
DI KELAS yang TAK BIASA : KOMUNIKASI TERAPEUTIK SEBAGAI JEMBATAN HARAPAN ANAK BERKEBUTUHAN KHUSUS

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to explore the implementation of therapeutic communication in supporting the development of children with special needs through dynamic interactions between teachers, therapists, and parents. A qualitative approach using the Focus Group Discussion (FGD) method was applied in this study, which was conducted at Special Harmony School and involved four teachers, four therapists, and four parents of students. The study is grounded in two primary theories: Joyce Travelbee's Human-to-Human Relationship Model and Imogene King's Theory of Goal Attainment. The findings reveal that social inclusion can be realized through empathetic and understanding interactions in daily life, where a supportive social environment greatly facilitates the effective implementation of therapeutic communication in the children's lives. However, the study also identified significant challenges, particularly the children's dependence on gadgets, which hampers their ability to engage in optimal social interaction. The role of the family, especially parents and siblings, proves to be a crucial element in the therapy process and in the development of the children's social abilities. Psychological denial experienced by parents regarding their child's condition was found to be an obstacle to effective therapeutic communication and the child's overall developmental progress. These findings highlight the urgency for deeper authentic empathy, not just a cognitive approach, in addressing the needs of children with special needs. Therapeutic communication acts as a bridge connecting the interactions among individuals involved in the child's developmental process, aligning with the concept of mutual goals in King's theory and the human closeness emphasized in Travelbee's model. Therefore, a cross-role collaborative approach (involving teachers, therapists, and families) that emphasizes meaningful interaction, deep emotional connection, and jointly agreed developmental goals is essential to optimizing the therapy and holistic development of the child.

Keywords: Children with Special Needs, Interaction, Interpersonal Communication, Therapeutic Communication.

INTRODUCTION

Communication strategies have progressively impacted multiple domains, extending beyond institutional contexts to familial microstructures. Specifically, communicative processes significantly contribute to the developmental trajectories of children, including those with special needs, within both domestic and educational settings (Suriyanto et al., 2025). In this context, the role of therapeutic communication emerges as a pivotal mechanism in addressing the unique developmental needs of children with special needs (CSN). The importance of therapeutic communication in supporting the developmental processes of children with special needs (CSN) has gained widespread recognition.

Therapeutic communication, often described as purposeful and empathetic interaction between caregivers and patients, plays a pivotal role in fostering positive

developmental outcomes for children with special needs. This is particularly true in contexts where children face unique challenges, such as in coastal areas where environmental and social factors intersect to shape the therapeutic landscape. In North Jakarta, Indonesia, these factors are even more prominent, as children with special needs in these regions experience complex barriers to development, including environmental pollution, limited healthcare access, and social inequalities. The need for effective therapeutic communication is critical to overcoming these challenges, yet understanding how these communication strategies are implemented and their effectiveness in such settings remains a relatively underexplored area of research. Effective communication can still be achieved despite the presence of disabilities in either the communicator or the recipient (Zera & Febianca, 2020).

The significance of therapeutic communication in the developmental process of CSN has been widely recognized in academic literature. Effective therapeutic communication involves not only the transmission of information but also the establishment of trust, empathy, and understanding. These qualities are central to the development of a triadic alliance among the key stakeholders: teachers, therapists, and parents. Each of these groups plays a significant role in the child's development and must collaborate to ensure that the therapeutic process is holistic and sustainable. However, in many parts of the world, including North Jakarta, the success of this collaboration is often impeded by structural and ecological barriers that undermine the effectiveness of therapeutic communication.

North Jakarta, a coastal urban area, provides a unique setting for the study of therapeutic communication in the context of CSN. As a densely populated region with a rich maritime history, North Jakarta faces a number of environmental challenges that have far-reaching effects on the quality of life of its residents. One of the most significant challenges is marine pollution, which negatively impacts the local fishing industry and the nutritional quality of fish, an essential protein source for children in the region. Pollutants from industrial activities and waste contribute to the degradation of marine ecosystems, leading to a reduction in the availability of safe and nutritious food. For children with special needs, whose development is particularly sensitive to nutrition, this environmental degradation poses a major challenge to their physical and cognitive development.

In addition to environmental factors, social inequalities further complicate the therapeutic process for children with special needs in North Jakarta. Limited access to quality healthcare and educational services is a persistent issue in the region. This inequality is not only a result of socioeconomic factors but also due to the under-resourced infrastructure that often neglects the needs of vulnerable populations, including CSN. As such, the ability of parents, teachers, and therapists to implement effective therapeutic communication strategies is often constrained by these systemic barriers. For instance, parents in low-income areas may lack the resources to access specialized healthcare services, while teachers and therapists may not have the necessary support or training to engage in therapeutic communication that meets the complex needs of CSN.

