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Improving Self-Regulated Learning Skills of Students with Special Needs: Strategies and Outcomes

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Improving Self-Regulated Learning Skills of Students with Special Needs: Strategies and Outcomes

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Abstract: Inclusive education seeks to ensure fair access to quality education for kids with special needs, as stipulated by Law Number 20 of 2003 on The National Education System of Indonesia. Nonetheless, children with impairments frequently face obstacles in social interactions and academic pursuits. This study investigates the efficacy of Self-Regulated Learning (SRL) training in improving the socialisation skills of students with disabilities at SMA Negeri 3 Bondowoso, an inclusive institution. The study employed a quasi-experimental approach and included three students with distinct needs: a slow learner, a visually challenged student, and a student with speech difficulties. Over a period of four months, SRL training was executed, integrating individualised counselling to enhance participants' metacognitive, motivational, and behavioural competencies. Data were gathered by pretest-posttest assessments, follow-up evaluations, questionnaires, and interviews with students, educators, and parents. The results demonstrated substantial enhancements in socialisation abilities, with all participants attaining elevated levels of social engagement, communication, and emotional control following the intervention. The SRL framework, based on self-regulation and social cognitive theories, allowed students to reflect on their behaviours, adjust social strategies, and control emotions proficiently. Personal counselling enhanced their self-assurance and development. This study shows that self-regulated learning (SRL) training, in conjunction with counselling, is an effective intervention for enhancing social skills and independence in students with impairments. The findings enhance inclusive education practices, providing educators with a systematic method to tackle social issues and foster a supportive learning environment for all children.

Key Words: Self-Regulated Learning; Inclusive education; Socialization skills; Students with disabilities; Counseling intervention

INTRODUCTION

Law No. 20 of 2003 regarding the National Education System stipulates that children with special needs are entitled to receive education equivalent to that of their peers, without discrimination or segregation into specialised institutions (Depdiknas, 2003). Children with exceptional needs possess specific physical constraints that impede their learning abilities. These restrictions hinder their ability to utilise social skills and impede their capacity to socialise freely, as their deficiencies render them targets

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of derision, mockery, and bullying. Children with exceptional disabilities may exhibit distinct learning paces and methodologies compared to their peers.

Children with exceptional needs sometimes struggle to establish learning objectives, demonstrate commitment to education, or self-motivate. In numerous instances, the tailored assistance required by children with impairments may be insufficient. Inadequate attention and supervision may hinder children with impairments from comprehending and executing tasks. Inflexible curriculum frequently pose challenges in accommodating the unique requirements of students with disabilities. The modifications necessary for students with disabilities frequently demand additional work from educators and institutions, and not all schools are prepared or equipped to implement these changes. This may impact their motivation and involvement in the learning process, along with challenges in adapting to the curriculum.

School is an educational institution where students undergo a progressive learning process designed to foster their external and internal development. Learning is a process comprising intake, processing, and output, enabling individuals to maximise their inherent potential, attain their objectives, and enhance their preparedness for future challenges. Permendiknas No. 70/2009 mandates that district and city administrations allocate a minimum of one primary school and one junior secondary school in every sub-district. A secondary education unit that facilitates inclusive education must accommodate students with special needs, allowing them to attend public schools, particularly those identified as inclusive institutions. Inclusive education is a service that facilitates the simultaneous learning of children with special needs (ABK) alongside their non-ABK peers of the same age in regular courses situated near their residences. The learning process is increasingly collaborative, with learners participating as equal members of the class, sharing both responsibilities and rights in the execution of academic duties and services (Muhtarom, 2015).

The objective of structuring inclusive education is to afford the maximum opportunity for all learners with physical, emotional, mental, and social disabilities, or those with potential intelligence and/or exceptional talents, to receive quality education tailored to their needs and capabilities. In accordance with these aims, inclusive schools are established in various schools across specified districts and towns. Designated schools are required to admit kids with special needs to integrate with their typically developing peers in a standard classroom setting. The integration of inclusive schools aims to actualise the principle of education for all, honouring diversity and ensuring non-discrimination for every student. SMA Negeri 3 Bondowoso is classified as an inclusive school.

