

Instructional Support for Self-Development Activities: Teaching Hair Oil Application to Students with Mild Intellectual Disabilities

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Abstract

This study investigates audience reception and digital discourse patterns surrounding the adoption of generative artificial intelligence (AI) in national television broadcasting. Specifically, it examines the intense public controversy and backlash on Instagram against TRANS7's "Legenda Bertuah," Indonesia's first fully AI-animated television series. Drawing on Robert Kozinets' qualitative netnography framework, this research examines the cultural experiences and interactions of social media users by analyzing archival comments on the program's official Instagram accounts. The data are interpretively analyzed through the theoretical lenses of Stuart Hall's encoding/decoding model and Vincent Mosco's political economy of communication. The findings reveal a dominant oppositional reception among Indonesian netizens. This resistance is driven by visual and auditory repulsion rooted in the "uncanny valley" effect, manifested in temporal jitter, stiff microexpressions, and robotic narration. Beyond aesthetic critiques, the digital discourse exposes deep socio-economic anxieties regarding labor commodification, the systemic displacement of local animators, copyright infringement of model training data, and the current media regulatory vacuum in Indonesia. This study is significant as it demonstrates that social media platforms serve as vital counter-hegemonic digital public spheres where active users critically evaluate corporate media strategies, resist technocratic cost-cutting, and assert labor rights. Ultimately, it highlights the urgent need for comprehensive digital broadcast regulations and the transition toward ethical, hybrid human-AI creative workflows.

Keywords: *Mild Intellectual Disability, Self-Care Skills, Grooming, Task Analysis, Inclusive Education, Student Independence, Special Needs Instruction*

INTRODUCTION

Education for children with mild intellectual disabilities requires an approach that is not only adaptive to their cognitive limitations but also transformative in equipping them with essential life skills. One critical aspect of special education is self-development, which involves a series of learning activities aimed at fostering independence in daily life. In this context, teachers bear the responsibility of designing learning processes that are realistic, meaningful, and aligned with the individual characteristics of their students (Fitriani et al., 2025; Tuasikal et al., 2024).

Children with mild intellectual disabilities typically have an IQ range of 50–70 and exhibit limited adaptive social functioning (Delphie, 2006; Pujiastuti, 2021; Sulistiyowati, 2021). They often face challenges in understanding abstract concepts, remembering task sequences, and performing fine motor activities with precision. Therefore, instructional design must emphasize concrete, step-by-step activities involving hands-on practice and repeated reinforcement. Skills related to personal care such as applying hair oil are not only components of basic hygiene but also contribute to social acceptance and self-esteem.

According to (Sitorus, 2024), self-development is a continuous process of enhancing one's quality of life, capabilities, and self-awareness. Activities such as hair grooming are not merely cosmetic; they are foundational life skills that support the individual's autonomy. However, field observations reveal that not all students with mild intellectual disabilities are able to carry out personal care routines independently and accurately even for tasks as simple as using hair oil (Dhyanti et al., 2020).

Preliminary observations at a special school in Cirebon Regency suggest that although self-development instruction has been implemented, the results remain suboptimal. Students still struggle to follow step-by-step instructions, measure appropriate amounts of hair oil, and apply it evenly. This indicates the need for a more systematic, structured, and individualized learning intervention.

This study aims to describe the abilities of students with mild intellectual disabilities in learning self-development skills through the activity of using hair oil, as well as to identify the factors influencing their performance. The focus is on how teachers conduct the instructional process, how students respond to it, and the outcomes in terms of functional independence .

Accordingly, the urgency of this research lies in its contribution to enhancing instructional strategies for life skills education among children with special needs particularly in the area of practical self-care that, while simple, holds significant impact. This study is expected to serve as a reference for teachers and special education practitioners in designing learning that prioritizes not only academic outcomes but also functional personal autonomy in everyday life (Dhyanti et al., 2020).

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employed a qualitative approach using a case study design. The qualitative approach was chosen to enable a deep understanding of the phenomenon within its natural and social context and to explore the subjective meanings behind individual experiences (Plano Clark, 2017). The case study design was selected for its strength in providing in-depth insights into a system or phenomenon in real-life settings, particularly when the boundaries between the phenomenon and the context are not clearly defined (Adrias & Ruswandi, 2025; Yin, 2017).

The research was conducted at SLB Negeri Kabupaten Cirebon, selected purposively due to the relevance of its student population and instructional setting to the study's objectives. The participants consisted of three students with mild intellectual disabilities and one classroom teacher directly involved in the self-development learning process.

