



## Managing Stress for Special School Teachers in Assisting Children with Special Needs

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### ABSTRACT

Many teachers of special schools (SLB) experience stress whether they realize it or not. Teachers who are under pressure can experience discomfort which can lead to depression, lack of motivation and frustration. The stress experienced by teachers of special schools has a negative impact on teachers of special schools and children with special needs (ABK), both physically, mentally, emotionally and behaviorally. Therefore, this problem must be addressed so that it does not have a negative impact on special needs school teachers and children with special needs. The purpose of this study is to determine the process of stress management strategies in overcoming these problems. This descriptive qualitative research was conducted using data collection techniques in the form of literature review. This study shows that coping with stress is an effort that consists of changes in cognitive and attitude in managing and overcoming pressure from within the individual and from outside the individual. The stress management strategy for Special School teachers consists of problem-oriented and emotional coping. Overcoming focus is a stress management strategy can be influenced by some cultural background, experience in solving problems, environmental factors, personality, self-image and social factors. It is believed that this research will greatly assist Special School teachers to improve the quality of education and training for Children with Special Needs, and through stress management can make people aware of the problems they face and make them more careful in their actions and take ways to solve problems.

**Keywords:** stress management, extraordinary school teachers, children with special needs.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

All children born into the world are gifted by Allah SWT with good opportunities in the form of talent, character and intelligence which vary from one child to another. These differences then require different treatment of education and services. Especially in Children with Special Needs.

According to the 1945 Constitution in Article 31 paragraph (1) which states that every citizen has the right to education. This law applies to all Indonesian citizens, both normal human beings and people who are not normal, such as Children with Special Needs. This article mandates that all citizens, including children who have limitations (special needs) or are in disadvantaged conditions, also have the right to education.

Law of the Republic of Indonesia No. 20 of 2003 concerning Special Education in section eleven, Article 32 paragraph (1), which reads: "Special education is education for students who experience difficulties following learning due to physical, emotional, mental, social or potential intelligence and special abilities" and for that Children with Special Needs are no longer excluded and considered as an important thing to pay attention to in education. Parents of children with special needs are also very concerned and start looking for schools that are suitable for their children. The worry is that parents of children with special needs (ABK) are increasingly making parents more enthusiastic about educating their children to get proper education, such as studying at special schools. This will increase the number of special school students (SLB).

Balancing the relationship between Special School (SLB) teachers and Children with Special Needs (ABK) can result in teachers becoming overwhelmed and burdensome, which are not in accordance with the teacher's abilities which can result in or become a source of stress for Special School teachers (SLB). Distribution or proportion so that Children with Special Needs (ABK) receive appropriate treatment, and special education teachers can more effectively educate children with special needs. However, in reality the situation is unequal, which is a burden for teachers.

Apart from that, stress for Special School (SLB) teachers can also be caused by other causes. The factors that cause stress for SLB teachers are that stress for Special School teachers is caused by the teacher's health. During the lesson, the condition of the students who were not very enthusiastic about the education and learning process, the students were very unenthusiastic because the teacher was convoluted in teaching, and students often went in and out of class, so that the teacher experienced an unpleasant education he felt, the relationship between students was not good, teachers worry about teaching students with special needs. (Miswanti, Hasan, and Zaini, 2013)

According to Rahayu and Hadriami (2015), a source of stress for Special School (SLB) teachers can come from school or home. The stress factor at school is that special

education teachers are unable to cope with diverse student behavior due to a lack of mastery of behavior modification techniques. Teachers are confused about applying appropriate teaching methods to students, parents of students who do not understand their child's behavior, and teacher management work. Stress originating in the family includes lack of discipline, problems with loved ones, parents not supporting their child's work as a special education teacher, and financial conditions. The amount of pressure they are under can mean fewer opportunities to express humor.

According to Ekawarna (2018), stress can have consequences for one's body (physical), mental, emotional, and attitude. Some of the bodily or physical impacts that can be felt and observed are back pain, headache, shortness of breath, high blood pressure, chest pain, and experiencing a heart attack. Other effects consist of fatigue or hepatitis, weakness and even depression. According to Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2017), stress on teachers can also cause fatigue and attrition in teachers. In addition, Wenzel (2010, Herman, Keith C., et al., 2017) (Batubara and Maniam 2019; Minsih et al. 2019; Saptiwi et al. 2018; Yuhana et al. 2017) also found several relationships between teachers and their students or children with special needs also have negative effects and negative behavior when a special school teacher (SLB) experiencing stress and not being able to deal with it well.

