



PSYCHOEDUCATION PROGRAM FOR PARENTS OF CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS IN THE AUTISTIC CATEGORY

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Abstrak

Tujuan pengabdian kepada masyarakat ini adalah melakukan pendampingan untuk meningkatkan penerimaan orangtua anak berkebutuhan khusus (ABK) kategori Autis. Adapun metode yang digunakan adalah Psikoedukasi. Psikoedukasi merupakan metode yang dilakukan dengan tujuan meningkatkan penerimaan orang tua Anak Berkebutuhan Khusus (ABK) Kategori Autis. Adapun peserta di dalam kegiatan pengabdian adalah orang tua Anak Berkebutuhan Khusus (ABK) kategori Autis berjumlah 25 orang peserta. Peserta pengabdian memiliki skor pre yaitu kategori rendah dalam hal penerimaan orang tua. Metode kegiatan psikoedukasi terdiri dari tiga tahap utama serta evaluasi. Pada tahap persiapan, tim terlebih dahulu menganalisis kebutuhan psikoedukasi dengan melakukan wawancara terhadap orangtua yang memiliki anak berkebutuhan khusus (ABK) kategori Autis. Kemudian, pada tahap pelaksanaan, kegiatan meliputi penyampaian materi tentang penerimaan orang tua terhadap anak Autis, definisi Autis, faktor-faktor penyebab Autis, sharing permasalahan yang dihadapi dan diskusi. Hasil evaluasi dari kegiatan psikoedukasi ini menunjukkan peningkatan skor rata-rata 22,40 pada pre-test menjadi 67,20 pada post-test. Psikoedukasi memberikan kontribusi positif dalam penerimaan orangtua Anak berkebutuhan Khusus (ABK) terhadap anak Autis. Sehingga dengan bertambahnya penerimaan dari orang tua maka dapat meningkatkan tumbuh kembang anak autis melalui pola asuh yang tepat.

Kata kunci: *Autis, Orang tua, Pengabdian, Penerimaan, Psikoedukasi.*

Abstract

The purpose of community service is to provide assistance to increase the acceptance of parents of children with special needs in the Autistic category. The method used is Psychoeducation. Psychoeducation is a method carried out to increase the acceptance of parents of Children with Special Needs in the Autistic Category. The participants in the dimming activity were parents of Children with Special Needs in the Autistic category, totaling 25 participants. Service participants have a pre-score, which is a low category in terms of parental acceptance. The method of psychoeducational activities consists of three main stages, as well as evaluation. In the preparation stage, the team first analyzed the needs of psychoeducation by conducting interviews with parents who have children with special needs in the Autistic category. Then, at the implementation stage, the activity included the delivery of material about parental acceptance of autistic children, the definition of Autism, the factors that cause Autism, sharing of the problems faced, and discussions. The results of the evaluation of this psychoeducational activity showed an increase in the average score from 22.40 in the pre-test to 67.20 in the post-test. Psychoeducation makes a positive contribution to the acceptance of parents of Children with Special Needs of autistic children.

So that with increased acceptance from parents, it can increase the growth and development of autistic children through proper parenting.

Keywords: Acceptance, Autistic, Community Service, Parent, Psychoeducation.

INTRODUCTION

Autism in Indonesia based on KPPAI data, has increased by around 500 children every year starting from 2010, in 2018 it was recorded at KPPAI 2.4 million children with an autism diagnosis (Purwaningrum et al., 2021). According to data written by the Indonesian Ministry of Health, in 2024, in May, there will be 2.4 million children with an Autism diagnosis (Stevani, 2024). Autism is a term used to describe a type of neurological problem that affects thought, perception and practice (Iswari et al., 2019).

However, the increase in the number of Autistic people has not been accompanied by parents' acceptance of the child's condition. So there are several cases reported as a result of parents' lack of acceptance of autistic children, such as the case of the murder of an autistic child carried out by his biological father by dumping the child into the river in Cilegon in 2015 (Ali, 2015). Furthermore, in the same year, a case of neglect of autistic children was also reported in the Pidie Jaya district, Aceh due to a lack of insight and acceptance of children's limitations (Ismail, 2015). In 2017, it was also reported that there were cases of neglect of autistic children in Bengkulu, as a result of parents' lack of acceptance of autistic children, and they were even reluctant to admit their children (Indonesia, 2017).

