

The effect of social support on the self-efficacy of parents of children with autism through the mediation of emotional intelligence

Aini Shafra Anwar¹, Salamiah Sari Dewi², Suaidah Lubis³

^{1,2,3}Master of Psychology, Universitas Medan Area, Medan, Indonesia

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received Feb 15, 2026

Revised Feb 20, 2026

Accepted Feb 27, 2026

Keywords:

Emotional Intelligence
Parents of Children with
Autism
Self-Confidence
Social Support

ABSTRACT

Parenting a child with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) presents unique challenges that can lower parents' self-confidence and self-efficacy. While social support is considered a crucial external factor, its effectiveness in boosting self-confidence often depends on internal factors, such as emotional intelligence. The purpose of this study was to examine the mediating role of emotional intelligence in the relationship between social support and self-confidence in parents of children with autism. This study used a quantitative approach with a purposive sampling technique. Data were collected from respondents, parents of children with autism, using instruments such as the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS). Data analysis was performed using Structural Equation Modeling with Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS). The results of a study of 153 parents of autistic children showed that social support influenced self-confidence by 51.7% with a p value <0.001. Social support influenced emotional intelligence by 57.3% with a p value <0.001, and emotional intelligence influenced self-confidence by 36.5% with a p value <0.001. Thus, it can be concluded that increasing social support can increase the self-confidence of parents of autistic children through their emotional intelligence.

This is an open access article under the [CC BY-NC](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/) license.



Corresponding Author:

Aini Shafra Anwar,

Master of Psychology,

Universitas Medan Area,

Jl. Setia Budi No 79 B / Jalan Sei Serayu Nomor 70 A, Medan, 20112, Sumatera Utara, Indonesia

Email: ainianwar236@gmail.com

INTRODUCTION

Parents of children with autism often face various complex challenges in the parenting process. These challenges include the need for long-term therapy, relatively high treatment costs, limited access to information, and social stigma from the community. This situation can cause considerable psychological pressure for parents, thereby affecting their emotional well-being and their ability to perform their parenting roles optimally. One important psychological aspect in raising children with autism is parental self-confidence. Self-confidence reflects an individual's belief in their ability to face challenges, make decisions, and carry out responsibilities. Parents who have high self-

confidence tend to be more adaptive in dealing with their children's conditions, more active in seeking solutions, and able to maintain an optimistic attitude.

Conversely, low self-confidence in parents of children with autism can have a negative impact on the quality of parenting. Parents may feel hesitant in making decisions, experience stress easily, and lack confidence in their ability to support their child's development. These conditions have the potential to affect the parent-child relationship and the effectiveness of interventions provided to children with autism. According to Lauster (2002), self-confidence is an individual's attitude or belief in their own abilities so that they are not easily influenced by others, are able to act according to their will, are optimistic, and take responsibility for the decisions they make. A factor that is thought to play an important role in increasing parents' self-confidence is social support.

Social support includes emotional, informational, instrumental, and appreciative assistance that individuals receive from family, friends, community, and professionals. This support serves as a source of psychological strength in facing life's pressures. According to Sarafino (1998), social support is the comfort, attention, appreciation, or assistance that a person receives from other people or groups, which makes the individual feel loved, valued, cared for, and part of a social network. Sarafino also explains that social support generally includes several forms, namely: 1.) Emotional support: empathy, affection, attention, and care, 2.) Esteem support: positive assessment, encouragement, or recognition of an individual's abilities, 3.) Instrumental support: direct assistance in the form of material or concrete actions, 4.) Informational support: advice, counsel, or information to help solve problems.

In addition to social support, emotional intelligence is also an important factor in dealing with the dynamics of parenting children with autism, particularly in shaping parents' self-efficacy. Emotional intelligence includes the ability to recognize one's own and others' emotions, manage emotions adaptively, motivate oneself, and build healthy interpersonal relationships. Salovey & Mayer (1990) introduced the concept of emotional intelligence as a mental ability related to emotions. Emotional intelligence is the ability to monitor one's own and others' feelings and emotions, distinguish between them, and use that information to guide thoughts and actions. Emotional intelligence is ability-based intelligence, not merely a personality trait or motivation, and can be learned and developed.

