

Cooperation between Parents and Teachers in Supporting the Development of Social Interaction in Autistic Children: A Case Study of Students at HKBP Tomuan Private Elementary School

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Abstract

This study aims to describe the collaboration between parents and teachers in supporting the development of social interactions in autistic children in student F at HKBP Tomuan Private Elementary School. This study uses a qualitative approach with a case study method. The subject in this study is a mild autistic student with the initials F who is in grade VI. Informants in this study consisted of F's parents, homeroom teachers, and teachers closest to student F. Data collection techniques were carried out through observation, interviews, and documentation. Data analysis used the Lexy J. Moleong model through the stages of data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions. The results of the study show that the development of F's social interactions has changed gradually towards the better. This can be seen from F's ability to begin to respond to communication, be involved in several school activities, and begin to show acceptance of interactions with the surrounding environment. The pattern of assistance provided by parents is carried out through consistent communication, continuous attention, and an approach that adapts to the child's emotional condition. Meanwhile, teachers provide assistance through an individual approach, building emotional comfort, and involving F in social activities in the school environment. Collaboration between parents and teachers is fostered through open communication, shared involvement in understanding the child's needs, and alignment of support patterns between home and school. This collaboration positively influences the development of F's social interactions.

Keywords: collaboration, parents, teachers, social interactions, children with autism.o



INTRODUCTION

In supporting the development of social interactions in autistic children, the role of collaboration between parents and teachers is crucial. Parental and teacher involvement in a child's education will be more effective if based on open communication and mutual trust. Collaboration is a joint effort between parents and groups working together to achieve specific goals (Putri Mutiara Jwinarti et al., 2024). According to (Putri et al., 2025), collaboration is a mutually supportive interaction process between individuals or groups in achieving common goals. Parent-teacher collaboration is a form of cooperation aimed at supporting the child's comprehensive development. (Fadila et al., 2025) argue that this collaboration involves several elements, such as honest communication, parental involvement in school activities, and mutual support to meet the child's needs and develop their potential. In the educational context, parent-teacher collaboration means communication, involvement, and active participation from both parties. Based on this definition, it can be concluded that parent-teacher collaboration is a collaborative relationship between parents and teachers built through communication and active involvement between the two parties. Therefore, the collaboration in question is the collaboration of parents and teachers in supporting children's social interactions. This collaboration extends beyond formal communication to include exchanging information about children's behavior and understanding their conditions and needs.

In inclusive education, children with developmental disabilities who require special services are referred to as children with special needs, who experience obstacles in one or more aspects of development, such as physical, intellectual, social, emotional, or communication. Children with special needs have characteristics that differ from other children, whether temporary or permanent, and therefore require education tailored to their needs. Children with special needs include conditions such as learning disabilities, intellectual disabilities, hearing impairments, and developmental disorders such as autism. One group of children with special needs most frequently encountered in mainstream schools are children with autism. Autism is a developmental disorder that affects a child's communication skills, social interactions, and behavior. According to (Alfanissa & Rahayu, 2026), autism is a developmental disorder characterized by preoccupation with certain things, repetitive behaviors, and difficulties in communicating, speaking, and interacting with others. Furthermore, according to (Syaputri & Afriza, 2022), autism is a symptom that appears in childhood, characterized by loneliness, delayed language development, spontaneous and limited activity, and memorizing things without thinking. Based on this opinion, it can be concluded that autism is a developmental disorder in children that impacts social interaction and communication skills. Therefore, autistic





children require effective support through collaboration between parents and teachers to ensure the child's social interaction development.

One of the most impactful developments in children with autism is their social interaction. According to (Prihatiningsih et al., 2025), the development of social interaction is a process of reciprocal relationships between individuals (children) that improves over time through shared activities such as play, thus fostering the development of social and communication skills. Nadia et al. (2023) argue that the development of social interaction is the dynamic development of interactions between individuals and groups of people, where reciprocal relationships occur. Similarly, Armelia & Zahroh (2024) state that the development of social interaction is a reciprocal activity between children and friends or adults through communication and mutually influencing actions, which plays a crucial role in an individual's social and emotional development. Based on this perspective, it can be concluded that the development of social interaction is a process that demonstrates an increase in a child's ability to communicate and adapt to the social environment.

Children with autism typically experience difficulties interacting with others. They struggle with two-way communication, are less responsive to social situations around them, have difficulty paying attention, and tend to be more interested in their own world. This condition is usually manifested by repetitive behavior, minimal interaction with others, and dependence on certain individuals when communicating.

