

The Effect of Social Support and Batak Values on Self-Acceptance of Fathers Who Have Children with Special Needs

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Abstract

Embracing parenthood is often considered a blessing, yet the experience can differ significantly for those raising children with special needs. Such circumstances can evoke a range of emotional responses, including anger, sadness, and disappointment, making self-acceptance challenging for fathers. Despite the crucial role fathers play in their children's development, the unique challenges posed by their conditions create obstacles to adjustment. This study aims to explore the impact of social support and Batak values on the self-acceptance of fathers with special needs children (ABK). Employing a quantitative approach, the research utilizes multiple linear regression analysis through SPSS 22, with social support and Batak values as independent variables and self-acceptance as the dependent variable. The study's sample comprises 44 fathers with special needs children, selected through purposive sampling. The findings reveal a negative correlation, indicating that higher levels of social support and adherence to Batak values are associated with lower self-acceptance among fathers of children with special needs.

Keywords: *Self-acceptance, social support, batak values, children with special needs.*

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Introduction

The presence of children within a family is generally esteemed as a societal asset, particularly those born healthy and filled with hope. However, the dynamics shift when children are born with special needs, encountering substantial barriers in physical, psychological, cognitive, and social dimensions (Mangunsong, 2009). According to the Directorate of Development SLB (2005), children with special needs are defined as those facing physical abnormalities or disorders, encompassing physical, mental-intellectual, social, or emotional aspects, which diverge from the normative trajectory of

growth and development compared to their peers.

Having children with special needs is an unusual experience for parents, entailing both physical and mental burdens (Prastuti & Amrullah, 2021), often unsettling their emotional well-being (Cristiani et al., 2021). Parents must exert considerable effort and resilience to adapt to the distinctive challenges posed by having children with special needs (Miranda, 2013). Puspita (2010) disclosed that parents typically react to children with mental disorders with feelings of distrust, shock, grief, disappointment, guilt, anger, and non-acceptance. Hornby's research (2014) indicates that fathers of children with Down syndrome often grapple with depression, sadness, and challenging circumstances due to their child's condition. Beyond the initial rejection phase, the subsequent step involves reaching an acceptance phase, which becomes feasible as parents gradually come to terms with their child's condition.

Self-acceptance, particularly for fathers, significantly influences the development of children, particularly those with special needs. Fathers play a pivotal role as protectors, fostering a sense of security and comfort for their families (Febrianto & Darmawanti, 2016). This responsibility arises from the reality of navigating the phases of dealing with and nurturing children with special needs. Consequently, some parents opt not to disclose their child's condition to others, even relatives. Simanjuntak et al.'s research (2020) on Batak tribe parents with autistic sons emphasizes that positive self-acceptance empowers parents to manage emotions, build relationships, and facilitate their children's development. Conversely, negative self-acceptance leads to regret, anger towards partners, and a negative outlook, hindering the focus on the child's development (Simanjuntak et al., 2020). Further, the study involving six fathers reveals that those with a genuine desire to accept their children cope better, aligning their expectations with reality, albeit still harboring concerns about their child's life and societal acceptance.

Self-acceptance refers to an individual's capacity to embrace their own existence, marked by a positive mindset and acknowledgment of personal values, including awareness of their actions. According to Sheerer, as modified by Berger (1952), self-acceptance encompasses several crucial aspects. The initial facet involves a sense of equality (Wijaya, 2023), wherein an individual accepting themselves perceives alignment with others without a sense of being more special or distinct. This individual acknowledges both mental health deficiencies and strengths, recognizing them as shared

human experiences.

The second facet is confidence in one's abilities. Those who accept themselves exhibit the belief that they can navigate life successfully. This is manifested in their confidence and commitment to cultivating their strengths while addressing shortcomings, ultimately deriving satisfaction from personal growth.

The third aspect is responsibility. Individuals embracing self-acceptance willingly take responsibility for their actions, fostering not only self-acceptance but also garnering social acceptance. They demonstrate an outward focus, displaying consideration and tolerance for others, contributing to their positive reception in their social environment. Additionally, such individuals adhere to personal standards, acknowledge limitations, and accept their humanity and emotions without self-blame.

