

## **The Role of Social Support in Fostering Self-Acceptance Among Mothers of Children with Intellectual Disabilities**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This study investigates the relationship between social support and self-acceptance among mothers of children with intellectual disabilities. Utilizing a quantitative correlational design, it examines how perceived social support impacts self-acceptance in a sample of 59 mothers at Rumah Pintar Salatiga. The research employs the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support and Berger's Self-Acceptance Scale, revealing that while most mothers receive moderate social support, a significant proportion struggle with self-acceptance. A positive correlation ( $r = 0.228$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) was found between social support and self-acceptance, albeit accounting for only 5.2% of the variance in self-acceptance. This suggests that other factors also significantly influence self-acceptance. The findings align with existing literature, indicating the necessity of comprehensive support systems that address both emotional and practical needs. Methodological limitations include reliance on questionnaires distributed through schools without researcher supervision and the exclusion of digital platforms for data collection. The study emphasizes the need for diverse and inclusive data collection methods in future research and calls for more extensive support mechanisms, including counseling and peer support, to enhance the well-being of this often-overlooked population.

**Keywords:** social support; self-acceptance; intellectual disabilities; maternal well-being; parental challenges



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## **INTRODUCTION**

The arrival of a child is often regarded as a great blessing eagerly anticipated by parents. However, some parents are bestowed the responsibility of caring for children who differ from the norm in various aspects. These differences may manifest in physical, intellectual, social, or emotional developmental anomalies. Such children are referred to as children with special needs (Setiawati, 2020). While some parents accept and strive to nurture their child's unique abilities, others feel overwhelmed by their child's limitations. Upon learning about their child's special needs, many mothers experience feelings of shame, despair, and a sense of personal culpability (Devina & Penny, 2016). Mothers struggling to accept their child's condition often exhibit behaviors such as a lack of engagement in the child's activities, diminished aspirations for the child, reduced affection, poor communication, and negligence of the child's needs (Zahra Kania & Yanuvianti, 2018).

Children with special needs, including those with intellectual disabilities like intellectual disability, present unique challenges. Intellectual disability refers to below-average intellectual ability, characterized by limitations in intellectual functioning and difficulties in social interaction (Asmarani & Sugiasih, 2019). Public understanding of children with intellectual disabilities is still limited, often leading to misconceptions about their capabilities. Consequently, some parents harbor hopes of their children overcoming these disabilities to become 'normal.' The burden on

parents, particularly mothers, of children with intellectual disabilities is significant, not only due to the child's specific needs but also due to societal pressures. Acceptance by the mother, which involves embracing her identity as a parent of a special needs child, is crucial. This acceptance leads to providing love, attention, warmth, comfort, and support, significantly impacting the child's well-being (Evilia & Ramadhanty, 2022).

Self-acceptance is a positive attitude towards oneself, embracing personal flaws and strengths without negative feelings like shame, guilt, or inferiority, and freedom from anxiety about others' judgments (Winarsih et al., 2020). Berger (1952) described self-acceptance as an individual's self-evaluation, uninfluenced by others, encompassing responsibility for one's actions, openness to feedback, equality with others, and lack of rejection or shame. Tameon (2019) added that self-acceptance involves being at peace with oneself, free of self-imposed burdens, thereby facilitating environmental adaptation. For mothers of children with special needs, self-acceptance is essential for providing the necessary care and affection. However, research indicates that a significant portion of mothers still struggle with self-acceptance (Islami & Ansyah, 2020; Kania, 2018).

Observations and interviews conducted by the researcher at Rumah Pintar Salatiga revealed varied responses from mothers of children with intellectual disabilities. Some still find it challenging to accept their child's condition, hoping for a future 'cure,' while others have gradually come to terms with their situation, aided by social support. This support often comes from family, friends, and spouses. Social support is vital for individuals facing undesired circumstances and has been shown to positively influence self-acceptance (Megasari & Kristiana, 2016; Zahra Kania et al., 2018; Chaerani & Rahayu, 2019; Ratnasari & Pribadi, 2019; Evilia Rahayu & Dwi Ramadhanty, 2020). Given the above context and the specific focus of this research on the relationship between social support and self-acceptance among mothers of children with intellectual disabilities at Rumah Pintar Salatiga, this study fills a gap in existing research, which has seldom examined this particular demographic.

## **METHOD**

### **Research Design**

The research methodology of this study is designed to investigate the relationship between social support and self-acceptance among mothers of children with intellectual disabilities at Rumah Pintar Salatiga. The study employs a quantitative approach with a correlational design, which is particularly effective in examining the nature and extent of relationships between variables without manipulating the study environment. This design choice is ideal for this type of exploratory research, allowing for an understanding of how social support and self-acceptance interact in a real-world setting.

