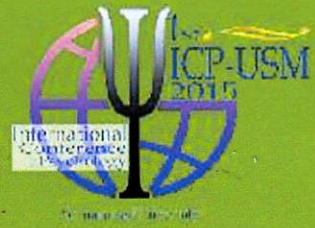




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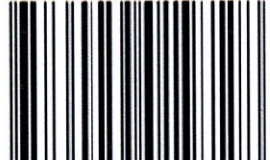
**“PSYCHOLOGICAL TRANSFORMATION
TOWARDS DEVELOPING CHARACTERIZED HUMAN BEING”**

Editor

Prof. Dr. Dra. Hardani Widhiastuti, M.M., psikolog



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Psychological Transformation Towards Developing Characterized Human Being

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CONTENT

	Page
Psychological Transformation Towards Developing Characterized Human Being	i
Preface	ii
Key Note Speaker	iii
Full Paper :	1
1. Experimental Study On The Effects Of Visual Stimulus On Beta Brain Waves In Traffic Accident Victims With <i>Post Traumatic Stress Disorder</i> Writer : Asep Solihin, Eka Susanty and Rahmat Taufiq	2
2. Gusjigangin The Trade Practices (Study In Family Business Embroidery Business Community In Kudus) Writer : Djoko Santoso and Chaterina Yekti Prawihatmi	10
3. Is Inclusive Education The Right Program For Special Needs Children In Indonesia ? Writer : Farah Farida Tantiani	22
4. Map Of Freshgraduate's Career Counseling Theme : Description Of Career Readiness Problematic Writer : Sri Muliati Abdullah	29
5. Contextual Determinants Of Indonesian Toddler Attachment In Yogyakarta Writer : Titik Muti'ah	41
6. A Survey Of Autism Knowledge In An Early Childhood Teacher's District Of Central Java Writer : Ika Febrian Kristiana, Costrie Ganes Widayanti	51
7. The Effects Of Religiosity On The Well-Being Of College Students Writer : Andy Saputra, Yonathan Aditya and Sri Lanawati	61
8. Car Dependency Among Young Indonesian Professionals : An Exploratory Study	71

Writer : Bonar Hutapea and Fransisca Iriani Roesmala Dewi

9. Detection Model Of Creativity Development
To Improve The Council Members' Performance
By Using The Big Five Personality Detection. 85
Writer : Hardani Widhiastuti and Gusti Yuliasih
10. Career Maturity (Career Maturity) Student Smk:
Qualitative Study 102
Writer : Nailul Fauziah, Erin Ratna Kustanti, Anggun Resdasari and
Ika Zenita
11. The Role Of Emotional Maltreatment Towards
The Development Of Human 122
Characteristics: An Introductory Review
Writer : Tita Elfitasari and Albert Albert
12. The Role Of Stress And Religious Commitment
On The Well-Being Of The College Students 131
Writer : Yonathan Aditya
13. Study On The Influence Of A Leader In
Promoting Successful International Cooperation: 138
A Case Study In Semarang City Government
Writer : Albert Albert and Tita Elfitasari
14. Minority Stress As Predictor Of Loneliness In Gay 148
A Correlational Study Of Minority Stress And Loneliness In Gay
Writer : Ekawati Sinaga and Rintana Dewi
15. Capturing Driving Anger 157
From Perceived Stress Of Car Drivers: The Jakarta Experience
Writer : Yohanes Budiarto, Fransisca I.R.Dewi and Riana Sahrani
16. The Application Of Organizational Citizenship Behavior 165
Model Towards Team Development And Performance Of Family
Planning Program Implementer
Writer : Wyati Saddewisasi and Aprih Santoso
17. A Pilot Study: The Effectiveness Of Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (Cbt) 167
For Adolescents Internet Addiction
Writer : Maria Helena Suprpto and Firmanto Adi Nurcahyo

