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## Analyzing Therapy for Children with Special Needs: Slow Learners and Mentally Impaired Using the Literature Review Method

Rafael Lisinus, Nadia Chairani<sup>1</sup>, Alissa Michelle Depari<sup>2</sup>, Sederhana Rambe<sup>3</sup>, Raisya Adinda<sup>4</sup>, Maghfirah Ramayulia<sup>5</sup> Hasibuan, Fidelia Beatrice Simarmata<sup>6</sup>, Clara Naulina Sitorus<sup>7</sup>, Sri Lumina Widya P<sup>8</sup>, Walinda Alfilia<sup>9</sup>, Agnes Exaudita S<sup>10</sup>, Puja Albaima<sup>11</sup>

Faculty of Education, Psychology Education Study Program, Guidance and Counseling, Medan State University

Email: [nadiachairani5@gmail.com](mailto:nadiachairani5@gmail.com) , [raisyaadinda77@gmail.com](mailto:raisyaadinda77@gmail.com)

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### Abstract

Children with physical and motor disorders are people with abnormalities or disorders in the muscle, bone, and joint systems, which can result in impaired coordination, communication, adaptation, mobilization, and impaired development of personal integrity. This research aims to find out the basic concepts and appropriate stages of therapy for children with special needs with intellectual, physical, motor, and mental retardation, and slow learners. With this research, the education system of inclusive schools for children with special needs is given more attention by implementing what is appropriate for children with special needs. Intellectual disabilities, physical motor skills, mental retardation, and slow learners. This research method is a literature review. Method of searching for articles in research journal databases and searching online. This Literature Review was synthesized using a narrative method. The data used in this research is secondary data. Based on search results on Google Scholar with the keywords children with special needs, physical motor barriers, intellectual barriers, and slow learners, researchers found 1,180 journals that matched these keywords. One way to overcome the dysfunction that occurs in a mentally retarded person so that the body organs of a mentally retarded child function optimally is by carrying out various types of therapy.

**Keywords:** Children with special needs, slow learners, mentally retarded

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### Introduction

Children with special needs are defined as those who need special education and services to fully develop their human potential. According to Heward, ABK is children with special characteristics that are different from children in general without always showing mental, emotional, or physical disabilities. Meanwhile, according to Divine, the crew explained as follows. Children with special needs have temporary or permanent special needs, requiring more intense educational services. According to Mangunsong, the deviations that cause children with special needs to be different lie in differences in mental characteristics, sensory, physical, and neuromuscular abilities, social and emotional behavior, communication skills, or a combination of two or three. Children with special needs (ABK) are significantly aware of complaints/deviations (physical, mental, intellectual, social and emotional), in the process of growth and development compared with other children who are suitable and therefore require special education services. (Saputra, 2016) From the opinion above, it can be concluded that children with special needs are children who have limitations in certain things, so they require special needs and special attention, including in terms of education.

Children with physical and motor disorders are people with forms of abnormalities or disorders in the muscle, bone and joint systems which can result in impaired coordination, communication, adaptation, mobilization and impaired development of personal integrity. A mentally retarded child is a child who has intellectual disabilities, so to speak does not cause difficulties in adapting to the environment. In addition, it is explained that children with intellectual disabilities are children who have intelligence that is significantly below average and accompanied by an inability to adapt behavior that appears during development; children are slow learners on slow learners and can almost be found in every inclusive school for children. The learning page has the physical appearance is the same as normal children, but 8-year-old children have intellectual abilities that are slightly different from normal children because the development of their cognitive functions is slower than normal for their age. Learning page children need special education services according to their needs and development characteristics to develop human potential optimally.

Education is a basic need for every human being without exception, including those who have limited abilities (disabilities). As stated in Republic of Indonesia Law Number 20 of 2003 Article 5, citizens who have physical, emotional, mental, intellectual, and/or social disabilities have the right to obtain special education, namely special education. (Damayanti, 2015). Education is the process of changing the attitudes and behavior of a person or group of people to mature humans through teaching and training efforts. According to Longeveld, education is providing conscious and deliberate assistance to a child (who is not yet an adult) in his growth towards maturity in the sense of being able to stand independently and be responsible morally or for all his actions according to his choice. Children with special needs usually attend special schools (SLB) according to their respective specificities. (Damayanti, 2015). Inclusive education is an alternative for children with special needs who experience physical limitations but can still follow the material taught in public schools.

