

Communication Skills of Autistic Children at the Karya Tulus Special School in Medan City for Social Interaction

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Abstract

The birth of a child in family life is a real source of happiness for a married couple. The best hope is directed at the growth and development of children. However, there are several births of children that are not the family's expectations. Children with neurological disorders (neurodevelopmental disorders). Autism is one of the children who have a neurological disorder which is directed at sensory integration disorders. Where this results in a lack of nerve function, one of which is in communicating. This study aims to determine the communication skills of autistic children in social interaction at Special Schools (SLB)-C Karya Tulus, Medan City. The method used is a type of qualitative research method with the "Purposive Sampling" technique, namely the sample selection technique according to the researcher. There are 3 subjects with autistic children with the initials KM, S, BS and there were two additional informants namely Veronika Ginting and Masdah Br. Matanari as the class teacher. Data collection techniques were carried out using observation and interview methods as well as documentation studies. As a basis, this research uses Herbert Blumer's Symbolic Interaction theory. The results showed that only one out of three subjects could be said to be capable of social interaction. The form of communication that KM does when interacting socially is in the form of two-way communication from the researcher to the subject. KM can read, write, count, and execute commands. While S, and BS are subjects who both have deficiencies in social interaction. Eye contact is unstable and less cooperative in social interaction, especially in answering researcher's questions.

Keywords

autism; communication; social interaction



I. Introduction

A family will be whole if it is blessed with a child. The birth of a child in family life is a real source of happiness for a married couple. (Tameon & Tlonaen, 2019) The best hope is directed at the growth and development of children. In fact, not all mothers can give birth and have children with normal growth and development. Some children are born with neurodevelopmental disorders. Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is a real disorder experienced by a child that appears at the age of three in his life. The attack on the brain nerves in autistic children is complex, affecting communication and social interaction disorders because the dominant treatment is living like having your own world and lacking a

social soul or being interpreted as a person who does not need the help of other people. (Karyati & Effendi, 2019). Autism is one of the children who have a neurological disorder which is directed at sensory integration disorders. (Daulay, 2019) Autistic children are children who have characteristics that are different from normal children in general, and that does not mean that these differences limit mental, emotional or physical disabilities. (Mahandi et al., 2022)

In the verses of the Qur'an there are verses that explain the human condition, namely surah At-tin verse 4, which reads;

تَقْوِيمَ أَحْسَنَ فِي الْإِنْسَانِ خَلَقْنَا لَقَدْ

Meaning: "Indeed, We have created man in the best form." (Al-Qur'an and its Translation, 2013).

Based on the verses written in the Al-Qur'an, it is clearly written that Allah makes human appearance and self in the best possible form, so does autistic children. The deficiencies experienced by autistic children are not a disgrace that must be hidden. Autism is also not a disease that must be avoided, but autism is a disturbance in nerve function.

Communication is said to be the main concept of exchanging information in interactions. Communication plays an important role in human life, because with communication humans are able to understand the wishes or input made by the communicator to the communicant. Communication is also often associated with social interaction. Because humans should always live side by side because human identity is to need the help of other humans in their life. (Karyati & efendi, 2019) Communication has always been an important point of social interaction. In each interaction there will be verbal and nonverbal communication.

The togetherness between individuals who carry out the communication also causes interaction. According to Soerjono (in Mahardani, 2016: 586) Social interaction is a dynamic inter-social relationship related to individuals or groups of humans as well as individuals with groups of humans. This social interaction is important in human life, moreover humans are said to be social beings who always need the help of others. All forms of body movement when communicating between individuals are based on physical and emotional responses to environmental stimuli. Deddy Mulyana (in Mahardani, 2016: 586). Therefore, social interaction can occur because of communication between individuals.

In the communication approach research tradition, there are several communication theories, one of which is the symbolic theory, which originally came from semi-ethnic and phenomenological studies. This theory has had a major influence on the concept of the study of the concept of communication studies. Symbolic interaction theory starts from symbolic interactionism initiated by George Heber Mead, namely a sociological perspective developed in the 20th century and continues into several theoretical approaches, namely the Iowa school initiated by Herbrt Blumer and the low school initiated by Mnaford Kuhn, and the Iowa school initiated by Herbrt Blumer and the low school initiated by Mnaford Kuhn, and Indiana initiated by Sheldon Stryker. (Saihua, 2019)

Social interaction is something that is difficult for children with autism to do in the world and their environment. (Yuswatingsih, 2021) Most of the autistic children are characterized by excessive emotions and tantrums that are difficult to control so that they interfere and change their personality in behavior and learning. Handojo (in Yuswaningsih, 2021) said research conducted by experts from various countries found facts about the social interactions of autistic children, including the existence of anatomical abnormalities in the

parietal lobe, cerebellum, and limbic system. This disorder also causes autistic children to not pay attention to their environment.