In addition to some of the cases above, the community service team also conducted interviews with parents of autistic children, The result is that parents have not accepted their children, where parents consider that their children are the same as other normal children, have high expectations in independence, in learning children can read, recite, which is equated with the standards of other normal children and can be cured, even though according to the teacher the child should receive treatment in the form of individual therapy or education specifically or independently, then parents refuse by not receiving diagnoses and recommendations submitted by doctors or psychologists regarding their child's condition.

Some of the above cases are the result of the inability of parents to accept the child's shortcomings when diagnosed with Autism. In contrast, the acceptance shown by parents is an important aspect for Autistic children (Susanto, 2014). It is tough for a mother to accept the fact directly that her child's condition is in the developmental disorder of the Autistic category, another thing that is required of a mother who takes care of an autistic child is to be able to accept and adapt to the child's situation, then the mother is also required to carry out special treatment to meet the needs and children of Autism who are quite difficult (Rahmania et al., 2016). Another thing, is that parents who have an Autistic child, feel various complex



emotions, such as anger, sadness, rejection, distrust of the child's condition, to feelings of guilt because the child is different from other children, the parents are still able to show sincere affection (Wardani & Artistin, 2023). Other impacts of the lack of parental acceptance of children with special need are that the handling provided is not by the needs of the child, the child has difficulty developing optimally, the child feels neglected and becomes a burden, the child can experience emotional and behavioral disorders, family harmony is disturbed, the psychological well-being of parents and children is not achieved (Ross, 2008). Another thing, parents who have not accepted their child's condition are rejecting the diagnosis of Autism by saying that their child is only late in talking, independent if treated as useless, considering that their child is not yet the time to experience the development that the child is experiencing. This condition causes parents to fail to meet their children's needs.

This is in line with research Li, X., & Meier, (2019) said that the acceptance of mothers and fathers is a determinant or factor of the quality of children. Likewise, with interactions, parents with autistic children who have not accepted their child's condition will provide inappropriate parenting. Another opinion is by Putri & Lutfianawati, (2021) said that the lack of parental acceptance of children with disabilities can result in handling that is not by the needs of the child, so it can hinder the optimal development of children, making children feel neglected and considered. This will ultimately disrupt family harmony and hinder the achievement of psychological well-being for parents and children.

Parental acceptance of Autistic children is that parents pay attention to the fulfillment of the child's basic needs, including physiological needs, a sense of security, a sense of belonging and affection, appreciation, curiosity, aesthetics, growth and self-actualization (Banoet et al., 2016). Parents are said to accept the condition of their child by accepting first in terms of the child's strengths and incapacities (Gumilang & Irnawati, 2022). Similarly, it was also conveyed that accepting the child's situation is an attitude that can be interpreted as accepting the child's strengths and weaknesses (Subyantoro et al., 2022; Wardani & Artistin, 2023).

Rahayu et al., (2022) said that parents with Children with Special Needs who receive their children will determine good or positive interactions. Another thing is that parents who accept their children will affect the growth and development of Autistic children, and the role of parents is needed in implementing gultant diet therapy to help stabilize the focus of the Autistic child (Syaputri & Afriza, 2022). Therefore, acceptance of the child's condition is important. The steps that can be taken are psychoeducation of parents' acceptance of autistic children.

Psychoeducation is one of the efforts that can be used as a form of guidance to parents so that they can understand in detail the problems in children's growth and development, so that problems can be recognized early to be overcome

immediately in the right way (Mirza, Rina, Marpaung, Winida, & Manurung Yulinda, 2019). Psychoeducation is an approach that uses knowledge and information about mental health to help people understand, manage, and improve their mental health conditions (Vahlia et al., 2024). In line with Hastuti, (2021) stated that psychoeducation is an effort to help individuals, groups or families in carrying out interventions centered on increasing participants' knowledge in the development of coping skills to face challenges.