18. Impact Of The Friendship And Emotion Intelligence On The Adolescence's Life Satisfaction Writer : Agoes Dariyo	176
19. Integrity And Moral Emotions (A Study On Elementary School Teachers Of Kabupaten Sleman, Yogyakarta) Writer : Ika Widyarini, Kwartarini W. Yuniarti and Leo Aditya	181
20. The Effectiveness Of Teachers Positive Communication Training To Improve Effective Communication Between Teachers And Their Students Writer : Sri Widyawati and Agung Santoso Pribadi	184
21. The Influence Of Their Peers Conformity Against Dating Violence In High School Students Writer : Anna Dian Savitri and Fitria Linayaningsih	189
22. Emotional Exhaustion In Teachers Of Special School Writer : Fitria Linayaningsih	193
23. Cognitive Behavior Modification To Improve Self Awareness Writer : Oti Jembarwati	199
24. Literature Study : Social Competence Of Gifted Students Writer : Rini Sugiarti, Fendy Suhariadi and Dewi R. Suminar	205
25. The Corelation Between Motivation And Work Performance Of Teachers In Sma 'X' Writer : Sri Kandariyah Nawangsih	219
26. The Differences Of Subjective Success Based On Age, Gender And Level Of Education Writer : Mulya Virgonita Iswindari Winta	224

A SURVEY OF AUTISM KNOWLEDGE IN AN EARLY CHILDHOOD TEACHER'S DISTRICT OF CENTRAL JAVA

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ABSTRACT

Autism is a pervasive developmental disorder, which its prevalence is increasing each year. This disorder is mostly diagnosed by professionals when the child reaches up to 36 months of age. Such phenomenon should be understood by parties that work intensively with children. Early childhood teachers, for example, be an important entity to help provide appropriate interventions, especially in educational setting for children with autism, in the basis of knowledge. The goal of this research is to see the teacher's knowledge of autism. Survey using five open-ended questions to 180 early childhood teachers in 3 cities located in Central Java Province, namely Semarang, Solo, and Pekalongan. The results showed that 88.3% of teachers did not know about autism and its characteristics, whereas 11.7% recognized autism and were able to mention the characteristics. Interestingly, autism was thought to be similar with mentally-ill person in a way that they smile or cry without any significant reason. None of the teachers knew how to educate students with autism, even though there were teachers having students with autism in their classrooms.

Key words : knowledge of autism , early childhood teachers, survey

INTRODUCTION

Most of research about autism are been largely limited to the western countries, even though autism has become a world-wide issue (Fombonne et al, 1999). In epidemiological survey by Fombonne (2003), Japan and Indonesia represent Asian countries regarding the prevalence of autism, however, there are only 6 subjects are identified with autism, according to the study of Wignyo Sumarto et al (1992) compared to Japan, whereas most countries are investigated are from western societies. According to the CDC, the number of autistic children increases from 2007 to at present, especially in school-aged children, and it is estimated from 1.8% to 3.23% (<http://www.forbes.com/sites/emilywillingham/2013/03/20/autism-prevalence-is-now-at-1-in-50-children/>). Meanwhile, the prevalence of autism in Indonesia is approximately 112,000 children aged 5-19 years old (<http://www.republika.co.id/berita/nasional/umum/13/04/09/mkz2un-112000-anak-indonesia-diperkirakan-menyandang-autisme>). The number presented may not reflect the real condition, because of the limited knowledge common people have about autism, as a result, it can influence the way society treat people with autism.

Autism is a complex neurodevelopmental disorder which are characterized are followed: difficulties with interaction and communication, repetitive patterns of behavior, restricted interests and activities with onset prior to 3 years of age (American Psychiatric Association, 2013)., There is an upward trend of increasing number of children suffering from autism there

are 15-20 cases per 10,000 children, or 0.15 % -0.20 %. If born in Indonesia six million per year, the number of persons with autism in Indonesia increased by 0.15 %, or about 6,900 children per year in comparison boys three to four more than girls. In 1966, found 4.5 per 10,000 children aged up to 8-10 years . In 2002 , the prevalence is 1 per 10,000 children, and even reports of some places shows the 1 per 150 children. Boys are 4-5 times higher than girls in suffering from autism (Data Autism in Indonesia, 2013).

