



The Role of Parents in Independence Children with Mental Retardation

Rizqi Amaliah[✉], Dina

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Universitas Negeri Semarang, Semarang, Indonesia

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Abstract

This study aims to determine the role of parents and the factors that influence the role of parents in the independence of children with mental retardation in Tegal Regency. This study used qualitative research methods with data collection methods of observation, interviews and documentation. The informants of this research were three parents of children with mental retardation in Tegal Regency, teachers and community leaders. Data sources were obtained through informants, literature and documents. Data analysis used the Miles and Huberman analysis method. The results showed that the implementation of the role of parents in the independence of children with mental retardation can be integrated in several aspects of independence, including the role of parents as mentors in social emotional independence, in the form of guidance to socialize with others and linguistic social interaction. The role of parents as educators in the independence of bodily functions, the form of education regarding self help skills and the role of parents as motivators in the independence of adapting to the environment, the form of motivation for their children to go to school, invite them to interact outside the home and learn to distinguish good and bad things. Factors that influence the role of parents in the independence of children with mental retardation are parenting patterns, education and age of parents, stress of parents of children with mental retardation and the relationship between father and mother of children with mental retardation in the family which determines the role of parents in parenting.

How to cite

INTRODUCTION

Every parent wants their child to grow up to be a fun, smart and accomplished person. However, most parents have to accept the fact that their child was born imperfect, in this case with special needs. About more than 2 million people in Indonesia have to accept this fact. (Husada, 2014) People with disabilities make up the largest minority group in the world, with around 80% of people with disabilities living in developing countries. One-third of these are children. (WHO, 2011). One of the classifications of people with disabilities is mental retardation.

According to WHO (2015) mental retardation is an insufficient mental ability. They tend to have difficulty taking care of themselves, even if it is only in personal matters, such as brushing teeth, bathing, eating and wearing clothes. The prevalence of mental retardation in Indonesia reaches 1-3% of the Indonesian population, which amounts to around 6.6 million people. As for Central Java Province, there are around 12 thousand students with the category of tunagrahita or mental retardation from various age categories (PLB Statistical Book 2019- 2020).

The impaired intellectual functioning that develops among children with mental retardation has accompanying physical, emotional and social effects that hinder the child's ability to perform physical activities and social roles, which will have a major impact on the quality of life of children with mental retardation (Silva et al., 2011) Every child has the right to continue living, growing and developing in a conducive and supportive environment. The role of parents of children with mental retardation is essential to develop their potential. Parents' knowledge and experience need to be increased to understand and recognize developmental problems in their children. This is because parents know most intuitively what is best for their child and what reactions can be expected, specifically in terms of independence.

Parents have full responsibility for the survival of their children, even if they have special needs. The role of parents is not only in helping them in doing all activities. Furthermore, parents must be able to foster an attitude of independence in their children, so that they are able to carry out activities even with their limitations. This is because the role of parents has a positive influence on children's changes, development, and achievement goals (Xu et al., 2019). The importance of optimal parental roles in children's education at home is directly related to children's develop-

ment (Wong, 2008). The more involved parents are in children's education, the more social skills children with special needs will develop (Mangunsong & Wahyuni, 2018).

Based on the explanation above, we can know that the role of parents is very important in training the independence of children with mental retardation. Then, how is the role of parents in the independence of children with mental retardation and what factors influence the role of parents in the independence of children with mental retardation. This research was conducted to parents of children with mental retardation in Tegal Regency. Based on data from BPS Tegal Regency regarding the number of people with social welfare problems (PMKS) in 2020, there were 26 children with disabilities (ADK). This number consists of 15 boys and 11 girls (<https://tegalkab.bps.go.id/>). The data does not explain in detail about the type of disability. Based on this number, the researcher then made observations to educational institutions and the surrounding environment, then selected 3 pairs of parents of children with disabilities who fit the predetermined criteria, two of whom had children who attended school, while one of them had not attended school.