Several factors influence self-acceptance, especially among fathers with children with special needs, notably social support and cultural values. Social support, defined as a relationship characterized by positive assistance and care (Ruwaida et al., 2006), is crucial in fostering self-acceptance. Hobfoll (1986) identifies three factors encouraging individuals to provide social support: empathy, social norms and values, and social exchange.

Sarafino et al. (2020) outlined five types of social support. Emotional support, derived from expressions of empathy and concern, provides comfort and a sense of belonging. Appreciation support involves positive expressions and encouragement, fostering progress and positive self-comparison. Instrumental or Concrete Support entails direct assistance, often provided by peers. Informational support involves providing advice or feedback, aiding individuals in understanding and addressing their situations. Social network support, derived from belonging to groups with similar interests, reduces stress by facilitating positive interactions and friendships.

In various perspectives on cultural identity and its significance in human life, it is evident that cultural identity plays a crucial role for individuals who are consistently tied to the groups they belong to (Pudjiati et al., 2021). Moreover, it is a vital component for cultural groups, encompassing shared values and an individual's cultural awareness derived from interactions with other cultures and daily practices (Pudjiati et al., 2021). This identity manifests in the cultural behaviors of individuals through subjective value criteria, cognitive considerations, and emotional attachments,

fostering an openness to diverse cultures (Marsella et al., 1985).

Among the diverse ethnic groups in Indonesia, the Batak community stands out with its patrilineal descent system and a strong cultural connection (Pudjiati et al., 2021). Within this cultural framework, the concept of "Marga" defines the identity of the Toba Batak ethnic group, representing an alliance of siblings, blood relatives, and descendants along the paternal line, with common land as ancestral property (Marbun & Hutapea, 1987).

In Batak culture, children are highly cherished within households, embodying the cultural value that states "Anakhon hi do hamoraon di au (My son is the most precious treasure to me)" (Sianturi, 2017; Simanjuntak, 2016). This belief underscores the idea that children are seen as invaluable assets, expected to enhance the family's honor and carry forward the family lineage. Consequently, parents, particularly fathers, may find it challenging to accept children with special needs due to the cultural values that intensify this difficulty.

Navigating this challenge becomes a complex task for Batak fathers, emphasizing the crucial role of social support in fulfilling their paternal responsibilities. Values, as identified by Schwartz (2006), play a significant role in shaping individual and communal perspectives. These values include Power, Achievement, Hedonism, Stimulation, Self-direction, Universalism, Benevolence, Tradition, Conformity, and Security.

In the Batak community, these values influence daily choices and behaviors, providing a framework for better self-understanding and interpersonal relationships (Simanjuntak, 2016). Moreover, certain values, such as Hagabeon, Hasangapon, and Hamoraon, deeply influence the purpose of life in the Batak community (Tinambunan, 2010). Hamoraon, associated with wealth, particularly in terms of material possessions and children, underscores the belief that children are genuine treasures (Simanjuntak, 2016). Hagabeon signifies the joy derived from having children, symbolizing hope and blessings for parents and relatives. Finally, Hasangapon, or glory and honor, is linked to a person's societal position, gauged by the success of their children in the family (Tinambunan, 2010).

Understanding these cultural values is essential for comprehending the Batak way of life, as they significantly impact various aspects, including marital life. Notably, the acceptance process for fathers is intricately connected to personal experiences and cognitive responses shaped by cultural

values received throughout their lives (Lestari, 2013).

In Batak culture, a father's role holds significant importance within both the family and the broader community, especially within the same tribal setting, such as the Toba Batak tribe. The gravity of this role is emphasized through adherence to cultural customs. However, when faced with the responsibility of caring for children with special needs, undertaking this role becomes a complex task. Feasibility arises when a father embraces the challenging circumstances and receives social support from his surroundings. Despite this, there is a noticeable lack of research on fathers in the Batak community raising children with special needs. Existing research primarily focuses on the significance of having children, particularly sons as bearers of the clan and successors of descendants in the Toba Batak family. Children are a source of pride in the Toba Batak community and increase *sahala* (authority) for parents (Sianturi, 2017). Additional research on children with special needs tends to be concentrated in special schools, neglecting deeper exploration within the cultural context (Gumilang & Irnawati, 2022).

