

Family Developmental Tasks and Socialization Skills in Children with Special Needs

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Abstract

Research Objective: Family developmental tasks during the school-age period include supporting children's intellectual growth, independence, and socialization outside the home. For children with special needs, family support is particularly important because social interaction may be affected by communication, behavioral, or adaptive difficulties. This study aimed to analyze the relationship between family developmental tasks in school-age children and the socialization skills of children with special needs at SLBN 01 North Bengkulu. **Methodology:** A quantitative analytic study with a cross-sectional design was conducted at SLBN 01 North Bengkulu in January 2026. The study involved 26 parents of children with special needs selected using purposive sampling. Data were collected using structured questionnaires measuring family developmental task achievement and children's socialization skills. The data were analyzed using univariate analysis and the Chi-Square test with a significance level of 0.05. **Results:** Most respondents were female (69.2%). Family developmental tasks were fully achieved by 18 respondents (69.2%), and good socialization skills were reported in 17 children (65.4%). Bivariate analysis showed a significant relationship between family developmental tasks and children's socialization skills ($p < 0.001$). **Conclusion:** The achievement of family developmental tasks is significantly associated with better socialization skills among children with special needs. Strengthening family-centered support, parental guidance, and school-family collaboration is recommended to improve social development outcomes.

Keywords: *family developmental tasks; socialization skills; children with special needs; family support; school-age children*

INTRODUCTION

The family is the first and most fundamental environment for children's growth and development. Family members provide emotional attachment, caregiving, social modeling, and stimulation that influence children's physical, cognitive, emotional, and social development. In family nursing, the family is viewed as an important unit of care because health and developmental outcomes are shaped not only by individual characteristics but also by family roles, communication, and support systems (Rohana et al., 2024).

Family development refers to the progressive changes experienced by families across the life cycle. According to Duvall's family development framework, families with school-age children have specific developmental tasks, including helping children socialize outside the family, encouraging intellectual development, providing opportunities for participation in school and community activities, and supporting children's adaptation to wider social environments (Bakri, 2022). These responsibilities are particularly important when the child has special needs, because additional parental guidance and environmental support are often required to develop independence and social competence.

Children with special needs may experience difficulties in social interaction, communication, emotional regulation, understanding social rules, and building peer relationships. These challenges may affect their ability to participate in school activities and interact with teachers, friends, and the wider community. International literature also emphasizes that children with developmental disabilities often require coordinated support from family, school, and health professionals to improve social participation and adaptive functioning (Lord et al., 2020; Hodges et al., 2020).

Parental support is a key factor in strengthening children’s socialization skills. Parents can provide repeated opportunities for communication, teach appropriate social behaviors, reinforce independence, and collaborate with teachers to create consistent expectations between home and school. Previous research in Indonesia has shown that children with special needs benefit from family encouragement and that social skills improve when family support is stronger (Mulyana, 2018). However, local evidence regarding how family developmental task achievement relates to socialization skills among children with special needs remains limited, particularly in special school settings in North Bengkulu.

Based on this gap, this study examined the relationship between family developmental tasks in school-age children and socialization skills of children with special needs at SLBN 01 North Bengkulu. The research hypothesis was: there is a significant relationship between the achievement of family developmental tasks in school-age children and the socialization skills of children with special needs at SLBN 01 North Bengkulu.

METHODS

Study Design, Setting, and Time

This study used a quantitative analytic approach with a cross-sectional design. The design was selected because the independent variable, family developmental tasks in school-age children, and the dependent variable, socialization skills of children with special needs, were measured at one point in time. The study was conducted at SLBN 01 North Bengkulu in January 2026.

Participants and Sampling

The participants were parents of children with special needs who were present at SLBN 01 North Bengkulu during the data collection period. A purposive sampling technique was applied because respondents were selected based on their relevance to the study objectives. The inclusion criteria were parents or primary caregivers of school-age children with special needs enrolled at SLBN 01 North Bengkulu, willingness to participate, and ability to complete the questionnaire. Parents who declined participation or submitted incomplete questionnaire responses were excluded.