The purpose of this study was to determine the role of parents in the independence of children with mental retardation and what factors influence the role. This research is expected to explain the role of parents and factors that influence the role of parents in the independence of children with mental retardation in Tegal Regency.

In addition, the research is expected to provide insight into knowledge to parents and references for teachers regarding the importance of their role in fostering the independence of children with mental retardation, as well as insight into the community as one of the supporting factors in fostering the independence of children with mental retardation and as an assessor if there are errors that occur in the process.

Previous studies have mostly taken families as research subjects. This shows that the research is still general. Therefore, this study takes the research subject of parents of children with mental retardation, the aim is to produce more specific research and answer questions that have not been answered in previous studies.

METHODS

This study discusses the role of parents in the independence of children with mental re-

tardation in Tegal Regency using a qualitative approach with a phenomenological research design. This study took the research subjects 3 pairs of parents of children with mental retardation, one teacher and one community. This research was conducted in Tegal Regency. Based on data from BPS Tegal Regency regarding the number of people with social welfare problems (PMKS) in 2020, there were 26 children with disabilities (ADK). This number consists of 15 boys and 11 girls (<https://tegalkab.bps.go.id/>). As for the data, it does not explain in detail about the type of disability. Based on the number of 26 children with disabilities in Tegal Regency, researchers then conducted observations to educational institutions and the surrounding environment, then selected 3 pairs of parents of children with disabilities who fit the predetermined criteria, both in terms of age and characteristics of children with mental retardation. Data collection methods in this research include observation, interview, and documentation techniques. The data analysis method uses the concept of Miles and Huberman, namely data condensation, data presentation and conclusion drawing and verification. Data validity checking uses data source triangulation. Meanwhile, the instrument in this research is the researcher himself or *human instrument*. Researchers have a function to determine the focus of research, select informants as data sources, collect data, assess data quality, analyze data, interpret data and make conclusions on everything.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. Tegal Regency

Tegal regency consists of 18 sub-districts, 281 villages and 6 urban villages. Tegal Regency, specifically Slawi, has around 548 children with special needs spread across several villages and sub-districts. According to the Tegal Regency Youth and Sports Office, in 2016 there were around 300 children with special needs, while in 2018 the number increased to reach 500 children of various ages. To support the research data, researchers conducted research in one of the special schools in Tegal Regency, namely SLB Negeri Slawi. In Tegal Regency itself, there are two special schools, namely SLB Negeri Slawi and SLB Manunggal Slawi.

Researchers conducted observations and also interviews with one of the small C class teachers. SLB Negeri Slawi is a special school with state status and is located at H. Agus Salim No. 5, Procot Village, Slawi District, Tegal Regency. To request information about the parents of

children with mental retardation who meet the conditions to become research subjects, the provisions referred to are regarding the age of the child and the disability they have.

This research focuses on the role of parents in the independence of children with mental retardation. In this section, it will be presented how the role of parents in the independence of children with mental retardation in Tegal Regency. The explanation of the role of parents in the social-emotional independence of children with mental retardation, the role of parents in the physical independence and body function of children with mental retardation, and the role of parents in the independence of adapting to the environment of children with mental retardation. In the second section, we will explain the factors that influence the role of parents in the independence of children with mental retardation in Tegal Regency. Among these factors are parenting patterns, education and age of parents, stress of parents of children with mental retardation to the process of acceptance and the relationship between fathers and mothers of children with mental retardation in the family.

B. The Role of Parents in the Independence of Children with Mental Retardation

Based on the results of the study, researchers found the form of parents' role in the independence of children with mental retardation. The current discussion will be divided into three parts, namely the role of parents in the social-emotional independence of children with mental retardation, the role of parents in the independence of bodily functions of children with mental retardation, and the role of parents in the independence of adapting to the environment of children with mental retardation.

