Proceedings Series in Educational Studies

The 5th International Conference on Educational Management and Technology (ICEMT) 2026

Literature Review: Independence Training, Strategies, and Life Skills for Children with Intellectual Disabilities

Qurotul Ishaqiyah, Risa Safira Ramadhani*, Azizah Dwi Fadilah, Anindhita Nanda Pradina, Emira Nurfitria Muhammad, Indra Amsal

State University of Malang, Jl. Semarang No. 5 Malang, East Java, Indonesia

*Author of correspondence, Email: risa.safira.fip@um.ac.id

Abstract

Special education, also known as exceptional education, is designed for students who experience physical, emotional, mental, or social barriers, as stated in Law No. 20 of 2003 on the National Education System. Its primary goal is to provide equal opportunities for students with special needs to develop their abilities and achieve optimal independence. Independence is a crucial aspect for children with intellectual disabilities, encompassing self-care and social adaptation skills. Through the development of life skills, these children are trained to meet daily needs such as dressing, eating, and maintaining personal hygiene. Practice-based training with an individualized approach has proven effective in enhancing their independence. Environmental support and appropriate teaching strategies play a significant role in helping children with intellectual disabilities realize their potential, improve their quality of life, and participate positively within society.

Keywords: Independence training; strategy; life skills; children with intellectual disabilities; intellectual disability

1. Introduction

Special education (exceptional education) is education for students who face difficulties in participating in the learning process due to physical, emotional, mental, and social disabilities. This is stipulated in Law No. 20 of 2003, Article 23, regarding the National Education System. According to this law, children with disabilities are entitled to the same opportunities as other children in terms of education and instruction.

Life skills are essential as a foundation for building independence, ensuring survival, overcoming various challenges, and making positive contributions in various aspects of life. Therefore, according to Wikasanti (2014: 47), education aimed at building and developing life skills is crucial for students. However, there are many factors that hinder students with special needs from realizing their rights—both their right to education and their right to achieve and enjoy a better quality of life.

Independence is a fundamental aspect of life inherent in every individual; no one wishes for their independence to be compromised due to physical limitations, commonly referred to as a disability. A physical disability is something no one ever anticipates or desires, yet in reality, it can occur unexpectedly—whether at birth, during development, or as a result of an accident. This abnormal physical condition poses a challenge for those who experience it, as it results in a decline in motor or sensory abilities. Disabilities are classified into several categories: visual impairment (impairment of the eyes); hearing impairment (hearing impairment); speech impairment (speech impairment); intellectual disability

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License.

(mental/intellectual impairment); physical disability (physical impairment); and multiple disabilities (two or more impairments simultaneously).

"Children with special needs" is a term used to describe children who have limitations, unlike typical children, though this does not necessarily imply emotional, mental, or physical disabilities in the educational context. According to Alimin (2004), children with special needs are those who experience physical, mental, or social behavioral abnormalities or deviations. Additionally, children with intellectual disabilities are those who have limitations and an intellectual ability below average. According to Mumpuniarti (2007:17), children with intellectual disabilities can also be described as those who are unable to adapt to a typical environment and require services, care, supervision, guidance, and support from external sources. Children with intellectual disabilities are classified into three categories: mild, moderate, and severe.

According to Somantri (2007), the independence expected of children with intellectual disabilities is the ability to take care of themselves and act responsibly. This includes self-care independence and the ability to produce tangible results using skills aligned with the child's talents, interests, and abilities—thereby fostering self-confidence and enabling behavior driven by internal motivation rather than external influence.

The scope of a child's independence includes performing tasks such as dressing, eating, bathing, and maintaining personal hygiene. Independence serves as an indicator of the success of special education interventions because it is closely linked to the child's quality of life and social integration (Wulandari, 2021). Independent children are better prepared to face the challenges of daily life and are more likely to be accepted by society.

The development of *life skills* is defined as an effort to enhance a person's ability to meet daily living needs without feeling overwhelmed, thereby achieving progressive change.

Efforts to develop *life skills* employ methods that prioritize practice over a relatively short period, where the skill-building materials provided must include clear and precise steps to ensure maximum effectiveness; subsequently, children are given the opportunity to engage in more practical application than theoretical instruction. According to Rakhmad Fitriawan (2016: 24), life skills development is an effort to enhance students' existing abilities, particularly in non-academic areas, as possessing these skills is expected to equip students with the tools needed to achieve a better standard of living.

