



Self-Adjustment in Mothers Who Have Children with Special Needs with Slow Learner Disorder (Phenomenological)

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Article Information

Article History:

Received January 2025

Accepted February 2025

Published March 2025

Keywords:

Self-Adjustment;

Mother;

Children Special Need;

Slow Learner.

How to Cite:

'Aini, J. K., & Affandi, G. R. (2024). Self-Adjustment in Mothers Who Have Children with Special Needs with Slow Learner Disorder (Phenomenological). *Jurnal Dimensi Pendidikan dan Pembelajaran Universitas Muhammadiyah Ponorogo*, 13 *Special Issue*(1), pp 233-243.

Abstract

Self-Adjustment is a phenomenon often experienced by parents who have children with special needs. Self-Adjustment is an important aspect in dealing with the emotional, social and psychological challenges that arise due to the child's condition. Self-Adjustment is the process of each individual learning to adapt to a new environment. This study uses a qualitative research method with a phenomenological approach with data collection techniques using semi-structured interviews. In this research participants used purposive sampling technique with the criteria of two mothers who have children with special needs with slow learner disorders who attend private elementary school X in the Sidoarjo area - East Java Province. The results showed that mothers who have children with special needs with slow learner disorders experience various challenges. Both participants had children with special needs with slow learner disorders with different problems. Both participants experienced challenges such as social pressure, stress, excessive emotionality, ability to adapt and ability to learn. Although both participants faced various challenges, participants were able to learn and benefit from the experiences they had. Thus, participants can become more patient, grateful and strong and ready to face a more stable life. This study aims to determine the extent of the phenomenon of Self-Adjustment in mothers who have children with special needs with slow learner disorders. This research is expected to provide new insights to contribute real support for mothers who have children with special needs with mild or severe categories. So that it is useful for improving the psychological well-being of parents, especially for mothers.

INTRODUCTION

The presence of a child in a family is the most beautiful gift and a special source of happiness. In fact, children are often considered to play an important role in maintaining the stability of a marriage. Every parent wishes for a child to be born in perfect condition. Parents generally hope to have children who are healthy both physically and psychologically. However, not all children are born and grow up in perfect conditions. Each individual child has limitations

both physically and psychologically. This can occur since the womb or during the growth and development period. Every child has a period of growth and development throughout their life (Nengsih, 2019).

Papalia states that children's growth can be recognized through physical aspects that can be measured quantitatively from one stage of development to the next. Meanwhile, development is more visible from changes in quality that can be observed by comparing previous characteristics with newly formed ones. Each child experiences a unique growth and development process, so there are differences in the development of each individual. These differences are also reflected in the challenges children face, which can vary from one another. Some of the problems that may arise include impairments in physical development, language delays, emotional disorders, slow learners, special talents, and impairments in sensory and motor abilities, which can be categorized as children with special needs, as described in (Uyuun, C, 2018).

Children with special needs who are born with limitations basically experience growth and development like other individuals, including in the learning process. As they grow older and gain experience, they acquire knowledge, understand concepts, and learn new things. They also experience emotions such as love, sadness and happiness, make friends, get to know different cultures, develop skills in various fields, invent new technologies and do many other things. All of this is part of human efforts to survive and actualize themselves in the world (Nurhidayat, Wahidin. K., Maulana. M.A, 2022). To avoid children feeling less confident, they need to be given positive examples that can be used as role models in behaving, thinking, speaking, dressing, and communicating (Oktavimadiana, Salsabila, & Gregorius Ari Nugrahanta, 2023). Instinctively, every child has the potential to develop optimally, so they need a pleasant and supportive environment. As well as allowing them to be directly involved in various activities. The activities provided must be in accordance with the principles of child development, namely fun, independent, spontaneous, and democratic. This is in line with the concept of fun learning, which is a learning process designed to be interesting and not boring for students with slow learner disorders (Kristiana, D., & Jumadi, J, 2022)

Children with special needs with slow learner disorders generally have an intelligence level (IQ) ranging from 70 to 90. Overall, the characteristics of slow learner children are similar to children in general. However, they tend to experience delays in understanding subject matter and in responding to instructions given. In fact, slow learners often have difficulty in understanding commands that are complex or consist of several stages. Their characteristics can be categorized into several aspects, including cognitive, language, physical, emotional, and moral and social aspects (Aziz, A. N., Sugiman, S., & Prabowo, 2016).