1. The role of parents in the social-emotional independence of children with mental retardation

One aspect of independence in children with mental retardation is social- emotional independence (Yamin, 2013). Parents as a stimulus who always accompany and guide their children, have an important role in the social- emotional independence aspects of children with mental retardation. This is in line with the opinion of Syarbini (2016) that from an early age the child's self-concept will be formed and built by itself, the role of parents in guiding children when they are young is very important to support their child's development. Especially for children with mental retardation who need special guidance from their

parents. One of them is how parents can guide their children to adapt to new people. This is in line with Kasari and Bauminer's opinion in their (Hallahan, 2009) First, that at pre-school age, they do not know how to initiate interactions with others. Secondly, the self-concept of children with mental retardation is poor and most likely unable to socialize effectively with others. Children can have the ability to interact with peers and adults. This is one of the developmental milestones that must be met in their developmental tasks. This is in line with the IDEA Early Childhood Program achievement targets: 2014-15 for children with special needs, which is children who have social relationships with peers and have good relationships with adults (ECTA Center in (Diana, 2021))

The next role is how parents provide opportunities for children to interact socially outside the home, how parents are able to be present in assistance and take their time to be by the child's side. Efforts to achieve independence in children with mental retardation must be made, so that they feel helped and valued for their existence (Astati, 2013). One way for children to feel valued for their existence is to provide opportunities for children to interact socially outside the home, both with peers, neighbors and their siblings, with parental guidance and assistance. This is in line with the opinion that *"Children need adults to help assess the limits of shame and doubt so that they become independent. Fostering self-reliance is the responsibility of parents / families, teachers / school and community"* (Yaswinda, 2013)

The next role is how parents are able to guide their children in linguistic social interaction. Language skills are a supporting factor for social development. However, we all know that children with mental retardation have deficiencies in language skills. Hodapp & Dykens in (Rondal, 2021) state that the ability to interact with the environment in children with mental retardation is influenced by their barriers in language and speech. The role of parents in this case is to continue to provide stimulus to support their language development, which can be in the form of picture cards, inviting them to tell stories and getting them used to talking to other people, both with parents and people in their environment. The social development of language of children with mental retardation is very dependent on how the environment is treated and accepted, especially the family environment towards children with mental retardation (Desiyani, 2010).

2. The role of parents in the physical independence and body functions of children with mental retardation

One aspect of independence in children with mental retardation is physical independence and body function (Yamin, 2013). This independence is related to the independence of mentally retarded children in taking care of their physical body and using their body functions properly, or in other words, it is called self-help skills. These skills include the child's ability to take care of the physical body, both in terms of personal hygiene, tidiness and proper bodily functions. Some of the self help skills that are commonly developed in children with mental retardation are dressing, bathing, eating and putting away toys. These *self help* skills include dressing, hygiene, and eating skills (Patton, 1981).

In bathing and teeth brushing skills, the role played by parents to their children is to introduce bathing procedures and accompany them during bathing activities. This is in line with the opinion of Sholish (2010), which states that basically parental involvement in children's intervention programs is a combination of two methods, namely by educating children as done by teachers and therapists at school and when at home parents provide opportunities for children to use skills learned at school in daily activities. Therefore, parents should have good communication with teachers or therapists at school, so that the steps of teaching independence to children can run in harmony and continuously. In addition, in this case parents also have a role as educators in providing education about self-help skills to their children. In carrying out the role of parents as educators, the steps that can be taken are to strive for the development of all children's potential, both affective potential, cognitive and psychomotor potential.

Furthermore, the role of parents in dressing and *grooming* skills is not only related to health aspects but also related to socio-cultural aspects, this is in accordance with the opinion of Arifah A. Riyanto (1979: 93) who said that clothing is one of the tools to communicate with other humans, this is viewed from a socio-cultural point of view. The role of parents carried out in this skill is the role of parents as educators, including by giving examples of how to wear clothes, then full assistance in carrying out these activities and providing assistance in the form of assistance. Parental involvement and parental roles as parental participation in children's education and experience

(Payne J.S, 1981). Apart from all that, cooperation between the two parents remains important so that the role of parents can run optimally, both in providing education in independence and experience in doing daily activities. Parents have an important role in the development of children, positive and negative reactions from parents play an important role in their development (Diana, 2021). Parents play an important role in guiding their children so that they have the life skills they need in the future. Parents of children with special needs must raise their children with optimism so that their growth and development can be optimized (Pancawati, 2019).