Daily living skills training programs are crucial in helping children with intellectual disabilities become independent in carrying out their daily activities. According to Purwanta & Somantri (2017), although intellectual disability is a permanent condition, with the right support, these children can develop and become more independent in their daily lives. In a journal article by Hidayat & Hasanah (2020), it is stated that structured and ongoing life skills training can enhance the independence of children with intellectual disabilities in performing daily activities. An individualized approach is essential in the context of special education.

2. Method

The method used for this study is the *Systematic Literature Review* (SLR). A systematic literature review is the process of collecting, evaluating, integrating, and presenting the

results of a search in a critical and systematic manner. This study followed the procedures outlined in the steps below.

2.1. Formulating Research Questions

This study addresses the following two research questions:

a. What forms does independence take for children with intellectual disabilities?
b. What measures can be taken to help children with intellectual disabilities achieve independence in performing daily activities?

2.1.1. Searching for References (Studies)

The literature search for this study utilized various indexed international journal articles. The keywords used in the literature search included *"Independence Training," "Strategy," "Life Skills," "Intellectual Disability," and "Children with Intellectual Disabilities."*

2.1.1.1. Selecting References

The author reviewed the abstracts and identified the relevance of variables or issues to the research keywords. Relevant journal articles were selected for in-depth analysis to address the research questions. The following is a list of articles used in this Systematic Literature Review.

Table 1. Systematic Literature Review of Selected Articles

No	Question	Source	Author, year of publication	Title
1	What Forms Does Independence Take for Children with Intellectual Disabilities?	Journal of Guidance, Counseling, and Islamic Da'wah, 15(1)	Umul Sakinah (2018)	Behaviorist Counseling in Shaping Independent Self-Care Behavior in People with Intellectual Disabilities
		Journal of Multidisciplinary Research and Development, 2(1)	Ulfah Kardina Putri & Ardisal (2019)	Parenting Styles of Parents with Intellectual Disabilities in Fostering Independence in Children with Intellectual Disabilities in Bungo Pasang Painan
		Journal of Islamic Guidance and Counseling, 2(1)	Aep Kusnawan, Sitta Resmiati Muslimah, & Ajrina Amalia S.	Self-Development Exercises for Students with Intellectual Disabilities to Enhance Independence
		Psikoborneo, 6(1), 2018: 124–131	Puji Astuti (2018)	Parental Support in Enhancing the Independence of Children with Moderate Intellectual Disabilities

		Southeast Sulawesi Educational Journal, 4 (3), 159-165.	Anggraeni, A., Aliansy, A., P., Limas, N., N., & Wijaya, S. (2021)	Getting to Know Children with Intellectual Disabilities Better
2	What steps can be taken to help children with intellectual disabilities achieve independence in performing daily activities	Indonesian Journal of Disability Research, 2(1), 43–50	Dayu Ikrima Ilmi Sabila & Muhammad Muhib Alqi (2024)	Self-Care Independence of Children with Intellectual Disabilities at YPAC Jember Special Education Junior High School After the Implementation of the Modeling Technique
		Scientific Journal of Elementary Education, 10(3)	Nur Azizah, Moh Toharudin, Diah Sunarsih (2025)	Teachers' Strategies for Enhancing the Social Independence of Children with Mild Intellectual Disabilities at SDN Brebes 02
		AlMustofa: Journal of Islamic Studies and Research, 1(1)	SRIWARDANI (2024)	Strategies for Fostering Independence in Students with Mild Intellectual Disabilities through the Self-Development Program
		Jurnal Unik: Special Education, 7(2), 52–60	Tika Rahmatunnisa, Dedi Mulia & Neti Asmiati (2022)	Parental Child-Rearing Practices and the Independence of Children with Intellectual Disabilities
		e-Journal of the Graduate Program, Ganesha University of Education, Department of Elementary Education (Volume 3, 2013)	Ni Made Suriadi, Nyoman Dantes, A.A.I.N. Marhaeni (2013)	Application of the Drill Method to Improve Learning Activities and Self-Care Skills for Children with Intellectual Disabilities

2.1.1.2. Extracting data

Using a form to filter and record what is interesting and needs to be revealed from the study.

2.1.1.3. Analyzing and presenting the results

After compiling the articles, the authors conducted an analysis using the obtained data, which was then summarized and grouped according to the research questions.

