



## Analyzing Students with Special Needs' Sense of Humor in Emerald School South Jakarta

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**Abstract:** This study collates the current state of knowledge regarding the sense of humor attitude in the social interactions among children with special needs, which aims to explore the current state of knowledge and quality of empirical evidence relating to humor among children with special needs. In the study there were involved 78 students of Emerald School of Cinere in South Jakarta. There were more over 20% students in normal condition and students with special needs were 80%. Research had assessed humor in the classroom and humor expression in different groups including those with autism, down syndrome, and other special needs. This study was designed by using the descriptive qualitative method to analyze, describe, and explain the data. The procedure of data collection was done by observation and filled the questionnaire of the Richmond Humor Assessment Instrument (RHAI). The result of the study showed that there were 47, 08% of favorable criteria, and 52, 92% of unfavorable ones. Based on gender, more boys answered favorable criteria compared to girls. Moreover, boys were dare to express their senses of humor than the girls. The girls showed their shynesses to express their sense of humor. The results of the study showed that the children with special needs in Emerald school had less sense of humor. Furthermore, the role of humor in communication development, social facilitation, creativity, and stigma had all received some limited attention among children with special needs in Emerald School, South Jakarta.

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### Introduction

According to Children Act from 1989, a child is defined as being a child in need if “they are unlikely to achieve or maintain, or have the opportunity of achieving, or maintaining, a reasonable standard of health or development without the provision for them of services by a Local Authority”. Different from ordinary children, who have a childhood full of hope, innovation and happiness, we can distinguish a special category of children, totally neglected in our urban space- the children in need. This category of children can be divided into several subcategories according to children problems. The most important one, taking into consideration the gravity of the situation and the lowest degree of recovery, is the category of children in street situation (Povian, Gurza, & Dumitrescu, 2014).



Every child is unique. Children have their own strengths and weaknesses. Their development progresses according to certain sequences, but the pace may vary. It is natural that some children may excel in certain areas but have deficiencies in other areas. However, if children display marked problems or difficulties in one (or more) developmental area(s), and their performance shows significant discrepancies compared with other children of the same age, it is advisable to refer the children for professional assessment (Educational Bureau The Government of Hongkong Administrative Region, 2007).

Children with special educational needs are children first and have much in common with other children of the same age. There are many aspects to a child's development that make up the whole child, including-personality, the ability to communicate (verbal and non-verbal), resilience and strength, the ability to appreciate and enjoy life and the desire to learn. Each child has individual strengths, personality and experiences so particular disabilities will impact differently on individual children. A child's special educational need should not define the whole child (NCSE, 2014).

The most controversial issue currently regarding the education of children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) is that of inclusion. Theories of inclusive and inclusive education have important implications for special education policies and practices in both developed and developing countries (Hornby, 2015). However, more over 20% Students in normal condition and students with special needs are 80% found in inclusive school in Cinere South Jakarta. The 78 students of inclusive school blended together to get the education there. The reasons the parents school their normal children there, because they wanted their children to have more empathy, caring, respect to their friends with special needs, more independent, more insightful and having more life skills. Students with special needs have challenges to adaptive functioning in at least two clue areas, i.e., communication, self-care, domestic skills, work, leisure, health and safety. Most of the students are accompanied by their house assistants. In addition, their characteristics of development have varied special needs not only in cognitive domain, but also in affective and psychomotor. Students in different special needs, including those who have visual impairment, hearing-impaired, students with orthopedically impaired or disabilities education act, retarded students, students with behavioral disorders, and students with language fluency disorder. On the other hand, the recent ideas have highlighted that the purpose of identification of impairments and challenges faced by the parents, teachers and professionals with special needs children is to identify the essential supports, which are provided by the teachers and professionals. The purpose is helping children with special needs increasing their life chance, contribution, and engagement aspects. The study of determine the importance of sense of humor among them appears to be one of the aspects. Moreover, rejection, keeping out even shutting out may occur due to perceive the challenges and effort engaged having sense of humor in assessing those children with different needs, or surprisingly, their positive feedback as results for aiming the study draft.

