

# The Level of Self-Efficacy and Self-Esteem of Students with Learning Disabilities Towards the Mastery of Soft Skills

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## Abstract

This study involves the self-efficacy and self-esteem of students with learning disabilities towards the mastery of soft skills among students from Vocational Special Education Secondary Schools in Malaysia, focusing on students enrolled in two schools' food preparation and production courses. This survey research distributed 56 questionnaires to students with learning disabilities. The research findings indicated moderate mastery of soft skills, self-esteem, and self-efficacy. Students' self-efficacy and self-esteem levels can be enhanced through various efforts from multiple parties. The soft skills of students can be nurtured through different encouragements and approaches. Teachers need to pay more attention to students with learning disabilities by designing various activities and teaching materials suitable for the cognitive level of these students in school.

## 1. Introduction

Based on the background of the problem, several issues have been discussed related to the level of self-esteem, self-efficacy, and mastery of the soft skills of students with learning disabilities. There are many constraints from a variety of angles causing students with learning disabilities to master soft skills because of their weakness in controlling emotions, preferring to be alone, and their levels of self-efficacy and self-esteem to be low (Ab Halim et al.).

Nowadays, there are many bad stigmas against students with learning disabilities and still less exposure to them by our society (Alkhasawneh, 2022). Students with learning disabilities feel less motivated due to many factors, such as a less satisfactory learning environment. Parents and the community around them do not give full support to students with learning disabilities to freely explore their world but rather to look cynically at them. They feel a big gap compared to other normal humans. According to Bhatt and Bahadur (2018), soft skills will not be fully reached by students with learning disabilities if the issue remains. The level of self-efficacy and self-esteem of students with learning disabilities is also very low, affecting weak and anxious soft skills.

This research aimed to study the level of self-esteem, self-efficacy, and mastery of the soft skills of students with learning disabilities at the Vocational Special Education Secondary Schools (SMPKV). The research was conducted on students with learning disabilities enrolled in the Preparation and Production of Food courses at the Vocational Special Education Secondary Schools Malaysia.

Researchers want to know the level of self-esteem, self-efficacy, and mastery of soft skills of students with learning disabilities. By describing these stages, the research seeks to open space for interventions and tailored approaches that can enhance soft skills development in this student population to promote their effective adaptation to various life contexts.

## 2. Methodology

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The methodology section describes the research design, procedure, instrument, and other important information related to methodology.

## 2.1 Research Design

This research applies the survey method because it is suitable for providing examples or figures that quickly relate to the population's current behaviour, attitudes, and beliefs (Mushtaq, 2016). This research uses a quantitative approach to identify self-esteem, self-efficacy, and soft skills. In this research, questionnaires were administered face-to-face.

## 2.2 Research Procedure

This research aims to study the level of self-appreciation of self-efficacy and the degree of mastery of the soft skills of students with learning disabilities at the High School of Special Vocational Education (SMPKV). This research involved three different instruments: self-esteem, self-efficacy, and soft skills. The instruments adapted from the Rosenberg Self-Evaluation Level Scale (1965), the General Self-Effective Scale (GSE) Schwarzer and Jerusalem (1995), and from the Journal of the Mastering of Soft Skills in Special Education Students at Master's Polytechnic (2012), which has 60 questions. The scale used is a scale of 4, which is very disagree, disagree, agree, and totally agree. Before carrying out the actual study, the researcher performed a validity process on the survey question. Three field-related experts have validated the items in the questionnaire. After that, the researcher conducted a pilot study. As a result of the pilot study, all items have a good reliability value with a Cronbach alpha exceeding 0.70.

## 3. Results and Discussion

The results of this research found that there were more male respondents than female respondents. The number of respondents aged 16 to 17 was higher than those aged 18 to 19. While the number of respondents to SMPKV Indahpura is higher than that of Shah Alam. The discussion in this research attempts to explore in more depth the findings of the research based on the following questions:

1. What is the level of self-esteem of students with learning disabilities towards the formation of soft skills?
2. What is the level of self-efficacy of students with learning disabilities towards the formation of soft skills?
3. What is the level of mastery of soft skills of students with learning disabilities?

### 3.1 Results

#### 3.1.1 The level of self-esteem of students with learning disabilities towards the formation of soft skills

This section will answer the first research question. In this section, there are ten survey items. This item is analysed using descriptive statistics to obtain standard min values and standard deviation. Analysis results showed that item B7 had the highest min value of 3.36 (SP=0.73). These results indicate that students feel that they value at least being on the same level as others. The item with the lowest score is item B8, with a minimum value of 2.35 (SP=1.08), which means the student is less self-respectful. Overall, the level of self-esteem towards the formation of soft skills is moderate, with a minimum value of 2.86 (SP=0.41).