The establishment of inclusive schools entails creating educational environments where at least one student with special needs learns alongside their typically developing peers, ensuring equitable educational and instructional rights for all. This unity aims to foster a reciprocal relationship characterised by mutual respect and support between typical students and those with special needs. While typical students can engage in classroom learning without difficulty, kids with special needs necessitate individualised attention. While inclusive schools are theoretically mandated to provide one accompanying teacher for students with special needs, in fact, these youngsters must possess a robust conviction in their ability to engage in learning alongside their typically developing peers.

The intrinsic development of an individual fosters Self-Regulated Learning (SRL), which commences when one endeavours to manage their cognition. In education, students must not only acquire knowledge but also develop effective organisational skills for learning. This is corroborated by the assertion of Permatasari et al. (2015) in Nugroho, Anang Amiruddin, Yuzarion Yuzarion (2022, p. 5179), which indicates that a student's mastery of knowledge and abilities is essential for achieving high performance and success. While particular knowledge and abilities pertain to certain topics and disciplines, SRL skills can universally impact student progress. SRL is a process wherein learners employ strategies to manage cognition, metacognition, and motivation. Cognitive methods encompass ongoing recall and rehearsal, elaboration, and organisational techniques for material (Kristiyani, 2020, p. 27). Metacognitive techniques encompass planning, monitoring, and evaluation. Motivational tactics encompass recognising learning as an innate necessity, enhancing self-esteem, and demonstrating perseverance in the face of challenges (Chin, 2004).

The curriculum implemented at SMAN 3 Bondowoso necessitates certain requirements to be fulfilled to attain the objectives, enabling students to optimise their learning in accordance with task needs. Children with unique needs and their limitations encounter challenges in adhering to the

conventional educational system. Their restrictions hinder their learning process in conventional classes. Consequently, SRL training is essential for collaborative learning to address their limits within the realm of inclusive education. Students with high SRL will endeavour to attain the requisite value standards to the fullest extent.

Children with unique needs and their limitations encounter challenges in adhering to standard educational practices. Their restrictions hinder their learning process in the conventional classroom. These limitations encompass deficient cognitive capabilities and social skills, including communication and the expression of viewpoints, particularly in group debates. In the learning process, these youngsters often remain mute, despite their lack of understanding of the subject matter, and they do not have the courage to pose enquiries. Despite the teacher's enquiries, they remained silent. They remained silent throughout group discussions. Children with special needs refrain from answering the teacher's questions due to past experiences of being ridiculed, deemed amusing, and occasionally subjected to vulgar taunts, particularly by male classmates. In addition to educational challenges, children with special needs frequently experience bullying, including during academic activities, and may also endure physical mistreatment, but not necessarily physical assaults. It is these derogatory views that cause children with special needs to isolate themselves, despite the presence of friendly friends. Children with exceptional needs often associate with one another despite being from different classrooms.

SLR is a learning endeavour that encompasses elements of cognition, motivation, and student behaviour in the execution of educational tasks. Facilitating SRL will assist students in governing their thoughts, behaviours, and emotions to effectively attain their educational objectives. Once these students with exceptional needs achieve self-acceptance, they may adapt and integrate with their peers. Gradually implementing SRL will assist special needs pupils in developing their confidence. Encouraging them to conform to the behaviour of typical youngsters. Possessing limits does not imply differentiation; it must be demonstrated via their capacity to thrive. Recognise their deficiencies, demonstrate a willingness to adjust and self-regulate, and cultivate self-assurance to position oneself among their peers.

