

The Analysis of Social Environment Role on the Enhancement of Interpersonal Intelligence of Autism Children

Vanessa Jovanka Geraldhyne^{1,*} Nanik Yuliaty¹ Senny Weyara Dienda Saputri¹

¹ Department of Education, Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, University of Jember, Jember, Indonesia

* Corresponding author. Email: vanessajovanka44@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This research was conducted to describe the interpersonal intelligence profile of children with autism in the mild category at Cahaya Nurani Kindergarten, Sumbersari sub-district, Jember Regency, and to describe the role of the social environment in increasing interpersonal intelligence in children with mild category of autism in Cahaya Nurani Kindergarten, Sumbersari sub-district, Jember Regency. This type of research is qualitative with data collection methods used are observation, interviews, and documentation. The results showed that children with autism in the mild category at Cahaya Nurani Kindergarten have been able to communicate well with people in their social environment, help people who need help, be able to understand various forms of emotions, and be able to work with people in their social environment. This is inseparable from the role of the social environment of children with autism. Parents, co-teachers, regular class teachers, and peers also help improve the interpersonal intelligence of children with autism.

Keywords: *Interpersonal Intelligence, Autism Children, Social Environment*

1. INTRODUCTION

Early childhood education is a non-formal education that is carried out to prepare children for schooling at the formal education level, namely Elementary Schools. Education is divided into two types, namely education that is regular and inclusive. Regular education is education that only accepts normal students, while inclusive education is education that accepts children with special needs as students at the school (Pratiwi, Andajani, & Putra, 2019). Inclusive education is education that places children with special needs with other normal children in the same school (Nofrianto, in Olivia, 2017: 3)

Teaching and learning activities in inclusive schools are not much different from education in regular schools. However, in inclusive schools there are additional special classes for children with special needs. The children will be grouped based on their abnormalities. Emawati (in Olivia, 2017: 6) states that there are 5 class models distribution in inclusive schools namely; (1) regular classes, is a learning for children with special needs with regular children in the same class; (2) regular classes with clusters is a learning for children with special

needs with regular children in the same class; (3) regular classes with pull out, classes that place children with special needs with regular children in the same class, but occasionally children with special needs are separated to study alone together with the accompanying teacher; (4) regular classes with clusters and pull-out learning of children with special needs are often combined together with regular children or other children with special needs without regular children, but sometimes students are separated to study on their own with the accompanying teacher; and (5) special classes with integration, in this class children with special needs can join regular children in certain types of learning.

Children with special needs are children born in different conditions from children in general. This can be seen and recognized from the physical characteristics of the child. There are several types of children with special needs, namely; deaf, blind, people with autism, and so on.

One example of students in inclusive schools is children with autism. Children with autism are children who have limitations on cognitive, interpersonal, and language skills. Children with autism have a low intelligence that is less than 70, while other normal

children have intelligence above 70. The characteristics of autism so far have only been measured from standard tests that are usually done in general to measure an intelligence (Hoekstra, et al in Crespi, 2016: 2).

Children with autism are usually difficult to accept in society, because they tend to be more aggressive than children in general. A child in general has good interpersonal intelligence. They tend to be acceptable both in the game environment and society, because, they are able to understand the emotions expressed by others, can convey and receive information well, and are able to work well together in a group (Untari, Purnama Putra, & Chintya Devi, 2019).

Matson and Nebel (in Funabiki, et al, 2015: 88) say that children with autism have difficulty in social interaction, communication with others, and lack of social interest. They often disturb people around them, hitting or throwing things hard, and even hurting themselves. That is what makes autism children difficult to be accepted in the community.

Autistic children often do activities that are aggressive not without reason. They may be violent to others or themselves because their desires are not fulfilled, there are things that disturb him, or there are messages from others that they are unable to receive. Autism children are classified as individuals who have difficulty in processing emotions in themselves, so that all activities that are aggressive are shown by autism children because they want to express or express themselves to others.

Cahaya Nurani Kindergarten in Jember Regency is one of the early childhood education that accept students with special needs. Cahaya Nurani Kindergarten has 8 students who fall into the autism category. However, from 8 students have different levels of autism. The levels of autism consist of mild, moderate and high levels of autism. One of the 8 students, there is a child with autism with a mild category who already has good interpersonal intelligence. Children with autism with mild categories have also participated in learning activities in regular classes, although for certain days they still have to study in special needs classes.

Children with autism with a mild category are able to attend learning in regular classes after conducting therapy and following learning in special needs classes for two years. There is good cooperation between the accompanying teacher and parents that makes the child able to communicate and work well with people in his social environment. In addition to the accompanying teacher and parents, the teacher in the regular class and the child's peers also helps improve the child's interpersonal intelligence through learning activities or playing in groups.

