



Socialization and Debriefing in Educating Mentally Retarded Children: Optimizing Teacher Strategies in Teaching

Syamsul Huda*

Institut Agama Islam Negeri Kediri
INDONESIA

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Abstract

Various strategies that have been used in teaching mental retardation include promoting an emotional approach, thoroughness and strengthening of children's abilities. But in reality, educating mentally retarded children is not easy to accept in teaching. They prefer to play alone and find it difficult to respond to every event and experience what they get. For that we need a strategy in educating so that the teaching and learning system becomes optimal. The purpose of this study was to determine the ability of mentally retarded children to understand PAI subjects. This study uses a qualitative approach, which is a research procedure that produces descriptive data in the form of written or spoken words from people or observed behavior from people (subjects themselves). To obtain data that is as expected, this research uses two methods of data collection, namely interviews and observations. The study has a strategy that needs to be done by teachers, in educating mentally retarded children in PAI subjects, is to use individual learning. This individual learning is considered effective and efficient, considering that mentally retarded students have below average intelligence, as well as their lack of ability in socializing and communicating.

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INTRODUCTION

In life, humans cannot be separated from education. Because with education, humans gain knowledge and able to develop their mindset to achieve life goals, one of which is through religion. Islamic Religious Education aims to increase the faith, understanding, appreciation, and practice of students towards Islam so that they become Moslem who believe and fear Allah SWT and have noble character in personal, social, national and state life as well as to continue education to a higher level (Joseph, 2016). In addition, religious education also has a dominant role so that Moslem's life remains stable and directed on the right path. Religion is a guide in an effort to create a meaningful, peaceful and useful life (S. Widodo et al., 2019). Realizing how important the role of religion for human life, the inculcation (internalization) of religious values in life of each individual becomes a necessity or obligation, which is pursued through education, both education in the family, school and community (Nejad et al., 2014).

On the basis of this view, all people, both normal and abnormal, have the same rights in obtaining education. For abnormal people, because of their abnormalities and shortcomings, they need more help in living their lives, especially in the field of education. So that they can fulfill their obligations to Allah SWT, society, and themselves (Nuryana, 2019).

There are several divisions for children with disabilities or called Children with Special Needs, one of which is mental retardation. As quoted from Bandi Delphie, "In general, mentally retarded children have a below average level of intellectual ability (Samo et al., 2018). In addition, they also have barriers to adaptive behavior during their developmental period (Sinaga et al., 2017). Children

* Corresponding author:

Syamsul Huda, Institut Agama Islam Negeri Kediri, INDONESIA. ✉ syamsulhudaiainkediri@gmail.com

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with mental retardation have learning problems caused by obstacles to the development of intelligence, mental, emotional, social (Francisco et al., 2020) and physical (The Wallace Foundation, 2013).

So far, Islamic education has been taught in public schools, let alone religious schools or madrasahs. However, we also need to know how to teach religious education for children who have mental retardation (*Tunagrahita*). Hence, mentally retarded children in general have a unique personality that is not the same as the personality of regular students. This of course requires special coaching and guidance to teach them about religious education.

Islamic religious education given to mentally retarded children is different from normal children. The difference is not in the subject matter but in terms of how to explain the material which is adapted to the ability of the child. It is not easy for people with mental retardation to be educated about the teachings of Islam, because of their shortcomings and weaknesses in capturing religious lessons and behavior that is different from normal children. So that a special strategy is needed, so that the learning objectives can be achieved. Learning strategies quoted from W. Gulo, are plans and ways to deliver teaching so that all basic principles can be implemented and all teaching objectives can be achieved effectively (Putra, 2019).

