

The Role of Teachers in Developing Independence in Down Syndrome Children at SLB Yakalimu

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Abstract

Independence is one of the competencies needed by a person to be able to run his life. Likewise for Down Syndrome children, independence needs to be trained and requires special development so that the child's life skills develop well. The aim of this research is to describe the role of teachers in developing independence in Down Syndrome children at SLB Yakalimu. The method used is qualitative. Data collection techniques through observation and interviews. The subject of this research is a teacher who teaches children with Down Syndrome. The results of this research are that teachers act as facilitators, who understand the special needs of children with Down syndrome, adapt the curriculum and teaching methods to suit their abilities, and teachers create a learning environment that supports children with Down syndrome to feel accepted, appreciated and motivated to learn. Teachers as motivators, provide emotional support and build social relationships for children with Down syndrome. Teachers act as mentors who teach important life skills and encourage children with Down syndrome to do their own tasks such as dressing, eating and personal hygiene. In this way, teachers play a role in helping Down Syndrome children achieve their maximum potential and have independence.

Keywords: *The Role of The Teacher; Down Syndrome; Independence*

INTRODUCTION

Down syndrome is a genetic disorder caused by trisomy of chromosome 21 which causes delays in physical and intellectual development (Naufal et al., 2022). Children with Down syndrome have certain physical characteristics and may experience difficulties in learning and communicating. One of the typical characteristics of Down syndrome sufferers is experiencing intellectual/cognitive limitations (Kamil et al., 2023). Down Syndrome is included in the type of moderate intellectual disability (able to train) which has intellectual function in the medium disability range with an IQ range of 40-54. Children's ability to train can be trained independently and achieve in various things. Being able to train means that children can be trained to be independent and excel in certain fields. Down syndrome sufferers who are classified as able to train will tend to find it easier to be given stimuli and be able to understand them (Julianto & Umami, 2022). Down syndrome children face challenges in developing independence, such as developmental delays, learning difficulties, and social stigma. However, with the right support, they have the potential to achieve independence and live full lives. Children with

Down syndrome have the potential to thrive and achieve independence, although they may need additional support and a longer period of time to reach certain developmental milestones. Developing independence in children with Down syndrome is a complex process and requires a holistic approach involving various aspects, from physical to social-emotional abilities.

Carrying out daily activities for children with Down syndrome is very difficult, that is why children with Down syndrome need special education services to help them carry out daily activities. Independence is a person's ability to carry out daily activities independently, without depending on other people. Independence is important for children with Down syndrome so that they can live a more meaningful life and participate actively in society. Specific development programs that must be given to children with Down syndrome are to train them to be independent in carrying out activities that must be carried out at home, at school and in the community. This special program covers the first aspect, namely self-care skills, self-care, self-help, communication skills, socializing, daily living skills and filling free time. Special programs must be provided in a simple way so that children can follow them well and are expected to have the basic skills to meet the needs of daily life (Alauddin et al., 2024).

From an early age, children with Down syndrome need to receive the right stimulation and support to help them develop motor, cognitive and language skills. Early stimulation can be done through various activities such as playing, singing, reading, and interacting with the surrounding environment. The role of the family is very important in supporting children with Down syndrome. The family is the first environment where children learn to socialize, and provides the basis for forming independence and education in children (Situmenang et al., 2023). Having a child with a disability will provide greater challenges and responsibilities. Family resilience, especially parents who have children with disabilities, is really needed to be able to face all the challenges that occur while accompanying the growth and development of their children who have special obstacles. Good cooperation between fathers and mothers as well as other family members is needed so that the growth and development of people with disabilities can run optimally (Rachman, 2023). Parents and families need to provide love, understanding and opportunities for children to learn and develop. Strong family support can help children with Down syndrome feel safe, loved, and motivated to reach their potential. Apart from parents and families, teachers also have a very important role in supporting the development of children with Down syndrome. Children with Down syndrome often face challenges in learning and social development. Therefore, teachers need to have a good understanding of the special needs of these children and implement appropriate approaches to help them reach their full potential.

