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THE ROLE OF PARENTING SELF-EFFICACY IN PARENTAL ACCEPTANCE AMONG PARENTS OF CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS: A CROSS-SECTIONAL STUDY

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ABSTRACT
Parenting self-efficacy reflects parents' confidence in managing parenting responsibilities and may be particularly important when caring for children with special needs, who often require sustained emotional, social, and caregiving support. Limited parental confidence may make adaptation to caregiving demands more difficult and may be associated with lower acceptance of the child's condition. This study aimed to examine the role of parenting self-efficacy in parental acceptance among parents of children with special needs attending special schools in Banyuwangi, Indonesia. A quantitative cross-sectional correlational study was conducted from May to July 2025 among 188 parents selected through purposive sampling from a population of 200 parents. Eligible participants were parents of children with special needs attending special schools in Cluring District who were willing to participate and able to complete the questionnaire independently; parents who withdrew or returned incomplete questionnaires were excluded. Data were collected using the Parenting Sense of Competence Scale and the Parental Acceptance–Rejection Questionnaire, with questionnaires completed in the presence of the researcher. Descriptive statistics and Spearman's rank-order correlation were used for analysis. Most participants had moderate parenting self-efficacy (93.6%), while most had high parental acceptance (78.7%). Parenting self-efficacy showed a positive and statistically significant, although weak, correlation with parental acceptance ($r = 0.191$, $p = 0.009$). This relationship may reflect that parents who feel more capable of managing caregiving demands are better positioned to respond adaptively to their child's condition, while the weak correlation suggests that parental acceptance may also be related to other personal, family, and contextual factors. These findings indicate that strengthening parenting confidence through appropriately designed parenting education and psychosocial or community support may help support parental acceptance.

Keywords: children with special needs; parental acceptance; parenting self-efficacy; parents

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INTRODUCTION

Parents of children with special needs (CWSN) face complex emotional and caregiving challenges in understanding and accepting their child's condition. The presence of a child with

special needs may evoke denial, disappointment, frustration, and difficulty in accepting the child's limitations (Che Ahmad, A., et al., 2025; Pasyola, N. E., et al., 2021; Rahayu, W. F., & Mangunsong, 2020). Inadequate parental acceptance may negatively affect both the child and the family. Children with special needs may experience discrimination, limited access to appropriate education, or exclusion from community activities due to parental shame (Sry Astati, et al., 2024). Negative social stigma may further complicate parental acceptance by causing parents to conceal their child's condition and lose confidence in their parenting role (Oduyemi, A.Y., et al., 2021; Salsabila, 2020; Serchuk, M.D., et al., 2021), potentially affecting parental psychological well-being and the child's social and emotional development (McLean, S., & Halstead, 2021).

The magnitude of disability further highlights the importance of this issue. Globally, approximately 1.3 billion people, or 16% of the world's population, live with some form of disability (UNDRR., 2023; WHO., 2023). In Indonesia, approximately 22.97 million people (8.5% of the population) live with disabilities (BPS., 2024), while the prevalence among children aged 5–19 years is estimated at 3.3%, representing approximately 2.2 million children (Kementerian Koordinator Bidang Pembangunan Manusia dan Kebudayaan Republik Indonesia, 2022). East Java recorded 34,196 verified students with special needs (Kemendikbudristek RI., 2025). In Banyuwangi Regency, approximately 1,147 children with special needs were recorded in 2025, with Cluring District having the highest concentration of students enrolled in special education schools, at approximately 200 students (Dinas Pendidikan Kabupaten Banyuwangi, 2025). These data demonstrate the relevance of addressing the challenges experienced by parents in accepting and caring for children with special needs.

Parental acceptance reflects parents' ability to acknowledge their child's condition and respond with warmth, understanding, and appropriate support. This process may be influenced by family environment, spiritual background, social influences, and financial circumstances (Sry Astati, et al., 2024). Social stigma may further increase emotional distress and reduce parents' confidence in fulfilling their parenting roles (Oduyemi, A.Y., et al., 2021; Serchuk, M.D., et al., 2021). Therefore, psychological resources that may help parents adapt to caregiving demands and develop positive responses toward their child's condition are important to consider.

