

Teacher Communication Behaviour to Mentally Retarded Students of Sukapura in Bandung City during the Covid-19 Pandemic

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Abstract. This research aims to determine the communication behavior used by the teachers of performing arts and handicrafts at SLB C Sukapura Bandung City in motivating mentally retarded students to be creative during the Covid-19 pandemic. The research used a qualitative approach with case studies. The research subjects were 6 informants, consist of three key informants and three supporting informants that were obtained through the purposive sampling technique. The results showed that the teacher's communication behavior of performing arts and handicrafts at SLB C Sukapura Bandung City in motivating mentally retarded students to be creative during the Covid-19 pandemic was by conducting offline and online learning, using the forms of verbal and nonverbal communication, and through the communication obstacles. This research concluded that the verbal and nonverbal messages cannot be separated because when the teacher communicates, verbal and nonverbal messages would be used simultaneously by the teacher. Moreover, the teachers also approach the mentally retarded students by listening and understanding their complaints to provide support and encouragement for student motivation. The communication obstacles that occur during offline learning were the lack of language skills and the low self-confidence of mentally retarded students. Furthermore, for online learning, some problems became the communication obstacles such as unstable connections, unsupported cellphones, and no internet data were. This research suggested that involving parents role in the learning process can be considered to be done to help students in order to maintain their learning motivation for online learning requires special concentration to focus

1. Introduction

Communication is a very important thing in life because communication can help humans to interact with each other. Thus, now, humans cannot live without the use of communication. We can see the form of communication behavior from communication use, which is a response or action of a person to stimuli that affect behavior and serve as a communication habit. [1] A message can be well received by the recipient if the sender of the message is able to deliver the contents of the message effectively and efficiently. Of course, communicating is not a difficult thing to do for normal humans who do not have physical and mental problems physical and mental problems. However, children with mental disorders, need specific understanding and assistance in communicating and interacting, mainly in education. [2]

In general, there are differences in educating mentally retarded students with normal students, this is due to limitations in their mental development. Thus, mentally retarded students need special communication to do academic, non-academic, and social tasks. Each mentally retarded student has

different communication skills, that is why the teacher's first step is to adjust the way of communication. [3]

Based on the results of field observations, the teacher of performing arts and handicrafts learning at SLB C Sukapura Bandung City stated the importance of communication behavior. Positive communication behavior will have a huge influence on the educational success of mentally retarded students. To achieve this success, mentally retarded students need encouragement in the form of motivation. Thus, the teacher of performing arts and handicrafts at SLB C Sukapura Bandung City must be able to adapt to the communication style and interaction of the mentally retarded students to achieve success. Talking about communication means that we are talking about verbal and nonverbal language [4]. Verbal communication used by teachers to motivate mentally retarded students is aimed to achieve active and interactive communication. Communication is done verbally and in writing. However, it is important for teachers to build an approach by listening and understanding the mentally retarded students' needs.

For the use of nonverbal communication, when the verbal communication process is not active and interactive, the teacher will use sign language to communicate with mentally retarded students. For example, the nonverbal communication used is such as nodding, pointing, and shaking their heads rather than using words to communicate. Citing a statement from the American Psychiatric Association Diagnostic the mentally retarded classification is divided distinguished into four types based on the child's IQ level [5] as follows:

1. Mild (IQ range 55-70)

Characteristics of children in this category experience a rather slow physical development compared to the average child of this age. They also find it difficult to complete academic tasks at school, but can do practical and household skills so that later they can live independently.

2. Moderate (IQ range 40-55)

Based on language development, the children have simple communication skills only to deliver basic needs such as bathing, eating, and drinking. However, they can still be educated to take care of themselves even though it takes a long process.

3. Severe (IQ range 25-40)

In this range, the child is unable to take care of themselves or perform even simple tasks. Children with mental retardation have speech disorders and physical abnormalities that can be seen from the tongue and head size that is larger than the usual head size. Overall, their physical condition is weak due to severe motoric physical impairment.

4. Profound (IQ range below 25)

In this heaviest category, children show physical and intellectual abnormalities in the form of an enlarged head size like hydrocephalus and megalocephaly. They also need intensive medical services for they have tiny adaptability. Furthermore, they cannot do the activities without the help of others.