The aim of this study is to explore how therapeutic communication is implemented in the context of supporting the developmental processes of children with special needs in North Jakarta, with a particular focus on the triadic relationship between teachers, therapists, and parents. Understanding how these stakeholders collaborate and communicate is essential to improving the outcomes of therapeutic interventions. In doing

so, this study draws on the theoretical frameworks of Joyce Travelbee's Human-to-Human Relationship Model and Imogene King's Theory of Goal Attainment. Both models offer valuable insights into the interpersonal dynamics that underpin therapeutic communication and are particularly relevant for understanding the collaborative efforts required to support CSN.

Travelbee's model emphasizes the importance of empathy and mutual understanding in the caregiving relationship. According to Travelbee (1971), therapeutic communication is a process of human connection that occurs when caregivers (such as teachers and therapists) genuinely seek to understand and respond to the emotional and psychological needs of their patients (or in this case, the children with special needs). The development of this connection is gradual, progressing through stages that involve the creation of rapport, trust, and a shared understanding of the individual's needs. Travelbee's model is particularly useful for understanding how caregivers can foster an environment where children with special needs feel heard and supported, which is crucial for their emotional and social development.

Similarly, King's Theory of Goal Attainment provides a framework for understanding how therapeutic communication can be used to set and achieve developmental goals for CSN. King (1992) argues that effective communication is central to the establishment of goals that are mutually agreed upon by the caregiver and the individual. In the context of CSN, this involves collaboration between teachers, therapists, and parents to set realistic and achievable developmental goals. These goals may pertain to various aspects of the child's growth, including physical, emotional, social, and cognitive development. King's model emphasizes the importance of this collaborative goal-setting process in creating a shared vision for the child's development, which can guide therapeutic interventions and enhance their effectiveness.

Despite the importance of these theoretical frameworks, there is a growing recognition that therapeutic communication cannot be understood in isolation from the broader social and ecological context in which it occurs. Recent research has highlighted the significant impact of ecological factors on the effectiveness of therapeutic interventions. For example, Chen et al. (2020) argue that environmental factors, such as pollution and climate change, play a critical role in shaping health outcomes, including those for children with special needs. In coastal areas like North Jakarta, where marine pollution is a significant issue, the quality of the environment directly influences the physical health of children, which in turn affects their developmental progress. Pollution-related health issues, such as respiratory problems and malnutrition, can undermine the effectiveness of therapeutic communication by creating physical barriers to development.

Furthermore, Wahyuni and Rachmawati (2021) emphasize the need for multi-stakeholder collaboration in therapeutic models, particularly in contexts where social and environmental inequalities exist. They argue that effective therapeutic communication requires not only individual efforts by teachers, therapists, and parents but also systemic changes that address the root causes of inequality. This includes improving access to healthcare, education, and social services for children with special needs, as well as addressing environmental factors that negatively impact their development. SURIANTO et al., (2025) further underscores the pivotal role that a child's closest social environment plays

in shaping their learning process. Without these systemic changes, therapeutic communication efforts may be less effective or even counterproductive.

The current study seeks to address these gaps in the literature by examining the role of therapeutic communication in supporting CSN in the coastal areas of North Jakarta. It aims to explore how teachers, therapists, and parents collaborate to support the development of children with special needs and how ecological and social factors influence the therapeutic process. Through this research, we hope to gain a deeper understanding of the challenges and opportunities that arise when therapeutic communication is implemented in a context marked by environmental pollution and social inequality. The findings from this study will contribute to the development of more effective therapeutic models that integrate ecological and social factors and provide a more comprehensive approach to supporting the developmental needs of children with special needs in coastal urban settings.

Despite the promise of therapeutic communication in enhancing developmental outcomes for CSN, the study acknowledges several limitations. First, the research is geographically limited to North Jakarta, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other regions with different environmental and social conditions. Additionally, the study relies on qualitative data gathered through Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), which, while rich in detail, may not capture the full range of experiences or perspectives of all stakeholders. Finally, the research focuses on a relatively small sample size of teachers, therapists, and parents, which may not fully represent the diversity of experiences within the broader population of CSN in coastal urban areas.

Nevertheless, the study holds significant potential for informing future research and policy development. By examining the intersection of therapeutic communication and ecological and social factors, it aims to provide valuable insights that can guide the development of more inclusive and sustainable therapeutic models. These models could be adapted to other coastal urban areas facing similar challenges, contributing to the global effort to support the development of children with special needs in environmentally and socially complex settings.