One such psychological resource is parenting self-efficacy (PSE), defined as parents' confidence in their ability to perform parenting responsibilities and manage caregiving challenges. Parents with higher PSE may be better able to adapt to parenting demands, whereas lower PSE is associated with greater psychological stress and difficulties in caring for children with disabilities (Fang, Y.,et al., 2021; Fu, W., et al., 2023; Glatz, T., et al., 2024). Social support may strengthen PSE by increasing parents' confidence and effectiveness in parenting practices (Fierloos, I. N., et al., 2023). Higher PSE has also been associated with better parental psychological well-being and adaptive parenting outcomes (Fang, Y., et al., 2021) suggesting its potential relevance to parental acceptance.

Previous studies have examined PSE and parental acceptance from different perspectives. Rahayu, W. F. and Mangunsong (2020) examined PSE as a mediator between parental acceptance and the socio-emotional abilities of children with special needs in Indonesia, while Aswar et al., (2024) reported a significant relationship between PSE and parental self-acceptance among parents of children with autism spectrum disorder in Makassar. Other studies have associated PSE with emotional intelligence and parental involvement (Chairunnissa, C., & Pandia, 2023; Inaya, I. B., et al., 2023), whereas parental acceptance has been examined in relation to emotional intelligence, family support, and demographic factors (Salsabila, N. D., & Adrian, 2025). However, differences remain in the populations studied, conceptualization of acceptance, and psychosocial factors examined. Evidence specifically addressing the relationship between PSE and acceptance toward the child among parents of

children with diverse special needs in the socio-cultural context of Banyuwangi remains limited. This represents an important context-specific research gap.

Based on this evidence, the present study examines the role of parenting self-efficacy in parental acceptance among parents of children with special needs in Cluring District, Banyuwangi. Given its cross-sectional design, the role of PSE is examined as an association rather than a causal relationship. It was hypothesized that higher PSE would be positively associated with higher parental acceptance. This study may provide context-specific evidence to inform family-, school-, and community-based support for parents. Therefore, this study aimed to examine the relationship between parenting self-efficacy and parental acceptance among parents of children with special needs attending special education schools in Cluring District, Banyuwangi, Indonesia.

METHODS

Study Design

This study employed a quantitative correlational design with a cross-sectional approach to examine the association between parenting self-efficacy and parental acceptance among parents of children with special needs. Both variables were measured at a single point in time without manipulation or intervention.

Setting

The study was conducted among parents of children with special needs attending special education schools (Sekolah Luar Biasa–SLB) in Cluring District, Banyuwangi, Indonesia. Data collection was conducted from May to July 2025 after obtaining ethical approval and permission from the relevant authorities. Eligible participants completed the questionnaires in the presence of the researcher, and all returned questionnaires were checked for completeness before data entry and analysis.

Research Subject

The study population consisted of 200 parents of children with special needs (CWSN) enrolled in special education schools (SLB) in Cluring District. Participants were recruited using purposive sampling according to predefined eligibility criteria. The inclusion criteria were parents of CWSN attending an SLB who were willing to participate voluntarily and able to complete the questionnaire. Parents who withdrew during data collection or returned incomplete questionnaires were excluded. A total of 188 parents who met the eligibility criteria and provided complete data were included in the final analysis.

Instruments

Parenting self-efficacy was assessed using the Parenting Sense of Competence Scale (PSOC), a 16-item self-report measure designed to assess parents' perceived competence in their parenting role. Each item was rated on a six-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (6), with a possible total score ranging from 16 to 96. Higher scores indicated greater perceived parenting competence. Previous construct validity testing reported that all 16 items met the validity criteria (Sari, 2020). Reliability testing demonstrated acceptable internal consistency, with Cronbach's alpha coefficients ranging from 0.75 to 0.842 across the instrument components (Sari, 2020). More recent psychometric research has continued to support the PSOC as a measure of parenting competence (Gilmore, L., & Cuskelly, 2024).

Parental acceptance was assessed using the 24-item short-form Parental Acceptance–Rejection Questionnaire (PARQ). The version used in this study comprised four domains: acceptance/warmth, rejection/aggression, indifference/neglect, and undifferentiated rejection. Each item was rated on a five-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5), and total scores were categorized according to predefined scoring criteria. Previous validity testing of the Indonesian version showed that item–total correlations were statistically

significant ($p < 0.05$), indicating that all items met the validity criteria (Pangestu, 2021). Reliability testing demonstrated acceptable internal consistency, with a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.826 (Pangestu, 2021). Recent psychometric evidence has supported the factorial structure and measurement properties of the PARQ Short Form, demonstrating its usefulness for assessing parental acceptance–rejection across different populations (Grama, et al., 2024).

