

# THE INFLUENCE OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION ON STUDENTS' SOCIAL SKILLS AND SELF-ESTEEM AT SDN 1 GERENENG IN THE ACADEMIC YEAR 2025/2026

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## Abstract

*This study investigates the influence of inclusive education on students' social skills and self-esteem at SDN 1 Gereneng in the 2025/2026 academic year. Using simple linear regression analysis, the findings demonstrate that inclusive education significantly predicts both variables, with 89.1% of the variance in social skills ( $F = 69.729$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ;  $R^2 = 0.891$ ) and 92% of the variance in self-esteem ( $F = 97.562$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ;  $R^2 = 0.920$ ) explained by its implementation. The results indicate that inclusive educational practices not only enhance students' collaboration, empathy, responsibility, and self-regulation in social interactions but also strengthen their confidence and sense of self-worth. Theoretically, this research contributes to educational psychology by affirming the role of inclusive environments in fostering both social competence and self-esteem. Practically, it highlights the importance of designing learning strategies, extracurricular activities, and school climates that balance cognitive, affective, and social dimensions. These findings suggest that inclusive education provides a critical foundation for developing equitable, supportive, and diversity-affirming learning environments that nurture students' holistic growth.*

**Keywords:** *inclusive education, social skills, self-esteem, elementary students, educational psychology*

## INTRODUCTION

Education is a fundamental human need that must be fulfilled by every individual. Through education, people are able to develop their potential optimally, encompassing intellectual, social, emotional, and

spiritual dimensions. Education does not merely serve as a medium for the transfer of knowledge but also functions as an avenue for character formation, the strengthening of social skills, and the construction of personal identity. Consequently, education plays

a pivotal role in determining the quality of a nation's human resources.

Within the national context, the state guarantees the right to education for all of its citizens. The 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia, Article 31, explicitly states that every citizen has the right to education. This provision emphasizes that education must be provided equitably, regardless of students' social, cultural, physical, or psychological backgrounds. It is this principle of non-discrimination that underpins the emergence of the inclusive education policy in Indonesia.

Inclusive education is an approach that places all learners—both mainstream students and those with special educational needs—within the same learning environment. This approach ensures that every child is granted equal opportunities to develop according to their individual potential. At its core, inclusive education values diversity and provides equitable educational services without distinction. In other words, it represents a concrete manifestation of human rights within the domain of education.

In Indonesia, inclusive education began to receive greater attention following the enactment of Ministerial Regulation of National Education No. 70 of 2009 on Inclusive Education. This regulation underscores the importance of educational access for all children, including those with special needs,

ensuring that they are not marginalized from the national education system. The implementation of inclusive education at the elementary school level is particularly crucial, as this is the stage where children begin to interact socially, develop relationships, and form self-concepts that will influence their future growth.

Previous studies have highlighted the benefits of inclusive education. Milla (2018) found that inclusive education has a significant impact on students' social skills and self-esteem. Learners in inclusive settings tend to be more confident, demonstrate stronger interpersonal skills, and are more easily accepted by their peers. Similarly, Said et al. (2020) confirmed that inclusive education enhances the quality of students' social relationships while fostering confidence in facing both academic and non-academic challenges.

Despite these promising findings, the implementation of inclusive education in many schools continues to encounter challenges. Common obstacles include limited supporting facilities, insufficient teacher training in inclusive teaching strategies, and the persistence of stereotypes or discriminatory attitudes among mainstream students toward their peers with special needs. Such barriers may hinder the effectiveness of inclusive education and undermine its ultimate goal of creating a welcoming and equitable learning environment for all students.

## **The Influence of Inclusive Education on Students' Social Skills and Self-Esteem at SDN 1 Gereneng in the Academic Year 2025/2026**

SDN 1 Gereneng, an elementary school in East Lombok, serves as one example of an institution that has adopted inclusive education. The school admits students with special needs into the same classrooms as their mainstream peers. Ideally, this arrangement promotes healthy interaction, mutual respect, and collaborative learning. However, observations indicate notable disparities in students' social skills and levels of self-esteem.

Some students demonstrate strong social competence, forming friendships and actively participating in both classroom and extracurricular activities. Others, however, struggle to adapt, remain reluctant to engage in discussions, and tend to withdraw from peer interactions. These differences suggest that challenges remain in the school's inclusive education practices, particularly in fostering students' social development.

