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Children Who Need Mental Support: A Teacher's Communication Strategy

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Abstract

The objectives of this study were as follows: 1) to determine the teacher's communication strategy in the teaching and learning process of mentally retarded children in SLB 01 Bengkulu City, and 2) to apply effective multimodal learning in the communication of teachers and mentally retarded children in the teaching and learning process. Field research with a descriptive approach is being conducted. According to the study's findings, the most common form of communication between teachers and students is verbal communication, which occurs both inside and outside the classroom during the teaching and learning process. This verbal communication can take the form of face-to-face conversations between teachers and students, or it can take the form of speaking in class learning. When we communicate, we not only send verbal messages but also nonverbal messages. In this study, the teacher uses both verbal and nonverbal communication during the teaching and learning process. The teacher uses simple verbal communication when teaching.

Keywords: communication strategy, children, mental support

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INTRODUCTION

Children with special needs (ABK) are children who are different from other children because of limitations or specialties. Physical, mental, intellectual, social, and emotional limitations are common in children with special needs. It can be seen that children with special needs face many more challenges in their lives than typical children. As a result, special care is required to communicate and socialize with children with special needs.

One of the children with special needs (ABK) mentioned previously is a mentally retarded child, also known as mental retardation. Mental retardation is a condition in which a person's intelligence regresses or fails to develop normally. This period begins when the individual is born. Typically, there is an overall mental developmental barrier, with the primary symptom being below-average mental development (Nevid dkk., 2015).

Language or communication difficulties are one of the limitations of mentally retarded children. This limitation occurs because mentally retarded children's cognition is hampered. Children with mental retardation can only understand words or sentences that are simple and clear

in meaning. When children with mental retardation (mental retardation) are compared to normal children of the same CA (Chronology Age), the children with mental retardation (mental retardation) generally have problems with articulation, voice quality, and rhythm. Furthermore, mentally retarded children have delayed speech development (expressive auditory language). Because of their mental retardation, these children have found it difficult to learn complex communication skills such as speaking and writing (Norhidayah, 2013). This has an impact on the learning process of mentally retarded children.

Researchers are drawn to the phenomenon that occurs in mentally retarded children, where the occurrence of conditions of difficulty in learning is frequently caused by the limited thinking of mentally retarded children in recognizing numbers and letters. Children's inability to adapt as a result of less varied parenting. The child's emotional changes have an impact on his or her mental psychology. The ability to learn independently that students develop while in the formal education system, in particular, can be a useful provision for carrying out lifelong learning after they leave the education system. Because problems will always arise in everyone's life, lifelong learning is required. To solve it effectively and efficiently, learning activities based on values to solve problems and adequate learning skills are required (Idawati, 2014).

Meanwhile, teachers must have fundamental knowledge of communication strategies in order to support effective learning. To identify communication strategies for children with special needs, it is necessary to analyze teachers' interactions with children during teaching and learning activities in the classroom so that the correct concept can be determined. It is hoped that by using effective communication strategies, a teacher will be able to increase the learning independence of children, particularly children with special needs, allowing them to control their mental, physical, social, and emotional states. A teacher is expected to be able to create a productive, creative, and innovative learning environment through the use of this effective communication strategy, namely a learning environment capable of increasing the learning independence of ABK students. As a result, the ability to teach communication strategies becomes the focal point of learning and must be professionally developed.

METHODS

With the type of field research used in this study, a descriptive approach is used. Qualitative research is research that seeks to understand the phenomenon of what research subjects experience, such as behavior, perception, and motivation for action, holistically and through description in the form of words and language, in a specific natural context, and through the use of various natural methods (Sugiyono, 2015). Researchers will look into the teacher's strategy for implementing a communication system for mentally retarded children at SLB 01 Bengkulu City in this study.

Interview techniques, observation techniques, and documentation techniques were used to collect data in this study. Because, in qualitative research, real phenomena can be easily understood with good meaning if interactions with subjects are carried out through in-depth interviews and observations, where these phenomena take place, and in addition, documentation (about materials written by or about the subject) is required to complete the data (Sugiyono, 2015).

