The Role of Interpersonal Communication of Educators for Students with Special Needs at Tat Wam Asi Special School in Baubau

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Abstract:. The aim of this research is to understand the role of interpersonal communication between educators and special needs students, as well as to identify the supporting and inhibiting factors in implementing interpersonal communication at SLB Tat Twam Asi. The method used in this research is a qualitative method. Data collection was carried out through three methods: observation, interviews, and documentation. The data analysis was conducted through data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing.The results of the research indicate that the role of interpersonal communication between educators and students at SLB Tat Twam Asi significantly influences various aspects within the school, especially in the learning domain. Interpersonal communication affects learning activities, play, and all interactions of students at school. It serves as a bridging tool between educators and students in their interactions. Without well-established interpersonal communication, the learning process becomes difficult to conduct. Personal approaches by educators to students help create a comfortable and enjoyable learning environment. The supporting factors include school facilities and the close relationship between educators and students. The inhibiting factors are the lack of classrooms and educators, lack of parental support, and the mental disorders experienced by the students.

Keywords: The impact of parenting style, semiotics, signifier, signified

Introduction

Communication is an essential and inseparable part of human life activities, both individually and as social beings. In social relationships, communication serves as a medium for interacting with others, sharing information, expressing desires, feelings, thoughts, opinions, and advice. No human can fulfill their life needs without engaging in communication, whether directly face-to-face or indirectly using certain media devices. Educational communication can significantly contribute to providing explanations and understanding of the learning materials given to students. Furthermore, the interactions built within the learning process become more dynamic by involving all individuals involved. Communication in education plays a crucial role in determining the success and goals to be achieved in education (Mahadi, 2021).

Historically, people with disabilities have been perceived by society as having physical or mental limitations and disorders. They are viewed as burdensome, useless,

and deserving of help and sympathy. The deeply ingrained culture in society causes this negative perception of people with disabilities. This culture has permeated society up to the present day. For example, many families consider having a child with disabilities as shameful, which means their child will be confined at home, not interacting with the outside world, not receiving quality education, and lacking opportunities to socialize with their surroundings.

This situation undoubtedly impacts the development of the child, as they cannot mingle with their environment and do not receive an education equivalent to that of their peers.The learning process in the classroom greatly benefits from communication. Schools essentially strive to change the behavior of students. Teachers play a very important role, one of which is enabling children with special needs to interact with the social environment (Indasari, 2016). The success of achieving educational goals heavily depends on the effectiveness of the educational communication process that occurs in schools between educators and students during learning activities. Educators must understand the basic concepts of communication.

In the realm of education, children with special needs are those who have deficiencies that cause their growth and development to differ from other children in general. Therefore, they require special attention, whether at home, school, or in the social environment. Children classified as having physical abnormalities are those with visual impairments (blind), hearing impairments (deaf), or mental development disorders (mentally retarded), children who cannot adapt to the social environment or exhibit deviant behavior (emotionally disturbed), and children with physical disabilities (orthopedically impaired). Without a supportive learning environment, children with mental abnormalities will struggle to learn. A supportive learning environment also significantly influences the learning process (Indasari, 2016).

All special needs students need to be shaped and developed with good national character values. Through the formation and development of these characters, students will become accustomed to good behavior and avoid negative behaviors (Guru et al., 2020). Teachers in a school play a crucial role. They are professional educators who teach, guide, train, and evaluate students. It is only natural that the growth of a school depends on the capabilities of its teachers (Lisa, 2021). In the field of education, or what is commonly referred to as the teaching and learning process, communication is extremely important because it is the key to all educational activities. Effective communication is vital for educators and students as they act as the senders and receivers of information.

Communication is crucial for all individuals. Many people believe that communicating with others is a simple task. However, few realize that communication can become difficult when there are disruptions, whether from the communicator or the

communicant. This situation can render the communication process ineffective. Such disruptions can also occur between students and teachers during the teaching and learning process, especially with special needs students. Communication barriers are often found in interactions involving special needs children.

In this study, the researcher uses the Symbolic Interaction Theory popularized by Herbert Blumer, which relates to the natural relationships that occur between humans in society and between society and individuals. Interactions among individuals develop through the symbols they create, including gestures, vocal sounds, physical movements, body expressions, or consciously performed body language.

