



The relationship between social support and self-acceptance among parents of children with special needs in Yogyakarta

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Abstract

Self-acceptance among parents of children with special needs is an important factor in supporting the quality of parenting and the child's development. Theoretically, social support acts as a protective factor that helps individuals psychologically adapt to stressful situations. However, previous research findings have shown inconsistent results, particularly among parents with children with diverse special needs. This study aims to examine the relationship between social support and self-acceptance among parents of children with special needs in Yogyakarta. The research uses a quantitative approach with a correlational design. The research population consisted of 2,633 parents, with a sample of 178 respondents selected thru cluster random sampling technique. The research instruments consisted of a social support scale (including emotional, instrumental, informational, and esteem aspects) and a self-acceptance scale, which were developed based on relevant theoretical concepts. Data analysis used Pearson Product Moment correlation after meeting the normality and linearity assumption tests. The research results show a significant positive relationship between social support and self-acceptance ($r = 0.712$; $p < 0.05$), indicating that the higher the social support received, the higher the level of self-acceptance among parents. These findings underscore the importance of social support as a factor related to the psychological adjustment process of parents of children with special needs. The implications of this research highlight the need to strengthen the social support system involving families, schools, and communities to enhance the psychological well-being of parents.

Keywords: children with special needs, self-acceptance, social support.

INTRODUCTION

Children are an important part of the family structure, playing a role in the dynamics of family development. In early childhood (0–8 years), children experience rapid growth and development, requiring optimal stimulation to achieve developmental tasks appropriate for their age (Anggraini, 2022; Purnama et al., 2021). However, not all children develop optimally. Some children experience disorders or limitations in physical, mental, emotional, or social aspects, which are then categorized as children with special needs (Mauna et al., 2020; Pitaloka et al., 2022). This condition demands educational services and caregiving patterns that are more adaptive to the child's needs.

Children with special needs have various characteristics, such as autism, hyperactivity, Down syndrome, intellectual disabilities, hearing impairments, visual impairments, and speech

impairments (Firdaus & Harsiwi, 2024; Habsy et al., 2023). The presence of children with special needs in Indonesia shows an increasing trend. The 2017 data from the Badan Pusat Statistik recorded around 1.6 million children identified as children with disabilities, increasing to 2.2 million in 2021 based on data from the Coordinating Ministry for Human Development and Cultural Affairs. In Yogyakarta, the number of children with disabilities also increased, from 2,123 in 2018 to 3,477 in 2021. In addition, data from the Yogyakarta Education Office for the 2023/2024 academic year shows that there are 2,633 children with disabilities at the early childhood education (ECE) and elementary school levels in special schools. This increase indicates the need for an inclusive environment, including the psychological readiness of parents in raising their children.

Parents who have children with special needs often experience various emotional reactions in the early stages, such as denial, anger, depression, and stress (Rahman et al., 2024; Sesa & Yarni, 2022). Therefore, self-acceptance becomes an important aspect in helping parents adapt to their child's condition. Self-acceptance is the individual's ability to fully accept their own condition and the situations they face (Abharini et al., 2023). Parents with good self-acceptance tend to be able to show attention, affection, and more adaptive parenting patterns toward their children (Hurlock, 2000). On the other hand, low self-acceptance can be demonstrated through stress, anxiety, and a tendency to impose one's will on the child (Syaputri & Afriza, 2022).

The process of self-acceptance does not happen instantly, but rather through certain psychological stages, from denial to acceptance (Sesa & Yarni, 2022). In this process, there are various factors that influence self-acceptance, such as self-understanding, realistic expectations, experiences, and support from the social environment (Hurlock, 2013). One of the important factors is social support.

Social support is a form of assistance received by individuals from their environment, whether in the form of emotional, esteem, instrumental, or informational support (Sarafino dalam Safitri & Solikhah, 2020). This support can come from family, partners, friends, or the community. In the context of raising children with special needs, social support becomes important because it can help parents cope with psychological pressures, including financial needs, therapy services, and educational assistance (Sriwahyuni & Rusli, 2023).

Several studies show that social support is related to self-acceptance among parents of children with special needs. Several studies found a significant positive relationship between the two variables (Damayanti et al., 2023; Winarsih et al., 2020). However, other studies show a weaker relationship (Girindani & Elisa, 2022; Siahaan et al., 2023), indicating inconsistency in

research results. Furthermore, most previous studies still focus on one type of special needs child, such as autism or Down syndrome (Metavia & Widiana, 2022; Rendani et al., 2021; Widhiati et al., 2022).

Based on this description, there are still limitations in previous research, particularly related to the variation in types of special needs children and the consistency of research results (Girindani & Elisa, 2022; Siahaan et al., 2023; Winarsih et al., 2020). Therefore, this study aims to analyze the relationship between social support and self-acceptance among parents of children with special needs aged 5–9 years in Yogyakarta, involving various types of special needs.

