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# The Roles of Practitioner's Handling Speech Disorders Children During Endemic

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**Abstract.** The aim of this research is to get an insight into practitioner views on developing speech disorders among children in Kuantan, Pahang. This is because the practitioner is responsible for handling and educating them in their speech development. The researcher chooses this topic due to the hiking trend in Malaysia where the number of children with speech disorders keeps on increasing from time to time. To make sure that these research objectives come into play, a selected school or centre by the researcher is a place to obtain appropriate data. To find appropriate data to answer the research questions, a selected practitioner who has depth experience, worked at the centre will be interviewed to materialize the aim of this research. Six random samplings have been chosen as respondents which will answer the interview session and forthwith answer research objectives. All of these practitioners are well experienced in handling children with speech delays. Hence, the validity and

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reliability of the data are considered conclusive methods had been used in comprehensive qualitative research. An interview session will be conducted with selected practitioners who fulfil the standard outlined earlier, such as vast working experience, deep expertise and well experience in handling children with speech disorders and try to obtain as detailed information as possible with is in line with the research objective and research question. For this research, the semi-structured interview is used as it is easier for the researcher to ask an additional question to the participant during the interview session if the researcher is not satisfied with the answer given. This finding from the data analysed successfully answers the research question of getting the information or experience from the practitioner's perspective in conducting children with speech disorders. This result will discuss on most of the practitioners used methods in enhancing children to develop their speech through the method of imitation, reinforcement, and motivation. Other than that, the biggest challenges faced by the practitioners are in understanding children with speech disorder needs and overcoming the challenges.

**Keywords:** Speech Disorder, Practitioner, Enhancing Children

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Background of Study

Language is a form of human communication that is used to connect something or give an understanding to the listener. The same may goes to children, as they have to communicate in expressing their thoughts and feelings. According to Jamie Eske (2019), any condition that affects a person's ability to produce sounds that create word or prevent people from forming correct speech sounds is called speech disorders. It is also affected person's ability in forming any sounds that can help them to communicate with other people. Practitioner is someone practicing a skilled profession for special education or licensing is required (American Heritage

Dictionary of the English Language, 5th Edition, 2020). All practitioners must adhere to the rules and regulations set forth in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), and Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). These Acts function as warranty for people with disabilities were given equal access to all aspects of life and living as any non-disabled person including education and the right to personal privacy.

### 1.2 Problem Statement

The numbers of children with speech disorder arose as much as an estimated one of 600 children is autism patients (World Health Organization, 2021) In Malaysia the numbers of children with speech disorder keep on increasing from time to time. Recent statistics also show that about 47,000 of the country's population is living with speech disorder children because of parent in Malaysian still lack awareness about this issue. However, it is very unfortunate if children cannot speak well according to the age level as recommended by Piaget theory where pre-operations stage which is the children around two until seven years old will expanded and developed the vocabulary during this stage. Yvonne Wren (2021) state that a report by the Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists during the first lockdown, 62% of children who needed speech and language therapy which is the therapy session were provided remotely because of post-covid era. However, from the same report, 19% of children did not like having speech and language therapy on video and 12% could not cooperate with it because of losing their focus.

1.3 Objectives

Research objectives in this study is to identify extent of knowledge of practitioner regarding of speech disorder among children. Beside that to identify the teaching strategies of practitioner in handling speech disorders children and to identify the practitioner's challenges in handling speech disorders children during endemic.

## 2. Literature Review

According to NIDCD (National Institute of Deafness and other Communication Disorders) nearly 1 in 12 (7.7%) USA children ages 3-17 had a disorder related to voice, speech, language or swallowing in the past 12 months, 5% of USA children ages 3-17 have a speech disorder that lasted for a week or longer during the past 12 months (2019). Research shows individuals with language disorders frequently experience higher than average levels of emotional, behavioural and social difficulties, including peer problems (Bercow, 2018). Additional, according to Chauhan (2016), motivation also increase the interest of children to participated in the learning process, and it is found sensible as the children with speech disorder learn more quickly and better in this remedial measure of motivation. The ways of motivation and the positive reinforcement are approximately same which is, to encourage children with speech disorder to speak. In Malaysia, an assessment tool called Malay Preschool Language Assessment Tool (MPLAT) has been developed to assess the areas of receptive language, expressive language and early literacy skills for Malay pre-schoolers (Rogayah, 2018). As delineated in the ASHA Scope of Practice in Speech-Language Pathology and federal regulations, practitioner has to work with children exhibiting the full range of communication disorders, including those involving language, articulation (speech sound disorders), fluency, voice/resonance, and swallowing (American Speech- Language-Hearing Association, 2010).

2.1 Previous studies

Other strategies in enhancing children with speech disorder is motivation from the practitioner. This strategy is importance toward children in supporting from adult in improving children's language. motivation was defining as "the internal state of an individual that most likely arouses, guide, and maintain their behaviour," (Anderson, 2011). According to Anderson (2011), the individual should not seek out external reward rather than, only by motivation will give internal feeling of embedded interest to the individual. The ways of motivation and the positive reinforcement are approximately same which is, to encourage children with speech disorder to speak. As concluded of the motivation, as mention by Paul and Sutherland (2005), in supporting children with speech disorder, motivation is a suitable strategy in developing children to speak like normal children because of the motivation are more value for them compare to the punishment or negative reinforcement.

Additional, according to Chauhan (2011), motivation also increase the interest of children to participated in the learning process, and it is found sensible as the children with speech disorder learn more quickly and better in this remedial measure of motivation.

## 3. Method

Data collection for this research was using qualitative method approach (interviews). In this research, the data will be collected using interview form and checklist. Once the interview session done, transcribe the entire conversation, data collected will be group accordingly for the purpose of thematic analysis. Patton and Cochran (2002), researcher is able to identify any issues that appear during interview session and the main themes summarize all of the view's researcher collected.