### **Variables**

Central to the study are two key variables: Social Support (Variable X) and Self-Acceptance (Variable Y). The research aims to explore how variations in social support influence the levels of self-acceptance among these mothers. Social Support is defined as the perceived assistance received by mothers from their immediate environment and is measured using the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS) by Zimet et al. (1988). This scale quantifies support from family, friends, and significant others, with higher scores indicating greater perceived support. Self-Acceptance, on the other hand, is the mothers' ability to accept themselves, including their flaws, which is crucial for effective socialization. This is measured using the Berger's Self-Acceptance Scale, modified by Padiana Devi (2021), where higher scores denote greater self-acceptance.

### **Participants**

The research, conducted at Rumah Pintar Salatiga, focused on a specific demographic: mothers with intellectually disabled children. The study involved a carefully selected sample of 58 participants. This sample was chosen to provide insights into the unique experiences and challenges faced by this group. The research was carried out over a nine-day period, from September 21 to September 29, 2023. The methodology employed for data collection was primarily through questionnaires, which were distributed to the subjects who met the study's criteria. The school played a crucial role in facilitating this process, ensuring that the questionnaires reached the appropriate participants.

The study's participants consist of 59 mothers with at least one child with intellectual disabilities, selected through accidental sampling from Rumah Pintar Salatiga. This sampling method provides a practical way to gather a representative sample from the community.

Table 1. Participants by Age

No.	Age Range	Number	Percentage
1.	20-30 Years	7	12%
2.	31-40 Years	26	45%
3.	41-50 Years	14	24%
4.	51-60 Years	11	19%

A key aspect of this study is the demographic breakdown of the participants, as detailed in Table 1. This table categorizes participants based on their age groups, offering a clear picture of the age distribution among the sample. The most significant age group was women aged between 31 and 40 years, comprising 45% of the participants. This age bracket, constituting nearly half of the sample, is particularly relevant as it often encompasses mothers who are actively engaged in the upbringing and care of their children, possibly facing specific challenges and experiences

related to their child's disability. The other age groups represented include 20-30 years (12%), 41-50 years (24%), and 51-60 years (19%). This diverse age range provides a broad perspective on the experiences and needs of mothers with intellectually disabled children, potentially offering insights that are relevant across different life stages.

### **Data Collection**

For data collection, two primary instruments are used: the Social Support Scale, which assesses the extent of support from various sources, and the Self-Acceptance Scale, which measures the levels of self-acceptance. Both scales have been validated for reliability and modified to suit the context of this study. In terms of instrument validation, content validity was confirmed through expert judgment, particularly by thesis supervisors. Item analysis was conducted using the corrected item-total correlation, ensuring that only items with significant discriminative power were retained. Reliability testing for both scales was carried out using Cronbach's Alpha, with results indicating satisfactory reliability.

### **Data Analysis**

The data analysis in this study involves using Pearson's Product-Moment Correlation technique to test the hypothesis regarding the relationship between social support and self-acceptance. Preliminary tests, including normality and linearity, were conducted to ensure the appropriateness of the correlation analysis. A significant relationship between the variables is identified if the p-value is less than 0.05, indicating a meaningful statistical connection.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Research Outcomes and Descriptive Analysis**

This study's primary focus was to explore the dynamics of social support and self-acceptance among mothers with intellectually disabled children. Utilizing a sample of 59 participants, the research revealed intriguing insights into these psychological constructs. The descriptive statistical analysis indicated an average (mean) social support score of 40.36 with a standard deviation of 10.355, and an average self-acceptance score of 37.78 with a standard deviation of 6.131. These figures suggest a moderate level of both social support and self-acceptance among the participants. The range of social support scores spanned from 24 to 48, while self-acceptance scores ranged from 26 to 63.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics of Social Support and Self-Acceptance

	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation
X	59	24	48	40.36	10.355
Y	59	26	63	37.78	6.131

**Table 3. Categorization of Social Support**

Category	Interval	N	Percentage
High	$x \geq 44$	12	20.3%
Medium	$32 \leq x \leq 44$	38	64.4%
Low	$x \leq 32$	9	15.3%
Total		59	100%

**Table 4. Categorization of Self-Acceptance**

Category	Interval	N	Percentage
High	$x \geq 51$	10	16.9%
Medium	$30 \leq x \leq 51$	38	64.4%
Low	$x \leq 30$	11	18.6%
Total		59	100%

**Table 5. Normality Test Results**

	KS-Z	Significance	Remark
Social Support Variable	0.106	0.098	Normal
Self-Acceptance Variable	0.105	0.166	Normal

