

Emotion activity education assistance program for therapists and psychologists: Efforts to train emotional regulation skills in children with special needs



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Abstract

One of the problems Children with Special Needs that needs to be addressed is the ability of children with special needs to recognize various kinds of emotions as well as how to manage the emotions they are feeling so that children with special needs can adjust to all situations they face. This community service activity aims to provide educational assistance to therapists and psychologists for service partners how to train emotional regulation skills in children with special needs using emotional activity media. The goal is that therapists and psychologists can train emotional regulation skills in children with special needs using instruments that are easy to apply, interesting, and fun. This assistance is carried out by using socialization methods and simulating the practice of using emotional activity media to therapists and psychologists. The activity went smoothly and was full of enthusiasm from the participants. Therapists and psychologists are able to understand the importance of emotional regulation skills in children with special needs and know easy, interesting, and fun learning methods for children with special needs.

Keywords

Children with special needs, emotional activities, emotional regulation

Introduction

The Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection of the Republic of Indonesia in 2013 described Children with Special Needs as children who experience limitations/extraordinary physical, mental-intellectual, social, and emotional which have a significant effect on the process of growth and development compared to other children of their age. The types of children with special needs include blind, deaf, intellectual disability, specific learning difficulties (dysgraphia, dyslexia, and dyscalculia), ADHD, mental retardation (emotional and behavioral disorders), autism, and special intelligence.

The problems faced by Children with Special Needs cover various aspects of their lives, both in terms of cognitive, physical, language, and socio-emotional. Various efforts are made to optimize the growth and development of Children with Special Needs. The forms of education services for Children with Special Needs include Special Schools and inclusive education (Zaitun, 2017). In the physical/motor aspect, Children with Special Needs gets a lot of assistance from professionals such as occupational therapy, physiotherapy, etc. In the cognitive aspect, stimulation for Children with Special Needs is given in various forms, one of which is the opportunity for Children with Special Needs to get education in Special Schools or in inclusive schools. In the language aspect, children with special needs get a lot of assistance from speech therapists. However, this speech therapist trains children with special needs to stimulate language development in children with special needs who experience speech delays or disorders, not yet

assisting children with special needs in recognizing and expressing their emotions. Some common interventions for children with special needs include speech therapy, occupational therapy consisting of physical therapy, social therapy, play therapy, remedial therapy, cognitive therapy, sensory integration therapy, snoezelen therapy, and music therapy (Desiningrum, 2016).

Based on the results of the assessment in the form of interviews and observations made by psychologists on parents of children with special needs, it shows that most parents with special needs complain about the same thing to their children regarding the socio-emotional abilities of their children. Children with special needs complains that they often experience tantrums, are unable to control their emotions, especially negative emotions, such as anger by shouting, throwing things, hitting, to unnatural fears such as crying incessantly. This is also justified by therapists and psychologists who accompany children with special needs when conducting therapy classes. The physiological limitations of children with special needs cause their personal balance to be less stable (Zaitun, 2017).

Several methods have been used by therapists and psychologists to train socio-emotional abilities in children

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with special needs, namely occupational therapy, behavioral therapy, play therapy, developmental therapy, and music therapy (Desiningrum, 2016). However, parents cannot fully do this at home due to limited time, energy, and knowledge (Adhiyastati, 2020). The importance of parental involvement in the intervention process supports the success of children with special needs therapy (Tantiani, 2020). Therefore, this service activity is aimed at therapists and psychologists who hope to make it easier for therapists and psychologists to train emotional regulation skills in children with special needs. Furthermore, therapists and psychologists can motivate parents to continue educating their children about emotion regulation when they are at home.

Emotional activity is an educational medium that is specifically designed to train emotional regulation in children with special needs by paying attention to the principles of learning for children with special needs. Some of the principles of learning with special needs children, namely being oriented to the needs of children, carried out through play, stimulating the emergence of creativity and innovation, using various sources and existing learning media, carried out gradually and repeatedly (Zaitun, 2017).

