



## Application of TEACCH method to sharpen life skills in children with autism.

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### Article Information

Submitted October 26, 2024

Revised November 06, 2024

Accepted December 23, 2024

### Keywords

Autistic children;

Life skills;

TEACCH method.

### Abstract

**Background :** The prevalence of autism in Indonesia has risen significantly in recent years, requiring targeted interventions to address developmental challenges. Special education institutions like TKLB River Kids play a crucial role in equipping autistic children with essential life skills to enhance their independence and quality of life. The TEACCH (Treatment and Education of Autistic and Associated Communication Handicapped Children) method has been widely recognized for its structured approach tailored to the unique needs of autistic individuals. This study examines the implementation of the TEACCH method at TKLB River Kids to explore its impact on developing life skills among autistic children.

**Aim :** The study aims to analyze the application of the TEACCH method in honing life skills among autistic children at TKLB River Kids, identifying the influencing factors and the outcomes of this intervention.

**Method :** This qualitative study employed a case study design to deeply explore the implementation of the TEACCH method. Data collection involved a one-month observation, interviews with three teachers and one therapist, and documentation analysis at TKLB River Kids. Triangulation techniques were used to validate the data, and Miles and Huberman's interactive model was applied for analysis.

**Results :** The findings reveal that the TEACCH method, utilizing visual schedules, independent work systems, and structured task organization, significantly improved life skills such as self-care, communication, motor development, and social interaction. Internal factors like children's motivation and cognitive abilities, as well as external factors including parental support and the availability of visual aids, influenced the program's success. Improvements in emotional regulation, task completion, and independence were observed, with parents and educators reporting reduced stress and enhanced family dynamics.

**Conclusion :** The structured implementation of the TEACCH method at TKLB River Kids has effectively fostered independence and life skills development in autistic children. The collaborative approach involving schools and families highlights the potential for broader application in special education settings, offering a sustainable model for enhancing the well-being of children with Autism Spectrum Disorder.

## INTRODUCTION

The prevalence of autism in Indonesia has shown a significant increase in recent years, as reflected in various official data from government agencies (Rahman et al., 2023 ; Wijaya & Putri, 2022 ; Santoso, 2024 ). Data from the Ministry of Health shows that during 2021-2022, there were 6,780 cases of developmental disorders in children, including autism

spectrum disorders, that received services at health centers (Ministry of Health of the Republic of Indonesia, 2023). This situation is increasingly concerning considering that out of a total population of around 275.8 million people in Indonesia, it is estimated that there are around 3.5 million autistic children (BPS, 2023). This condition requires special attention from various stakeholders to improve the quality of health and education services for autistic children ( R. Kusuma et al., 2023 ; D. Pratiwi & Hidayat, 2024 ; Nugroho, 2023 ). Handling autistic children in Indonesia still faces various serious challenges, especially in terms of accessibility to quality health and education services (Rahmawati et al., 2024 ; Sutanto & Permadi, 2023 ; Abdullah, 2024 ).

Educational institutions play a role in the growth and development of autistic children ( A & Harsiwi, 2024 ; Rahman, nd., 2023 ; Kusuma & Wijaya, 2022; Pratiwi et al., 2023). Special Schools (SLB) and special educational institutions are responsible not only for providing education for autistic children (Hidayat et al., 2023 ; Nugraha & Putri, 2022 ; Widodo & Sari, 2024 ). Not only focusing on academics, but also developing life skills and student independence (Sutrisno et al., 2024 ; Wulandari & Permana, 2023 ; Purnomo, 2023 ). Through structured and systematic programs, special educational institutions strive to equip autistic students with the practical skills needed to live their daily lives more independently, such as the ability to take care of themselves, interact socially, and manage basic routines.

The World Health Organization (WHO) defines life skills as the ability to adapt and behave positively that enables individuals to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life (Singh & Agarwal, 2024; WHO, 2005; Zaman et al., 2023). Life skills include a variety of abilities that help a person deal with various situations in life, both in personal, social, and professional environments (Dubois & Trabelsi, 2007; Gould & Carson, 2008; Kirchhoff & Keller, 2021; Saini, 2016). These skills are important for self-development, effective social interaction, and success in various aspects of life (Boyce et al., 2010; Prasertcharoensuk et al., 2015; Raeff, 1997; Wheeler, 2008).