In addition to directly asking the subject, the researcher made several efforts to ensure the validity of the data findings. Researchers look for answers from other sources as well. Triangulation theory refers to the use of multiple theories (more than one main theory) or multiple perspectives to interpret a set of data (Sundayana, 2014).

FINDING AND DISCUSSIONS

Communication Strategy of the Teacher in the Teaching and Learning Process of Children with Mental Requirements at SLB 01 Bengkulu City

Communication is an activity that is inextricably linked to human life. According to this definition, communication is the process of changing one's behavior. A person's behavior can thus be changed through communication. It is referred to as communication in the educational world. The goal of this learning or communication is for students, particularly mentally retarded children, to have a positive change in attitudes and behavior after participating in teaching and learning activities. Communication plays an important role in the implementation of education in special schools (SLB).

A communicator is the teacher or teacher. Messages that convey knowledge or subject matter. Books, blackboards, and other media are used as channels. Students serve as communicators, receiving messages from the communicator. According to the feedback, students understand the message.

The focus of this study is the Teacher's Communication Strategy in the Teaching and Learning Process of Mentally Impaired Children at SLB 01 Bengkulu City During the Covid-19 Pandemic. The disadvantage of mentally retarded students is their intellectual or mental weakness. Several things were discovered in this study about teaching mentally retarded children. When presenting material to mentally retarded students, it must be simplified and reduced. The weight of the subject matter is adjusted to the students' abilities and abilities.

According to the study's findings, the teacher's communication strategy in the teaching and learning process was divided into three parts: planning, implementation, and evaluation. The following are the study's findings: 1) Preparation: be respectful, empathic, audible, clear, and humble; 2) Execution: empathy, audibility, clear meaning, and humility; and 3) Assessment: respect, humility.

According to the study's findings, the teacher's respect communication strategy toward students, in which the teacher sought students to have interactive communication, was discovered. Mutual respect is the foundation of communication between teachers and mentally retarded children. Teachers communicate by bestowing awards that leave an impression on students. The teacher has the ability to condition in any situation. The teacher is able to hear and comprehend what the mentally retarded child is saying. Lessons can be delivered in a manner or attitude that is typically accepted by mentally retarded children when teaching them. Teachers use facial expressions, body language, and words that mentally retarded children can understand. When teaching mentally retarded children, the message is clear and creates understanding. Communication in the classroom for mentally retarded children means respecting one another and not looking down on them. The teacher is gentle when teaching mentally retarded children. The teacher is polite and self-controlled when teaching mentally retarded children.

Based on the findings of the study, the teacher employs the sensory tools of mentally retarded students, which can still be used to capture the teacher's intended message. The use of these senses is not limited to a single sense tool. However, multisensory perception, such as hearing and touch, hearing and visual, and touch and visual. Even when the senses are used concurrently. Learning media is used as a channel for sending messages between teachers and students in the learning process of mentally retarded students.

This type of communication is classified as both verbal and nonverbal. Nonverbal communication becomes more dominant, such as when angry children frown, throw things, and hit people around them. In verbal communication, the child's language is unclear and difficult to understand. The solution given to children with mental retardation at an early age in communication, both verbally and nonverbally, is that teachers and parents must pay attention to

the growth and development of children, see the needs of children, teach good behavior, and be repeated as early as possible to help children prepare for community participation.

According to the findings of the study, the teacher's communication pattern is a primary communication pattern that includes spoken language, command sentences, and redundant or repetition methods. This communication pattern is very effective in helping mentally retarded students develop independence.

The Use of Effective Multimodal Learning in the Communication of Teachers and Children with Mental Requirements During the Teaching and Learning Process

The teacher attempted to design the program based on the abilities and criteria of each student during its preparation. It is critical for the teacher to prepare before beginning the lesson. Careful planning will result in more effective and efficient learning. Student readiness refers to the preparation done by students prior to receiving material from the teacher. What students usually prepare is related to the writing tools used during the learning process.

Many factors must be considered by the teacher when presenting the material in order for the material to be conveyed correctly and accepted by students. So that material delivery is not floaty and boring for students. Only storybooks and picture media are commonly used by teachers. This is a medium that is only available in schools. The method's application is tailored to the teaching material that will be delivered to students. A teacher must be able to effectively manage a class. In order to create a relaxing and peaceful learning environment. So that students can effectively absorb the information presented by the teacher. And learning objectives can be met based on what has been determined.

