



## Literature Study: Correlation of Self-Regulation with Social Behavior in Children with Special Needs

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**Abstract:** Children with special needs have atypical development that is different from children in general. They need to face various types of obstacles in carrying out their functions as humans. One of these obstacles is social development which has an impact on the emergence of problematic social behavior. The presence of these disorders is suspected to be connected to their inadequate self-regulation. This study aims to provide a comprehensive view of the correlation between self-regulation and social behavior in children with special needs based on scientific evidence. The method used is a literature review. The results of the study indicate that the social behavior of children with special needs which is often hampered has a correlation with self-regulation which is connected through executive function disorders and theory of mind and can be exacerbated by the presence of comorbid conditions.

**Keywords:** *children with special needs, social development, social behavior, self-regulation*

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### I. Introduction

Since birth, humans will continue to experience development. Development refers to changes in structure or function over time within a person that are not only genetic or "innate" characteristics of a child and appear as children develop, often showing different manifestations at different times in development (Bjorklund & Causey, 2017). Children who experience atypical development are children with special needs. These children experience obstacles and have special needs due to certain deficiencies, for example special needs due to loss of sensory function, low cognitive intelligence development, impaired movement/motor function, and so on (Efendi, 2017). One consequence of their special needs is poor self-regulation, which leads to poor academic, behavioral, and social outcomes.

Behavioral manifestations of self-regulation represent the process by which a person regulates their environment (McClelland et al., 2015). This indicates a person's capacity to change throughout life that is influenced by biological, behavioral, and contextual factors. Therefore, children who are less able to regulate themselves are at high risk for peer rejection, social isolation, and may have low academic achievement (Blair, 2002). Self-regulation is closely related to social competence (McKown et al., 2009) which is the ability to take another person's perspective on a situation and learn from past experiences and apply those experiences to the changing social landscape. (Semrud-Clikeman, 2007).

It is difficult to deny the statement that humans behave. Social behavior itself refers to any movement, action, or practice that takes into account others (Heatherton, 2011). There are several social stereotypes for people with disabilities that indicate difficulties in overcoming behavioral problems and essentially create dependence on others in demonstrating social behavior. (Argan, 2005). Children with special needs such as autistic, mentally retarded, blind, and deaf children have complex and sensitive social behavior patterns and they take longer than children in general to initiate social behavior (Romer, 1981; Lord, 1990; Chandler et al., 1992; Runjić et al., 2015; Paterson et al., 2020). Self-regulation is a complex process and can be broken down in several different ways. This literature review is concerned with providing a more comprehensive view of how self-regulation in children with needs correlates with their social behavior.

## II. Research Method

The method used in this research is a literature review which is a summary of the subject area that supports the identification of a particular research question (Rowley & Slack, 2004; (Cronin et al., 2008). There are 4 steps in the literature review process, namely selecting the topic to be reviewed, then searching for and selecting the right article, analyzing and synthesizing the study, and organizing the writing of the review to be compiled. (Ramdhani et al., 2014). Topics related to the obstacles experienced by children with special needs were chosen because their ability to behave socially is quite limited. Meanwhile, on the other hand, inadequate self-regulation is considered to play a role in the social behavior that emerges (Baumeister & Heatherton, 1996).

Furthermore, the selection of articles began from research journals with the keywords used being self-regulation, social behavior, and children with special needs on the Google Scholar database site. From this search, more than 30,000 relevant articles were found. Then after filtering the articles published from 2011 to 2021, around 90 related articles were collected. In the final selection, research that accommodates the discussion of the relationship between self-regulation and social behavior was selected. Finally, there were 25 articles identified that could accommodate the research objectives.

This literature review was conducted using an accurate scientific evidence approach based on the analysis of 25 journal articles selected according to the research objectives. One person screened the articles and 2 people verified the analysis of each article. The researcher used the same criteria as previously mentioned, according to the research objectives. The organization of the articles was carried out based on a review of a series of research objectives that developed until all data was processed. The researcher also ensured that each article analyzed had the potential to accommodate the needs of several research findings. For example, several articles showed discussions of self-regulation and social behavior of children with special needs simultaneously. Therefore, the results of the study are based on how the correlation between self-regulation and social behavior in children with special needs.

## III. Result and Discussion

### A. *Self-Regulation Ability.*

Self-regulation includes any effort by an individual to change their own responses or inner states. This self-regulation refers to the exercise of self-control, especially in relation to bringing oneself in accordance with the standards that are prioritized and allowing a person to control and direct their attention, thoughts, behaviors, emotions, and cognitions so that their behavior remains goal-directed (Vohs & Baumeister, 2016; Blair, 2002; Posner & Rothbart, 2007; Korucu, et al., 2017). In general, self-regulation is a process that is carried out consciously because it requires effort in self-regulation. Around 80-90% of self-regulation that occurs in everyday life is manifested in the act of stopping a response (Baumeister & Newman, 1994).