Education is changing the behavior of mature individuals through teaching and training efforts. Therefore, education is the right of every individual, as confirmed in the 1945 Constitution, article 31 paragraph (1), that: "Every citizen has the right to receive education." If we refer to this article, education is also a right for individuals who experience physical, mental, and intellectual disabilities. This is stated in Law of the Republic of Indonesia Number 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System, Article (2), that: "Citizens who have physical, emotional, mental, intellectual and social disabilities have the right to receive special education"

Children with special needs must receive special education services, a formal place in the world of education for children with special needs, namely Special Schools. Special Schools are schools specifically designed for children who experience various types of disabilities, such as physical, mental, and social disorders. Mental retardation is a group of students with mental disabilities who have below-average intellectual abilities and have limitations in thinking. Such include low thinking ability, weak attention and memory, difficulty thinking abstractly difficulty controlling emotions, and lack of logical thinking. The limitations of mentally retarded students cause them to experience difficulties in developing basic skills, such as numeracy readiness skills, namely: distinguishing between big and small, many or few, or long and short of an object. This difficulty is caused by the characteristics of mentally retarded students who experience obstacles in their intelligence so that they experience obstacles in adapting, lack of motor skills, lack of motivation, poor concentration, and get bored quickly. The difficulties experienced by mentally retarded students allow students to make mistakes in understanding the material. This causes mentally retarded students to experience difficulties in receiving lessons, especially Mathematics lessons.

There was also previous research conducted by "Muhammad 'Ainul Yaqin" in 2015 regarding the Role of Parents in Instilling Morals in Mentally Disabled Children at Semarang State Special Schools (SLB) (Islamic guidance perspective). This research explains that despite all the obstacles to the attitudes and behavior of mentally retarded children, parents still have a role in forming attitudes, behavior, and character in the home. In line with this research, researchers assume that apart from the role of parents, there is also a role for schools in meeting the developmental needs of mentally retarded children. Due

to delays in the development of their intelligence, mentally retarded students will experience various obstacles in their efforts to fulfill these needs; some of them even achieve some or less, depending on the severity of the obstacles the child has and the attention given by their environment. According to Witmer & Kotinsky (Frampton & Gail, 1955: 117-119) describes these eight needs, namely:

- Feeling assured that one's needs will be met (The Sense of Trust)
- Feeling of authority to regulate oneself (The Sense of Autonomy)
- The feeling of being able to act according to one's initiative (The Sense of Initiative)
- Feeling of satisfaction at having carried out the task (The Sense of Duty and Accomplishment)
- Feeling proud of one's identity (The Sense of Identity)
- Feeling of Familiarity (The Sense of Intimacy)
- Parental Sense (The Parental Sense)
- Sense of Integrity (Integrity Sense)
- Apart from the eight special needs previously described, according to Astaty, there are also needs of mentally retarded children that can be broadly grouped into physical needs and psychological needs. These needs are quite important for children with intellectual disabilities, so that the child can grow and develop normally with the help of everyone around him.

In accordance with the explanation above, it can be seen that education is a very important need for all human beings without exception, including those who have limited abilities (disabilities). In the education process for children with special needs, especially children with special needs who are Slow Learners and Mentally Disabled, they need special education services in accordance with the characteristics of their needs and development to develop human potential optimally, namely by applying therapy methods to children with special needs (ABK).

Based on this, here the author conducted research using the literature review method to analyze and find out appropriate therapy to be applied to children with special needs, especially children who are slow learners and mentally retarded in the learning process.

## Research Method

This research method is a "Literature Review". A literature review is a critical process of collecting, evaluating, and synthesizing various literature sources relevant to the research topic. By conducting a literature review, researchers can gain an in-depth understanding of current research developments and identify existing research gaps. Literature, or what is also known as literature in Indonesian, refers to all types of writing that can be used as references or reference material in various fields of research or scientific writing.

The data used in this research is secondary data. Method of searching for articles in research journal databases and searching online. The database search used was "Google Scholar" from 2013 to 2023. For the article search, the keywords used were also included in data collection: "children with special needs, physical motor barriers, intellectual barriers, and slow learners."

This Literature Review was synthesized using a narrative method by grouping similar extracted data according to the results measured to answer the objectives of research journals that meet the inclusion criteria, then collected and made a journal summary including the name of the researcher, year of publication of the journal, country of research, research title, method and summary of results or findings. Based on the first search results, hundreds of articles may be found, so it is necessary to have criteria to homogenize the articles found so that there are not too many articles obtained.