Life skills include various abilities that help a person deal with various situations in life, both in personal, social, and professional environments (Anderson, 2012; Bolat & Korkmaz, 2021; Buchert, 2014; Camiré, 2023). These skills are important for self-development, effective social interactions, and success in various aspects of life (Hennekam, 2015; McCollum, 1999; Yang & Bradford Brown, 2016). If autistic children are not trained in *life skills*, the impact can be very significant on their development and future. A lack of *life skills* can result in excessive dependence on caregivers, difficulties in future education and employment, and social isolation (Cerniglia et al., 2017; Chow & Tiwari, 2014; Mallory 2024 ). *Inadequate life skills*, autistic children have difficulty living their daily lives independently, interacting with others, or even taking care of themselves. This can limit their potential and reduce their chances of participating fully in society. On the other hand, with the right life skills taught, autistic children can develop self-confidence, increase their ability to adapt, and have a greater chance of achieving independence and success in the future.

In an effort to overcome these challenges, various intervention methods have been developed. One approach that has received widespread attention is the Care and Education of Children with Autism and Related Communication Disabilities TEACCH (Panerai et al., 2009; Schopler et al., 1984; Virues-Ortega et al., 2013). This method, developed by Dr. Eric Schopler and his colleagues at the University of North Carolina in the 1960s, emphasizes structured learning and environmental adaptation to meet the needs of individuals with autism.

The TEACCH method is based on a deep understanding of the cognitive characteristics of children with autism, including their propensity for visual processing and need for routine and

structure. It uses visual strategies to organize the learning environment, providing visual schedules, and breaking down complex tasks into smaller, more manageable steps. This approach aims to increase children's understanding of their environment and what is expected of them, thereby promoting independence and *independent living skills*.

There are several studies that show the effectiveness of the TEACCH method on people with autism in various aspects. The TEACCH method research (Leni Cahyani, 2017) with a focus on the TEACCH method in improving the ability to brush the teeth of autistic children at the Dian Amanah Autism School using the Single Subject Research design, the results of the study showed a significant increase in students' ability to brush their teeth from an average of 55.83% in baseline phase 1 to 69.5% after the intervention, and increased again to 76.6% in baseline phase 2. The TEACCH method adapted to the characteristics of autistic students has been proven effective in helping students understand the material and improve self-development skills which are very important for achieving independence. The application of the TEACCH method in special schools for autistic students in Malang by highlighting the success of its implementation through three stages: Planning, implementation, and evaluation (Dacholfany et al., 2023; Nawasita et al., 2023; Tawa et al., 2024). This method combines structured teaching activities, clear schedules, an organized learning environment, and visual aids to improve communication skills and independence in students with autism spectrum disorders. Despite challenges such as student anger and teacher inconsistency, the school has taken steps to address these issues through teacher training, parent collaboration, and behavior analysis, with the goal of a more effective intervention program.

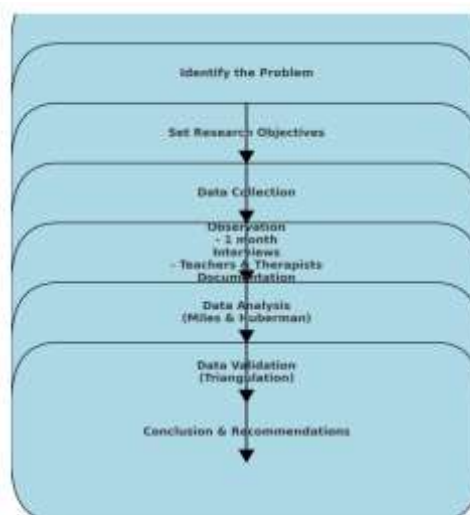
Research shows that the TEACCH approach is effective for children with autism in various aspects, but its implementation still needs further study. Differences in culture, education systems, and available resources can affect the effectiveness and adaptation of this method to local contexts. TKLB River Kids consistently applies the TEACCH approach method in implementing education for autistic children in schools. The use of the TEACCH method in schools has succeeded in improving the quality of life skills and independence of children. This positive influence can be felt by teachers who are directly involved in learning autistic children. Teachers find it easier to understand and communicate with children, as well as condition them during the school activity process. To find out more about the application of the TEACCH method in honing *life skills* at TKLB Autisme River Kids Malang, it is necessary to conduct research on the main problem of how the TEACCH method is applied in honing *the life skills* of autistic students at TKLB Autisme River Kids Malang.