METHOD

This study uses a quantitative approach with a correlational design to examine the relationship between social support and self-acceptance among parents of children with special needs. Correlational quantitative research is used to describe the relationship between variables without manipulating the variables being studied (Samsu, 2017).

The population in this study consists of parents who have children with special needs aged 5–9 years attending Special Schools in Yogyakarta Province. Table 1 shows the number of special school students in Yogyakarta, which amounts to 2,633 people. The research sample consisted of 178 respondents obtained thru cluster random sampling, considering regional representation, namely four regencies and one city in the Yogyakarta Province.

Table 1. Amount of SLB students in Yogyakarta

No	District/City	Amount of students
1	Kab. Bantul	682
2	Kab. Gunungkidul	560
3	Kab. Kulon Progo	253
4	Kab. Sleman	801
5	Kota Yogyakarta	337
	Total	2.633

Data collection was conducted using a questionnaire based on psychological scales consisting of two instruments, namely the social support scale and the self-acceptance scale. The social support scale was developed based on aspects proposed by Sarafino, including emotional, instrumental, informational, and esteem support (Sarafino dalam Safitri & Solikhah, 2020). Meanwhile, the self-acceptance scale was developed referring to Hurlock's concept, which reflects an individual's ability to accept their condition as a whole.

Both instruments use a five-point Likert scale, with response ranges from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The questionnaire was distributed directly (paper-based). From

a total of 185 respondents who filled out the questionnaire, 7 data were eliminated because they did not meet the completeness criteria, resulting in a final analyzed data set of 178 respondents.

The reliability test of the instrument was conducted using the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient with the help of SPSS version 23. Table 2 shows the reliability statistics of the social support and self-acceptance scales. The test results indicate that the social support scale has a reliability value of $\alpha = 0.966$ and the self-acceptance scale has a reliability value of $\alpha = 0.953$, which indicates very high internal consistency.

Table 2. Reliability statistics

Variabel	Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items	Description
X	.919	32	Reliable
Y	.903	32	Reliable

Before hypothesis testing, assumption tests including normality, linearity, and homogeneity were conducted. The normality test using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov method showed a significance value of $p = 0.200$ ($p > 0.05$), indicating that the data is normally distributed. The linearity test showed a deviation of linearity value of $p = 0.853$ ($p > 0.05$), which indicates a linear relationship between the variables. The homogeneity test resulted in a significance value of $p = 0.926$ ($p > 0.05$), indicating that the data has homogeneous variance.

Hypothesis testing was conducted using Pearson Product Moment correlation analysis to determine the direction and strength of the relationship between social support and self-acceptance in parents of children with special needs.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study examines the relationship between social support and self-acceptance among parents of children with special needs aged 5–9 years in Yogyakarta. Table 3 shows a significant correlation between social support and self-acceptance in children with special needs. The results of the analysis using the Pearson Product Moment correlation show a significant positive relationship between social support and self-acceptance ($r = 0.712$; $p < 0.05$). The coefficient value indicates that the relationship between the two variables falls into the strong category, thus the research hypothesis is accepted. This finding indicates that the higher the social support received, the higher the level of self-acceptance among parents.

Table 3. Correlation between social support and self-acceptance

		Social support	Self-acceptance
Social support	Pearson Correlation	1	.712**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0,000
	N	178	178
Self-acceptance	Pearson Correlation	.712**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0,000	
	N	178	178

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Theoretically, these findings indicate that social support plays a role as a factor related to the process of individual psychological adjustment. Social support, whether in the form of emotional, instrumental, informational, or esteem support, helps parents cope with the pressures arising from their child's condition. This is in line with previous research findings that show a positive relationship between social support and self-acceptance (Damayanti et al., 2023; Winarsih et al., 2020). However, there are also studies that show a weaker relationship (Siahaan et al., 2023), indicating that the relationship between the two variables may be influenced by contextual factors.

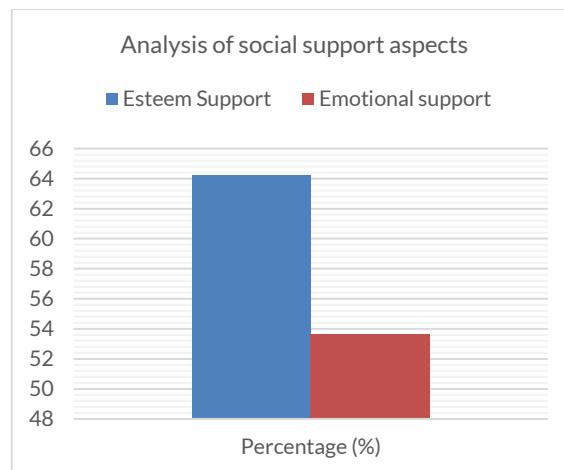


Fig 1: Statistics of the analysis results on the aspect of social support

Analysis based on aspects of social support shows that all aspects, namely emotional, esteem, informational, and instrumental support, have a positive relationship with the self-acceptance of parents of children with special needs. Figure 1 shows that among the four aspects, appreciation support shows the strongest relationship (64.2%). This indicates that the

feeling of being valued and recognized by the environment contributes to the increase in parents' self-confidence (Alufi & Saifullah, 2023). On the other hand, emotional support shows a lower relationship (53.6%), although it still falls within the moderate category.