A total of 26 parents met the inclusion criteria and participated in this study. The sample size represents the accessible respondents who fulfilled the criteria during the study period. Although the number of participants was adequate for a preliminary school-based analysis, the small sample size is acknowledged as a limitation and may restrict the generalizability of the findings.

Operational Definitions

Family developmental tasks in school-age children referred to the family’s ability to support children’s school adjustment, socialization outside the home, intellectual development, independence, and participation in age-appropriate activities. Socialization skills of children with special needs referred to children’s ability to communicate, interact with peers and adults, follow social rules, adapt to school activities, and participate in social situations.

Variable	Operational Category	Scoring Note
Family developmental tasks	Fully achieved/partially achieved	Score reaches the predetermined cut-off. Insert exact cut-off value.
Socialization skills	Good/adequate	Score reaches the predetermined cut-off. Insert exact cut-off value.

Research Instruments

Data were collected using structured questionnaires consisting of respondent characteristics, family developmental tasks, and socialization skills of children with special needs. The questionnaire used a Guttman scale format with dichotomous response options to obtain clear responses from participants. The family developmental task questionnaire measured the extent to which parents supported school-age developmental responsibilities, while the socialization questionnaire measured children's ability to interact, communicate, and adapt socially.

The questionnaire development process should be reported transparently. In the revised manuscript, the instrument is described as being developed based on family developmental task concepts and literature on children with special needs. The questionnaire should be reviewed for content validity by relevant experts and tested for reliability before data collection. The final manuscript should include the actual validity and reliability results, such as item-validity coefficients and reliability coefficient values, if available.

Data Collection Procedure

Before data collection, the researcher obtained permission from the school and coordinated with school staff. Eligible parents were approached while they were dropping off or waiting for their children. The researcher explained the study objectives, voluntary nature of participation, confidentiality, and the right to withdraw. After informed consent was obtained, respondents completed the questionnaires. The researcher checked the completeness of responses before data entry.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using univariate and bivariate analysis. Univariate analysis was used to describe respondent characteristics, the achievement of family developmental tasks, and children's socialization skills using frequencies and percentages. Bivariate analysis was conducted using the Chi-Square test to examine the relationship between family developmental tasks and children's socialization skills. The level of significance was set at $\alpha = 0.05$. Because the sample size was small, the results should be interpreted cautiously, and future studies may consider Fisher's exact test when expected cell counts are low.

Ethical Considerations

This study was conducted according to ethical principles for research involving human participants, including respect for autonomy, confidentiality, beneficence, and non-maleficence. Respondents were informed about the study and participated voluntarily. Personal identities were not reported in the manuscript.

RESULTS

Respondent Characteristics

This study involved 26 parents of children with special needs at SLBN 01 North Bengkulu. The majority of respondents were female.

Table 1. Description of Respondent Characteristics Based on Gender

Gender	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Female	18	69.2
Male	8	30.8
Total	26	100.0

Based on Table 1, most respondents were female, with 18 respondents (69.2%), while 8 respondents (30.8%) were male.

Achievement of Family Developmental Tasks

Table 2. Achievement of Family Developmental Tasks for School-Age Children

Family developmental tasks	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Partially achieved	8	30.8
Fully achieved	18	69.2
Total	26	100.0

Table 2 shows that most respondents had fully achieved family developmental tasks, with 18 respondents (69.2%). Meanwhile, 8 respondents (30.8%) had partially achieved these tasks.

Socialization Skills of Children with Special Needs

Table 3. Socialization Skills of Children with Special Needs

Socialization skills	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Adequate	9	34.6
Good	17	65.4
Total	26	100.0

Based on Table 3, most children with special needs had good socialization skills, with 17 children (65.4%), while 9 children (34.6%) had adequate socialization skills.