This activity consists of several parts, namely picture story books, board games, and emotional activity sheets. Each of the activities contained in this media contains several benefits, including illustrated story books that contain stories as well as equipped with image media in which can deepen understanding of story content and strengthen children's memory (Zubaidah & Ratnasari, 2019). In addition, board games are chosen as one of the media because in playing using board games, children will experience directly an event or simulation in real events (Nasrulloh *et al.*, 2019). Research conducted by Zikrillah & Humardhiana (2021) proves that the design of the Edumaze boardgame learning media increases the learning spirit of elementary school students. The third part of the emotional activity media is an illustrated worksheet with cartoon characters. Generally, children aged 6-12 years prefer to do illustrated activities rather than just looking at long texts. Yolanda (2019) proves that student worksheets are able to make the learning atmosphere more enjoyable because there is a mix of verbal and visual language (pictures).

Methods

This service is carried out by the Behavioral Science and Public Policy (BSPP) Research Team, Faculty of Psychology, Universitas Sebelas Maret, Surakarta. This service focuses on assisting therapists and psychologists of the UPT PLDPI Surakarta through education as well as simulating the practice of using educational media for emotional activities.

UPT PLDPI Surakarta is a Technical Service Unit of the Center for Disability and Inclusive Education Services, which is located at Jl. Agung Timur No. 6A Ngemplak Sutan, Mojosongo, Jebres, Surakarta. UPT PLDPI was established in 2017 to facilitate children with special needs who come from underprivileged families to get the right to education by doing therapy, so that the development of children with special needs can grow more optimally.

Service activities begin with the preparation stage. At this stage there are several activities carried out, namely a survey on the condition of the partner's problems, the needs

of the partners, the atmosphere and situation of the location of the activity. Furthermore, conducting a literature study related to emotional problems in children with special needs, how to manage them, as well as appropriate educational methods used for children with special needs. After that, develop the concept of educational media consisting of picture story books, board games, and picture worksheets. The finished media is then validated by 5 Subject Matter Experts (SME) from clinical psychologists and educational and developmental psychologists.

The second stage is the activity implementation stage. At this stage, socialization and simulation of the practice of using educational media were carried out to the therapists and psychologists at UPT PLDPI. This assistance aims to introduce emotional activity media, the purpose of each section of the media and how to use it so that therapists and psychologists can implement emotional regulation in children with special needs.

The third stage is evaluation. At this stage, the service team asked for criticism and suggestions from therapists and psychologists regarding the implementation of emotional activity media education assistance. The service team also provides a medium for this emotional activity for Partners to practice and teach children with special needs parents when they are at home.

Result dan Discussion

The service activity was carried out on July 4, 2022 at UPT PLDPI Surakarta. The service activities went smoothly and full of enthusiasm from the therapists and psychologists.

In this activity, it was conveyed the importance of practicing emotional regulation skills for children with special needs using easy, interesting, and fun media. The educational media of emotional activity which consists of several parts has the same goal but the expected output is different. Expectations from reading together a picture story book that contains 5 kinds of stories with the theme of emotional regulation of emotions. Research by Redd *et al.* (2015) states that the presence of pictures in story books is effective for children to understand stories compared to story books containing only text.

The expected output from playing this board game is that crew members can recognize the expression of emotions contained in the board game, practice emotional expression and regulate emotions according to the question cards contained in the board game. Through this game, it can stimulate the ability of the crew to solve problems related to emotions. The research of Sudirman *et al.* (2020) proves that the use of paper puppets and board games is effective in increasing knowledge of reproductive health of special school children.

There are 2 worksheets given to crew members. The first worksheet has output children with special needs can match every event contained in the worksheet with the appropriate emotional expression. The second worksheet has the output of children with special needs being able to match every event contained in the worksheet with proper emotion regulation. Research proves that children's worksheets using a constructivist approach can improve early childhood science skills (Pratiwi & Mustaji, 2016).