Based on the explanation above, of course, various variants occur in obstacles or disturbances in the children's communication development with special needs. Thus, this is what must be understood to become a foothold for teachers for children with special needs to get a clear picture of what communication form can be applied to them in fulfilling their needs in interacting. So that the children get the opportunity and proper treatment from their environment as much as a normal individual got.[6] Therefore, the teacher must adapt to the child's psychological situation, which is not easy. It is hard to communicate with mentally retarded students, especially during the Covid-19 pandemic. The spread of the Covid-19 virus has caused tremendous panic for its fast and easy transmission. That is why the government makes various policies and implements health protocols to break the spread of the Covid-19 chain. One of them is the government's teaching policy and learning activities from home or School From Home. This policy implemented is to suppress the transmission of the Covid-19 virus and break the chain of its spread. Thus, almost all schools are closed with teaching and learning online activities. [7]

Online learning is approved by several schools in Indonesia as experiencing several obstacles, [8] especially in schools for children with special needs. However, the teacher of performing arts and

handicrafts learning at SLB C Sukapura Bandung City said that although they found some obstacles in the offline and online learning process, they can apply the hybrid learning process online or offline.

Offline and online learning does not prevent teachers and the mentally retarded students at SLB C Sukapura Bandung City from achieving success in creativity. Various efforts have been made to achieve success in creativity by providing support and encouragement in the form of motivation to the mentally retarded students actively. It is important for every mentally retarded student to have motivation. It is believed that motivation can encourage mentally retarded students to be more creative and active in developing their skills. Thus, it is hoped that their skills can help them to earn income to fulfill their needs. Mentally retarded students are among those who need to receive cultural and vocational education services to develop their talents and potential optimally. These learning skills are given with the aim that students can live independently and develop their potential talents and interests as a basic attitude to do a job in the community. Thus, it is hoped that they can earn an income for themselves and the community.

In this research, the teacher of performing arts and handicrafts at SLB C Sukapura, Bandung City, tries to become an active communicator for mentally retarded students through verbal and nonverbal forms or attitudes. The teachers of arts and handicrafts at SLB C Sukapura Bandung City realize that communication behavior has an important role in helping students to be motivated. Moreover, they can be enthusiastic about being creative even during the Covid-19 pandemic. All of the methods and efforts by the teachers is aim to provide the best learning to mentally retarded students.

2. Method

This research uses a qualitative approach as a method of data analysis that produces descriptive data in the form of written or spoken words from people and observed behavior. In addition, this research uses a case study design. [9] The subjects in this research were teachers of performing arts and handicrafts and mentally retarded students at SLB C Sukapura, Bandung City. The informants in this research were six informants that distinguished into three key informants and three supporting informants. The selection for informants in this research used a purposive sampling technique while the considerations in determining research informants were those who knew about the problems studied.

3. Results and Discussion

The data analysis results that researchers have collected through in-depth interviews and passive participation observations show that:

Teacher's Verbal Communication To Mentally Retarded Students

Verbal communication is a form of communication that is delivered directly through oral and written. There are several types of messages used by teachers of performing arts and handicrafts at SLB C Sukapura Bandung City in motivating mentally retarded students to be creative during the Covid-19 pandemic [4], such as:

1. Speaking and Writing

One of the forms for teacher communication behavior to mentally retarded students at SLB C Sukapura Bandung City is the verbal communication used during communicating. The communication that occurs is two-way communication when the teacher communicates followed by feedback from mentally retarded students. While, writing, in online learning the teacher communicates through WhatsApp messages as a way to help mentally retarded students practice their skills such as writing and socialize with their interlocutors online.

2. Listening and Reading

Besides doing communicating orally and in writing, it is important for the teachers of performing arts and handicrafts learning at SLB C Sukapura Bandung City to approach mentally retarded students through the process of listening and reading. Listening and reading have different elements. We usually try to understand, remember, and pay attention when in a listening situation. Meanwhile, reading is a form of obtaining information from what has been written. During the offline

learning process to understand mentally retarded students, the teacher can observe directly through the daily activities. Meanwhile, in online learning, the teacher can take a personal approach with mentally retarded students through WhatsApp messages and the teacher asks what the mentally retarded students' want to be motivated, talks from the heart to heart, tries to be themselves and understands what the mentally retarded students' wants. There are several characteristics of verbal communication itself, including [10]:

- 1) Clear and Concise
In both offline and online communication with mentally retarded students, the teacher uses language that is informal, short, solid, and clear. In addition, the teacher adjusts the language that used in the social environment of mentally retarded students.
- 2) Vocabulary
It is important for teachers that communicate with mentally retarded students to use simple language and avoid scientific terms for the language skills possessed by mentally retarded students are low.
- 3) Intonation
The voice tone delivered can affect the meaning of the message conveyed. Therefore, the teacher uses calm and gentle intonation so that mentally retarded students feel calm and comfortable when providing support in the form of motivation to mentally retarded students.
- 4) Speech Speed
Mentally retarded students have a low ability to understand language. Based on that the teacher then adjusts the speed and tempo when communicating with mentally retarded students to make it easier for them to understand the message delivered.
- 5) Humor
Sometimes the teacher inserts humor into the conversation when communicating to reduce tension with mentally retarded students.