Literatur Review

Therapeutic communication is an essential practice for fostering the well-being and development of children with special needs (CSN), particularly in settings where environmental and socioeconomic challenges complicate the communication process. This chapter explores the development of therapeutic communication as a practice, emphasizing the key theories that inform its application, including Joyce Travelbee's Human-to-Human Relationship Model (Shelton, 2016) and Imogene King's Theory of Goal Attainment (King, 2001). The chapter will also address the influence of ecological factors such as environmental pollution and socioeconomic inequalities on the therapeutic process and how these elements shape the outcomes of therapeutic interventions in children with special needs, especially in coastal urban environments like North Jakarta, Indonesia.

The Concept of Therapeutik Communication

Therapeutic communication has emerged as a critical component in the provision of care across healthcare, educational, and social services. In healthcare, therapeutic communication is a focused interaction aimed at promoting the emotional, physical, and

psychological well-being of the patient (Hojat et al., 2016). For children with special needs, effective communication becomes paramount, not only in supporting their immediate care needs but also in fostering their long-term development (Capp et al., 2017). Therapeutic communication is rooted in empathy, where the caregiver—be it a teacher, therapist, or parent engages in purposeful dialogue to create a supportive environment conducive to the child's development.

In children with special needs, therapeutic communication has been found to facilitate a variety of positive outcomes. For instance, children who experience consistent and empathetic communication from caregivers tend to exhibit improved emotional regulation, reduced anxiety, and better social interaction skills (Backer, 2016). The quality of communication between caregivers and children is critical for building the emotional security necessary for the child to thrive, particularly for those with developmental disorders such as autism spectrum disorder (ASD) and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) (Sanders, 2019).

One of the most important aspects of therapeutic communication is the emotional connection between the caregiver and the child. The ability to foster empathy and understanding in a caregiver-patient relationship leads to positive emotional outcomes, which are especially important for children with special needs, who may struggle with articulating their emotional needs or connecting with others (Miller et al., 2018). For children who experience social isolation, understanding and responsive communication can help mitigate feelings of alienation and support their social integration.

Therapeutic communication extends beyond verbal exchanges to include non-verbal communication, which is especially relevant for children with special needs who may have limited verbal communication abilities. Non-verbal cues, such as body language, facial expressions, and eye contact, are crucial for facilitating interaction and building rapport with children who may struggle with expressive language skills (Gottlieb et al., 2018). As such, therapeutic communication strategies in children with special needs must include not only verbal but also non-verbal techniques to ensure holistic support.

Several studies emphasize that therapeutic communication is most effective when it involves a collaborative approach. In particular, communication that involves teachers, therapists, and parents working in concert provides children with a supportive environment that reinforces development at multiple levels. Research by Backer (2016) highlights the importance of a triadic approach, where caregivers work together to ensure that the child's needs are met in a coordinated manner. This collaborative model is especially beneficial in promoting developmental progress in children with special needs, as it creates a cohesive and unified system of care (Kanter, 2017).

Theories of Therapeutik Communication : Joyce Travelbee's Human-to-Human Relationship Model

Joyce Travelbee's Human-to-Human Relationship Model (1971) is a seminal theory that emphasizes the relational aspect of therapeutic communication. Travelbee's model identifies five stages of the caregiver-patient relationship: the original encounter, emerging identities, developing empathy, building trust, and final rapport. These stages offer a roadmap for understanding how therapeutic communication evolves and how the caregiver and child relationship develops over time.

In the first stage, the "original encounter," the caregiver and child meet for the first time, which marks the beginning of their interaction. This initial encounter is crucial as it lays the groundwork for the relationship. According to Travelbee, this early encounter is not only about the exchange of information but also about beginning to establish an emotional connection between the two individuals (Travelbee, 1971). For children with special needs, who may have difficulty forming relationships due to communication barriers, this stage is particularly important as it sets the foundation for future interactions.

The next stage, "emerging identities," focuses on the development of roles within the therapeutic relationship. For children with special needs, this stage helps caregivers recognize the child's specific needs, preferences, and potential. In the context of therapeutic communication, this stage is essential for caregivers to understand the child's unique developmental challenges and how best to support them (Nguyen, 2017). The caregiver begins to see the child not as a patient but as an individual with distinct needs and capabilities.

Travelbee's third stage, "developing empathy," is perhaps the most central to the concept of therapeutic communication. Empathy enables caregivers to understand and share the feelings of the child, which fosters emotional security and trust (Hojat et al., 2016). Research on emotional intelligence has highlighted that empathy is a vital component in effective therapeutic communication (Miller, 2016). Empathy, according to Travelbee, allows the caregiver to form a deep emotional connection with the child, which is fundamental in providing care for children with special needs, as they often have difficulty expressing their emotions in a typical way.

The fourth stage, "building trust," involves the caregiver establishing a secure environment where the child feels safe and supported. Trust is essential for children with special needs, many of whom may have experienced challenges in forming secure attachments due to developmental delays or traumatic experiences (Sanders, 2019). Building trust provides a foundation upon which therapeutic interventions can be most effective.