This psychoeducational activity succeeded in increasing the knowledge of parents of ABK about the ideal stress-coping strategy (Trisnadewi et al., 2025). Nawangsari, (2022) dan Raihana et al., (2025) said that parenting psychoeducation is focused on improving the knowledge of parents with disabilities, there has been no psychoeducational research focused on increasing parental acceptance of children with special needs in the Autistic category. Therefore, devotees are interested in doing this service with psychoeducational media. The purpose of community service activities is to help parents in increasing acceptance of Autistic children in order to increase the growth and development of Autistic children to be more optimal.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Psychoeducation to Increase the Acceptance of Parents of Children with Special Needs in the Autistic Category in the IT Learning Group, amounting to 25 parents. Furthermore, service activities are carried out in three stages, namely preparation, implementation, and evaluation. This community service activity is carried out in three stages, namely preparation, implementation, evaluation, and reporting, along with explanations of each stage.

Preparation Stage

Community Service is carried out: (a) Identifying psychoeducational needs. This process begins by conducting community interviews, namely parents who have children with special needs in the Autistic category. Furthermore, preliminary studies of the literature and field data were carried out to identify the problems experienced. The data acquisition is used as information in designing psychoeducation so that the material presented is adjusted to the needs of (b) Preparation of psychoeducation programs. This is done so that activities are carried out in a structured and measurable manner. The program includes the implementation, scheduling and process of psychoeducational events. (c) Preparation of psychoeducational materials. This includes the theory used tailored to the needs of the participants that are tailored to each training session. (d). Preparation of the parent acceptance scale used as a pre-test and post-test as well as an evaluation form of activities on the material, learning process or training process, facilities and implementation of training as an effort to carry out quality



assurance for the quality and success of service activities. (d) Preparation of facilities and infrastructure. The film media that is prepared as supporting material in psychoeducation as a task for participants, learning media equipment in service that is used in task activities that will be used in psychoeducation, including rooms, psychoeducational equipment and projectors to support training activities. (e) Field coordination. This is done by determining the implementation schedule, making permits to technical planning and the implementation of activities after which preparing materials, resource persons assignment letters, equipment as a medium of service learning.

Implementation Stage

Community Service carries out namely: (a) Pre-test or pre-test which is carried out to measure the level of initial knowledge of participants related to parental acceptance by using questions in the form of a likert scale distributed through the gogle form (b). Psychoeducation is carried out interactively and uses the experiential learning method. The activity is psychoeducation of parental acceptance which has the aim of providing knowledge or debriefing for parents who have children with special needs in the Autistic Category to support the growth and development of children to be optimal. The resource persons for this service activity were Syarifah Ivonesti, S.Psi, M.Psi., a psychologist who has experience as a psychologist for Education Children with special needs, and has experience as a psychologist at the Riau Province Autism service center and a lecturer in the course for children with special needs, with a team namely Ade Silvana, Nina Zakiyah, MSi as a team lecturer and is a member of the service who is also experienced in accompanying children with special needs.

The service activities, namely job readiness training, began with an opening by the MC or host and filling in the participants' attendance, then continued with a break by providing snacks for the training participants. The training event continued by inviting participants to watch films related to Autistic children which has the goal of being a focus and a common perception before the material is given rules or agreements before participating in the training before doing the training, then the initial activity of participants is asked to fill out a pre-test with a scale of parental self-acceptance which is the material given in the training.

Furthermore, then material related to Autism, causative factors, the process of parental acceptance was given, involved in group discussions, by discussing the details of the film given, followed by watching a potential film of children with special needs that provided insight for participants, resource persons also provided experiences as learning materials for participants. This is in line with research conducted by Ivonesti et al., (2020), Ivonesti & Mahsuri, (2025) namely the method of group discussions, lectures, discussions, debrief, experiential learning, watching videos, movies, games, and the resource person also conveyed their experiences and experiences from others to support in increasing the knowledge of the participants.

Evaluation and Reporting Stage

Community Service conducts evaluation is carried out by providing a post test and evaluation of the process of psychoeducational activities and evaluation of activities. The materials that are evaluated include materials, learning processes or training processes, facilities and the implementation of training as an effort to carry out quality assurance for the quality and success of service activities.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Community service to increase parental acceptance of children with special needs in the autistic category through psychoeducational methods. Activities are carried out in three stages, namely preparation, implementation, evaluation and reporting.

Planning Stage

The service team coordinates the implementation of activities with activity partners, namely the IT Learning Group. The following is prepared, namely the schedule for the implementation of activities, licensing or administration in terms of borrowing places, equipment, coordination with the school, namely the principal, which is used as a place to carry out service activities. Another thing is the preparation of learning materials, equipment and media used in psychoeducation.