Teacher's Nonverbal Communication to Mentally Retarded Students

The nonverbal messages can help mentally retarded students who have low language skills to understand the message. Nonverbal communication is a form of communication that uses nonverbal messages.[11] Furthermore, Jalaluddin Rakhmat distinguished nonverbal messages into several categories, as follows:

1. Kinesic Message
 - a. Facial messages, the teacher deliver messages using facial expressions. For example, the teacher shows a happy and cheerful expression to appreciate the mentally retarded students' success.
 - b. Gesture messages, the teacher showing a movement on one of the limbs to communicate various meanings. For example, the teacher says "No!" then the index finger will move to indicate the word no.
 - c. Postural messages, the teacher communicates with a posture that leans towards mentally retarded students. The adjusted distance is about one meter or less. It is usually difficult for mentally retarded students to understand the message delivered if the distance is more than one meter.

2. Proxemic Message

- a. Artfactual messages, this communication is seen through appearance. It is important for the teachers to look polite and neat to be imitated and followed by mentally retarded students. Even though learning is done online, teachers always try to make students wear neat school uniforms to indicate that even though teaching and learning are done at home, they are ready for school.
- b. Touch Message, a person can distinguish the emotions conveyed through touch as well as mentally retarded students. Touch with certain emotions can communicate the feel of affection, fear, anger, and emotions such as stroking the head of a mentally retarded student to communicate affection.

The Teacher's Communication Obstacles to Mentally Retarded Students

In communication, of course, obstacles cannot be avoided. Based on the results of interviews and observations of researchers in the field, it is found that there were several communication obstacles that were passed by teachers in the offline and online learning process. There are several things that become obstacles in the communication process, including [12]:

1. Obstacles from the Message's Sender

As the party who deliver the message, the teacher of learning arts and handicrafts at SLB C Sukapura Bandung City admitted that they never experienced obstacles in conveying messages to mentally retarded students for the teacher had understood the initial assessments of their mentally retarded students.

2. Obstacles on Encoding/Symbol

For there are several differences in the language skills of mentally retarded students, it makes the messages delivered by the teacher often cannot be understood simultaneously by students at one time. Especially in online learning that makes it one of the communication barriers that occur.

3. Media Obstacles

Media barriers that occur are in the online learning process. The obstacles occur such as parental gadgets that do not support the Zoom Meetings and WhatsApp applications. Furthermore, some problems occur such as a bad internet connection and not having an internet quota.

4. Obstacles in Code Language

Offline and online barriers in code language can occur to mentally retarded students. They have difficulty interpreting the teacher's messages, this is due to their low language and comprehension skills. For this reason, the art and handicraft learning teacher at SLB C Sukapura Bandung City communicates responsively not only to mentally retarded students but also to parents.

5. Recipient Message Obstacles

One of the obstacles for recipients during the offline and online learning process are those mentally retarded students that unfocus and do not pay attention to the teacher when delivering messages both in the classroom and through video calls. Mentally retarded students who prefer to be silent and do not ask questions when they do not understand the message delivered also become one of the communication barriers.

4. Conclusion

Based on the research results conducted by researchers, it can be concluded that the use of verbal and nonverbal communication [13] as a form of teacher communication behavior to mentally retarded students during the Covid-19 pandemic is effective in motivating mentally retarded students to be creative during the Covid-19 pandemic. This can be seen from the achievement of the success target of mentally retarded students who produce handicrafts per week during the Covid-19 pandemic, such as masks, strap masks, mask connectors, and foot mats to be sold through exhibitions conducted online and e-commerce. In addition, the other achievements of mentally retarded students are participating in virtual competitions and making delivery trays at the city level in West Java. Besides, the teacher constantly encounters some communication obstacles, the teacher of performing arts and

handicrafts at SLB C Sukapura Bandung City has provided various solutions to minimize the obstacles that occur such as collaborating with parents of mentally retarded students, facilitating internet quotas for mentally retarded students who need, do face-to-face learning, and make video tutorials.

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Research on the Covid-19 pandemic effect, when linked to the academic field, is a reality that has a considerable meaning during the Covid-19 pandemic. Thus, there are considerable changes in the learning system that is carried out offline as well as online. For normal children, the online learning system is considered as difficult as the realities we see and find in the news read. Especially for children with special needs or mentally retarded children. This research completion cannot be done without the support and help from various parties. Therefore, the researchers are a pleasure to express our gratitude and appreciation to:

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