

# Parents' Role Optimization in Stimulating Autism Children's Development through Family Counseling Program

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## Abstract

Parents' role is very important in stimulating children's development, moreover for those with special needs. Most parents do not comprehend, yet have lack awareness in stimulating children's development. Therefore, it needs a kind of family counseling program. Family has important role for children in their process of development and growth.

This research aimed to create awareness of the importance of parents' role to optimize children's growth and development, and also to assist quality time between parents and children through learning activity created to minimize concentration disruption on autism children. Indicators used in this research are feeling and self esteem, quality of communication, family system, family needs analysis, and implemented family counseling program.

Research method used is descriptive qualitative. Sampling used in this research is purposive sampling, which its sample and data source is chosen with particular consideration. Research is conducted on family having 5-year-old-autism-girl with concentration disruption. Data is collected through observation, interview, and documentation.

Result of this research shows that from feeling and self esteem indicator, it is seen that the family has lack of confidence in handling children. From communication quality indicator, this family has low communication quality. Therefore, it is needed family needs analysis, namely a family counseling. By implementing family counseling program of discussion and sharing, and also learning time with mother, quality time from parents to optimize children's development can be created and concentration disruption can be minimized through learning activity.

**Keywords:** Parents' Role Optimization, Children's Development Stimulation, Autism, Family Counseling

## I. INTRODUCTION

Kustawan (2012: 29) states that autism is disruption of development on children indicated with disturbance and slowness in cognitive, language, behavior, communication, and social interaction. Leo Kanner states that autism generated from the word "auto" which means alone. People with autism live as if

they live in their own world. Based on this statement, many teachers and parents assume that children who cannot interact with their surroundings are identified as children with autism. In fact, there are children who cannot interact due to psychological problems.

Durig in Trevarthen (1998: 35) states that autism is a complex development disruption related to communication, social interaction, and imagination activity. Those indications are showed before 3 years old. Moreover, in infantile autism, the indications are showed since infant. Autism is also a consequence in mentally life of complex difficulty brain development influencing many functions, namely: perceiving, intending, imagining, and feeling. Autism can be declared as a failure in systematic reasoning.

Betty (2006: 34) states that there is strong evidence that children with autism spectrum disorders (ASD) have generally higher levels of emotional and behavioral problems such as physical aggression, hostility, temper tantrums and self-injurious behaviors.

Wing (1974) classifies two main groups of problems faced by children with autism, namely: problem in understanding the world and difficult behavior and emotional problems. This is also in line with statement from Susan E. Bryson, there are two forms of attention—focused/sustained attention, as required in recognizing objects or patterns, and visual-spatial attention, or the ability to move attention fluidly through visual space.

Difficulties in children with autism should be handled correctly through a program. Some ways to minimize those difficulties are biomedical therapy method, occupation therapy, sensory integrated therapy, playing therapy, behavior therapy, physical therapy, speaking therapy, musical therapy, visual therapy, medicaments therapy, and therapy through meals.

Another type of service for children with autism is through education adapted with children's characteristics and abilities. Structured teaching program is considered as a proper way in achieving big progress. It makes children with autism be able to estimate what they will get. Sudden alteration can make

children become panic and tantrum. Despite the condition, they need to be taught spontaneous and flexible things, especially in their social ability (Baron-Cohen, 1993).

LEAP Intervention Model (Learning Experience and Alternative Program for Preschoolers and Parents) uses response stimuli with children are in social environment. One alternative way in involving parents is by giving family counseling. Family counseling sees family in a whole that problems faced by a family member can be solved effectively by involving other family members. Family counseling focuses on problems related to family situation and the implementation involves family member. It helps family member to learn and realize that family's bond comes from family member's relationship.

As stated by Murray, that it is inclined to suspect a very serious influence of parents on the forming of needs of their children because parents award or punish certain ways of behavior and have a share in reinforcing or weakening the effects of respective stimuli.