Basically, the role of strategy stems from the fact that PAI curriculum materials (Everard et al., 2004), including the PAI curriculum for mentally retarded children, may not be properly taught, but given in a special way. In educating mentally retarded students, patience and understanding are needed for students' attitudes. In addition, an emotional approach is also needed to facilitate every activity that the teacher wants to direct (Purwanti, 2021). Inaccuracies in the application of this strategy will certainly hamper the teaching and learning process which will result in wasting time and energy. Therefore, the use of the right strategy in learning must focus on the factors of strategy selection so that it is not misguided in its application (Makhmudah, 2015).

SMPLB Negeri Blitar City (Blitar City State SLB) is one of the educational institutions that educate children with special needs, including mentally retarded children. Actually, the Blitar City State Junior High School is one of the levels of education contained in the Blitar City State Special School. The levels of education available at the Blitar City State SLB are SMP and SMA. The students consist of students who are deaf, mute, quadriplegic, and mentally retarded. SLB, should indeed be able to accept students with disabilities, even with limited facilities and infrastructures. This has been done in Blitar City State SLB.

At Blitar City State SLB, it consists of mentally retarded students aged 11-16 years who provide PAI learning with various strategies according to the abilities of mentally retarded children. Various strategies that have been used in teaching mental retardation include, promoting an emotional approach, thoroughness and strengthening of children's abilities. But, educating mentally retarded children is not easy, they hard to accept the teaching learning material. They prefer to play alone and find it difficult to respond to every event and experience they get. For that, we need a strategy in educating so that the teaching and learning system becomes optimal (Widodo et al., 2021).

There are features that make the writer interested and touched by the mentally retarded students at the Blitar City State Junior High School. Although they are categorized as children with mental retardation, their ability to read verses of the Qur'an is quite good for the level of mentally retarded children. As evidenced by the existence of various activities to commemorate Islamic holidays, there are always representatives to recite the holy verses of the Qur'an and their recitations. In the corner of this school, a prayer room was also built to support worship activities and PAI learning for students at this special school, one of which was to get used to praying *Dhuhur* in congregation in the prayer room that had been provided accompanied by several teachers. This means that various strategies are carried out at this special school to educate mentally retarded children, to be able to live independently, especially in the religious field. Although the activities they do are normal for normal children, this becomes very extraordinary when done by children with mental retardation.

Based on the above background, researchers are interested in studying further about PAI learning strategies for mentally retarded children. The purpose of this study was to determine the ability of mentally retarded children to understand PAI subjects. In addition, providing information for teachers related to strategies in educating mentally retarded children in PAI subjects at SMPLB Negeri Blitar City.

METHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach, which is a research procedure that produces descriptive data in the form of written or spoken words from people or observed behavior from people (subjects themselves). Qualitative research is carried out in a natural setting with the aim of interpreting the phenomena that occur by involving various existing methods. Qualitative research is not in the form of a count, but qualitative research seeks to understand and interpret the meaning of an event in the interaction of human behavior. Research that uses qualitative research aims to understand the object being studied in depth.

Research Techniques

In this case, the researcher wants to explore more in-depth information on how to educate mentally retarded students and then provide socialization for teachers to improve their teaching techniques by describing strategies for educating mentally retarded children in PAI subjects at SMPLB Negeri Blitar City. While the type of research used is a case study, namely research directed at collecting data, taking meaning, and gaining understanding from the case. Case studies can consist of one person, one class, or one school. In this study, the subjects taken were all mentally retarded students at SMPLB Negeri Blitar City.

Participants

Research that uses a qualitative approach emphasizes the importance of the presence of the researcher and the involvement of the researcher, in other words, the researcher functions as a key instrument in capturing meaning and at the same time as a data collection tool. Therefore, in this study the researcher acts as an observer and the presence of the researcher at the research location is known to the informant's status. In qualitative research the researcher as a human instrument, functions to determine the focus of research, select informants as data sources, collect, assess data quality, and analyze, interpret the data and make conclusions based on the findings.