2.1.1.4. Interpreting the Results

Incorporate answers based on the results of the analysis and grouping of the questions that have been raised, and organize them into paragraphs.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Results

Social representation is unbalanced, and people with intellectual disabilities—or those known as "tunagrahita"—still face stereotypes and negative prejudices. This leads to incorrect behaviors and perceptions within society toward people with intellectual disabilities. Just like children in general, people with intellectual disabilities also have the right to accessibility and convenience in daily life; the right to a proper education; the right to advocacy; and the right to everything that other people have.

3.2 Discussion

In a study by Umul Sakinah, individuals with intellectual disabilities—due to their various limitations, including mental, intellectual, and sensorimotor impairments—face difficulties in living their lives like typically developing children, both in personal matters and within social settings. According to Titin Sunawarti and Muzal Kadim (2000: 172), individuals with mild intellectual disabilities are categorized as having a form of intellectual disability that is amenable to education. Children with mild intellectual disabilities experience language impairments but are still able to communicate. Generally, they can take care of themselves, although their development is slow. Meanwhile, children with moderate intellectual disabilities face delays in the development of language comprehension and use, as well as in self-care and motor skills; consequently, some of them require supervision and assistance from others throughout their lives. Intellectual disabilities that generally preclude the ability to care for oneself fall into the severe category. The developmental delays experienced by children with intellectual disabilities include difficulties in communication, self-care, life skills within the family, social skills, community participation, self-direction, maintaining health and personal safety, functional academic skills, and time management and work (Muh Basuni, 2012: 12). The program proposed by Muh Basuni (2012:13) to help them adapt to their environment involves self-care training, which is a form of education focused on self-care. This approach offers several benefits: it helps alleviate low self-esteem, builds self-confidence, fosters a strong sense of self, develops the ability to perform specific tasks, and can help heal both physical and psychological disorders or ailments.

In a preliminary study conducted by Ulva Kardina Putri and Ardisal, it was reported that children with intellectual disabilities appear to be independent in performing daily activities. For example, the children go to and return from school without being dropped off or picked up by their parents; they choose their own clothes to wear in accordance with school rules and are already neatly dressed when they go to school. The journal describes that in daily activities, parents always accompany and involve children with intellectual disabilities in their tasks. For instance, when the mother is cooking or doing laundry, the child helps out as well. The researcher states that the independence of children with intellectual disabilities in taking care of themselves is closely tied to the parenting styles used by their parents to foster this independence. Parenting styles refer to the methods parents use to raise and foster independence in their children's character and personality, as well as to instill values so that children can adapt to their environment (Rachmawati, 2010).

According to Aep Kusnawan, Sitta Resmiati Muslimah, and Ajrina Amalia S, children with intellectual disabilities are those identified as having below-average intelligence. Generally, the lives of children with intellectual disabilities tend to depend on others; these children are unable to perform daily activities independently, which often leads them to rely on others—especially their parents—to meet their developmental needs. Consequently, they require specialized assistance or training, including educational programs, training, and guidance. The hope is that providing specialized training tailored to their needs will enable children with intellectual disabilities to develop their full potential, so that their integration into the community of typically developing children does not become increasingly difficult.

According to a journal article and research conducted by Puji Astuti, children with intellectual disabilities face limitations in adapting to their environment; they are unable to think abstractly or process complex ideas, which results in difficulties in learning due to a tendency to lose focus easily, poor motor skills, limited adaptive development, and so on. Additionally, these children have limited ability to care for themselves. The first study was a " " of a child with the initials ZM (7 years old), who was unable to perform any tasks independently, such as dressing, eating, bathing, and so on. The second study involved a child identified as WH (9 years old), who could perform some tasks independently but not to the fullest extent—for example, the child could bathe alone but not thoroughly, eat alone but still make a mess, and dress alone but put clothes on incorrectly, such as wearing them inside out or buttoning them in the wrong order. The third study involved a child identified as AZ (8 years old), who could perform some tasks independently but not as well as possible, and whose independence could still be developed through training. Children with intellectual disabilities face cognitive challenges, so independence goals must be formulated according to their individual potential. Sarafino (as cited in Pancawati, 2013) notes that parents play a crucial role in providing support—through attention and affection—to aid their child's growth and development. One way to do this is by training them in various skills and fostering a supportive environment within the community.

