

Parental Acceptance of Children with Intellectual Disabilities at SLB X, North Lampung

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Abstrak: Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui proses penerimaan orang tua terhadap anak dengan hambatan intelektual di SLB X Lampung Utara. Penelitian menggunakan pendekatan deskriptif kuantitatif dengan metode survei terhadap orang tua anak dengan hambatan intelektual. Data dikumpulkan melalui kuesioner dan diisi oleh salah satu orang tua. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan mayoritas orang tua berusia 30–40 tahun ke atas, dengan pendidikan terakhir SMA dan sebagian besar sebagai ibu rumah tangga. Sebanyak 65% orang tua mengalami syok dan bingung, 30% kecewa, 10% marah, dan menyalahkan diri. Namun, saat ini 100% orang tua sudah berusaha menerima dengan ikhlas. Faktor keyakinan diri sendiri (80%) menjadi faktor yang paling berpengaruh terhadap penerimaan orang tua. Sedangkan pandangan masyarakat yang buruk terhadap anak (30%) menjadi faktor penghambat terbesar yang dialami orang tua. Berpasrah kepada Tuhan dipilih 40% orang tua sebagai upaya menerima kondisi anak. Sebagian besar orang tua (85%) pernah mendapatkan stigma terhadap kondisi kebutuhan khusus anak mereka. Sebanyak 80% orang tua menjawab stigma paling banyak didapat dari orang yang mereka tidak kenal. Secara umum, orang tua memiliki harapan yang besar dan realistis terhadap masa depan anak. Sehingga dapat disimpulkan bahwa orang tua melalui masa yang sulit dalam penerimaan, tetapi usaha dan dukungan sekitar membantu mereka dalam penerimaan dan penyesuaian diri terhadap anak dengan hambatan intelektual.

Kata kunci: Penerimaan, Orang Tua, Tunagrahita, anak dengan hambatan intelektual

Abstrak: This research aims to determine the acceptance of parents towards children with intellectual disabilities at SLB X Lampung Utara. The study used a quantitative descriptive approach with a survey method on parents of children with intellectual disabilities. Data were collected through questionnaires and filled out by one of the parents. The results showed that the majority of parents were aged 30–40 years and above, with a high school education and most of them were housewives. As many as 65% of parents experienced shock and confusion, 30% were disappointed, 10% were angry, and blamed themselves. However, currently 100% of parents have tried to accept it sincerely. Self-belief (80%) is the most influential factor in parental acceptance. Meanwhile, society's negative views of children (30%) are the biggest inhibiting factor experienced by parents. Surrendering to God was chosen by 40% of parents as an effort to accept their child's condition. Most parents (85%) have experienced stigma regarding their child's special needs condition. As many as 80% of parents answered that the stigma was mostly obtained from people they did not know. In general, parents have high and realistic hopes for their child's future. So it can be concluded that parents go through a difficult time in acceptance, but the efforts and support from those around them help them in accepting and adjusting to children with intellectual disabilities.

Keywords: Acceptance, Parents, Intellectual Disabilities



INTRODUCTION

The presence of a child is a great hope for a family. However, sometimes a child experiences developmental challenges that require special attention from parents. One such challenge is intellectual disabilities, commonly referred to as "tunagrahita." Children with intellectual disabilities face limitations in intelligence or comprehension, which impact their physical development and social life (Simamora, 2021).

According to the APA in DSM-5 (APA, 2013), intellectual disability is a developmental disorder that affects conceptual, social, and practical intellectual functioning and adaptive behavior. Children with intellectual disabilities struggle with academics and abstract thinking (Gargiulo & Bouck, 2017). Furthermore, limitations in adaptive behavior become apparent when children engage in social interactions, communication, and daily activities (Phillips, 2013).