Chodijah (in Siti et al, 2020) suggests that social interaction occurs if the following factors are met: 1) There is social contact, both social contact between individuals, between groups, and between individuals and groups, which is carried out directly or indirectly, namely through other communication media. This social contact is said to be positive if it results in cooperation, but if it produces negative things then hostility arises; 2) There is social communication between individuals, between groups and between individuals and groups. That is, the message conveyed by the communicator can be received by the interlocutor (Siti et al., 2020)

Dhiki Yulia Mahardani also conducted research in 2016 at Bangunrejo 2 Public Elementary School with the title "Communication Ability in Social Interaction of Autistic Children at Bangunrejo 2 State Elementary School" where the subject was only able to make one-way communication. The subject is able to speak but in verbal communication it is still lacking while in nonverbal communication it only does touch and body movements. Social interaction skills are also lacking, lacking eye contact and not being able to play with peers. The subject is able to respond to communication when interacting directly but the response given is not in accordance with the topic of communication.

In supporting communication skills and social interaction in children, the role of parents is needed as a whole in it. Parents must patiently respond to all attitudes that are less pleasing from an autistic child. However, in order to further support autistic children it is recommended to carry out the learning process in the school environment. (Puspitaningtyas, 2020) This can also trigger a lack of tantrums and stress in autistic children.

The government supports the learning process by establishing an Special School program (SLB). (Rifayanti, n.d.) This school aims as a learning process for children with autism. Usually these schools have the same level as public schools, namely Kindergarten, Elementary, Middle School, High School, but the learning process that distinguishes SLB and public schools, One Special School (SLB) in Medan City is located on Jl. Namopewawir, Tuntungan II, Kec. Pancur Batu, Kab. Deli Serdang, North Sumatra Province, this school was founded in 1987 and operated in 2015 under the name SLB-C Karya Tulus Medan City. Based on Pustaka research, SLB-C Karya Tulus, Medan City, shelters children who are predominantly non-Muslim and there are only a few Muslim people. The establishment of this SLB is planned to be able to help children with special needs in pursuing both formal and non-formal education.

The education of children with special needs is also covered by a curriculum and instructor according to the needs of these children. In every region in Indonesia there are many Special Schools (SLB). But there are also sections of these various special schools, for example, a school that specifically accepts autistic children is called SLB-F, specifically for blind children is called SLB-A, specifically for deaf children is called SLB-B and especially mentally retarded children is SLB-C and many more. kind. (Daulay, 2019)

Sourced from the results of conducting observations, it was found that problems in autistic children at SLB-C Karya Tulus, Medan City were difficult to interact socially. It was found that there were several autistic children who were only able to introduce names on the basis of their teacher's instructions. There are also children who only focus on one object in front of them, such as food. The articulations conveyed are also less clear and more playful or act like they have their own world. This is the basis for researchers to find out the communication of autistic children towards social interaction at SLB-C Karya Tulus, Medan City. To be thoroughly understood.

II. Research Method

This research uses a type of qualitative descriptive research method. According to Sugiyono, (2012) Qualitative descriptive research is a research method to obtain in-depth data, a data that contains meaning. Based on the subject selection technique, namely "Purposive Sampling", it was found that 3 subjects of autistic children in grade 6 SD at SLB Karya Tulus, Medan City with the initials KM, S and BS, while supporting data sources were obtained through the class teacher who overshadowed the 3 autistic students, namely Veronika Ginting and Masdah Br. Matanari. In collecting data, this research used observation techniques which were first carried out and continued using interview techniques, and to strengthen the data documentation techniques were carried out in the form of photos and videos. As a basis, researchers use Herbert Blumer's symbolic interaction theory, namely: (1) humans act based on a meaning that exists for them (2) meaning is stated to exist from the results of social interactions carried out with other people (3) these meanings are then refined when the process of symbolic interaction takes place.

