

## **PARENTAL MENTORING APPROACH TO ADDRESS SOCIAL INTERACTION OF AUTISTIC CHILDREN FROM A COUNSELING PERSPECTIVE**

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### **Abstract**

This research is entitled "Parental Assistance Approach to Overcoming Social Interactions of Autistic Children in a Counseling Perspective". Social interaction in autistic children is a social disorder in the form of difficulties in understanding and building social relationships with the people around them who require help from parents to overcome their social interaction problems. This research aims to determine the social interaction abilities of autistic children and determine the parental assistance approach in dealing with the social interactions of autistic children from a counseling perspective. This research uses qualitative methods with field types. The researcher's data collection techniques used interview techniques and documentation by subjects and data analysis techniques used pattern matching, time series, and data explanation. The results of this research show that the ability and approach of mentoring by parents to overcome the social interactions of autistic children as found from the results of interviews with the subject, Amir shows good development from the assistance of his parents. It can also be concluded that the approach used by parents to accompany the social interactions of autistic children helps Amir's development to recover well even though there are still some social interactions Amir still cannot master well.

**Keywords:** Parental Assistance, Social Interaction, Autism

### **Abstrak**

*Penelitian ini berjudul "Pendekatan Pendampingan Orang Tua Untuk Mengatasi Interaksi Sosial Anak Autis Dalam Perspektif Konseling". Interaksi sosial pada anak autis merupakan suatu gangguan sosial berupa kesulitan dalam memahami dan membangun hubungan sosial dengan orang-orang di sekitarnya yang memerlukan bantuan dari orang tua untuk mengatasi permasalahan interaksi sosialnya. Tujuan penelitian ini adalah untuk mengetahui kemampuan interaksi sosial anak autis dan mengetahui pendekatan pendampingan orang tua dalam mengatasi interaksi sosial anak autis dalam perspektif konseling. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif dengan jenis lapangan. Teknik pengumpulan data peneliti menggunakan teknik wawancara dan dokumentasi oleh subjek dan teknik analisis data menggunakan penjadohan pola, deret waktu serta eksplanasi data. Hasil penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa kemampuan dan pendekatan pendampingan oleh orang tua untuk mengatasi interaksi sosial anak autis yang didapati dari hasil wawancara bersama subjek, Amir menunjukkan perkembangan yang baik dari bantuan pendampingan orang tuanya. Dapat disimpulkan juga bahwa pendekatan yang digunakan oleh orang tua untuk mendampingi interaksi sosial anak*

*autis membantu perkembangan Amir semakin pulih dengan baik walaupun masih tersisa beberapa interaksi sosial Amir yang masih tidak dapat dikuasai dengan baik.*

**Kata Kunci:** *Pendampingan Orang Tua, Interaksi Sosial, Autis*

## INTRODUCTION

Autistic children are a category of children with special needs who have disorders in the central nervous system that cause problems in aspects of child development. Autism is defined as an understanding that is only interested in its own world. His behavior arises solely because of the impetus from within himself. People with autism do not seem to care about stimuli or encouragement coming from others and seem to live in their own world (Ramachandran, 2020). Autistic children have disorders that are said to be an inability to interact with others, language disorders that are shown by delayed language acquisition, strong memories and an obsessive desire to maintain order in their environment (Allen dkk., 2021). By having autistic children who experience disorders and delays in the fields of communication, cognition, language and social interaction, parents get ridiculed by others, resulting in parents being negative about what they experience, and parents' emotions are also disturbed so that violence and oppression against their biological children occur (Hernandez-Ruiz, 2020a).

The manifestation of developmental disorders in autistic children after the age of 3 years with abnormal types of characteristics in three aspects, namely social interaction, communication, and repetitive behavior (Tomfohrde dkk., 2023). There are several characteristics of autistic children such as in communication which shows that language development is slow or completely absent, autistic children such as difficulty speaking and sometimes the words used do not match the meaning and they often babble meaninglessly over and over again with language that is difficult for others to understand. Other characteristics of autistic children have problems in social interactions such as often avoiding eye contact, and suppressing what is felt and autistic people prefer to be alone (Srinivasan dkk., 2021).

Social interaction is a relationship between two or more individuals, where individual behavior affects, changes other individuals or vice versa. The definition of social interaction according to several experts states that social interaction is a reciprocal relationship between two or more people and the people involved in it play an active role. In social interaction there is also more than just a relationship between the parties involved but rather the occurrence of mutual influence (Sengupta dkk., 2020).

