

An Overview of Emotional Support and Self-Acknowledgment Among Parents of Children with Special Needs

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Abstract

This study examines how emotional support functions as a way for parents to accept children with special needs. It is considered important to strengthen the connection between parents and children and help children understand and accept themselves. Data were collected from four parents of children with special needs in a kindergarten in East Bandung through a qualitative research method using interview and questionnaire instruments. The results of the study indicate that parental acceptance of themselves by providing emotional support is very important for children's emotional development. Parents who accept their child's situation tend to share better emotional support, such as affection, support, appreciation, encouragement, involvement in decision-making, and validation of their child's feelings. This support also builds children's self-confidence and makes them feel accepted by their environment. Self-acceptance in parents is a difficult process that involves complex emotional stages ranging from rejection to acceptance. Families and communities have shown that their support is very important to help parents in the process of creating a friendly and supportive environment for children with special conditions.

Keywords: *Emotional Support, Self-Acceptance, Children With Special Needs.*



A. INTRODUCTION

Early childhood is an extraordinary time valuable in the life of a person and every child, including children with special needs need family support to achieve all aspects of their development. Parents sometimes experience various emotions due to the presence of children with special needs at home, especially negative emotions such as sadness, worry, shame, and anger (Nurhayati et al., 2023). In this situation, children need full family support to feel accepted and loved by their families. Family support must be given emotionally to meet the child's psychological needs, such as attention, affection, and appreciation (Andriani et al., 2017). Children with special conditions or children with special needs will achieve better awareness of each individual's personal well-being objectively if they receive full emotional support.

The presence of every child is something that is longed for a parent. However, sometimes a child is born not according to the expectations of some parents. Because they have physical and mental limitations (Putri & Lutfianawati, 2021). Not all individuals are born perfect and there must be deficiencies (Winarsih, 2020). Therefore, children must be treated well and with love, including those with Special Needs (ABK) (Gumilang, 2022). Babies who are born with physical and mental abnormalities can be classified as children with special needs (Vebrianto & Satiningsih, 2020).

Recognition or self-acceptance is a component that contributes to emotional support. Self-acceptance is when an individual is able to agree with what is happening to him/her, both advantages and disadvantages, without giving up on reality (Rahmawati, 2018). Parents' self-recognition of children with special conditions greatly influences a child's survival, especially in the early years and critical periods (Abdullah et al., 2021). This shows that self-acceptance is very important for maintaining mental health. Accepting children with special needs is not only acknowledging and accepting that the child has limitations; positive self-acceptance will also result in family support characterized by full attention and affection (Faradina, 2016). Children must get support, the opportunity to meet all their needs, and guarantees of physical and mental health.

Parents who have children with special conditions often have difficulty accepting their child's condition, starting from denial to self-blame. To overcome this sadness and disappointment, family support is needed. According to Winarsih et al. (2020), parental self-acceptance consists of five stages: denial, anger, depression, bargaining, and acceptance. In the denial stage, parents feel disbelief and reject reality. Anger often occurs, followed by severe depression. Parents begin to seek benefits from their child's situation during the bargaining process until they finally reach the acceptance stage. Family and community must provide strong support during this acceptance process, which is a complex emotional process. Family support is the most important component in helping someone solve problems. For example, when parents are disappointed with themselves, family support will increase their confidence and stimulate them to face the problems that occur (Thaibah et al., 2020). In addition, family support in the social context and community acceptance are very important to help parents through these stages, improve their health and improve their quality of life (Vebrianto & Satiningsih, 2020).

Parents should understand the difficulties their children face. Parents who can provide full emotional support to their children when facing such situations is one of the factors that influence the child's development and emotional well-being. Family support is an important factor in accepting the situation experienced by parents who have children with special needs, family support can come from the husband, parents, in-laws, and children (Artika, Adyani, & Ratnawati, 2018). Rusdiana (2018) the higher the support given by the family to parents who have children with special needs, the higher the parents' self-acceptance of children with special needs. Parents who treat children with special needs by offering emotional support here are considered to strengthen each other. Thus, the focus of the study is the relationship between emotional support as a way for parents to accept children with special conditions.

This study has the potential to provide stronger guidelines for providing emotional support, because by understanding the context of the difficulties faced by parents and children, this study can provide new understanding of the role of emotional support as a form of self-recognition of parents who have children with special needs to support the harmony of their families. In addition, this study provides

new understanding of how parents and children strengthen each other and enrich educational discussions.