Data Analysis

Data were analysed using SPSS and consisted of the following steps: 1) Descriptive statistics (frequency and percentage) were used to summarize demographic characteristics, the distribution of parenting self-efficacy and parental acceptance levels. 2) Spearman's rank-order correlation (ρ) was employed to determine the strength and direction of the relationship between parenting self-efficacy and parental acceptance This non-parametric statistical test was selected because the study variables were measured on an ordinal scale and did not meet the normality assumption, making Spearman's correlation more appropriate than Pearson's correlation (Field, 2024; Pallant, 2020). A significance level of $p < 0.05$ was applied to all statistical analyses.

Ethical Consideration

Ethical approval for this study was obtained from the Health Research Ethics Committee of STIKES Banyuwangi (Approval No. 248/03/KEPK-STIKESBWI/VII/2024–2025). All participants were provided with information about the study's objectives, procedures, potential benefits, and their right to withdraw at any time without consequence. Written informed consent was obtained before participation. Confidentiality and anonymity of all participants were strictly maintained throughout the research process.

RESULTS

Table 1. Characteristics of Respondents (n = 188)

Characteristics	Category	n	%
Sex	Female	181	96
	Male	7	4
Age	18–44 years	101	54
	45–59 years	78	41
	≥60 years	9	5
Occupation	Labourer	11	6
	Farmer	24	13
	Housewife	126	67
	Self-employed	19	10
	Trader	8	4
Monthly income	< Banyuwangi Regency Minimum Wage	166	88
	≥ Banyuwangi Regency Minimum Wage	22	12
Marital status	Married	162	86
	Other marital status	26	14
Type of special needs	ADHD	9	5
	Autism	50	27
	Down syndrome	36	19
	Physical disability (*Tuna Daksa*)	8	4
	Intellectual disability (*Tuna Grahita*)	30	16
	Visual impairment (*Tuna Netra*)	24	13
	Hearing impairment (*Tuna Rungu*)	23	12
	Speech impairment (*Tuna Wicara*)	8	4

A total of 188 parents participated in this study. As shown in Table 1, the majority of respondents were female, with 181 respondents (96%). Most participants were aged 18–44 years, with 101 respondents (54%), and 126 respondents (67%) were housewives. Most respondents had a monthly income below the Banyuwangi Regency Minimum Wage,

accounting for 166 respondents (88%), while 162 respondents (86%) were married. Regarding the type of special needs, autism was the most frequently reported condition among the respondents' children, accounting for 50 respondents (27%), followed by Down syndrome with 36 respondents (19%) and intellectual disability with 30 respondents (16%).

Table 2. Distribution of Parenting Self-Efficacy Levels among Parents of Children with Special Needs

Parenting Self-Efficacy	n	%
Low	2	1.1
Moderate	176	93.6
High	10	5.3
Total	188	100

According to Table 2, the Parenting Sense of Competence (PSOC) revealed that most respondents demonstrated a moderate level of parenting self-efficacy, with 176 participants (93.6%) falling into this category.

Table 3. Distribution of Parental Acceptance Levels among Parents of Children with Special Needs

Parental Acceptance	n	%
Low	0	0.0
Moderate	40	21.3
High	148	78.7
Total	188	100

Based on the Parental Acceptance–Rejection Questionnaire (PARQ) results, 148 respondents (78.7%) demonstrated a high level of parental acceptance.

Table 4. Relationship Between Parenting Self-Efficacy and Parental Acceptance (n = 188)

Variables	n	Spearman's ρ	95% CI	*p*-value	Interpretation
Parenting self-efficacy – Parental acceptance	188	0.191	0.100–0.282	0.009	Weak positive correlation

Note: CI = confidence interval. Statistical significance was set at p < 0.05.

The results of Spearman's rank-order correlation test showed a weak positive and statistically significant relationship between parenting self-efficacy and parental acceptance (ρ = 0.191, 95% CI [0.100, 0.282], p = 0.009). This finding indicates that higher parenting self-efficacy tended to be associated with greater parental acceptance among parents of children with special needs.

