



The roles of parents in supporting early childhood with ADHD and dyslexia to overcome learning difficulties

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Abstract

Parents play a crucial role for children learning success, especially for early childhood. Their role is particularly important for early childhood with special needs, including ADHD and dyslexia. Therefore, this study aims to explore the role of parents in supporting early childhood with ADHD and dyslexia to overcome their learning difficulties. The study used a qualitative approach, involving two children: an ADHD child and a dyslexia child, as well as their parents and therapists as the main participants. Data collection was conducted through semi-structured interviews and observation during therapy sessions at Rumah Terapi Liliput Samarinda and Anisa Therapy Center Samarinda. The results showed that the role of parents includes five important aspects: recognition support, psychological support, practical support, knowledge support, and community support. Children showed progress, such as increased vocabulary, reading and writing skills, focus improvement, and motor skills. However, challenges remain occur, particularly from insufficient inclusive school environment and the limited public understanding of ADHD and dyslexia. Thus, the proactive parents and their understanding of their roles is an important key in supporting their children to overcome their learning barriers and promote optimal development.

Keywords: ADHD; dyslexia; parent's role; learning difficulties.

INTRODUCTION

Parents are the primary responsible parties in children's education, whether in formal, informal, or non-formal institutions. Their role is crucial in determining the future direction of children, serving as the fundamental foundation for their growth and development. A child's success is greatly influenced by their parents and environment. For children with special needs, the role of parents is crucial as companions, advocates, sources of information, teachers, and evaluators. In inclusive education, parents play a crucial role in supporting the achievement of educational goals through acceptance, financial support, study guidance, and socialization. Syaputri & Afriza (2022) claimed that support provided by parents to individuals consists of five main aspects, including recognition support, psychological support, practical support, knowledge support, and community support. Recognition support refers to the positive appreciation of others. Psychological support relates to emotional aspects, while practical support includes providing

direct assistance. Knowledge support refers to providing solutions to a problem. Community support is an individual's sense of belonging as part of a group. These types of support are needed by children, especially children with special needs.

Parents could collaborate with teachers because teachers are not just content deliverers. They are facilitators who create a conducive learning environment, motivators who ignite the spirit of learning, and guides who help students overcome challenges (Yestiani & Zahwa, 2020). Thus, teachers have a crucial impact on the learning process in schools, as they are the leaders in the learning process, guiding and playing an important role for students in their intellectual development. Educators who are considered successful in teaching and learning activities are teachers who possess teaching skills, namely pedagogical, professional, character, and social skills (Sanjani & Akbar, 2020). However, parents are still primarily responsible for supporting their children's learning. Therefore, they need to collaborate to support children with learning difficulties, especially in early childhood.

Learning difficulties in early childhood are a major concern in the world of education, especially for children with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) and dyslexia. Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) is a neurobiological developmental disorder characterized by the main symptoms of difficulty concentrating, impulsive behavior, and hyperactivity that is not appropriate for the child's developmental age (Banaschewski et al., 2017). ADHD is also a behavioral disorder characterized by difficulty maintaining attention, impulsive behavior, and hyperactivity (Frank-Briggs, 2011). Based on DSM-V indicators, ADHD falls under the category of disruptive behavior disorders and is often accompanied by developmental and learning problems. These symptoms are usually noticeable before a child reaches the age of 7 and can appear in various contexts, such as at home, at school, or in social interactions (Rahmani, Kusumawicitra, & Karyani, 2022).

Dyslexia is one of the most common learning disorders, but it is often recognized and addressed late, especially in young children. Habibi mentioned that dyslexia is defined as a challenge in spelling, reading, or writing. Additional symptoms that may appear include difficulty with counting, writing numbers, and coordination or motor skills (Aryani & Fauziah, 2020). Dyslexia is not a medical condition, but rather a learning disorder that affects the reading and writing process, even though children with dyslexia have normal intelligence. This can happen and be seen when a child has difficulty spelling, as well as difficulty distinguishing between letters that have similar shapes, such as b/d, p/q, w/m, n/u, and numbers. Dyslexia is divided into two types: auditory and visual. In auditory dyslexia, children have difficulty

distinguishing similar sounds or parts of sentences, even though their verbal and visual abilities are good. In visual dyslexia, children rely more on hearing than sight to understand material (Aryani & Fauziah, 2020).