There is evidence that getting positive emotion, such as fun and amusement are key components of positive social engagement. Through humorous, engagements and situations as positive strategies to serve social function among children with special needs are needed. Nevertheless, cheerfulness, fun, and amusement seemed difficult to found among themselves. Therefore, possibly due to the arrangement needed to enable people with creative support needs to involve.

Humor is a complex phenomenon which involves cognitive, emotional, behavioral, psychophysiological and social aspects (Pérez-Aranda et al., 2019). Bariaud asserts that



humor is both a cognitive process and an affective experience. Early humorous interactions contribute to the development of emotional complicity and ultimately to the development of empathy. Thus, for a person to engage in emotional complicity, she or he must share the humorist's intention to fully enjoy the humorous stimuli (Semrud-Clikeman & Glass, 2010).

According to Wanzer et.al (Andriyani, 2016), there are two types of humor; appropriate and inappropriate. "An aspect of appropriateness is meeting social norms. When we violate norms, we are likely to be perceived as behaving inappropriately". When the humor violates students' expectancies and causes a negative emotional response may be viewed as inappropriate. On the other hand, it is likely that teachers' humor attempts will be perceived as appropriate when the incongruity is recognized and resolved and when the target of humor is a disliked other or is not a member of the students' references group.

Although very related to humor, sense of humor is a different construct which refers to "habitual individual differences in all sorts of behaviors, experiences, affects, attitudes, and abilities relating to amusement, laughter, jocularity, and so on" (Pérez-Aranda et al., 2019). Humor is an important aspect of the social interactional lives of people with intellectual disabilities and their caretakers serving important social, developmental, and emotional wellbeing functions. In particular it can serve an equalizing function in terms of interacting power fostering the experience of shared moments and building of social capital. On the other hand, humor can also be a manifestation of negative attitudes and derogation of people with intellectual disabilities, serving as a source of source of stigma and emotional harm (Chadwick & Platt, 2018).

Formation of a sense of humor seems to follow a developmental pattern that parallels the child's intellectual and emotional development. Influencing this developmental progression are personality variables; cultural and educational background; fantasy and play opportunities; intelligence, which is positively correlated With preference for certain types of humor; and sex, which accounts for the single largest source of individual differences in Sense of humor (Cornett, 1986). The affective component of humor is studied particularly thoroughly by R. Martin (Gnevek, Musijchuk, & Musiichuk, 2018), he considers humor as a behavioral pattern (a tendency to frequently laugh, tell jokes and make others laugh); an ability (to remember jokes, to tell, create, and understand them); a character trait (cheerfulness); an aesthetic reaction (laughter over certain kind of things); an attitude (a positive attitude toward the world or funny people); a view of life; a strategy to overcome difficulties (the tendency to overcome adversity through the prism of humor).

Several of the present study's hypotheses were generally supported by the results. The students with autism exhibited less comprehension of all types of jokes than the control students did. Students with autism favored nonsense jokes over incongruity-resolution jokes, and they preferred nonsense jokes at the same level as the control group participants did. In regard to humor styles, the tendency toward positive humor was less in students with autism than in the control group, but the tendency toward negative humor was the same in both groups (Wu et al., 2014).

Based on the experience of a teacher (Tamara Guo) who teaches children with special needs, Tamara said that in working with children with special needs and their families for nearly 18 years, I can honestly say that the old cliché "laughter is the best medicine" rings true. Being a teacher, therapist, caregiver or parent of a child with special needs is certainly stressful at times, but it also brings many joys and special pleasures each and every day. Laughter can actually help speed the physical and mental recovery process, thus it is beneficial not only to the caregivers, but to the children themselves. By keeping and using



our sense of humor and bursting out in laughter, we can keep ourselves from bursting from stress (<https://day2dayparenting.com/importance-laughter-teaching-special-needs-children/>).

According to previous research conducted by Amelija Mozeti Hussua and Marko Strle (Hussu & Strle, 2010), the assessment of children with special needs is a frequent topic in teachers meetings and team meetings of professionals that work with pupils with special needs. There is little theoretical background on the mentioned topic and therefore are teachers' experiences very important. Teachers appreciate team work, cooperating with other practitioners and specialists that work with children with special needs, clearly established goals and frequent possibilities of group evaluations.