Having a child with an intellectual disability presents a significant challenge for parents. Often, when parents are presented with a child with special needs, particularly intellectual challenges, they initially experience feelings of anger, frustration, and disappointment. These emotions may lead them to unconsciously take out their frustrations on the child, which can result in depression as they struggle to determine the best course of action (Sesa & Yarni, 2022). Eventually, in the final stage, parents come to fully accept their child, hoping that they will become independent (Wahyuni et al., 2022). However, parental acceptance of children with special needs is a complex process that varies from person to person. The way a family manages these challenges depends on various factors such as personality, support systems, education, financial situation, marital relationships, family cohesion, and the severity of the child's special needs (Kandel & Merrick, 2007).

Parental adjustment to raising a child with special needs is a lifelong process (Rahayuningsih & Andriani, 2011). Moreover, parental adjustment and acceptance play a crucial role in the child's overall development. Acceptance within a family helps foster a child's mental well-being, independence, and socialization skills while also building their self-confidence through support from their closest family members. If parents struggle to accept their child's condition, the child may feel rejected and neglected, leading to low self-esteem (Firmawati & Ayu, 2022). Parental rejection significantly affects a child's emotional stability during adolescence and may hinder their ability to develop their full potential.

Parental acceptance of a child with an intellectual disability provides the child with a sense of "strength" and self-confidence, enabling them to develop their abilities and pursue their interests. This, in turn, increases their chances of becoming independent and reducing dependence on parental or external assistance (Zahrah, 2019).

Parents of children with intellectual disabilities need support from family and close relatives to help them accept and educate their children properly (Faradina, 2016). Parental acceptance is also influenced by professional support (Anan & Yamaguchi, 2007), such as assistance from medical professionals, psychologists, and teachers. Social support also plays a role in parental acceptance of children with intellectual disabilities (Badriah et al., 2024). Social support in the form of advice, suggestions, and concern from the community can help parents manage their child's condition (Amalina et al., 2023).

The issue of parental acceptance of children with intellectual disabilities became an interesting topic for this study after visiting a special needs school (SLB) in North Lampung. Based on pre-research observations at an SLB in North

Lampung, approximately 20 parents have children with intellectual disabilities at the elementary, junior high, and senior high school levels. The researcher observed that many parents still seemed to struggle with accepting their child's condition. This assumption was supported by preliminary interviews with teachers, who stated that parental acceptance remained a challenge. This was evident in instances where parents appeared to treat their children differently, expressed confusion in handling them, confided in teachers about their difficulties, and frequently complained about their child's condition.

Parental acceptance is crucial in helping children reach their full potential. The issue of parental acceptance at this school sparked the researcher's interest in exploring the topic further. Therefore, based on these initial findings, this study aims to understand how parents accept children with intellectual disabilities at SLB X in North Lampung. The research seeks to answer the question: "How do parents accept their children with intellectual disabilities, and what are their hopes for their children?". This study is expected to explore parental acceptance, as well as the factors that facilitate or hinder it. It is also hoped that the findings will raise awareness among parents and the community about the importance of acceptance and support for children with intellectual disabilities, while also reducing stigma and discrimination against both parents and children with intellectual disabilities.

METHOD

This study employs a quantitative descriptive approach using a survey method. The research was conducted in December 2024. Data collection was carried out through a Google Form questionnaire to identify the level of parental acceptance of children with intellectual disabilities. The research subjects included all parents of children with intellectual disabilities from SDLB (Elementary Level), SMPLB (Junior High Level), and SMALB (Senior High Level) at SLB Negeri Lampung Utara. The questionnaire was designed to be anonymous, allowing parents to respond comfortably without hesitation.

The study used a questionnaire instrument designed to determine whether and how parents accept their children with intellectual disabilities. In the questionnaire, researchers provided questions regarding respondents' background data, consisting of seven questions covering general information such as name, gender, age, religion, education level, and occupation. There were also twelve questions related to the child's disability and how parents perceive and accept their child, along with ten questions about the factors that hinder and support parental acceptance. To conclude the questionnaire, researchers included eight questions regarding parents' expectations for their children with intellectual disabilities.