Children with learning disabilities experience impairments in basic psychological processes or the central nervous system, which affect skills such as listening, speaking, reading, writing, arithmetic, and social skills. These difficulties are not caused by factors such as mental retardation, emotional disorders, hearing problems, visual impairments, or environmental, cultural, and economic factors, although these can occur simultaneously. Children with learning disabilities often also experience additional disorders, such as problems with visual perception, coordination, sensory integration, and social-emotional skills (Ginting et al., 2023). Based on the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5), specific learning disability is a condition characterized by difficulty reading words, slow or difficult comprehension of reading meaning, and problems with spelling, written expression, number concepts, numerical facts, and mathematical reasoning. Based on DSM-5, specific learning disabilities are classified into three categories: dyslexia, dysgraphia, and dyscalculia (Rahma & Rosita, 2024).

Strategies for overcoming learning difficulties include several approaches that can be implemented by parents and teachers, such as giving rewards, providing punishments, and learning thru play. Rewards, such as maximum values or star stickers, can motivate children to achieve without having to use expensive items, simply by encouraging recognition. Meanwhile, punishment should be administered carefully to avoid negative impacts such as anxiety or depression, and it must be tailored to the child's situation. Additionally, game-based learning can make the learning process more engaging and enjoyable, helping children overcome boredom and improve their understanding (Nuraeni & Syihabuddin, 2020).

Based on the initial observations conducted by the researcher on two children with different learning difficulties, several challenges they face in the learning process and social interaction were identified. The first child, initial A, who is 9 years old and shows symptoms of Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD), has difficulty maintaining focus, especially when receiving instructions. This child often repeats the words spoken by the teacher and requires frequent repetition of instructions. Although the child previously cried frequently when having difficulty completing tasks, during the observation, the child appeared calmer despite still facing those difficulties. This child also shows signs of short-term memory impairment, such as forgetting names easily and being easily distracted by new things, which affects their understanding of

learning materials. Meanwhile, the second child, R, who is 6 years old, has dyslexia, which is evident in his difficulty recognizing letters and numbers correctly, as well as his difficulty writing numbers backward. This child also has difficulty counting backward, even tho they can count forward correctly. Additionally, in reading and writing activities, children often get confused with certain letters or numbers, such as difficulty recognizing the letter "W" or numbers written backward (e.g., 16 becoming 61). This child also needs repeated instructions in motor activities, such as jumping or throwing a ball, and shows difficulty remembering color and number sequences, although there is improvement over time.

Several relevant studies have shown various findings regarding the crucial role of parents in supporting young children experiencing symptoms of ADHD and dyslexia. Nurputeri (2024) emphasized that parental involvement is highly significant in helping children with ADHD manage symptoms and adapt socially through behavioral therapy, positive reinforcement, and physical activity. Another study conducted by Marito (2025) reported that consistent attention, structured routines, and effective communication between parents and teachers are very helpful for children with ADHD in learning and adapting (Marito et al., 2025). While Humaidi (2021) discussed how parental guidance for children with dyslexia be done through active communication with the school, reading together with the child, and setting a positive example in daily reading activities. Overall, active involvement and appropriate parenting styles from parents play a significant role in helping children overcome learning difficulties due to ADHD or dyslexia and encourage their optimal potential development (Fahri, 2021). Further, Fitri & Nusantara (2022) found that the Role of Parents in Supporting Learning for Children with Dyslexia at SKB Gudo, Jombang Regency. This study discusses how parents accompany children with dyslexia in the learning process, including the challenges they face and the strategies used to overcome their children's learning difficulties (Fitri & Nusantara, 2022). Most previous research has tended to focus on the individual role of parents in supporting children with learning difficulties. Therefore, parental support plays an important role in helping children face their learning challenges.

