

THE USE OF SOCIAL STORIES TO IMPROVE SOCIAL INTERACTION SKILLS OF STUDENTS WITH ADHD IN INCLUSIVE CLASSROOMS AT GIWANGAN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL YOGYAKARTA

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to improve the social interaction skills of a student with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) in an inclusive classroom through the implementation of the Social Stories method. The study was conducted at Giwangan Elementary School, Yogyakarta, involving one fifth-grade student with ADHD. This research employed Classroom Action Research based on the Kemmis and McTaggart model, consisting of planning, action, observation, and reflection, and was carried out in two cycles. Data were collected through observation, interviews, documentation, and field notes, and analyzed using descriptive qualitative techniques supported by simple quantitative measures. The findings indicated a progressive improvement in the student's social interaction skills. In Cycle I, the average achievement of social interaction indicators reached 54%, which did not meet the minimum success criterion ($\geq 75\%$). Following improvements in instructional strategies, including structured storytelling, repeated exposure, intensive support, and consistent positive reinforcement, the score increased to 93% in Cycle II. The student showed improved ability in turn-taking, rule-following, cooperation, and peer interaction. These findings suggest that Social Stories can be an effective intervention to support social interaction development for students with ADHD in inclusive classroom contexts, particularly in case-based applications.

Keywords: Social Stories, ADHD, Social Interaction, Inclusive Classroom

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INTRODUCTION

Inclusive education has become a central agenda in global education systems to ensure equitable access and meaningful participation for all learners, including those with special educational needs. International frameworks emphasize that inclusion is not limited to physical placement in regular classrooms, but also involves active engagement, social participation, and the development of interpersonal competencies within the learning environment (UNESCO, 2020).

In practice, the effectiveness of inclusive education depends on how well schools accommodate the diverse needs of students, particularly in terms of social and behavioral development. Social interaction is a critical component of learning in inclusive classrooms, as it supports collaboration, communication, and emotional development. Students who experience difficulties in social interaction are at risk of social exclusion and reduced participation in classroom activities.

One group that frequently encounters such challenges is students with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). ADHD is characterized by persistent patterns of inattention, impulsivity, and difficulties in self-regulation, which directly affect both academic performance and social functioning (Barkley, 2014). These characteristics often hinder students' ability to engage effectively in social interactions within classroom settings.

Empirical evidence indicates that students with ADHD tend to struggle with interpreting social cues, maintaining conversations, and adhering to social norms such as turn-taking and cooperative behavior (Kauffman & Landrum, 2018). As a result, they often experience peer rejection, limited

social engagement, and difficulties forming positive relationships in inclusive classrooms.

These challenges become more pronounced in elementary school settings, where social interaction plays a fundamental role in learning processes. Inclusive classrooms require students to actively participate in group work, follow shared rules, and engage in continuous interaction with peers and teachers. For students with ADHD, these demands often exceed their current social and behavioral capacities.

Field observations conducted at Giwangan Elementary School, Yogyakarta, reveal that although the school has implemented inclusive education practices, students with ADHD still demonstrate significant difficulties in social interaction. These include impulsive behaviors, interruptions during conversations, limited ability to wait for turns, and challenges in cooperating with peers during classroom activities.

Further findings from interviews with classroom teachers and special education support teachers indicate that existing instructional strategies have not yet effectively addressed these social interaction challenges. While support systems such as special education teachers are available, the lack of structured and targeted interventions limits the development of students' social skills within the classroom context.

To address these issues, structured and explicit social interventions are required. One approach that has been widely used is the Social Stories method, developed by Gray (1995). This method uses short, structured narratives to describe social situations, expected behaviors, and possible

consequences, helping students understand and respond appropriately to social contexts.

Previous studies have demonstrated that Social Stories are effective in improving social understanding and reducing maladaptive behaviors among children with special needs (Chan et al., 2021; Como et al., 2023). However, most of these studies focus on children with autism spectrum disorder or are conducted in clinical and special education settings rather than in inclusive classroom environments.

Research specifically examining the use of Social Stories for students with ADHD in inclusive elementary classrooms remains limited. This gap is important, as students with ADHD require context-based interventions that are directly integrated into real classroom interactions. Without such interventions, improvements in social skills may not transfer effectively into daily classroom practices.

Based on these considerations, there is a need for an intervention that is both practical and contextually relevant to inclusive classroom settings. Classroom Action Research provides an appropriate framework, as it allows iterative improvement through cycles of planning, action, observation, and reflection within real teaching contexts. Therefore, this study aims to implement the Social Stories method to improve the social interaction skills of a student with ADHD in an inclusive classroom at Giwangan Elementary School, Yogyakarta.