Self-regulation in children with special needs is often influenced by their self-efficacy, metacognition, and executive function (Mason & Reid, 2017). Research conducted by Calkins & Howse in Jahromi and Stifter (2008) shows that individual differences in one form of self-regulation may be related to children's regulation in other areas. This self-regulation consists of cognitive, behavioral, and emotional self-regulation with different levels.

Cognitive self-regulation, or executive function, involves flexible goal-directed behavior, temporal organization of behavior, and complex and purposeful behavioral flexibility. Self-regulation is closely related to the executive function of the self which is operated through the cortical area of the brain that synergizes with the anterior cingulate which is part of the limbic system of the brain related to affect. This area actively, consciously, and intentionally plans directly, initiates, monitors, and revises ongoing responses (McClelland et al., 2007; Thomson and Jaque, 2017).

The extrinsic and intrinsic processes responsible for monitoring, evaluating, and modifying emotional reactions or expressions are translations of self-regulation in terms of emotions (McRae & Gross, 2020). As children grow older, they become more able to express and regulate their own emotions (Charles & Carstensen, 2007). Rothbart & Bates (2007) state that self-regulation in terms of behavior is understood as the ability to monitor attention and inhibit behavior in order to achieve

goals. This conceptualization of behavioral regulation is closely related to effortful control which is defined as the efficiency of executive attention, including the ability to inhibit dominant responses and/or activate subdominant responses, to plan and to detect errors (Edossa et al., 2018; Gómez-Miñambres & Schniter, 2017).

#### *B. Social Behavior of Children with Special Needs.*

Humans have desires that drive them to do something. This desire is a manifestation of how humans organize themselves. The behavior that emerges can vary and one of them is social behavior which can be defined as all behaviors that affect, or are affected by, other members of the same species (Whishaw & Kolb, 2020). Social behavior can be viewed as an exchange of something, either material or non-material, where someone hopes to get something when giving something to someone else (Homans, 1958). This is influenced by biological and environmental factors and can be relevant in the development of developmental pathway problems (Trommsdorff & Cole, 2011). One of the main obstacles faced by children with special needs, in this context children with visual and hearing impairments, autism, Down syndrome, and mental retardation, is social development (Alimovic et al., 2013; Kofler et al., 2011; Vissers & Hermans, 2018; Dieleman et al., 2018; Eisenhower et al., 2005). Behavioral problems at an early age are predictors of various problems in later developmental stages. This arises because the obstacles they have more or less affect their executive functions and intelligence (Romero-López et al., 2018).

Social behavior is closely related to Theory of Mind (ToM) or theory of mind which is also related to a person's intelligence (Astington, 2003). Slaughter & Repacholi (2004) define ToM as a person's ability to predict and explain the behavior of others which is reflected in the person's mental state. Children with special needs experience impaired ToM development when compared to children with typical development (Smogorzewska et al., 2019).

#### *C. Correlation of Self-Regulation Ability to Social Behavior in Children with Special Needs*

Self-regulation, which is the ability to control one's actions and responses, is essential for healthy development in various contexts such as emotional, behavioral, and cognitive. Self-regulation skills are needed both to display constructive behavior (Eisenberg, Smith, & Spinrad, 2011) and to control negative social behavior. Self-regulation, one type of which is emotional regulation, which is the ability to express emotions appropriately, and theory of mind, which is the ability to understand one's own and others' emotions as a guide to emotional regulation, are highly integrated into social competence (Halberstadt et al., 2001). However, some individuals have difficulty performing these skills, one of which is children with special needs. Matson (2017) summarizes that children with special needs have difficulties in terms of social development which can have a direct impact on social competition, social skills, and social behavior. For example, children with autism have significantly higher behavioral problems and lower social skills than their peers with typical development (Baker & Blacher, 2020). This is also coupled with the possibility of comorbidities that occur in cases of children with different special needs which can then lead to higher behavioral problems (Baker & Blacher, 2021). The production of poor self-regulation is inadequate social behavior. Zhou in Korucu (2017) stated that the path that connects the two is that self-regulation underlies various types of regulation which are then influenced by various aspects such as executive function and theory of mind. Various forms of behavioral problems may also have differential relationships with theory of mind.

### **IV. Conclusion**

Children with special needs have delayed social development that can affect social skills, social abilities, and social behavior. Through the obstacles to theory of mind and executive function experienced by children with special needs, poor self-regulation plays a role in how they demonstrate social behavior.

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