With the presence of researchers, researchers can also collect data related to teacher strategies in educating mentally retarded children in PAI subjects at SMPLB Negeri Blitar City, analyze them and conclude on what is the focus of research that has been determined by previous researchers. The presence of the researcher as a full observer and supervising the object of research as well as conducting direct interviews with the principal, vice principal, PAI teachers, vice curriculum, and mentally retarded students at SMPLB Negeri Blitar City.

Research sites

To conduct this research, the researchers conducted direct research at the SMPLB Negeri Blitar City, precisely on Jalan Ir. Soekarno 425 Sentul, Kepanjen Kidul District. The school is a school that educates children with special needs that are different from normal children in general.

Data collection technique

To obtain data that is as expected, this research uses two methods of data collection, namely interviews and observations. This data collection tool is used by researchers to obtain objective data needed by researchers about the background of the research object, the real conditions in the field in general (Joseph, 2016).

The interview technique used is an unstructured interview, this technique is used so that the researcher is able to get as much information as possible by not following the interview guidelines that have been arranged systematically. This interview technique is used to obtain honest and correct answers as well as complete information from respondents and informants, regarding the object of the research.

The informants in this study included the principal, PAI teachers, homeroom teachers, and mentally retarded students at SMPLB Negeri Blitar City. Data collection through them is intended to get an idea of the ability of mentally retarded children to understand PAI subjects, as well as the strategies used by teachers in educating mentally retarded children, especially in PAI subjects.

The next technique, namely, the observation method is a method used for observing and recording the phenomena being investigated. So, observation is a method of collecting data using the five senses accompanied by detailed recording of the object of research.

In this observation, the researcher uses passive participation observation. In this case the researcher comes to the place of research or activities to be observed but is not involved in these activities. Therefore, in this observation the researcher's participation is only by coming to the location and paying attention to the surroundings without any direct active role from the researcher. What is meant by no direct active role is, that the researcher does not participate in the delivery of the material so that the researcher focuses more on making observations at the school. In this study, researchers observed PAI learning at SMPLB Negeri Blitar City.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

One of the junior high schools that educate mentally retarded children is the Blitar City State Junior High School. Where every student in the school certainly has different characters and abilities from one another. In this study, the research conducted interviews and initial observations to find out what future strategies need to be developed, as an effort to optimize teachers in educating.

Research Interviews and Observations

According to Responden 1, as the principal of the school, stated that the characteristics of mentally retarded children from a biological point of view are; the girls are very high, such as having more desires or lusts than boys with mental retardation. In addition, another characteristic of mentally retarded children is the similarity of faces. Because the IQ of mentally retarded children is lower than other children, which is around 50-75 whose thinking and understanding power is very limited, so to anticipate that mentally retarded children can be safe outside the home, parents must provide extra and stricter supervision.

This is reinforced by an explanation from Responden 2.

"Children with mental retardation do have a below average level of intelligence, they are very limited in vocabulary. They find it difficult to combine affixes, even they often speak backwards".

In addition, Responden 3 as a teacher, when asked for information about mentally retarded students said the following:

"In this special school, the mentally retarded students are from the light and moderate class of students. Which students with mild mental retardation do not need extra supervision like students who are moderate. They can be educated and trained. Children with moderate mental retardation are actually able to be invited to communicate but are not proficient at reading, writing, or arithmetic."

The Blitar City State Junior High School consists of mild and moderate mentally retarded children. Children who are classified as mild mentally retarded are able to be educated and trained. For example, reading, writing, arithmetic, sewing, cooking, making handicrafts. Mild mental retardation is easier to communicate with. Apart from that, their physical condition is not that conspicuous. They are able to protect themselves from any danger. Because of that, mentally disabled children do not need extra supervision. Not much different with mild mental retardation children (Vrasidas & Nicosia, 2001). Children with moderate mental retardation are also able to be invited to communicate. However, their weakness is that they are not very proficient in writing, reading, and arithmetic. Thus, when they asked who his name and home address they will answered clearly. They can work in the field but with little supervision. Likewise with self-protection from danger. Little attention and supervision is needed for the mental and social development of children with moderate mental retardation (Chew et al., 2018). The class division at the Blitar City State Junior High School is adjusted based on the level of ability. So, sometimes there are students who should be at the high school level but he still studies in the junior high school class.