This study involved three groups of main informants selected using purposive sampling techniques based on certain criteria in accordance with the objectives of the study, namely: autistic students at SLB River Kids who have participated in the TEACCH Method program for at least one year, teachers who have had at least one year of experience in implementing the TEACCH method, and therapists who actively apply this method in their therapy sessions at SLB River Kids, where the selection of these three groups of informants allows researchers to obtain comprehensive data from various perspectives on the application of the TEACCH Method in honing the life skills of autistic children.

The results of this study are expected to provide valuable insights for educators and therapists at SLB River Kids in supporting the independent learning of autistic children. These findings may also contribute to the development of inclusive education practices in other special schools across Indonesia. Furthermore, this research aims to address the challenges in implementing the TEACCH method within the context of special education in Indonesia.

## METHOD

This article uses a qualitative approach with a case study type. The study was conducted by conducting intensive exploration of the application of the Teacch method to the life skills of autistic children. Data were obtained through a series of observations, interviews and documentation. Observations were conducted for one month, and after the data was collected, the researcher conducted interviews with teachers and therapists at TKLB River Kids to strengthen the data. Respondents consisted of 3 teachers and 1 therapist. The criteria for becoming respondents were teachers and therapists who had been with the group for 1 year. The data collected were presented and then data analysis was carried out using the Miles and Huberman techniques. The validity of the data in this study will be tested using predetermined criteria. The researcher applied triangulation techniques to verify the validity of the data. Triangulation is the process of checking data thoroughly by comparing data from various sources, methods, theories, and different times. The goal is to increase confidence in the research findings.



## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

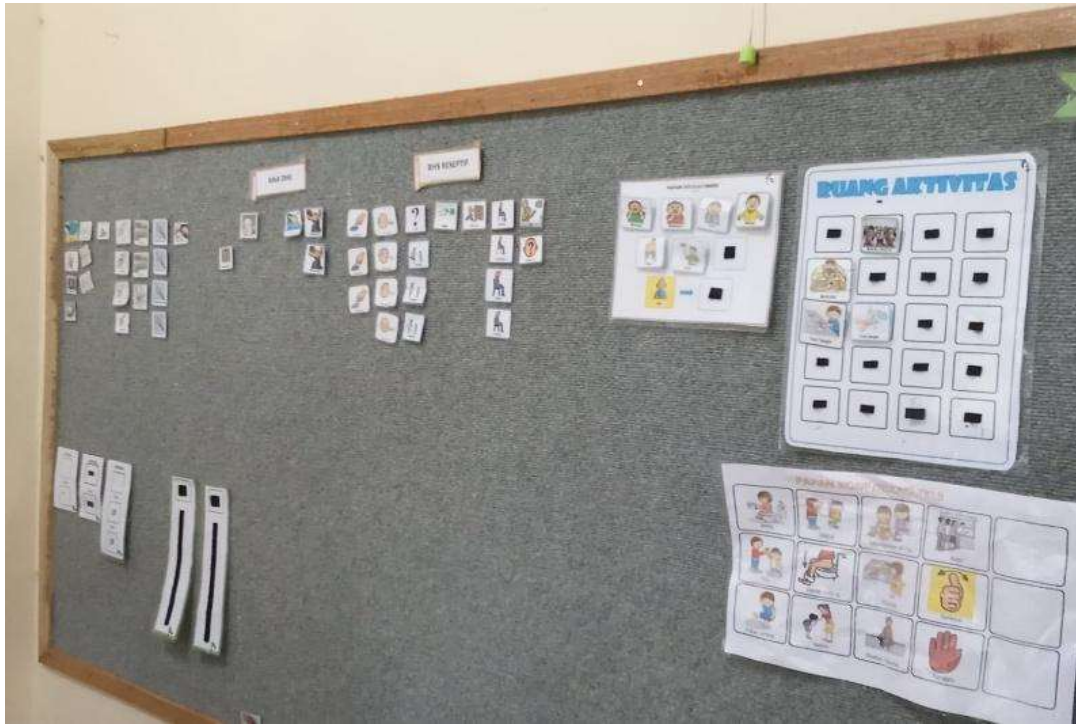
### A. Results

The TEACCH (Treatment and Education of Autistic and Associated Communication Handicapped Children) method approach at TKLB River Kids shows a comprehensive and structured application in an effort to hone *the life skills* of autistic children. This method is applied with a deep understanding of the needs of autistic children. In its daily practice, TKLB River Kids applies three main components of the TEACCH method, namely the use of visual schedules, work systems (especially independent work systems), and task organization. Teachers divide tasks into small steps that children can follow visually, which aims to increase children's independence in carrying out various activities.

*Life skills* that are the main focus of TKLB River Kids cover various important aspects of daily life, starting from self-care skills such as dressing, eating, and maintaining cleanliness. Focus is also given to the development of basic academic skills, including writing, reading, and arithmetic. Communication and social skills are a priority, helping children interact with others and express themselves. Motor development, both gross and fine, is integrated into



various activities. The program also covers simple household skills, time management, and understanding routines. Likewise, the development of emotional intelligence and adaptability are part of the curriculum, preparing children to face various life situations.



**Figure 1.** Visual Schedule

To obtain these results, this study utilized a qualitative case study approach that allowed for an in-depth exploration of the implementation of the TEACCH method at TKLB River Kids. Data collection was carried out systematically over one month and involved three main techniques: observation, interviews, and documentation. Observations were conducted during the daily activities of autistic children at school, with researchers carefully monitoring the use of visual schedules, task divisions, and independent work systems. These observations were recorded systematically in field notes and through visual documentation to ensure comprehensive data collection. Structured interviews were carried out with three teachers and one therapist, all of whom had at least one year of experience in implementing the TEACCH method. The interviews provided insights into the strategies used, challenges encountered, and observed impacts of the program. In addition, documentation such as children's progress records, visual aids, and learning tools was gathered to support and triangulate the collected data. The Miles and Huberman interactive model was applied for data analysis, which included processes such as data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. Triangulation techniques were applied to validate the data by comparing findings across observations, interviews, and documentation.

The results of observations in the classroom environment revealed that the principles of the TEACCH method had been implemented thoroughly, marked by a structured classroom environment and the consistent use of visual learning aids. The application of visual schedules helped children follow routines better, while independent work systems allowed them to complete tasks at their own pace. Task organization through step-by-step guidance made complex activities more manageable and improved children's ability to carry out daily tasks independently. This finding aligns with the research conducted by (Farahmand et al., 2024),

which demonstrated that structured learning environments significantly enhance adaptive skills in autistic children. Similarly, (Harrop et al., 2020) highlighted the effectiveness of TEACCH-based interventions in improving children's functional skills and independence.

Furthermore, evaluation of the development of life skills was conducted systematically and periodically by teachers and therapists at TKLB River Kids. Direct observations were used to monitor children's progress in acquiring specific skills, and these findings were documented in structured records that tracked their development over time. Evaluations included regular discussions among educators to assess the effectiveness of the methods applied and to identify new challenges. When challenges were identified, adjustments were made to better suit the needs of individual children. This adaptive approach ensures that every child receives optimal support in their skill development and helps address any barriers to progress.

The findings indicate that internal and external factors influence the success of the TEACCH method. Internal factors include the children's motivation, cognitive abilities, and communication skills, while external factors involve parental support, family involvement, and the availability of visual aids. Parental support plays a crucial role in reinforcing skills learned at school, and consistency in implementing these strategies at home significantly contributes to the children's progress. However, variations in parental involvement sometimes pose challenges, which is consistent with the findings of (Stahmer et al., 2023) regarding the importance of family collaboration in supporting interventions for autistic children.

This study highlights that the TEACCH method not only improves children's independence but also enhances their ability to interact socially and follow structured routines. Teachers reported improvements in children's behavior, noting that they were better able to regulate emotions and complete tasks without excessive assistance. Parents also expressed positive feedback, stating that the children exhibited greater independence at home, which in turn reduced their stress and increased the overall quality of family life. These results align with the findings of (Stahmer et al., 2019; Virues-Ortega et al., 2013), who observed significant improvements in adaptive skills and reductions in parental stress following the implementation of TEACCH-based interventions.