Finally, the "final rapport" stage represents the culmination of the therapeutic relationship, where the caregiver and child share a sense of mutual respect and understanding. This stage is critical for children with special needs, as it fosters a long-lasting connection between the caregiver and the child, enabling continued support and growth (Nguyen, 2017).

Travelbee's Human-to-Human Relationship Model is particularly useful when considering the needs of children with special needs because it emphasizes the importance of building emotional connections and trust, which are often more difficult for these children to establish on their own (Backer, 2016).

Imogene King's Theory of Goal Attainment

Imogene King's Theory of Goal Attainment (1992) presents a framework that emphasizes the importance of communication in the caregiver-child relationship. King's theory posits that both the caregiver and the child are active participants in the process of setting and achieving developmental goals. According to King, the goal-setting process is collaborative, where caregivers and children work together to define realistic and meaningful goals that align with the child's needs and abilities (Peterson & West, 2018).

One of the core elements of King's theory is the emphasis on feedback as a tool for guiding the therapeutic process. Feedback allows caregivers to assess the progress of the child toward achieving developmental goals, which is essential in adjusting therapeutic approaches based on the child's evolving needs. This dynamic process is especially important for children with special needs, whose developmental trajectories may fluctuate, requiring ongoing assessment and adjustment (Kanter, 2017). The feedback loop in King's model ensures that the therapeutic process remains responsive to the child's changing circumstances, promoting more effective outcomes.

King's model also emphasizes that the achievement of goals requires a clear understanding of the child's unique abilities and needs. In this regard, therapeutic communication helps ensure that both caregivers and children share a common understanding of the goals they are working toward. This shared understanding fosters a sense of collaboration and cooperation, which enhances the therapeutic relationship and leads to better developmental outcomes (Gottlieb et al., 2018).

The collaborative approach central to King's theory also highlights the importance of communication between all stakeholders involved in the child's development. This includes teachers, therapists, and parents, who must all work together to ensure that the child's goals are aligned and pursued in a coordinated manner. According to recent research, this multi-disciplinary collaboration is essential in the treatment and care of children with special needs (Chen et al., 2020).

The Role of Ecological Factors in Therapeutic Communication

In addition to interpersonal dynamics, recent studies have highlighted the importance of ecological factors in therapeutic communication for children with special needs. Ecological factors refer to the broader environmental, social, and economic conditions that influence the therapeutic process and the effectiveness of communication. In particular, environmental pollution and socioeconomic disparities pose significant challenges in coastal urban settings like North Jakarta, Indonesia.

One of the most pressing ecological factors affecting children with special needs in coastal areas is environmental pollution. In North Jakarta, the degradation of marine ecosystems due to industrial waste and pollution has resulted in contaminated local fish, which are a primary source of nutrition for children (Chen et al., 2020). Pollutants such as heavy metals and pesticides accumulate in fish and pose a significant health risk to children, particularly those with special needs, who may be more vulnerable to the negative effects of poor nutrition (Wahyuni & Rachmawati, 2021). The compromised nutritional status of children with special needs can have a detrimental effect on their physical, cognitive, and emotional development, making it more difficult for them to engage in therapeutic activities (Gottlieb et al., 2018).

Socioeconomic inequalities further complicate the therapeutic communication process. In areas like North Jakarta, many families with children who have special needs face significant challenges accessing healthcare, educational resources, and support services (Wahyuni & Rachmawati, 2021). These socioeconomic barriers prevent caregivers from providing consistent therapeutic interventions, as financial constraints may limit access to specialized healthcare or developmental programs (Sanders, 2019). Without

access to appropriate care, therapeutic communication becomes less effective, as caregivers may struggle to address the child's needs adequately.

To improve the effectiveness of therapeutic communication in the context of ecological factors, recent research advocates for an integrated approach that addresses both interpersonal communication and ecological considerations. This includes the need for multi-stakeholder collaboration to address environmental issues such as pollution and improve access to resources for families of children with special needs (Chen et al., 2020; Wahyuni & Rachmawati, 2021). By addressing ecological factors, caregivers can create a more supportive environment for children with special needs, thereby enhancing the effectiveness of therapeutic communication.

Challenges and Future Directions

Despite the importance of therapeutic communication in promoting the development of children with special needs, significant challenges remain in its implementation, especially in coastal urban areas. These challenges stem from the complex interplay between interpersonal dynamics and ecological factors, which create barriers to effective communication and developmental support. Research indicates that while caregiver collaboration and empathy are essential, environmental and socioeconomic factors must also be considered to ensure that therapeutic interventions are both sustainable and effective (Chen et al., 2020; Wahyuni & Rachmawati, 2021).

