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Parents' Motivation of Children with Intellectual Disabilities in Improving Their Children's Oral and Dental Hygiene

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ABSTRACT

Health is a comprehensive state of well-being that includes physical, mental, spiritual, and social aspects, allowing individuals to lead productive social and economic lives. Among various health concerns, oral health plays a vital role as it directly impacts overall health. Oral hygiene, defined as the absence of plaque and tartar in the mouth, is essential to maintain this health. This study aims to explore parents' motivation in supporting their intellectually disabled children to improve oral hygiene at SLB C Autis Negeri Tuban in 2024. The research method using an analytical approach, the research involved purposive sampling of 47 parents and their children. Descriptive analysis and bivariate Spearman's rank correlation test were applied to analyze the data. The results demonstrated a significant positive relationship between parental motivation and improvements in the oral hygiene of intellectually disabled students. It can be concluded that stronger parental motivation contributes to better oral hygiene outcomes, as reflected in improved Oral Hygiene Index-Simplified (OHI-S) scores among these students.

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INTRODUCTION

Health is a state of complete physical, mental, spiritual, and social well-being that enables individuals to live productively in social and economic spheres (Hariram et al., 2023; Abbas et al., 2024; Singh, & Agarwal, 2024; Al-Thani, 2025; Navidmanesh et al., 2025). Achieving the highest possible health status for the community requires integrated and comprehensive health efforts, including individual and public health initiatives. Beyond general physical health, oral health deserves special attention because it significantly impacts overall bodily. Oral hygiene refers to the condition where the oral cavity is free from debris such as plaque and tartar. Neglecting oral hygiene leads to plaque buildup on the teeth, which can spread across the tooth surfaces. Dental caries in primary school children are often linked to the frequent consumption of cariogenic foods (Pariati, 2021).

The children with special needs constitute approximately 7–10% of the total child population in Indonesia. Special needs children (SNC) include those with physical, psychological, cognitive, and/or social limitations, which delay their achievement of

developmental milestones and full potential. This group encompasses children who are deaf, blind, physically disabled, intellectually disabled, speech-impaired, or emotionally disturbed (Louisa et al., 2021). Children with special needs require specialized care due to their developmental disorders and abnormalities. In relation to disability, they may have limitations in one or more abilities, whether physical (e.g., visually or hearing impaired) or psychological, such as autism and ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder), a medical condition characterized by impulsive and hyperactive behaviors (Fakhiratunnisa et al., 2022). These children are considered a high-risk group for health problems and therefore need assistance and collaboration with others to obtain and maintain their health, including oral health. Maintaining a clean and healthy oral condition is crucial to support their overall well-being. Common oral health issues among children with special needs include dental caries (Atmadjati et al., 2023).

Stefanovska et al., (2010) reported that poor oral hygiene and periodontal disease are major challenges faced by individuals with disabilities (Stefanovska et al., 2010). This aligns with findings that oral hygiene in visually impaired students at SLB-A (Special School for the Blind) improved significantly after receiving daily guided toothbrushing and verbal instructions. Indahwati et al. noted that children with special needs have different mental, physical, and emotional limitations compared to typically developing children, necessitating additional support in maintaining oral hygiene (Louisa et al., 2021). Motivation is the tendency within an individual, either consciously or unconsciously, to perform certain actions aimed at achieving specific goals. It is usually derived from knowledge, which then fosters desires that underlie behavior. Children primarily gain motivation from their families and school environments, which is especially critical during their growth and development stages. Parents play a significant role in shaping their children's behavior. The attitudes and behaviors of parents, particularly mothers, towards oral health maintenance considerably influence their children’s oral hygiene practices (Pay, & Wali, 2021; Variani, & Krisyudhanti, 2021; Rahmaniar et al., 2022; Harapan, Karamoy, & Bidjuni, 2023; Pinat et al., 2023; Wali et al., 2024).

