

# CHILDREN WITH AUTISM: THE EFFECTS OF PSYCHOSOCIAL DEVELOPMENT, NUTRITIONAL STATUS, AND FAMILY ACCEPTANCE, ON LEARNING ACHIEVEMENT

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## ABSTRACT

**Background:** Children with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASDs) are considered by many to be lifelong conditions. Previous studies have reported relative weaknesses associated with ASDs including social and communication deficits, circumscribed interests, difficulties with inferring meaning, comprehension of ambiguity and abstract concepts, as well as the ability to discriminate relevant from irrelevant information. However, research on the factors affecting the learning ability in autistic children is lacking in Indonesia. This study aimed to analyze the effects of psychosocial development, nutritional status, and family acceptance, on learning achievement in children with autism, in Jember, East Java.

**Subjects and Method:** This was a cross-sectional study conducted at Special Elementary School in Jember, East Java. A total sample of 50 autistic students was collected for this study by exhaustive sampling. The dependent variable was learning achievement. The independent variables were nutritional status, psychosocial development, and family acceptance. The data were collected by questionnaire and analyzed by path analysis.

**Results:** Learning achievement was directly affected by psychosocial development ( $b = 0.36$ ;  $SE = 0.13$ ;  $p = 0.005$ ) and nutritional status ( $b = 1.42$ ;  $SE = 0.65$ ;  $p = 0.029$ ). Nutritional status was positively affected by strong family acceptance ( $b = 0.07$ ;  $SE = 0.01$ ;  $p < 0.001$ ).

**Conclusion:** Learning achievement of autistic children is affected by psychosocial development and nutritional status.

**Keywords:** learning achievement, psychosocial development, nutritional status, family acceptance.

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