Social skills are a vital competency for elementary students. According to Merrell and Gimpel (2013), social skills are the ability to interact effectively with others within specific social contexts. These skills encompass communication, conflict resolution, collaboration, and the building of positive relationships. In inclusive classrooms, social skills are essential to creating a harmonious and collaborative learning atmosphere.

Equally important is self-esteem, which significantly influences students' academic success. Self-esteem reflects the extent to which individuals view themselves positively and feel valued by others. Students with high self-esteem are typically more confident, proactive, and resilient in the face of difficulties. Conversely, those with low self-esteem tend to be passive, hesitant, and less motivated to explore their potential.

At SDN 1 Gereneng, a noteworthy phenomenon emerges regarding students' self-esteem. Learners from middle- to upper-income families are often more confident and active in classroom activities, whereas students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds are more likely to be passive and insecure, despite having comparable academic abilities. This indicates that family background plays a role in shaping students' self-perceptions in school.

Teacher and peer support are also critical factors. Teachers who are able to recognize individual student characteristics and acknowledge their efforts contribute positively to the development of self-esteem. Similarly, peer acceptance provides a sense of safety and value for students with special needs, encouraging them to participate in classroom interactions. Thus, the roles of teachers and peers are central to the success of inclusive education.

When effectively implemented, inclusive education not only enhances academic achievement but also strengthens students' social skills and self-esteem. A supportive, empathetic, and diversity-oriented learning environment fosters positive educational outcomes. Conversely, unaddressed barriers risk exacerbating inequalities among students.

Given these considerations, it is important to investigate the influence of inclusive education on students' social skills and self-esteem. This study seeks to provide empirical insights into how the implementation of inclusive education at SDN 1 Gereneng shapes students' socio-emotional development, as well as the challenges encountered in practice.

This research also carries practical significance for schools and teachers. The findings may serve as a basis for evaluating inclusive teaching strategies, equipping teachers with greater sensitivity to students' needs, and designing support programs that strengthen both social skills and self-esteem. In this way, inclusive education can move beyond rhetoric and be realized optimally in primary schools.

From an academic standpoint, this study contributes to the growing body of literature on inclusive education, particularly with respect to its relationship with social skills and self-esteem. The results may also serve as a reference for future research seeking to

explore the effectiveness of inclusive education in different contexts.

Considering the significance of inclusive education for both mainstream and special needs students, along with the persisting challenges in its implementation at SDN 1 Gereneng, this study is deemed necessary. The focus is to examine the extent to which inclusive education influences the social skills and self-esteem of elementary school students.

Based on the background outlined above, the research problem can be formulated as follows: How does inclusive education influence the social skills and self-esteem of students at SDN 1 Gereneng in the 2025/2026 academic year? This central research question is expected to yield a clearer understanding of the relationship between inclusive education and students' socio-emotional development, with implications for both educational theory and classroom practice..

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

This study employed a quantitative approach with an ex post facto design, which investigates events that have already occurred without direct manipulation of the variables under study. The research utilized a causal-comparative design with the aim of examining the influence of inclusive education (independent variable) on students' social skills and self-esteem (dependent variables) at SDN 1

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Gereneng. The study was conducted during the first semester of the 2025/2026 academic year, with the research site purposively selected on the grounds that the school has implemented an inclusive education system.

The population consisted of all students from Grade II to Grade VI at SDN 1 Gereneng, totaling 163 learners. A purposive sampling technique was applied, taking into account both mainstream students and students with special needs enrolled in inclusive classrooms, yielding a sample of 20 students. Data were collected through classroom observations to capture the implementation of inclusive practices, alongside questionnaires employing a Likert scale. The questionnaire measured social skills across four indicators (cooperation, responsibility, empathy, and self-control) and self-esteem across three indicators (self-confidence, self-respect, and self-acceptance).

The research instruments were validated using the product-moment validity test and tested for reliability using Cronbach's Alpha in order to ensure their psychometric quality. The data collected were analyzed through multiple linear regression to determine the effect of inclusive education on students' social skills and self-esteem, both partially and simultaneously. The t-test was employed to assess partial effects, while the F-test was used to examine simultaneous effects. The

coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ) was calculated to identify the extent to which inclusive education contributed to the variance in the dependent variables.

### RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings indicate that inclusive education exerts a significant influence on students' social skills at SDN 1 Gereneng. A simple linear regression analysis was employed to examine the effect of the independent variable, inclusive education (X), on the dependent variable, students' social skills (Y<sub>1</sub>). The results of the data analysis are presented in Table 4.1 below:

Tests of Between-Subjects Effects						
Source	Dependent Variable	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	y1	1943.621 <sup>a</sup>	2	971.811	69.729	.000
	y2	2443.143 <sup>b</sup>	2	1221.571	97.562	.000
Intercept	y1	167431.680	1	167431.680	12013.488	.000
	y2	196491.835	1	196491.835	15692.972	.000
x	y1	1943.621	2	971.811	69.729	.000
	y2	2443.143	2	1221.571	97.562	.000
Error	y1	236.929	17	13.937		
	y2	212.857	17	12.521		
Total	y1	172751.000	20			
	y2	202656.000	20			
Corrected Total	y1	2180.550	19			
	y2	2656.000	19			
a. R Squared = .891 (Adjusted R Squared = .879)						
b. R Squared = .920 (Adjusted R Squared = .910)						

The analysis of the Tests of Between-Subjects Effects revealed that inclusive education (X) had a significant influence on students' social skills. The regression output showed an F-value of 69.729 with a significance level of 0.000 (< 0.05), indicating a statistically significant effect of the independent variable on social skills (Y<sub>1</sub>). The R-squared value of 0.891 (Adjusted R<sup>2</sup> =

0.879) suggests that 89.1% of the variance in social skills is explained by the independent variable, while the remaining 10.9% is attributable to factors outside the model. This demonstrates that the model provides strong explanatory power in accounting for the relationship between inclusive education and students' social skills.

A similar pattern was observed for self-esteem ( $Y_2$ ). The analysis yielded an F-value of 97.562 with a significance level of 0.000 ( $< 0.05$ ), confirming that inclusive education also exerts a significant effect on self-esteem. The R-squared value of 0.920 (Adjusted  $R^2 = 0.910$ ) indicates that 92% of the variance in self-esteem is explained by the independent variable, with only 8% influenced by external factors not captured by the model. The high explanatory value underscores the robustness of the research model in explaining the impact of inclusive education on self-esteem.

Prior to hypothesis testing, prerequisite analyses were conducted to ensure the validity of parametric testing. The normality test results indicated that both social skills and self-esteem followed a normal distribution, as the significance values from both the Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk tests exceeded 0.05. This confirms that the data did not deviate from normality and were suitable for parametric analysis. Furthermore, Levene's Test for homogeneity of variance showed significance values greater than 0.05

across both variables, demonstrating homogeneity of variance across groups and validating the use of ANOVA for hypothesis testing.

Once the assumptions were met, the main ANOVA analysis reaffirmed the significant effect of inclusive education on both dependent variables. For social skills, the model explained 89.1% of the variance, while for self-esteem, it accounted for 92%. These findings confirm that the null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ) is rejected for both variables, and the alternative hypothesis ( $H_1$ ) is accepted.

In summary, the results clearly establish that inclusive education has a significant and substantial effect on students' social skills and self-esteem. The high R-squared values for both variables highlight the strong explanatory capacity of the model, providing robust empirical evidence that inclusive education plays a pivotal role in shaping students' socio-emotional development. These findings also reinforce the theoretical foundation that the independent variable contributes meaningfully to the formation of both social competence and self-esteem.

### **Impact of Inclusive Education on the Development of Students' Social Skills**

Elementary schools are not merely institutions for the acquisition of academic knowledge; rather, they function as critical spaces for character

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formation and the development of social skills. Through daily interactions, students learn to appreciate diversity, collaborate with peers, and cultivate empathy. Within this context, inclusive education serves as a pedagogical approach that guarantees equal opportunities for all learners while simultaneously fostering a socially conducive environment. SDN 1 Gereneng in the 2025/2026 academic year exemplifies such practice by embedding inclusivity as the foundation of its social climate.

Descriptive statistical analysis revealed that inclusive education ( $X$ ) had a mean score of 101.35 with a standard deviation of 8.58, whereas social skills ( $Y_1$ ) recorded a mean of 107.35 with a standard deviation of 3.74. These findings suggest that while the degree of inclusive education implementation varied considerably, students' social skills remained relatively homogeneous. This pattern underscores the role of an inclusive school climate in ensuring equity in the development of social competencies.

The inclusive learning environment encouraged students to actively engage with peers, respect individual differences, and collaborate toward shared goals. This aligns with Anderson and Boyle's (2020) assertion that inclusive education simultaneously enhances access to learning and strengthens socio-emotional development. At SDN 1 Gereneng, the relatively high and evenly distributed

social skills among students reflect this dual function.