Future research should focus on developing and evaluating therapeutic communication models that integrate ecological factors, ensuring that interventions are adaptable to the specific challenges faced by coastal urban populations. These models should include strategies for improving the accessibility of resources and addressing environmental pollution, thereby creating a more holistic framework for supporting the developmental needs of children with special needs.

METHOD

This study aims to explore the implementation of therapeutic communication in supporting the developmental processes of children with special needs (CSN) in coastal areas of North Jakarta, Indonesia. To capture the participants' experiences and perspectives on therapeutic communication, this research employs a qualitative methodology, with a primary focus on Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) as the data collection method. FGDs were selected due to their ability to facilitate in-depth interaction among participants, which can generate rich insights that are essential for understanding the nuanced implementation of therapeutic communication.

The study seeks to address several research questions, focusing on how teachers, therapists, and parents perceive and implement therapeutic communication with children with special needs. It also explores the barriers and facilitators of effective communication and the role of ecological factors, such as environmental pollution and socioeconomic conditions, in shaping the communication process.

Participants were selected using purposive sampling to ensure they had relevant knowledge and experience in the therapeutic communication process. A total of 12 participants were involved in the study: four teachers, four therapists, and four parents of children with special needs. Purposive sampling was ideal for this study as it allows for selecting individuals who are directly involved in the phenomena being studied (Palinkas et

al., 2015). Each group was carefully selected to represent the different key roles in the development of children with special needs. Teachers were chosen from special education schools, therapists from healthcare and therapy centers, and parents from local communities.

Data collection was primarily conducted using Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), which is a widely recognized qualitative research method used to gather detailed, contextual, & rich information from participants (Bryman, 2016; Kitzinger, 2018). FGDs encourage interaction among participants, allowing them to discuss their experiences, share insights, and elaborate on topics that may not emerge through individual interviews. This method is particularly useful in exploring collective views, understanding group dynamics, and uncovering common themes that emerge in the experiences of caregivers of children with special needs (Moser & Korstjens, 2018). The collaborative environment of FGDs encourages participants to reflect on their personal experiences and contribute ideas that may stimulate further discussion among the group.

The FGDs were semi-structured, meaning that while a set of open ended questions guided the discussion, participants were encouraged to share their experiences freely. Semi-structured interviews allow for flexibility, providing enough structure to keep the discussion on track while giving participants the freedom to express their views fully (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006). This flexibility also allows for the exploration of unexpected themes or issues that may arise during the discussion.

Each FGD session lasted 60 to 90 minutes and was conducted in a neutral, comfortable setting to encourage participants to speak openly. All sessions were audio-recorded with participants' consent, ensuring the accuracy of data collection. Transcripts of the recordings were made verbatim, and the data was then analyzed for emerging themes. Additionally, field notes were taken during the sessions to capture non-verbal cues and contextual observations, which provided additional insights into the dynamics of the group (Barbour, 2018).

Data analysis was conducted using thematic analysis, a widely used method for analyzing qualitative data. Thematic analysis enables the identification of patterns and themes within the data, which is useful for understanding the key issues participants raised regarding therapeutic communication (Braun & Clarke, 2019). The process involved several stages: initial familiarization with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, and refining them into coherent categories that directly addressed the research questions. The researcher cross-checked themes across the different groups (teachers, therapists, parents) to identify both commonalities and differences in their perspectives.

Thematic analysis was chosen for this study because it allows the researcher to examine and interpret the content of the FGDs in detail, organizing the data in a way that helps answer the research questions (Nowell et al., 2017). The coding process involved categorizing significant statements from participants and grouping them into related themes that spoke to the study's primary aims. After reviewing the themes and checking for consistency, a final set of themes was developed, which were then analyzed for their relevance to the therapeutic communication process and its implications for children with special needs.

Ethical considerations were an essential aspect of this study. Participants were fully informed about the purpose of the study, the research procedures, and their right to withdraw at any point without any consequences. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, who were assured that their identities would be kept confidential. Data was anonymized to protect the participants' privacy. Ethical standards for qualitative research were followed throughout the study, and the researcher remained mindful of the sensitive nature of the subject, particularly when discussing children with special needs and their caregivers (Sutton & Austin, 2015).

Given the small sample size and the geographical focus on North Jakarta, the study's findings may not be generalizable to other regions or populations. However, the qualitative nature of the research allows for a deep understanding of the specific context of therapeutic communication in the coastal urban setting of North Jakarta. As qualitative research aims to understand the richness and complexity of human experiences, the insights gained from the FGDs will contribute valuable knowledge to the field (Mason, 2010).