The survey data will be analyzed to calculate the percentage of responses for each question. Based on the findings, the researcher will conclude the responses to describe whether and how parents have accepted their children with intellectual disabilities (Maidiana, 2021).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. Parents Background

Based on the questionnaire distributed in December 2024, data was collected from 20 parents (either father or mother) of children with intellectual disabilities at SLB X Lampung Utara. It was found that the majority of parents had at least completed high school, and most of them were housewives. Additionally, 80% of the

questionnaires were answered by mothers who had carried children with intellectual disabilities, meaning that the responses regarding acceptance tend to reflect the perspective of mothers rather than fathers. More detailed data can be seen in Table 1 below.

Tabel 1. The Distribution of Parents' Demographic Background (n =20)

categories	choises	frequence	precentage
Roles	Father	4	20%
	Mother	16	80%
Age	20-30 y.o	3	15%
	31-40 y.o	8	40%
	> 40 y.o	9	45%
Last Education	Elementary School	1	5%
	Junior High School	0	0%
	Senior High School	6	30%
	Diploma	4	20%
	Bachelor(S1)	7	35%
	Magister/Doctoral(S2/S3)	2	10%
Profession	Housewif es	10	50%
	Employee	2	10%
	Sales	2	10%
	Teacher	1	5%
	Farmer	1	5%
	Entrepreneur	4	20%

B. Child's Condition

Referring to Table 2, the majority of parents realized that their child had an intellectual disability between the ages of 1-5 years, before they entered school age. This indicates that most parents who participated in the survey were already aware of their child's condition during early development. It also suggests that before enrolling their children in school, parents had already gone through a long process of accepting their child's special needs.

Based on the levels of intellectual disability, 45% of children were classified as having mild intellectual disabilities, followed by 25% with moderate disabilities, and 30% with severe disabilities. This data shows that the majority of children with intellectual disabilities fall into the mild category.

Tabel 2. Keadaan Anak dengan Hambatan Intelektual [n=20]

Categories	Choises	Frequence	Percentage
Age	4-6 y.o	3	15%
	7-12 y.o	8	40%
	13-17 y.o	4	20%
	> 17 y.o	5	25%
Level of Intellectual Disability	Mild	9	45%

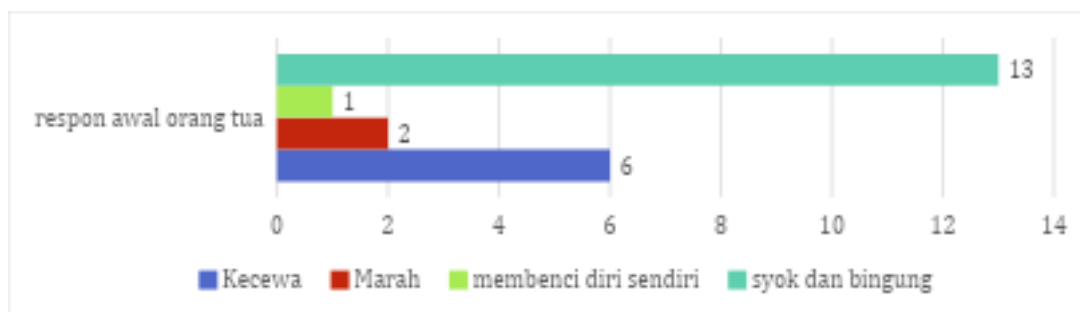
	Moderate	6	30%
	Severe	5	25%
Time of recognizing the child's intellectual disability	During pregnancy	1	5%
	At birth	4	20%
	Under 1 year old	2	10%
	1-5 years old	8	40%
	5-10 years old	4	20%
	Above 10 years old	1	5%

C. Parental Acceptance

Picture 1 illustrates parents' initial responses upon discovering that their child has special needs. A total of 13 parents (65%) reported feeling shocked and confused when they learned about their child's intellectual disability. Meanwhile, 6 parents (30%) admitted to feeling disappointed, 2 parents (10%) felt angry, and 1 parent (5%) experienced self-hatred. No parent responded with happiness or joy upon receiving the news about their child's condition. Emotional responses such as sadness, disappointment, or confusion are common reactions when facing this reality.