Based on preliminary observations that have been made and the background explanation above, the authors

see that there are differences between the theories of children with autism with reality. Therefore, in this study the authors are interested in examining how the role of the social environment in increasing interpersonal intelligence of children with autism in TK Cahaya Nurani, Sumbersari District, Jember Regency.

2. METHOD

The study was conducted at the Cahaya Nurani Kindergarten, Sumbersari District, Jember Regency. This research was conducted on 28 October 2019 to 22 November 2019 in Cahaya Nurani Kindergarten, Sumbersari District, Jember Regency. The subjects of this study were one child with autism with mild categories as key information, parents of students with mild category of autism, accompanying teachers, regular class teachers, and peers of autistic children as supporting informants. This type of research is a case study qualitative research. The methods used for data collection are observation, interviews, and documentation.

Observations made in this study were to observe the interpersonal intelligence possessed by children with autism in the light category at Cahaya Nurani Kindergarten, Sumbersari Subdistrict, Jember Regency, and the role of the social environment towards increasing interpersonal intelligence of mild autism children in the Light Nurani Kindergarten, Sumbersari Subdistrict, Jember District.

The interview in this study was to gather various information related to how the role of the social environment in training, educating, and providing habituation activities to children related to interpersonal intelligence. Interview activities were carried out with accompanying teachers, class teachers, and parents of students with mild category of autism

Documentation is the process of collecting some supporting data in research activities. Supporting documents needed in this study are the profile of Cahaya Nurani Kindergarten school, Sumbersari Subdistrict, Jember Regency, the profile of children with mild category of autism, certificate of diagnosis of autism of children, photos of interviews with teachers and parents, and photos of learning and playing activities of children at Cahaya Nurani Kindergarten Sumbersari District, Jember Regency.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

From the research that has been carried out at TK Cahaya Nurani, the following results have been obtained.

3.1 Profile of Interpersonal Intelligence in Children with Autism in the Mild Category in Cahaya Nurani Kindergarten

Musfiroh (2014: 1.18) explains that there are 5 indicators of interpersonal intelligence, namely: (1) sensitive to the feelings or emotions of people around them; (2) able to become a leader; (3) able to motivate others; (4) likes to share and is willing to cooperate with those around him; and (5) able to resolve conflicts within the team. Of the 5 indicators presented by Musfiroh, K has 3 indicators of interpersonal intelligence namely, sensitive to the feelings or emotions of people around him, able to move his friends, and be able to work together in a group. The indicator of interpersonal intelligence that K does not have is the ability to resolve conflicts that exist in the surrounding environment and have not been able to motivate friends who need motivational encouragement.

Supratiknya (in Atmajaya, 2017: 198) explains that children with autism are indifferent children, do not care about those around them, and are unable to respond to everything that is said by others. Based on research that has been done, K who is the subject in this study is not a child who is indifferent and unable to respond to words given by others. K is a child who is sensitive to the feelings of others and is able to understand the emotions given by people around him. When K sees people around him angry or talking in a high tone, K feels scared and can even cry. Similarly, when K sees people around him laughing happily in doing something, he will also laugh together. In addition, when a friend cries in class, K responds to this by telling the teacher that his friend is crying.

Desiningrum (2016: 30) states that children with autism have a disorder in communicating, even they have no interest in communicating with people in their environment. This is inversely proportional to what has been found at the time of the study. Based on research that has been done, K is able to communicate well with people around him. Good communication skills are able to make K dare to move his friends. For example, when K has finished working on a paper stamp and paint, K moves his friends together to dry their work in front of the class. In addition, K also directed his friends to put the paper correctly and gave the stone on the paper so it wouldn't fly. At the time of community service activities in class, K also often reprimanded his friends who did not participate and helped clean the class.

Autism children are children who often carry out activities involving themselves rather than playing and socializing with people in their social environment (Supratiknya, in Atmaja, 2017: 198). This opinion is not in accordance with what has been obtained in the field. K is a child who is quite active in socializing with friends in his environment both at school and at home. K has a pretty good cooperative spirit, in the sense that K is able to work well with his friends. For example, when there is a friend

who is playing the bowl alone, K helps the friend by pushing the bowl slowly. Then, after the friend has finished playing K's turn to sit in the bowl and his friend who pushed the game.

In the theory revealed by Desiningrum (2016: 30) children with autism are children who do not want to interact socially, do not have eye contact, and are reluctant to respond to people around them. But in reality, K is an autistic child who already has the ability communication well. This is why K is able to have good interpersonal intelligence. Because basically, interpersonal intelligence can appear in a person if the person has a communication skill between people that is good enough so that he is able to respond to all forms of interaction and emotions that arise from the surrounding environment.