In general, Sofyan argues in Family Counseling that counseling process should be preceded in some steps. Counseling relation in the first step should precede an effort to develop rapport to make close counseling relation, honest, and believe each other, so that client become more overt. Effort to develop rapport should be started as soon as client comes into counseling room. It can be preceded of counselor has ability to develop it.

The purpose of creating rapport situation in counseling bond is to make the situation become a situation giving courage and confidence for client to deliver their feeling, problems, or even their deep secret to counselor.

According to Brammer (1979: 51), in principal, counseling process consists of two basic phases, namely counseling bond building and creating positive action. Those phases should be implemented in the beginning and in the next step of the process that is are marked by the existence of rapport as the key of counseling.

Family with children with special needs will meet more problems within the family, started from the child acceptance until children's parenting. Therefore, the family needs counseling.

The purpose of this research is to build awareness of the importance of parents' role to optimize children's growth and development, and also to assist quality time between parents and children through learning activity created to minimize

concentration disruption on autism children. Kind of approaching used in this research is communication approach. This approach emphasizes on how to create effective communication within the family to optimize children's growth and development.

## **II. RESEARCH METHOD**

Research method used was descriptive qualitative. Data was collected by using observation, interview, and documentation. To choose sample, purposive sampling was used. According to Sugiyono (2012: 54), purposive sampling is a technique to choose sample and data source by considering particular consideration. This kind of sampling was used since this research needs special criteria.

Subject used was single parent of autism children. It was conducted in SLB Negeri Grobogan Kecamatan Karangrayung Kabupaten Grobogan by giving family counseling program to stimulate autism children's development. Data was analyzed by using interactive analysis. Interactive process was also conducted in the process of collecting data, for example in the form of comparison of inter data unit, data collecting, in the end of data collecting process, and in the process of report making which involves final analysis. This cycle process is conducted since the beginning until the end of data collecting as the continuity of reflection process (Sutopo, 2005).

## **III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

As the result of family counseling conducted in this research, there are some major components, namely component in family situation, feeling and self-esteem, quality of communication, family system, family needs analysis, and family counseling program. Those components are elaborated as follows.

### **A. Component in Family Situation**

#### **1) Feeling and Self-Esteem**

Self-esteem is individual assessment on pride, through behavior on themselves implicitly and un-verbalized and describe of how far she/he judge her/himself as a person having ability, value, worth, and competence.

RI's mother does not own confidence of her competence/ability in guiding RI, development which needs special handling. She assumed to look for another school which suits with RI with no effort to optimize RI's potential. Meanwhile, RZ feel impatient. RZ's mother is a busy woman. RZ is unconfident.

RI is highly confident. It was reflected when RI told the teacher about animals he had met in zoo. However, he delivered it unclearly or in the other words; he cannot deliver a concept in a whole.

## 2) *Communication Quality*

According to Satir, communication is an important factor in a system. It has main role in people relationship to each other and how they manage their surroundings and also rules for the family.

Based on the explanation above, communication condition of the family is not good enough. RI's mother was strict in communicating with her children. However, to make a commitment, RI's mother is inconsistency. RZ tend to behave on his own. It makes his mother hard to communicate with him. Moreover, RZ was introvert. It can be elaborated as follows.

Mothers were already firm to their children, but they were still inconsistent due to their children's characteristics. Sometimes, RZ behaves on his own. RI like to be spoiled and emotional. It makes his mother does what he wants. RI communicates with his mother more often than RZ.

Mostly, RI shows what he wants non-verbally. RI was obedient to his mother. When RI sleeps, his mother likes to kiss him. When RI awake, RZ was ignorant to RI. RZ communicate with his mother only when he was asked.

RI talks more than RZ. He shows things what he wants verbally and more clearly. He does not like to be lied. If he travels, he makes agreement and he will not asked besides agreement. He was consistent with his promise.

## 3) *Family System*

Family system is a family seen from its function as a unit with some rules, hopes, and emotions. Each family member relates each other. Therefore, one stress faced by a family member will affect the others. Family system has potential to share and face stress healthily, overtly, productively, and potential for communication process by focusing on mistake of one family member.