3.1 Instrument

An interview is a conversation for gathering information either conducted face-to face or over the telephone. The instrument is an interview forms specially designed to collect data. This method is the proper way to obtain information about the roles of practitioner's handling speech disorders children during endemic. In addition, interview also help to obtain more accurate data in this study. It helps the researcher to saves time, energy and expense by only having to use interview forms to a small sample. This interview form consists of several questions to achieve objective in this research. The objective is to understand views of practitioner regarding of speech disorder among children and to identify the teaching method of practitioner in developing speech disorder among children.

3.2 Interview procedures

Define goals by determining what to accomplish and the information by deciding on the type of interview go over requirements such as information, time, funds, and possible respondents and determine whether required an organized, interviews that are semi-structured or unstructured. Pick the right people to talk to. Decide on the characteristics of the interview based on the type of interview. the number of interviewees and the number of interviews that must be conducted. Make a plan for how to conduct the interviews. Consider interviews can be conducted over the phone or in person.

3.3 Sampling Procedures

Sampling is a process of selecting a group of individuals for a study which represents a large predetermined group. A qualitative sample is a sample selected not randomly. Qualitative research requires either small or few samples. The study sample depends on the type of study, instrument and method of data collection. 1 to 3 people was more than enough unless the researcher wanted to conduct a group interview.

## 4. Results and Discussion

Emotional well-being and social, behaviour, cognition and academic excellence in the school of the child are hidden disability for speech disorders. Some may have resulted in surgery on speech organs for children that have speech disorders because of congenital or required and functional or organic in origin. The problem becomes more serious in nature and may need extensive treatment for speech disorders occur due to hearing impairment. The communication disorders in children are classified into five categories which is speech, language, developmental speech and language, fluency and voice disorders.

Based on the survey that occur during the research, the extent of knowledge of practitioner are medium and high regarding of speech disorders. Two of the practitioners have high knowledge about speech disorders because before the Covid-19, they were in charged handling speech disorders children. The other one has medium level of knowledge because she just assigns by the principle to help the other two practitioners handling the speech disorders child. Based on the observation, all of them have no difficulties in handling this child because they are professional. Regarding the information gave by practitioners, gender is one of the factors affected speech disorders. There is statistic given by the practitioner about gender factor regarding speech disorders at their school (2019):

**Table 1.** *Gender Factor*

| Speech disorder | Male (%) | Female (%) | Total |
|---|---|---|---|
| Stuttering | 5 (71.42) | 2 (28.57) | 7 |
| Delayed speech and language | 4 (66.66) | 2 (33.34) | 6 |
| Mouth breathers | 3 (60) | 2 (40) | 5 |

Based on the table above, male children tend to have speech disorders because of their personality and behavior while the female children less having speech disorders because of

their easy-going personality and curiosity need.

Newer treatment or teaching method used by practitioner in handling speech disorder children during pandemic is more activities regarding mouth movement. Some of the children tend to have lazy behavior because they feel more comfortable at home with their parents during MCO. Because of the situation, they have no desire to talk with others due to busy parents even they in the same house. This situation keeps on harming the children slowly and they bring this new attitude, or we called it disorders to school. Practitioners need an aggressive treatment to help the child back on regular track. First is mouth movement activities. There is several activities give out by practitioner during interview session which is *a,e,i,o,u* session with fingers focused on the mouth and blowing water on paper during arts class. This is their recent activities that they repeat every week to make the children familiar with their mouth movement.

Other than that, encourage the children to speak more during read aloud session. Before this, practitioner have less interaction with the children due too many children in one class. During the endemic, the numbers of children came to school less than average, so the practitioner have more focused on each child. During this session, practitioner always give a cue to the children to asks any question and always make them curious about the story. Principle also give extra care to the practitioner which is send the practitioner to the reading training. Principle also get advised from otorhinolaryngology and speech-pathologists regarding newer treatment options. But all of these methods mean nothing without cooperation of the child and their support system (parents).

Undeniably, there is slightly different challenges in handling speech disorder children during this endemic. The practitioners give out several challenges the faces. One of the challenges is during online classes, the children tend to focus on other device (hand phone) than focus on the practitioners. Parents open the online class on their laptop while children sit in front of the laptop and play with their device. The interaction between practitioners and children became less. The other challenge is the number of children with speech disorders increases due to MCO. This increases number is very worrying besides the children also lack in normal development. The parents already do their best during MCO to make sure their children get education as what they should get but this is beyond their abilities because the expertise in educational field far from them. So, this is several challenges the practitioners facing while handling speech disorders children during this endemic.

## 5. Conclusion

During the acute phase, increases pressure on families, reduced access for support services and social distancing were our numerous pandemic-related health risks for children and adolescents. Anxiety, stress and violence exposure are predominant issues after the pandemic. Despite the difficult circumstances, in order to decrease bad influence on children, all practitioners should continue regular and emergency treatment as far as possible. The practitioners should look out more on children ability, interesting and differences before and during endemic regarding their language development.

All activity should be considered on every child as some of them are differing in abilities, interest and attitudes. Before endemic, mostly children spend their time at home with family members. They tend to develop different types of abilities, interest and attitudes. So, as a practitioner, need to be prepared as much as possible in helping the children. In that regards, to ensure the equality of learning can improve children development, the practitioners have a solid understanding how the children learn more understand why curriculum needs to be differentiated. Other strategies in handling children with speech disorder is motivation from the practitioners. This strategy is importance toward children in supporting from adult in

improving children's language. The ways of motivation and the positive reinforcement are approximately same which is to encourage children with speech disorder to speak.

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