Implementation Stage

The stage of implementation of psychoeducational service activities is carried out, namely participants of service activities are asked to fill in attendance and scale in the form of pre-tests and attendance while waiting for the event to start, the results of the pre-test are used by the service team as a tool to measure the condition of initial admission as a basis for comparison with the results of the post-test to measure the usefulness of the psychoeducation program. Therefore, the involvement of pre-tests in service activities is not only administrative, but also has an important role in ensuring the quality and relevance of activities. The graph of the pre-test results of the trainees is described in Figure 1.

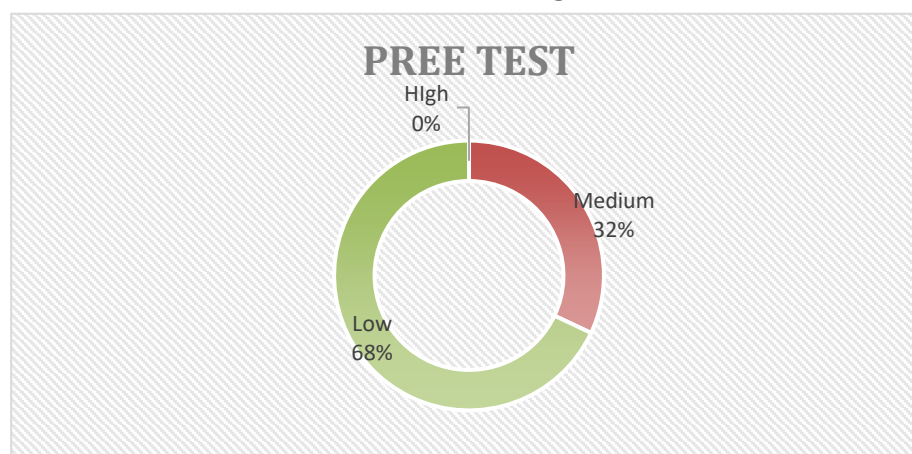


Figure 1. Pre Test Score Diagram



In the picture above, the pre-test results given before the implementation of psychoeducation found that the acceptance rate of parents of Children with Special Needs in the Autism category was very low. This can be seen from the results of the answers to 21 statement items on the scale, Most participants showed scores that were far below the adequate category, which indicates that they have not fully accepted the condition of a child with developmental disabilities in the Autism category.

Implementation of activities

Furthermore, in the activity, the presenter used powerpoint. Powerpoint media is a medium used to support presentations with a more professional and effective atmosphere. The session lasted for three days in a face-to-face format, consisting of material presentations, interactive discussions, and simulations of handling certain situations. The material presented includes a basic understanding of autism, effective communication strategies with autistic children, and stress management for parents. The material delivery session is explained in Figure 2.



Figure 2. Material Delivery Session by Resource Persons

During the implementation, participants showed increased participation and confidence in conveying personal experiences and asking questions about how to deal with difficult children's behaviors. One of the most impactful sessions was when parents were invited to role-play and share about the methods they used at home. From a brief evaluation during the activity, participants stated that this psychoeducation provided new insights and improved their ability to accompany

children with autism in a more patient and targeted manner. The enthusiasm of the participants is explained in Figure 3.



Figure 3. Documentation of Participants in Psychoeducational Activities

Psychoeducation can increase parental acceptance by providing examples in the form of videos to parent participants, examples of Autistic children who are successful and successful in achieving their achievements, characteristics of Autism, in the form of Autistic symptoms, acceptance in Islam, factors, and works of Autistic children. Furthermore, what supports the success of the service is the material provided with the definition of autism, characteristics of autism, fantor of causes, parental acceptance of autistic children, sharing the process of parental acceptance of autistic children, videos of autistic children who have achievements. This material can help participants improve their knowledge, where increased parental knowledge related to Autistic children can encourage parental acceptance through better understanding, reduction of stigma, and increased confidence in parenting. This understanding allows parents to adjust their attitudes and behaviors to the child's condition in a more adaptive way.

Evaluation Stage

After the implementation of psychoeducation related to the admission of parents of children with special needs (ABK) in the Autistic category, participants were again given the same questionnaire as a post-test instrument to evaluate the change in their acceptance rate. The results of these measurements are shown in Figure 4.