B. METHOD

This study is a type of qualitative research that uses one of the phenomenological approaches. This approach uses a systematic interview method that focuses on the dimensions of Emotional Support and Children with Special Conditions/Needs. Researchers also conducted direct observations, which means they saw the behavior of the subjects directly. This study involved 3 parents who have children with special conditions/special needs. This study used a snowball sampling technique *to* find key information. Key informants are people who understand and have various relevant information needed for research or are carried out in a chain by asking for information from people who have been interviewed or contacted previously. This study was conducted in a kindergarten in East Bandung. The subjects of the study were parents of children with special conditions/special needs who attended the kindergarten, with a sample size of 3 people. Subjects were selected based on inclusion criteria, being able to be interviewed, and parents who live with children with special conditions/special needs. Data analysis is used to determine locations, obtain permits, develop relationships, collect data, store data, provide solutions to problems in the field, and process data.

C. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study involved 3 subjects: parents who have children with special conditions/special needs: AS, SL, and RS. The informants were AS 's mother and RS's sister. The study was conducted at the subject's residence for 2 meetings and was carried out for 45 minutes. Before being interviewed, respondents were asked to prepare for the study. The researcher planned the time for the 2nd interview after the first interview.

Based on the results of observations from 3 subjects, all respondents describe different behavior and treatment of their children. Of the three subjects, 2 respondents describe very good closeness with their children, but one respondent does not. In addition, both subjects are directly involved in caring for children, helping children in daily activities. The interview results showed that two of the three research subjects could accept their children's condition, which means that parents can take care of and care for children with special needs well. However, one of the research subjects could not accept the fact that she had a child with special needs. The three parents felt dissatisfied as parents and did not do their best as parents to help the development of children with special needs because of limited time and knowledge in dealing with children with special needs. Subject AS, SL accepted her child who had special needs well, but there was still one parent named RS who had poor self-acceptance, the behavior of not accepting having a child with special needs had an important effect on the development of her child.

acceptance is the extent to which a person is able to recognize and acknowledge their personal characteristics and use them to live their life (Bernard, 2013). According to Rohner (2012) parental acceptance is a behavior of parenting accompanied by giving affection, comfort, support, full attention, warmth, and love to their children. A person's recognition of their strengths and weaknesses, without blaming others, and the desire to continue to develop are signs of self-acceptance.

In the initial study of three parents who have special needs children, researchers looked at various aspects of self-acceptance in each person. Most subjects were able to accept their child's current condition. This is indicated by parents who are able to accept their child's shortcomings and strengths, believe in their abilities, and are satisfied with the results. However, one subject rejected what happened to the child, blamed himself and others but even though he did not accept it, he still tried to make peace with himself and accept the child's condition.

Pageranationsation has tried to accept both emotionally and intellectually that with the presence of a special child in the family is the most beautiful gift and will lead to great things better (Munisa, Lubis, & Nofianti, 2022). Respondents on behalf of AS have a good sense of equality by showing good self-acceptance. AS shows an attitude that does not complain when telling about his child's condition. AS also has a good sense of equality with the second respondent, namely SL. SL has the capacity to accept and accept children in any situation. Compared to the third respondent, namely RS, he does not have a sense of equality, because the child's condition does not match RS's hopes and desires. RS also cannot understand her child's condition. a mother was very shocked when she heard the news about the diagnosis of her child with special needs (Risky & Aisyah, 2020). So that it makes RS feel shocked because he still has not fully accepted his child's condition.

Parents always hope to have normal children, but it is different from the lives of parents, especially mothers who have children with special needs, many families feel sad because their hopes and dreams for the future of their children have to be postponed after learning that their child is diagnosed with special needs (Vebrianto & Satiningsih, 2020). In addition, parents' perceptions of the concept of an "ideal family" that is passed down from generation to generation will be based on the picture of an ideal family, where the child's condition is described as a "perfect child" who is normal and well-developed.

From the data above, self-acceptance does not mean that people have to accept their current condition without trying to develop through the stages of self-acceptance. If someone can accept themselves, it means they know where and how they are at the moment and they are also able to accept themselves in situations that do not make them comfortable. People who have good self-acceptance will have a mature personality and can function well.

Subjects who do not accept the current conditions will continue to experience all conflicts within themselves. This will cause the subject to continue to feel sad, have difficulty in living everyday life, and run out of time to resolve their own conflicts. In the end, the subject will not be satisfied until they reach the stage of self-acceptance.

D. CONCLUSION

Acceptance of parents who have children with special needs has different stages and elements. All three subjects went through several stages in the process of accepting a child diagnosed with special needs. They went through these stages in different ways because of their children's different conditions. Self-acceptance in AS subjects shows that the subject tries to understand the child's condition after learning that the child has a developmental disorder or special needs.

Subject SL also tried to accept it well, although at first she felt sad and surprised when told about her child's condition, SL had the ability to understand and accept her child's condition. In addition, SL felt directly responsible for helping her child, SL always tried to be with and support the activities carried out by her child. Subject RS does not have good self-acceptance. This happens because her child's condition is not in accordance with her wishes and expectations so that RS feels afraid and ashamed of being harassed by others because her child's condition is not the same as other normal children.

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