The findings of this research offer a valuable contribution to the field of special education, particularly in enhancing the life skills of autistic children. The structured and systematic implementation of the TEACCH method at TKLB River Kids serves as a model that can be replicated in other educational institutions. By integrating individualized approaches, continuous evaluation, and family collaboration, this method ensures that children receive optimal support tailored to their specific needs. These findings provide a strong theoretical foundation for future research and underscore the importance of structured teaching methods in supporting the growth and independence of autistic children.

## **B. Discussion**

The effectiveness of the TEACCH method implementation is influenced by several internal factors, such as children's motivation, cognitive abilities, and communication and interaction skills. These factors significantly determine how well children respond to the TEACCH method. This aligns with (Vygotsky, 1978) theory of development, which emphasizes that a child's potential for growth is closely related to environmental support that matches their cognitive capacities and motivational needs. In the context of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), the characteristics of each child—such as variations in cognitive abilities, sensory processing, and behavioral regulation—pose unique challenges that demand individualized adjustments. (Huber & Carter, 2016; Kasari et al., 2018; Ng & Weisz, 2016)

further support this by highlighting the importance of personalized interventions tailored to the specific needs of each child with ASD.

External factors, including parental support, family involvement, and the availability of visual aids, play an equally critical role in determining the success of the TEACCH method. According to (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) ecological systems theory, interactions within a child's immediate environment, such as family and school, are essential for their developmental progress. Inconsistent family involvement and varying levels of support outside of school can disrupt the consistency needed for optimal results. (Mahoney & Wheeden, 1997; Reschly & Christenson, 2012; Sarkadi et al., 2008) argue that active family collaboration is key to sustaining and enhancing intervention outcomes. TKLB River Kids recognizes these challenges and addresses them through regular committee meetings aimed at improving parental understanding of the TEACCH method. In these meetings, teachers provide guidance and discuss strategies to encourage parents to continue supporting their children at home. Additionally, video-recorded tutorials showcasing simple activities allow parents to learn and apply techniques effectively, ensuring continuity between school and home practices. This initiative reflects (Dillenbourg, 1999) theory of collaborative learning, which emphasizes the importance of synergy between teachers, parents, and children in achieving successful outcomes.

The availability of visual aids emerges as another critical factor influencing the effectiveness of the TEACCH method. Visual supports, such as schedules, task organization charts, and step-by-step guides, are central to helping autistic children process information more effectively. This aligns with findings by (Arthur-Kelly et al., 2009), who highlight that visual tools cater to the learning style of children with ASD, making tasks more structured and predictable. However, the inconsistent utilization of visual aids by some parents indicates external challenges, such as limited understanding or time constraints. (Schuck et al., 2022) reinforce the need for a holistic intervention approach that considers both environmental factors and the involvement of all stakeholders in supporting autistic children.

The results of this study demonstrate that the implementation of the TEACCH method at TKLB River Kids has significantly improved life skills development in autistic children. Before the implementation of this method, children displayed a lack of independence in performing daily tasks and had limited social skills. However, following systematic application, many children exhibited notable progress in their ability to carry out daily tasks independently, such as dressing, eating, and maintaining cleanliness. Additionally, improvements were seen in basic academic skills, including reading, writing, and numeracy, as well as in communication and interaction with peers and teachers. These findings align with (Virues-Ortega et al., 2013), who reported significant increases in adaptive skills following TEACCH-based interventions.

Behavioral changes observed in autistic children further reflect the TEACCH method's effectiveness as a holistic behavior management approach. This approach integrates functional behavior analysis to identify and address specific behavioral triggers, ensuring that interventions are tailored to the unique needs of each child. (Steinbrenner et al., 2020) emphasize the importance of understanding the antecedents and functions of behavior to develop appropriate strategies. At TKLB River Kids, teachers analyze the background, triggers, and purposes of behaviors to implement interventions that encourage positive behavioral outcomes. This systematic and structured approach not only minimizes challenging behaviors but also promotes emotional regulation and routine adherence.