This research presents a more comprehensive perspective by placing the role of parents within a framework of collaboration with therapists. Through active involvement in the therapy process, parents not only provide emotional and practical support at home but also adjust their child's learning strategies based on the evaluation results from the therapist. This collaborative approach creates more integrated and adaptive support for children's needs, potentially leading to more optimal outcomes in helping them overcome learning barriers. This study addressed

the research question: how do parents play a role in supporting early childhood children with ADHD and Dyslexia in facing learning difficulties? The purpose of this study is to determine how parents play a role in supporting early childhood children with ADHD and Dyslexia in facing learning difficulties.

METHOD

Research Design

A qualitative multi-case study was employed in this study. This design was utilized because this study focuses on specific cases with more than one case – a child with ADHD dan a child with dyslexia – and explores the roles of parents and therapists in their daily lived experiences. According to Yin (Nur'aini, 2020) case studies are an appropriate strategy for answering research questions that are how or why in nature, when the researcher has little control over the events being studied, and when the focus is on contemporary phenomena. This approach was chosen to deeply understand how parents play a role in supporting young children with learning difficulties, specifically a 9-year-old child named A with ADHD and a 6-year-old child named R with dyslexia. The research was conducted in two locations: Liliput Therapy House in Samarinda and Anisa Therapy Centre in Samarinda.

Participant

The participants in this study consisted of a total of four participants: two parents (one parent each of a child with ADHD and dyslexia) and two therapists actively working at the two therapy locations. Participant selection was conducted using purposive sampling techniques with the following criteria: parents of young children undergoing therapy due to learning difficulties (ADHD or dyslexia), and therapists directly involved in the children's therapy process.

Instrument and Data Collection

The instrument used in this study is a semi-structured interview guide. This guideline is compiled based on 25 indicators for each informant group (parents and therapists). For parents, the interview explores things like: how they knew their child was having learning difficulties, visible symptoms, challenges faced, teaching methods at home, forms of motivation and support, and the use of aids such as flashcards. For therapists, questions include the initial assessment process, therapeutic approaches used, strategies for parental involvement, learning media used, and evaluation of therapy outcomes. The interviews were conducted in person and

recorded in the form of transcripts. In addition to interviews, data was collected thru direct observation of the child during therapy sessions. Observations were conducted non-participatorily, focusing on aspects such as the child's ability to concentrate when receiving instructions, motor skills, emotional expression when experiencing difficulties, ability to follow directions, and social interaction with therapists and parents. This observation was conducted at both therapy locations repeatedly to obtain a complete picture of development.

Ethical Consideration

This research was conducted while adhering to the principles of research ethics, particularly because it involved vulnerable subjects, namely young children with special needs (ADHD and dyslexia), as well as parents and therapists as participants. As an initial step, the researcher sent a notification letter regarding the clarity of the research and a request for research permission to Liliput Therapy House Samarinda and Anisa Therapy Centre Samarinda to obtain access for observation and interviews. After receiving the explanation, the participants verbally expressed their consent to participate in the study. The participants' consent was obtained verbally (assent) after the researcher explained the study's purpose and procedures. Thus, the implementation of this research still meets ethical standards even without signatures, while prioritizing the awareness, willingness, and transparency among all parties involved.

Data Analysis

Data analysis was conducted using the Miles and Huberman model. This model was chosen because of the large amount of narrative and complex data from interviews and observations, requiring a reduction process to select relevant information, data presentation for easier understanding, and verified conclusion drawing. In this way, researchers can find patterns in parental roles in supporting children with ADHD and dyslexia. This opinion is reinforced by Miles and Huberman, who explain that qualitative analysis involves three main stages: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing/verification (Latifah & Supena, 2021).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

RESULTS

The research findings indicate that parents play a crucial role in providing support to children with ADHD and dyslexia through various forms of guidance. Table 1 below presents the study findings from two cases of children with different learning difficulties: A, who has been

diagnosed as ADHD, and R, who is diagnosed with dyslexia. The data show that both children have different difficulties, and both exhibit early symptoms that indicate the need for further intervention. This table also provides information on early identification methods, parental responses, home learning strategies, children's responses during learning, progress or advancements in therapy, and the challenges they face both at school and in social interactions.

Table 1.