Moreover, using and sharing humorous stories and media can help enhance a sense of voice and advocacy, in our teachers while defying traditional or "normal" constructions of society and race. Humor can also help teachers explore and question archetypes and stereotypes, as a first step toward stronger advocacy efforts (Mora, Weaver, & Mae Lindo, 2015). They can gain the knowledge on what is best for children with special needs only by education, permanent learning, and exchanging good practices. Sharing those ideas is probably the most adequate way of helping other teachers in reducing uncertainties in the teaching process and the process of the assessment. On the other hand is a possibility even for the children that their achievements reflect their knowledge and true effort. Teachers need to make sure of their sense of humor level and must manage the class. Use of an appropriate level of sense of humor, based on the present findings, can have a positive effect in better learning (Motlagh, Motallebzade, & Fatemi, 2014). As Vance notes (Bolkan, Griffin, & Goodboy, 2018), the positive effects of contiguous humor in the classroom might occur because this type of humor can arouse students without dis-tracting them from the course content.

Humor, both producing and appreciating, strengthen positive social interactions. Cultivating positive responses are needed to create social interactions among children with special needs, and surround them to optimize their health and well-being. However, in order to fully comprehend the responding, one also needs to think that individual differences will play a role. Individual differences sense of humor of those with various special needs express their sense of humor in unique experiencing of humorous situations among them. Mostly they don't show and don't know how to express their sense of humor in their social interactions each other. Therefore, those children with special needs have to be helped but also taught how to help themselves to improve their personal growth and social interactions. Getting the right feedback in different activities such as assessment of sense of humor of their capabilities on all functional areas; we're interested in any particularity and all peculiarities, especially during their individual experiences to enhance their perception on their sense of humor, challenges, achievements, cognitive, meta-cognitive process and strategies to prepare themselves to self-evaluation. Thus this paper aims to collate and summarize the purpose of assessing sense of humor among children with special needs in various level of their particularity and all peculiarities different sense of humor.

## **Research Method**

This study is designed by using the descriptive qualitative method, because it is basically trying to analyze, describe, and explain the data. The procedure of data collection was done by observation and filled the questionnaire. A questionnaire was constructed based on our teamwork with the teacher supporting that are involved in working with assessing 78



students. Only 66 children with special needs' questionnaires were collected as the data, the rest are normal. Sixteen questions of The Richmond Humor Assessment Instrument (RHA) (Richmond, 2013) were designed to be a self-report measure of an individual's use of humor in communication. Unlike some other similar measures, this instrument does not focus on a particular kind of humor (such as story telling). Alpha reliability estimates for this measure have been near 90. The questions were assembled to be evaluated by individuals with a response as 5 = *strongly agree*, 4 = *agree*, 3 = *undecided*, 2 = *disagree*, 1 = *strongly disagree*. All questions referred to the research areas of assessing children with special needs' senses of humor among them, preparing the assessments, motivating them, setting the criteria and what are the main problems in the process of assessment.

### Finding and Discussion

When discussing the positive advantages of humor in all aspects of social interactions among children in special needs, it is essential to define the complex construct, as many questions provided and not all may have the functions being discussed in this paper. For example, the way they're laughing at their friends, or mocking them, is a form of humor interaction. However, teasing, which also relates to "play" laughing at a target, serves a pro-social function, and even seen as part of flirting behavior (Hussu & Strle, 2010). So how humor is perceived, will depend on the both the context, and the disposition of the children within the interaction. The way they assess their senses of humor through the interactions, communicate among them, and do self-assessment. Here are the results:

There are fifty eight students of Emerald inclusive school with various characteristics of special needs who were the participants. The special needs they have are unique and wonderful. Here are the characteristics of their special needs:

**Table 1. Characteristics of Special Needs**

No.	Characteristics of Special Needs	Total
1	Cerebral Parsy	1
2	Autism	16
3	ADHD	9
4	Asparger	1
5	SEBD	3
6	Down Syndrom	5
7	PPD-NOS	8
8	Dispraksia	3
* Note: The other left are Normal students		12

A questionnaire was constructed based on our team work with different classes that are involved in working with children with special needs. 16 questions were assembled in different types of questions; 16 items to be evaluated by individuals with a response as *disagree*, *quite agree*, *none agree*, and *completely agree*. All questions referred to the research areas of assessing children with special needs, preparing questionnaires, motivating students, setting the criteria and what are the main problems in the process of the assessment.