DISCUSSION

The predominance of moderate parenting self-efficacy (PSE) in this study suggests that most parents of children with special needs perceived themselves as reasonably capable of managing their parenting responsibilities, although their confidence may not yet be optimal. This finding should be considered within the characteristics of the study participants, most of whom were female (96%), aged 18–44 years (54%), housewives (67%), married (86%), and had a monthly income below the Banyuwangi Regency Minimum Wage (88%). These characteristics provide important contextual information because parenting self-efficacy may develop through parents' experiences in performing caregiving responsibilities as well as through the personal, family, and social resources available to them. Previous research has shown that PSE is associated with psychosocial factors such as parenting stress, social support, and family conditions (Setianingsih, H. P., et al., 2024), while cross-cultural evidence suggests that family norms, gender roles, and social support may also shape parents'

confidence in their parenting abilities (Fang, Y., Boelens, M., Windhorst, D. A., Raat, H., & van Grieken, 2021) (Fang, Y., et al., 2021). Therefore, the moderate PSE observed in this study may reflect the interaction between parents' caregiving experiences and the social and family context in which parenting occurs.

This interpretation is also consistent with previous evidence showing that higher PSE is associated with better parental psychological well-being and more adaptive responses to parenting demands. Fang et al. (2021) reported that higher PSE was associated with more favorable psychological outcomes among parents, while Albanese et al. (2019) found that PSE was positively related to parental well-being and child adjustment. Parents of children with special needs may encounter additional psychological and social challenges that can influence their confidence in managing caregiving responsibilities, making appropriate social and professional support particularly relevant (Ronkainen, N., et al., 2023). In the present study, the predominance of married respondents may indicate the potential availability of spousal support, whereas the high proportion of respondents with incomes below the regional minimum wage may reflect economic circumstances that could add to caregiving demands. However, the associations between these respondent characteristics and PSE were not specifically examined in this study; therefore, they should be interpreted as contextual factors rather than determinants of PSE. Taken together, the findings suggest that strengthening parents' confidence in their caregiving abilities may require attention not only to individual parenting skills but also to the family and social environment surrounding parents of children with special needs.

The high level of parental acceptance observed in this study suggests that most parents were able to acknowledge their child's condition and respond to their needs with positive and supportive attitudes. Parental acceptance is particularly important for children with special needs because it may shape the quality of parent–child interactions and the emotional and social environment in which the child develops. This finding is consistent with Salsabila, N. D., & Adrian, (2025), who emphasized the importance of parental acceptance in supporting positive parenting experiences among parents of children with special needs. Similarly, Lorijn, S. J., et al. (2022) reported that parental acceptance is associated with favorable long-term developmental outcomes, including psychological well-being, social development, and educational attainment. The high parental acceptance found in the present study may therefore reflect parents' adaptation to the ongoing demands of caring for their children; however, acceptance should be understood as a dynamic process that may develop through parents' experiences and interactions with their children over time.

The characteristics of the respondents may provide additional context for understanding the high level of parental acceptance observed in this study. Most respondents were female (96%), married (86%), and aged 18–44 years (54%), while 67% were housewives. These characteristics may reflect substantial day-to-day involvement in caregiving and the potential availability of family support, although their direct relationships with parental acceptance were not statistically examined in this study. Previous research has suggested that parental acceptance may be associated with sociodemographic and family-related factors, including age, socioeconomic conditions, and the family environment (Ayar, G., et al., 2024; Prasetyaningrum, S., et al., 2023). The predominance of respondents with monthly incomes below the Banyuwangi Regency Minimum Wage (88%) also highlights the socioeconomic context in which caregiving occurred. Rather than indicating that these characteristics directly determined parental acceptance, the findings suggest that acceptance should be understood within the broader interaction of individual, family, and socioeconomic circumstances surrounding parents of children with special needs.

The positive and statistically significant association between parenting self-efficacy and parental acceptance suggests that parents who perceive themselves as more competent in managing parenting responsibilities also tend to demonstrate greater acceptance of their

child's condition. This finding is consistent with previous evidence indicating that higher PSE is associated with more adaptive parenting responses, including greater confidence in managing caregiving challenges and better emotional adjustment (Fang, Y., et al., 2021; Ronkainen, N., et al., 2023). Rahayu, W. F., & Mangunsong (2020) also demonstrated the relevance of PSE within the relationship between parental acceptance and the socio-emotional development of children with special needs, highlighting the interconnected role of parents' confidence and acceptance in family functioning. From this perspective, parents who feel more capable of responding to their child's needs may be better positioned to manage caregiving demands and develop more adaptive responses toward their child's condition. Given the cross-sectional design, however, this association should be interpreted without implying causality.