According to a journal article by Anggraeni, A., Aliansy, A., P., Limas, N., N., & Wijaya, S., Effendi (as cited in Usti, 2013), children with intellectual disabilities—particularly those with below-average or very low intelligence—require assistance from others, especially to help manage their development. Children with intellectual disabilities have psychological and intellectual developmental disorders that affect their cognitive development and adaptive behavior, such as an inability to concentrate, difficulty controlling emotions, a tendency to be more withdrawn and prefer solitude, heightened sensitivity to danger, and so on. Children with intellectual disabilities may also experience difficulties with *"adaptive behavior*," meaning they are unable to achieve a level of independence consistent with the standards of autonomy and responsibility expected of children.

The application of *modeling* techniques, as described in a journal article by Dayu Ikrima, Ilmi Sabila, and Muhammad Muhib Alqi (2024), states that these techniques are used to enhance self-care independence. There are three forms of this technique: first*, the live model*, where the teacher demonstrates the action directly—such as tying shoelaces—and the student imitates it immediately. Second, *the* symbolic *model,* in which the teacher provides a demonstration via a video of tying shoelaces shown through a projector in the classroom. And third, *the multiple model,* in which one student is selected to serve as a role model while the other students observe and then imitate. After implementing this model, the varying

abilities of each student will become apparent. This technique is effective because it facilitates the learning process for children with mild intellectual disabilities through observation. According to Albert Bandura, modeling is a behavioral counseling technique designed to change, increase, or reduce a person's behavior through a learning process involving direct observation and imitation of the behavior or actions of a specific individual (Abd Hafid et al., 2023).

The process of developing social independence in children with mild intellectual disabilities is certainly different from that of typical children, given their limitations. This necessitates self-development activities designed to foster social independence in these children, which requires teachers to employ optimal strategies in implementing a series of activities that incorporate structured and diverse approaches. In the classroom, teachers consistently apply cooperative learning methods, such as group discussions and peer collaboration, which directly encourage social interaction and teamwork. Additionally, positive reinforcement—whether verbal (such as praise) or nonverbal (such as smiles, thumbs-up gestures, or applause, given individually or to the group)—further strengthens these students' socially independent behaviors. Furthermore, teachers design social simulation activities—such as presentations or role-playing—tailored to the children's abilities and interests. Teaching aids and social learning media have also proven effective in enhancing students' social independence and interest in learning. This is documented in a journal article by Nur Azizah, Moh Toharudin, and Diah Sunarsih (2025).

According to Sriwardani (2024), every parent of a child with certain developmental disabilities should naturally hope that their child will eventually become an independent individual who does not rely on others. This can be achieved through self-development programs—efforts to build individuals through education in the family, school, and community—thereby fostering independence in daily activities (Basuni, 2012). Self-development programs for children with intellectual disabilities are designed to help them develop their existing abilities, such as taking care of themselves, personal hygiene, eating, drinking, using the restroom independently, and so on. These programs also address various challenges, ranging from dressing themselves and tying shoelaces to interacting with others and socializing with both children with intellectual disabilities and typically developing children.

Tika Rahmatunnisa, Dedi Mulia, and Neti Asmiati (2022) note in their journal article that parents of children with special needs, including those with intellectual disabilities, must understand and apply parenting methods that take into account the child's unique condition—which differs from raising typically developing children—because children with special needs have limited abilities (Sipayung, 2018). The implementation of an appropriate parenting model will support the child's development, particularly in terms of independence, which significantly influences the formation of an independent character in every child with intellectual disabilities. Based on the results of observations and interviews conducted by the researcher and author with three parents regarding their parenting styles toward fifth-grade children with intellectual disabilities at SKh Negeri 02 in Serang City, it can be concluded that parents employ four parenting styles: permissive, democratic, a combination of permissive and democratic, and a combination of authoritarian and permissive. As a result, these children are physically capable of being independent in their daily activities. Independence is certainly needed by every individual, especially children with intellectual disabilities, for

whom it is very useful to be able to care for themselves without relying too heavily on others. From this discussion, it can be concluded that parenting styles play a crucial role in fostering independence in children with intellectual disabilities. Good and appropriate parenting styles will foster the healthy development of a child's independence.