Mostly we didn't have difficulties in establishing a sense of equity among all students and in preparing them, especially those with special needs, for the assessment, and reinforce them as much as possible because we are helped and supported by the teachers. They know how and where to find the appropriate support for understanding the particularities of each students and are autonomous in detecting the true nature of an error. Mostly they know when

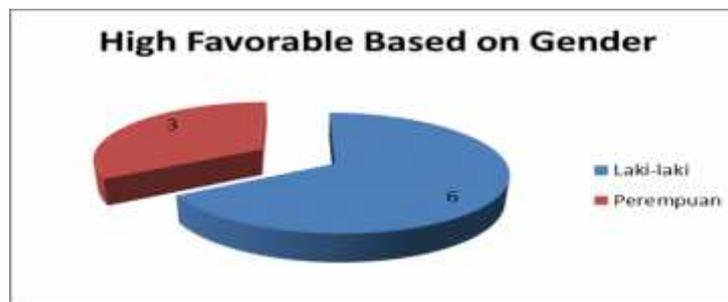
a mistake is made because of unwilling or real problems that immerge from impairment. Sometimes they try to develop metacognitive processes in students (self-regulation, self-evaluation) but there's a big lack in developing such processes even in themselves.

Here are the findings from the questionnaires that we assessed based on favorable questions; 1, 2, 4, 5, 7, 10, 13, 15 (positive questions) and unfavorable questions which are numbers 3, 6, 8, 9, 11, 12, 14, 16 (negative questions):



**Figure 1. Assessed Based on Favorable Questions**

Based on the chart shows above, the students chose the unfavorable questions higher than the favorable. The students who catagorized in autism chose more favorable questions than others. It means that the more higher favorable questions were answered, the more sense of humor they got. Due to the cognitive impairments which characterize intellectual, social, attention deficit, emotional and behavior difficulties, it is probable that students with intellectual disabilities may experience challenges in cognitively processing, comprehending, and appreciating humor. Moreover, physical and assertive dominance is likely to be more limited due to the limitations in self-determination, autonomy, and expressive communication.



**Figure 2. High Favorable Based on Gender**

Based on gender, more boys answered favorable questions more than girls. Moreover, boys are dare to express their senses of humor than the girls. The girls showed their shynesses to expressed their sense of humor. Instead of doing some humor things, they laughed seeing the boys expressed their sense of humor.

Finally, based on the number and quality of studies reviewed, discussions were drawn in relation to the questions posed at the outset of the review. Their answers showed that they mostly consider only the established criteria of the questionnaires 47, 08% of favorable criteria, and 52, 92% of unfavorable questions. The unfavorable criteria are higher than favorable criteria. The results showed that the children with special needs in Emerald school have less sense of humor. However, generally they were enjoyed with the given answers and their teachers added that the students take in consideration also individual's characteristics, personal and family background. They showed also their efforts and cooperation during the moment they filled the questionnaires.



Teachers used several approaches to motivate their students. Most of them were used to express enthusiasm and humor toward the questions that they ask. Only a tenth of students questionnaires are helped by their friends and teachers. We can say that students are self-confident in the way that they assess their sense of humor with their special needs. We also have little problems when we have to deal with Down syndrome students, and students who have SEBD. Those students have problems in processing information and understanding kind of humor; usually they don't finish their questionnaires and are likely mistaken. Students with speech and language disorders (15, 5%) and students with specific learning disabilities (13, 7%) are groups that tend to mislead teachers because they often think that they don't understand and just don't want to work, study, and learn.

