

## Social Skills of Students with Mild Intellectual Disability in Inclusive and Special School Settings

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### ABSTRACT

The present study examines the social skills of students with mild intellectual disability studying in inclusive and special school settings. The sample consisted of 100 students, of which 52 were from inclusive schools and 48 from special schools. The data were collected using the EACCID scale. The findings revealed statistically significant differences between the two groups across all domains of social skills, including mealtime behaviour, mobility skills, grocery shopping, toileting, post office skills, and other survival skills. The results indicated that students in special schools performed better in structured self-care skills such as mealtime behaviour, mobility, and toileting. In contrast, students in inclusive schools demonstrated higher performance in community-based and functional skills such as grocery shopping, post office skills, and other survival skills. The findings suggest that both educational settings contribute differently to the development of social skills. Therefore, a balanced approach integrating structured training and real-life exposure is essential for enhancing the overall social competence of students with mild intellectual disability.

**Keywords:** *Social Skills, Intellectual Disability, Inclusive Education, Special Schools, EACCID*

Education plays a vital role in the holistic development of every child, including those with mild intellectual disability. Social skills are an essential component of adaptive behaviour, enabling individuals to interact effectively with others and function independently in daily life. Students with mild intellectual disability often experience difficulties in developing appropriate social behaviours, communication skills, and community participation.

In recent years, there has been a growing emphasis on inclusive education, where students with disabilities are educated alongside their typically developing peers. Inclusive school settings provide opportunities for natural social interaction, peer learning, and exposure to real-life situations. On the other hand, special schools offer structured environments with individualized instruction, which may support the development of basic self-care and routine-based social skills. The development of social skills such as communication, mobility, self-help, and community participation is crucial for the independent living of students with

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intellectual disability. These skills not only enhance their quality of life but also improve their social adjustment and acceptance in society.

However, there is an ongoing debate regarding the effectiveness of inclusive versus special school settings in promoting social skills among students with intellectual disability. While inclusive settings emphasize social integration and real-life exposure, special schools focus on systematic training and individualized support.

Therefore, it becomes important to compare the social skills of students with mild intellectual disability in these two educational settings. The present study attempts to examine the differences in various domains of social skills using the EACCID assessment tool. The findings of the study will contribute to understanding the role of educational environments in enhancing the social competence of students with intellectual disability.

Social skills are essential for independent living and successful integration into society, especially for students with mild intellectual disability. These skills include daily living abilities such as communication, mobility, self-care, and community participation. Educational settings, whether inclusive or special schools, play a significant role in developing these competencies. Inclusive schools provide opportunities for interaction with typically developing peers, while special schools offer structured and specialized training.

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The literature review provides an understanding of prior research on social skills of students with intellectual disabilities, particularly in inclusive and special school settings. Several studies have highlighted the importance of educational environments in influencing the learning outcomes and social development of students with mild intellectual disability.

**Rao and Reddy (2021)** examined the effectiveness of social skills training programs for students with intellectual disability. The study found that systematic training and peer-mediated interventions significantly improved communication skills, cooperation, and social participation among students.

**Das and Mishra (2020)** explored the impact of inclusive education on functional skill development among children with intellectual disability. The study concluded that inclusive environments facilitate the development of practical life skills such as shopping, communication, and community participation due to increased real-world interaction.

**Sasikala and Swarnakumari (2020)** conducted a study on the impact of inclusive education on children with mild intellectual disability with special reference to social skills and peer attitudes. The study reported that inclusive education provides opportunities for children with intellectual disabilities to interact with typically developing peers, which helps them develop appropriate social behaviours, cooperation, and communication skills. The findings indicated that students placed in inclusive classrooms showed improved social interaction and positive peer relationships compared to those in segregated settings.

**Kumar and Singh (2019)** conducted a comparative study on social competence of children with intellectual disability in inclusive and special schools. The study revealed that children in inclusive settings demonstrated better community-related social skills, while those in special schools performed better in structured daily living skills. The study emphasized the importance of environmental exposure in developing functional social competencies.

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**Sharma and Nair (2018)** investigated the role of school environment in developing adaptive behaviour among children with mild intellectual disability. The findings indicated that structured teaching strategies in special schools enhanced self-care and routine-based skills, whereas inclusive schools promoted social interaction and independence in real-life situations.

**Gupta and Mehta (2017)** conducted a study on adaptive behaviour and social skills among children with intellectual disability. The results revealed that social skills are strongly influenced by both instructional methods and environmental factors, highlighting the importance of combining structured teaching with real-life exposure.

**Kaur and Kakkar (2016)** studied the social adjustment of children with intellectual disability in different educational settings. The findings indicated that children in inclusive schools showed better social adjustment and peer acceptance, whereas children in special schools showed better performance in routine and self-help skills.