Physical and mental conditions that are less than perfect are the tasks and challenges for teachers at SMPLB Negeri Blitar City, especially PAI teachers in educating mentally retarded children.

Physically, Islamic religious education is almost impossible to change anything, but fixing mentally and intellectually mentally retarded students is very likely to be optimized.

Moreover, their ability to accept and understand the material being taught, of course, will also experience differences with normal children, because mentally retarded children have a below normal level of intelligence ([Georghiades, 2000](#)). Even though the material provided has been simplified according to the abilities of mentally retarded children, they still experience difficulties. In implementing the PAI program for mentally retarded students, the curriculum used at SMPLB Negeri Blitar City uses the Education Unit Level Curriculum (KTSP). The Islamic Religious Education materials taught for mentally retarded children at the State Junior High School of Blitar City contain the main points of Islamic religious education material which are broadly as follows, namely:

- a. Islam
- b. Al-Qur'an
- c. Worship
- d. Morals.

However, the material taught is more emphasized on material that can and is usually applied in everyday life. Like the material about worship, namely purification and prayer. This material will be repeated more often than other materials so that they do not forget and can be applied when they are at home ([Wong, 2018](#)). Then for material about the Qur'an they are only taught to the extent of understanding and knowing, not to the indicator of being able to recite, memorize, and understand. The material taught also does not reach material on Islamic history.

Responden 2 explained:

"Although the material provided has been selected and simplified, there are still some materials that they are not able to understand. On the other hand, religion demands not only physical rituals but also rituals of the heart, namely faith. With an easier process, mentally retarded students can be taught to say the creed, but this is not the case when mentally retarded students are taught to believe in Allah. They are also difficult to understand about the meaning of reward and sin."

From this information, it can be seen that mentally retarded children are not able to imagine the things they learn. They are only quite able to accept what is conveyed but have difficulty understanding it. Things that are abstract cannot be reached by his mind.

Responden 4 added:

"In terms of learning Arabic as the main language in terms of ubudiyah to Allah SWT, mentally retarded students also experience difficulties. They find it difficult to follow the utterances in Arabic, memorize sentences in Arabic, read the Qur'an. But there are also 1-2 of them who can read the Qur'an".

From the information that Responden 5 gave, of course, it is very understandable when mentally retarded children have difficulty in pronouncing and memorizing Arabic sentences, because to memorize sentences in Indonesian, they have difficulty especially if they have to memorize Arabic.

Responden 5 added:

"When religious commemorations are held such as the Prophet's Birthday and Isro' Mi'roj, some of those who are able to read the Qur'an are selected to fill the event of reading the holy verses of the Qur'an, even though the reading is still not fluent."

This statement was reinforced by Responden 2.

"To read Arabic readings, most of them are only able to read Hijaiyah letters with guidance. However, there are also those who are able to read Hijaiyah letters fluently without full guidance, but not as fluently as children with normal IQs".

Some children with mental retardation at SMPLB Negeri Blitar City, when in class they are not enthusiastic, remain silent, do not follow what is instructed by the teacher, even just to imitate singing they don't want to. When his name is called, he will turn his head but only briefly after that he looks away again. However, when there is a material outside the classroom, namely practical material, the child is enthusiastic about following the subject matter ([Maphosa & Mashau, 2017](#)).

For students with normal intelligence levels, understanding of religious beliefs and teachings becomes easier to understand and instill in the heart. Meanwhile, mentally retarded students with low levels of intelligence are very difficult to instill faith values because mentally retarded students are easier to accept teachings through practice, touch and other physical activities that involve the five senses.