METHOD

This study employed a Classroom Action Research (CAR) design to improve the social interaction skills of a student with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) in an inclusive classroom setting.

The research was conducted at Giwangan Elementary School, Yogyakarta, Indonesia. The participant was one fifth-grade student diagnosed with ADHD who was enrolled in a regular inclusive classroom. Although the study focused on a single participant, the intervention was implemented within the natural classroom context involving interactions with peers, a classroom teacher, and a special education support teacher.

The study followed the Classroom Action Research model proposed by Kemmis and McTaggart, which consists of four iterative stages: planning, action, observation, and reflection. The research was conducted in two cycles, with each cycle designed to refine the intervention based on the results of the previous cycle. This cyclical process allowed continuous improvement of instructional strategies aimed at enhancing the student's social interaction skills.

During the planning phase, initial observations and interviews were conducted to identify the student's specific difficulties in social interaction, including impulsive behavior, difficulty in turn-taking, and limited cooperation with peers. Based on these findings, a set of Social Stories was developed as the primary intervention tool. The stories were designed using simple, structured, and context-relevant language to represent common classroom social situations, expected behaviors, and appropriate responses. Observation instruments were also prepared to assess the student's social interaction performance across predefined indicators.

The action phase involved the implementation of the Social Stories intervention during regular classroom activities. The stories were delivered consistently before or during learning

sessions, followed by guided practice and reinforcement. The intervention was carried out collaboratively by the classroom teacher and the special education support teacher to ensure consistency and individualized support. In the second cycle, modifications were made to improve the effectiveness of the intervention, including more structured storytelling, repeated exposure, increased intensity of teacher support, and consistent use of positive reinforcement strategies.

Data were collected through multiple techniques, including structured observation, interviews with teachers, documentation, and field notes. The primary data focused on the student's social interaction behaviors, which were assessed using indicators such as initiating interaction, responding to peers, turn-taking, rule-following, and cooperative behavior during classroom activities.

Data analysis was conducted using a combination of qualitative and simple quantitative approaches. Qualitative analysis was used to interpret behavioral changes observed during the intervention, while quantitative analysis was used to calculate the percentage of achievement for each social interaction indicator in each cycle. The level of success was determined based on the minimum mastery criterion ($\geq 75\%$). The comparison between Cycle I and Cycle II results was used to evaluate the effectiveness of the intervention.

To enhance the credibility of the findings, data triangulation was applied by comparing results from observations, interviews, and documentation. In addition, collaborative reflection between the researcher, classroom teacher, and special education support teacher was conducted at the end of each cycle to ensure the validity

of interpretations and to guide the improvement of subsequent actions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Cycle I

In Cycle I, the intervention was implemented to introduce the Social Stories method and to address the student's initial social interaction difficulties. The planning stage focused on identifying key problems, including impulsive behavior, difficulty in turn-taking, and limited peer interaction.

The implementation of the intervention showed initial positive effects. The student demonstrated improved attention during learning activities and began to respond to social prompts. However, the results did not meet the minimum mastery criterion ($\geq 75\%$). Observation data indicated that the overall achievement of social interaction skills reached only 54%, categorized as low.

Despite the improvement, the student still showed inconsistent behavior in applying social skills during real classroom interactions. Difficulties remained in waiting for turns, cooperating with peers, and following classroom rules independently. These findings indicated that the intervention in Cycle I was not yet optimal and required refinement.

Reflection results suggested the need for several improvements, including more structured delivery of Social Stories, increased repetition, more intensive teacher support, and consistent use of positive reinforcement. These adjustments were then implemented in Cycle II.

2. Cycle II

In Cycle II, the intervention was improved based on the reflection results

from Cycle I. The Social Stories were delivered in a more structured and consistent manner, with increased repetition and stronger teacher support.

The implementation of Cycle II showed significant improvement in the student’s social interaction skills. The student demonstrated better ability in turn-taking, cooperation, and adherence to classroom rules. The student also showed more consistent positive interactions with peers.

Observation results indicated that the average achievement of social interaction skills increased to 93%, categorized as high, and exceeded the minimum mastery criterion ($\geq 75\%$). All indicators showed improvement, with some reaching full achievement.

The reflection results confirmed that the intervention was effective, and the research objectives were achieved. Therefore, no further cycles were required.