Parents' initial reactions of shock and anxiety reflect the typical acceptance process, which often begins with a phase of denial. These negative emotional responses align with Simamora's (2021) study, which found that parents experience a range of reactions—including anger, denial, or disappointment—before fully accepting their child's condition. The initial emotional response of parents also aligns with Gargiulo's theory on parental acceptance of a child's condition.

Generally, parents go through an initial stage of shock, followed by denial, guilt, anger, and sadness before they eventually adjust (Kirk et al., 2009). Gargiulo (2012) describes the acceptance process in three phases: the primary phase (shock, denial, grief, and depression), the secondary phase (ambivalence, guilt, anger, and shame), and the tertiary phase (weighing options, adapting, and acceptance). The fact that most parents reported feelings of shock, anger, and guilt indicates that they were primarily in the primary and secondary phases upon learning about their child's condition. This supports Gargiulo's (2012) view that these phases take time, vary from person to person, and do not necessarily follow a linear progression.



Picture 1. Parents' Initial Response to Their Child's Intellectual Disability Condition

Table 3 illustrates the emotional state of parents throughout the process of accepting their child's condition. A total of 55% of parents reported experiencing extreme difficulty, while 45% stated they faced considerable difficulty in accepting their child's initial condition. Notably, no parents indicated that they had no difficulty at all. This finding reinforces the fact that every respondent faced challenges in accepting their child's condition. These results align with Picture 1, which shows that parents initially reacted with anxiety, confusion, anger, disappointment, or self-blame upon learning about their child's condition. The emotional turmoil parents experience highlights the complexity of the acceptance process and underscores the significant psychological impact of having a child with an intellectual disability.

Table 3. Parents' Acceptance

No.	Categories	Statement	n	%
1.	Parents who had difficulty accepting their child's condition initially	No difficulty	0	
		Some difficulty	9	45%
		Significant difficulty	11	55%
2.	Parents' readiness to accept their child's condition	Fully prepared under any circumstances	1	5%
		Prepared due to circumstances	19	95%
		Not prepared	0	-
3.	Parental feelings of discomfort or shame when their child's condition is recognized by others	Attempting to act normally	6	30%
		Continues to feel ashamed	0	-
		Striving to take pride in their child's condition	14	70%
4.	Frequency of parents comparing their child to others	Frequently	15	75%
		Occasionally	5	25%
		Never	0	-
5.	Experience of guilt regarding their child's condition	Continues to feel guilty	4	20%
		Never experienced guilt	5	25%
		Previously experienced guilt but no longer does	11	55%
6.	Degree of parental acceptance of their child's condition	Fully accepting with sincerity	20	100%
		Accepting reluctantly	0	
		Unable to accept	0	

Parents' readiness to accept their child's condition shows that 95% felt prepared due to their circumstances. This suggests that parents' acceptance of their child's special needs developed after they became aware of the child's challenges. Only one parent reported being prepared for any condition from the beginning. Initial parental readiness to accept any condition before the child is born can significantly impact their level of acceptance.

A total of 70% of parents strive to take pride in their child's condition. However, 75% still frequently compare their child to others. Additionally, feelings of guilt are common among parents of children with special needs. Table 3 reveals that 55% of

parents had previously experienced guilt but no longer feel that way, while 20% still struggle with guilt.