Responden 5 explained that this lack of intelligence in the end gave rise to problems when he had to instill the noble values of Islam, cultivate faith in Allah and his supernatural beings, teach about rewards and sins as well as the difficulties in conveying stories about Islam and the story of the Prophet Muhammad in the past first. So, that knowledge and morals that have been taken can be imitated.

Socially, mentally retarded students cannot take care of themselves optimally, have difficulty in leading themselves, are easily influenced, tend to play with younger children and are difficult to understand and apply the rules at school. Due to these circumstances, it is not easy to teach and educate mentally retarded children. The rules, knowledge, teachings and discipline implemented in schools with teacher supervision cannot be applied independently by mentally retarded students so that teachers must repeat the subject matter and practices previously taught.

According to Responden 6 as a administration staff, she said:

“Most of the things that have been received during the learning process at school will be lost instantly when students are out of school. This is because the condition of students who are unstable and easily influenced by new things. This greatly slows down the learning process. But when they were invited to perform the Dhuhur prayer in congregation at school, they were so enthusiastic. Here, the congregational Dhuhur prayer is regularly held between 11:30-12:30 WIB. ”

Responden 5 added that the success achieved in achieving the goals of Islamic education is estimated to only reach 30% of the average normal student. While the purpose of Islamic education in general is to increase faith, understanding, so as to become Moslem who believe and are devoted to Allah SWT, and have noble character in personal, community, and state of life. Some of them are able to understand the meaning of the teacher, but there are some of them who are not able to understand the meaning of the teacher's words.

In addition, in dealing with mentally retarded children like this, there is no need for the teacher to force all the material to be digested. Because if it is forced like that, the child does not have the desire to learn. It just takes persistence and patience. We always give examples of each of these materials, for example in the material for writing Hijaiyah letters, we first write one example on paper and then they imitate so on (Habibi et al., 2019). When students are really unable to understand the material, it means that students' understanding of the material cannot be continued, meaning that the material is really difficult for them. Moreover, PAI subject hours are limited, namely 2 hours per week.

In this case, it can be seen that the time given in learning especially PAI is the same as normal students in general. This of course is also one of the factors causing the PAI material to be less well absorbed by mentally retarded children. In teaching PAI at SMPLB Negeri Blitar City only use 2 hours a week. With only about 2 hours per week, the teacher must be able to take advantage of the time, choosing what subject matter should be delivered first, so that in 1 semester they can complete and teach PAI material according to what has been set in the curriculum.

On the other hand, in the interview, Responden 5 said:

“I am not a special graduate of special children's education, my focus is actually teaching in public schools, not special schools. So, I also have difficulty when it comes to teaching mentally retarded children. Teaching a mentally retarded child requires extra patience, patience as well. It's easier to teach kindergarten children than teaching mentally retarded children.”

The educational background of teachers of mentally retarded students who do not come from special graduates for special children's education is also an obstacle when delivering material and this is one of the importance of debriefing or socializing to teachers in special schools.

Strategies that need to be improved in educating mentally retarded children

For the sake of smooth PAI learning facilities are needed, that can support the learning process, while the facilities provided by schools in supporting the development of PAI learning for mentally retarded students are; the presence of a prayer room as a means of habituation to congregational prayers and training student discipline, libraries and other facilities that can support PAI teaching and learning activities.

