

Parent Support Group (PSG) Approach for Parents of Children with Autism

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Abstract: This study aimed to obtain the picture of implementation process of Parent Support Group (PSG) program for parents of children with autism. This study used qualitative research by taking a sample of three informants. Data were collected through observation, interviews, and documentation related to the implementation of Parent Support Group (PSG) program for parents of children with autism. The results of the study found that the program was implemented through several stages involving an initial identification, determination of topics, setting schedules, program implementation, and evaluation. Qualitative data analysis was carried out by means of data reduction, data display and draw conclusions. The implementation of the program is carried out for 2 days by inviting parents, the school and a resource person as a facilitator. As a test of implementation carried out interviews to parents and showed that the implementation is done in accordance with the plans that have been prepared. In addition, parents feel parent support group program is very useful because parents become more understanding about children with special needs and how to apply the appropriate parenting for them. So that this program is recommended by some other things in particular schools.

1 INTRODUCTION

Parents Support Group (PSG) program for parents of children with autism has become a very necessary program developed at each school to minimize the level of parenting stress on parents. Nowak et al. (2013) reveals that many parents of autistic children feel the need to defend the rights of their children, and this can be a major source of stress in parenting. Parenting stress involves a series of ways to overcome behavioral and communication with children (socialization, teaching) or nursing care (nurturing, protecting), searching for a cure for children (Dabrowska and Pisula, 2010). Some interventions can be done to improve the understanding of parents on parenting, one of which is triple-P (Positive Parenting Program). Triple P is a program that aims to improve the knowledge, skills and confidence of parents, lowering the destructive behavior of children (Sanders, 2003; Dean, Myors and Evans, 2003; Matsumoto, Sofronoff, and Sanders, 2007). Plimley, Bowen, and Morgan (2007)

proved that treatment with triple P education provides an effective means of communication that increases parent-child interaction, enhances self-esteem and reduce stress parents' parents. (Smallegange, Hermanns and Oort, 2016; Mitchell et al., 2007) showed in his study that the provision of triple-P understanding through the Parent Support Group lead to positive results, namely the welfare of parents, changes in parental behavior and the child's behavior.

Parents who have children with autism disorders have many different characteristics. There are some parents who already have a good level of acceptance of the conditions experienced by their children so they have a desire to learn and understand about the needs of children including one of them is the application of parenting patterns in accordance with the development of their children .. But there are still many parents who have not understood about the Children with Special Needs and the service needs that should be given the pattern of care so that they tend to provide an authoritarian parenting and tend to be over protective of children. It may be that the

purpose of over protective parenting is because parents have an exaggerated fear if the obstacles they experience, their child will get a bad treatment from the environment. However, bad parenting patterns will actually potentially increase the barriers they experience. This is because in Children with Special Needs requires modification of behavior and treatment that frees them to expression.

In order to provide understanding of parents about the pattern of care that should be applied to children who have autism disorders of course parents need a facilitator. There are a variety of facilitators who can help parents one of them is a parent sharing group that has children with autism disorders. With this sharing group or discussion parents will tend to feel the same friends so that anything experienced can be communicated together and can reduce the level of stress or incomprehension in parents who have Children with Special Needs.

Research conducted by Pouretmad et al. (2009) indicate that the Positive Parenting Program is effective in reducing stress levels in parents. But these studies have constraints that limited exploration of the problem caused by too many samples used. In addition, the lack of access within the validity of the instrument also become limitations to this study. Based on the results of the study, researchers are interested to developing a similar program using a limited sample so that researchers can explore more about the problems faced. Besides researchers validity of the instrument to the expert so hopefully this research can illustrate better results from previous studies.

School has been conducting Parent Support Group (PSG) program at the end of each semester intentionally to evaluate the learning programs and the ability of the child within a semester. Parent Support Group activities are carried out at the end of each lesson in the school involving parents who have children with the same obstacles, such as fellow parents of children with mental barriers (Mueller, Milian and Lopez, 2009). With the existence of Parent Support Group, parents have chances to meet other families with similar needs so that it can serve each other, share information and provide mutual support (Hallahan, Kauffman and Pullen, 2011). Parent Support Group activities in schools did not accommodate the needs of parents to serve each other since it was only done in one-way communication which was from the school to parents. One factor which failed the goal of Parent Support Group was due to the lack of systematically steps in the Parent Support Group program's implementation.