Such outcomes corroborate the findings of Zhang et al. (2022), who highlighted that early development of social skills positively impacts academic achievement, motivation, and psychological well-being. Collaborative classroom practices—such as group discussions, presentations, and teamwork—played a pivotal role in reinforcing these skills. Nguyen and Pham (2025) further emphasize that inquiry-based and collaborative pedagogies are particularly effective in enhancing students' social competencies.

Equally significant is the integration of Social Emotional Learning (SEL). Teachers at SDN 1 Gereneng implemented daily reflections, reinforced prosocial behaviors, and mediated conflicts through empathetic approaches. These practices resonate with Hromek and Roffey's (2021) findings that SEL initiatives in inclusive settings substantially improve social awareness and interpersonal competence.

The relative homogeneity of students' social skills also demonstrates that school culture exerts a stronger influence than technical variations in the implementation of inclusive education. As Graham and Slee (2020) argue, inclusive school culture—grounded in cooperation, mutual respect, and recognition of diversity—shapes social outcomes more

profoundly than policy mechanics. This is further evidenced by students' participation in extracurricular programs and group projects, which broaden their opportunities for meaningful social engagement.

From a theoretical perspective, the present findings lend strong support to Li and Chen (2022), who reported that inclusive education significantly improves interpersonal communication. Furthermore, Martinez et al. (2021) identified childhood social skills as robust predictors of both academic and non-academic success in later stages of life. Thus, the positive trajectory observed at SDN 1 Gereneng has important long-term implications.

In sum, this study provides empirical evidence that inclusive education exerts a significant and positive influence on the social skills of elementary students. The consistency of students' social competencies, despite variations in inclusive practices, reflects the critical mediating role of school culture and collaborative pedagogy. These findings are consistent with Carter et al. (2023), who emphasized the necessity of school leadership in embedding inclusive values across institutional practices.

Nevertheless, the study is constrained by its relatively small sample size ( $N = 20$ ), which limits generalizability. Future research with larger cohorts, longitudinal designs, or qualitative methods such as in-depth interviews and classroom observations

is warranted to generate more nuanced insights into the dynamics between inclusive education and social skill development.

Practically, schools should prioritize professional development for teachers on collaborative and reflective teaching strategies, expand SEL integration, and design extracurricular activities that emphasize teamwork and prosocial interaction. Such initiatives will ensure that students' social competencies are cultivated holistically, preparing them for the challenges of broader societal participation.

Taken together, the findings affirm that inclusive education at SDN 1 Gereneng in the 2025/2026 academic year positively contributes to the development of students' social skills. This reinforces contemporary scholarship positioning inclusive education as a cornerstone for nurturing adaptive, tolerant, and socially competent future generations.

### **The Influence of Inclusive Education on Students' Self-Esteem**

Self-esteem constitutes a fundamental dimension of personality development, referring to individuals' evaluative judgments of themselves, encompassing both self-acceptance and self-worth. Within the context of elementary education, self-esteem plays a dual role: it contributes to the formation of identity while simultaneously shaping learning

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motivation, academic achievement, and the quality of social interactions. Understanding the factors that underpin self-esteem—particularly inclusive education—therefore becomes essential for fostering a holistic educational ecosystem.

At SDN 1 Gereneng during the 2025/2026 academic year, inclusive education was systematically integrated as part of the school's developmental strategy. This policy ensured that all students had equal rights to learn, participate, and grow according to their potential. Importantly, the inclusive environment was not confined to academic attainment but extended to the creation of a culture of acceptance, togetherness, and respect for diversity—conditions that provided fertile ground for strengthening self-esteem.

Descriptive statistics indicated that the self-esteem variable ( $Y_2$ ) had a mean of 99.50 and a standard deviation of 3.98, with scores ranging from 93 to 106. These values suggest that most students fell within the moderate-to-high self-esteem category, underscoring the potential of inclusive practices to establish a positive psychological climate. This finding resonates with Donnelly (2020), who argued that inclusive practices emphasizing participation foster a sense of belonging and, in turn, elevate students' self-esteem.

Nevertheless, the relationship between inclusive education and self-

esteem was neither singular nor linear. A notable observation was that some students with high inclusivity scores exhibited low self-esteem, while others with lower inclusivity scores reported higher self-esteem. Such variations highlight the multidimensional nature of self-esteem, which is shaped not only by the school environment but also by familial dynamics, individual dispositions, and broader life experiences (Park et al., 2021).