Based on search results on Google Scholar with the keywords children with special needs, physical motor barriers, intellectual barriers, and slow learners, researchers found 1,180 journals that matched

these keywords. A total of 1,050 journals from journals found according to the search keywords were then screened; 1,042 journals were excluded because full-text articles were not available. For journals that met the inclusion range of 8 journals, 5 were excluded, so 3 full-text journals were reviewed.

Criteria	Inclusion
Period	The maximum period for journal publication is 10 years.
Time	(2013-2023)
Language	Indonesian
Subject	The child with special needed
Journal Type	Original Research Article (not from a review)
Availability	text Full Text

## Result And Discussion

### a. Understanding “Mentally Impaired and Slow Learners”

According to Reiss (in Suharmini, 2007: 69) “mentally retarded children” are children who have intellectual disorders, causing difficulty in adapting to their environment. Apart from that, Kustawan (2016) added that children with intellectual disabilities are children who have intelligence that is significantly below average and is accompanied by an inability to adapt to behavior that appears during development.

“Slow learners” have low learning achievements or slightly below the average of children in general, in one or all academic areas. Children who are slow learners or slow learners are limited to academic abilities and other abilities such as language or communication, emotional, social, or moral aspects. A slow learner is someone who has low achievement (below the average for children in general) in one or all academic areas but is not classified as a mentally retarded child. The IQ test score is between 70 – and 90 (Dunlap, p. 30). Children like this are usually caused by several things, one of which is physical violence or mental violence (Quotient, p. 12).

### b. Learning needs of children with “intellectual disabilities and slow learners”

- Children with “intellectual disabilities” have special learning needs. Here are some things to pay attention to:
  1. The curriculum must be adapted to the child's ability level. This may involve simplifying the material, repeating it, or using additional resources.
  2. Children with intellectual disabilities may need additional support from a teacher or special therapist who can help them with their learning process.
  3. use various teaching methods, such as visual, auditory, and kinesthetic, to facilitate understanding children with different intellectual disabilities.
  4. Besides academic skills, it is also important to develop daily living skills, such as social skills, independence, and communication skills.
  5. Continuously evaluate your child's development to ensure that they are making progress and identify areas that need additional attention.
  6. Collaborating with the child's parents or guardians is key. They have a deep understanding of a child's needs and can assist in the development of a suitable learning program.
  7. Facilitate an inclusive environment in schools, where children with intellectual disabilities can interact with their peers and feel accepted.
  8. Provide emotional support to these children. Patience and positive encouragement can help them overcome obstacles in the learning process.

- Children with obstacles as "slow learners" are those who need extra time to understand and master academic material compared to their peers. The following are some of the learning needs of children with obstacles as "slow learners":
  1. Provide these children additional time and individual attention to help them understand the material better. Sometimes, one-on-one teaching can be very beneficial.
  2. Adjust the learning speed to the child's learning speed. This may mean slowing down the pace of teaching and allowing more time to process information.
  3. Use simpler and clearer material. Avoid using complicated technical terms and consider using images or illustrations to aid understanding.
  4. Focus on developing basic math, reading, and writing skills. These basic skills are important for further academic success.
  5. Use formative assessments regularly to monitor your child's progress. This allows you to customize teaching according to their needs.
  6. Slow learner children may need extra support from a teacher or special education specialist.
  7. Encourage positive self-esteem by providing constructive feedback and praising your child's achievements, no matter how small.
  8. Teach children effective study skills, such as time management, organization, and problem-solving strategies.
  9. Involve parents in the child's education process. They can help monitor the child's progress at home and provide additional support.

**b. Strategies for Dealing with “Children with Special Needs”**

1. Understand Your Child's Needs. Take the time to understand your child's obstacles or needs. Every child is different, and a deep understanding will help you design an appropriate approach.
2. Be Your Child's Advocate: Be the voice that speaks for your child in the school and community. Make sure their needs are met, and their rights are respected.
3. Seek Support and Information Look for peer parent support groups or special education resources to get information, advice, and support from people going through something similar.
4. Communicate with the School Establish strong communication with your child's school. Speak with teachers, educational specialists, and other school staff to ensure appropriate educational planning.
5. Get to know your child's progress and monitor your child's development regularly. This helps you know what is working and what needs improvement in their learning approach.
6. Provide Emotional Support. Children with special needs may face stress and frustration. Make sure they feel emotionally supported and given positive encouragement.
7. Importance of Balance: Remember to maintain balance in your life. Don't ignore your own needs and the needs of your family as a whole.
8. Educate Yourself and continue to learn about your child's special conditions or needs. The more you know, the better you can support them.
9. Accept Yourself and Your Child, accept your child as they are. Accepting yourself as a parent with these particular challenges is also important. Mistakes are part of the process.
10. Establish relationships with professionals. Collaborate with therapists, psychologists, or doctors with experience caring for children with special needs.