Findings on children with learning difficulties (ADHD and Dyslexia)

Aspect	Child A	Child R
Age	9 years old	6 years old
Type of difficulties	ADHD	Dyslexia
Early Symphons	Speech delay, tantrums, lack of focus, impulsive actions	Only knows the letter "A", repeats words, and is very easily distracted.
Early identification	The first-grade teacher suggested an evaluation, then going to therapy.	Kindergarten teachers and Quran teachers gave signals, diagnosed by a psychologist.
Parent responses	Therapy was inconsistent initially, then regular therapy started; support from family.	Initially unaware, then therapy and following the therapist's advice.
Strategies at home	Flashcards, two-way communication, follows the child's mood, high tolerance	Flashcards, storybooks, recalling material from therapy, and evening study time
Children's responses during learning	Easily distracted, sometimes resists learning, throws tantrums when stressed.	Gets bored quickly, is easily distracted by small noises, and prefers sequential memorization.
Therapy progress	Vocabulary increases, communication improves, and motor skills gradually develop.	Can recognize letters, start to count, and focus better.
Challenges at school	Public schools are not 100% capable of handling this, and the classroom teacher is keeping them there.	Not focused, easily distracted, learns more slowly than peers.
Social Interaction	Uncomfortable in crowded places, less confident with motor skills.	Prefers talking to adults, less confident with new people.
Emotional Support	Calmed during tantrums, left until calm.	Not forced to study, allowed to take a break when not in the mood to avoid stress.
Other family roles	Grandparents play a significant role in daily caregiving.	Father and mother take turns, regular communication with the therapist.

DISCUSSION

Recognition Support

Recognition support can be a positive appreciation for others. The research results indicate that parent A's role in the form of recognition support is to provide positive recognition for non-academic abilities, such as assembling Lego, remembering small things at home, and maintaining clean and tidy living habits. In addition, teachers in public schools also showed acceptance by providing tolerance and keeping child A in the regular school despite having special needs.

Meanwhile, the role of parent B in this case is to provide reward-based support, such as promising gifts or something the child likes, to encourage them to study. Recognition is also evident in the belief in the potential of child R, who is considered equal to other children, especially due to their good interaction with adults.

The role of parents is evident in providing positive support and guidance. Parents who actively encourage, appreciate their child's efforts, and help explain difficult material make their child feel more confident in learning. Additionally, parents also serve as role models in creating good study habits, such as setting regular study times and reducing distractions while studying. By playing this role, according to (Mawaddah et al. (2020) parent not only help their children understand their lessons but also teach them the values of discipline, responsibility, and independence, which are very important in their lives.

Sarafino & Smith (Rahmadina et al., 2021), arguing that parental support is related to feelings of happiness, being valued, care, and receiving help from parents or other groups. In other study, Sintia (2025) found that support and appreciation from parents, whether in the form of praise or gifts, are very effective as motivators. When children can complete tasks or achieve accomplishments, recognition from their parents makes them feel valued and encourages them to keep trying. However, this support is sometimes not optimal, especially when it comes to direct support. Many parents are hindered by their busy work schedules and cannot provide enough time to accompany their children while they study. As a result, the child becomes more dependent on friends or teachers to complete their tasks. This kind of parental support aligns with the one of five main aspects proposed by Syaputri & Afriza (2022), involving recognition support, psychological support, practical support, knowledge support, and community support.

Psychological Support

This support is related to emotional aspects. The research findings indicate that the role of parent A in the form of psychological support is emotional accompaniment when the child experiences tantrums. They don't force learning activities when a child isn't ready and provide space for them to calm down. This shows an empathetic form of parenting.

Meanwhile, the research findings for the other case show that the role of parent B in the form of psychological support is demonstrated by the mother of child R. Although there was initial concern and rejection upon learning about the child's condition, over time, she was able to accept and understand that child R needed a different approach. Parents also choose not to force their children when they are unmotivated to study and adjust study time based on the child's psychological condition.