3.2 The Role Social Environment of Autism Children

Social environment is an environment that has a lot of influence on increasing children's interpersonal intelligence. The social environment around K is quite a lot of help both in terms of training K to do daily activities, teach emotions, invite K to play, educate, and communicate both ways with K. Although K is a child with special needs with the classification of autism, K is able well received in his social environment. Teachers and friends at school K do not distinguish between one another. Likewise, when at home, K's friends never saw that K was a child with autism.

Before entering the regular class, K entered the special ABK class first for two years and studied with the accompanying teacher. Atmajaya, (2017: 277) suggested that the teacher accompanying children with autism was very important in training children, especially in exercising children's independence. During therapy in the special needs class, the teacher trains K in relation to activities related to habituation and daily activities. The initial therapy given by the accompanying teacher is to practice eye contact. Because, as we know that children with autism are difficult to have eye contact. According to the explanation from Ms. Tr, eye contact is the main thing that must continue to be trained for children with autism. If an autistic child has enough eye contact, it will be easier for parents and teachers to teach other things related to daily activities or learning. Not only with the accompanying teacher, K's parents also play a role in practicing K's eye contact. K's parents ask the accompanying teacher how and what needs to be done so that K has eye contact.

After having good eye contact, K's parents began to introduce K to anyone in the family and those around him. K's parents taught him by juxtaposing each person's photo with that person's own. Through the habituation given, K found out who his parents were, what their faces were like, and who they were called.

Similar to introducing family members, K teachers and parents also try to introduce various forms of emotions to K. These emotions include emotions of pleasure, sadness, disappointment, and anger. To train K so that he knows the various forms of emotions is to use pictures about the various emotions or train directly. What is meant by exercising emotion directly is for example when K's mother is angry, then He will speak in a high tone and tell K that she is angry. When Mrs. Tr knowing that K was sad, Mrs. Tr asked K why he was just silent and asked whether K was sad or not. Likewise, the K accompanying teacher at school, the teacher teaches emotional forms through a variety of pictures and also practice directly. Through the ways that have been taught by parents and teachers, K is now able to understand the various forms of emotions that exist in people around him and is able to show his emotions precisely according to his mood.

During the two years K attended the Cahaya Nurani Kindergarten, K had shown many changes from within. From before K had not had eye contact and was unable to speak, K is now an active child when asked by those around him. After having had eye contact and introducing various emotions, at present K is more focused on his understanding in the academic and non-academic fields. For example in reading, mathematic, performing arts, and other non-academic activities.

Learning provided by the accompanying teacher, class teacher, and parents of course is different. Based on observations made, in the special needs center class the teacher teaches K to learn to count in stages such as addition, subtraction, counting backwards, and completing missing numbers. K's co-teacher also focuses on teaching K to read. Because understanding K is still lacking in remembering letters of the alphabet.

In contrast to learning in the special needs center class, in the regular K class it is often seen learning to make work with teachers and other friends. The teacher never distinguishes children with autism from other regular children. All children learn together in class in a circular sitting position. The level of difficulty in making work between children with autism and regular children is also no difference. Teachers teach K as well as teach regular children. The obstacles faced by the teacher when teaching K are also not much different from other regular children. This is because K has received a lot of learning and therapy in special ABK classes.

Not only in academics, K teachers in schools and K parents educate K to understand religious values and norms. At school, the teacher in the regular class teaches K and other friends how to pray. Teachers at school also offer lessons for both autism students and regular students. Based on observations made, K was good enough to reading Qur'an. Not only that, teachers and parents trained K to get used to saying excuse me, sorry, and thank you. This indeed needs to be taught early on. K's teacher and

parents also teach K to always share with friends or people in his social environment. Parents and K teachers at school also often ask K to participate in helping teachers or parents tidy up toys or prepare tools to be used during the day's learning.

Pratiwi and Martiningsih (2013: 154-157) explained that normative values need to be taught to children with autism even so that children can be well received in their social environment, and also humans must live in accordance with the norms, behavior, and customs that exist in their immediate environment. K has been able to understand normative rules such as greeting when exiting and entering a room, saying excuse me when passing in front of people, and saying thank you when given something. In the observations that have been made, K also looks like a child who is quite independent and wants to help those around him who need help. Just like when Mrs. Tr tidied the toys, K helped her mother tidy up the toys. When at school, K also often helps the teacher and his friends like preparing learning equipment and helping his friend pick up toys.

In addition to teachers and parents who play an important role in increasing K interpersonal intelligence, namely friends with K games. Dulisanti (in Sari, 2015: 182) explains that peers can help increase the interpersonal intelligence of autism children so that children do not have social and psychological disorders. K's peers in the home and school environment helped K to foster a sense of cooperation and train K to communicate with people in his social environment. Friends in K's home environment often come to K's house to pick up K to play in front of his house or visit K's house to play together at home. Likewise with regular friends in K's school environment, they often approach K when they see K playing alone. The friend invites K to play together like putting together a game or exchanging toys. Through this, it can be seen that peers both in the home environment and in the K school environment also help K to communicate and interact well with the social environment and can be well received by people in the social environment. Because, not all people are able to accept children with autism well and there are still people who think that children with autism are crazy children.