Remember that each child is a “unique individual,” and many resources and supports are available to help you on this journey. Talk to people who can help and advice, and always prioritize your child's well-being and development.

**c. Types of Therapy for “Slow Learner and Mentally Disabled Children”**

1. Types of therapy for mentally retarded children

One way to overcome the dysfunction that occurs in a mentally retarded person so that the body organs of a mentally retarded child function optimally is by carrying out various types of therapy. The therapy itself has the aim of correcting existing dysfunction, preventing new dysfunction, and training so that activities can run optimally despite having a disability. One form of therapy carried out

for mentally retarded children is through sensory integration therapy. Sensory integration therapy aims to create, increase, or improve the level of independence of someone who experiences physical or mental disorders.

"Sensory integration" therapy as a form of occupation and treatment for children with certain conditions is often used as a way to make improvements, both to improve developmental disorders or learning disorders, social interaction disorders, or other behavior (IDAI (Indonesian Pediatrician Association), 2011, p. 98). The therapy is a process of recognizing, changing, and differentiating sensations from the sensory system to produce a response in the form of "Purposeful Adaptive Behavior."

Sensory integration therapy is given to mentally retarded children by teaching general behavior by providing a reward and punishment system. If the child does what he is told correctly, he is praised. On the other hand, children can be punished if they do something wrong. With this sensory integration therapy program, activities for mentally retarded children can be handled appropriately and correctly so that mentally retarded children can live and mingle generally in the wider community.

Several research results related to sensory integration therapy show that speech and sensory integration therapy should be given to children from the start. Speech therapy and sensory integration in children who are late in speaking have an important role in determining the child's subsequent language and motor development (Sunanik, 2013, pp. 19–44).

Other research states that children can carry out activities developed due to the intervention of walking online activity with sensory integration therapy, which affects the child's gross motor skills (Yahya, A. Kurniawan, A. Samawi, A., 2015, p. 325). Meanwhile, Jati et al.'s research stated a decrease in the frequency, duration, and intensity of temper tantrum behavior after receiving sensory story treatment. (Jati, S. N, Widyorini, E. Roswita, Y, 2012, p. 234).

## 2. Types of therapy for slow learner children

"Cognitive therapy" is carried out by stimulating a person's behavior. According to Santrock (2008), applied behavior is the application of operant conditioning principles to change human behavior. Three applied behaviors are important in the field of education, namely: 1) increasing desired behavior, 2) using encouragement and formation, 3) and reducing undesirable behavior.

There are four skills to improve student learning: listening, planning, doing, and checking. According to Meichenbaum, in modifying cognitive behavior, students can be taught how to use self-instruction; this can be done by including dialogue and interaction between teachers and students, modeling, motivational strategies, feedback, and aligning tasks according to student development.

Cognitive therapy is a form of training in cognitive development and management through applying certain treatments to a person. 2. Memory Ability is an individual's ability to receive, process, and recall stimuli received as memories. The stages carried out can be explained as follows:

1. The first stage was a pre-test to determine the initial memory abilities of children who were slow learners by using several sub-tests on the Binet test tool, which refers to vocabulary and memory abilities.
2. Implementing cognitive therapy adapted to the theme of 6 meetings to stimulate and train memory skills in children in the slow learner category. The cognitive therapy used in this research uses several puzzle game models to stimulate the memory abilities of slow-learner students.
3. Carrying out a post-test to determine the effect of cognitive therapy that has been given on memory abilities, using test equipment that has been used in the pre-test on students who are slow learners.

For students with learning disabilities, executive control processes (metacognitive strategies) such as planning, organizing, and adapting are very important processes; some approaches teach strategies directly by utilizing memory (Deshler et al., in Woolfolk. 2009). Presley (Woolfolk. 2009), developed a cognitive strategy model as a guide for developing students' metacognitive strategies.

## 4. "Occupational therapy" for slow-learner children

Occupational therapy or occupational therapy comes from the words occupational and therapy; occupational itself means activity, and therapy means healing and recovery. Eleonor Clark

Slagle was one of the pioneers in developing OT or occupational therapy, along with Adolf Meyer and William Rush Dutton. Occupational therapy in children facilitates appropriate sensory and motor functions in their growth and development to support their ability to play, learn, and interact in their environment. Occupational therapy is carried out through activities or works for children who experience sensory-motor disorders.