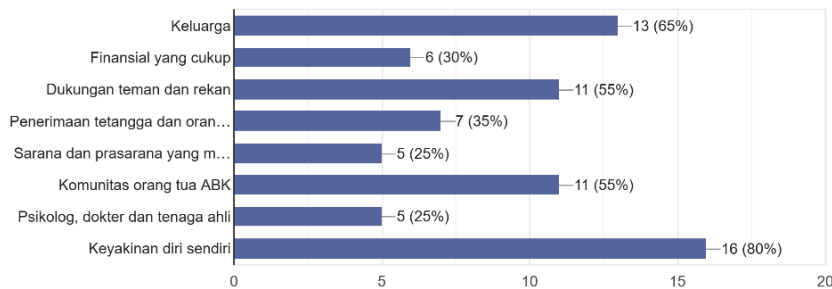
According to the responses collected at the time of the survey, 100% of parents stated that they had fully accepted their child's condition with sincerity. This finding highlights that while parents initially went through a difficult period, they made efforts to prepare themselves after learning about their child's condition and worked towards acceptance and pride. Although some parents still compare their child to others or experience lingering guilt, they continue striving to accept their child's condition.

This is a natural process, as parental acceptance and adjustment to their child's condition is a lifelong journey. Even parents who have reached the stage of acceptance may experience moments of sadness, denial, or anger from time to time (Gargiulo, 2012).

D. Factors Influencing and Impeding Parental Acceptance

Parents do not immediately accept their child's condition. As shown in Picture 1 and Table 3, they go through a difficult period of adaptation. This process is not instantaneous and is influenced by various factors. Picture 2 illustrates the factors that support parents in accepting their child's condition.

Hal apa saja yang mendukung Anda dalam menerima kondisi kebutuhan khusus anak? (jawaban boleh lebih dari 1)
20 jawaban



Picture 2. Factors Supporting Parental Acceptance

Picture 2 shows that self-belief is the most significant factor in parents' acceptance of their child's condition, with 80% of parents selecting this factor. Other supportive factors include family support (65%), support from friends (55%), and the presence of a parent community (55%). Picture 2 illustrates that acceptance primarily stems from parents' own belief in accepting their child's condition, or internal factors. However, support from close individuals such as family, friends, and communities serves as an essential reinforcement. This aligns with the perspective that a family's approach to handling challenges, including raising a child with special needs, is influenced by internal factors such as parental personality, family cohesion, education level, and financial stability (Kandel & Merrick, 2007). Table 4 further explores the supporting factors that help parents accept their child's condition.

Table 4. Supporting Factors for Parents in Accepting Their Child's Condition

Categories	Choises	Frequence	Percentage
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Individuals providing emotional and practical support	Parents	8	40%
	Spouse	10	50%
	Grandparents	5	25%
	Siblings	11	55%
	Close friends	9	45%
	Neighbors	4	20%
	Colleagues	4	20%
	Parent support groups	2	10%
Parental efforts to foster acceptance (jawaban responden dapat lebih dari 1)	Reflection and self-reassurance	7	35%
	Prayer and spiritual surrender	15	75%
	Reading literature on similar conditions	14	70%
	Attending seminars and workshops	9	45%
	Consulting a psychologist	9	45%
	Joining parent support groups for children with special needs	12	60%
	Seeking assistance from extended family	3	15%
	Enrolling the child in therapy or school	16	80%
Watching inspirational stories on social media	8	40%	

Table 4 presents responses regarding who supports parents in accepting their child's condition. The results indicate that 50% of parents received support from their spouse, 55% from siblings, 40% from their own parents, and 45% from close friends. The spouse plays a crucial role in accepting the child's condition, as raising a child with special needs can cause tension and stress within the household for some families (Gargiulo, 2012). A lack of spousal support can lead to marital issues, which may affect the acceptance process for the other parent. Additionally, family members and relatives also play a significant role in helping parents accept their child's condition. Without support from close individuals, parents may struggle emotionally and in other aspects of caregiving.

Parents' efforts to support their child are also reflected in their responses in Table 4, where they were allowed to select more than one option. Taking their child to therapy or school was chosen by 80% of respondents, followed by 75% who relied on faith and surrendering to God. Enrolling a child in therapy or school indicates that parents hope for their child's development and are actively working to maximize their potential. Bringing the child to therapy or school reflects the family's educational role. Additionally, parental knowledge, watching stories of others in similar situations, and engaging with communities facing the same challenges also contribute to acceptance.