Special needs schools are designed for children with special needs, where these children are expected to attend school and interact like other children. One such special needs school in Baubau is Tat Twam Asi, located on Jalan Budi Utomo Lorong TK Pembina Baubau. Based on initial observations, this school consists of various levels, from elementary to high school, with a total of 55 students, all in the same environment. In the teaching and learning process at this school, there is interpersonal communication between educators and their students. This school has successfully graduated several competent students who can communicate well, making it easier for them to interact in social environments.

Educating special needs students presents unique challenges for educators. The distinct nature and attitudes of special needs children, compared to other children, require extra attention, such as patience and a high level of empathy. Based on initial interviews conducted by the researcher with one of the educators at Tat Twam Asi Special Needs School, the educator mentioned that communicating with special needs children requires an emotional approach to ensure that the students can receive the intended messages. It is not easy to deliver lesson material to special needs children, as each child's reception varies depending on their classification. For instance, visually impaired children are easier to communicate with compared to hearing-impaired children, who require educators to use sign language. Similarly, intellectually disabled children, who have below-average intellectual capabilities, need an emotional approach to feel comfortable and more open to communication.

Messages must also be conveyed effectively to ensure the intended message is understood. Based on this, the researcher is interested in exploring the role of interpersonal communication at SLB Tat Twam Asi, specifically aiming to understand how teachers communicate verbally with visually impaired students and non-verbally (following the students' body language) with hearing-impaired students, as well as identifying the factors that hinder effective communication between teachers and special needs students.

To understand the role of interpersonal communication between educators and students at Tat Twam Asi Special Needs School in Baubau, the researcher explores various ways in which teachers interact with special needs students. Interpersonal communication here involves not only the verbal conveyance of information but also the emotional approaches taken by educators to ensure that the messages are well received by the students. This includes using body language, gestures, and other alternative communication methods tailored to each student's needs, such as verbal communication with visually impaired students and the use of sign language with hearing-impaired students. Emotional approaches are crucial to creating a comfortable learning environment where students feel valued and understood.

Additionally, this study aims to identify the supporting and inhibiting factors of communication between educators and students during the teaching process at Tat Twam Asi Special Needs School in Baubau. Some identified supporting factors include the availability of adequate school facilities, specialized training for educators, and the close relationship between teachers and students. On the other hand, inhibiting factors include the limited number of educators, lack of parental support, and the diverse mental and physical challenges faced by the students. Understanding these factors helps in designing more effective and inclusive communication strategies, thereby optimizing the learning process.

Methodology

The research methodology employed in this study is qualitative. The research is conducted at Tat Twam Asi Special Needs School located on Budi Utomo Street, with data collection scheduled to commence in March 2024. Data for this study are categorized into two types: primary and secondary. Primary data are obtained directly from the field through observation, interviews with educators, and documentation at Tat Twam Asi Special Needs School. On the other hand, secondary data consist of information gathered indirectly from sources such as books or journals, which aid the researcher in finding relevant data references. The combination of these two data sources forms a solid foundation for analysis and conclusions in the study. Data collection techniques include observation, interviews, and documentation. Data analysis involves three stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion or verification.

Result and Discussion

Interpersonal Communication Roles of Educators and Students with Special Needs at Tat Twam Asi Special School

Interpersonal communication, or communication between individuals, is the process of exchanging information involving two individuals to interact and build a strong relationship between them. In this context, interpersonal communication involves educators and students interacting within the school environment to engage emotionally, facilitating educators in conveying information or lessons to students with special needs. Interpersonal communication plays a crucial role at Tat Twam Asi Special School in supporting the learning interests of students who may be more challenging to manage compared to typical children. However, effective communication requires specific approaches depending on the classification of each student's disability. For instance, visually impaired students (blind students) require special teaching methods using Braille, a tactile writing system read by touch. They do not use a specialized language; rather, educators communicate with them as with anyone else.

On the other hand, intellectually disabled students (mentally challenged) have below-average IQs, face developmental delays, and struggle with mental and cognitive patterns, making it harder for them to adapt socially. Educators must communicate face-to-face, ensuring clear articulation and repetition of sentences to aid understanding. Building closeness with these students is essential for them to feel comfortable and open up, ensuring interactions are not awkward and students feel cared for and attended to personally.