Teachers who experience stress will also become uncomfortable and feel pressured. Stress in the short term can result in teachers experiencing pressure, not being motivated, and can experience frustration. If stress continues for a long time, the teacher is no longer able to work, the teacher becomes sick, and the teacher will resign from his duties at school (Maryati, 2017).

The negative impact of stress is a drastic decrease in work output. This results in increased absenteeism, increased desire to leave, and decreased commitment to the institution of work. Thus the impact of stress is very large because it can cause disruption to work and will be very detrimental to the institution itself. The highest stress symptoms are behavioral symptoms, then psychological symptoms, and physiological symptoms (Rizal, 2013).

If special education teachers can embrace situations and are able to overcome existing problems, Special School (SLB) teachers will be able to better embrace responsibilities and situations and help Children with Special Needs (ABK) make positive changes. Stress management can also guide Special School (SLB) teachers to find problems they are facing, act carefully, and make decisions. However, previous studies have not discussed much about how to deal with stress between special education teachers and shadow teachers, because parents of special needs schools themselves are the most common topic. For this reason, it is necessary to find stress management strategies with the theme of special education teachers.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The research method is a literature review or Literature Review. Literature review is the first and important step in creating a research plan (Wisnu, Tutik, and Handayani 2021; Erwansyah et al. 2020). As previous research from (Desiningrum et al. 2023; Jariono et al. 2021; Burhaeni et al. 2021; Ramdania et al. 2020; Rahayu and Mangunsong 2020; Pursitasari, Allenidekania, and Agustini 2020; Iswari, Nurhastuti, and Zulmiyetri 2019; Hudha et al. 2019 ;Rewata et al. 2009 ) which also used the literature review method. Literature review is a process of searching and researching literature by reading various journals, books, articles and other publications on research topics to produce articles on a particular subject or topic (Gurtu and Johny 2021) (Marpaung et al. 2021)(Greeff and Nolting 2013)(Marzali, 2017; Asmita and Masril 2022; Anggraini and Asmita 2022) Asmita and Fitriani 2022).

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

Stress comes from the Latin *strictus*, stress is a confusing and complex concept. Scientific research on stress was originally focused on physical stress (such as burden beyond capacity) or psychological tension (emotional or mental pressure) as a result of social relations as opposed to negative consequences) (Hasan, 2003)

The word stress comes from the English vocabulary. According to the Oxford Dictionary, stress has at least six meanings, according to its use in various fields. (1) Stress or anxiety caused by problems in life. (2) Pressure on an object that can damage or change the shape of the object. (3) Special interest in directing something. (4) The additional power used when certain words are spoken. (5) Added power to create a special sound in music. (6) Disease due to poor physical condition (Hasan, 2013)

Stress is part of everyday life. Smet's & Sarafino (in Hasan, 2013) state that stress is caused by transactions between the environment that creates distance and individuals and between demands arising from various situations and social resources, biological systems, a person and psychology which are defined as circumstances.

So it can be concluded that stress is a part of life or a condition consisting of anxiety, pressure, demands on one's condition both physically and emotionally.

According to Priyoto (2014), stress can be classified according to its symptoms consisting of mild stress, moderate stress, and severe stress. Mild stress is stress that everyone experiences every day. Oversleeping, traffic jams, criticism from superiors, etc. Slightly tense situations last from a few minutes to a few hours. Mild stress is characterized by increased visual acuity, enthusiasm, increased energy but decreased energy reserves, often experiencing fatigue without cause, increased ability to complete lessons, sometimes digestion, brain, etc. System failed, lack of relaxation. Mild stress

can be beneficial because it can make us think and make it more difficult to face life's challenges. Moderate stress can last longer than mild stress. Moderate stressors include unresolved situations with co-workers, long absences from family or sick children. Moderate stress can be characterized by heartburn, stomach pain, insomnia, muscle tension, and light body tension and feelings. Severe stress is a condition experienced by a person for a long time, weeks or months, such as a chronic illness or physical, psychological and social changes in the elderly. Characteristics of severe stress include difficulty in performance, disturbance in social relationships, sleep problems, negativity, difficulty concentrating, fear of ambiguity, increased fatigue, inability to perform simple tasks, systematic confusion, increased anxiety (Yurt, 1986).