When asked to select only one of these responses, the most common answer was that 40% of parents chose praying and surrendering to God. This aligns with a study conducted in Tangerang, which found that religiosity plays a role in parental acceptance of children with special needs (Rahmawati, 2018).



Picture 3. Key Factors Supporting Parents in Accepting Their Child's Condition

Aside from supportive factors, this study also explores the obstacles that hinder parents from accepting their child's condition, as shown in Table 5. The three most common responses—where parents could select more than one—were a lack of knowledge about their child's condition (50%), feelings of guilt (40%), and negative societal perceptions (30%). This indicates that barriers to acceptance stem from both internal struggles and external environmental factors.

Social support is known to influence how parents respond to their child's condition and their efforts to accept it (Amalina et al., 2023). When asked to choose the biggest obstacle to acceptance, the most selected response was negative societal views (30%), followed by a lack of knowledge (25%) and insufficient information about psychological services. This indirectly highlights that, aside from parents' mental state and awareness, negative societal perceptions significantly impact their ability to accept their child's condition. However, social support in the form of emotional, informational, and material assistance can be beneficial for parents of children with special needs (Widhiati et al., 2022).

Support from family and friends enables parents to meet their child's needs (Kausar et al., 2003). A study in Turkey found that parents of children with intellectual disabilities often do not receive sufficient support from family, social circles, or the community, leading to feelings of stigma (Duran & Ergün, 2018). This finding aligns with Table 5, which shows that stigma and a lack of family support can hinder parental acceptance.

Tabel 5. Factors Hindering Parental Acceptance

Categories	Choses	Frequence	Precentage
Barriers to acceptance of the child's condition (jawaban dapat lebih dari 1)	Lack of family support	3	15%
	Unsupportive friends	1	5%
	Negative societal perceptions	6	30%
	Feelings of guilt over the child's condition	8	40%
	Insufficient knowledge regarding the child's condition	10	50%

	Limited access to psychological services	5	25%
The most significant barrier to acceptance	Negative societal perceptions	6	30%
	Insufficient knowledge about the child's condition	5	25%
	Limited access to psychological services	4	20%
	Feelings of guilt regarding the child's condition	3	15%
	Lack of family support	2	10%
	Unsupportive friends	-	

E. Stigma Experienced by Parents

Stigma toward children with special needs (ABK) remains a significant issue, affecting not only the children themselves but also their parents and families. About 85% of parents have experienced mockery and societal stigma. This aligns with the findings in Table 5, which indicate that negative public perception plays a role in hindering parental acceptance. These results reinforce previous research showing that stigma is still frequently attached to parents and families of children with intellectual disabilities (Mitter et al., 2019).

According to Table 6, the majority of stigma comes from strangers (90%), followed by neighbors (45%). The lower percentages of stigma from spouses, siblings, relatives, parents, and coworkers suggest that stigma is more commonly received from those who do not have a close relationship with the parents. This indicates that the less familiar someone is with the family, the more likely they are to make stigmatizing judgments. Stigma from strangers is assumed to stem from a lack of awareness and empathy toward children with intellectual disabilities. This is consistent with previous studies that found negative perceptions or stigma toward ABK are influenced by limited knowledge, low empathy, and a lack of social interaction with them (Nursholichah et al., 2024).

How parents respond to stigma is usually influenced by their level of acceptance. Responses in Table 3 show that all parents have made efforts to wholeheartedly accept their child's condition. This is also reflected in how they handle stigma—85% choose to ignore it, while the remaining 15% feel saddened but try not to take it to heart. In line with the factors that hinder acceptance, 60% of parents feel that social stigma has a significant impact on their acceptance process, 30% feel unaffected, and 10% consider it highly influential.