#### 3.1.2 Level of self-efficacy of students with learning disabilities towards the formation of soft skills

This section will answer the second research question. In this section, there are nine survey question items. This item is analysed using descriptive statistics to obtain standard min values and standard deviation. The results of the respondents' answers on the level of self-efficacy of students with learning disabilities towards the formation of soft skills represent the degree of self-efficacy of people with learning problems towards the development of overall soft skills

The analysis results showed that item C3 had the highest min value of 3.29 (SP=0.67). These results refer to students feeling that they can stick to their goals and their goals. The item with the lowest rating is the fifth item with a minimum value of 2.35 (SP=0.97), which means students are less confident in their intelligence to deal

with unexpected situations. Overall, the level of self-efficacy towards the formation of soft skills is moderate, with a minimum value of 2.98 (SP=0.46)

### 3.1.2 Level of Mastery of Soft Skills: Students with Learning Disabilities

This section will answer the third research question. In this section, 35 question items are divided into seven elements. These items are analysed using descriptive statistics to obtain standard min values and fractions. Overall, the level of mastery of soft skills of students with learning disabilities is higher, with a minimum value of 3.00 (SP=0.44).

## 3.2 Discussions

Overall, this research has successfully achieved the set objective. A total of 56 respondents consisting of students with learning disabilities who enrolled in food preparation and manufacturing courses at the High School of Special Education in Malaysia, namely at SMPKV Indahpura, Johor and SMPKV Shah Alam, Selangor, were the samples of this research.

### 3.2.2 The level of self-esteem of students with learning disabilities towards the formation of soft skills

Overall, these students with learning disabilities have a moderate level of self-esteem. They feel they are worth at least being on the same level as others. It can convince these students to be more self-respectful. Mushtaq and Akhouri (2016) say that self-esteem involves individuals who judge themselves positively or negatively; they play an important role in balancing their mental health and self-personality. This assessment relates to the acceptance of the individual's vital functions. The result of this research is supported by the findings of a research conducted by Alkhasawneh et al. (2022), which showed that students with learning disabilities were classified in simple stages based on their self-esteem and academic achievement levels. Furthermore, it could be reinforced by situations and studies of students' academic accomplishments depending on self-appreciation and their current relationships. High student self-esteem leads to high grades (Park & Jeong, 2015).

### 3.2.3 Level of self-efficacy of students with learning disabilities towards the formation of soft skills

The result of the analysis showed that the students with learning disabilities have a moderate level of self-efficacy. The results of this research are supported by the findings of research conducted by Izam et al. (2019), which showed that students with learning disabilities had a moderate level of self-efficacy. This suggests that most students are less confident in completing tasks within the specified time frame. The students also feel they can stick to their goals and achieve them. According to this finding, they are also like normal humans who want to have their own ideals and goals. George and Bhanupriya (2022) said their study found positive results, such that someone with dreams and goals will have significant achievements and a high self-esteem level.

### 3.2.4 Level of Mastery of Soft Skills Students with Learning Disabilities

The level of mastery of soft skills of students with learning difficulties is moderate. According to a study by Cinquin et al. (2019), there are many areas where opportunities for individuals with less effort are still lagging compared to society, as shown by the World Health Organization (WHO) report. According to research by Cinquin et al. (2019), there are many areas in which opportunities for individuals with disabilities are still lagging compared to society, as demonstrated by the World Health Organization (WHO) report. This is especially true in the field of education, which represents individuals with insufficient education, which decline drastically from the primary school level to higher education.

## 4. Conclusion

Overall, the research was conducted with good cooperation from the Special Vocational Education Secondary School (SMPKV), including the principal, teachers, and students. The findings of this study can contribute to various parties, especially students with learning difficulties, to be more confident and move forward. Their levels of self-effectiveness and self-esteem can be enhanced with various efforts from all sides. Teachers need to pay more attention to students with learning difficulties by designing various activities and lessons according to the cognitive level of students with learning disabilities in the school. The teacher needs to be more creative in thinking about improving the soft skills of students with learning disabilities. Schools also need to take the initiative to send teachers to seminars or courses that can train them to learn more about these students with problems.

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### Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of the paper.

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