According to Hasibuan (2012), there are several factors that can cause stress to occur, namely difficult and excessive workload, lack of behavioral and administrative pressure, sufficient time and tools for personal conflict with superiors or work groups, low performance answers and family problem. (Hasibuan, 2012). SLB teachers experience stress when dealing with Children with Special Needs (ABK). Stress is caused by two factors that come from within oneself and an unsupportive society. Demonstrates some psychological symptoms which are signs of stress. For example, the SLB teacher is restless and irritable. For physical symptoms, SLB teachers usually experience headaches, dizziness, tense muscles, heart attacks and easily feel tired (Linayaningsih, 2015; Sariwulan et al. 2019).

Stress when this situation occurs when the individual is unable to personally deal with the cause of stress (stressor). Consequences experienced by individuals are losses (a person feels something dangerous is happening), threats (a person feels that there is a dangerous opportunity to continue in the future), and challenges (a person is involved) can be problems faced.

The impact of stress according to Siswanto in Pratiwi (2020):

- a. Consequences of subjective: anxious, aggressive, low self-esteem, bored, lethargic, losing patience, tired, depressed, disappointed, feeling in exile.
- b. Consequences for behavior: prone to drug addiction accidents, emotional outbursts, impulsive behavior, laughing but nervous
- c. Consequences for physiological functions: increased heart rate, dilated pupils, increased blood sugar, dry mouth, sweating, feeling cold and hot
- d. Effects on organization: alienation, frequent absences, job dissatisfaction, decreased loyalty, and low productivity

SLB teachers with female experience experienced a higher stress load. SLB teachers aged 17-25 experience more stress. SLB teachers with 1-10 years of service experience higher levels of stress. SLB teachers with Abitur experience more stress. SLB teachers with unmarried status are more burdened. SLB teachers with 6-10

students face more stress. SLB teachers with very high workloads are exposed to greater stress (Pratiwi, 2020)

Therefore it is very important to overcome it by means of stress management (Copping Stress). Lazarus and Folkman (1984) (Niriyah et al. 2022; Manaig et al. 2022; Wati et al. 2021) state that stress management is a change in behavioral and cognitive efforts directed at dealing with certain external and internal stressors that are determined beyond the individual's own abilities. This management refers to the way one's cognitive abilities and behavior are managed or reduced, minimize, control, or tolerate conditions of demands from outside one's existing self and from within one's self.

Meanwhile, according to Rasmun (in Fernanda, 2019), coping means a person gets rid of stress and psychological tension when facing daily problems that require personal skills and support from the surrounding environment to reduce the stress they experience. In other words, coping is a process that individuals go through to deal with stressful situations. Coping improves individual responses to situations that threaten them both psychologically and physically.

According to Aldwin and Revenson (in Kertamuda & Herdiansyah, 2009), coping strategies are ways or methods used by individuals to overcome and deal with problems and situations that are experienced and seen as threats that harm painful challenges and obstacles.

It can be concluded that overcoming stress is an effort in the form of behavioral and cognitive changes to coordinate and overcome pressure both from outside and inside that is experienced beyond one's ability and positive thinking. In solving problems, everyone has a different strategy.

According to Lazarus and Folkman (1984) there are 2 ways to deal with stress (stress management), namely stress coping management that focuses on problems and coping management that focuses on emotions (Nurjannah et al. 2022; Azriful et al. 2021).

This problem-focused stress coping management consists of individual efforts to change situations through planned problem solving, observation, and very careful step-by-step efforts. Once done, an individual creates a very well thought out plan. After that, the plan was carried out with great care. In confrontational coping, people try to change the situation by being bullying and acting aggressively or taking risks. When faced with a problem, people tend to be proactive. This is done to curb situations that threaten the individual. When an individual seeking social support has a problem, the individual seeks external support. This form can take the form of seeking information, voluntary assistance, or emotional support.