In a study, several symptoms of autistic children's disorders in the aspect of social interaction include not being able to show interest in social interactions, uncontrolled behavior that makes autistic children unable to focus and often apply sudden emotional changes. In addition, when viewed from the social activities of autistic children in groups, autistic children will not join in social activities. In addition, autistic children prefer to be separated from their group of friends or they will remain in the group without being

active. In other words, autistic children can gather with their friends but they just stay silent and do not care about others around them (Thompson dkk., 2020).

Supervision and direction from parents will affect children in following their learning. Parents must be willing to take the time to always accompany children in their growing time. Thus the child will have more confidence in the future. In addition to a sense of pride in themselves because they get attention from their parents. Attention and guidance by parents at home will affect children's learning readiness, both learning at home and learning at school, attention from parents is needed as reinforcement in the learning process (Afsharnejad dkk., 2022). Problems on the part of parents in caring for children with special needs such as autistic children can put pressure from a mental and emotional point of view. There are several problematic factors for parents in caring for children with special needs, including economic factors, knowledge, abilities, management and monitoring. An irregular family economy will also limit the needs required by autistic children. The need for autistic children to get professional guidance and ease of learning tools is among the high burdens on parents (Hernandez Ruiz & Braden, 2021).

The first research literature review, research from Echa Syaputri and Rodia Afriza with the title 'The Role of Parents in the Growth and Development of Children with Special Needs (Autism)' is a qualitative type of research with a literature study. The focus of this research is related to the role of parents in the growth and development of children with special needs, namely autistic children. As a result, the selection of appropriate handling and care for children with special needs at an early age is very necessary, such as in the family, community and school environment to help the child's development and growth process. The difference between the above research and the researcher's focus is to examine the parental approach that has been used by a family that has successfully handled the social interaction problems of autistic children (success story) (Tsiplova dkk., 2022).

Second, the next research entitled 'Improving Social Interaction Skills in Autistic Children Through Associative Play Therapy' from Siska Iskandar and Indaryani. The study was conducted to determine the effectiveness of the associative play approach in improving the social interaction skills of children with autism. The results of the study found that there were significant differences used by researchers with children with autism before using the associative play approach. The difference between the author's research and the researcher is in the approach aspect. This is because, the researcher does not present what approach will be discussed in the study, but the approach is referred to according to the guidance that has been practiced by the subject in accordance with the focus of the study, namely examining the success story of a family who also has an autistic child who has successfully overcome the social interaction disorder of an autistic child (Hernandez-Ruiz, 2020b).

## **METHOD**

The method in this research is a qualitative method using the type of field case study research. This study obtained results using data collection techniques from interviews and documentation. This can be known by interviews related to social interaction skills and accompanying approaches by parents to overcome social interaction of autistic children which took place online for one meeting on February 17, 2024. The subject studied was an autistic child named Amir Fahmi who was 17 years old in 2024 and experienced social interaction problems, lived in the Bertram area, Pulau Pinang, Malaysia, had Malay nationality, and was Muslim. Referring back to this study, the type of qualitative research used serves for this study to explain in more detail the phenomena that apply to the assistance of parents who have autistic children with problems in social interaction and approaches according to the counseling perspective used by these parents. The results of this study have been analyzed using data analysis techniques specific to case study research that have been determined by Budianto, (2024) such as pattern matching, explanation making, and time series analysis.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

The results and discussion in this study entitled 'Approach to Assistance by Parents to Overcome Social Interaction of Autistic Children in a Counseling Perspective' will focus on the social interaction abilities of autistic children and whether the assistance approach used by parents to overcome the problem of social interaction of autistic children in a counseling perspective.

### **Social Interaction Skills of Autistic Children**

The success of overcoming Amir's social interaction skills is one of the tantrums that often occur since elementary school age. Until now, tantrums have not happened anymore because this autistic child has managed to control his tantrums with several approaches used by his parents toward Amir himself. There are also some social interactions of this autistic child that have passed an uncontrollable state, almost all of the social interaction problems of autistic children can be controlled properly and are no longer a problem that must be managed by Amir's parents.

This autistic child's social interaction is only a little problematic regarding his understanding in conversation or it can be said that he still cannot understand what people are talking about with heavy language and words. This autistic child also still does not know how to tell what he feels and what situation he is experiencing. However, Amir is often carried away if he sees people crying or a death, Amir will also cry as if he understands what the person is feeling, but Amir still cannot understand what exactly is happening and what situation is happening, only feels sad to see people sad or crying. Thus Amir's social interaction problems are no longer a big and heavy problem for the parents who guide him and the people around him.