III. Discussion

3.1 Results

This research was conducted at the Karya Tulus Special School (SLB)-C, Medan City, which is located on Jl. Namopecawir, Hamlet III, Tuntungan II, Kec. Stone Fountain. This school was established in 1987 and began operating in 2015. The location of the school is close to local residents' settlements with the dominance of non-Muslim communities. SLB-C Karya Tulus Medan City is one of the schools that accommodates several children with special needs including Autism, Down Syndrome, Severe Grahita and Mild Grahita. The service system is in the form of special accompanying teachers (GBK) and student dormitories. Other services include computer learning, study books and the Bible as religious reading material.

This study focused on aspects of communication skills in social interaction. Based on the results of observations and interviews conducted regarding communication skills in social interaction in autistic children at SLB-C Karya Tulus Medan City, it was obtained that not many children were able to interact socially, especially children who came directly from this school. Some children who are able to interact socially have a guidance period or a long school term and are transfer students from other inclusive schools before attending SLB-C Karya Tulus, Medan City. Through Herbert Blumer's Symbolic Concept theory this research is based on three assumptions namely:

a. Humans Act Based on Meaning

Every human being taking action must have "meaning" so that other people are able to understand what message you want to convey. Actions based on meaning are one of the actions taken by some autistic children at SLB-C Karya Tulus, Medan City. Researchers will summarize and describe the actions taken by autistic children against teachers and friends in the social environment.

b. Interaction with Teachers

1. Forms of Communication

Communication groups are translated into two, namely verbal communication and non-verbal communication. Verbal communication is a form of communication that is conveyed by the communicator to the communicant by means of writing or verbally. (Mahsa & Loren, 2018). Judging from the research results, KM has a clear articulation in the delivery of verbal

communication. This can be seen from his ability to clearly read and count from 1-50 numbers without stopping. KM is capable of two-way communication, but still mostly use one-way communication. This conclusion can be seen from his response in receiving orders and responding to teacher calls. Actions taken by KM using spoken language, such as asking to go home to the class teacher "Vero we are going home" however, KM can only speak 1 word when carrying out two-way communication.

According to Mirza Maulana (in Rifayanti, 2019) said the disruption of human communication in terms of the speed of the way he speaks, unable to speak or mute, using language that is not understood by the interlocutor or imitating the speech of other people continuously (stupid/ecolalia). Subject S is disturbed in his verbal communication. S can only repeat the teacher's words or the echolalia mode of speaking in communicating especially when S has no focus. However, if done, S can carry out orders and do them well. Subject S is able to write on the basis of his teacher's orders, but the writing only repeats like what we write. The action taken by S when he wanted to write was to ask for a pen.

While BS has a severe verbal communication disorder. BS can communicate under certain circumstances, for example only with his personal wishes. BS cannot do something with orders, but on the basis of his own will. TF takes action with thumbs up so other people don't disturb him.

2. Directions from the Teacher

Guidance from the teacher is one way for autistic children to interact socially, where with the direction the child is better able to do things like other children in general. This is also what helps children develop sensory children to new things.

When receiving orders, KM did well, he was very cooperative listening to the directions and instructions the teacher gave such as counting, writing, singing and sitting. He followed them when he focused on one particular thing. The counting method used by KM starts with the teacher mentioning the initial numbers first, then KM continues. The same goes for singing. If not focused, KM may want to run and chase whatever it wants.

Meanwhile, when S gets an order, he is able to do it. He heard the teacher's directions such as sitting, shaking hands, sweeping. However, it is quite difficult if the S is not focused. Based on the observations of researchers in the field, S is still out of focus. It can be seen from his eye contact that cannot be directed when communicating. S still listens to other things around and speaks with repetition of the words we speak. However, it can be said that subject S at a glance is able to follow directions from his supervising teacher.