The teacher employs a learning method and media to convey the learning message to blind students. Students who are blind have difficulty seeing the teaching and learning process in the classroom. Blind students' learning characteristics include relying on non-visual senses to compensate for weakness caused by loss of visual function. Blind students' learning styles differ from those of other students. The multimodal method is one of the learning methods used by the teacher. Multimodal is a combination of two or more communication models that broadens and simplifies the meaning or message from separate communication models. To communicate in the classroom, the teacher employs not only one model, such as writing, but also the sense of hearing and gestures, so that students can understand what the teacher is saying: 1) Preparation: language, motion, images, and audio; 2) Visual execution; 3) Physical evaluation.

Communication is only a minor component of educational communication. Patterned communication is communication that is specifically designed to change target behavior in a specific community for the better. Communication is intended to provide cognition, affect, and conation or psychomotor aspects. The teacher serves as the communicator (communicator), and the students serve as the recipients (communicant). This communication occurs during the learning process. Students, teachers, lesson content, teaching methods, learning media, and evaluation are all components of the learning process. The teacher's instructional communication in teaching mentally retarded students is highlighted in this study.

Children who are mentally retarded have learning difficulties as a result of obstacles to their intellectual, emotional, social, and physical development. Mentally retarded children require assistance because, in addition to their limited intelligence, they struggle to care for themselves in society. Previous research on four special schools for mentally retarded students (SLB C) in the city and district of Bandung, including SLB-C Purnama Asih, SPLB-C Ciapaganti, SLB-C Lembang, and SLB-State Cileunyi, revealed that they have significant functional difficulties. He stated that the achievement level had not yet reached the expected level of learning achievement in accordance with the curriculum target of 75%.

This demonstrates that the challenges that mentally retarded children face have an impact on their level of achievement. Obstacles encountered on the target party cannot be overcome. Furthermore, the communicants in this study are mentally retarded children who face intellectual challenges. In fact, this is the ultimate goal of all instructional communication activities on the target side. Messages or information conveyed by communicators may be misinterpreted due to personality issues and the target party's condition. As a result, the researcher is curious about the instructional communication used by the teacher to achieve the instructional goals. What normal children do is difficult for mentally retarded children to follow. The environment's verbal and nonverbal stimulation does not always transfer properly. In fact, even the simplest things are not always properly digested.

In fact, during the teaching and learning process, the teacher uses both verbal and nonverbal communication to convey information. Of course, this will have an impact on the achievement of instructional communication objectives. Researchers chose SLB 01 Bengkulu City as a research site because it is specifically designed for children with special needs, particularly those with intellectual abilities below the average or mental retardation. Additionally, the phenomenological method was used in this study. Based on the research subjects' experiences, researchers can gain an overview of teacher communication in teaching mentally retarded children using the phenomenological method. In-depth interviews can be used to obtain all research descriptions. As a result, the research findings are true reflections of the subject's experience.

The findings demonstrated that using the multimodal model to learn was effective. The multimodal model's components include content, question and answer, social emotional, evaluation, and reflection, all of which can be effectively implemented through e-learning. To be optimal in its implementation, the multimodal model through e-learning requires supporting applications, particularly in the social-emotional component and questions and answers. Furthermore, using the multimodal model can encourage lecturers' creativity in creating media that supports online learning, such as PowerPoint-based videos and audio (Masfingatinn dkk., 2021).

CONCLUSION

The study's findings indicate that: 1) the most common form of communication between teachers and students is verbal communication, such as during the teaching and learning process in and out of the classroom. This verbal communication can take the form of face-to-face conversations between teachers and students, or it can take the form of speaking in class learning. Actually, when we communicate, we convey not only verbal but also nonverbal messages, and 2) in teaching, teachers use media that is already available in schools. However, teachers do not always use instructional media because they are limited in equipment or are unable to deal with other subjects that use the same media at the same time. In fact, some teachers believe that there are times when subject matter does not require media and that the lecture method and verbal explanation are sufficient. Furthermore, teachers frequently use their surroundings or provide their own materials to teach.

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