This phenomenon was also found at HKBP Tomuan Private Elementary School. Based on initial observations and preliminary interviews, a student with autism characteristics experienced difficulties in social interaction. F tends to talk and laugh to himself, and is less responsive to instructions from teachers or parents, unless repeatedly reminded. During learning and social interactions at school, F has difficulty focusing and controlling his body movements, such as repetitive hand movements, which makes it difficult to participate in activities with friends and teachers. Furthermore, F tends to only respond to certain teachers, particularly Mrs. AP, who is more attentive to him, indicating that his social interactions have not developed evenly and still require intensive support. F's parents then chose HKBP Tomuan Private Elementary School as their school because it is considered to have a more accepting environment and does not provide excessive academic pressure. F then learns alongside peers with different character traits. During the learning process, F requires special support, especially in understanding teacher instructions, focusing attention, and interacting with his classmates.

F's condition in the school environment demonstrates that progress in social interactions for children with autism does not always occur equally in every situation. At times, F appears





able to respond to direction and interact, especially with people he already knows. However, in other situations, F again shows a tendency to withdraw and be less responsive to his surroundings. This shows that the development of social interactions in children with autism is greatly influenced by their environment and the support they receive. This situation presents a challenge for teachers, especially in mainstream schools. In addition to teaching according to the curriculum, teachers must also adapt their learning methods so that children with special needs can still interact socially in the classroom. In diverse classrooms, teachers' attention is often divided between the needs of both the mainstream and special needs children. This demonstrates that helping children with autism in mainstream schools requires ongoing support and cannot be handled by a single party.

On the other hand, F's parents recognize that the development of their child's social interactions cannot be left entirely to the school. They also play a crucial role in continuing the parenting practices implemented at school into the home environment. However, due to limited knowledge, time, and family circumstances, this parenting process does not always go smoothly. This demonstrates the importance of alignment between support at home and at school. Based on preliminary data, it appears that the AP teacher has an emotional closeness with F. This teacher better understands F's character, provides affection and attention, and maintains more intense communication with the parents. This closeness makes F more comfortable and responsive when directed. This situation indicates that the collaboration between parents and teachers is not only technical but also involves emotional aspects and trust. F's parents view school as the primary place for children to learn to socialize, while teachers also need parental support to improve the development of children's social interactions both at home and at school. Compared to previous research, most studies discuss parent-teacher collaboration in the general context of educating children with special needs. This study has an in-depth research focus, namely examining parent-teacher collaboration in supporting the development of social interactions in children with autism at HKBP Tomuan Private Elementary School through a descriptive qualitative approach. This research emphasizes field narratives, the experiences of parents and teachers, and the collaboration that occurs in the child's support process.

RESEARCH METHODS

1. Research Type

This study employed qualitative research. This research focuses on research that can be described qualitatively. Moleong (Ayu et al., 2024) explains that qualitative research aims to understand phenomena experienced by research subjects, such as behavior or habits,





motivation, and actions. Overall, it utilizes descriptions in the form of sentences and language within a naturally occurring context. Therefore, this type of research is appropriate for analyzing the collaboration between parents and teachers in supporting the development of autistic children (case study of HKBP Tomuan Private Elementary School). This research is descriptive qualitative, namely scientific research that seeks to uncover truth from the empirical side of the story, attempting to describe and explain social events. The research method used is a case study. Case studies are used to gain a deeper understanding of a problem or phenomenon being studied. According to Jasmine (2014), a case study is a qualitative research strategy that aims to explore a case in depth and within a real-world context. This design was chosen because the research focuses on a single case: the collaboration between parents and teachers in supporting the social development of children with special needs at HKBP Tomuan Private Elementary School.

2. Research Location and Time

The primary subject of this study was a special needs student with autism. The supporting data sources for this study were the student's parents and class teachers involved in the mentoring and learning process at the school. The study took place in East Siantar District, Pematang Siantar City, North Sumatra, from March to April 2026.

3. Research Subject

The profile of the research subject is F, 13 years old, male. His father, KJ, is self-employed, and his mother, M, is a housewife.

4. Data Collection Techniques

The research stages require a data collection process. The data collection techniques used in this study are as follows:

1) Observation

Observation is a technique for observing the reality of what occurs in the field. The researcher directly observes the research subjects. The observed subjects directly observe the behavior and social interactions of children with special needs at school.

2) Interviews

According to (Moleong, 2017), an interview is a purposeful dialogue conducted between two parties: the interviewer and the interviewee, or informant, who answers the questions.



Based on the description above, the researcher used a semi-structured interview technique, which utilizes an interview guide. This interview was used directly by the researcher to obtain data related to the collaboration between parents and teachers in supporting the development of social interactions in children with autism (a case study of the HKBP Tomuan Private Elementary School).

3) Documentation

Documentation is a technique for searching for or collecting important data regarding matters in the form of files and records of past events. According to Sugiyono (2016), documentation is a data collection technique conducted by examining existing documents or records. These documents can be articles, newspapers, books, photographs, videos, or video recordings. This research uses documentation to support problem-solving efforts in this study, namely the collaboration between parents and teachers in supporting the development of social interactions in autistic children (a case study of the HKBP Tomuan Private Elementary School).