Similarly, deaf students (hearing impaired) communicate face-to-face using sign language or hearing aids. Educators should articulate clearly and demonstrate words or phrases to aid communication. Meanwhile, physically disabled students (orthopedically impaired) at Tat Twam Asi face physical limitations in limbs but exhibit normal mental and developmental functions, thus engaging in learning activities similar to their peers. Autistic students pose challenges due to hyperactivity and difficulty in emotional control. Educators must repeatedly convey messages and approach them with parental-like care to establish comfort and openness. Emotional control difficulties also characterize emotionally disturbed students, akin to intellectually disabled students, they require gentle communication without harshness or anger, ensuring discipline and understanding during learning.

Effective interpersonal communication is crucial in educator-student interactions at Tat Twam Asi. It disciplines without causing pressure, employing gentle explanations and loving care to neutralize unstable emotions. The school curriculum blends learning with play to prevent boredom and maintains a pleasant classroom atmosphere using visuals,

audio-visual aids, and play equipment. Educators use interpersonal communication to ensure effective message delivery and build personal rapport, fostering a conducive learning environment where students understand lessons and engage socially. In conclusion, interpersonal communication profoundly influences activities at Tat Twam Asi, particularly in education. It acts as a bridge between educators and students, facilitating effective interaction. Without robust interpersonal communication, the teaching-learning process would be challenging. Educators' approach establishes comfort and strong bonds, enabling effective message delivery and achieving educational goals comfortably and effectively.

Supporting and Inhibiting Factors in Interpersonal Communication Among Educators and Special Needs Students

In addition to the educators' roles in teaching students, there are several supporting and inhibiting factors that affect interpersonal communication between educators and students with special needs. Supportive factors include school facilities and the closeness between educators and students. Although not perfect, the facilities at Tat Twam Asi Special School are adequate for current needs. The library contains numerous books tailored to each student's disabilities. Besides books, there are also various teaching aids, games, and other resources to enhance students' learning interests. Lessons are not confined to books but also presented in engaging audio-visual formats, including animations related to the curriculum, which students appreciate for making learning less monotonous.

Another supportive factor is the strong bond between students and educators. Educators strive to adapt to students' comfort levels, focusing on imparting moral values and good character rather than demanding mastery of every subject. This approach fosters emotional bonds that facilitate easier communication. Educators understand students' needs, and students feel loved and cared for, enhancing their willingness to engage in communication. Conversely, inhibiting factors include inadequate classroom space and insufficient teaching staff. Limited classroom space forces students with different disabilities to share the same room, making it challenging for educators who must employ varied teaching methods. Similarly, a shortage of teaching staff prevents the ideal ratio of one educator per student from being realized.

Another hindering factor is the lack of parental involvement in the learning process. While not all parents are indifferent, some place full trust in the school, resulting in students receiving education solely during school hours. Given the low memory retention of students with special needs, lessons need frequent repetition. However, without reinforcement at home, students often forget previous day's lessons, necessitating

repetition. Lastly, mental disturbances among students pose significant communication challenges. Difficulty in communication and slow responsiveness hinder effective teaching. These factors collectively impact interpersonal communication dynamics at Tat Twam Asi Special School, influencing both the teaching process and student development.

Conclusion

Based on the research findings, the following conclusions can be drawn:

1. Interpersonal communication plays a crucial role at Tat Twam Asi Special School in facilitating interaction between educators and students. It enhances the learning process, enables effective exchange of messages and information, and fosters a comfortable environment for students. Through interpersonal communication, educators successfully engage students, who become more open and at ease, ultimately leading to more effective learning outcomes.

2. Supporting factors for effective interpersonal communication include adequate facilities and the close relationship between educators and students. These factors contribute positively by providing necessary resources and fostering emotional bonds that facilitate communication. Conversely, inhibiting factors include limited classroom space, insufficient teaching staff, lack of parental support, and mental disturbances among students, which collectively pose challenges to effective interpersonal communication in the school environment. Addressing these factors could potentially enhance the overall educational experience for students with special needs at Tat Twam Asi Special School.

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