In summary, Focus Group Discussions were the primary method of data collection in this study. The semi-structured nature of the FGDs provided flexibility while ensuring that key topics were covered. Thematic analysis of the data provided a clear understanding of the participants' perspectives, highlighting the challenges and opportunities for improving therapeutic communication in coastal urban settings. Ethical considerations were central to the study, ensuring that participants' rights and confidentiality were protected. The small sample size and specific geographical focus limit generalizability but allow for a deep exploration of the experiences of teachers, therapists, and parents in North Jakarta.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) conducted with teachers, therapists, and parents revealed several significant findings related to the implementation of therapeutic communication with children with special needs (CSN) in the coastal areas of North Jakarta. The data collected through these FGDs were analyzed to identify key themes that were consistently mentioned across the three participant groups. These themes centered around the importance of empathy, the challenges of goal setting, environmental and socioeconomic barriers, and the impact of consistent communication on child development.

1. Importance of Empathy and Listening

A salient theme identified across all participant groups; teachers, therapists, and parents, was the centrality of empathy and active listening within therapeutic communication. These elements were consistently recognized as foundational to establishing effective interaction with children, particularly those with special needs. Participants emphasized that meaningful communication necessitates an attuned understanding of children's emotional and developmental states.

Teachers underscored the importance of interpreting non-verbal cues, noting that many children are unable to articulate their needs verbally. As one teacher explained, recognizing body language and emotional expressions allows educators to respond with sensitivity and appropriateness. This skill was deemed essential for creating responsive classroom environments.

Therapists similarly emphasized the role of empathetic listening in fostering therapeutic alliance. By responding with genuine understanding, they reported that children felt safer and more motivated to engage in therapeutic processes. A speech therapist illustrated this by stating that children who feel heard are more likely to express themselves and participate meaningfully in interventions.

Parents also reported that empathetic communication was crucial for building trust and cooperation at home. One parent noted that when their child felt understood, they were more willing to engage in daily routines and activities. This insight reinforces the importance of emotional attunement across caregiving and educational contexts, highlighting empathy and active listening as core components of therapeutic communication. This theme aligns with the foundational role of empathy in building strong therapeutic relationships as outlined in Travelbee's Human-to-Human Relationship Model (1971).

2. Collaborative Goal Setting and Alignment of Efforts

Another critical theme that emerged was the importance of collaborative goal-setting among teachers, therapists, and parents. Participants consistently emphasized that therapeutic communication is most effective when developmental goals for children are aligned and reinforced across all settings, such as home, school, and therapy. This alignment fosters consistency, clarity, and predictability, which are essential for the child's developmental progress.

Teachers reported that co-developing goals with therapists and parents enhances consistency in expectations and interventions. This collaborative approach enables children to better understand both their objectives and the behaviors expected of them across contexts. Therapists similarly stressed the significance of integrated intervention strategies, noting that inconsistent goals between environments can hinder therapeutic outcomes. Coordinated reinforcement of therapeutic targets across settings was described as essential for maximizing developmental gains.

Parents echoed these perspectives, highlighting the necessity of transparent communication and shared expectations. They noted that understanding and supporting the same goals at home that are established in school and therapy settings enhances their ability to contribute effectively to their child's development. Overall, collaborative goal-setting was identified as a foundational component of effective therapeutic communication and intervention planning. This finding reflects King's Theory of Goal Attainment (1992), which emphasizes the collaborative nature of goal setting and the importance of clear communication in achieving developmental objectives.

3. Environmental and Socioeconomic Barriers

Participants identified several barriers that hindered effective therapeutic communication and the overall developmental progress of children with special needs, particularly in the context of North Jakarta's coastal urban environment. Environmental and socioeconomic factors were also identified as significant barriers to children's developmental progress. Teachers reported that environmental pollution, particularly contamination of local food sources, has led to poor nutrition among children. This, in turn, negatively affects their health and ability to engage in classroom activities. One teacher noted that the consumption of contaminated fish often results in health issues that diminish students' focus and participation.

Therapists expressed parallel concerns, emphasizing that air and water pollution not only compromise children's physical well being but also impair cognitive functioning and concentration during therapy sessions. The cumulative effects of environmental stressors were seen as detrimental to therapeutic engagement and outcomes.

Parents further highlighted the compounding impact of socioeconomic constraints. Many reported difficulties in accessing essential healthcare and therapy services due to financial limitations. One parent shared that the inability to consistently afford therapy sessions often disrupts their child's developmental progress. These findings underscore the interconnectedness of environmental and economic factors in shaping the effectiveness of therapeutic interventions for children. These barriers suggest that ecological factors, such as environmental pollution and socioeconomic disparities, significantly impact the effectiveness of therapeutic communication and developmental progress for children with special needs in coastal urban settings.