**Table 6. Linearity Test Results**

	F difference	Significance	Remark
Deviation from linearity	1.290	0.247	Linear

**Table 7. Correlation Test**

	Correlation (r)	Significance (p)	Remark
Social Support - Self-Acceptance	0.228	0.041	Significant

### **Categorization of Social Support and Self-Acceptance**

A deeper analysis showed a significant variation in the levels of social support and self-acceptance among the participants. According to the categorization (Table 4.3), a majority (64.4%) of the participants fell into the 'moderate' social support category. This indicates that most participants received a fair amount of support from their environment. In contrast, a closer look at self-acceptance (Table 4.5) revealed that 64.4% of the participants had low self-acceptance levels, a concerning finding that underscores the challenges faced by these mothers.

### **Testing Assumptions: Normality and Linearity**

The normality test (Table 4.6) showed that both the social support and self-acceptance data were normally distributed, a crucial aspect for the validity of the study's findings. Additionally, the

linearity test established a linear relationship between social support and self-acceptance. These results validate the appropriateness of the statistical methods used in analyzing the data.

### **Hypothesis Testing and Correlation Analysis**

The study employed Pearson's product-moment correlation technique, revealing a positive correlation ( $r = 0.228$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) between social support and self-acceptance. This significant finding suggests that higher levels of social support are associated with higher levels of self-acceptance among the mothers. However, it's noteworthy that social support contributes only 5.2% to the variance in self-acceptance, implying that other factors also play a crucial role in this context.

### **Discussion and Comparative Analysis**

The research's findings align with previous studies, such as the work of Kania Zahra and Yanuvianti (2018), which also highlighted a positive relationship between social support and self-acceptance among mothers of special needs children. This study extends this understanding by suggesting that the level of social support can significantly influence a mother's acceptance of her situation and identity. The support received from family, friends, and significant others plays a crucial role in this process. However, despite the moderate level of support, the low self-acceptance among many participants indicates potential gaps in the kind of support needed or its effectiveness.

The categorization of social support and self-acceptance levels further elucidates the complexities involved. While a majority received moderate social support, a considerable number still experienced low self-acceptance. This paradox suggests that mere availability of support might not be enough; its quality, relevance, and the individual's perception of support may also be critical factors.

### **Limitations and Implications**

The study faced several limitations, particularly in data collection. The use of questionnaires distributed through schools, without direct supervision by researchers, may have influenced the depth and accuracy of the responses. Additionally, the decision against using digital platforms for questionnaire distribution, due to varying levels of technological literacy among participants, potentially limited the study's reach and convenience.

The implications of this research are multifaceted and significant, especially in the context of providing support to mothers with intellectually disabled children. The study highlights a crucial link between social support and self-acceptance, suggesting that while a majority of these mothers receive moderate levels of support, many still struggle with low self-acceptance. This indicates a need for more tailored and effective support systems that not only address the quantity but also the quality and relevance of the support provided. The positive correlation between social support and self-acceptance, though significant, is not overwhelmingly strong (contributing only 5.2% to the variance in self-acceptance), pointing to the potential influence of other factors such as personal coping strategies, community resources, and psychological interventions. These findings call for

a more comprehensive approach in supporting mothers of intellectually disabled children. Support services should not only focus on providing resources but also on enhancing the mothers' ability to accept and adapt to their unique situations. This could include counseling services, peer support groups, and educational programs aimed at building resilience and self-efficacy. Moreover, the study's methodology and its limitations underscore the importance of employing diverse and inclusive data collection methods in future research. Ensuring the depth and accuracy of responses, possibly through mixed-method approaches or incorporating digital platforms with user-friendly interfaces, could provide more nuanced insights into the experiences of these mothers. In summary, this research contributes to a deeper understanding of the challenges faced by mothers of intellectually disabled children and underscores the need for comprehensive support mechanisms that are sensitive to both the emotional and practical needs of these mothers. It paves the way for future studies and interventions aimed at enhancing the well-being of this often-overlooked population.

## **CONCLUSION**

The study on mothers with intellectually disabled children offers crucial insights into the interplay of social support and self-acceptance, revealing that while most mothers receive moderate social support, a significant number still struggle with low self-acceptance. This highlights the need for more effective support systems that focus not just on the quantity but also the quality and relevance of support. The positive correlation between social support and self-acceptance, although significant, accounts for only a small percentage of variance, suggesting that other factors like personal coping strategies and community resources also play essential roles. The findings advocate for a comprehensive approach to supporting these mothers, including counseling, peer support, and resilience-building programs. Despite its methodological limitations, this research underscores the importance of inclusive and varied data collection methods and sets a foundation for future studies aimed at enhancing the well-being of this often-overlooked population.

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