Family plays a very significant role in maintaining the mental health of its members, especially for individuals experiencing mental health problems. One of the main functions of the family is to provide essential emotional support that helps individuals feel accepted and understood. This support is usually fostered through open communication within the family. This is supported by the opinion that when family members feel comfortable discussing their feelings, worries, or problems without fear of punishment or judgment, they tend to be more open to expressing their feelings and seeking necessary help (Nanda, 2025). According to research conducted by Raden Roro (2020) parent have a very significant responsibility in fostering self-confidence in young children. Various methods can help boost a child's self-confidence, one of which is showing an attitude of appreciation. Although parental expectations cannot always be met, pressuring a child to always follow their parents' wishes will only damage their self-confidence.

Additionally, Alfira & Siregar (2024) stating that interactions between parents and children often arise when parents try to encourage their children to learn. From interviews with parents, it was revealed that although their methods of persuading their children varied, they generally used similar approaches, such as preparing the child's favourite food. However, when a child continues to refuse to learn, some parents sometimes choose to force them, which risks hurting the child's mental health in the future. This coercive action usually takes the form of excessive pressure to make the child want to learn. Nevertheless, there are times when parents face situations where they feel the need to push a child who seems less motivated or hasn't

finished their tasks. Therefore, parents' ability to provide the right motivation to their children becomes very important.

Emotional support is provided by calming the child during tantrums, giving hugs, and offering motivation and praise when the child successfully completes a task. Academic support is evident in parental involvement in accompanying children as they learn to read and write, patiently repeating instructions, and helping children recognize frequently reversed letters and numbers. Meanwhile, social support is provided by training children to say the names of new friends or teachers and by familiarizing them with interacting with the school environment. These various forms of support demonstrate that parents play a direct role in building children's self-confidence, supporting their learning process, and helping them adapt to their social environment. This aligns with the thinking of Ki Hadjar Dewantara, that the role of parents is very important and cannot be replaced in the child's educational process. Parents have a love that drives them to strive for their children to grow and develop for the better, regardless of the situation they face (Hasni, 2021).

There is no evidence regarding teachers' roles in this type of support for those two cases of children. In fact, the role of a teacher who is willing to wait until the child is completely calm before continuing therapy is significant in supporting children with ADHD (Maghfirah et al., 2024).

Practical Support

This support includes providing direct assistance. The research findings indicate that parental roles in providing practical support for child A include parental participation in therapy, the use of learning aids such as flashcards and professional games, and the involvement of grandparents in daily accompaniment. Therapists also give simple homework assignments like watering plants or playing with sensory materials (sand, slime). Meanwhile, the research findings with child R show that the parents' role as practical support was that child R received support in the form of private tutoring initially, although it was not effective, which was then followed by more structured therapy. Parents use books, flashcards, and evening study time for 30–60 minutes. The therapist also provides post-session advice and reports to be implemented at home.

Home learning assistance is a way for parents to accompany their children by providing support, encouragement, monitoring, helping them complete assignments, reviewing previously learned material, asking about what they have learned and any difficulties they encountered

while studying, as well as providing learning resources such as a study space, stationery, and textbooks. Providing facilities for children can include meeting their learning needs, enrolling them in educational institutions if necessary, helping children, including providing support for those experiencing learning difficulties, offering assistance, and providing facilities to motivate them to learn (Fitri & Nusantara, 2022).

The role of parents can have a positive effect on a child's development, but now the roles of fathers and mothers at home are no longer balanced. Sometimes, working mothers still need to manage the household and support their children in their studies. Additionally, how parents raise their children influences their learning outcomes at home, and this parenting style is crucial for a child's development. Because children need attention and affection from both parents to shape their character and abilities. Children raised by both parents who provide equal support and love usually have better social and emotional skills (Aulia et al., 2023).

According to Tan (Mustika, 2021) there are three important roles parents play toward their children as learners, including parents as providers, parents as encouragers, and parents as companions. They understand the difficulties children experience and provide the necessary solutions or assistance.