Based on the discussion that has been explained above, interpersonal intelligence possessed by K can be improved well because of his teachers at school, parents, and friends in their social environment. Through regular practice and good cooperation between teachers and parents, K, who had not been able to speak and communicate initially, had no eye contact, was unable to express emotions properly, has now become an active child and can communicate in both directions well. In addition to K's teachers and parents, K's peers at home and at school are also people who play an important role in helping to improve K's interpersonal intelligence. By inviting K to play, they participate in training communication and emotions in K.

Nevertheless, researchers also have limitations when conducting research. The limitation that was encountered during the research activities in the field was that the researcher was unable to directly observe relatives or friends playing in K's home environment. The number of children with autism is mild in school, and the number of researchers conducting research also makes children with Autism often feel disturbed and unfocused in carrying out their activities.

4. CONCLUSION

In TK Nurani Kindergarten, Summersari Subdistrict, Jember Regency, there is a child with autism with mild category and has interpersonal intelligence, that is K. K is able to communicate well and is able to respond to every utterance delivered by interlocutors using either verbal or non-verbal language. K can be well received by people in his social environment. K often helps those around him who need help and are not afraid to participate in group play. K is able to understand the emotions of those around him well. If people around K are angry, then K will feel scared and cry as well as if people around K laugh happily, K will also participate and feel the happy emotions by laughing. In addition to understanding the emotions and feelings of others, K is also able to express his own emotions precisely in accordance with his current mood.

The enhancement in K interpersonal intelligence cannot be separated from the role of K's social environment, namely parents, teacher assistants, regular class teachers, and peers in the home and school environment. People in K's social environment also help K in training to foster a sense of cooperation within K, teach and train various forms of emotions, and help to train social interaction in K. Through regular exercises and habits, K is able to communicate with people in his social environment and express his emotions well.

Although K already has good interpersonal intelligence, teachers should be able to continue to train and stimulate K by providing habituation activities related to interpersonal intelligence. In addition, parents should also consult and discuss with regular classroom teachers so that parents are able to understand what aspects of a child's interpersonal intelligence are lacking when the

child is in a regular class, and consult regularly with consultants at school to help children achieve all indicators of intelligence interpersonal.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We gratefully acknowledge the support from Faculty of Teacher Training and Education – the University of Jember, especially Research Group – FKIP – University of Jember of year 2019-2020 and the school principal and all teachers of Cahaya Nurani Kindergarten teachers in Summersari District, Jember Regency.

REFERENCES

- [1] Atmaja, J. R. (2017). Pendidikan dan Bimbingan Anak Berkebutuhan Khusus. Bandung: Remaja Rosdakarya.
- [2] Crespi, B. J. (2016). Autism As a Disorder of High Intelligence. *Hypothesis and Theory*, 300-. DOI: 10.3389/fnins.2016.00300.
- [3] Desiningrum, D. R. (2016). Psikologi Anak Berkebutuhan Khusus. Yogyakarta: Psikosain.
- [4] Funabiki, Yasuko. Mizutami, Tadao. Murai, Toshiya. (2015). Fine Motor Skills Relate to Visual Memory in Autism Spectrum Disorder. *Journal of Educational and Developmental Psychology*, 88-96. DOI: 10.5539/jedp.v5n1p88.
- [5] Musfiroh, T. (2014). Pengembangan Kecerdasan Majemuk. Jakarta: Universitas Terbuka.
- [6] Olivia, S. (2017). Pendidikan Inklusi untuk Anak-anak Berkebutuhan Khusus. Yogyakarta: Andi Offset.
- [7] Pratiwi, Ratih Putri. Murtiningsih, Afin. (2013). Kiat Sukses Mengasuh Anak Berkebutuhan Khusus. Yogyakarta: Ar-Ruzz Media.
- [8] Sari, Dewi Puspita. (2016). Penerimaan Sosial Teman Sebaya Terhadap Anak Autism Spectrum Disorder di Kelas III Sekolah Green School Yogyakarta. *Jurnal Widia Ortodidakta*, 1180.
- [9] I. Pratiwi, K. Andajani, and A. P. Putra, "Promotion of media literacy for the early childhood's parents," *Indian J. Public Heal. Res. Dev.*, vol. 10, no. 6, 2019.
- [10] E. Untari, A. Purnama Putra, and A. Chintya Devi, "Innovation of Project Base Learning (PjBL) on Outdoor Study for PGSD's Student Activity on Education Diffusion," 2019.