5. Data Analysis

Data analysis in qualitative research is conducted during data collection and after completion within a specified period. During the interviews, the researcher analyzes the interviewees' responses. If the interviewee's answers are deemed unsatisfactory, further questioning is conducted until credible data is obtained. The data analysis technique used in this study is the Miles and Huberman interactive data analysis model.

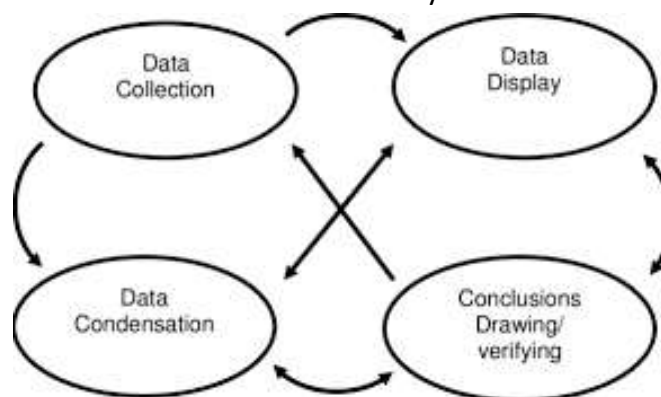


Figure 1. Components of the Interactive Data Analysis Model

RESULTS

Based on the research results, the development of student F's social interactions shows



gradual changes for the better. This change is evident in F's ability to respond when spoken to, to participate in several group activities at school, and to show acceptance of others around him. Although this development does not yet fully demonstrate active social interaction skills, the changes in F's development indicate progress compared to his previous condition. Interviews with his parents revealed that in his early development, F tended to be quiet, had difficulty responding when called upon, and was unable to establish reciprocal communication with those around him. F also often became absorbed in his own world, laughing to himself, talking to himself, and displaying a tendency to withdraw. In certain situations, F even showed resistance when invited to interact, especially when he was in a bad mood. This indicates that F's social interaction skills were initially very limited, both in terms of communication, social responsiveness, and engagement with his surroundings.

However, based on observations and interviews throughout the research, F is now beginning to show improved social development. F began to respond when spoken to, occasionally giving short answers, displaying a smile when comfortable, and began participating in some school activities with his friends. These changes indicate that F is slowly adapting to his social environment, although he still requires guidance and an approach tailored to his needs. The results of this study align with the theory that explains that the development of social interactions in autistic children occurs gradually and is heavily influenced by a supportive environment, consistent social stimulation, and emotionally secure relationships. Autistic children generally take longer to develop social responses than typical children because they tend to have difficulties with reciprocal communication, understanding social cues, and adjusting to the broader social environment. Therefore, even the smallest developments in social responses remain an important part of a child's development.

The findings of this study also align with research by Yeanny Ekawati and Yustina (2019), which showed that the development of social interactions in autistic children is influenced by the involvement of their immediate environment, particularly family and school, in providing ongoing social support. This study explains that autistic children can demonstrate positive social development when they are in an environment that is accepting, understands their needs, and provides space for them to develop according to their abilities. A similar trend was seen in F, whose social development occurred alongside continued support both at home and at school. According to the researchers' analysis, F's development of social interactions demonstrates that autistic children have the potential to thrive when provided with appropriate guidance, a comfortable environment, and acceptance from their surroundings. F's ability to respond to communication, participate in group activities, and accept interactions with others





demonstrates that social development in autistic children can develop gradually through a consistent process. Thus, F's development of social interactions is influenced not only by the child's individual condition but also by the quality of social support provided by their immediate environment.

Based on the research results, F's social interaction development is inseparable from the support provided by his parents and teachers in his daily life. This support is not limited to monitoring his activities but also manifests itself through attention, emotional engagement, ongoing communication, and patience in dealing with F's conditions and characteristics. This consistent support is one factor that helps F demonstrate changes in his social interaction skills. Within the family, parents play a crucial role in supporting F's development. Interviews revealed that the parents strive to support F through repeated communication, teaching F to respond when spoken to, and accustoming F to gradually adapting to his social environment. The parents also strive to understand F's emotional state, especially when he is in a bad mood. In such situations, the parents choose to use a calmer approach to prevent F from feeling stressed and to maintain a comfortable feeling. This approach demonstrates that supporting autistic children requires a deep understanding of the child's emotional state.

Furthermore, the role of teachers at school also significantly influenced F's social interaction development. Research shows that the teacher closest to F strived to foster a comfortable relationship to ensure F felt safe in the school environment. The teacher's approach was more personal, patient, and did not force F to interact immediately. Instead, the teacher allowed F space to adjust slowly, while still providing guidance and involving F in various school activities. This gentle approach made it easier for F to accept the presence of others and gradually began to demonstrate better social responses.