A systematic review highlighted that parental involvement positively affects the oral health of children with Down syndrome. Parents help manage and maintain their children’s oral hygiene. Lack of parental knowledge and understanding about oral health can lead to unnoticed deterioration of oral conditions. Continuous and repetitive parental guidance enhances the self-care skills of children with intellectual disabilities in toothbrushing, ultimately making it a habitual practice (Dasrina et al., 2023). Health education involves conveying messages to the public. Effective health education tools should be designed based on the principle that knowledge is acquired through the five senses. A dental phantom model is one such educational aid, used for demonstrating oral care techniques and clinical training. This model simulates the gums, teeth, and palate, showing the structure of teeth and proper methods for oral cleaning and protection (Nurmalasari et al., 2021). This study will focus on parents of children with intellectual disabilities at SLB C Autis Negeri Tuban. Prior to this, no education had been provided on maintaining oral hygiene, and according to the school principal, there was no School Dental Health Effort program (UKGS) in place—although UKGS is an important promotive and preventive oral health service. This research aims to explore parental motivation in supporting their intellectually disabled children to improve oral hygiene at SLB C Autis Negeri Tuban in 2024.

METHOD

This study employs an analytical research design aimed at examining the relationship between variables—in this case, the relationship between parental motivation and the oral hygiene of intellectually disabled students at SLB C Autis Negeri Tuban. The study population comprises 53 parents and their intellectually disabled children enrolled at the same institution. A total of 47 parent-child pairs were selected as the sample, using purposive sampling. This technique involves selecting participants based on specific considerations relevant to the research objective, namely, focusing on parents of intellectually disabled students.

The sampling process was guided by both inclusion and exclusion criteria. Inclusion criteria refer to participant characteristics that align with the research objectives, while exclusion criteria refer to conditions that warrant the removal of individuals who may otherwise meet the inclusion criteria. In this study, the inclusion criteria required respondents to be mothers of intellectually disabled students at SLB C Autis Negeri Tuban. The research was conducted at SLB C Autis Negeri Tuban from July 18 to July 26, 2024.

Data collection instruments included a structured questionnaire used to assess parental motivation in supporting the oral hygiene of their children. To evaluate the oral hygiene status of the students, clinical examination sheets were utilized in combination with disposable diagnostic tools such as probes, tweezers, mouth mirrors, and excavators.

Data analysis involved both descriptive and bivariate techniques. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize the characteristics of the independent and dependent variables in the form of frequency distributions. To test the research hypothesis, bivariate analysis was conducted using Spearman's rank correlation test at a significance level of $\alpha = 0.05$. A result of $\rho < \alpha$ indicated a statistically significant relationship between parental motivation and the oral hygiene of intellectually disabled students, while $\rho > \alpha$ indicated no significant relationship. Further analysis was conducted using SPSS software to determine the strength of the correlation, based on the partial correlation coefficient.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study was conducted at SLB C Autis Negeri Tuban in 2024, with respondents consisting of intellectually disabled students aged 10 to 15 years. It is known that there are no UKGS (School Dental Health Efforts) activities at SLB C Autis Negeri Tuban. The respondents in this study were the parents of the intellectually disabled students at SLB C Autis Negeri Tuban, totaling 47 individuals.

Table 1. Distribution of Respondent Characteristics Based on Student Gender, Parents' Occupation Level, and Parents' Education Level of Intellectually Disabled Students at SLB C Autis Negeri Tuban in 2024.

Respondent Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Male	22	47
Female	25	53
Total	47	100
Occupation Level		
Entrepreneur	12	26
Private Employee	2	4
Civil Servant (PNS)	2	4
Trader	1	2
Farmer	1	2
Industry Worker	1	2
Housewife	28	60
Total	47	100
Education Level		
Junior High School (SMP)	13	28
Senior High School (SMA)	18	38
Higher Education (University)	16	34
Total	47	100

Table 1 shows that the majority of the parents' occupations are housewives (60%), and the highest education level among parents is senior high school (SMA), with 18 individuals (38%). Parental occupation influences many aspects of family life, including child-rearing practices and attention to health, particularly oral hygiene. Parents with greater knowledge of health tend to be more involved in maintaining their children's dental hygiene.