Effective learning that can be used by slow learners uses an approach that must be in accordance with their cognitive and social development stages. According to Piaget, primary school-age children are in the concrete operational stage, which means they need real experiences to understand concepts well. In their social development, these children are also in the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), where they begin to learn to take responsibility and complete tasks independently, although they still need guidance from adults (Prasanti, T.V.P., & Nugrahanta, G.A., 2022). This requires the care of children with special needs who are most responsible are their parents. The most important role of parents in educating their children by giving examples of good deeds, good words, because what parents do and say will be an example that is then imitated by children, therefore it is very necessary to understand the process of fostering children in all their age ranges (Hikmat R., Rosidin , DN , 2022).

Psychologically and emotionally, mothers have the first position in terms of adjusting to and accepting caring for, guiding and educating children with special needs. Mothers have a feeling of responsibility for their children's normal and abnormal conditions. Because mothers

have a sense of caring for children from the womb, giving birth, to the growth of children. The mother's emotional reaction to the existence of her child is a child with special needs will be felt more, so that the mother's interaction with the child takes place more intensely than other family members (Ayuningtyas, D.P, 2020). Mangungso revealed that parents who have children with special needs with slow abilities or slow learners often face more complicated and severe changes, both physically and psychologically (Firmansyah, A. N. A, 2022).

In this situation, self-adjustment is needed. Parents need to adjust themselves emotionally, socially and practically to face these challenges. This adjustment not only helps parents deal with the stress, but also allows them to provide the best support for their child's growth and development as described in the study (Soraya, N., Mendrofa, N. E., Shalihah, N., Nainggolan, Y. R., & Nasution, A. A. B, 2024). According to Schneiders' theory in psychology, self-adjustment is known as "adjustment". Adjustment includes three main forms, namely (1) Adaptation, (2) Conformity and (3) Mastery Efforts. Therefore, adjustment can be defined as a process that involves mental responses and individual behavior in dealing with various internal needs, pressures, frustrations, and conflicts. The purpose of this process is to achieve a balance between the demands within the individual and the expectations of the external environment in which he is located (Fanani, Q., & Jainurakhma, J, 2020).

This opinion is also in line with Hollander (Lusiana, A, 2019), who revealed that self-adjustment is the process of each individual learning to adapt to a new environment. This occurs when each individual faces a new situation and needs to respond. Self-adjustment plays a role in influencing parenting and how parents educate children. Parents with good self-adjustment skills tend to adapt more easily to their role as caregivers. Conversely, if parents have difficulty in adjusting, they tend to have difficulty managing themselves, facing challenges, and are more vulnerable to pressure and stress, especially when educating children with special needs. Schneiders stated that Aspects of self-adjustment include: (a) the ability to control excessive emotions, (b) have adequate self defense mechanisms, (c) be able to control personal frustration well, (d) think rationally and be able to direct themselves, (e) be able to learn from experience and benefit from it, and (f) have a realistic and objective attitude (Rifai, N., & Kumaidi, M. A, 2015).