The role of the teacher for children with Down syndrome is as a facilitator, motivator and guide. Teachers must understand the special needs of these children, design appropriate learning environments, use flexible teaching methods, collaborate with parents and support teams, and motivate social interaction and emotional support.

With the right approach, teachers can help children with Down syndrome reach their full potential and develop the skills necessary for success in life.

Based on the description above, we will describe the role of teachers in supporting and assisting the development of independence for children with Down syndrome so that they can have basic abilities to meet the needs of daily life and achieve their maximum potential.

METHODS

This research uses a qualitative method, namely research that is descriptive in nature and tends to use analysis. Qualitative research is used to explore and understand the meaning that a number of individuals or groups of people ascribe to social or humanitarian problems. This qualitative research process involves important efforts, such as asking questions to understand procedures, collecting specific data from participants, analyzing data inductively, and interpreting the meaning of data. The final report for this research has a flexible structure or framework (Rukminingsih et al., 2020).

The qualitative method in this research aims to understand in depth how teachers play a role in the process of developing independence in children with Down syndrome. This method emphasizes understanding the meaning, experiences and perspectives of stakeholders, namely teachers and children with Down syndrome. This general exploration stage is carried out by interviewing people who are considered important and understand the independence of students with special needs. Class teachers are considered to know the development of each student with special needs, such as activities at school and at home and how to communicate well with students (Setyari et al., 2024). This interview also aims to explore their understanding of their role in developing children's independence.

Directly observe teacher interactions with children with Down syndrome in the classroom or outside the classroom. Analyze related documents, such as curriculum, lesson plans, and teacher notes, to understand how teachers integrate the development of independence in the learning process. Focusing research on one or several cases of children with Down syndrome and teachers involved in the process of developing their independence. By using qualitative methods, this research can provide a valuable contribution in understanding the role of teachers in developing the independence of children with Down syndrome and provide recommendations for improving more effective learning practices.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

RESULT

The role of teachers in developing independence in children with Down syndrome is very important. Down syndrome children have special needs that require adapted learning approaches and strategies. Teachers act as facilitators, motivators and mentors in helping children reach their maximum potential.

Teachers need to understand the special characteristics and needs of children with Down syndrome, such as developmental delays, learning difficulties, and the need for additional support. Down syndrome children have different levels of development, so teachers need to understand that each child is unique and has a different learning speed. Teachers need to understand that children with Down syndrome may have difficulty understanding verbal instructions, so they need to use visual and kinesthetic learning methods. Teachers also need to understand that children with Down syndrome may have difficulty controlling their emotions, so they need to create a calm and supportive learning environment. Based on observations at SLB Yakalimu, teachers have strategies for creating a conducive learning environment, because teachers understand each character of the Down syndrome children who study there. One of them is by arranging seating in class. There are children who have the habit of always being mischievous towards other friends. During the learning process, these children are always placed close to the teacher's desk. When the child comes home from school, the teacher always asks for help to put away the chairs and tables in the classroom, so the child always comes home last compared to other friends so that the child doesn't play pranks on his friends. This was done by the teacher to avoid conflict between children, but the Down syndrome child felt needed by his teacher and felt that his presence was recognized and accepted.

Teachers prepare individual learning plans that are tailored to the child's needs and abilities. Individual learning plans include realistic and measurable learning goals, as well as effective learning strategies. Individualized learning plans take into account a child's strengths and weaknesses, as well as his or her interests and talents. Individualized learning plans are coordinated with parents and other professionals involved in the child's education. Because children with Down syndrome have an IQ range of 40-54, teachers at Yakalimu SLB must look for learning that is fun and varied. It takes years for children with Down syndrome to recognize the numbers 1-5. Their way of learning is by continuous repetition, of course the teacher must be creative in finding learning media so that children with Down syndrome feel motivated to learn with new strategies even though the material is still a repetition of the introduction of numbers 1-5 and the learning atmosphere in the class is not boring.