Symptoms of autism are commonly diagnosed at the age more than 2 years, but there are some symptoms that are consistent over the years, such as inability to stare at other person's eyes, unwillingness to share an interest in playing with other people , especially pretend play (Kerig & Wenar,2006; Piaget in Frost, Wortham, and Reifel,2008). Parents become a key role in the early detection of this disorder, but they are often too late to detect due to a lack of understanding of autism and parents have already felt depressed with the condition of their children that hamper them to act further (Ozturk, Riccadonna, & Venuti, 2014). Infact, the conditions experienced by children with autism do not only exert themselves, but also affect the family life, , and the environment, especially the school. Autism is derived from the Greek word "autos" which means self (self). The word 'autism' is used in the field of psychiatry to show symptoms of withdrawal (Budiman, 2002) . The word 'autism' within the meaning of a child with autism spectrum disorders is addressed to a child who lives in his own world. American Psychiatric Association (2013) defines autism as a pervasive developmental disorder with onset prior to age 3 years, with a difficulties in many areas, including interaction-communication, social-emotional deficiency, and behavior with specific traits and accompanying individuals throughout their life span.

Kanner (in Kerig & Wenar, 2006) defines autism as a disorder characterized by aloneness, pathological desire for sameness, delayed language development, echolalia, pronouns reversals or extreme literalness, impaired in the area of communication. The prevalence of autism does not relate to social class and ethnicity, although there are environmental influences such as changes in physical-chemical environment environment and exposure to harmful substances (Fombonne, 2003; Gil, 2010). The symptoms of autism impact several areas, such as: 1) communication: speech delay or unable to talk, echolalia, dissynchronous tone and pronunciation, inability to maintain attention by staring at speaker's eyes; 2) social interaction: disharmonious emotion, and inability to empathize; 3) behaviour: repetitive behaviour and unintended, inability to use toys accordingly, the inability of doing social, imaginative, and pretend play; 4) Sensory perception: hypersensitive to lights, sound, or texture (Kerig & Wenar , 2006; Frost , Wortham , and Reifel , 2008; American Psychiatric Association , 2013).

As a developing country, Indonesia has issued the education service policy through Permendiknas/ Decree of Ministry of Education No 70 in 2009 (Ministry of Education, 2010) has sought an education system that provides opportunities for all students with disabilities (including autism) to participate in education or learn in an educational setting together with

the typical students. The regulation explicitly requires all level of educational institutions to receive and provide education service for students with disability (special needs) together with their peers, known as inclusive education. This implies that it is teacher's responsibility to ensure that all children without exception are welcome in the classrooms. Limited studies or research about Indonesian teachers' knowledge about autism are being reported. Meanwhile, teachers play an important role in recognizing and identifying whether their students are at risk of having developmental delay, since they interact with them more frequently in a structured manner. This study aims to look at the knowledge of early childhood teachers about autism. Provision of sufficient knowledge about autism, will assist teachers in finding alternative solutions to the problems related to educational services provided. Research on the knowledge about autism to early childhood teachers will be beneficial as evaluation basis for determining follow-up service in a way of providing information about autism in early childhood teachers in Indonesia.

METHODS

This study used both a quantitative and a qualitative approach. The quantitative method used was a survey. It explained about social phenomena by examining the relationships between variables that became the focus of research (Singarimbun & Effendi, 1983). The aims for implementing survey were assessing the thoughts, opinions, and feelings. One hundred and eighty early childhood teachers from 3 cities in Central Java (Semarang, Solo, and Pekalongan), Indonesia were selected using cluster random sampling. Research surveys were used to assess of the people where the intended use of these methods can be practically and theoretically. Surveys conducted to determine the thoughts, opinions, attitudes as a form of knowledge about autism early childhood teachers, in other words the variables to be studied is the teacher's knowledge of autism. Specific characteristics in survey research is involved samples and sampling techniques (Shaughnessy, Zechmeister, & Zechmeister, 2007).

Questionnaire was applied to collect the data. It consisted of five open-ended questions such as: the knowledge of developmental delay, the experience of having students with developmental delay, the knowledge of autism and its characteristics, where they get the information, and experience related with autism. The data was analyzed using descriptive statistics to get an information about the teachers' knowledge about autism without concluding the relationship between variables. It comprises for frequency and percentage from total amount. Qualitative analysis was applied to get the uniqueness of subjects' response pattern

RESULT

Sociodemographic results:

Table 1. teacher's educational background education

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 1	173	95.6	96.1	96.1
2	7	3.9	3.9	100.0
Total	180	99.4	100.0	
Missing System	1	.6		
Total	181	100.0		

Information :