This study is supported by the research of Sumanti, Tawil, and Indiati (2015) regarding the implementation of SRL strategies to enhance learning autonomy. SRL training is a brief instructional process that employs systematic and organised methodologies to facilitate self-regulation, supervision, and control over cognitive, motivational, and behavioural aspects by attending to the surrounding environment. This research differs from others in its implementation manner, specifically through individual counselling sessions. SRL is predominantly implemented for typical kids, whereas children with impairments are examined primarily in certain competencies.

Existential purpose and individual development. This study is to evaluate the efficacy of SRL instruction in enhancing social skills among three children with impairments (Festy, 2018). We intends to perform a study titled "Self-Regulated Learning Training to Enhance the Social Skills of Children with Disabilities," based on the aforementioned rationale and occurrences. This study posits that SLR training enhances the SRL capabilities of children with impairments both prior to and during the training intervention. From the preceding explanation, a problem formulation arises: (1) What was the degree of socialisation skills among students with disabilities prior to the SRL training intervention? What is the level of socialisation skills among students with disabilities following the SRL training intervention? What is the efficacy of SRL training in enhancing the socialisation skills of students with disabilities?

METHOD

Participants

This quantitative research adopts a quasi-experimental design and was conducted at SMAN 3 Bondowoso, a designated inclusive school in Bondowoso district. Respondents were selected using a purposive sampling technique, based on specific objectives (Sugiyono, 2019, p. 168). The participants comprised three students with special needs, each representing distinct criteria: (1) a slow learner, (2) a partially blind student, and (3) a speech-impaired student. These respondents were chosen for their potential to provide critical insights into addressing the research questions.

Procedure

The research was conducted over four months, from February to May 2023. During the first week, the researchers focused on planning and observing the participants. This was followed by a two-month field phase where SRL training was implemented, and data were collected through questionnaires and interviews. The final month was dedicated to processing the data, interpreting the findings, and preparing the research report.

The training program was based on self-regulation theories, which emphasize how students manage, adapt, and sustain their learning activities within both individual and social contexts. Zimmerman and Martinez-Pons (1990) highlight that SRL involves active engagement in metacognitive, motivational, and behavioral processes. Participants underwent three assessments: a pretest before the intervention, a posttest immediately after the intervention, and a follow-up assessment conducted several months later to evaluate the long-term impact of the training.

Instrumentation

Data collection was performed using a questionnaire designed to measure the socialization skills of students with disabilities. Students with special needs completed the questionnaires during individual sessions in the counseling room. Additionally, interviews were conducted with students, their classmates, teachers, and other individuals who could provide detailed contextual information. These interviews aimed to explore the causes and effects of challenges experienced by students with disabilities.

Data Analysis

The data analysis process began with assumption testing to ensure the validity of the statistical methods. A normality test was conducted using the Shapiro-Wilk test to verify whether the data followed a normal distribution, given the small sample size (Santoso, 2010). Additionally, a homogeneity test was performed using the Levene test to confirm uniform variance across the data sets (Payadnya & Jayantika, 2018).

The main statistical analysis employed a paired-samples t-test to compare pretest and posttest scores. This analysis was conducted to determine whether there was a significant improvement in the participants' socialization skills following the SRL training. A higher posttest score, as compared to the pretest, was interpreted as evidence of the intervention's effectiveness in enhancing the social skills of students with disabilities (Christensen, as cited in Seniati et al., 2011).

RESULTS

The research on students with special needs, conducted through the implementation of SRL training, revealed the following findings regarding their socialization skills prior to the intervention:

Student 1

Before the SRL training, this student struggled to adapt to their environment, often remaining quiet and isolating themselves in the classroom. They displayed difficulty in managing emotions, frequently becoming angry and unwilling to accept differing opinions. For instance, when a friend asked them to submit an assignment they had not completed, they would react with anger, sulking for the rest of the day and refusing to engage with others. The student was easily provoked by minor issues and rarely exhibited a friendly demeanor. Additionally, they faced significant challenges in interacting with peers, including participating in group activities, speaking publicly, and interpreting social cues.