Parents' self-adjustment in dealing with children with slow learner disorders is not only related to their ability to manage stress, but also to how they utilize social support and the surrounding environment to overcome various challenges that arise. Previous research conducted in the Queensland and Victoria regions located in Australia related to parenting and self-adjustment of parents who have children with developmental disabilities, involving 914 parent respondents. The results showed that 93% of parents were sensitive to change after being blessed with a child with developmental disabilities (Mazzucchelli, T. G., Hodges, J., Kane, R. T., Sofronoff, K., Sanders, M. R., Einfeld, S., Tonge, B., Gray, K. M., & MHPEDD , 2018). Continued with a research study by (KHAIRUL, I. B, 2015) in the Padang area located in the West Sumatra province of Indonesia reinforcing previous research. The results show that self-adjustment or self-adjustment in parents who have children with special needs with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) was recorded at 66.7% with a p-value = 0.035 there is a very significant relationship. In the context of the phenomenon of self-adjustment or self-adjustment in parents of parents who have children with special needs, it is relevant to be studied more deeply.

The originality of this study lies in the in-depth exploration of the self-adjustment aspects of mothers who have children with special needs with slow learner disorders through a phenomenological approach. In contrast to previous research that more generally discusses parenting children with severe disorders, this study highlights the emotional, social and psychological aspects that influence the mother's adaptation process. Thus, this study provides

new insights into the challenges faced and the strategies used by mothers in adjusting to their children's conditions.

In this phenomenon study research, researchers conducted an initial survey conducted during the independent learning activities of the independent campus (MBKM) Teaching Assistance 2024 for four months through observations, interviews and data on students with disabilities in the 2024-2025 school year who entered inclusion in one of the private elementary schools (SD) in Sidoarjo. There are eight students with special needs with slow learner disorders including one student in class 1 strawberry, one student in class 2 train and one student in class 2 bus, one student in class 3 bougenville and two students in class 3 edeoulwiss and two students in class 5 sirius.

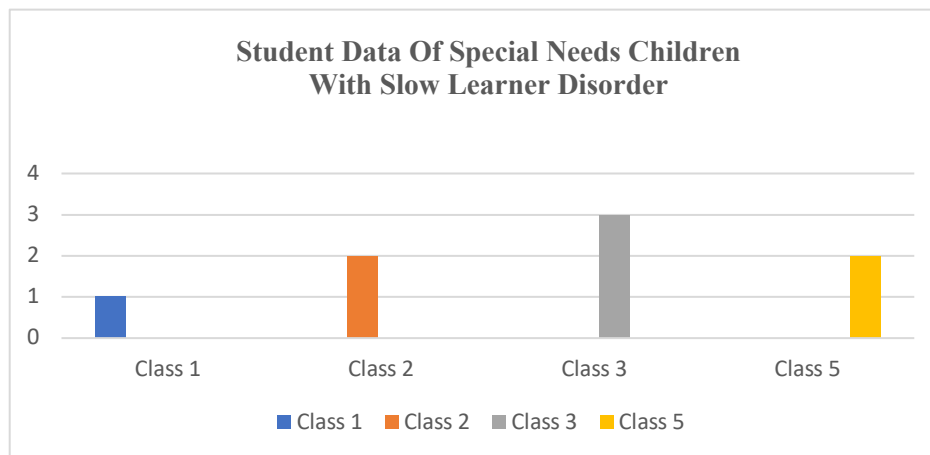


Chart 1. Data on Students with Slow Learner Disorders

Based on the data chart above, this research focuses on self-adjustment or self-adjustment carried out by mothers who have children with special needs with slow learner disorders in one of the private elementary schools (SD) in the Sidoarjo area. Through an initial survey conducted during the independent learning activities of the independent campus (MBKM) Teaching Assistance 2024, researchers found that there were eight students with special needs children with slow learner disorders spread across various classes. This condition requires mothers to be able to adapt both emotionally, socially, and psychologically which is useful for supporting their child's special needs in the surrounding environment, this phenomenon is the basis for understanding more deeply for mothers to manage the challenges they face and the strategies used in the process of self-adjustment in the process of parenting and educating children with special needs with slow learner disorders.