Previous studies on Batak parents have concentrated more on the importance of having children for married Batak individuals but have not specifically delved into the realm of children with special needs (Sianturi, 2017). Considering this context, conducting research in this area takes on heightened significance. The potential to illuminate the interplay between social support, cultural values, and, in this case, the Batak concept of social acceptance, as experienced by fathers, could provide valuable insights for society at large.

Method

Design

This study employs a correlational research design with a quantitative approach, examining three variables: social support and Batak values as independent variables, and self-acceptance as the dependent variable.

Participants

The study comprised a sample size of 44 respondents, focusing on fathers with children having special needs. Inclusion criteria were as follows:

- a. Married for a minimum of one year
- b. Having at least one child with special needs
- c. Belonging to the Batak Tribe

Purposive sampling techniques were employed for the research, recruiting individuals from the population who met the specified research characteristics.

Questionnaire

The investigation systematically collected data utilizing diverse scales to quantify the three research variables. Social support was evaluated employing the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS) developed by Zimet et al. (1988), which consists of 12 items assessing the sufficiency of social support from family, peers, and other significant individuals. Respondents expressed their level of agreement on a five-point scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree, with higher scores indicating a heightened perception of social support. The reliability of the instrument, assessed through SPSS, was determined to be 0.848. An illustrative MSPSS item is as follows: "I have someone always ready when I need them; I got the help and emotional support I needed from my family; Friends try to help me."

Batak values were appraised utilizing the Batak Values Scale by Simarmata (2019), reflecting beliefs inherent to the Batak people's purpose of life: Hagabeon, Hasangapon, and Hamoraon. Respondents conveyed their agreement on a five-point scale, ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree, with higher scores signifying a heightened perceived value of Batak. The instrument demonstrated a reliability of 0.924 in SPSS. An illustrative Batak Values Scale item is: "It is very important for me to be respected by others; I feel it is important to maintain the 'clan' of the Batak tribe; It is important for me not to give up easily because I am a hard worker."

Data concerning the self-acceptance variable were amassed utilizing the Berger Self-Acceptance (BSA) developed by Berger (1952), comprising 36 items. The reliability of this instrument, determined through SPSS, was ascertained to be 0.915. An illustrative BSA item is: "In order to be liked and accepted, I try to be someone who meets other people's expectations; I am not worried if other people judge me badly; I'd like it if I could find someone who would tell me how to solve my personal problems."

Data analysis

This study employed multiple linear regression analysis, utilizing SPSS 22 for data analysis. Multiple linear regression is a modeling technique that incorporates multiple independent variables, aiming to ascertain both the direction and magnitude of the influence these variables exert on the dependent variable (Ghozali, 2018).

Result

In this section, we will delineate the study findings by examining age, number of children, and age of marriage, providing the following description.

Table 4
Distribution of respondent data by age

| NO | Age | Frequency |
|----|---------------|-----------|
| 1 | 31 – 40 Years | 9 |
| 2 | 41 – 50 Years | 18 |
| 3 | 51 – 60 Years | 8 |

The distribution of respondents' data by age reveals that the highest frequency is observed in the 41-50 age range, comprising 18 data points, while the 51-60 age range shows a minimum frequency with 8 data points.

Research variables are classified into three levels: high, medium, and low. This categorization is determined by the empirical mean value and the normative standard deviation within each group. Presented below are the statistical data for the variables of social support, Batak value, and self-acceptance.

Table 5
Categorization of social support

| Categorization | Range | Frequency | Percentage |
|----------------|------------------|-----------|------------|
| High | $44 \leq X$ | 5 | 14.3% |
| Moderate | $28 \leq x < 44$ | 30 | 85.7% |
| Low | $X < 28$ | 0 | 0% |
| Entire | | 35 | 100% |

Utilizing the outlined classification of social support variables, empirical evidence reveals 30 instances (85.7%) falling within the medium category, while 5 instances (14.3%) pertain to the high category.