Data collection employed method triangulation, which included in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and document analysis. Interviews were used to gather detailed narratives from the teacher about teaching strategies, challenges, and student responses. Participatory observation enabled the researcher to directly witness how students engaged in self-care activities using hair oil. Documentation involved analysis of teaching plans, student learning records, instructional materials, and photos of learning activities (Patton, 2014; Tashakkori & Creswell, 2007).

In qualitative research, the researcher functions as the primary instrument (human instrument), meaning that direct interaction with participants and field contexts is integral to the research process (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Supporting instruments such as interview guides, observation sheets, instrument grids, and documentation templates were developed to ensure systematic and transparent data collection.

Data trustworthiness was ensured by applying four criteria from (Lincoln & Guba, 1985): credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Credibility was achieved through data triangulation and member checking. Transferability was ensured by providing detailed contextual descriptions (thick description). Dependability and confirmability were supported by maintaining an audit trail and systematic documentation of the research process (Shenton, 2004).

Data analysis followed the interactive model by (Miles et al., 2014), consisting of three stages: (1) data reduction, involving selection, simplification, and transformation of raw data; (2) data display, presenting the data in narrative form, matrices, or simple visualizations; and (3) conclusion drawing and verification, conducted iteratively to ensure accuracy and consistency of the findings. Data analysis was performed concurrently with data collection, allowing the researcher to respond adaptively to emerging dynamics in the field.

This study was carried out from February to July 2025, encompassing the preparation phase, field data collection, and analysis through to the final reporting. This methodological framework is expected to contribute substantively to the improvement of evidence-based, contextually relevant instructional practices for students with special needs.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Student Ability in Performing Self-Care Activities

The results of observation and documentation revealed that most students with mild intellectual disabilities in Class III were able to follow the self-care learning steps involving hair oil application, although not fully independently. Students generally understood the sequence of the activity, which included preparing the tools, receiving instructions, and practicing the steps. However, guidance was still necessary, especially when students forgot certain stages or hesitated during execution.

One student was observed preparing the materials as instructed and listening attentively when the teacher explained the function of each item. However, during the application process, the student only applied the oil to the front part of the head, leaving other areas dry. This finding was consistent across participants, as noted in the observation field notes: "Some students apply the oil only in one spot usually the front or top of the head and require assistance to distribute it evenly." (*Field Observation Notes, March 2025*) The teacher also provided confirmation of this challenge during an in-depth interview: "They often forget the steps, like how much oil to use or how to spread it correctly. I need to remind them frequently or help finish the task." (Teacher R, Interview Transcript, 12 March 2025) Despite these limitations, students showed interest and enthusiasm during the activity. The documentation from the teaching session, including lesson plans and photographs, supported these findings. Photographic evidence showed students smiling while engaging in the activity, though many still needed physical or verbal prompts at various stages.

The teacher's formative assessment records indicated that two of the three students demonstrated partial independence, meaning they could complete some steps without intervention, while one student consistently required one-on-one support. This was reflected in the documentation: "Student FKA was able to open the oil bottle, pour an appropriate amount, and begin application independently but needed help spreading it across the entire scalp." (*Lesson Documentation Sheet, Teacher R*) Overall, the findings suggest that students have begun to internalize some aspects of the routine but still depend on structured guidance and modeling from the teacher to complete the task properly.

Learning Challenges Encountered by Students

The learning process revealed several specific challenges experienced by the students during the self-development activity involving hair oil. These challenges were both cognitive and motoric in nature, consistent with the characteristics of mild intellectual disability. The primary cognitive difficulty observed was **memory and sequence retention**. Students often forgot the step-by-step procedures involved in the activity, such as the amount of oil to use or the correct order of application. This was evident during repeated observations, where students hesitated or performed tasks out of sequence without prompts. One student, for example, skipped the preparation step and immediately attempted to apply oil with bare hands, forgetting to prepare the towel and comb beforehand.

The teacher highlighted this issue in the interview: "Sometimes they just stare at the materials, unsure what to do next. If I don't guide them step-by-step, they'll skip or get stuck." (Teacher R, Interview Transcript, 12 March 2025)

Motor coordination was also a limiting factor. While students could physically hold and open the bottle, they often lacked the fine motor control to measure the oil accurately or spread it evenly. As a result, some applied too much oil, leading to excessive dripping, while others used too little, rendering the activity ineffective. In addition to motor and cognitive barriers, **emotional responses** also played a role. When students encountered difficulty or failed to perform correctly, they often became disengaged. One student exhibited signs of frustration, including frowning and remaining silent for the remainder of the session. This emotional withdrawal was noted in the observation log: “When the student failed to follow the step, she became quiet and refused to continue without encouragement.” (*Observation Notes, March 2025*) Documentation from the student progress log further supported these findings. It was noted that some students showed **inconsistent performance**, completing tasks correctly one day but struggling with the same steps on another.