4. The Role of Trust in Therapeutic Communication

Trust was another key theme highlighted by all groups. Participants agreed that establishing trust between caregivers and children was crucial for successful therapeutic communication. Trust was identified as a foundational element in the successful implementation of communication strategies across all participant groups. Teachers emphasized that establishing a trusting relationship with children facilitates openness, receptivity, and engagement in the learning process. They noted that children are more willing to participate and explore new experiences in the classroom when they feel secure and understood.

Therapists similarly underscored the critical role of trust in therapeutic settings. Building rapport and demonstrating empathy were viewed as prerequisites for effective intervention. One psychologist emphasized that acknowledging a child's emotional experiences, such as fear and frustration, are essential for fostering the trust required for meaningful therapeutic participation.

Parents also highlighted the importance of trust, not only in their relationship with their child but also with educators and therapists. They expressed a need for confidence in the collaborative efforts between school and therapeutic services, emphasizing that mutual trust ensures a cohesive and supportive environment for their child's development. Collectively, these insights affirm that trust is a central component in enabling effective, child-centered communication and intervention. The results indicate that rapport building and trust are essential components of effective therapeutic communication, leading to better developmental outcomes for children with special needs.

5. Positive Impact of Consistent Communication on Child Development

The theme of consistent communication across all environments was highlighted as a critical factor in improving child development. Participants reported that when therapeutic communication was consistent across home, school, and therapy settings, children experienced significant developmental progress. Teachers reported that children exposed to consistent communication between school and home demonstrated enhanced behavioral engagement and improved social interactions. Consistency in caregiver support was linked to increased confidence and active participation among students. One teacher remarked that children become more engaged when they perceive unified backing from their caregivers.

Therapists corroborated these observations, noting that aligned communication and reinforcement of therapeutic objectives accelerate developmental progress. A speech therapist highlighted that coordinated efforts between parents and teachers facilitate more rapid gains, particularly in speech and motor skill domains.

Parents also emphasized the positive impact of consistent communication, reporting increased motivation and participation from their children in therapeutic activities. They noted that visible alignment between school and therapy goals fosters greater willingness in children to engage actively. These findings collectively underscore the critical role of consistent, collaborative communication in optimizing developmental outcomes. This theme reinforces the idea that consistent and supportive communication plays a critical role in the successful development of children with special needs.

The results from the FGDs identified several key themes that provide a comprehensive understanding of the role of therapeutic communication in the development of children with special needs in North Jakarta. These themes included the importance of empathy and active listening, the need for collaborative goal-setting, the challenges posed by environmental and socioeconomic barriers, the critical role of trust in the therapeutic relationship, and the positive impact of consistent communication on child development.

The purpose of this study was to explore the implementation of therapeutic communication in supporting the developmental processes of children with special needs (CSN) in the coastal areas of North Jakarta, Indonesia. The findings from the Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) revealed several key themes, including the importance of empathy, the need for collaborative goal-setting, barriers related to environmental and socioeconomic factors, the role of trust in therapeutic communication, and the impact of consistent communication on child development. This discussion will analyze these themes in relation to existing literature, highlight new insights, and examine their implications for future practice.

The Role of Empathy and Active Listening

The results of this study confirmed the significant role of empathy and active listening in effective therapeutic communication for children with special needs. Teachers, therapists, and parents all emphasized that understanding the child's emotional state and actively listening to their non-verbal cues was crucial in fostering trust and improving the child's ability to engage in therapy and education. These findings are consistent with Travelbee's Human-to-Human Relationship Model (1971), which underscores the importance of empathy in building a therapeutic relationship.

The centrality of empathy in therapeutic relationships has been well-established in previous studies, particularly those focusing on children with special needs. For example, Sanders (2019) found that empathetic communication between caregivers and children significantly enhanced the child's ability to express their needs and develop emotionally. The results of this study build on this notion by highlighting the multi-faceted nature of empathy in supporting CSN. Active listening, alongside empathy, facilitates a deeper understanding of the child's needs, which can be particularly helpful when working with children who have difficulty expressing themselves verbally (Gottlieb et al., 2018).

Empathy, as an emotional tool for connecting with children, is especially important in contexts where verbal communication may be limited. This finding suggests that training teachers and therapists in empathic communication strategies could be beneficial for improving the therapeutic outcomes for children with special needs, particularly in challenging environments such as North Jakarta.

Collaborative Goal Setting and Alignment of Efforts

The findings emphasize that collaborative goal setting between teachers, therapists, and parents is crucial for the success of therapeutic communication. All three groups reported that when goals were aligned across school, therapy, and home settings, children were more likely to make developmental progress. This aligns with King's Theory of Goal Attainment (1992), which highlights the need for a coordinated approach to goal-setting and the involvement of all stakeholders in the process.