Table 2. Frequency Distribution of Intrinsic Motivation Responses of Parents of Intellectually Disabled Students at SLB C Autis Negeri Tuban in 2024.

No	Statement	Respondent Answer							
		Strongly Agree (SA)		Agree (A)		Disagree (D)		Strongly Disagree (SD)	
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
1	I take my child to the dental clinic to have tartar removed so that their oral cavity stays clean.	17	36	24	51	6	13	0	0
2	I always encourage my child to rinse their mouth after eating to prevent food residues from sticking.	22	47	14	29	10	21	1	3
3	I do not allow my child to eat candy.	19	40	20	42	7	15	1	3
4	I brush my child's front teeth with an up-and-down motion, moving from the gums toward the teeth for thorough cleaning.	16	43	24	51	1	3	0	0
5	I do not brush my child's front teeth with an up-and-down motion, moving from the gums toward the teeth for thorough cleaning.*	10	21	25	53	11	23	1	3
6	I brush the back teeth near the cheeks with a circular motion to remove any food particles between the teeth.	23	49	13	28	11	23	0	0
7	I brush my child's upper teeth near the palate to ensure all tooth surfaces are clean.	15	31	25	53	6	13	1	3
8	I brush my child's teeth twice a day to keep their teeth and mouth healthy and clean.	21	45	20	42	6	13	0	0
9	I have my child's teeth and mouth examined to maintain a clean oral cavity.	21	45	15	31	11	23	0	0
10	I do not have my child's teeth and mouth checked every six months because there is no pain.*	0	0	11	23	18	38	18	38

Table 2 shows that, overall, the intrinsic motivation of parents of intellectually disabled students at SLB C Autis Negeri Tuban in 2024 falls into the strong motivation category (66%). A total of 31 parents (66%) demonstrated strong intrinsic motivation, while 16 parents (34%) showed moderate intrinsic motivation.

Table 3. Frequency Distribution of Extrinsic Motivation Responses of Parents of Intellectually Disabled Students at SLB C Autis Negeri Tuban in 2024.

No	Statement	Respondent Answer							
		Strongly Agree (SA)		Strongly Agree (SA)		Strongly Agree (SA)		Strongly Agree (SA)	
		F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F
1	I take my child to clean their tartar after receiving advice from family members.	19	40	28	60	0	0	0	0
2	I always encourage my child to rinse their mouth after eating.	29	62	15	32	3	6	0	0
3	I encourage my child to eat vegetables and fruits.	31	66	10	21	6	13	0	0

4	I brush my child's front teeth using an up-and-down motion or from the gums toward the teeth after receiving guidance from health workers.	26	55	18	38	3	7	0	0
5	I do not brush my child's front teeth using an up-and-down motion or from the gums toward the teeth after receiving guidance from health workers.*	0	0	2	4	25	53	20	43
6	I brush my child's back teeth near the cheeks in a circular motion to remove food debris between teeth after receiving guidance from health workers.	25	53	19	40	2	5	1	3
7	I brush my child's upper teeth near the palate after receiving guidance from health workers.	22	47	21	44	3	6	1	3
8	I brush my child's teeth twice a day after receiving guidance from health workers.	22	47	20	43	5	10	0	0
9	I take my child for dental and oral check-ups to improve their oral health.	29	62	15	32	2	5	1	3
10	I give my child praise as a reward when they cooperate with tooth brushing.	25	53	21	44	1	3	0	0

Table 3 shows that the extrinsic motivation of parents of intellectually disabled students at SLB C Autis Negeri Tuban in 2024 also falls into the strong motivation category, with a percentage of 87%. A total of 41 parents (87%) demonstrated strong extrinsic motivation, while 6 parents (13%) had moderate extrinsic motivation.