Knowledge Support

This support refers to providing solutions to a problem. The research results indicate that the role of parent A in the form of knowledge support is that parent A learns from the experiences and advice of teachers/therapists. They received information about appropriate therapies, as well as household strategies such as two-way communication and the use of learning media. The therapist's communication book is an important tool for the exchange of knowledge. Meanwhile, the research findings with child R show that the parents' role in providing knowledge support was that child R's parents were directed by the tutor to see a psychologist, who then diagnosed dyslexia. This is an important starting point for understanding children's needs. They also receive regular input from therapists on how to stimulate child R at home to make learning more effective.

In the process of self-development, each child has different abilities. Some of the challenges in the learning process for children include laziness, giving up easily, lack of care, and defiance toward teachers, all of which are part of learning difficulties. This problem is generally

difficult for children to solve on their own. They may not know the right way to address their problems, especially in children with special needs. Meanwhile, others may not realize what their actual problems are. Some children seem fine, even though they are actually facing problems. This makes it difficult for children to follow the learning process at school.

Besides parents, the role of teachers is very important in helping children overcome the problems they face, so a diagnosis is needed to determine where the child's learning difficulties lie and how to overcome them (Ndraha et al., 2022). The role of parents in helping children learn, especially those with learning difficulties, is crucial because parents are the primary supporters who can provide emotional, academic, and social support (Mawaddah et al., 2020). They are not only providers of learning tools, but also serve as motivators, teachers, and supervisors to ensure the child can learn well. Nevertheless, there are some obstacles, such as parents' lack of understanding of the subject matter, variations in educational backgrounds, and limited time due to work, which pose significant challenges.

Community Support

Community support is an individual's sense of belonging as part of a group. The research results show that parents A accompanied their child in receiving support from their school community, especially the homeroom teacher, who insisted on keeping child A in public school because they felt the child could still be guided. In the home environment, although not all neighbours understood, the parents stated that they did not receive any direct negative responses. Meanwhile, the research findings with child R indicate that parental involvement in obtaining community support provides child R with support and opportunities to feel safe and comfortable socializing, especially with adults. His mother often brought him to the office so that child R could interact with adults. The mother's work environment became a place for child R to learn communication skills, boost self-confidence, and feel accepted by the community.

Research conducted by Minarni (2025) proves that a welcoming school atmosphere has a positive impact on the success of inclusive education for students with special needs. A welcoming school atmosphere fosters an environment that supports active participation, academic achievement, and the mental health of students with special needs. Strong support from the principal is crucial in creating an inclusive school atmosphere. Principals who have a clear understanding of inclusive education and actively support and organize related programs in the school can provide encouragement and motivation to teachers and staff to create an

inclusive environment. Positive attitudes and beliefs from teachers are also crucial. Teachers who believe that all students can learn and succeed, and are willing to adapt and collaborate to meet the diverse needs of students, can create an effective and supportive learning environment for children with special needs. Additionally, it was stated that support from the school and the surrounding community is crucial for helping children with special needs grow. Support and encouragement from teachers, peers, and the community can make children feel accepted and more motivated to learn (Foera-era Lase, 2024).

CONCLUSION

Parental role strongly influences supporting young children with ADHD and dyslexia in overcoming learning difficulties. Although both conditions have different characteristics – ADHD is more related to attention disorders, impulsivity, and hyperactivity, while dyslexia focuses on reading and language processing difficulties – both require a personalized, consistent, and collaborative approach between parents, teachers, and therapists. Parents not only act as providers of physical needs and learning aids, but also as emotional companions, motivators, information providers, and connectors between the child and the educational environment. Parents' initial response is a crucial determinant of intervention success. During the learning process, both children exhibited specific challenges, such as being easily distracted, getting bored quickly, having tantrums when stressed, and being slower to grasp material compared to their peers. However, with consistent parental support and methods tailored to the child's needs, significant improvements were observed, such as increased vocabulary, letter recognition skills, improved focus, and better motor development. Additionally, the importance of emotional support without pressure or coercion is an equally important aspect to ensure children are not stressed and remain motivated to learn. Although public schools are not yet fully equipped to handle the specific needs of these children, inclusive efforts from teachers and the home environment are still being made to create an atmosphere that supports optimal growth and development. Overall, the active and understanding role of parents is the key to helping children with ADHD and dyslexia overcome their learning difficulties and reach their full potential.

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