These findings indicate that forms of support that are concrete and visible tend to be perceived as more beneficial compared to emotional support alone. This is in line with the research by Alufi & Syaifullah (2023) which shows that social support in various forms can increase motivation and help parents accept their child's condition. Thus, all aspects of social support contribute to parents' self-acceptance, but appreciation support appears to be the most dominant aspect in supporting the process of accepting the child's condition.

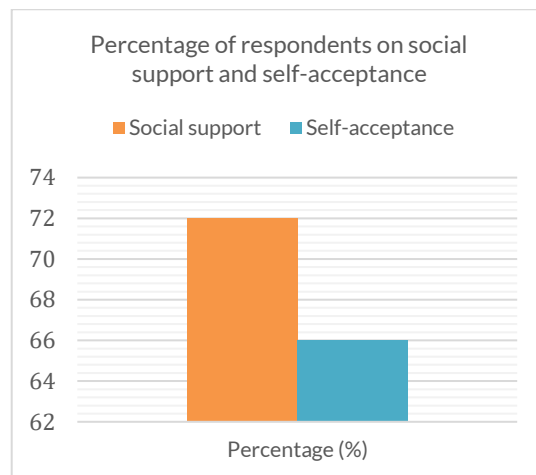


Fig 2: Statistics of respondent percentage results between social support and self-acceptance

Figure 2 shows the percentage results of respondents regarding social support and self-acceptance. Based on the categorization results, the majority of respondents had a moderate level of social support (72%) and a moderate level of self-acceptance (66%). This condition indicates that the social support received by parents is not yet fully optimal in enhancing self-acceptance. These findings are in line with the research by Zaini & Azizah (2024) and Geweniger A. (2024), which indicate that the social support received by parents of children with special needs falls into the moderate category, suggesting that the social support received is not yet optimal.

The results of this study also show that the relationship between social support and self-acceptance falls into the strong category (72.1%). These findings are in line with Rusdiana (2018) research, which found a moderate to strong positive relationship. but differs from the research by Winarsih et al. (2020) which showed a moderate relationship (54.8%). These differences in results indicate the presence of variations in findings that may be influenced by differences in research locations, sample sizes, and the types of special needs of the children.

Based on the age analysis, it was found that parents under 40 years old have a stronger relationship between social support and self-acceptance compared to those over 40 years old. These findings are consistent with Puspita (2018) research, which shows a similar pattern. This can be explained by the fact that younger individuals tend to focus on their own lives in building social relationships and are open to environmental support (Jati, 2023). herefore, as they age, social interactions tend to decrease, which affects the acceptance of social support (Hasan dalam Puspita, 2018; Windayani & Putra, 2021).

However, it should be noted that self-acceptance is not only influenced by social support but also by other factors such as parental education level, self-concept, religiosity, and other factors that can contribute to an individual's experience of positive self-acceptance. This indicates that the relationship between social support and self-acceptance is complex and influenced by various factors.

Practically, these findings emphasize the importance of social support from family, school, and community in assisting parents of children with special needs. Such support can take the form of attention, tangible assistance, or social recognition, which can enhance the motivation and psychological well-being of parents in fulfilling their caregiving roles.

CONCLUSION

This study shows that there is a significant positive relationship between social support and self-acceptance among parents of children with special needs in Yogyakarta. These findings indicate that social support is related to parents' ability to accept their child's condition, where the higher the social support received, the higher the level of self-acceptance. Social support, whether in the form of emotional, instrumental, informational, or esteem support, contributes to helping parents' psychological adjustment process.

Theoretically, the results of this study reinforce the role of social support as a protective factor in facing psychological stress. In addition, this research provides empirical contributions by examining parents of children with special needs with diverse characteristics, thereby enriching the understanding of self-acceptance dynamics in the context of parenting. However, this study has limitations, particularly in the use of a correlational design that does not allow for causal conclusions, as well as the limitations of the variables studied. Therefore, the results of this study need to be interpreted with caution.

Based on these findings, it is recommended that families, schools, and communities actively participate in building an inclusive and sustainable social support system for parents of children with special needs. Such support can be realized thru the provision of mentoring

services, parenting education, and increased social awareness to reduce stigma. Further research is recommended to examine other variables such as religiosity, resilience, and coping strategies, as well as to use more diverse research designs to obtain a more comprehensive understanding.

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