Based on these problems, the researchers developed a Parents Support Group (PSG) program which is expressed by Debonis (2005) on steps to implement Parents Support Group that can provide a positive outcome for changes in parental caring behavior. Here is Figure 1, which describes the implementation steps of Parents Support Group program.

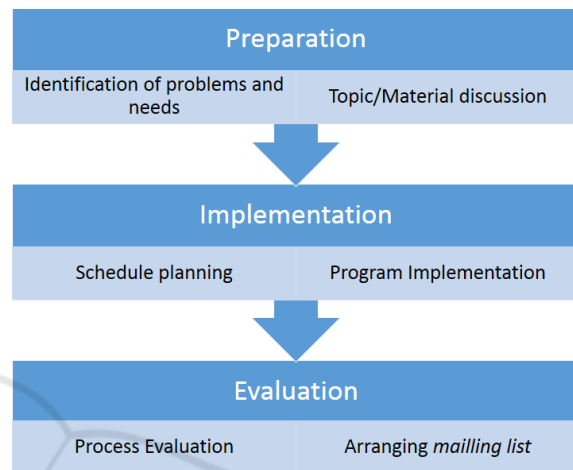


Figure 1: Implementation measures of Parents Support Group (PSG).

Parents Support Group (PSG) Program will be able to deliver positive results, if done with the proper stages.

- **Early Identification**
In this phase researchers conducted observations of the problems that occurred in the field and analyzed its needs.
- **Determining the Training Topic or Discussion**
Based on the findings of problems in the field, researchers with schools and parents discussed topics that would be delivered.
- **Plan a Schedule**
Topic discussion events continued with planning discussion of implementing the schedule of Parents Support Group.
- **Implementation of the Program**
Implementation of the program was done according to the plan.
- **Evaluation**
The evaluation activity included an evaluation during the implementation process and compilation of mailing list to find out reciprocal or benefits of Parents Support Group (PSG).

2 METHOD

2.1 Research Aim

This study aimed to describe the implementation process of Parents Support Group (PSG) program in the field naturally without any manipulation of data.

2.2 Design

The method used in this study was a qualitative method also called investigative approach because researchers usually collect data by meeting face to face and interact with the people in the study area in order to obtain the in-depth data (Walker, 2006).

2.3 Data Collecting

Data were collected through observation, interviews, and documentation then analyzed qualitatively. Audio-recorded semi-structured interviews and observation, conducted within the parents' home or at an agreed setting. Interviews were conducted in two schemes. The first scheme was undertaken at the beginning of the study aimed at identifying problems and needs in the field. While the second scheme is done at the end of the study with the aim to know the success of the parent support group program in changing the views and behavior of parents to children with special needs.

Table 1: Questions about the objective conditions of parental care quality.

Key interview questions	Questions
Before implementation program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ How does the parent understand the child's obstacles? ▪ How do parents react when knowing the child is experiencing developmental obstacles? ▪ How do parents design or provide children's education services? ▪ What form of parental support in every child's behavior? ▪ How are the rules applied to children? ▪ What are the consequences for the breach of agreed rules? ▪ How do parents express their emotions to children both verbally and nonverbally?

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ How do parents provide protection to children? ▪ How often do parents give physical punishment to children?
After implementation program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Is the program plan made readable and understood by the school? ▪ Are programs tailored to the needs on the ground? ▪ Is the implementation of the field in accordance with the proposed program plan? ▪ Are programs designed to improve parental understanding of quality care for children with autism disorders? ▪ What is the impact of program implementation on behavior change on parent to children with special needs?