Figure 1. The cover of module to train emotional regulation skills in children with special needs.



Figure 2. This board game serves as a tool aimed at cultivating emotional regulation skills among children with special needs.

This emotional activity media is considered easy and interesting to use because the composition of the stories in the picture story books is short and clear. Even more interesting because this media is equipped with board games that are easy to play by children with special needs and there are illustrated worksheets which of course can indirectly train children with special needs to solve problems related to emotions because learning becomes interesting and demands student activity.

Conclusion & Implication

The mentoring activity for the emotional activity education program for therapists and psychologists as an effort to train the regulatory skills of children with special needs went smoothly and was full of enthusiasm from the participants. This educational media can be used as psychologists, therapists and parents as a learning method to train children's emotional regulation skills.

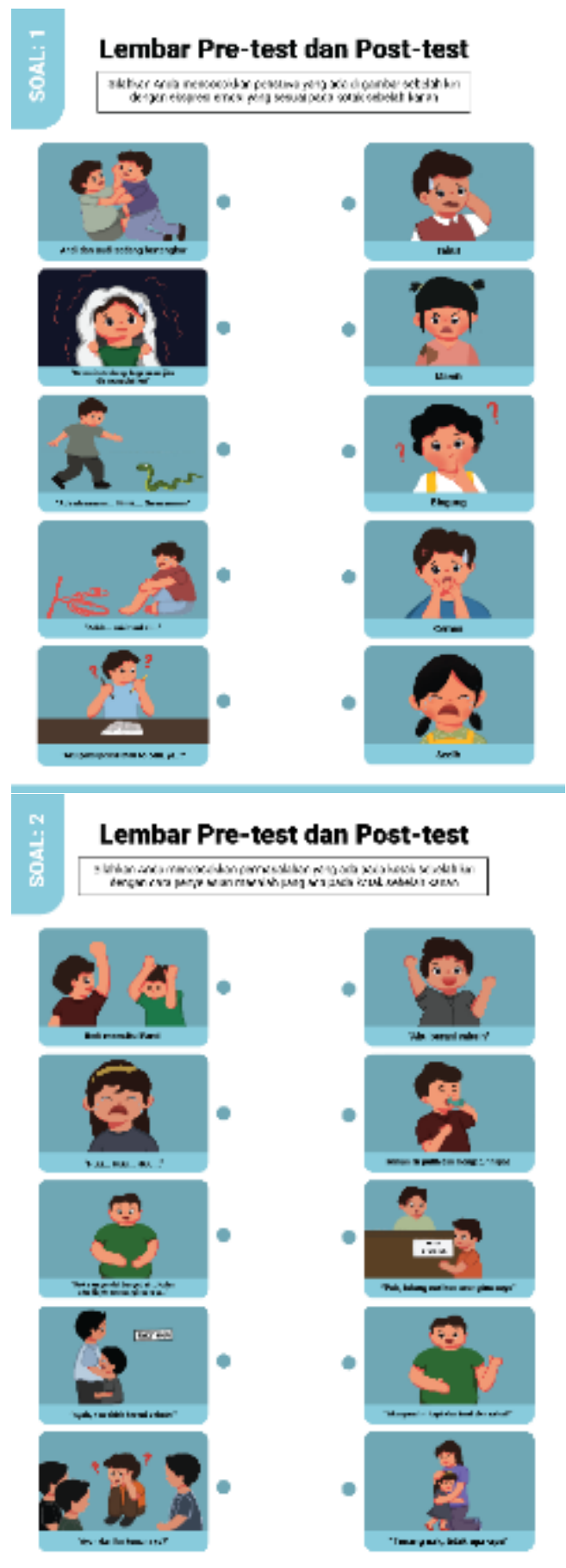


Figure 3. These two worksheets are designed to facilitate the cultivation of emotional regulation skills in children with special needs, each with a distinct task focus.

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