Based on description above, there are some rules in RI's family system, family member's position in family system, and hopes. Ever family member's condition will influence others. RI's family system will be elaborated as follows.

In rules indicator, RI's mother is not firm enough in applying rules, tends to give ease, and does what her son want. RZ is inconsistent in obeying rules in his family (moody). RI does not obey rules in his family.

Seen from family functioning indicator, the role of RI's mother in family is as housewife and family leader, therefore, she is busy with her activities and she

gives lack attention to her children. RZ is the oldest child in the family.

From emotional side, RI's mother is patient, hard-working person, and tough. RZ tends to push his desire to other family members. RI cannot control his emotion and sometimes he is angry when he cannot obtain what he wants.

From hope side, RZ's mother wants him to spare time to help RI's mother in tutoring RI. RZ hopes that RI can develop and grow appropriately. Meanwhile, RI hopes that he can learn while playing.

## *B. Family Needs Analysis*

Based on deep communication with family (mother and RZ), we provide family profile into 5 Quality of Life aspects, namely family educational background factor, family spiritual factor, family psychology factor, family job factor, and family health-safe factor.

From family educational background factor, the mother has low understanding about her children. The incorrect understanding about child's education is by giving entire education to school with no interference from parents. It is important to give stimuli from family to optimize children's development.

RZ shows that he has low knowledge about children's development. The low understanding about the importance of intervention is to optimize children's development.

Viewed from family spiritual factor, both the mother and RZ have very good spiritual side. The mother wears hijab and she has commitment on it. In daily activity, she also implements religious values, like praying and using right hand to do good activity.

From family psychological factor, she has economic problems remembering that she is a single parent and has responsibility to take care of two children. A single parent does not have time to share about her burden or problems. His son, RZ is in second semester, so he is busy with his assignment. It is difficult for her to explain about a figure of father. In the other side, she wants to tell RI that his father had passed away. However, when RI was born, his father showed up whereas he knew that his father has passed away. It makes thing difficult to tell RI. Since then, RI do not obedient, tantrum because he assumes that his father do not come home due to his mother. RZ feels that RI is not his brother. That is why he ignores RI many times. He is not ready to be a father for him yet.

Viewed from family job factor, the mother is busy to work so that she has no time to learn together with her children. RZ is busy with his college.

### **C. Result of Children with Special Needs Family Analysis**

Result of children with special needs family analysis based on family component and family needs are: in the side of acceptance, actually, family accept FT, however, this acceptance is not accompanied with giving services to optimize FT's potential. Parents have hope just as other parents that FT can grow and develop as what his friends do.

Actually, there is communication between school and parents related to FT's ability in following lesson in school, but there is no comprehensive report related to FT's assessment. Communication in family runs not too well because each family member is busy with their own activities. System and rules in family are not clear yet binding. It makes inconsistency in family. The actual potential that is should own in a family has not realized yet related to services for RI.

### **D. Result of Family Counseling Program**

After the implementation of family counseling, the mother starts to spare time to accompany her son in studying and she can create her own creativity in giving reward and pursue her son to do what she tells to him during learning time.

RI was excited and happy when he studied with his brother. When RI was tired to study, his brother gave him drawing as reward. Besides, after studying, his brother asked RI to harvest fruit together in front of their house. The relationship between them is appeared.

Family realizes that the importance of sparing time, studying, and giving stimuli to develop potential on the children. The mother said that she will keep her commitment to help RI in doing his activity and also communicate intensely with his brother. By doing good communication, it is hoped that RI can develop optimally.

## **IV. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION**

Based on family counseling, through communication approach, it can be concluded that RI's family, especially the mother, has confidence and competence in stimulating RI's growth and development. Quality time between RI and his family can be created. It can be seen from together learning activity. His brother now is willing to spare his time to accompany him to learn.

Family awareness about the importance of quality time, to study and stimulate RI's growth and development, must be created and developed through communication and colaboration between family and school such as teacher, so that composed suitable learning program in home and school.

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