Student 2

This student also encountered difficulties adapting to their surroundings, primarily due to a visual impairment in their right eye, which led to feelings of shyness and insecurity. They frequently

missed school, citing discomfort and experiences of bullying. Their withdrawn behavior manifested in a reluctance to speak or engage with others, often remaining silent and avoiding social interactions. The student displayed low self-confidence in social situations, which hindered their participation in school-based social activities.

Student 3

This student faced similar challenges in adapting to their environment, despite having kind classmates. A speech impairment resulted in a lack of confidence, leading the student to avoid interactions with peers, preferring instead to communicate exclusively with their twin brother, who attended a different class. They tended to keep their problems to themselves and often resorted to inappropriate solutions due to a lack of trust in others. The counseling teacher found it difficult to monitor this student, as their peers were not familiar with their habits or even their place of residence. The student's difficulties with verbal and non-verbal communication further exacerbated their inability to establish meaningful relationships with peers.

The pre-test measurement of socialization skills for students with disabilities is summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. Socialization skills of students with disabilities on the pre-test

No.	Score Range	Frequency	Percentage	Category
1.	0% - 33%	2	67%	Low
2.	34% - 66%	1	33%	Medium
3.	67% - 100%	0	0%	High
Total		3	100%	

The research findings indicate a noticeable improvement in the socialization skills of students with special needs after participating in the SRL training program. The details for each student are as follows:

Student 1

Following the SRL training, this student demonstrated progress in adapting to their environment. They showed increased enthusiasm for attending school, although they still preferred not to mingle extensively with their classmates and often left the classroom. Their tendency to become angry diminished, and they began practicing anger management techniques, such as listening to teachers' advice. The student smiled more frequently when interacting with others and developed a better understanding of how to cope with negative behaviors from peers, choosing to avoid conflict instead. They also displayed a willingness to share aspects of their life on social media platforms like Facebook and Instagram, even if verbal interactions remained limited. These improvements were evident in their greater participation in social activities, such as group discussions, playing games with friends, and engaging in extracurricular activities.

Student 2

This student showed significant improvement, attending school regularly and seeking out a sense of belonging within a community, even if primarily with other students with disabilities. They exhibited a cheerful disposition, actively engaging in conversations with friends, greeting teachers in person and via WhatsApp, and demonstrating a friendly attitude towards others. The student was comfortable initiating conversations, sharing their goals, and discussing their motivations and aspirations with others, including their family. Notable enhancements were observed in their communication skills, including the ability to start conversations, listen actively, and express themselves clearly and confidently.

Student 3

After the SRL training, this student gradually opened up within a safe classroom environment. Despite initial reluctance, they began sharing their personal and familial problems with others, showing a willingness to accept advice and opinions. They exhibited progress in emotional regulation, remaining calm in stressful situations and responding constructively to conflicts. The student demonstrated an improved understanding of others' perspectives, greater empathy, and behavior aligned with social norms. These changes contributed to their ability to build more meaningful social connections. The post-test measurements of the students' socialization skills are summarized in Table 2.

Table 2. Socialization skills of students with disabilities on the post-test

No.	Score Range	Frequency	Percentage	Category
1.	0% - 33%	0	0%	Low
2.	34% - 66%	0	0%	Medium
3.	67% - 100%	3	100%	High
	Total	3	100%	

The intervention is deemed effective if it results in significant improvements in the social skills of children with disabilities. These improvements may include enhanced social participation, better communication skills, and improved emotional regulation. Based on the analysis results, adjustments to the intervention approach may be necessary. For instance, if progress in a specific area is insufficient, the treatment might require modification or additional support. Additionally, identifying external factors that influence outcomes, such as family involvement or peer interactions, can contribute to the development of a more holistic and integrated intervention strategy.