1 = early childhood educational bachelor or special educational bachelor

2 = non- early childhood educational bachelor or special educational bachelor

Table 2. teacher's age

Age

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid >30	174	96.1	96.7	96.7
<30	6	3.3	3.3	100.0
Total	180	99.4	100.0	
Missing System	1	.6		
Total	181	100.0		

Table 3. work experience

Work experience

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid > 5 years	150	82.9	83.3	83.3
<5 years	30	16.6	16.7	100.0
Total	180	99.4	100.0	
Missing System	1	.6		
Total	181	100.0		

The descriptive analysis of the results as shown in table 4:

Table 4. Knowledge about autism

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Do not know	2	1.1	1.1	1.1
know	178	98.9	98.9	100.0
Total	180	100.0	100.0	

There was 98.9 % early childhood teachers stated that they knew about developmental delays, while only 11 % teachers did not know (Table 1)

Table 5. Number of students with developmental delays or disability (in class)

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid No one	169	93.9	93.9	93.9
anyone	11	6.1	6.1	100.0
Total	180	100.0	100.0	

93.9 % teachers said that none of their students had developmental delays, Only 6.1 % teachers stated that they had students with developmental delays. They were characterized by unclear language and speech, inattentive, unable to read, write, and count. The teachers identify barriers to the development of students based on what they observe and experience when interacting with students.

Table 6. Characteristic of autism

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Do not know	159	88.3	88.3	88.3
know	21	11.7	11.7	100.0
Total	180	100.0	100.0	

A total of 159 (88.3 %) teachers claimed that they did not know about autism and its characteristics, whereas 21 (11.7 %) said that they knew. The teachers who knew about autism mentioned its characteristics as follows : unable to focus so the child could not follow what was being taught in classes, cool / fun with toys themselves and avoid to play with friends. They also mentioned that children with autistic traits were as the same as being crazy, They smiled or cried for no apparent reason..

There were several sources of autism information that teachers got as mentioned in Table 4. A total of 17 teachers (9.44 %) responded that they got information about autism from the mass media both television and newspapers. Only one teacher (0.56 %) answered that attending seminar was the way they knew about autism.

Table. 7 Source of information about autism

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid newspaper	11	6.11	6.11	6.11
tv	6	3.33	3.33	3.33
Seminar	1	0.56	0.56	0.56
nothing	162	90	90	90
Total	180	100.0	100.0	

DISCUSSION

From our findings, there is still a misconception of teacher knowledge about developmental delays and autism. Many early childhood teachers only consider about the growth and development of their students, however, they tend to neglect. They do not know appropriately related with the atypical development and its manifestation. This finding is contradictory with the result in developed countries, such as Sweden. A study conducted by Anderson, Miniscalco, and Gillberg (2014) on preschool teachers in Sweden has found that 27 (96%) preschool teachers have noticed about the development of their students and discuss about the difficulties students have on their academic achievements to parents. Almost 56% of preschool teachers in Sweden have helped to make early detection / early identification of the difficulties experienced by students aged 1-2 years which then help parents to make further efforts by taking the child to the professional. In developed countries, it is familiarly recognized that early childhood teachers have already provided themselves with adequate knowledge about autism. Moreover, they also have developed education service such as Early Childhood Special Education/ ECSE and allied health (speech or occupational therapy). They realize that appropriate education services since early childhood, will increase the quality of life of children with autism and their family (Lord & Bishop, 2010, in Yumak & Akgul, 2010).

Many evidence in the United States showed that children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) who received access to educational services and early treatment show an increase in cognitive abilities , adaptive , and their social - communication (Irvin, Hume, Boyd, McBee, Odom, 2013). Education-based treatment at an early age will give a positive result although not significant, but clinically will be helpful in changing of social- communication ability for children with autistic disorder (Kaale, Fagerland, Martinsen, & Smith, 2014). In contrast, most of teachers in early childhood service (PAUD) in Indonesia do not have sufficient knowledge related with autism. It can be understood because teachers in PAUD are not graduated from special education faculty, some of them are graduated from early childhood program in faculty of education, and some are from science faculty. They may have ever heard of with the term 'autism', however, they are not proficient in their knowledge of this disorder. As a result, they will easily make an appraisal when children show autistic-like behavior, and label them as autistic.

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