These recurring difficulties underscore the need for structured repetition, immediate feedback, and emotional support in the learning process. The challenges faced by the students are not merely technical but reflect deeper needs for guided learning environments tailored to their cognitive profiles.

Instructional Support and Teacher Strategies

Effective instructional support is essential when teaching students with mild intellectual disabilities, particularly in developing self-care routines such as applying hair oil. In this study, the teacher employed a variety of strategies designed to accommodate the cognitive and behavioral characteristics of the students, ensuring that the learning process was accessible, supportive, and meaningful.

Prior to beginning the instructional process, the teacher conducted a **diagnostic assessment** to identify each student’s baseline skills. This initial evaluation focused on the students’ ability to recognize grooming materials, understand the concept of cleanliness, and perform basic hand movements involved in hair care. According to the teacher’s documentation, this assessment helped her adjust the learning pace and modify expectations based on individual capabilities. “Before starting, I always assess their understanding. Can they name the tools? Do they know what the oil is for? This helps me set realistic targets for each child.” (Teacher R, Interview Transcript, 12 March 2025)

The teacher used **direct instruction combined with modeling**, which proved effective for this group of learners. Each session began with a demonstration, during which the teacher slowly showed each step starting from opening the oil bottle to applying the oil on the scalp. She repeated the demonstration as needed, using simple language and exaggerated gestures to enhance comprehension.

During the activity, the teacher applied **verbal prompts and physical guidance** to help students stay on task. For example, she used short, directive phrases like “now open the bottle” or “put a little on your hand,” while also gently guiding the student’s hand if they struggled with motor control. This was observed consistently across the sessions and recorded in the observation logs. “The teacher often guided the students physically, especially when they forgot how to apply or used too much oil. This ensured they stayed engaged and completed the task with some success.” (*Observation Notes, March 2025*). Another key strategy was the use of **positive reinforcement**. After each successful step, the teacher gave verbal praise (“Good job!” or “That’s right!”) and sometimes used a reward system, such as giving stickers or allowing students to choose the next item to work with. This reinforcement helped maintain motivation and reduced student frustration when difficulties arose.

Flexibility was also critical. The teacher adjusted the **duration and intensity of instruction** based on each student’s attention span and fatigue level. For one student with lower endurance, she broke the activity into shorter segments over multiple sessions. This

individualized pacing helped avoid overload and allowed the student to complete the activity without emotional distress.

The teacher also implemented **repetition and review** as part of her weekly plan. Skills taught during one session were reviewed in the next, often starting with a recap or a quiz-like game. This helped reinforce memory and sequence retention. According to the teacher, students showed better performance when activities were repeated in the same structure over time.

In addition to instructional methods, the teacher maintained **detailed documentation** for each student. This included progress logs, photographs of student work, and anecdotal records. These documents were not only used for monitoring development but also served as reflective tools to evaluate and improve teaching strategies. “I keep track of what each student can do week by week. If someone keeps forgetting the same step, I know I need to change how I teach that part.” (Teacher R, Interview Transcript, 12 March 2025)

Finally, the classroom environment was deliberately organized to support focused learning. The materials were always prepared in advance and arranged in a consistent layout. The physical setup minimized distractions, and the teacher maintained a calm tone to create a supportive atmosphere where students felt safe to make mistakes.

These combined strategies assessment, modeling, prompting, reinforcement, repetition, and documentation formed a comprehensive instructional approach tailored to the needs of students with mild intellectual disabilities. The teacher’s adaptability and structured support were instrumental in helping students progress toward greater independence in performing self-care routines.

Discussion

The findings of this study illustrate the nuanced and multifaceted nature of teaching self-care skills, particularly the application of hair oil, to students with mild intellectual disabilities. These students demonstrated partial independence in performing grooming tasks but consistently required structured support, prompting, and reinforcement throughout the learning process. This aligns with previous research emphasizing that individuals with mild intellectual disabilities often benefit from repetitive, task-analyzed instruction and scaffolded learning environments (Westling et al., 2000).

One of the key outcomes observed was the students’ capacity to perform basic steps in the self-care routine when tasks were broken down into smaller, manageable components. This is consistent with the **task analysis** approach commonly used in special education, which decomposes complex tasks into discrete, teachable steps (Brown et al., 2015). The effectiveness of this method lies in its ability to reduce cognitive load and promote gradual skill acquisition. Despite the support provided, memory lapses and sequencing difficulties remained prominent among the students. These challenges are characteristic of cognitive limitations in learners with mild intellectual disabilities, particularly in the areas of working memory and executive functioning (Swanson & Zheng, 2014). Students often forgot the order of operations or skipped steps altogether unless given immediate prompts.