There are eight forms of coping that appear in dealing with stress (Sari & Septiani, 2018), namely:

1. Problem Focused Coping (Management of coping stress that focuses on problems)
  - a. Planful Problem Solving  
Explain problem solving efforts with caring and calm attitude as well as an analytical approach in problem solving.
  - b. Confrontive Coping  
Describes an aggressive response to changing circumstances, risk taking and represents the level of anger.
  - c. Seeking Social Support  
Describe efforts to seek support from the surrounding environment, whether in the form of sincere assistance, information, or emotional support.
2. Emotion Focused Coping (stress coping management that focuses on emotions)
  - a. Distancing  
Describe the reaction to withdraw or try to avoid the problem and evoke positive behavior.
  - b. Self-Control  
Describe attempts to regulate actions and feelings
  - c. Accepting Responsibility  
Tries hard to acknowledge his role in the problems he faces and tries to put things in their rightful place.
  - d. Escape-Avoidance  
Describe the reaction of the imagination and efforts to escape or avoid the problem at hand.
  - e. Positive Reappraisal  
Describes efforts to create positive meaning with an emphasis on personal development as well as religious issues.

Emotionally focused stress coping consists of the following elements: Positive evaluation means when a person responds to the problem faced with positive evaluation or thinking. Although not uncommon, this leads to an approach to religious affairs. By taking responsibility, an individual can try to realize the responsibility they seek in problems. Second, the individual accepts the current situation and tries to do better. Self-control is meant here when an individual tries to adjust or adjust the emotions they face when dealing with a problem. When faced with a problem, individuals experience emotions as a result of the problem. These are emotions that are or need to be regulated by the individual. Separation, the individual keeps the distance between himself and the problem at hand. This is done to prevent individuals from getting involved in the problem. Avoid the problem at hand by avoiding individual solutions and separating them from the problem at hand. This escape tends to turn into something more enjoyable.

According to Lazarus and Folkman (1984), there are several ways to deal with stress which can be influenced by experience in dealing with problems, cultural background, personality, environmental factors, social factors, one's self-concept, and so on. In addition, Maryam (2017) also found several ways that a person deals with stress or implements stress management can also be influenced by the resources available to them and have a huge impact on a person's ability to solve problems.

Relevant resources consist of people who need good health to work well and able to handle problems well. And individuality itself comes from the formations in the environment.

According to Holahan and Moos (1987, Maryam, 2017), people with adequate social resources tend to use problem-focused coping and avoid emotion-focused coping and avoidance in problem solving. Financial wealth here means that people with a lot of wealth tend to live richer lives than people with little wealth. This advantage makes it easier to solve individual problems. However, according to Lazarus and Folkman (1984), existing assets do not affect how someone can use them to solve existing problems.

Stress management for Special School (SLB) teachers can be done by trying to accept a situation, trying to be more realistic, the need for responsibility, fighting the fear experienced by Special School teachers (SLB), feeling that they have to be able to handle the burden, being aware of the Special School teacher's self. It's normal that what is being done is something noble, makes Children with Special Needs (ABK) comfortable, persuades Children with Special Needs (ABK) to have enthusiasm in learning, collaborates with other teachers and parents (Siahaan 2022 ;Patriadi,2021; Baharuddin and Dalle 2019 ; Jaya et al. 2018).

Stress management for SLB teachers can also be done through individual access or individual approaches such as sharing or sharing stories or chatting with co-workers, facilitating time management that's how children express themselves and stress management then can also take an organizational approach, namely by increasing the teacher's internal communication with the organization , such as relationships with superiors or principals or foundations, to colleagues and students who offer school social supports such as outings every year. (Alfian, Ridha, Sari, Azkha, 2021)

## **CONCLUSION**

Stress management is an effort to regulate and overcome external and internal pressures in the form of cognitive and behavioral changes. The handling of stress coping used by special school teachers (SLB) is problem based coping (stress coping management that focuses on problems) which includes: systematic problem solving, confrontation and seeking social support, and emotional based coping (management of stress that focuses on on emotions) which includes: positive judgment, responsibility,

self-control, detachment and avoidance. Because special education teachers are prone to stress, special education teachers must apply stress management that is appropriate to their current situation or problem. Appropriate leadership for SLB teachers is an individual and organizational approach, creating a comfortable atmosphere in the classroom, and being self-aware.

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