In contrast to the BS, this subject actually cannot carry out any orders from the teacher's directions as long as it has not become his personal desire. However, if you are used to doing it, you can do it without orders or directions from the teacher. BS has resistance if it is not in accordance with what he wants, therefore the teacher does not make excessive orders to BS. As a result, BS becomes quiet and rarely hears directions which make it difficult for him to develop body sensations.

c. Interaction with Friends

1. Interaction Development

The obstacles that autistic children experience from the start have an impact on their lack of social interaction in their environment. They experience complex things covering several aspects including social interaction.(Prihtyaningsih, nd)

2. Self

Autistic children tend to be alone and only struggle with thoughts and ways that are fun for themselves. As did the three subjects. In interacting with Subjects S and BS, it was

observed that they could only interact with themselves, this interaction could be said with objects such as food or things that were currently holding them. Whereas KM already has interaction with his friends and no longer relies on his own world.

3. Friend

Social interaction in autistic children, namely interactions carried out in the main environment first, such as at school autistic children interact with friends. For S and BS, interacting with friends is a real difficulty for them. They cannot gather or socialize with other friends when recess begins. In contrast to KM, even though he only has one friend, he can play or join friends. KM is only comfortable with one person in his class, this can be seen from when the researcher saw firsthand the comfort KM felt when he was close to Agung.

d. Meaning is obtained from the Results of Social Interaction

1. Response

Responses are actions taken by objects during social interactions. Based on the research, autistic children's responses to teachers and autistic children's responses to friends are obtained.

2. Autistic Children's Responses When Interacting with Teachers

The results of field research show that KM really responds to teacher directions or orders such as when called KM immediately approaches and sits in front of the teacher. The researcher also gave several questions and KM's responses were very good when answering questions. Whereas S, can be said to be able to respond when called upon by the teacher. S can approach the teacher when his name is called. However, S found it difficult to respond when the researcher gave directions, because S only repeated the words spoken by the other person. Unlike the BS which does not respond at all when called. He also ignores orders and questions from the teacher when BS doesn't want to do it. But, when BS can want it then BS does it himself. Like when reading the letters on the blackboard,

3. Autistic Children's Responses When Interacting with Friends

Regarding the response of autistic children when interacting with friends, this is in line with the development of interactions with friends described above. KM is only comfortable with one person in class while only playing alone outside of class. While S and BS do not have friends and cannot respond to their friends in interactions. Especially for the dominant BS subject who doesn't like being bothered by friends who sometimes play pranks. As a consequence, BS can look furious and have excessive tantrums.

e. Language

Language is the main component in communication. Language is defined as a purely human and non-instinctive method of communicating ideas, emotions, and desires through a system of voluntarily produced symbols, according to (Syahrin, 2018) First and foremost, language is an auditory representational system of symbols. Language maintenance is compulsory responsibility of the users of the language (Ramlan, 2018). Language affects the thought and behaviour of human beings. The attitude of a person speaking more than one language is not the same as others who speak just one language (Akinwamide, 2018). Language is an arrangement of arbitrary symbols possessing an agreed upon significance within a community; furthermore, these symbols can be used and understood independent of immediate contexts, and they are connected in regular ways (Ramlan, 2018). Language is a means of communication between all aspects of human life, inseparable from the intervention

and assistance of other people. (Ulfah & Budiyanto, 2015) Communication is also capable of creating social interaction. The language is divided into two, namely:

1. Sign language/Symbol

The sign language used by autistic children can be happy language and sad language. Usually, the state of being happy in general for autistic children is by showing happy expressions to the environment, namely the teacher and their friends. When happy, KM shows his happy expression by running and laughing. Likewise with S and BS. They also do the same thing if they express their happy way.

Sign language used when angry usually looks like a normal child in general. Children will take actions that can express their emotions such as slamming tables or hitting friends around. The angry language used by KM and S usually only looked gloomy and just remained silent without language, while the angry language used by BS was to rebel by destroying several items until BS was satisfied.

2. Spoken Language

Spoken language is language that comes out directly from the mouth or spoken language. In expressing pleasure, the three subjects did not utter language orally. The subject only does sign language which is common, namely laughing and running or sometimes clapping. Likewise with spoken language when angry. They only do angry sign language as stated in the explanation above.

f. Meaning is Perfected during the Process of Social Interaction

Autistic Children's Eye Contact When Interacting

In essence, autistic children are disturbed in focusing on doing something. The broken focus that occurs in autistic children is related to sensory disturbances in children or related to their nerves. On average, autistic children are not too able to make eye contact with their interlocutors when interacting. This is evidenced by the subjects S and BS who were not too able to look at the researcher when trying to interact. It's the same with the teacher teaching, S and BS also can't see the teacher's eye contact. In contrast to KM, he was able to see the eye contact of the researcher and the teacher even though he still seemed to be out of focus.