Table 4. Frequency Distribution of Parental Motivation of Intellectually Disabled Students at SLB C Autis Negeri Tuban in 2024.

Category	Intrinsic Motivation		Extrinsic Motivation	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Strong Motivation	31	66	41	87
Moderate Motivation	16	34	6	13
Low Motivation	0	0	0	0
Total	47	100	47	100

Table 4 shows that the majority of parents of intellectually disabled students at SLB C Autis Negeri Tuban have strong intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Thirty-one parents (66%) exhibited strong intrinsic motivation, while 16 parents (34%) showed moderate intrinsic motivation. Regarding extrinsic motivation, 41 parents (87%) demonstrated strong motivation, and 6 parents (13%) showed moderate motivation.

Table 5. Frequency Distribution of Oral Hygiene Scores of Intellectually Disabled Students at SLB C Autis Negeri Tuban Before and After Receiving Motivation from Parents.

Category	Before		After	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Good	0	0	44	94%
Moderate	0	0	3	6%
Poor	47	100	0	0
Total	47	100	47	100

Table 5 shows that the oral hygiene scores of intellectually disabled students at SLB C Autis Negeri Tuban in 2024 were categorized as poor (100%) before receiving motivation from their parents. After parental motivation, 94% of the students' oral hygiene scores improved to the good category.

Table 6. Cross-tabulation of Parents' Intrinsic Motivation with Their Intellectually Disabled Children's Oral Hygiene at SLB C Autis Negeri Tuban in 2024

OHI-S	Intrinsic Motivation			p-value
	Strong	Moderate	Total	
Good	31	13	44	0,012
Moderate	0	3	3	
Poor	31	16	47	

Based on Table 6, it can be seen that parents with strong intrinsic motivation had children with good oral hygiene index-simplified (OHI-S) scores, totaling 31 children (66%). Meanwhile, parents with moderate intrinsic motivation had children with moderate OHI-S scores, totaling 16 children (34%). The p-value was 0.012, meaning $\rho < \alpha$ (0.05), so the alternative hypothesis (H1) is accepted and the null hypothesis (H0) is rejected. Therefore, it can be concluded that there is a significant relationship between parental intrinsic motivation and the improvement of oral hygiene in intellectually disabled students at SLB C Autis Negeri Tuban in 2024.

Table 7. Cross Tabulation of Parental Extrinsic Motivation and Oral Hygiene of Intellectually Disabled Students at SLB C Autis Negeri Tuban in 2024

OHI-S	Extrinsic Motivation			p-value
	Strong	Moderate	Total	
Good	41	3	44	
Moderate	0	3	3	0,01
Poor	41	6	47	

Based on Table 7, it can be seen that parents with strong extrinsic motivation had children with good OHI-S scores, totaling 41 children (87%), while parents with moderate extrinsic motivation had children with moderate OHI-S scores, totaling 6 children (13%). The p-value was 0.01, which means $\rho < \alpha$ (0.05), so the alternative hypothesis (H1) is accepted and the null hypothesis (H0) is rejected. Therefore, it can be concluded that there is a significant relationship between parental extrinsic motivation and the improvement of oral hygiene in intellectually disabled students at SLB C Autis Negeri Tuban in 2024. In conclusion, the stronger the parents' motivation, the better the OHI-S scores of intellectually disabled students at SLB C Autis Negeri Tuban in 2024.

DISCUSSION

Parental Motivation of Intellectually Disabled Students at SLB C Autis Negeri Tuban in 2024.

According to Wahluyo et al. (2023), parental motivation is the internal drive or stimulus within parents that causes them to take actions to achieve goals or fulfill needs. Motivation can be divided into two types: intrinsic and extrinsic. Intrinsic motivation arises from within the individual without external influence, while extrinsic motivation is driven by external factors such as family encouragement or health workers (Wanti et al., 2021).