Tabel 6. Stigma experienced by parents

Categories	Choses	Frequence	Precentage
Parents who have experienced stigma regarding their child's condition	Yes	17	85%
	No	3	15%
Pihak yang memberikan stigma dan penolakan terhadap kondisi anak (jawaban dapat lebih dari 1)	Parents	1	5%
	Spouse	1	5%

	Sibling	1	5%
	Close friends	2	10%
	Neighbors	9	45%
	Colleagues	1	5%
	Strangers	18	90%
Parental reactions to stigma	Feeling sad, disappointed, crying, and self-blame	-	
	Feeling sad but trying not to take it personally	3	15%
	Ignoring societal perceptions and focusing on their child	17	85%
Influence of social stigma on parental acceptance	No impact	6	30%
	Somewhat impactful	12	60%
	Highly impactful	2	10%

Stigma influences how society perceives children with intellectual disabilities, which in turn affects parents' ability to accept their child's special needs. These findings further reinforce the idea that community perception and social support play a crucial role in helping parents embrace their child's condition. Negative stigma can lead to feelings of guilt, shame, denial, anger, and disappointment, all of which hinder parental acceptance. However, a strong sense of acceptance allows parents to better understand themselves, take responsibility, practice patience, and remain calm when facing challenges related to their child's condition (Faradina, 2016).

F. Parental Expectations

Hope is recognized as an important factor and a strong predictor of parental acceptance of their child's disability (Juvonen & Leskinen, 1994). Acceptance is generally linked to parental expectations. When parents have accepted their child's condition, they tend to have realistic expectations. In contrast, parents who have not yet fully accepted their child's condition may either have overly ambitious hopes or, conversely, lose hope entirely. Table 7 presents parental expectations for their children. Overall, it is evident that parents have high hopes for societal acceptance of their children, their independence, social skills, talent development, and basic academic learning. These expectations are considered realistic and are believed by parents to be achievable through their child's education and development.

Table 7. Parental Expectations

Parental Expectations	Strongly Hope		Moderately Hope		Slightly Hope	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
1 Child being accepted and respected by society	19	95%			1	5%

2	Child achieving independence in daily activities	19	95%			1	5%
3	Child developing strong social skills	18	90%			2	10%
4	Child enhancing personal talents and interests	18	90%			2	10%
5	Child acquiring fundamental academic skills	19	95%			1	5%
6	Child obtaining employment and living independently	13	65%	4	20%	3	15%
7	Increased community support for families with children with intellectual disabilities	15	75%	3	15%	2	10%
8	More training programs for parents	19	95%	1	5%		5%

Parents generally have high expectations for their child's functional skills, such as independence, socialization, basic academics, and developing personal interests. However, responses regarding future employment and independence vary. About 65% of parents highly hope their child will secure a job, 20% are moderately hopeful, and 15% have low expectations. These responses indicate that some parents still feel pessimistic about their child's ability to become independent. The availability of social support resources and shared experiences significantly impact parental resilience and expectations (Kausar et al., 2003). This is closely related to the need for community support and programs that can help parents better understand and manage their child's intellectual disability.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results and discussion, it was found that parents face challenges in accepting children with intellectual disabilities at SLB X Lampung Utara. All parents have eventually accepted their child's condition, but the process was not instantaneous. Initially, 65% of parents experienced shock and confusion, 30% felt disappointed, 10% were angry, and 5% blamed themselves. Self-belief and support from spouses, family, and friends were the most influential factors in parental acceptance. On the other hand, negative societal perceptions of children (30%) and a lack of knowledge (25%) were the biggest obstacles parents faced. The study also found that 85% of parents had experienced stigma regarding their child's special needs, with 80% stating that most of the stigma came from strangers. Overall, parents hold high yet realistic hopes for their child's future. The findings indicate that parental acceptance is supported by awareness and self-motivation, which are influenced by how close relatives and society respond to the child's condition. The researcher suggests that the community should work towards increasing acceptance and reducing stigma to support parents in embracing their child's condition.

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