According to Ni Made Suriadi, Nyoman Dantes, and A.A.I.N. Marhaeni (2013), some children with intellectual disabilities are still unable to take care of themselves when it comes to dressing. For example, putting on a shirt may sound very easy and simple, but when applied to children with intellectual disabilities, most of them cannot do it on their own without first being taught and trained. This was evident when a teacher asked a child to put on a shirt by themselves, and the child was unable to do so. Alternative teaching methods previously tried by teachers included having the child directly unbutton and rebutton the shirt in front of the class; however, this was ineffective because the child felt embarrassed about having to undress. One method considered appropriate and suitable for teaching self-care skills related to dressing is the drill method. According to Hernawo (2008), a good teaching method for instilling certain habits involves starting with easy tasks, moving on to slightly more difficult ones, and finally to very difficult ones. This learning process cannot be accomplished in a single session, given the child's limited intellectual capacity. Therefore, it must be repeated until the child understands and can perform the task independently.

4. Conclusion

This literature review indicates that children with intellectual disabilities—often referred to as intellectually disabled children—face difficulties in carrying out their daily lives independently, which leads to certain societal views that look down on these children. However, there are efforts that can be made to help children with intellectual disabilities develop the skills needed to carry out their daily activities independently without relying too heavily on others, particularly their parents and close friends. Some of these efforts include: *modeling* techniques to identify each student's unique abilities*;* refining learning strategies; self-development programs—which involve building individuals through education within the family, school, and community; implementing appropriate parenting models; and training methods (drills). These efforts can be taught and applied to children with intellectual disabilities according to their level and characteristics.

References

Neli, M., Indrawadi, J., & Isnarmi, I. (2020). Strengthening Independent Character Education for Children with Intellectual Disabilities at the "Harapan Ibu" Bina Grahita Social Care Center in Padang. Journal of Civic Education, 3(2), 172–177.

Kusnawan, A., & Muslimah, S. R. (2022). Self-Development Exercises for Students with Intellectual Disabilities to Enhance Independence. Cons-Iedu, 2(1), 7–15.

Pioh, E. Y., Kandowangko, N., & Lasut, J. J. (2017). The role of caregivers in enhancing the independence of children with visual impairments at the Bartemeus Social Care Center in Manado. Acta Diurna Komunikasi, 6(1).

Astuti, P. (2018). Parental support in enhancing the independence of children with moderate intellectual disabilities. Psikoborneo: Scientific Journal of Psychology, 6(1), 124–131.

Iftitah, I., Kismawiyati, R., & Megaswarie, R. N. (2025). Early Intervention Using a Visual Schedule to Train Independence in Children with Mild Intellectual Disabilities. SPEED Journal: Journal of Special Education, 9(1), 23-34.

St Aisyah, B. M., & Sakina, U. (2020). Efforts to Develop Life Skills for Children with Intellectual Disabilities at State Special School No. 1, Wajo Regency. Sipakalebbi Journal, 4(2), 381–397.

Rafael, D. O., Ceria, S., Tanzila, T., Ulina, S., Afrizah, A. N., & Lawita, N. F. (2025). Improving Social Skills and Independence in Children with Intellectual Disabilities Through a Daily Life Skills Training Program. COMSEP: Journal of Community Service, 6(2), 90-95.

Limas, N. N., Anggraeni, A., Aliansi, A. P., & Wijaya, S. (2024). Getting to Know Children with Intellectual Disabilities Better. Southeast Sulawesi Educational Journal, 4(3), 159–165.

Sabila, D. I. I., & Alwi, M. M. (2024). Self-Care Independence of Children with Intellectual Disabilities at YPAC Jember Special Education Junior High School Following the Implementation of Modeling Techniques. Indonesian Journal of Disability Research, 2(1), 43-50.

Azizah, N., Toharudin, M., & Sunarsiih, D. (2025). Teachers' Strategies for Enhancing the Social Independence of Children with Mild Intellectual Disabilities at SDN Brebes 02. Pendas: Scientific Journal of Elementary Education, 10(3), 588–597.

SRIWARDANI, S. (2024). STRATEGIES FOR FOSTERING INDEPENDENCE AMONG STUDENTS WITH MILD INTELLECTUAL DISABILITIES THROUGH THE SELF-DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM. ALMUSTOFA: Journal of Islamic Studies and Research, 1(01), 137–146.

Rahmatunnisa, T., Mulia, D., & Asmiati, N. (2022). Parental Child-Rearing Practices and the Independence of Children with Intellectual Disabilities. UNIK Journal: Special Education, 7(2), 52-60.

Suriadi, N. M., Dantes, N., & Marhaeni, A. A. I. N. (2013). *The Application of the Drill Method to Improve Learning Activities and Self-Care Skills for Children with Intellectual Disabilities* (Doctoral dissertation, Ganesha University of Education).