There are several factors that can affect self-adjustment or self-adjustment in parents according to Schneiders' theory. Among them are caused by (1) Physical and hereditary factors, (2) Psychological determinants, including experience, learning, conditioning, self-determination, frustration and conflict, (3) Environmental conditions, (4) The role of culture and religion, (5) The development and maturity of personality elements, especially intellectual, social, moral, and emotional maturity (Sakius, G. G., Minarni, M., & Hayati, S, 2024).

Previous research has focused more on the self-adjustment of parents with children with special needs with mild disorders such as Autism, ADHD etc. There are still few that specifically discuss the experiences of mothers who have children with slow learner disorders. So that there are still few other studies that specifically discuss the experiences of mothers who have children with special needs with slow learner disorders. The purpose of this study is to determine the extent of the Self Adjustment phenomenon in mothers who have children with special needs with slow learner disorders. The uniqueness of this research lies in its focus on mothers of children with slow learner disorders, which are still rarely studied, so it is hoped that it can provide new insights

to contribute real support for mothers who have children with special needs with slow learner disorders.

METHODS

This research uses a qualitative method with a phenomenological approach, which takes place naturally and is based on facts. This approach aims to reveal and understand the experiences of participants based on the events they perceive. The phenomena studied include changes in participants' attitudes, perspectives, or behaviors (Creswell, 2015). According to Creswell the qualitative research design in this study has a natural nature, where the researcher does not try to change or manipulate the research environment. Instead, research is conducted by observing phenomena in their original context, that is, in the place where they occur (Winarto, J. T., Hayati, E. N., & Situmorang, N. Z., 2019).

The selection of participants in this study was carried out using purposive sampling method, involving two participants who met the criteria as mothers with children with special needs who experience slow learners and attend private elementary school X in Sidoarjo, East Java. Data collection techniques included observation, interviews and documentation. Observation was conducted as an open-ended information gathering process (Creswell, 2015; Rachmatunisa & Rahmandani, 2023). Before the researcher conducts the interview, the researcher will outline the interview guidelines. The interview guidelines adjust the aspects of self-adjustment taken from Schneiders, which include: (a) the ability to control excessive emotions, (b) have adequate self defense mechanisms, (c) be able to control personal frustration well, (d) think rationally and be able to direct yourself, (e) individuals can learn and benefit from the experience, and (f) have a realistic and objective attitude.

Data analysis was conducted using thematic analysis. According to Naughton & Hughes, thematic analysis is a data analysis method that aims to identify and find themes and categories from data that has previously been coded. The stages of data analysis in this study include (1) preparing raw data, (2) coding, (3) Axial Coding and (4) Selective Coding (Rachman, S. P. D., & Cahyani, I, 2019).

The validity of the data in this study was tested through data triangulation which involved the use of various sources of information from several participants. The aim was to compare and strengthen the data collected. In the credibility test, data is checked by verifying information obtained from various sources, time, and methods. In this study, data validity was carried out by triangulating sources, namely by examining data from several sources and then conducting a member check to ensure that the data obtained was consistent with the information provided by participants (Creswell 2015; Gayatri, R. R. P. A., & Rahmasari, D, 2022).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the phenomenon of research on self-adjustment of mothers with children with special needs at X Sidoarjo Private Elementary School, a summary chart of the research results can be presented as follows:

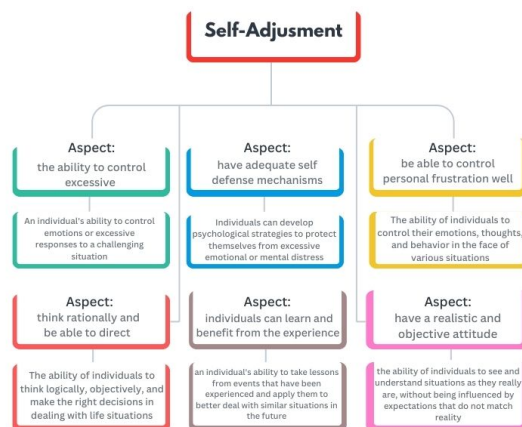


Figure 1. Summary Explanation of Results

Based on the results of the self adjustment research that has been presented, it can strengthen the research results as well as the results of data analysis from interviews with the two subjects with the initials Mrs. (SI) and Mrs. (YI) obtained the following data:

Aspect the ability to control excessive

Self-adjustment in mothers is reflected in their ability to control excessive emotionality, so that they can face various challenges in their maternal role more calmly and wisely. With good emotional control, a mother is able to respond to children's needs more patiently and attentively, and adjust to the dynamics of family life without being easily carried away by stress or pressure. This ability not only supports the mother's psychological well-being, but also creates a more harmonious and positive environment for the child's development (Palmor Haspel, S., Benyamini, Y., & Ginzburg K, 2020).

“When I faced the situation and condition of my child like this, I was sincere.” (code 2b: SI, 43 Years)

“Ooo... for me, when I was diagnosed differently, I thought that maybe God gave me this to be more patient. So, I chose to be grateful”. (code 1a:YI, 49 Years)

From the results of the interview, SI's mother participant showed an attitude of acceptance of her child's condition with a sincere statement in dealing with the situation, reflecting a form of acceptance that is more resigned to the situation. In contrast, YI's mother's participants showed her child's condition as part of Allah SWT's destiny which aims to teach patience and choose to be grateful. from the comparison of SI's mother's participants and YI's mother's participants have different variations in self-adjustment strategies.

Aspect have adequate self defense mechanisms

A mother is able to apply self-defense mechanisms adaptively, so that she can face the pressures and challenges of her role as a mother without being emotionally burdened. With appropriate defense mechanisms, mothers can manage stress, cope with disappointment, and maintain their psychological balance (Palmor Haspel, S., Benyamini, Y., & Ginzburg, K, 2020).

“I will try my best to distance myself or avoid it.” (code: 9h SI, 43 Years)

“The neighbors' talk about my child makes me sad, but I keep thinking positively.” (code:12a YI, 49 Years)

From the interview results, Participant SI mother's tended to avoid situations that made her uncomfortable, while participant YI mother's felt sad but tried to think positively. This difference shows different self-adjustment strategies, where one mother copes with pressure by avoiding, while the other tries to deal with it with a positive mindset.

Aspect be able control personal frustration personal

The presence of children with special needs provides more complex pressures and responsibilities, making parents of children with special needs experience greater problems than parents with normal children, potentially causing stress in parents (Amelasasih, 2019).

“This incident once made me drop. because of the bad words of others.” (code: 2a SI, 43 Years)
“I once did not allow my child to leave the house to provide space for me and my child while looking for information regarding the best therapy for him to get better in the future”. (code: 5d YI, 49 Years)

From the interview results, SI's mother participant felt down due to the negative words of others, while YI's mother participant chose to limit her child's interaction temporarily to find the best solution. This shows a difference in self-adjustment, where one mother is more affected by the environment, while the other focuses more on proactive action for her child's future.

Aspect think rationally and be able to direct yourself

Parents with critical thinking and conflict management skills can regulate their thoughts, behaviors and emotions to solve problems, even in difficult situations. This process takes time until they can devise strategies to optimize their child's treatment and deal with challenges (Lempang, Sutiaputri & Diana , 2021).

“I discussed with a neurologist and psychologist whether my child could be cured, Alhamdulillah the answer was light. Then if I continue to be down, my child will be the victim.” (code:8g SI, 43 Years)

“we just go with it. So my husband and I think that if we have to go to therapy, we can make him better, more independent and like other regular children.” (code: 8g YI, 49 Years)

From the interview results, Participant SI's mother showed self-adjustment by seeking information from medical personnel before being able to accept her child's condition and rise from adversity. Meanwhile, Participant YI's mother self-adjusted by focusing more on concrete actions, such as therapy, to increase her child's independence. This difference reflects the two forms of self-adjustment of mothers with children with special needs, one mother needed external reassurance before adjusting, while the other was immediately solution-oriented and actively accepted.