Although the association between PSE and parental acceptance was statistically significant, its weak magnitude ($\rho = 0.191$) indicates that parenting self-efficacy alone is unlikely to account for substantial variation in parental acceptance. This finding is important because parental acceptance is a complex process that may be associated with multiple personal, family, social, and contextual factors. Previous research has shown that social support and broader socio-cultural contexts may shape parents' beliefs and adaptation in parenting children with special needs (Fang, et al., 2021). Other studies have highlighted the relevance of family functioning, psychosocial resources, and socioeconomic circumstances in understanding parental adaptation and acceptance (Ma, T., et al., 2024; Salsabila, N. D., & Adrian, 2025). The respondent characteristics identified in this study provide additional context for understanding this complexity, although these characteristics were not tested as predictors of parental acceptance. Therefore, the weak correlation observed in this study may indicate that PSE represents one relevant psychological factor within a broader set of influences associated with parental acceptance rather than being the sole factor related to how parents accept their child's condition.

Taken together, the findings of this study extend the existing evidence on parenting self-efficacy and parental acceptance by examining these constructs among parents of children with diverse special needs within the local socio-cultural context of Banyuwangi, Indonesia. Previous studies have addressed parenting self-efficacy and parental acceptance in different populations and conceptual frameworks, including the mediating role of PSE in children's socio-emotional development (Rahayu, W. F., & Mangunsong, 2020). The present study adds context-specific evidence by demonstrating that PSE is positively associated with acceptance toward the child, while also showing that the magnitude of this association is weak. This finding reinforces the view that parental acceptance is a multidimensional process that cannot be understood solely through parents' confidence in their parenting abilities. Rather, PSE should be considered as one psychological factor operating within a broader personal, family, social, and contextual environment. These findings provide a basis for further investigation of the mechanisms and additional factors associated with parental acceptance among parents of children with special needs in Indonesian settings.

IMPLICATION AND LIMITATIONS

Implication

The findings of this study have implications for nursing practice and family-centered care for children with special needs. Healthcare professionals, particularly community and family nurses, may consider parenting self-efficacy as one of the psychosocial aspects when providing support to parents of children with special needs. Parenting education, psychosocial support, and community-based programs aimed at strengthening parents' confidence in managing caregiving responsibilities may support parental acceptance. Given the weak association identified in this study, however, support strategies should also consider other personal, family, social, and contextual factors that may be related to parental acceptance.

Limitations

This study has several limitations. First, the cross-sectional design allows the identification of associations between parenting self-efficacy and parental acceptance but does not permit conclusions regarding causality or the direction of the relationship. Second, the use of purposive sampling and recruitment of participants from special education schools within a single district may limit the generalizability of the findings to parents of children with special needs in other settings. Third, the sample was predominantly female, which may limit the representation of fathers' parenting experiences. In addition, although respondent characteristics provided relevant contextual information, their associations with parenting self-efficacy and parental acceptance were not specifically examined. Future studies could employ longitudinal or multicenter designs and examine additional personal, family, social, and contextual factors to provide a more comprehensive understanding of parental acceptance among parents of children with special needs.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrated a positive and statistically significant, although weak, association between parenting self-efficacy and parental acceptance among parents of children with special needs. Parents with greater confidence in their parenting abilities tended to report higher levels of acceptance toward their child's condition. However, the weak association suggests that parenting self-efficacy is only one of several factors that may be related to parental acceptance, which is likely shaped by broader personal, family, social, and contextual influences. These findings provide context-specific evidence from Banyuwangi, Indonesia, and support the importance of considering parenting self-efficacy within a broader understanding of parental acceptance among parents of children with special needs.

SUGGESTIONS

Future research should involve more diverse populations across different settings and examine additional psychosocial factors that may be associated with parental acceptance. Longitudinal, qualitative, or multivariable approaches may also provide deeper insight into the factors and processes underlying parental acceptance among parents of children with special needs. Schools and healthcare professionals are encouraged to provide accessible information, counselling, and supportive services that respond to parents' caregiving needs, while recognizing that parenting self-efficacy represents only one of several factors associated with parental acceptance.

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DECLARATION OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflict of interest. The research was conducted independently and objectively without any financial, personal, or institutional relationships that could influence the study results or their interpretation. The funding institution had no involvement in the design, analysis, or decision to publish this research.

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