### ***Statement of Problem:***

Social skills of students with mild intellectual disability in inclusive and special school settings.

### ***Significance of the problem:***

The development of social skills is crucial for students with mild intellectual disability, as these skills directly influence their independence, social adjustment, and quality of life. In the context of modern education, both inclusive and special school settings aim to support such learners, yet their effectiveness in fostering social skills across domains remains a concern. Therefore, the present study holds considerable significance. The findings are significant for teachers and special educators, as they provide insights into which domains of social skills require more attention in each setting. This can help in designing appropriate teaching strategies, individualized education programs (IEPs), and intervention plans. Study is important for policymakers and educational planners, as it provides empirical evidence regarding the effectiveness of inclusive education versus special schooling. This can guide decisions related to curriculum planning, resource allocation, and implementation of inclusive policies. Further, the study is beneficial for parents and caregivers, as it helps them understand the strengths and limitations of each educational setting in developing their child's social competencies, thereby assisting them in making informed educational choices. Finally, the research adds to the existing body of knowledge in the field of special education, particularly in the area of adaptive behavior and social skill development, and provides a foundation for future research and intervention-based studies.

### ***Objectives of the Study:***

- To compare the social skills of students with mild intellectual disability in inclusive and special schools.
- To compare the social skills of students with mild intellectual disability in inclusive and special school settings across different social skills domains of EACCID.

### ***Hypothesis:***

- **H<sub>0</sub>1:** There is no significant difference in social skills of students with mild intellectual disability studying in inclusive and special school settings.

### ***Research Design:***

The present study employed a descriptive survey research design to examine the social skills of students with mild intellectual disability studying in inclusive and special school settings. The descriptive survey method was considered most appropriate for the study, as it facilitates the systematic collection, analysis, and interpretation of data related to existing conditions without any manipulation of variables. The primary objective of the study was to compare the academic performance of two groups of students with mild intellectual disability—those enrolled in inclusive schools and those studying in special schools. The comparison was carried out across various academic domains as assessed through the EACCID (Evaluation of Adaptive and Functional Skills in Children with Intellectual Disability) tool. This design enabled the researcher to obtain an objective understanding of differences in academic performance across the two educational settings.

### ***Sample:***

The sample of the present study consisted of 100 students with mild intellectual disability studying in inclusive and special school settings. Out of the total sample, 52 students were selected from inclusive schools, while 48 students were selected from special schools.

The participants were identified based on their diagnostic records and school reports, which confirmed the presence of mild intellectual disability. The students were drawn from institutions that provide educational services specifically for children with intellectual disabilities. The participants' age ranged from approximately 10 to 16 years, and they were enrolled in grade levels appropriate to their cognitive and functional abilities. The selection of participants was carried out using purposive sampling technique, as the study specifically required students with mild intellectual disability from two distinct educational settings for comparative analysis.

### ***Tool:***

The EACCID is a standardized tool designed to assess functional academic and social competencies among children with intellectual disabilities, supporting educational planning and intervention. The tool assesses various domains of academic and social performance, including reading and writing skills, numeration, computation, and functional academic concepts. EACCID is widely used by special educators, psychologists, and researchers for educational assessment and intervention planning. The tool generates systematic and objective data that support the development of Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) for children with intellectual disabilities. Its standardized nature ensures reliability and validity in assessing academic performance across different educational settings.

### ***Data Collection Procedure:***

The data for the present study were collected from students with mild intellectual disability studying in inclusive and special school settings. Prior permission was obtained from the respective school authorities before initiating data collection. The participants were selected based on school records and diagnostic reports confirming mild intellectual disability. After selecting participants, the researcher personally visited the respective schools to administer the assessment. The EACCID tool was administered individually to the selected students in a suitable and comfortable environment. Clear, simple instructions were provided to ensure students understood the tasks. Adequate time and support were given to the participants during the assessment process. The responses of the students were carefully recorded only for social skills domains in accordance with the standardized guidelines of the tool to maintain accuracy and consistency in data collection.

**Statistical Techniques:**

The collected data were analyzed using appropriate statistical techniques to achieve the objectives of the study. The Mean was calculated to determine the average performance of students in different academic domains. The Standard Deviation (SD) was computed to assess the variability or dispersion in the scores. The independent samples t-test was applied to determine the significance of the difference between students studying in inclusive and special school settings. These statistical techniques enabled the researcher to test the formulated hypotheses and draw meaningful interpretations regarding the academic performance of students with mild intellectual disability.