Furthermore, teachers provide consistent support and motivation to children, create a positive and inclusive learning environment, where children feel accepted and appreciated, provide praise and recognition for the progress achieved by children, even if the progress is small, encourage children to try new things. and overcome challenges, by providing appropriate support and guidance.

Teachers teach important life skills, such as dressing, eating, bathing and personal hygiene, at SLB Yakali, this is included in the special program which is held every

Wednesday. Teachers can use practical and fun learning methods, such as role playing and simulations, can use visual aids and written guides to help children understand instructions, can divide complex tasks into smaller, easier-to-understand steps.

Teachers help children build self-confidence by giving praise and recognition for progress achieved, encouraging children to try new things and overcome challenges, giving children opportunities to demonstrate their abilities and share their experiences with others, helping children overcome fear and anxiety by provide appropriate support and guidance. Teachers facilitate children's social interactions with peers and adults., can use group activities, games, and social events to help children interact with others, teach children social skills, such as how to start a conversation, how to take turns, and how to cooperate with people On the other hand, it can help children overcome difficulties in social interaction by providing appropriate support and guidance.

Teachers must work together with parents to support children's development, communicate regularly with parents about the child's progress and needs, involve parents in the child's learning process and provide information about the learning strategies used, work together with parents to create a suitable home environment supports children's development, teaches effective communication skills, such as speaking, reading and writing, using visual, auditory and kinesthetic learning methods. Teachers must encourage children to be independent in various aspects of life, such as dressing, eating, and doing simple tasks, can use behavior modification techniques and reward systems to motivate children, can provide opportunities for children to make their own choices and decisions, provide appropriate support and guidance as children try to become independent. By implementing the right strategies and approaches, teachers can play an important role in developing independence in children with Down syndrome.

DISCUSSION

Down syndrome children have an intelligence level that is significantly below the average general intelligence of children their age. This situation is indicated by an IQ that is below 70, which is around the 40-54 range. This refers to limitations in general intellectual functions and limitations in adaptive skills, namely behavior related to daily skills such as communication, self-care, social and community skills. The category of education given to Downs syndrome children is training ability, usually the aim of education is more directed at socialization, self-help activities and simple work activities. (Wardani, 2016).

Based on the research that has been conducted, it can be understood that to develop independence in children with Down syndrome, a supervising teacher must intervene directly to guide them, and patiently direct and set a good example for children so that they understand and are willing to carry out what has been instructed by the supervising teacher. The aspect of developing children's independence is the most

important aspect that can be developed from an early age. A child is said to be independent when he is able to carry out all activities on his own, whether related to self-help activities such as wearing his own clothes, eating himself, bathing himself, etc. or relating to school assignments. Independence means that children are able to stand on their own in various matters and are able to carry out their own activities (Wahyuni et al., 2021). Teachers play a role in continuously motivating and directing children with Down syndrome, in this way it is hoped that children's independence will develop and increase. In the guidance process carried out at SLB Yakalimu, the stage of developing independence may also take quite a long time. Supervising teachers who teach and provide guidance have a great influence on the process of children with Down syndrome in developing independence.

Guidance in the special program implemented at Yakalimu SLB has gone well, because children with Down syndrome can have the confidence to be independent in accordance with the daily needs of children with Down syndrome in the school environment and in the community in the future and have the necessary skills. So that when children with Down syndrome learn to be independent in school they have mastered it, then when children with Down syndrome enter society or public places, at least children with Down syndrome do not depend on other people and are able to control themselves with the self-confidence they have because they are used to it and have learned at SLB Yakalimu .

CONCLUSION

Teachers have a very important role in developing independence in children with Down syndrome. Teachers act as facilitators, motivators and mentors to help children reach their maximum potential by providing appropriate support, guidance and education. An individual approach and tailored learning strategies are very important for children with Down syndrome. Every child has different needs and abilities, so teachers need to create individual learning plans accordingly. Parental involvement is very important in supporting the development of children with Down syndrome. Teachers must work together with parents to create a supportive and consistent environment for children. Builds self-confidence, teaches life skills and social skills to help children with Down syndrome become independent.

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