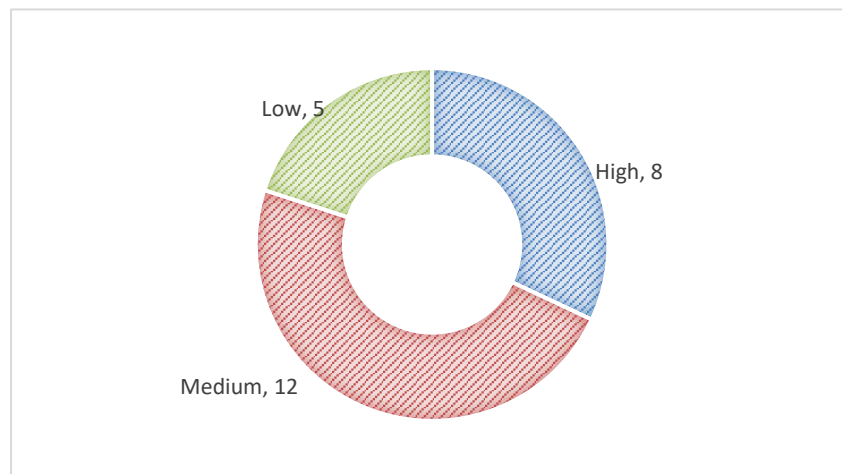


Figure 4. Post-test Results of Mentoring Activities

Based on the diagram, there is a significant increase in the acceptance rate of parents of Children with Special Needs in the Autistic category. If in the pre-test, most of the participants showed a relatively low score and reflected unpreparedness in accepting the child's condition, then the results of the participants' post-test after psychoeducation showed a positive shift. There are 20% of all participants who do not experience a change in score between the post-test and pre-test scores. This is because the participants do not participate in the activity to the maximum, and participants often ask for permission to leave the activity session.

Furthermore, from Figure 4, it can be seen that 48% of participants are in the medium category. This illustrates a change in parental acceptance of Autistic children, which began to form after psychoeducational activities were carried out. Meanwhile, 32% of participants reached the high category, which indicates that the majority of participants have experienced a change in acceptance of Children with Special Needs in the Autistic category after psychoeducation. These findings show that psychoeducation has a significant positive impact on increasing parental acceptance. To provide a more comprehensive overview of the comparison between pre-test and post-test results, Table 1.

Table 1. Pre-Test and Post-Test Comparison Results

Level	Pre-test	Post-test
High	0	8
Medium	8	12
Low	17	5

Based on table 1, an overview is obtained of an increase in the score of psychoeducation participants, namely those who at the beginning of the pre-test scores of participants in the high category are empty, the medium category is 8 while the low category is 17 people. This means that most of the participants have not been able to accept autistic children and only a few are in the medium category in accepting autistic children. Meanwhile, after being given training from the post-test

results, it was seen that there were significant changes, from the results of the parental acceptance scale in the service participants, namely the scores of participants in the high category of 8 people, the medium category 12 people, and the low category as many as 5 people. This means that the data on the sample taken show that psychoeducation can significantly increase parental acceptance of Autistic children.

Table 2. Average Comparison Results of Pre-Test and Post-Test

	Mean	N	Std.Deviation
Pre-test	22.40	25	
Post-test	67.20	25	

Table 2 illustrates a significant increase in the acceptance score of parents of Children with Special Needs in the category of Autistic children after being given psychoeducation. The average pre-test score of participants of 22.40 reflects a very low acceptance rate before the intervention was performed. This is consistent with the results of the initial categorization which showed that most participants were at a low level in understanding and accepting the condition of Autistic children. However, after the implementation of psychoeducation, there was a sharp spike in scores, as shown by the average post-test score of 67.20.

In addition, from the results of interviews with several mothers of the assisted participants, they admitted that they were very helped by this psychoeducational session. She said that so far she often felt confused and overwhelmed facing her child's behavior, but after participating in this activity, she began to understand that the approach needed is consistent, patient, and based on scientific understanding.

"I realized that I was not alone, and that there was a way to communicate with my son."

One mother of a 5-year-old girl who was recently diagnosed with autism also benefited greatly from the group discussion sessions. She said that the experience of sharing stories with other parents really helped her reduce the psychological burden and make her better prepared to take on the role of mother.