Table 1. Improvement of Social Interaction Skills Across Cycles

Social Interaction Indicators	Cycle I (%)	Cycle II (%)
Initiating interaction	50%	90%
Responding to peers	55%	95%
Turn-taking behavior	50%	90%
Following classroom rules	60%	95%
Participation in group activities	55%	95%
Average Score	54%	93%
Category	Low	High

Table 2. Summary of Intervention Effectiveness

Cycle	Average Score	Category	Achievement Status
Cycle I	54%	Low	Not Achieved
Cycle II	93%	High	Achieved

This study aimed to improve the social interaction skills of a student with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) in an inclusive classroom through the implementation of the Social Stories method. The findings showed a significant improvement, with the average score increasing from 54% in Cycle I to 93% in Cycle II. This result indicates that structured interventions can effectively improve social interaction skills in students with ADHD in classroom settings.

The initial findings in Cycle I reflect the core characteristics of ADHD, including inattention, impulsivity, and difficulties in self-regulation. These characteristics are known to interfere with social functioning and classroom participation (Barkley, 2014). Students with ADHD often experience challenges in maintaining appropriate behavior during social interactions due to deficits in executive functioning (Kofler et al., 2019).

Difficulties in social interaction among students with ADHD are also associated with problems in interpreting social cues and responding appropriately. Research has shown that impairments in social cognition significantly affect peer relationships and classroom engagement (Ros & Graziano, 2018). This explains the inconsistent behavior observed in Cycle I,

such as interrupting and difficulty waiting for turns.

The limited improvement in Cycle I indicates that initial exposure to intervention is not sufficient to produce stable behavioral change. Effective social skill interventions require structured, repeated, and consistent implementation (Evans et al., 2018). In this study, Social Stories initially helped increase awareness but did not immediately lead to consistent behavior.

The significant improvement in Cycle II suggests that intervention quality is a key factor in effectiveness. The use of repetition, structured guidance, and reinforcement contributed to better outcomes. School-based interventions for ADHD have been shown to be more effective when implemented consistently and intensively (DuPaul et al., 2021).

The findings support the theoretical basis of Social Stories as structured narratives that guide behavior in social contexts. Social Stories help students understand expectations and appropriate responses in specific situations (Gray, 2010). This approach reduces ambiguity and supports behavioral regulation.

The effectiveness of Social Stories is also supported by empirical research. Social Stories have been found to improve social understanding and reduce disruptive behavior in children with special needs (Chan et al., 2021). Similar findings indicate that narrative-based interventions can enhance social skills development (Como et al., 2023).

In the Indonesian context, research also shows that Social Stories can improve social interaction in students with special needs in inclusive classrooms. Studies conducted in Indonesian elementary schools reported increased social engagement after

structured social interventions were implemented (Hidayati & Fauziah, 2022). This supports the relevance of the current findings in local educational settings.

Teacher support played a crucial role in the success of the intervention. Collaboration between classroom teachers and special education teachers ensures consistent implementation and reinforcement. Effective inclusive practices require active teacher involvement in addressing diverse student needs (Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2019).

From a behavioral perspective, the improvement observed in this study can be explained through repeated exposure and reinforcement. Behavioral change occurs when appropriate responses are consistently practiced in meaningful contexts (Bandura, 1986). In Cycle II, the student demonstrated more stable and independent social behavior.

Despite the positive findings, this study has limitations. The use of a single-subject design limits the generalizability of the results. Single-case studies provide in-depth insights but require further research with larger samples to strengthen external validity (Kazdin, 2021).

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that the implementation of the Social Stories method in an inclusive classroom can effectively improve the social interaction skills of a student with ADHD. The improvement observed across the two action research cycles indicates that structured, repeated, and context-based interventions are essential in supporting behavioral change. The student showed progress in key aspects of social interaction, including turn-taking, cooperation, rule-following, and peer engagement. These findings confirm that

social difficulties in ADHD are not fixed deficits but can be improved through systematic instructional strategies embedded within classroom activities.

The study also highlights that the effectiveness of Social Stories is strongly influenced by the quality of implementation, including consistency, repetition, and teacher collaboration. The involvement of both the classroom teacher and the special education teacher played a crucial role in ensuring the success of the intervention. Although the findings are limited to a single-subject context, this study provides practical evidence that Social Stories can be integrated into inclusive classroom practices to support social development in students with ADHD. Future research is needed to examine the effectiveness of this approach with larger samples and in different educational settings to strengthen its generalizability.

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