

# *Managing Challenging Behaviors of Students with Autism Spectrum Disorder in Inclusive Schools Settings*

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**Abstract**—The purpose of this research is to describe the teacher's effort to manage the challenging behaviors of students with ASD in inclusive school settings. This effort is classified into minor intervention and moderate intervention. This research used descriptive qualitative research design. Data were collected through interview and non-participant observation. Moreover, data were analyzed by applying interactive model. This research was held in one inclusive school in Sidoarjo, Indonesia. There are five participants in this research. Findings indicate that teachers are able to understand the triggers of challenging behaviors of students with ASD. However, all of the teachers are only able to implement minor intervention. Furthermore, teachers are still struggling in implementing the moderate intervention.

**Keywords**—challenging behaviors; students with autism spectrum disorder; inclusive schools.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Autism spectrum disorder (ASD) is a lifelong neurodevelopmental disorder mainly affecting social communication along with the individuals' patterns of behaviour, interests, and activities [1]. BPS (Indonesia's Bureau of Statistic) estimates that from 2010 to 2016 there were around 140,000 children under the age of 17 who have the ASD [2]. The agent of research and consultancy, SPIRE, predicts that there are 139,000 children with ASD from 400,000 children with special needs [2]. Furthermore, the Director of the Ministry of Health's in 2013 calculated that there were 112,000 children with ASD with ages ranging from 5-19 years [3].

Given the high number of children with ASD in Indonesia. Currently, there is an increasing number of students with ASD in inclusive school. Inclusive schools are based on the principle of Education for All. It can be understood that in inclusive schools, the school adjusts to the needs of all students, and is ready to accept students, regardless their background [4]. Therefore, this has implications for the importance for adaptation and reform both on instrumental input and environmental input in the school system.

One of the problems in adjusting educational system in inclusive schools for students with ASD is their challenging behaviors. Challenging behaviors could be defined as destructive, harmful, disruptive, or otherwise unacceptable behaviors that occur with sufficient frequency and/or severity to be of major concern. Moreover, Challenging behaviors should not be seen only in the context of being a feature of just the individual [5] That problem is equally shared by those who need to understand and respond to it. Furthermore, challenging behaviors happen because of the interaction between three components (1) an individual, their current & past experiences and what they have learned (2) the thoughts, feelings and behaviors of other people in their lives & (3) the environments, communities and cultures they live in ([6]). Thus, in the classroom setting teachers should perform classroom management to handle this issue.

In addition to the teaching process, the classroom management process is a crucial thing that must be applied by the teacher. Class management is also able to maximize student learning opportunities [7]. Previous research by Goodenow & Wenzel (in [8]) shows that the attachment of students to schools due to good classroom management can have a positive impact on academic motivation, understanding ability, and good emotional development in students.

Classroom management is part of basic teaching skills that aim to realize and maintain an optimal learning atmosphere, which relates to the ability of teachers to create favorable conditions, delight students, and create healthy learning disciplines [9]. Moreover, [10] explain that classroom management is a conscious effort to apply the management component in the program and activities in the classroom so that learning takes place smoothly and the potential of students can develop optimally. Furthermore, Good and Brophy (in [9]) reveal that classroom management is a planning and implementation effort to keep students from learning, doing assignments, and reducing discipline disorders and problems in the classroom. Furthermore, besides the complexity and individuality of

obstacles experienced by students with the autism spectrum, [11] explains that managing classes is important for students with special needs so that they can learn comfortably.

In order to overcome challenging behaviors in students with ASD, teachers can apply the following techniques: mediation with peers, discussions with parents, asking for help from the principal or counselor, or using mentors [7]. However, more specifically efforts to overcome students' problems can be done through the thought of Evertson et al. [7] which includes: minor interventions, and moderate interventions with the following explanations (1) minor interventions, this intervention is applied to behaviors that usually interfere with class activities and the learning process. For example: students are noisy themselves, students joke excessively, or eat in class; (2) moderate interventions, this intervention is applied to more challenging behaviors such as disturbing other students and disrupting classroom learning activities

Therefore, the aim of this research to describe the teacher's effort to manage the challenging behaviors of students with ASD in inclusive school settings.

## II. METHOD

Descriptive qualitative research design was applied in this research. Participants are five teachers in one inclusive elementary school in Sidoarjo Indonesia. This school was selected due to the quite a large number of students with ASD. Data were collected through observation and interview. Non-participant observation was implemented during the learning process in class using observation instrument. Moreover, interview was held in-depth using open structured instruments. There are four teachers and one principal as the research participants. Furthermore, data were analyzed with qualitatively [12], through three different stages namely: condensing the data (merging and strengthening data), data presentation, conclusion drawing and verification. In terms of data validation, data were validated with triangulation. There are two triangulation types which were used namely source triangulation and technique triangulation. The source triangulation was held through asking the same question to different participants to obtain valid data. Moreover, the technique triangulation was completed by comparing the data from interview, and observation.

## III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### A. Result

In the interview principal said that teachers were able to understand the challenging behaviors of each student with ASD in their class. Like nosy behavior, or anger. So far the challenging behaviors of students with ASD is not too severe, and can be handled by the teachers, even if there is severe challenging behaviors parents will be involved. The results of interviews with principals are in accordance with the results of interviews and observations in four different classes (Grade I, Grade II, Grade IV and Grade V).