The next body function skills are eating and drinking skills. Eating and drinking skills including self-care skills include several skill indicators, namely:

1. Recognize the procedures for eating and drinking
2. Doing the eating
3. Doing drinking

The three indicators above can be used as steps to teach eating and drinking skills to children with mental retardation. Parents can work with teachers and school programs to train their children in eating and drinking skills. The role of parents in this skill is to train their children to eat and drink without the help of parents, this training is done gradually and the child is not immediately released just like that but accompanied then slowly released to eat and drink alone. This is in accordance with the opinion of Hallahan and Kauffman in their study (Mangunsong, 2014) that children with mental retardation are able to develop their self-help skills well if they receive training, especially if the training is carried out in natural and non-institutional settings, for example in their own homes.

The next body function skill is cleaning up the play equipment. Play itself is one of the means for children to learn. Many things they can explore through play activities, as well as for children with mental retardation. Life skills or independence can be trained to children with special needs through various activities, including in the form of play activities (Diana, 2021). Play is very important for children's mental, emotional and social well-being (Wong, 2008). Play in this case is doing activities that they like, either with objects that are around them or toys that have been specially designed for children with mental retardation. During the play process, some play equipment is used and causes the play equipment to be scattered. Therefore, parents are expected to be able to invite their children to clean up the

toys after playing. The role of parents in this case is by giving examples to them, then inviting their children to practice together. This is in accordance with the Associative Theory expressed by Edwin Ray Guthrie that learning about behavior requires practice or training because usually the right movement has been associated with the instructions. Guthrie described that external stimulation will cause a real response and produce a real movement. For example: when the phone rings, a person would normally turn towards the phone and walk towards it and pick up the phone (Hergenhahn, 2008).

The role of parents should not be addictive and make children dependent. Rather, it must be fostering. The role of parents as educators of children generally provides opportunities to carry out their activities independently to support their abilities while still providing supervision as an anticipatory step in case things get out of control. One specific example is by giving them the opportunity to try to do something on their own and giving full trust so as to foster a sense of optimism and confidence in themselves.

3. The role of parents in the independence of adapting to the environment

A child with mental retardation does not only live in a family environment, some of them also receive education at school, most importantly they will eventually be involved in living in a community environment. Therefore, they must have the skills to adapt to the environment they live in, both the family environment, the school environment and the community environment. Children who are aware, understand, have self-awareness, and approve of themselves are more likely to have a positive perception of themselves, and will be able to organize and adapt to their environment (Wehmeyer, 2000). The role of parents in this case is how they become motivators for their children to be able to adapt to the environment, especially the school environment. Based on this, parents must be able to establish good cooperation with teachers. The development of independence is a *normative* process, meaning that independence is a directed process. So it requires a third part, such as the school as a part that helps parents to support their role in the independence of children with mental retardation. Even though in practice at school, it requires a strategy and a lot of time to achieve the goal of independence.

One aspect of the independence of children with mental retardation is adapting to the surrounding environment, has one indicator

that can distinguish good and bad things, they are expected to understand what can be done and what is prohibited. This is part of moral development that should be developed in children with mental retardation. Good morals or morals are a carving process that is obtained through a long process of care and education (Samani, 2012). Therefore, the role of the family, especially parents, is the most important thing for the achievement of good morals for children with mental retardation. The role of parents in this case is to learn to distinguish good and bad things through case studies (stories) and habituation. Habituation here can be done when parents accompany their children in daily activities. Then convey stories that contain lessons, so that they are able to understand the context of the difference between good and bad things. Then slowly apply it in everyday life. This is also called a method approach or behavioral approach, which is changing behavior from bad to better. The behavioral approach is to filter and separate the problematic behavior and limit specifically what changes are desired (Oktaviani, 2019).