Understanding the relationship between social support, emotional intelligence, and self-confidence can provide a basis for the development of psychological intervention programs, such as support groups, emotional intelligence training, and family counseling. In addition, the results of this study are expected to increase public awareness of the importance of social support for families of children with autism. Adequate support can help reduce social stigma and improve the quality of life for families. Practically, this research can also be a reference for psychologists, counselors, educators, and health workers in designing assistance programs that focus on improving the psychological well-being of parents of children with autism. Based on this description, it is important to conduct research on the influence of social support on the self-confidence of parents of children with autism, with emotional intelligence as a mediating variable.

Previous research has consistently demonstrated that social support enhances psychological well-being and self-efficacy among parents of children with ASD; however, most studies emphasize direct associations without clarifying the internal psychological mechanisms through which external support strengthens parental self-confidence. Although emotional intelligence has been linked to adaptive coping and emotional regulation, its role as a mediating pathway transforming social support into strengthened self-belief remains underexplored, particularly in parents of children with ASD and within non-Western contexts. This study addresses that gap by proposing and empirically testing an integrated structural model in which emotional intelligence mediates the relationship between social support and parental self-confidence. The novelty of this research lies in positioning emotional intelligence as a mechanism

of internalization of external support, rather than merely as an independent predictor, thereby offering a more comprehensive theoretical explanation and context-specific empirical evidence to inform psychologically grounded interventions for parents of children with ASD.

RESEARCH METHOD

The type of research used in this study is a quantitative approach. A specific sample is used with data that can be measured objectively. Sampling in quantitative research can be done using various techniques, one of which is purposive sampling, which is the determination of samples based on certain criteria in accordance with the research objectives. This research is planned to be conducted from June 2025 to February 2026, located at the Aneuk Lon Developmental Care Service, which is located on Jalan Medan Banda Aceh, Panggoi Kota Lhoksumawe. The respondents in this study are parents of children with autism aged 3-10 years, totaling 150 people at the Aneuk Lon Developmental Care service. Social support was measured using the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS) developed by (Zimet et al., 1991), which consists of 12 items and has been adapted by (Sulistiani et al., 2022). The tool used to measure self-confidence was the General Self-Efficacy Scale (GSE) developed by (Schwarzer & Jesrusalem, 1993), which consists of 10 statements. This scale has been adapted into Indonesian by (Novrianto et al., 2019). Emotional intelligence is measured using the concept proposed by (Salovey & Mayer, 1990) and has been adapted to the Indonesian cultural context by (Idriyani, 2020). This instrument consists of 33 statements.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Results

General Profile of Respondents

Table 1. Descriptive data of respondents

<i>Binomial Test</i>					
Variable	Level	Counts	Total	Proportion	p
Gender	Male	22	153	0.144	< .001
	Female	131	153	0.856	< .001
Age	20 - 30 year	30	153	0.196	< .001
	30 - 40 year	66	153	0.431	0.106
	40 - 50 year	45	153	0.294	< .001
	> 50 year	12	153	0.078	< .001
Gender of Special Children	Male	103	153	0.673	< .001
	Female	50	153	0.327	< .001
The Position of Special Children	Youngest	45	153	0.294	< .001
	Eldest	53	153	0.346	< .001
	Middle	42	153	0.275	< .001
	Only child	13	153	0.085	< .001

Note. Proportions tested against value: 0.5.

Based on the descriptive analysis of 153 parents of children with autism, the majority of respondents were female, numbering 131 (85.6%), while male respondents numbered 22 (14.4%). In terms of age, most respondents were in the 30-40 age group, namely 66 people (43.1%), followed by 45 people (29.4%) in the 40-50 age group, 30 people (19.6%) in the 20-30 age group, and 12 respondents (7.8%) were over 50 years old. These data indicate that the majority of parents of children with autism in this study were of productive adult age, with a predominance of mothers.

Table 2. Results of hypothesis analysis tests between variables

<i>Total effects</i>						
	Std. estimate	Std. Error	z-value	p	95% Confidence interval	
					Lower	Upper
Social Support → Self-Confidence	0.534	0.072	7.398	< .001	0.392	0.675
Social Support → Emotional Intelligence	0.632	0.063	10.078	< .001	0.509	0.755
Emotional Intelligence → Self-Confidence	0.631	0.084	7.500	< .001	0.466	0.796

Conclusion from the Results of the Hypothesis Test Analysis Between Variables: a) There is an influence of social support on the self-confidence of parents of children with autism; b) There is an influence of social support on the emotional intelligence of parents of children with autism; c) There is an effect of emotional intelligence on the self-confidence of parents of children with autism.