The positive impact of the TEACCH method extends beyond children's developmental progress to the overall quality of life of their families. Parents reported feeling more supported

and observed that their children became more independent and better able to follow structured routines at home. The reduction in parental stress levels, combined with improved family dynamics, highlights the method's broader benefits. These findings are consistent with studies by (Fante et al., 2024; Zeng et al., 2021), who found that TEACCH-based interventions significantly enhance family quality of life by reducing caregiver burden and fostering greater autonomy in children.

In conclusion, the TEACCH method at TKLB River Kids has proven effective in contributing to the development of life skills and fostering independence among autistic children. By utilizing three main components—visual schedules, self-paced work systems, and task organization—the method provides a structured and systematic approach that addresses the individual needs of children. The findings underscore the importance of combining individualized interventions with ongoing evaluation to optimize program outcomes. Although challenges such as inconsistent parental support and external constraints remain, the results show significant progress in children's independence, social interactions, and emotional regulation. Moreover, the program's positive impact on family well-being emphasizes the need for strong collaboration between schools and families. The TEACCH method implementation model at TKLB River Kids offers a valuable reference for other educational institutions, special education practitioners, and policymakers in designing effective and sustainable interventions for autistic children. These findings further highlight the critical role of a structured, holistic, and collaborative approach in supporting the growth and development of children with Autism Spectrum Disorder.

**Implications**, the findings of this study emphasize the critical importance of structured and individualized interventions, such as the TEACCH method, in enhancing the life skills and independence of autistic children. By demonstrating the successful application of visual schedules, independent work systems, and task organization, this research offers a practical framework that can be adapted by other special education institutions. It also highlights the value of family collaboration and consistent support in ensuring the sustainability of intervention outcomes, underscoring the need for stronger integration between schools and home environments. **This research contributes** significantly to the field of special education by providing empirical evidence of the TEACCH method's effectiveness in the Indonesian context. It bridges a crucial gap by exploring how cultural and resource-specific factors influence the implementation and outcomes of this approach, offering actionable insights for educators and policymakers to design inclusive programs that prioritize life skills development and foster greater autonomy for children with Autism Spectrum Disorder.

**Limitation**, this study is limited by its focus on a single institution, which may restrict the generalizability of the findings to other contexts. The reliance on qualitative data, while providing in-depth insights, may not capture the broader variability of experiences across diverse populations, and variations in parental involvement and resource availability also present challenges. **Future research** should expand the scope by including multiple institutions across different regions to explore the broader applicability of the TEACCH method. Employing quantitative methods to measure long-term impacts on life skills development and investigating the role of digital tools in enhancing the method could provide innovative solutions to improve accessibility for families in remote or underserved areas.

## CONCLUSION

The implementation of the TEACCH method at TKLB River Kids has proven to be highly effective in developing life skills, fostering independence, and enhancing behavioral regulation among autistic children. By utilizing structured components such as visual



schedules, self-paced work systems, and task organization, this method enables children to manage daily tasks independently, improve communication and social interaction, and build basic academic and motor skills. The results demonstrate that internal factors such as motivation, cognitive abilities, and communication skills, along with external factors like parental support, family involvement, and the availability of visual aids, play a crucial role in the program's success. While variations in parental involvement and external challenges sometimes hinder consistency, systematic evaluations and adaptive interventions have allowed for targeted improvements. Furthermore, the positive outcomes extend beyond the children's development, as parents report reduced stress levels, improved family dynamics, and enhanced overall quality of life. These findings emphasize the importance of a structured, individualized, and collaborative approach between schools and families in supporting children with Autism Spectrum Disorder. The TEACCH model implemented at TKLB River Kids serves as a valuable reference for educational institutions, policymakers, and practitioners in designing sustainable and effective interventions that promote the growth, independence, and well-being of autistic children and their families.

#### **AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS STATEMENT**

The authors declare their contributions as follows: PS led the study's design, methodology, data collection, and initial manuscript drafting. IHE contributed to the literature review, theoretical framework, and data validation. AR supported data collection, qualitative analysis, and visual preparation. R enriched the discussion, provided cultural insights, and ensured compliance with submission requirements. All authors approved the final manuscript and are accountable for its content.

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