Teacher of grade I in the interview revealed that she understood students' challenging behaviors such as: anger when disturbed. The handling provided is through

advice, and calm students. Teacher usually works with other teachers when dealing with challenging behaviors of students with ASD. The results of the interview are supported by observations where the teacher knows the triggers of challenging behaviors and applies minor interventions through diversion. While the teacher has not applied moderate intervention, but it has avoided students from danger. After being verified, teachers rarely interact with students with ASD, while moderate intervention is not applied because the challenging behaviors shown by students with ASD is still in the mild stage. Furthermore, the teacher in the interview revealed that she understood the challenging behaviors of students with ASD such as: angry when disturbed, shouting, excessive behavior, and anger when the goods are lost, with handling given through finding lost items (if students are angry when the goods lost), reminded verbally, then continued with a physical prompt. The teacher usually works with other teachers. The results of this interview are supported by observations where the teacher knows the triggers of challenging behaviors. The teacher also applies minor interventions through the transfer of attention to observation.

Teacher of grade II in the interview explained, the teacher understood the challenging behaviors of students with ASD such as: speaking harshly, irritable, and nosy. The handling given through advice is repeated, and allows when students cry. Furthermore, the teacher usually works with parents in dealing with challenging behaviors. The results of the interviews are supported by observations that the teacher recognizes the triggers of challenging behaviors while the teacher takes care of without applying minor interventions with diversion but only verbally, and has not applied moderate intervention, on teacher observation involving the teaching assistant, and throughout the observation the teacher avoids students from danger. Furthermore, the teacher in the interview revealed that the teacher understands the challenging behaviors of students with ASD including: screaming, and speaking harshly, angry when disturbed, engrossed alone, and drinking carelessly. Handling given is through advice, and calm students. Teachers usually also collaborate with teaching assistants and parents. The results of interviews are supported by the observation that the teacher knows the triggers of challenging behaviors, through handling without applying minor interventions with distractions but only verbally and touch. Furthermore, the teacher has not applied moderate intervention, on observation the teacher involves teaching assistants in handling challenging behaviors, and in both observations the teacher avoids students from danger.

Teacher of grade IV revealed in an interview that he understands the challenging behaviors of students with ASD which includes: having a nosy problematic behavior, and being easily angry if disturbed, has less learning motivation. The handling given by the teacher is through advice, and calms students. Teachers also usually work with teaching assistants. The results of the interview are different from the results of observations, where the teacher does not recognize the triggers of challenging behaviors. The teacher also did not implement minor interventions and did not apply moderate intervention. Furthermore, the teacher also does not involve other parties. Although it still avoids students from danger.

Teacher of grade V revealed in interviews that the teacher understands the challenging behaviors of students with ASD which includes: screaming during learning, nosy pulling hijab. The handling provided is through giving attention, and calming students. Teachers usually also work with parents. The results of the interviews are also supported by the results of observations, where the teacher recognizes the triggers of behavior, without applying minor interventions with distractions but only verbally. Furthermore, the teacher has not applied moderate intervention, but involves teaching assistants in handling, and in all observations the teacher avoids students from danger.

### B. Discussion

During the learning process, there are students who behave that cause problems, both for themselves, learning process, classmates, and teachers. Challenging behaviors in the frequency will certainly be higher in inclusive school settings, including if there are students with ASD. Barriers to social communication and behavior experienced by students with ASD can lead to challenging behaviors. Principal said in an interview that challenging behaviors that often arises in students with ASD in the classroom is noisy behavior, and uncontrollable anger. Even so, the problem can be handled by the teacher.

The results of interviews and observations revealed that challenging behaviors experienced by students with ASD is very diverse, including: anger when disturbed or items lost, self-absorbed and excessive behavior, drinking carelessly / without permission, nosy, speaking harshly. From these results it can be said that both classroom teachers and teaching assistants have implemented the first step in handling the challenging behaviors of students with ASD namely recognizing the causes of challenging behaviors [13], [14].

Furthermore, for the intervention all teachers only applying minor interventions, namely challenging behaviors is still at an early stage, while moderate intervention has not been applied even though there are challenging behaviors that should receive this intervention, such as when one student with ASD gets angry in class because of being left out by his parents. In more detail, only the teacher of grade I who applies the steps and principles of handling challenging behaviors in students with the autism spectrum, namely applying minor interventions by diverting attention [15], [16], involving other parties in prevention and treatment challenging behaviors [16], and avoiding students with autism spectrum from harm [15]. Whereas many teachers do not apply minor interventions with the transfer of attention, but only verbally and touch, even though the teacher still cooperates with each other, and avoids students with ASD from danger.

## IV. CONCLUSION

It can be concluded that the teacher has been able to understand the triggers of challenging behaviors in students with ASD. Furthermore, for the implementation of interventions to overcome challenging behaviors, all teachers are only able to apply a minor intervention when challenging behaviors is still at an early stage, while moderate intervention has not been applied even though many students with ASD show challenging behaviors with high intensity and should get moderate intervention. For further research, it is suggested to conduct research on the same topic but involve more research subjects.

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