Table 3. Results of hypothesis analysis testing through mediators

	Std. estimate	Std. Error	z-value	p	95% Confidence interval	
					Lower	Upper
Social Support → Emotional Intelligence → Self-Confidence	0.399	0.068	5.879	< .001	0.266	0.532

The criteria of the t-test (Ghozali, 2016) state that if the significance value (p) < 0.05, then H_0 is rejected and H_1 is accepted. This means that there is an influence between variables through a mediator. Conclusion from the Results of the Hypothesis Test Analysis Between Variables. There is an effect of social support on the self-confidence of parents of children with autism through the mediation of emotional intelligence.

Table 4. Results of path analysis between variables

<i>Path coefficients</i>						
	Std. estimate	Std. error	z-value	p	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower	Upper
Emotional Intelligence → Self-Confidence	0.365	0.059	6.160	< .001	0.249	0.482
Social Support → Self-Confidence	0.517	0.056	9.166	< .001	0.407	0.628
Social Support → Emotional Intelligence	0.573	0.054	10.577	< .001	0.467	0.679

Note. Estimator is ML.

Based on the results of the path analysis between variables. The following results were obtained: a) Social support affects the self-confidence of parents of children with autism by 51.7% with a p-value < 0.001, making the relationship highly significant. This shows that the higher the level of social support received, the higher the self-confidence of parents of children with autism; b) Social support affects the emotional intelligence of parents of children with autism by 57.3% with a p-value < 0.001, making the relationship highly significant. This finding shows that good social support contributes to an increase in the emotional intelligence of parents of children with autism; c) Emotional intelligence affects the self-confidence of parents of children with autism by 36.5% with a p-value < 0.001, making this relationship highly significant. This indicates that the

better the emotional intelligence possessed, the higher the self-confidence of parents of children with autism.

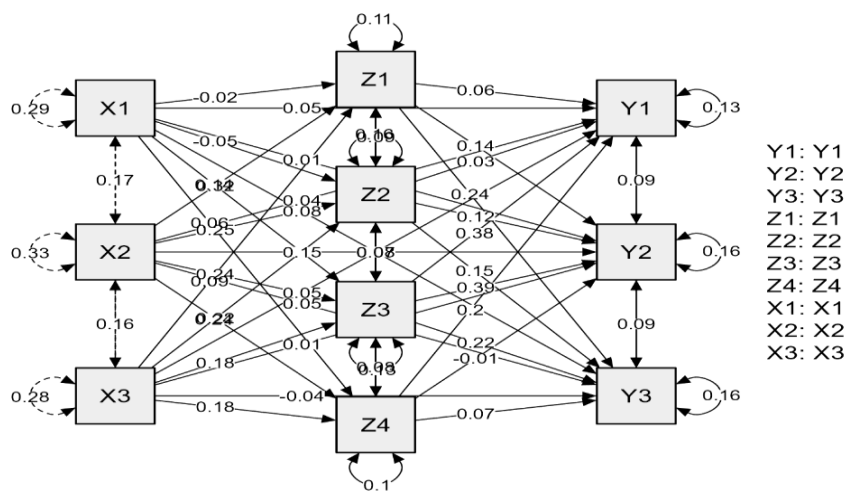


Figure 1. Results of inter-construct path analysis

Discussion

Social support was found to influence the self-confidence of parents of children with autism by 51.7% with a p-value < 0.001, indicating a highly significant relationship. This finding indicates that social support plays an important role in shaping parents' self-confidence in carrying out their role of caring for children with autism. The more support received, whether from family, friends, or the social environment, the stronger the parents' self-confidence in facing various parenting challenges.

The results of this study are in line with social psychology theory, which states that social support plays a role in improving an individual's psychological well-being and self-confidence. A supportive social environment provides a sense of security and validation of the experiences of parents, enabling them to better manage stress and maintain a positive attitude towards themselves.

These conditions ultimately contribute to increased self-confidence in facing the demands of parenting children with autism. The findings of this study are also supported by the results of a study by Riskia & Dewi (2017), which showed a correlation between social support and self-efficacy. Social support, especially appreciative support, has been proven to have a strong relationship with increasing an individual's belief in their abilities. This reinforces the assumption that social support plays an important role in building self-confidence, including in parents of children with autism.