DISCUSSION

The results of this study align with the theory that autistic children require consistent guidance, an individual approach, and stable emotional support to develop socially. Each autistic child has unique characteristics, so the guidance provided must be tailored to the child's needs and circumstances. An overly forceful approach can actually lead to rejection, anxiety, and even emotional outbursts in children. Conversely, a patient, focused, and accepting approach will help children feel secure and gradually build social interactions. These findings are also supported by research by Mia Aris Septianingsih and colleagues (2024), which showed that teacher strategies using a personalized approach, special attention, and guidance methods tailored to the child's characteristics can help improve the social interaction skills of autistic children. Furthermore,





research by Echa Syaputri and Rodia Afriza (2024) also confirmed that active parental involvement in the daily guidance process has a positive influence on the development of children's communication and social relationships. This reinforces the findings of this study that consistent support, both at home and at school, plays a crucial role in F's development.

According to the researchers' analysis, the support patterns applied to F indicate that the development of autistic children's social interactions is significantly influenced by the quality of the relationship between the child and their caregiver. When a child feels understood, accepted, and not pressured, they are more likely to demonstrate natural social responses. In F's context, the patient and consistent approach of parents and teachers was a key factor in helping F gradually develop his social interaction skills.

Based on the research findings, F's social interaction development was not only influenced by the support provided separately by parents and teachers, but also by the collaboration between the two parties in supporting the child's development. This collaboration was evident in open communication, shared involvement in understanding the child's condition, and a shared goal in helping F develop, particularly in social interaction. A mutually supportive relationship between family and school is crucial in creating an environment conducive to F's social development.

According to interviews, F's parents demonstrated openness with the school regarding their child's condition, including habits, character, emotional responses, and the most appropriate approach for F. The information provided by the parents helped the teacher better understand F's needs while at school. Conversely, the teacher actively communicated F's development to the parents, including learning responses, social behavior, and minor changes observed in F's daily life at school. This communication helped both parties achieve a shared understanding of their child's condition and development. In addition to open communication, collaboration between parents and teachers is also evident through their shared support in the mentoring process. Parents foster social habits at home through ongoing communication, while teachers continue this process at school by providing space for F to learn to interact with peers. This continuity of mentoring between home and school allows F to receive more consistent social stimulation. This is important because autistic children require repeated social practice to understand interaction patterns within their environment.

The results of this study align with the theory that collaboration between family and school is crucial in supporting the development of children with special needs, particularly in the social and communication aspects. When parents and teachers communicate well, exchange information, and have a consistent approach, the mentoring process is more effective. Children do not experience significant differences in treatment between home and school, making it





easier for them to adjust and feel secure throughout their development. The findings of this study are also supported by research by Putri Mutiara Jwinarti (2024), which explains that collaboration between parents and teachers through regular communication, open information, and joint involvement in supporting children has a positive influence on the social development of children with special needs. Furthermore, research by Yeanny Ekawati and Yustina (2019) also shows that active family involvement and school support are important factors in shaping the social interaction skills of autistic children. These findings reinforce the findings of this study, which show that F's social development is not solely influenced by one party but is the result of consistent, joint support provided by the family and school.

According to the researchers' analysis, collaboration between parents and teachers in supporting F is a key force in fostering the development of the child's social interactions. The relationship established extends beyond formal communication regarding learning progress but also includes joint efforts to understand the child's needs, adapt approaches, and provide the emotional support F requires. With this strong collaboration between home and school, F enjoys a more stable, comfortable, and supportive environment in which to gradually learn and build social interactions.

CONCLUSION

Based on research findings on parent-teacher collaboration in supporting the development of social interactions in autistic children, a case study of student F at HKBP Tomuan Private Elementary School, it can be concluded that F's social interaction development shows gradual changes for the better. This change is evident in F's ability to respond when spoken to, his involvement in various school activities, and his gradual acceptance of interactions with his surroundings. However, F still exhibits several challenges, such as a tendency to be alone, difficulty initiating interactions independently, and social responses that are still influenced by emotional state and mood.

The support pattern implemented by parents and teachers plays a significant role in supporting F's social interaction development. Parents provide support through repeated communication, consistent attention, and an approach that adapts to the child's emotional state. Meanwhile, teachers provide support through an individual approach, fostering a sense of comfort, and involving F in various social activities within the school environment. This patient, consistent, and ongoing support helps F demonstrate gradual social development. Cooperation between parents and teachers is also an important factor in supporting the development of F's social interactions. Open communication, joint involvement in



understanding children's needs, and alignment of support patterns between home and school help create consistent social stimulation for F. With good cooperation, the development of F's social interactions can be supported in a more targeted manner according to the needs and characteristics of the child.

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