2.4 Sampling and Recruitment

This study was carried out for 2 months investigating three parents of children with autism at Rumah Autis Bandung, Indonesia. The selection of the subjects was done by purposive sampling as it was based on several considerations. Parents were typically giving frequent helps in their children's activities, spoiling them when they were crying as well as the lack of mutual participation among parents with similar children's problem that led the lack of understanding of parents of children with autism. In addition, one out of the three parents was a single parent. It was somehow different compared to two other parental caring as well as the lack of acceptance support from full-member family, which affected her personal relationship as she was not close to others and was experiencing stress in parenting process. In order to obtain the data regarding factors associated with socio-economic background of the subject, researchers initially asked the school related to the condition of parents and possible willingness of parents to be the subject of research. Furthermore, based on the recommendation of the school, the researchers asked for permission directly to the parents concerned and in order to maintain the privacy of the subject, the subject names were confidentially abbreviated.

2.5 Data Analysis

Whiteley and Whiteley (2006) explain that the qualitative data analysis of the observations and interviews are a must in qualitative research to adapt

to the situation on the ground which is unique for each study. Qualitative data analysis in this research was done by collecting data, data reduction, data display and then draws conclusions.

3 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In the early identification phase, researchers conducted observations of the child-care condition performed by parents of children with autism. Child-care conditions observed, among others drawn from the theory of Baumrind (1991) covering the aspects of warmth, positive control, positive affect, protection, and punishment against children. Based on observations conducted, researchers found out that parents did not understand the quality of child care that should be applied to children which impact on the less optimum development of the child's ability. Results confirmed through interviews with the school and their parents, researchers concluded some problems faced by parents among other, parents do not understand the essence of children with autism and parents' lack of understanding of the quality care application for children who have yet to fully impact the development owned by the child.

Limited trial held on 14-15 June 2016 at the school. Implementation carried out by inviting parents, the school and resource experts as facilitators for the participants to have a high level of confidence. Farrell and Weaver (2000), revealed that the facilitators are individuals who helped to launch the process of the communication group of people so that they can understand or solve problems together.

Trials conducted for 3 x 60 minutes to 13 autism parents were carried out in a joint meeting but researches used 3 subjects for. Implementation of the program led by the principal and featured Dr. Hj. Rahayu Ginintasasi, S.Psi., M.Psi., as an expert in the field of parenting a child with autism. The event began with an introduction, then the experts explained about the materials to be delivered. Further activities were conducted with the provision of material about the nature of children with autism as well as the material regarding the caring quality and attention of participants.

Based on observations the development of Parent Support Group (PSG) program were in accordance with the needs on the field, the speakers deliver material in accordance with program implementation plans that have been validated, parents were enthusiastic to pay attention to the material presented and to ask some questions to the informant related to their desire to improve the quality of care for their

children who have autism. The result of this study proves the Hallahan, Kauffman and Pullen (2011) that the presence of parents support group so parents can share their experiences and knowledge so as to provide emotional support. Boonsuchat (2015) and Abenavoli, Greenberg, T., and Bierman (2015) revealed that through the Parent Support Group program can reduce the level of anxiety of parents that will greatly help improve the child's ability in academic and non-academic.

Evaluation can be defined as a systematic way of valuation which ultimately provides the necessary information for continuous improvement (Borate, Prasad, and Borate, 2014), the evaluation was done with the instruments of observation and interviews related to the planned implementation of the program. Based on observations conducted by researchers during the implementation of the program, the Parent Support Group (PSG) program development was based on the results of preliminary studies that were in accordance with the needs in the field, the implementation process were conducted in accordance with the stages in validation. During the implementation, the parents enthusiastically paid attention to the material presented and had chances to ask some questions to the experts related to their eagerness to improve the quality of care for their children who in needs.

Some of the challenges expressed by Oloffson, Skoog, and Tillfor (2016) related to the implementation of the Parent Support Group program, where each parent has different activities so it's difficult in scheduling, a facilitator greatly influences the success of the program so that schools should be very careful in determining issues that will be presented as well as selecting the right facilitator.

4 CONCLUSIONS

The stages of PSG program implementation process began with early identification to problems and needs in the school, then the identification results were taken into consideration to determine the topic of the meeting soon after the implementation schedule was agreed upon investigator with the joint school, parents and facilitators. The PSG program implementation process indicated an active exchange of information between the school, parents and facilitators so that this stage was highly recommended to be implemented in other schools with adjustment needs in particular schools.

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