Emotional intelligence affects the self-confidence of parents of children with autism by 36.5% with a p-value < 0.001, making this relationship very significant. This indicates that the better the emotional intelligence, the higher the self-confidence of parents of children with autism. The ability to recognize, understand, and manage emotions helps parents face various parenting challenges with more calmness and confidence. Emotional dynamics do not always have a positive impact on self-confidence.

On the other hand, there is a positive relationship between emotional intelligence and the generalization of self-confidence in parents of children with autism. This shows that the ability to manage emotions helps parents develop broader self-confidence in various parenting situations and social interactions. Good emotional intelligence allows individuals to be more adaptive in facing changes and challenges.

In addition, a positive relationship was found between social support and the strength of self-confidence in parents of children with autism. High social support provides a sense of security, appreciation, and emotional encouragement that can strengthen parents' self-confidence in carrying out their parenting roles. A supportive social environment is a source of motivation and psychological reinforcement for parents.

However, there is a negative relationship between support from loved ones and the generalization of self-confidence in parents of children with autism. This may indicate that support that is too focused or protective can prevent individuals from developing broad self-confidence in various situations. Optimal support needs to be accompanied by opportunities for individuals to remain independent.

Other findings show a negative relationship between family support and aspects of emotional perception and understanding in the emotional intelligence of parents of children with autism. This can be interpreted to mean that, under certain conditions, excessive or inappropriate family support can affect the process of individuals understanding and managing their emotions independently. Family dynamics can also play a role in shaping individuals' emotional responses.

Overall, the results of this study show that social support, emotional intelligence, and self-confidence have complex but interrelated relationships. Social support not only has a direct effect on self-confidence but also through emotional intelligence as a mediator. Therefore, improving the quality of social support and developing emotional intelligence are important factors in strengthening the self-confidence of parents of children with autism in facing various parenting challenges.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that social support significantly influences parental self-confidence by 51.7%, directly strengthens emotional intelligence by 57.3%, and that emotional intelligence contributes 36.5% to parental self-confidence, confirming its role as a significant mediating mechanism. These findings indicate that external support not only directly enhances parents' belief in their abilities but also strengthens their emotional regulation capacity, which in turn reinforces self-confidence. Practically, intervention programs for parents of children with ASD should adopt an integrated approach that combines structured social support systems such as peer-support groups, family-based assistance, and professional counseling with emotional intelligence training focused on emotional awareness, regulation, and adaptive coping skills. Such dual-component interventions are likely to produce more sustainable improvements in psychological resilience and parenting confidence. However, given the cross-sectional design and context-specific sample, future research should employ longitudinal and multi-group analyses to examine potential moderator variables, particularly parent gender and child age, in order to determine whether the magnitude or direction of these relationships varies across demographic and developmental conditions, thereby enabling more targeted and evidence-based intervention strategies.

References

- Afifah, Firman, & Netrawat. (2024). Hubungan SelfEfficacy Dan Dukungan Sosial Terhadap Self Regulated Learning Siswa Di SMA Negeri X Merangin. *Jurnal Edu Research*, 4(4).
- Azwar, S. (2022). Metode Penelitian Psikologi. Penerbit Pustaka Pelajar Yogyakarta.
- Bandura. (1997). *Self-efficacy (the exercise of control)*. New York: W'H. Freeman and Company.
- Baumer, N., & Spence, S. J. (2018). Evaluation and Management of the Child With Autism Spectrum Disorder. *National Library Medicine*.
- Cohen, S., & Wills, T. A. (1985). Stress, Social Support, and the Buffering Hypothesis. *Psychologkal Bulletin*, 98(2), 31.

