




PLAY THERAPY IN EDUCATIONAL INTERVENTIONS FOR STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS: A SYSTEMATIC REVIEW

*Maznah Ramli¹, Fazzuan Khalid², Rozniza Zaharudin³, Ahmad Afandi Yusri⁴, Mohd Imran Yusoff⁵

^{1,2,3,4,5} School of Educational Studies, Universiti Sains Malaysia, Penang Malaysia

| Article Info | ABSTRACT |
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| <p>Article history: Received: 22 July 2024 Revised: 4 August 2024 Accepted: 26 August 2024 Published: 1 Sept 2024</p> | <p>This review aims to systematically analyze the research on play therapy and its effectiveness in helping children with special educational needs (SEN) succeed in school. Play therapy has shown great promise in special education as a child-centered approach that utilizes engaging and interactive mediums to assist social, emotional, and cognitive development. Focusing on implementation issues and factors affecting play therapy's efficacy, the study intends to assess its effectiveness across different SEN situations. Recent studies have shown that play therapy can help individuals with special educational needs (SEN), especially those on the autistic spectrum and those with ADHD, greatly improve their social skills, emotional control, and problem-solving ability. Nevertheless, several obstacles are highlighted in the study. These include different kinds of special needs, methodological limitations in previous research, and the impact of social and cultural variables on the results of play therapy. The results stress the importance of individualized strategies that consider cultural norms, educational settings, and student requirements. To help teachers and therapists make the most of play therapy in special education, this review adds to the expanding corpus of literature on the topic. To fill in the gaps and strengthen the evidence foundation for play therapy treatments in special education settings, future research approaches are being recommended.</p> |
| <p>Keywords: Autism spectrum disorder (ASD), educational intervention, play therapy, special needs students, and systematic review</p> <p></p> | |

Corresponding Author:

*Fazzuan Khalid

Faculty of Educational Studies University of Science Malaysia, Malaysia.

Email: fazzuan@usm.my



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INTRODUCTION

Play therapy is an effective intervention approach in special education, especially for students with special educational needs (SEN) (Hau & Mohd Rashid, 2023). Play therapy includes various activities and techniques that aim to help children build social, emotional, and cognitive skills through a fun and interactive medium (Amanda &

Hidayat, 2024; Barghi et al., 2024; Farnam et al., 2019). Play therapy shows effectiveness in the field of psychology and education which is the main approach to support the holistic development of MBPK. This approach provides space for children to explore emotions and communicate better, as well as develop problem-solving skills in a less formal setting than traditional therapy sessions.

The main advantage of play therapy in special education lies in its child-centered approach and focus on play experiences as the main medium for learning and development. Play therapy enables MBPK students to overcome learning obstacles in a supportive and non-pressured environment. Through structured play, students can learn new skills in contexts relevant to the lives of autistic children, encouraging them to use these skills in real situations. In addition, play therapy can also improve the relationship between students and teachers, as well as between students and peers, because it trains social interaction and teamwork. Therefore, play therapy not only helps in students' individual development but also contributes to a more inclusive learning environment.

STUDY PROBLEMS

Play therapy has been recognized as an effective intervention in helping the development of students with special educational needs (SEN), but there are still some challenges in its implementation that require attention. Studies on the effectiveness of play therapy often face methodological challenges, such as small samples and a lack of rigorous experimental control. In addition, the effectiveness of play therapy may vary according to the type of special needs, age, and background of the pupil, which requires a different approach. There is also a lack of understanding of how cultural and social aspects influence the acceptance and effectiveness of play therapy. Therefore, this study aims to comprehensively evaluate the effectiveness of play therapy in various special education contexts, focusing on implementation challenges and factors that influence its effectiveness. This study will also examine how play therapy can be optimized to provide maximum benefits to MBPK.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. Studying the potential of play therapy in the social, emotional, and cognitive development of students with special educational needs (SED).
2. Identifying the challenges of play therapy among MBPK.
3. Studying the factors that influence the effectiveness of play therapy against MBPK.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Previous studies have shown that play therapy has great potential in helping the development of students with special educational needs (SED). According to Landreth and Bratton (2006), play therapy can improve the social and emotional skills of children, especially those with autism spectrum disorders. This study found that through structured play interactions, children can learn to recognize and manage their emotions and improve communication skills. Likewise, a study by Ray et al. (2015) showed that play therapy was effective in helping children with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) manage their behavior better. These studies emphasize that play therapy can be a powerful tool in special education interventions, helping MBPK overcome developmental barriers in a safe and fun environment.