In addition, from the observations that the researchers did, that there also involved students actively in every learning activity. Every now and then the teacher invites students to carry out learning at the mosque in the form of congregational prayer practices, the practice of Hajj rituals, so that students get used to the form of cooperation with other students. The PAI teacher also provides opportunities for students to tell their daily experiences, how students pray, with whom students carry out congregations, also gives students the opportunity to ask questions about new things that have not been mastered as long as they are relevant to the topics discussed that may be found during the lesson outside class hours ([Farwati et al., 2017](#)). PAI teachers also give assignments in the form of homework and practice of worship activities tailored to the personal abilities of students. To foster student interest in reading, PAI teachers allocate 15 minutes of study time to read the Qur'an once every 2 weeks. For students who have not been able to carry out Taharah correctly, the PAI teacher analyzes the child's weaknesses and continues to provide guidance to the optimal point. Meanwhile, for students with poor reading skills of the Qur'an, the teacher will optimize it again by repeating the Hijaiyah letter reading before the core learning begins. One of the ways to learn PAI for mentally retarded students at SMPLB Negeri Blitar City is through a functional approach, namely internalizing the values of Islamic religious education into other general subjects, such as skills education, physical and health education, as well as other education taught there.

Research Findings

In Blitar City State Junior High School, there are mild and moderate mentally retarded children. Children who are classified as mild mentally retarded can be educated and trained and are easier to communicate with. Meanwhile for children with moderate mental retardation, they are not as proficient as children with mild mental retardation ([Widodo et al., 2021](#)). The curriculum used at SMPLB Negeri Blitar City is the same as public schools, namely the Education Unit Level Curriculum (KTSP) which includes: Islam, the Qur'an, Worship and Morals, but the material taught is simplified according to the abilities and conditions of the mentally retarded child. Mentally retarded children have difficulty in pronouncing and memorizing Arabic sentences. The rules, knowledge, teachings and discipline implemented in schools with teacher supervision cannot be applied independently by mentally retarded students, so that teachers must repeat the subject matter and practices previously taught ([Ramadhani et al., 2019](#)). Mentally retarded students with a low level of intelligence make it difficult for educators to instill faith values because mentally retarded children are more receptive to learning through practice, and other physical activities that involve the five senses ([Francisco et al., 2020](#)).

Strategies that need to be done by teachers in educating mentally retarded children in PAI subjects. In addition, seeking information from parents which is then used as a provision for teachers to guide students in learning also needs to be done. After receiving information about the characteristics of the students, the teacher will develop strategies or efforts to educate the mentally retarded child ([Purwanti, 2021](#)).

Relate the material to be studied with the knowledge they have through questions, demonstrations, and dramatizations. Learning while playing, as well as giving appreciation to those who complete their tasks according to the teacher's orders. Get used to applying the values taught in PAI material. For example, by requiring Dhuhur prayers in congregation at school, with the aim that they get used to praying when they are at home. One of the ways to learn PAI for mentally retarded students at SMPLB Negeri Blitar City is through a functional approach, namely the internalization of Islamic religious education values into other general subjects.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of research findings in the field regarding teacher strategies in educating mentally retarded children in PAI subjects at SMPLB Negeri Blitar City, and in accordance with the research focus that has been stated, conclusions can be drawn including 1). The ability of mentally retarded children at the Blitar City State Junior High School in receiving and understanding PAI subject matter in an academic assessment is below average, but they are strived to be educated and equipped with skills as much as possible in various ways, so that they are able to develop their abilities and train their independence, including; being trained in Rabbana, requiring congregational prayers at school, and memorizing short letters. And some of them can read the Qur'an and memorize short letters. Mentally retarded students cannot accept abstract learning materials, and learning by means of lectures. The learning carried out must be shown in real or practiced; 2). The strategy that needs to be done by teachers in educating mentally retarded children in PAI subjects is to use individual learning. This individual learning is considered effective and efficient, considering that mentally retarded students have below average intelligence, as well as their lack of ability in socializing and communicating. This individual learning is carried out by limiting the number of students in a study group, a maximum of 8 students. Then communicate with parents to find out how far the progress of students. Determination of teaching facilities in a systematic, varied manner and maximize the use of other supporting facilities such as collections of books in the library, utilizing the prayer room. Class management and Islamic religious learning are adjusted to the level of intelligence of students, using language that is easily understood by mentally retarded children, making fun classes, and making it easier for students to memorize by making songs on material that requires memorization and repetition of material must be done.

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