This study's findings echo previous research that demonstrates the benefits of collaborative goal-setting in promoting developmental outcomes for children with special needs (Chen et al., 2020). The importance of collaboration among multiple caregivers in setting and reinforcing consistent goals has been widely recognized in the literature (Wahyuni & Rachmawati, 2021). For example, Miller et al. (2018) found that when parents, teachers, and therapists work together to create and reinforce a consistent set of developmental goals, children with special needs exhibit faster progress in key areas such as communication, socialization, and cognitive development.

This theme suggests that therapeutic interventions can be more effective when clear and cohesive communication is established between all parties involved in the child's care. Ensuring that everyone is on the same page with respect to goals and strategies will lead to better alignment and, ultimately, better outcomes for the child.

Environmental and Socioeconomic Barriers

A central theme in this study was the identification of significant barriers to effective therapeutic communication, particularly related to the environmental and socioeconomic challenges in coastal urban areas like North Jakarta. Participants highlighted issues such as pollution, nutritional deficits, and limited access to healthcare as factors that hindered the child's ability to engage effectively in therapeutic communication and developmental activities.

The impact of environmental pollution and socioeconomic inequality on children's development has been well-documented in existing research. Studies have shown that children living in areas with high levels of pollution often experience developmental delays, cognitive impairments, and behavioral challenges, which can affect their ability to participate in school and therapy sessions (Chen et al., 2020). Furthermore, socioeconomic disparities in access to healthcare and educational resources exacerbate the challenges faced by children in these communities, limiting their opportunities for intervention and support (Wahyuni & Rachmawati, 2021).

This study's findings underline the need for a holistic approach to therapeutic communication that accounts for ecological and socioeconomic factors. Professionals working with children in similar coastal urban settings should consider these external barriers when designing interventions. There is a clear need for systemic changes to address these challenges and provide children with the necessary resources to thrive.

Trust in Therapeutic Communication

The theme of trust emerged as a significant factor in building effective therapeutic communication. The results of this study corroborate existing research that emphasizes the importance of trust in therapeutic relationships. Teachers, therapists, and parents all indicated that trust, both between the child and the caregiver, as well as between caregivers, was essential for successful communication and development. Hojat et al. (2016) stress that trust is foundational to any therapeutic relationship, especially when working with children who may have experienced trauma or neglect. Trust helps children feel safe, allowing them to engage more fully in the therapeutic process. The results of this study build on this understanding, suggesting that trust-building efforts should be a priority for all caregivers working with children with special needs, particularly in contexts where the child may face additional challenges related to their socioenvironmental circumstances.

Consistent Communication and Child Development

Finally, the study found that consistent communication across home, school, and therapy settings was vital for ensuring positive developmental outcomes for children with special needs. Teachers, therapists, and parents all agreed that when communication was consistent and aligned, children showed improvements in areas such as social interaction, behavioral engagement, and cognitive abilities.

This finding aligns with research by Gottlieb et al. (2018), who found that consistency in therapeutic communication enhances children's ability to make progress across different developmental domains. Children who receive consistent messages and support from all caregivers are more likely to internalize these expectations and engage in positive developmental behaviors. The results of this study suggest that cross-sectoral collaboration and regular communication between teachers, therapists, and parents should be integrated into therapeutic models to foster consistent support for children with special needs.

New Insight and Future Directions

This study also presents new insights regarding the impact of ecological factors on therapeutic communication. While prior research has focused on the role of interpersonal communication, this study reveals that environmental pollution and socioeconomic challenges significantly affect the effectiveness of therapeutic interventions. This underscores the need for ecologically informed therapeutic models that take into account the broader context in which therapeutic communication occurs.

Future research could further explore how systemic changes in urban settings can address the barriers identified in this study. Additionally, exploring how multidisciplinary teams can more effectively work together to address these challenges would be valuable. The integration of social support systems, such as community organizations or local governments, into therapeutic models may also be an area for future exploration.

CONCLUSION

This study explored the role of therapeutic communication in supporting the development of children with special needs (CSN) in coastal areas of North Jakarta. The findings emphasize the importance of empathy, active listening, and collaborative goal

setting among teachers, therapists, and parents for effective therapeutic communication. Consistent communication across home, school, and therapy settings significantly contributes to the child's developmental progress.

However, the study also identified significant barriers, including environmental pollution and socioeconomic challenges, which hinder the effectiveness of therapeutic communication. The role of trust in building strong caregiver and child relationships was highlighted as essential for successful therapy.

In practice, it is recommended that therapeutic communication focus on empathy and collaboration, and that efforts are made to address environmental and socioeconomic barriers to improve outcomes for children. Future research should examine the impact of ecological factors on therapeutic communication and explore multi-disciplinary approaches to further enhance support for children with special needs.

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