When they were faced with a difficult question, teachers or their normal friends try to find help in a team based on their class. For example talk to other students that have the same difficult questions and need the class teacher help (46 or 79, 3%). This case showed that sense of humor also attracted sense of empathy from both the normal students and the students with special needs. The teachers also provided additional learning help to students with special cases. Those practitioners and teachers are more familiar with the individual's particularities, mostly because they spent more time in an individualized setting with a child. They have the possibility to know the child's weaknesses and strengths, and determine if the child's mistake is due to lack of knowledge or a result of his/her impairment. Crying for help to the class teacher is just becoming an appropriate way of dealing with problems. Common treatments used by Class teachers are in charge of the individualized educational plans and are the first to be the most familiar with the different specific adaptations that are made for the students' benefit but lack of using the treatment of humor sense.

This study highlighted the approach, strategy and value of benevolent humor in facilitating social relationships, cognitive domain, teachers and friends' coping, value, and enjoyment of the caring role among children with special needs are needed to support their life engagement. Despite this, study that specifically focused on the analyzing the assessment of humor among children with special needs highlighted the importance of shared humor for good interactions among them. Humor was found to be an important component of interactions for children with mild to moderate cognitive impairment and those with autism, Down syndrome and intellectual disabilities. Moreover, students with complex support needs and more severe cognitive impairments (e.g., those with ADHD) humor was also found to be a response to familiar interactional stimuli. Given the importance of humor in these contexts, it would behoove future research to consider humor as more of a key variable in interactions among students with special needs and significant others across a variety of contexts. Humor is an important aspect of the social interactional lives of children with special needs and their life serving important social, developmental, and emotional wellbeing functions. In particular it can serve an equalizing function in terms of communication power fostering the experience of shared moments and building of social life.

## **Conclusion**

We can conclude that the more higher favorable questions were answered, the more sense of humor they got. There were 47, 08% of favorable criteria, and 52, 92% of unfavorable ones. The unfavorable criteria are higher than favorable criteria, showed that the children with special needs in Emerald school have less sense of humor. Due to the cognitive impairments which characterize intellectual, social, attention deficit, emotional and behavior



difficulties, it is probable that students with intellectual disabilities may experience challenges in cognitively processing, comprehending, and appreciating humor. Moreover, physical and assertive dominance is likely to be more limited due to the limitations in self-determination, autonomy, and expressive communication. In fact, based on gender, boys are more expressive to express their senses of humor than the girls. The results showed that the children with special needs in Emerald school have less sense of humor. Furthermore, the role of humor in communication development, social facilitation, creativity, and stigma had all received some limited attention.

Analyzing humor by assessing it as part of the human experience and the varied conceptualizations of humor evident, there does appear to be a need for more research specifically focusing on humor and intellectual among children with special needs. In addition, more high-quality, primary, empirical research appears to be needed to analyze and assess the sense of humors among children with special needs. Therefore, Good Assessment of humor for Children with special needs can gain knowledge and treatment on what is best for them only by good education, personal engagement, and exchanging good practices. Study has shown that using humor assessment designed to generate to be modifiable in accordance to the children with special needs can gain knowledge, personal development and treatment on what is best for the children by assessing their sense of humor in various level of their particularity and all peculiarities.

### **Suggestion**

We suggest that teachers, parents and professionals need to explore the current state of knowledge in this field and so children with special needs from different age groups, their schools, were all included to provide more comprehensive and valuable insights into this unexplored area. The obstacles in this research are to provide an understanding of the contents of the questionnaire to the children with special needs, but it can be overcome with language and communication delivery that is simpler and fits their daily lives. The other obstacles were to gather the data, like their schedule for interviewing. Beside us, there were some departments, Communities, Therapist and other schools came there to have some researches, had comparing study, and so on. Moreover their different activities in school time among them. Therefore, we had to arranged the schedule well depend on their timing and readiness. Even though, sharing those ideas of using humor is probably the most adequate way of helping other teachers, parents and professionals in reducing uncertainties in the teaching process and the process of the assessment. On the other hand is a possibility even for the children that their achievements reflect their knowledge and true effort.

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