Aspect individuals can learn and benefit from the experience

The tangible benefits of experiences experienced by parents with children with special needs are that they increase self-satisfaction, encourage a positive mindset, foster optimism, and generate hope in living life. In addition, these experiences help parents find the good in the difficult situations they face (Hambali, Meiza, & Fahmi, 2015).

“And since this kind of experience, I as a mother will continue to learn for the success of my two children and I will continue to fight.” (code: 8f SI, 43 Years)

“Socially, I learned to be more confident and focused on my child's growth and development. I am also ready to share information with new parents about children with special needs with the same character as my child.” (code: 8f YI, 49 Years)

From the results of the interviews of the two participants, SI's mother showed self-adjustment by making the experience experienced as a motivation to continue learning and striving for the success of her children. Meanwhile, YI emphasized social self-strengthening by increasing self-confidence, focusing on child development, and sharing experiences with other parents. This difference reflects different self-adjustment strategies, where one mother is more oriented towards personal struggle for her children, while the other also develops a social role in supporting fellow parents.

Aspect have a realistic and objective attitude

The self-adjustment of parents of children with special needs is viewed from a realistic and objective attitude, where some parents tend to think about things outside of reality. When they

have difficulty being realistic, they try to accept the situation and seek support. Parents are better able to deal with situations when they see positive developments in their children (Istiadji E., & Wardhani A, 2024).

“I am confident that my child will succeed and grow up like other children.” (code: 22a SI, 43 Years)

“My husband and I accepted fate with sincerity because AL was the child we were waiting for. As much as possible, we try to provide the best for him. (code:10a YI, 49 Years)

From the results of the interviews of the two participants, SI's mother showed self-adjustment with the belief that her child could grow and succeed like other children. Meanwhile, Participant YI's mother self-adjusted by accepting her child's condition as part of her destiny and trying to give her best. This difference reflects two forms of self-adjustment, where one mother focuses more on optimism towards her child's future, while the other emphasizes unconditional acceptance and effort.

CONCLUSION

The conclusion of this study shows that mothers who have children with special needs with slow learner disorders face various challenges in self-adjustment. Both participants have children with slow learner disorders with different background problems. Participant SI's mother has a child with special needs with slow learner disorder caused by milestone delays at the age of 1 year - 3 years, so that the child of SI's mother participant is required to do therapy. Her child also has a speech delay caused by seizures. Not only that, the participant's child until the age of 9 years is still taking treatment for his seizures and is still under seizure monitoring using seizure medication. Furthermore, for participant mother YI has a child with special needs with slow learner disorder with a background caused when her child was 3 years old - 4 years old experiencing speech delay and behavioral disorders, therefore the child of participant mother YI conducted behavioral disorder therapy to a psychologist professional expert. Furthermore, when the child of YI's mother participant entered school in elementary school, he had experienced changes in behavior that were quite independent slowly and when the age of the subject child entered the second grade of the second semester, a special assistant teacher was being released.

From the background of this difference, it shows that mothers who have children with special needs with slow learner disorders face various challenges in Self-Adjustment. Family support, social environment and increasing understanding and acceptance play an important role in helping mothers get through various emotional and psychological. Through the experiences of mothers who have children with special needs with slow learner disorders, different patterns of self-adjustment will be formed to reflect resilience, love and compassion, and acceptance of children's conditions in dealing with complex parenting roles. Then, the recommendation for future research is to be able to explore the experiences of parents who have children with special needs with more diverse categories. So that not only children with severe special needs. So that research related to the experiences of parents who have children with special needs can increase public awareness and concern for the struggles of parents who have children with special needs.

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