The Effectiveness of SRL Training in Improving Social Skills Among Students with Disabilities

The effectiveness test for SRL training in improving the socialization skills of students with disabilities demonstrates that this training is highly effective. It aids students in adapting to their environment, building self-confidence, and transforming introverted behaviors into more open and interactive ones. Through SRL training, students learn to greet others, exhibit friendly behavior, seek help when faced with challenges, and demonstrate an understanding of the importance of collaboration. Additionally, the training motivates children with learning disabilities to achieve academic excellence. Before testing the hypothesis using a t-test, the data underwent normality and homogeneity testing. For normality, the Shapiro-Wilk test was applied. The results of this normality test are presented in Table 3:

Table 3. Test of normality

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov ^a			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Sociability	.295	6	.111	.844	6	.140

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

Based on the Table 3, the significance value for the Shapiro-Wilk test is 0.140, which exceeds the threshold of 0.05. This indicates that the null hypothesis (H_0) is accepted. Therefore, it can be concluded that the data for both groups are normally distributed.

The homogeneity test is used to determine whether the variances of the groups come from the same population. In this study, the Levene method was applied to test for homogeneity. The data is considered homogeneous if the significance value exceeds 0.05, while it is deemed inhomogeneous if the significance value is less than 0.05. The results of the homogeneity test are presented in Table 4:

Table 4. Test of Homogeneity of Variances

	Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
	5.133	1	4	.086

Based on Table 4, the significance value is 0.086, which is greater than 0.05. This indicates that the null hypothesis (H₀) is accepted. Therefore, it can be concluded that both groups come from populations with the same variance (homogeneous).

Hypothesis testing in this study utilized an independent sample t-test to compare the differences between groups. Additionally, a dependent paired sample t-test was applied to analyze the differences between pre-test and post-test results within the same group.

Table 5. Paired Samples Test Results

		Paired Samples Test							
		Paired Differences				95% Confidence Interval of the Difference			
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	Lower	Upper	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Pair 1	Post_test - Pre_test	47.000	7.000	4.041	29.611	64.389	11.629	2	.007

Based on Table 4, the results of the paired samples t-test show that the calculated t-value (t-count) is 11.629, which exceeds the critical t-value (t-table) of 4.303 at a 5% significance level with n=3. Additionally, the significance value (0.007) is less than 0.05, indicating a statistically significant result. These findings demonstrate that SRL (Self-Regulated Learning) training is effective in improving the socialization skills of students with disabilities.

The effectiveness of SRL training was evident in several aspects. First, in terms of social engagement, students in the experimental group displayed significant improvements compared to the control group. They were more active in group discussions and social activities, indicating that SRL training encourages active participation in social interactions. Second, regarding communication skills, students showed marked improvements in initiating conversations, listening attentively, and expressing themselves clearly. This suggests that SRL training not only enhances self-management but also significantly boosts communication abilities. Third, in the domain of emotion management, students were better able to manage emotions, such as remaining calm in stressful social situations and handling conflicts more effectively. This indicates that the self-regulation techniques embedded in SRL training positively impact emotional control, which, in turn, improves social interactions.

Feedback from teachers and parents further supports the effectiveness of SRL training. They observed notable positive changes in the social behavior of students, including enhanced interactions with peers and increased participation in school activities. Similarly, students themselves reported feeling more confident and capable in social situations, allowing them to engage more actively in social activities. These findings suggest that SRL training not only improves students' social skills but also enhances their self-confidence, helping them feel more comfortable and prepared for social interactions. The combination of observational data and self-reported feedback underscores the effectiveness of SRL as a valuable intervention for improving the socialization skills of students with disabilities.

DISCUSSION

Table 1 illustrates that prior to the implementation of SRL (Self-Regulated Learning) training, 67% of children with disabilities were categorized as having low socialization skills, while 33% fell into the medium category. After the application of SRL training, significant improvements were observed in the students' socialization skills, particularly in the areas of social engagement, communication skills, and emotional management. Feedback from teachers, parents, and students supported these findings, with many reporting long-term positive effects.