C. Factors affecting the role of parents in the independence of children with mental retardation

In this section, we will explain the factors that influence the role of parents in the independence of children with mental retardation in Tegall Regency. Among these factors are parenting patterns, education and age of parents, stress of parents of children with mental retardation to the process of acceptance and the relationship between fathers and mothers of children with mental retardation in the family.

1. Parenting patterns of parents of children with mental retardation

Parenting here is related to how parents behave when their children make mistakes, as well as the division of roles between father and mother. *"Parenting cannot be separated from the relationship or interaction between children and their surrounding environment. The child's environment includes family, school and community, but of these three environments, family has the main role"* Parenting cannot be separated from the relationship or interaction between children and their surrounding environment. The child's environment includes family, school and community, but of these three environments, family has the main role (Retno Arini, 2019)

There are two kinds of parenting patterns that are usually applied, namely authoritarian,

democratic parenting. In this study, researchers found that most parents tend to apply democratic parenting. Democratic parenting makes children with mental retardation more confident because they get the opportunity to try to do their own activities, so that the role of parents runs more optimally in teaching independence to their children, not just as a companion and continue to provide assistance. This is in line with the opinion of Ashinfina Handayani in Wila (2009) that confidence in doing something is the first thing that needs to be given to children with mental retardation. When the confidence of a child with mental retardation has begun to grow, then he will be more eager to try new things.

An accepting or rejecting attitude towards their child, an affectionate or indifferent attitude towards their child, a patient or hasty attitude when dealing with their child, a protective or neglectful attitude directly affects the child's emotional reaction. The role of parents greatly influences children's development (Hasbullah, 2011). Democratic parenting makes children with mental retardation more confident because they get the opportunity to try to do their own activities. However, on the other hand, authoritarian parenting tends to make children afraid to try to do their own activities because they are prohibited by their parents.

2. Education and age of parents of children with mental retardation

The education level of parents of children with mental retardation is an indicator of social class when in the community. The social class referred to here, is something that is valued in society, the form can be in the form of money or objects of economic value, land, power, science, quality in religion or perhaps also an honorable descent, there is a relationship between social class and parental acceptance (Darling, 1982). Parental acceptance will affect how parents behave towards their children. Differences in social class have one indicator, namely the level of education, which can affect parents' attitudes towards their children (Khoiri, 2012). This is in accordance with the opinion expressed by Mercer in (Darling, 1982) that the *lower class* has more acceptance than the middle social class.

3. Stress of parents of children with mental retardation.

Stress experienced by parents of children with mental retardation is the initial process of acceptance that they usually go through, after going through a period of stress then parents

will reach the acceptance stage. The acceptance that materializes from this process makes parents aware of their child's condition as it is without showing an excessive attitude in parenting, nor rejecting children even though in their development they are very dependent on parents (Zuk in (Darling, 1982)) Therefore, parental stress affects the role of parents in their acceptance of children with mental retardation, then it will affect the role of parents. Stress in parents of children with mental retardation is true, until the process of parental acceptance takes a lot of time. After going through the acceptance process, parents are then able to carry out their role optimally, in the growth and development of their children, of course in achieving independence.

4. Relationship between father and mother of a child with mental retardation

A family will never be separated from the problems that occur in its journey, which will have an impact on the relationship between father and mother as well as children. Marital conflicts between fathers and mothers related to extra living expenses for child care, care for children with special needs, fatigue, and limited time for alone time that makes husband and wife lose time to provide attention and appreciation (Gupta, 2004). These are conflicts that cannot be avoided by a decision to start a family and have children.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on research on

1. The role of parents in the independence of children with mental retardation can be integrated in several aspects of independence, including the role of parents as mentors in social and emotional independence. The role of parents as educators in physical independence and body function, and the role of parents as motivators in the independence of adapting to the environment.

2. Factors that influence the role of parents in the independence of children with mental retardation are parenting patterns, education and age of parents, stress of parents of children with mental retardation to the acceptance process and the relationship between fathers and mothers of children with mental retardation in the family, thus determining the role of parents in parenting.

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