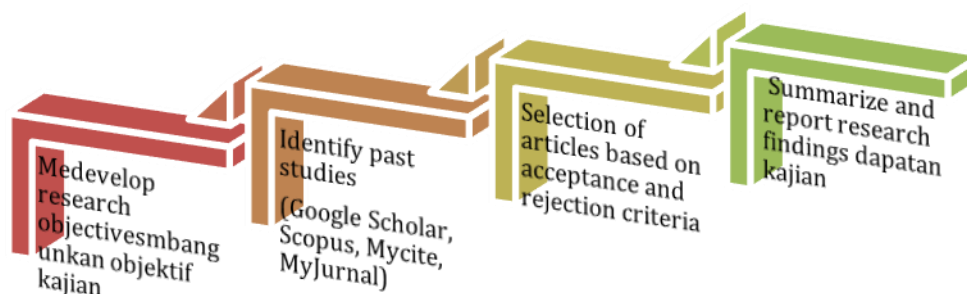
However, the implementation of play therapy also faces various challenges. A study by Lin and Bratton (2015) shows that one of the main challenges is the lack of sufficient resources and training for educators and therapists to implement play therapy effectively. In addition, a study by Moustakas (2014) found that the effectiveness of play therapy may be influenced by factors such as the student's cultural and socioeconomic background, which requires a more appropriate approach. As for the methodological issue in this study of the effectiveness of play therapy in terms of the small sample size and the lack of strict experimental control, this can affect the validity of the study results. Therefore, further research needs to be done to overcome these challenges and develop a deeper understanding of how play therapy can be optimized to provide maximum benefits to MBPK in various contexts.

STUDY METHOD

This library study is carried out according to four processes, as shown in Figure 1. Based on the four methodological processes of this library study, the study begins by developing the objectives of the study and is followed by the

process of identifying suitable articles. After that, the selection of articles is done by entering acceptance and rejection criteria. Finally, the process of making a summary and reporting the findings of the study is done on the selected articles, which are a total of 9 articles.

Figure 1. Article selection process



Develop Research Objectives

The first step of this study involves determining the purpose of the study as explained in the second subtopic. This study aims to review the play therapy approach in educational intervention for students with special educational needs (SEE).

Identify Past Studies

A comprehensive literature review was conducted through various academic databases such as Google Scholar, Scopus, Mycite, and MyJurnal to obtain a comprehensive overview of past studies conducted on the teaching of grammar aspects. This helps researchers identify current trends, methodologies used, and key findings in previous studies published starting in the year 2018 until 2024. The keywords used for this study are "grammar teaching method", "Malay education" and "primary school". The keywords are also translated into English to help researchers find articles more comprehensively.

Selection Of Articles Based on Acceptance And Rejection Criteria

The selection of articles is based on acceptance and rejection criteria, which is an important step in systematic review studies. Acceptance criteria focus on articles published since 2018 and above to ensure that the study uses the latest sources and meets current developments in the field of education. In addition, the selected articles must involve a study sample consisting of teachers and primary school students.