"So far, I feel that this is just my own burden, but it turns out that many parents have experienced the same thing. I became more optimistic and wanted to learn more," she said.

Meanwhile, other participants who have been accompanying their children for a long time to undergo routine therapy, welcomed the presence of this program because it provides space for self-evaluation and renewing insights. He said that the approach taught during psychoeducation feels more grounded and easy to apply in daily life.



"I really hope that this activity can continue, because not all parents have access to the right information."

These psychoeducational activities have had a positive impact not only in increasing knowledge, but also in forming an emotional support network between parents. Assisted partners responded very well and showed more positive attitudes in dealing with the challenges of parenting children with autism. It is hoped that this activity will be the first step in building a sustainable learning community and creating an inclusive space that can strengthen the role of families in supporting the development of children with special needs holistically.

The results of the data obtained showed that there was an increase in parental acceptance of autistic children; this increase indicates that the psychoeducation provided can have a meaningful impact on changes in parents' attitudes and understanding. This increase is in line with the definition of psychoeducation according to Nelson-Jones, (2019) dan Supratiknya, (2011) Namely psychoeducation or personal-social education There are at least six definitions of psychoeducation, each representing a specific movement, namely (a) training people to learn various life skills, (b) academic-experiential approach in teaching psychology, (c) humanistic education, (d) training paraprofessionals in the field of counseling skills, (e) a series of service activities to the community, and (f) providing information services about psychology to the public. Therefore, psychoeducation is appropriate to be given to increase the acceptance of parents of children with special needs in the Autistic category.

The fact that none of the participants were in the low category on the post-test reinforces these findings (Maharani et al., 2025). Thus, psychoeducational interventions are effective in increasing parental acceptance of autistic children. So that with increased acceptance from parents, it can increase the growth and development of autistic children through proper parenting. The results of this analysis are in line with the research Cahyani & Putrianti, (2021); Nawangsari, (2022) which states that psychoeducation can improve the understanding of parents or caregivers of children with special needs, through better understanding, parents are potentially encouraged to establish healthier and supportive interactions with children (Basuki & Prasanti, 2023). This can motivate them consciously to implement parenting styles that are by the advice of experts, and adjusted to the child's conditions and needs so that children's development and growth can take place more optimally in line with the results of research from Desi & Ratna, (2023); Himawan et al., (2021); Humairoo & Fikry, (2023), which shows that positive parental involvement in parenting patterns contributes greatly to children's emotional and cognitive well-being.

Theoretically, the Health Belief Model (HBM) explains that knowledge affects the perception and response to health conditions. Moreover Swarup et al., (2025) The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) emphasizes that attitudes, subjective norms,

and perceptions of behavior control, all of which are influenced by knowledge, play a role in shaping the intentions and actual or real behavior of parents. Furthermore, according to (Fatirahma & Hendriani, 2025; R. P. Putri & Wiwin, 2025; Trisnadewi et al., 2025) In the perspective of Stress and Coping Theory, adequate knowledge acts as a form of cognitive coping that helps parents accept and manage the stress caused by the diagnosis of Autism in children in a more constructive way (Nurwahidin et al., 2024; Zakiah et al., 2020).

Likewise, the material provided by the resource persons in the form of sharing experiences by parents who experience the condition of having an Autistic child. This is very helpful for participants in providing inspiration, support, lessons and positive expectations to children. This is in line with the opinion that Sharing experience is the process of sharing experiences and inspiring life stories to provide understanding, inspiration and support to others (Vahlia et al., 2024).

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

Psychoeducation to increase parental acceptance of autistic children has a positive impact on parental acceptance. As many as 80% of participants experienced an increase in parental acceptance of autistic children. The results of the participant questionnaire can be seen from the scores of participants in the high category 8 people, 12 people in the medium category, and 0 people in the low category.

As for the lack of this service only involving mothers, suggestions for the next service should involve the immediate family of the Autistic child. Furthermore, for related parties such as therapy institutions, inclusion schools and Special Schools, Public Schools are recommended to be able to provide psychoeducation on an ongoing basis as a routine program. In addition, it is necessary to expand psychoeducation to parents who have children with other disability diagnoses. Subsequently, the provision of psychoeducation was given in three months, in order to see the consistency of changes in parental acceptance by using the acceptance scale.

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