Family factors play a pivotal role: parental emotional support, positive parenting styles, and warm communication reinforce children's confidence, often compensating for limitations in the school context. Conversely, the absence of family support may hinder self-esteem development even within highly inclusive educational settings. At the individual level, traits such as temperament, resilience, and social competence also serve as critical determinants. As Kaya and Aydin (2022) contend, students with strong social skills are more likely to experience peer acceptance and recognition, thereby bolstering their self-esteem. This was evident at SDN 1 Gereneng, where students adept in social adaptation displayed greater confidence and optimism in academic and interpersonal engagements.

Yet, certain students still reported low self-esteem despite the inclusive climate, often linked to personal setbacks such as academic struggles,

adjustment difficulties, or feelings of social isolation. This underscores the need for inclusive education to be complemented by personalized interventions, including individual counseling, mentoring, and the provision of consistent positive feedback from teachers. Yang and Kim (2023) affirm that self-esteem development is most effective when inclusive education is coupled with pedagogical approaches responsive to children's emotional needs, particularly when teachers demonstrate empathy, appreciation for diversity, and affirming reinforcement.

Collaborative learning practices at SDN 1 Gereneng, such as group discussions, cooperative projects, and play-based activities, were found to significantly enhance students' self-esteem. Through such interactions, students experienced recognition, felt valued for their contributions, and learned to appreciate differing perspectives—elements central to the construction of a healthy self-concept. The link between self-esteem and learning motivation further reinforces this effect: students with higher self-esteem were more willing to embrace challenges and persist in the face of setbacks, while those with lower self-esteem tended to avoid risks and disengage from difficult tasks.

Nonetheless, challenges remain. The diversity of students' backgrounds creates differing emotional needs, requiring teachers to exercise

heightened sensitivity and differentiated pedagogical responses. Jansen et al. (2022) demonstrated that psychosocial support programs tailored to individual differences significantly enhance students' self-esteem beyond the baseline benefits of inclusive education. Similarly, peer relationships—marked by acceptance, recognition, and support—serve as critical external reinforcements of self-esteem. The inclusive ethos at SDN 1 Gereneng encouraged such peer dynamics, ensuring that all students felt safe to express themselves without fear of rejection.

Importantly, self-esteem is not merely a psychological construct but also a predictor of academic performance. Students with higher self-esteem consistently demonstrated better learning outcomes, as corroborated by Sari and Nugroho (2024), who identified self-esteem as a powerful predictor of elementary students' academic achievement in Indonesia. This confirms the dual function of inclusive education: fostering a conducive learning climate while simultaneously nurturing students' self-esteem.

The effectiveness of inclusive education, however, hinges on the collaborative involvement of multiple stakeholders—teachers, parents, and students themselves. At SDN 1 Gereneng, strengthening teacher professional development in reflective pedagogy, expanding psychosocial

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support, and fostering family-school partnerships emerged as strategic avenues for sustaining positive self-esteem outcomes.

In conclusion, inclusive education at SDN 1 Gereneng exerted a significant influence on students' self-esteem by creating an environment of acceptance, belonging, and recognition. Although the relationship was mediated by individual and contextual factors, the overall trajectory was positive. When complemented by emotional support strategies and holistic interventions, inclusive education has the potential to promote sustained self-esteem development, thereby preparing students to thrive both academically and socially.

### CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that the implementation of inclusive education exerts a significant influence on both students' social skills and self-esteem at SDN 1 Gereneng in the 2025/2026 academic year. The findings reveal that inclusive education accounts for 89.1% of the variance in social skills ( $F = 69.729$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ;  $R^2 = 0.891$ ) and 92% of the variance in self-esteem ( $F = 97.562$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ;  $R^2 = 0.920$ ). These results confirm that the more effectively inclusive education is implemented, the greater the enhancement of students' abilities to collaborate, empathize, assume responsibility, and regulate their social interactions, as well as their capacity to

build confidence and self-worth. Theoretically, this study reinforces educational psychology perspectives which highlight the pivotal role of external factors, particularly inclusive education, in shaping social competence and self-esteem. Practically, the findings provide valuable insights for educators, counselors, and policymakers to design learning strategies, extracurricular activities, and educational environments that balance cognitive, affective, and social development. In this regard, inclusive education emerges as a crucial framework for cultivating equitable, supportive, and diversity-affirming learning environments while preparing students to develop mature social skills and resilient, healthy self-esteem.

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