Table 6
Categorization of social support by age

| Age | Categorization | Frequency | Percentage |
|-------------|----------------|-----------|------------|
| 31-40 Years | High | 0 | 0% |
| | Moderate | 7 | 77.7% |
| | Low | 2 | 22.3% |
| Total | | 9 | 100% |
| Age | Categorization | Frequency | Percentage |
| 41-50 Years | High | 0 | 0% |
| | Moderate | 18 | 100% |
| | Low | 0 | 0% |
| Total | | 18 | 100% |
| Age | Categorization | Frequency | Percentage |
| 51-60 Years | High | 3 | 37.5% |
| | Moderate | 5 | 62.5% |
| | Low | 0 | 0% |
| Total | | 8 | 100% |

Table 7
Categorization of Batak Values

| Categorization | Range | Frequency | Percentage |
|----------------|------------------|-----------|------------|
| High | $95 \leq X$ | 0 | 0% |
| Moderate | $59 \leq x < 95$ | 34 | 97.2% |
| Low | $X < 59$ | 1 | 2.8% |
| Total | | 35 | 100% |

The classification of Batak value variables reveals that, empirically, 34 data points (97.2%) fall within the medium category, while 1 data point (2.8%) is categorized as low.

Table 8
Categorization of Batak Values by Age

| Age | Categorization | Frequency | Percentage |
|-------------|----------------|-----------|------------|
| 31-40 Years | High | 0 | 0% |
| | Moderate | 9 | 100% |
| | Low | 0 | 0% |
| Entire | | 9 | 100% |
| Age | Categorization | Frequency | Percentage |
| 41-50 Years | High | 0 | 0% |
| | Moderate | 17 | 94% |
| | Low | 1 | 6% |
| Entire | | 18 | 100% |
| Age | Categorization | Frequency | Percentage |
| 51-60 Years | High | 0 | 0% |
| | Moderate | 8 | 100% |
| | Low | 0 | 0% |
| Entire | | 8 | 100% |

Table 9
Categorization of self-acceptance

| Categorization | Range | Frequency | Percentage |
|----------------|------------------|-----------|------------|
| High | $77 \leq X$ | 0 | 0% |
| Moderate | $49 \leq x < 77$ | 15 | 42.8% |
| Low | $X < 49$ | 20 | 57.2% |
| Entire | | 35 | 100% |

The empirical categorization of self-acceptance value variables reveals that 15 data points (42.8%) fall within the medium category, while 20 data points (57.2%) belong to the low category.

Table 10
Categorization of self-acceptance by age

| Age | Categorization | Frequency | Percentage |
|-------------|----------------|-----------|------------|
| 31-40 Years | High | 0 | 0% |
| | Moderate | 7 | 77.7% |
| | Low | 2 | 22.3% |
| Entire | | 9 | 100% |
| Age | Categorization | Frequency | Percentage |
| 41-50 Years | High | 0 | 0% |
| | Moderate | 18 | 100% |
| | Low | 0 | 0% |
| Entire | | 18 | 100% |
| Age | Categorization | Frequency | Percentage |
| 51-60 Years | High | 3 | 37.5% |
| | Moderate | 5 | 62.5% |
| | Low | 0 | 0% |
| Entire | | 8 | 100% |

Table 11
Results of the Coefficient of Determination

| Type | R | R Square | Adjusted R Square | Std. Error of the Estimate |
|------|-------|----------|-------------------|----------------------------|
| 1 | .462a | .213 | .164 | 10.215 |

a. Predictors: (Constant), Batak Values, Social Support

According to [Table 11](#), the R-Square Adjusted value of 0.164 indicates that 16.4% of the variation in self-acceptance can be attributed to the combined influence of social support and Batak values. Specifically, social support and Batak scores collectively account for 16.4% of the variance in self-acceptance, with the remaining 83.6% being influenced by variables not included in the linear regression model.