Relationship Between Family Developmental Tasks and Socialization Skills

Table 4. Relationship Between Family Developmental Tasks and Socialization Skills

Family developmental tasks	Adequate n (%)	Good n (%)	Total n (%)	p-value	Interpretation
Partially achieved	7 (87.5)	1 (12.5)	8 (100.0)	<0.001	Significant
Fully achieved	2 (11.1)	16 (88.9)	18 (100.0)	<0.001	Significant
Total	9 (34.6)	17 (65.4)	26 (100.0)		

Table 4 shows that among respondents whose family developmental tasks were fully achieved, 16 respondents (88.9%) reported good socialization skills in their children. In contrast, among respondents whose family developmental tasks were only partially achieved, 7 respondents (87.5%) reported adequate socialization skills. The Chi-Square test showed $p < 0.001$, indicating a statistically significant relationship between family developmental tasks and socialization skills of children with special needs at SLBN 01 North Bengkulu.

DISCUSSION

Family Developmental Tasks in School-Age Children

The findings showed that most families had fully achieved family developmental tasks for school-age children. This indicates that many parents had carried out roles related to supporting children's adaptation to school, encouraging learning activities, and facilitating social interaction outside the home. In the context of children with special needs, the achievement of family

developmental tasks may require greater parental involvement because children often need structured guidance, repetition, and emotional support to adapt to social situations.

This finding is consistent with family development theory, which emphasizes that families with school-age children are expected to support children's broader social participation and learning experiences (Bakri, 2022). It also supports previous findings that family support is associated with better social skill development among children with special needs (Mulyana, 2018). International studies on developmental disabilities also highlight the importance of coordinated family and school support in improving adaptive and social functioning (Lord et al., 2020; Hodges et al., 2020).

Socialization Skills of Children with Special Needs

Most children in this study demonstrated good socialization skills. This result suggests that many children were able to communicate, interact, and participate socially within their school environment. However, a proportion of children still demonstrated only adequate socialization skills, indicating that some children may require additional support to improve peer interaction, communication, emotional regulation, and adaptation to daily school activities.

Children with special needs often face barriers in understanding social cues, maintaining conversations, and building stable peer relationships. Therefore, socialization skills should be supported through collaboration among parents, teachers, nurses, and other professionals. School-based routines and family reinforcement at home are important because children benefit from consistent expectations across environments (Selian, 2024; Rahamadhania, 2025).

Relationship Between Family Developmental Tasks and Socialization Skills

The study found a significant relationship between family developmental tasks and the socialization skills of children with special needs. Families that fully achieved developmental tasks were more likely to have children with good socialization skills. This finding supports the assumption that family roles, guidance, and involvement are important determinants of children's social development.

Family developmental tasks involve more than fulfilling basic physical needs. They include providing opportunities for children to interact with others, encouraging independence, supporting school participation, and helping children manage daily challenges. For children with special needs, these roles may directly influence confidence, communication, and social participation. The finding is also consistent with previous studies showing that parental emotional support, open communication, and participation in school or extracurricular activities are associated with better social development among children with special needs (Fadila, 2025; Nurhayati, 2023).

The results have practical implications for family-centered nursing and special education. Nurses and educators should involve parents in socialization training, provide health education about family developmental tasks, and promote school-family collaboration. Family-centered interventions can help parents understand their developmental roles and provide structured support that strengthens children's social participation.

Study Limitations

This study had several limitations. First, the sample size was small and included only 26 respondents from one special school, which limits the generalizability of the findings. Second, data were collected using parent-reported questionnaires, which may be influenced by social desirability or recall bias. Third, the cross-sectional design does not allow causal inference. Future studies should include larger samples from multiple special schools, use validated instruments with clearly reported

psychometric properties, and consider mixed-method or longitudinal designs to better understand family processes and child socialization outcomes.

CONCLUSION

This study showed that most families of children with special needs at SLBN 01 North Bengkulu had fully achieved family developmental tasks for school-age children, and most children demonstrated good socialization skills. There was a significant relationship between family developmental tasks and the socialization skills of children with special needs. These findings indicate that family roles, responsibilities, and support are important factors in promoting children's social development. Strengthening family-centered nursing education and collaboration between schools and parents is recommended to improve socialization outcomes among children with special needs.

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Informed Consent Statement: Informed consent was obtained from all respondents involved in this study before data collection.

Data Availability Statement: The data presented in this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request. The data are not publicly available due to ethical and privacy considerations.

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