**RESULTS & DISCUSSION**

*Table-1 Indicating mean, SD and t-values between intellectually Disabled children from inclusive and special schools for the Social Skills of EACCID.*

Measure	School	N	Mean	SD	't'	Sig. Level
<b>Social Skill Mealtime Behaviour</b>	Inclusive	52	17.11	5.33	5.28	<i>p</i> <.01
	Special	48	22.09	4.06		
<b>Social skill Mobility Skills</b>	Inclusive	52	2.30	.79	10.75	<i>p</i> <.01
	Special	48	3.81	.61		
<b>Social skill Grocery Shopping</b>	Inclusive	52	4.37	.97	5.50	<i>p</i> <.01
	Special	48	3.41	.77		
<b>Social Skill Toileting</b>	Inclusive	52	2.92	.99	5.02	<i>p</i> <.01
	Special	48	3.77	.69		
<b>Social skill Post office Skills</b>	Inclusive	52	2.74	.75	5.74	<i>p</i> <.01
	Special	48	1.83	.83		
<b>Social skill other survival Skills</b>	Inclusive	52	25.55	5.67	4.53	<i>p</i> <.01
	Special	48	19.93	6.64		

Table 1 presents a comparison between students with mild intellectual disability studying in inclusive schools and those in special schools across various domains of social skills as measured by EACCID. The mean scores, standard deviations, and calculated t-values are presented for each domain.

The mean score of students from inclusive schools (M = 17.11, SD = 5.33) is lower than that of students from special schools (M = 22.09, SD = 4.06) in the domain of mealtime behaviour. The calculated t-value (t = 5.28) exceeds the critical value at the 0.01 level of significance, indicating a significant difference between the two groups. This suggests that students in special schools perform better in mealtime behaviour skills.

In the domain of mobility skills, the mean score of students from inclusive schools (M = 2.30, SD = 0.79) is lower than that of students from special schools (M = 3.81, SD = 0.61). The calculated t-value (t = 10.75) is highly significant at the 0.01 level, indicating that students in special schools demonstrate better mobility skills.

For grocery shopping skills, the mean score of students from inclusive schools (M = 4.37, SD = 0.97) is higher than that of students from special schools (M = 3.41, SD = 0.77). The calculated t-value (t = 5.50) is significant at the 0.01 level, suggesting that students in inclusive schools perform better in this domain.

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In the domain of toileting skills, the mean score of students from inclusive schools ( $M = 2.92$ ,  $SD = 0.99$ ) is lower than that of students from special schools ( $M = 3.77$ ,  $SD = 0.69$ ). The calculated t-value ( $t = 5.02$ ) is significant at the 0.01 level, indicating that students in special schools perform better in toileting skills.

In the case of post office skills, the mean score of students from inclusive schools ( $M = 2.74$ ,  $SD = 0.75$ ) is higher than that of students from special schools ( $M = 1.83$ ,  $SD = 0.83$ ). The calculated t-value ( $t = 5.74$ ) is significant at the 0.01 level, showing that students in inclusive schools perform better in this domain.

Finally, in the domain of other survival skills, the mean score of students from inclusive schools ( $M = 25.55$ ,  $SD = 5.67$ ) is higher than that of students from special schools ( $M = 19.93$ ,  $SD = 6.64$ ). The calculated t-value ( $t = 4.53$ ) is significant at the 0.01 level, indicating that students in inclusive schools demonstrate better performance in other survival skills.

Overall, the results reveal significant differences between the two groups across all domains of social skills. While students in special schools perform better in structured self-care skills such as mealtime behaviour, mobility, and toileting, students in inclusive schools show better performance in community-based and functional skills such as grocery shopping, post office skills, and other survival skills. Thus,  $H_0$  is strongly rejected. These findings are supported by previous research indicating that inclusive environments enhance social interaction and adaptive functioning, while special schools are more effective in teaching basic life skills through individualized instruction.

## CONCLUSION

The present study concludes that there are significant differences in the social skills of students with mild intellectual disability across inclusive and special school settings. The findings reveal that special schools are more effective in developing structured self-care skills such as mealtime behaviour, mobility, and toileting due to systematic and individualized training. In contrast, inclusive schools provide better opportunities for developing community-based and functional skills, such as grocery shopping, post office skills, and other survival skills, through real-life exposure and peer interaction. The study highlights that both educational settings possess unique strengths in fostering different dimensions of social competence. It emphasizes the need for a balanced and integrated approach that combines structured learning with natural social environments. Such an approach can ensure the holistic development and independent functioning of students with mild intellectual disability. The findings also reinforce the importance of adapting educational practices to meet diverse learner needs. Overall, the study contributes valuable insights for educators, policy makers, and researchers in the field of inclusive and special education.

### *Educational Implications:*

- Inclusive schools should incorporate structured training for self-care skills.
- Special schools should provide more community exposure and real-life learning experiences.

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### **Conflict of Interest**

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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