Articles written in Malay and English are accepted. In addition, the selected articles must focus on grammatical aspects and be published from Malaysia as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Acceptance and Rejection Criteria

| Criteria | Acceptance Criteria | Rejection Criteria |
|----------|--------------------------------------|--|
| Year | Articles published in 2018 and above | Articles published before 2018 |
| Articles | | Proceeding, Systematic article, article under review |

| | | |
|----------|--|---|
| Sample | Teachers, trainee teachers and primary school students | Apart from teachers, trainee teachers and primary school students |
| Language | Articles in Malay and English | Articles other than Malay and English |
| Aspect | Specifically for grammar aspects | In addition to grammatical aspects |

As for the rejection criteria, articles that do not meet the requirements as published before 2018 will be rejected. Studies that did not involve primary school teachers and students as samples were also excluded because they did not provide an accurate picture of studies at the primary school level. Articles written in languages other than Malay and English are rejected to avoid the possibility of misinterpretation due to language differences. Articles that are not written specifically for grammatical.

SUMMARIZE AND REPORT RESEARCH FINDINGS

The last step involves an in-depth analysis of the selected articles. After careful screening and inspection, only nine (9) articles were found to be very relevant for this study. The articles examined were first coded through Microsoft Excel software. The results are then reported in the form of a table.

Study Results

Based on the documents provided, researchers have compiled the information in the form of a table below:

| Author and Year | Research Methods | Sample | Study Findings |
|------------------------------|---|--|--|
| Khalid M.; Anjum G. (2019) | Qualitative - Semi-structured interviews | 9 rehabilitation teachers | The Orton-Gillingham approach is most effective and popular for dyslexic students. Major challenges include stigma, late diagnosis, and behavioral problems. |
| Wijnhoven LAMW et al. (2015) | Quantitative - Randomized controlled experiment | 120 autistic children aged 8-16 years | The Mindlight video game has the potential to reduce anxiety symptoms in children with autism. |
| Barry L. et al. (2022) | Quantitative - Survey | 369 mainstream primary school teachers | Teachers lack initial training and CPD related to autism. Knowledge and use of EBP varies according to teacher characteristics. |

| | | | |
|------------------------------|---|--|---|
| Wijnhoven LAMW et al. (2020) | Quantitative - Randomized controlled experiment | 109 autistic children aged 8-16 years | There was no difference in the decrease in anxiety symptoms based on child ratings, but a significant decrease based on parent ratings in the experimental group. |
| Bana S. et al. (2017) | Quantitative - experimental | Quasi-40 children with intellectual disabilities | Cognitive-behavioral play therapy effectively improves the self-esteem of children with intellectual disabilities. |
| Huijnen CAGJ et al. (2016) | Qualitative - Focus groups and systematic literature review | 53 ASD professionals from 9 organizations | Professionals identified 74 ASD objectives in 9 different domains. Existing robots address these 24 objectives in 8 domains. |
| Byford S. et al. (2015) | Quantitative - effectiveness analysis | Cost-152 preschool children with autism | Parent-focused communication therapy shows clinical improvement, but at a higher cost than usual treatment. |
| Lang R. et al. (2014) | Quantitative - baseline designs across participants | Multiple 3 young children with autism | Play skills taught through behavioral interventions can be maintained, generalized, and sustained even without social reinforcement. |

CONCLUSION

The promising future of play therapy as a helpful intervention for SEN students is highlighted in this comprehensive analysis. Play therapy has been shown in recent research to help kids with special educational needs (SEN), especially those on the autistic spectrum or with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), acquire better social skills, emotional management abilities, and cognitive capacities. Students are able to overcome learning obstacles and gain vital life skills in a supportive and engaging setting that is child-centered through play therapy. On the other hand, the review highlights several obstacles to successful play therapy implementation. Some examples of these include the fact that current research has some methodological constraints, that the efficacy varies across various kinds of special needs, and that social and cultural variables might impact the results. These results highlight the importance of individualized strategies that consider cultural origins, educational settings, and the unique requirements of each student. These obstacles should be the focus of future studies if play therapy is to be most effective in special education settings. Among these goals is the need for more extensive and controlled experiments to determine if play therapy is beneficial for a wider variety of special needs and to determine the role that social and cultural variables play in shaping treatment results. Teachers and therapists also require better tools and training to use play therapy successfully.

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