The environment, including physical, biological, and social surroundings, significantly affects motivation. Family support is one key environmental factor. When parents provide guidance and support for healthy behaviors, it can prevent dental damage and maintain oral hygiene in children (Sari et al., 2022).

Based on data analysis, parental motivation to improve their children's oral hygiene falls into the strong motivation category. The researcher's opinion is supported by respondents' answers indicating that most parents motivate their children to maintain oral health by, for example, taking their children to dental clinics for cleaning, encouraging consumption of vegetables and fruits, and rewarding children with praise after tooth brushing.

From the discussion above, it can be concluded that the parental motivation of intellectually disabled students at SLB C Autis Negeri Tuban in 2024 is strong. According to the researcher, parental motivation plays a crucial role in maintaining oral health, especially for children with special needs such as intellectual disabilities. Intrinsic motivation from parents'

desire to maintain their child's oral hygiene is important, but extrinsic support, such as guidance from health professionals, is equally significant. With strong motivation, such as accompanying children to dental clinics and offering praise, parents can instill healthy habits early on. This also shows that parents have high awareness of oral hygiene, which positively impacts their child's development.

Oral Hygiene Scores of Intellectually Disabled Students at SLB C Autis Negeri Tuban in 2024.

Data needed to calculate oral hygiene scores were collected by measuring the debris index and calculus index. The debris index assesses the amount and distribution of food debris/plaque on tooth surfaces, while the calculus index measures the amount of tartar on teeth. The Oral Hygiene Index-Simplified (OHI-S) is obtained by summing these two indices.

Before parental motivation, the oral hygiene scores of intellectually disabled students at SLB C Autis Negeri Tuban in 2024 were in the poor category. After receiving parental motivation, the scores improved to the good category. According to the researcher, the poor oral hygiene before parental motivation may be caused by several factors such as limited understanding of oral hygiene importance, inadequate fine motor skills for proper tooth brushing, or lack of personal hygiene attention from the surrounding environment. After receiving motivation from parents, significant improvements were observed, likely because children were encouraged through actions like brushing teeth together and receiving praise.

The improvement in scores reflects better dental health and suggests that with proper guidance and motivation, intellectually disabled children can learn and develop good oral hygiene habits.

Relationship Between Parental Motivation and Oral Hygiene of Intellectually Disabled Students at SLB C Autis Negeri Tuban in 2024

This study found a relationship between parental motivation and improvement in oral hygiene of intellectually disabled students at SLB C Autis Negeri Tuban in 2024. This aligns with Izro et al. (2023), who stated that motivation can be influenced by both intrinsic and extrinsic factors. Good oral hygiene scores are the result of motivation to direct efforts toward maintaining oral cleanliness. Motivation gives individuals the drive to take actions to fulfill their oral health needs.

According to the researcher, both intrinsic motivation (such as personal concern for the child's health) and extrinsic motivation (such as support from the environment or health professionals) play vital roles in determining children's oral hygiene levels. Strong motivation encourages parents to actively maintain their children's oral hygiene and take necessary steps to establish good habits.

Health services also influence children's oral hygiene status. Interventions may include improving health facilities, systems, and management. If health service systems at the school environment are inadequate, the children's oral hygiene status may not reach its full potential. This research highlights the crucial role of parental motivation in improving oral hygiene in intellectually disabled children. Therefore, programs aimed at increasing parental motivation can have a positive impact on children's oral hygiene habits.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the study on the motivation of parents of students with intellectual disabilities at SLB C Autis Negeri Tuban in improving their children's oral and dental hygiene, it can be concluded that the parents' motivation falls into the strong category. The oral hygiene scores of the students with intellectual disabilities at SLB C Autis Negeri Tuban are categorized as good. There is a significant relationship between the motivation of parents and the improvement of their children's oral and dental hygiene at SLB C Autis Negeri Tuban in 2024. Future researchers are encouraged to conduct further studies on parental motivation in improving their children's oral hygiene by increasing the number of respondents to obtain more comprehensive results and better understanding.

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