Occupational therapy generally emphasizes fine motor skills; apart from that, occupational therapy also aims to help a person carry out daily activities, productive activities, and use of free time. Occupational therapy is a type of health therapy that is part of medical rehabilitation. In occupational therapy, people with disabilities will be trained to carry out daily activities to reduce dependence on other people.

The principles of occupational therapy include creating movement and carrying out daily activities. Occupational therapy aims to help individuals achieve independence in all aspects of their lives. Basically, occupational therapy focuses on a sensory or motor approach or a combination thereof to improve the ability to feel touch, taste, sound, and movement. Occupational therapy also includes games and social skills, training hand strength, grip, cognition, and following directions. In occupational therapy, therapists usually consult with doctors, nurses, teachers, and social workers or counselors.

#### **d. Forms of Therapy for Slow Learner Children**

- “Occupational Therapy”
  1. Meronce Steps:
    - Prepare tools and materials such as beads and thread
    - Take the thread and insert the beads into the hole until it is as long as the thread provided
    - Then shape the thread according to your wishes, such as making a bracelet, necklace, etc
  2. Moving rice
    - Prepare tools and materials such as rice, containers
    - Then move the rice from one container to another until it's finished
    - Repeat over and over again
    - Pinching and unpinning
    - Prepare tools and materials such as clothespins and paper
    - Take the paper, then attach the clothespins to the paper provided on all sides
    - Then remove the clothespin again
    - Repeat these steps until finished

#### **e. Forms of Therapy for Intellectually Disabled Children**

- Steps for integrative sensory therapy using the DTT (Discrete Trial Training) technique
  - Give the first instruction
  - Give the second instruction
  - Give the third instruction
  - Give your child a prompt

Prompt means the help we give after the child cannot respond appropriately to the first, 2nd, and 3rd instructions. So, we still allow the child to remember what we have taught, but the limit is only three times. The fourth, give him help. So, when a child makes a mistake or is distracted or silent when we give instructions, we help with the fourth instruction. Prompt that can be given at least once. If the child understands and comprehends what we have taught, then we carry out a technique called EO, namely Establishment Operation.

When doing EO, the first thing we do is repeat. We repeat the exact instructions 1-3 times; after it turns out to be correct 3 times, we do a switch, namely replacing the instructions with another activity unrelated to the lesson we have just taught the child. After switching back, we return to the initial learning to discover that the child still remembers the previous learning.

## Conclusion

“Intellectually retarded children” are children who have intellectual disorders, causing difficulty in adapting to their environment. A slow learner is someone who has low achievement (below the average for children in general) in one or all academic areas but is not classified as a mentally retarded child. Children like this are usually caused by several things, one of which is physical violence or mental violence.

Children with “intellectual disabilities have special learning needs.” One is that abilities must be adjusted to the child's abilities. Meanwhile, one of the learning needs for children who are slow learners is using simpler and clearer material. To deal with the needs of slow learners and mentally retarded children, you must use appropriate and careful strategies according to the child's needs. Several types of therapy that can be used to help slow learners and mentally retarded children include sensory therapy, cognitive therapy, and occupational therapy.

Sensory integration therapy aims to create, increase, or improve the level of independence of someone who experiences physical or mental disorders. Cognitive therapy is carried out by stimulating a person's behavior. Behavioral therapy is the application of operant conditioning principles to change human behavior. Remember that every child is unique, and many resources and support are available to help you on this journey. Talk to people who can help and advise, and always prioritize your child's welfare and development.

According to Mangunsong, the deviations that cause children with special needs to be different lie in differences in mental characteristics, sensory, physical, and neuromuscular abilities, social and emotional behavior, communication skills, or a combination of two or three. Children with special needs (ABK) are significantly aware of complaints/deviations (physical, mental, intellectual, social, and emotional) in the process of growth and development compared with other children who are suitable and, therefore, require special education services. (Saputra, 2016).

One form of therapy carried out for mentally retarded children is through sensory integration therapy. Sensory integration therapy aims to create, increase, or improve the level of independence of someone who experiences physical or mental disorders.

Cognitive therapy is carried out by stimulating a person's behavior. According to Santrock (2008), applied behavior is the application of operant conditioning principles to change human behavior. Three applied behaviors are important in the field of education, namely: 1) increasing desired behavior, 2) using encouragement and formation, 3) and reducing undesirable behavior.

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