3.2 Discussion

Judging from the results of the Symbolic theory put forward by Helbert Blumer, it shows that the three subjects have different skills and disorders. The communication skills of autistic children at SLB Karya Tulus, Medan City can be described as follows:

Table 1. Subject Data

Subject	Name Initials	Gender	Age	Old School
1	km	Man	14 years	1 year
2	S	Woman	14 years	1 year
3	BS	Woman	16 years	9 years

Based on observation through observation with the Helbert Blumer concept, the researcher describes the three subjects below with an analysis conducted by the researcher regarding the communication skills of autistic children, the SLB-C Karya Tulus, Medan City.

a. KM Subject

KM does not experience too much interference in social interaction and can be said to be able to carry out social interactions. This is evidenced by the way he communicates

verbally which is quite clear, his understanding of the language is reflected in his response when given an order. Orally, KM uses clear articulation with not too loud intonation. Eye contact is also good in responding to questions or commands made by the teacher and researcher. The difficulties experienced by KM can be seen from its two-way communication. He only listens to one-way communication from the teacher.

b. Subject S

S experienced communication and social interaction disorders. Her verbal language skills are still limited and stammering. He also repeats words in communicating with his interlocutor. Orally, he only made a sound that was quite loud but still limited. Subject S can still receive orders and respond when directed by the teacher. This can be seen from his quick response when called by the teacher and still sitting quietly in front of the teacher and researcher. So, according to the conclusions made by the researcher, Subject S is still able to communicate and interact socially, but not yet fully.

c. Subject

BS is the only subject that is difficult to do social interaction. Verbal communication skills either orally or in writing do not yet exist. His understanding of responses or commands is still unstable. BS can only do something on the basis of his own will and desire. If he wants, without any direction he can do it. However, BS can read two words, such as flowers, read books and three spellings such as shoes. In this case, the researcher concludes that BS has not been able to communicate and interact socially.

IV. Conclusion

Based on the results of observations made by researchers on Monday, March 27, 2023, it can be seen that 3 of several autistic children have difficulties interacting. without any directions. However, on the other hand, according to the supervising teacher, there are significant advantages as long as the child is old and follows the learning process carried out at the school.

Furthermore, the researchers conducted research in stages starting on April 11-13 2023 with different autistic children at the time of observation. During the research period, it was also found that autistic children were quite the same as autistic children during the observation period. There were three subjects selected by the researcher, where only one subject was classified as able to carry out social interactions. Meanwhile, the other two subjects are still relatively difficult to carry out social interactions even though they have had a long period of time in undergoing the learning process at SLB-C Karya Tulus, Medan City.

Based on the results of the research, discussion and conclusions above, the researchers drew the conclusion that several autistic children at SLB-C Karya Tulus, Medan City experienced complex problems in their communication skills. Therefore, researchers found possible factors inhibiting social interaction in autistic children at SLB- C Karya Tulus Medan City, including 1) this difficulty lies in school admissions that are not specialized in handling Autism, which is where it is most likely that if they are in an autistic school they will get competent teachers in their field, 2) Autistic children in SLB-C Karya Tulus Medan City have not get therapy facilities that help facilitate the development of social interaction in children.

This is corroborated by research conducted by Dwi Tiansa Barus, et al(Barus et al., 2020)with the title "The Effect of Lego Play Therapy on the Social Interaction of Autistic Children at SDLB 0107700 Kisaran Naga, Kisaran Timur District, Asahan Regency in 2019" the results obtained after doing lego play therapy found that 10 people (76.9%) had

experienced social interaction. After conducting perigal therapy experiments using lego games as a tool, the researchers got changes including eye contact that focused when the researcher called, then with the child's training in using the game, the child was able to get along and carry out social interactions with friends around him. Then in research conducted by Jessica Sindy Sirait, (Sirait & Desiana, 2019).

Preferably, through the critique there are suggestions that are able to build so that they become improvements in the future. Researchers hope that in the future parents will be more understanding and sensitive to developmental disorders in children and be able to choose schools specifically for developmental disorders in children. Furthermore, if possible, SLB-C Karya Tulus Medan City has a role in facilitating autistic children to participate in various therapies that can help the development of autistic children.

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