Table 12
Model Interpretation

| Type | Unstandardized Coefficients | | Standardized Coefficients | t | Sig. |
|----------------|-----------------------------|------------|---------------------------|-------|------|
| | B | Std. Error | Beta | | |
| 1 (Constant) | -5.448 | 20.208 | | -.270 | .789 |
| Social Support | .893 | .355 | .398 | 2.512 | .017 |
| Values Batak | .251 | .218 | .182 | 1.151 | .258 |

The [table 12](#) indicates that social support plays a significant role in influencing self-acceptance among fathers of children with special needs. Conversely, Batak Values show no discernible impact on the self-acceptance of fathers in similar circumstances.

Discussion

Based on the study results, it is evident that the hypothesis linking the influence of Batak values on a father's self-acceptance is rejected. This implies that Batak values do not exert an impact on the self-acceptance of fathers with children having special needs. Consequently, there exist unexplored factors beyond those considered in this study that contribute to the self-acceptance of fathers in such circumstances. This finding diverges from Lestari's (2013) prior research, which emphasized cultural values as a key internal factor influencing the acceptance process, with self-acceptance

viewed as a cognitive response to cultural values.

The study underscores the crucial role of self-acceptance in fathers, especially within the Batak customs, where their social role within the family system, defined by the term "Father" (Tinambunan, 2010), carries significant importance. Batak culture regards children as precious treasures, and their future is integral to enhancing the family's societal standing. However, contrary to expectations influenced by cultural values, this study indicates that fathers with children having special needs do not find self-acceptance through adherence to Batak values.

Contrasting with Hurlock's (2013) assertion on the influence of cultural values on fathers' self-acceptance, this study reveals that Batak values adopted by fathers in such situations do not contribute to self-acceptance. Interviews with fathers in similar circumstances highlight that cultural values primarily guide their efforts to instill social structure understanding in their children, rather than aiding their own self-acceptance.

The research findings emphasize the significant impact of social support on fathers' self-acceptance in the context of children with special needs, aligning with the research hypothesis. Coping with the challenges posed by special needs is undeniably demanding, making parental self-acceptance a vital attribute. The ability to embrace various aspects of life, including personal weaknesses, is characteristic of individuals displaying self-acceptance, enhancing their effectiveness in daily life.

Contrary to this positive perspective, initial interviews with Batak fathers reveal a prevalent difficulty in accepting their children's special needs, influenced by cultural values that place a high premium on offspring status. Consequently, many fathers harbor hopes that their children will be healthy, contributing positively to the family's societal standing, resulting in reluctance to involve their children in family events.

Recognizing children as divine gifts, especially those with special needs, emphasizes the importance of fostering parental self-acceptance. Izzah (2022) notes the challenges faced by parents in navigating feelings of non-acceptance, shame, sadness, or disappointment, highlighting the significance of self-acceptance in positively shaping psychological well-being.

Establishing a supportive network becomes imperative, not only for children with special needs but also for the entire community, fostering a inclusive environment. Public education on interacting with individuals with special needs is crucial, as highlighted by Rahmawati (2018), who emphasizes the role of environmental factors in parental self-acceptance.

This study affirms a positive link between social support and self-acceptance among Batak tribal fathers with children having special needs. Increased social support correlates with higher self-acceptance levels, as demonstrated in line with Rusdiana's (2018) research. The study acknowledges a limitation in the small sample size, attributing it to the challenge of finding willing participants among fathers of children with special needs, especially in rural areas. Additionally, the need for translators in rural areas for scale translation from Indonesian to Batak introduces potential language comprehension challenges for participants.

Conclusion

The research findings on fathers with children with Special Needs indicate that Batak values do not significantly impact their self-acceptance. However, the study reveals a notable influence of social support on the self-acceptance of fathers in this demographic. The discovery that Batak cultural values do not play a role in the self-acceptance of these fathers is intriguing, particularly considering the general expectation among Batak people that their children, considered as their wealth, will carry on the family lineage in the community.

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