Some of Amir's abilities only occur in childhood alone such as being able to make eye contact with people around him who are close such as close family. We often hear that

these autistic children prefer to be alone as if they live in their world and play alone, not mixing and mingling with others. But this aloof behavior only happened when Amir was small and did not happen for a long time. The last ability of autistic children that many people understand is that they are privileged with the ability of strong memory when learning something or something that he is more interested in.

This discussion found that Amir's social interaction skills are getting better every day and almost all of Amir's social interaction symptoms can be resolved properly such as tantrums which are almost 0% said by Amir's parents because it has been almost 1 year there are no more tantrums. From the interview above we can also know that Amir's social interaction skills are easier to interact with the closest people such as family, people he knows, and people he often meets. The ability of social interaction of autistic children is found in the theory of *Autism Spectrum Disorder* (ASD), not all autistic children will be limited in their social interaction abilities if the people around them can guide the autistic child in an orderly manner and follow the abilities possessed by the autistic child.

### **Parental Assistance Approach to Overcoming Social Interaction of Autistic Children in a Counseling Perspective**

The approach used by Amir's parents to assist in the problem of social interaction two (2) approaches are still used to this day, namely the visual *learner* approach and *social story*.

First, the *visual learner* approach helps Amir to understand learning or situations easily and helps Amir to remember well. An example of a situation where this approach is used is when Amir is uncontrolled and tantrum and wants to hit his head on the wall, then his parents print 1 photo showing a bloody and injured person and explain to Amir if hitting his head on the wall will make himself sick and bloody. It turns out that the approach is very effective against Amir, while talking slowly and Amir's condition is increasingly controlled. Since using that approach, every time he feels like having a tantrum he will say repeatedly "If hitting his head on the wall will hurt himself", then Amir will cry or just hold back anger by showing angry, sad faces, and so on following what is felt at that time.

The approach used by parents to overcome the social interaction of autistic children with *visual learner* methods. This approach uses the method of pictures, watching videos, or watching television. In general, these visual learners will easily remember and easily learn with things that can be seen with their own eyes rather than what they can hear (Lee dkk., 2022). This method has been used since Amir was a child until he was a teenager. What Amir learned as a child is still remembered by Amir today as an example of a situation at school that requires Amir to cook using a fire stove but because Amir was shown and taught by his parents not to play with fire because fire is dangerous to humans, at school this child obeys what his parents teach so he cannot participate well in activities that use fire and ingredients in the kitchen. Because Amir has to do things that he does not want to do, Amir does not pay attention in the learning class, Amir just wants to go home and

does not want to do the work at school or it can be said that this child protests because he is forced to do things that he does not want to do himself.

The second is the *social story* approach which tells the activities that will be passed in the future or tomorrow. The situation that is done by parents about the *social story* approach, for example, as getting a condangan from a friend that will be followed by the whole family, then in the evening before the time to go to the condangan, his parents will tell what activities will be carried out throughout the condangan and will meet with the crowd, then his parents also advise and advise Amir that he must maintain good order so as not to make the surrounding people uncomfortable and angry. From such storytelling, as his age increases, Amir can accept the approach so that sometimes he asks his parents what activities he will do tomorrow. The social story approach used by parents for autistic children is a method that uses a cognitive approach to behavior. This approach teaches children how to prepare for the environment, and generate ideas to find solutions to social problems faced by children so that in the end they can implement solutions in the form of changes as expected (Lee dkk., 2024).

It can be concluded that the *social story* approach is successful for autistic children because the impression of this *social story* approach can restore and help these autistic children control their emotions and tantrums. With this *social story* approach, this autistic child no longer faces tantrum problems and almost 100% no longer applies to this autistic child. Even the parents of this autistic child also shared that although their child still cannot understand what other people are talking about, the actions or actions of this autistic child after doing the *social story* approach seem to understand the circumstances and situations that apply and are very helpful in the work of parents throughout the day that goes well.

## CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the social interaction skills of this autistic child are getting better every day and almost all symptoms of social interaction of this autistic child can be resolved properly such as tantrums which are almost 0% said by the parents of this autistic child because it has been almost 1 year there are no more tantrums. From the interview above we can also know that the social interaction skills of this autistic child are easier to interact with the closest people such as family, people he knows, and people he often meets. The approach of assistance by parents to overcome the social interaction of autistic children such as *Visual Learner* and *Social Story* which is often applied by parents to their autistic children can help this child manage his own emotions so that he no longer acts tantrum and helps this child in easily remembering and understanding learning and circumstances by giving an image following a certain situation. Some shortcomings can be improved and added both as parents of autistic children who have social interaction problems, to assist this autistic child to better understand social interaction even though he still depends on Amir's developmental stage.



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