Low socialization skills in children with disabilities before the SRL intervention can be attributed to several factors. According to Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory, learning occurs through observation, imitation, and interaction with others. Bandura highlights self-efficacy as a critical factor in motivating behavior. Meanwhile, SRL theory provides a structured framework, dividing the process into pre-behavioral, behavioral, and post-behavioral phases, offering practical insights into teaching SRL (Beishuizen, J., & Steffens, K. 2011). Both theories emphasize self-regulation, which is essential for improving social and learning outcomes. Children with disabilities often struggle to understand social norms, such as recognizing nonverbal cues, interpreting facial expressions, or adhering to social behavior rules. They may also face challenges in regulating emotions and controlling impulses, further complicating their ability to interact effectively with peers (Nurhayati, I., Akbar, M. F. R., Putra, H. D., & Fitriani, N. 2024).

Table 2 demonstrates that, after the application of SRL training, 100% of the students achieved a high level of socialization skills. This marks a significant improvement, as the percentage shifted from the low category to the high category. This progress highlights the effectiveness of SRL training in fostering social development.

Individual counseling services provided alongside SRL training further supported students in expressing their thoughts and addressing challenges. These services also encouraged students to build courage and confidence, emphasizing that they have equal rights and opportunities in education and life. Students were taught to recognize both their strengths and weaknesses, which helped them build self-confidence and engage more effectively with others (Horn, D., Grötzbach, D., & Drechsel, B. 2021)

The SRL training was conducted over four sessions for each student, equipping them with tools and strategies to regulate and control their social behavior. This approach significantly improved their social skills, enabling them to achieve success in social interactions with peers. Social skills, defined as the ability to interact appropriately in specific contexts, are essential for personal and social success. Combs and Slaby (in Merrell and Gimpel, 2014) describe social skills as behaviors that are socially acceptable, personally beneficial, and advantageous to others. Similarly, Takahashi et al. (2015) define social skills as learned behaviors that facilitate effective interaction and help individuals avoid socially inappropriate responses.

The reflection process inherent in SRL enables students to evaluate their social interactions, analyze their behavior, and develop improved social strategies. Individuals with strong social skills are more likely to be accepted by peers, form friendships, and maintain positive relationships with parents and others. Takahashi et al. (2022) argue that individuals skilled in SRL can plan social interactions and manage their emotional responses, leading to enhanced social outcomes. Moreover, Torrano Montalvo, F., & González Torres, M. (2004) suggest that adolescents with strong social skills perform better academically, solve problems effectively, and develop greater interest in school.

Conversely, poor social skills can hinder children from forming meaningful relationships and may lead to negative social experiences. Characteristics of poor social skills include difficulty adjusting behavior to suit different contexts, controlling aggression, and adhering to socially acceptable norms. Geldard and Geldard (2012) highlight that students with poor social skills often struggle to accommodate others' needs, misunderstand social cues, and fail to control impulsive or aggressive behavior.

This study aligns with previous research in emphasizing the importance of maximizing the potential of children with disabilities by fostering self-confidence and independence. Conducted in an inclusive high school with a small sample size, this study differs from others that were conducted in primary or special schools. Furthermore, this research incorporates the use of guidance and counseling strategies to provide a structured training approach, including follow-up activities, distinguishing it from other studies on social skills development.

CONCLUSION

The implementation of Self-Regulated Learning (SRL) training proved to be highly effective in improving the socialization skills of students with disabilities. The training resulted in significant improvements in social engagement, communication skills, and emotional management, with all

participants achieving a high level of socialization skills after the intervention. Feedback from teachers, parents, and students confirmed the positive and lasting impact of the training.

The structured approach of SRL, grounded in theories of self-regulation and social cognition, provided students with tools to adapt their behavior, build self-confidence, and enhance their interactions with others. Additionally, individual counseling services further supported students in addressing challenges and developing a stronger sense of self-worth. This study underscores the potential of SRL as an effective intervention for fostering social skills and promoting independence among students with disabilities, contributing to both their personal and academic success.

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