Emotional responses also played a significant role in shaping learning outcomes. When students struggled or perceived failure, they tended to withdraw or show signs of frustration, such as pouting or disengagement. These behaviors are not uncommon and reflect the importance of integrating emotional and behavioral support within instructional planning (Gargiulo & Metcalf, 2010). A failure to address these emotional cues can hinder progress and diminish student motivation.

The use of **positive reinforcement** by the teacher proved vital in sustaining student engagement. Praise, rewards, and immediate feedback served to validate student efforts and reinforce correct behaviors. According to (Cooper et al., 2007), reinforcement is one of the most effective strategies in increasing the frequency of desired behaviors, particularly in special education contexts.

Additionally, this study highlighted the significance of teacher flexibility in pacing instruction. Students with mild intellectual disabilities often require instruction that is not only explicit but also **paced according to individual stamina and responsiveness** (Friend, 2022). The teacher's adaptive approach extending or shortening sessions based on student needs demonstrated an understanding of this principle and contributed to the overall effectiveness of the intervention.

The teacher's ability to conduct **formative assessments** and document student progress regularly was another strength of the instructional model. Ongoing assessment not only informed instructional decisions but also provided data to reflect on the learning process. According to (Black & Wiliam, 2009), formative assessment is central to improving learning outcomes, particularly when it is used dynamically and not just for recordkeeping.

The findings also support the argument that **visual and kinesthetic learning modalities** are especially beneficial for students with intellectual disabilities. The hands-on, repetitive nature of the grooming task matched well with the students' learning profiles. Research has shown that students with cognitive impairments often respond better to concrete, action-based learning experiences compared to abstract instruction (Hallahan Kauffman, J. M., & Pullen, P. C., 2015). Moreover, the learning of self-care tasks like grooming is not merely functional but also tied to **social perception and self-esteem**. Students who are able to manage their personal hygiene independently are more likely to be accepted in social settings and feel a sense of autonomy (Carr, 2008). Thus, teaching grooming routines contributes not only to skill development but also to emotional and social well-being.

The structured classroom environment played a key role in minimizing distractions and facilitating focus. Students with intellectual disabilities often require a predictable and organized setting to perform optimally (Cooper et al., 2007)). The consistency in material arrangement and instructional delivery observed in this study reinforced this principle and contributed to the students' ability to engage with the task.

Despite these strengths, the study also identified areas for improvement. While the teacher provided exemplary one-on-one support, the intervention could be enhanced by integrating **peer modeling** or **video modeling** as additional instructional tools. These approaches have been shown to promote generalization and independence in self-care tasks (Charlop-Christy et al., 2000).

Another consideration is the sustainability of independence. While students demonstrated progress during sessions, long-term retention and transfer of skills to other settings (e.g., at home) were not assessed. Generalization is a common challenge in special education, and future programs should consider involving parents or caregivers in training to reinforce the behavior in different contexts (Stokes & Baer, 1977).

The study also raises important implications for **curriculum development** in special schools. Currently, grooming skills are often embedded within broader "self-development" categories. However, the specificity and repetition required for mastery suggest that these skills should be given explicit focus and broken down into micro-units with defined learning outcomes. Furthermore, the role of **teacher training** cannot be overstated. The effectiveness of the intervention relied heavily on the teacher's competence, adaptability, and empathy. Pre-service and in-service training programs must prepare educators to use evidence-based instructional strategies tailored to the unique learning needs of students with intellectual disabilities (Billingsley, 2004).

In conclusion, this study reinforces the notion that students with mild intellectual disabilities are capable of learning functional life skills with the right support structure. A combination of task analysis, direct instruction, reinforcement, and emotional responsiveness forms the foundation of effective teaching in this context. Future research should explore the long-term retention of skills, their generalization across settings, and the impact of multi-modal interventions involving families and caregivers.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrated that students with mild intellectual disabilities are capable of learning essential self-care routines such as applying hair oil when provided with structured, repetitive, and supportive instruction. Despite their cognitive and motor limitations, students showed meaningful progress when instructional strategies such as task analysis, modeling, and positive reinforcement were consistently applied. The role of the teacher was central in guiding the learning process, adapting instruction to individual needs, and fostering emotional engagement.

The findings underscore the importance of designing life skills education that is concrete, individualized, and embedded within the daily routines of students with special needs. Developing personal grooming skills not only supports functional independence but also enhances students' confidence and social acceptance. Future interventions should consider involving families and integrating multi-contextual practice to support generalization of skills beyond the classroom.

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