- Dewi Anggita, E., Hoyyi, A., & Rusgiyono, A. (2019). Analisis Structural Equation Modelling Pendekatan Partial Least Square Dan Pengelompokan Dengan Finite Mixture PLS (Fimix-PLS). *Jurnal Gaussian*, 8(1), 35-45. <http://ejournal3.undip.ac.id/index.php/gaussian>
- Ghozali, I. (2016). *Aplikasi Analisis Multivariate Dengan Program IBM SPSS 23* (8th ed.). Semarang: Badan Penerbit Universitas Diponegoro.
- Gottlieb, B. H. (1985). Social Support and The Study of Personal Relationship. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationship*.
- Gozali, I., & Latan, H. (2015). *Partial Least Squares: Konsep, Teknik dan Aplikasi Menggunakan Program SmartPLS 3.0* (2nd ed.). Semarang: Badan Penerbit Universitas Diponegoro.
- Gunawan, S., & Alfita, L. (2024). Dukungan Sosial dan Kecerdasan Emosional Remaja. *Journal of Education, Humaniora and Social Sciences (JEHSS)*, 7(2), 613-622. <https://doi.org/10.34007/jehss.v7i2.2337>
- Hodges, H., Fealko, C., & Soares, N. (2020). Autism spectrum disorder: definition, epidemiology, causes, and clinical evaluation. *Translational Pediatrics*.
- House, J. S. (1981). *Work Stress and Social Support*, Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.
- Idriyani, N. (2020). *Adaptasi Alat Ukur Kecerdasan Emosi*.
- Kholida Mulyono, N., Sugiarti, R., & Erlangga, E. (2023). Uji Validitas Job Seeker Career Adaptability Scale Pada Pencari. *Jurnal Fokus Konseling*, 9, 78-87. <https://doi.org/10.52657/jfk.v9i2.1945>
- Kurniawan, D., Sahar, J., Rekawati, E., & Sartika, R. A. D. (2025). Translation and validation of the Indonesian version of the Family Support Scale (FSS) for elderly. *Lentera Perawat*, 6(4), 713-721. <https://doi.org/10.52235/lp.v6i4.611>
- Lauster, P. (2002). *Tes Kepribadian (Alih Bahasa: D.H. Gulo)*. Jakarta: PT Gramedia Pustaka Utama.
- Novrianto, R., Kargenti, A., Maretih, E., & Hasbi Wahyudi. (2019). Validitas Konstruk Instrumen General Self Efficacy Scale Versi Indonesia. *Jurnal Psikologi*. <https://doi.org/10.24014/jp.v14i2.6943>
- Pierce, G. R., Sarason, B. R., & Sarason, I. G. (1997). *Sourcebook of Social Support and Personality*. London: The Plenum Series In Social.
- Procidano, M. E., & Heller, K. (1983). Measures of Perceived Sosial Support From Friend and From Family: Three Validation Studies. *American Journal of Community Psychology*.
- Rusdi, M. (2025). Scale Validation of Self-Regulated Learning. *Jurnal Ilmiah Mandala Education (JIME)*, 11(3), 2656-5862. <https://doi.org/10.58258/jime.v11i3.9091/http>
- Salovey, P., & Mayer, J. D. (1990). Emotional Intelligence. *Sage Journals*.
- Sarafino, E. P. (1998). *Health Psychology: Biopsychosocial Interactions* (3rd ed.). United States of American: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.
- Sarafino, E. P., Smith, T., & King, D. B. (2015). *Health Psychology: Biopsychosocial Interactions* (1st ed.). Wiley.
- Saut, E. H. H., & Anggita, T. P. (2023). *Metode Penelitian Kuantitatif: Untuk Mahasiswa Psikologi*. PT. Pena Persada Kerta Utama.
- Savickas, M. L., & Porfeli, E. J. (2012). Career Adapt-Abilities Scale: Construction, Reliability, and Measurement Equivalence Across 13 Countries. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*.
- Sugiyono. (2018). *Metode Penelitian Kuantitatif*. Bandung: Alfabeta.
- Sulistiani, W., Fajrianti, & Febrian Kristiana, I. (2022). Validation of The Indonesian Version of The Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS): A RASCH Model Approach. *Jurnal Psikologi*, 21(1), 89-103.
- Supratiknya, A. (2015). *Metodelogi Penelitian Kuantitatif Dan Kualitatif Dalam Psikologi*. Universitas Sanata Dharma, Yogyakarta.
- Taylor, S. E. (2018). *Health Psychology* (10th ed.). New York: Mc Graw Hill Education.
- Uzlifatul Jannah, E. (2013). Hubungan Antara Self-Efficacy Dan Kecerdasan Emosional Dengan Kemandirian Pada Remaja. *Persona, Jurnal Psikologi Indonesia*, 2(3), 278-287.
- Zimmerman, B. J. (2000). *Attaining Self-Regulation: A Social Cognitive Perspective*. San Diego, CA: Academic Press.
- Zimmerman, B. J. (2002). *Achieving Self-Regulation: The trial and triumph of Adolescence*. Greenwich, CT: Information Age PublishiG