

## The Implementation of Child-Centered Group Play Therapy in Social Skill Learning for Slow learner

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### Abstrack

Slow learners experience substantial deficits in social interaction, yet interventions targeting their social skills development remain underexplored. This study investigated the implementation of Child-Centered Group Play Therapy (CCGPT) to enhance social skills among slow learners in an inclusive elementary school. A qualitative descriptive approach was employed over two months at Bangsri 02 Elementary School, Magetan Regency, Indonesia. Eight slow learners (four male, four female) in grades V and VI were purposively selected. Data were collected through passive participant observation, in-depth interviews with special assistant teachers, and documentation. Analysis followed Miles and Huberman's interactive model, comprising data reduction, presentation, and conclusion drawing. Teachers demonstrated adequate competency in implementing the five-stage CCGPT protocol. Of 31 social skill indicators measured across cooperation, assertion, responsibility, empathy, and self-control domains, 27 indicators (87.01%) were achieved. However, four indicators remained underdeveloped: self-confidence in interaction, appropriate emotional expression, emotional control, and proper speech tone. Implementation challenges included teachers' limited psychological backgrounds, inadequate facilities, and cognitive constraints among slow learners. CCGPT shows promise for improving social skills in slow learners. Recommendations include specialized teacher training, provision of therapy rooms, and future research incorporating art elements to enhance emotional expression and self-confidence.

**Keywords:** child-centered group play therapy, social skills; slow learner, inclusive education, qualitative study

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## INTRODUCTION

UNESCO refers to inclusive education as Education for All, meaning it should reach all citizens equally. Therefore, the Indonesian government implements inclusive education in all formal and non-formal education units for all citizens, regardless of physical, emotional, mental, intellectual, or social disabilities. Inclusive education takes place in inclusive schools, allowing children with special needs to go to school, learn, and interact with regular students (Hakala, K., et al, 2018; Hassanein., et al, 2021; Lozano., 2022; Walton, E., & Rusznyak, 2020). These schools create a learning environment that combines both regular and special needs students, adapting the curriculum, facilities, and teaching methods to meet different types of disabilities (Dapudong, 2014; Galevska, & Pesic, 2018).

Data from the Central Statistics Agency (BPS) in 2020 showed that the number of people with disabilities in Indonesia reached 22.5 million, or 5% of the population (Lafiana et al, 2022). In Magetan Regency, East Java, the most common disability in inclusive elementary schools is slow learners. Students identified as slow learners have the highest prevalence of disorders in inclusive elementary schools in Magetan Regency. Asri's (2022) study found that, among 42 inclusive elementary schools in Magetan Regency, 80.55% of students were slow learners. A slow learner is a term used to describe students' limitations in learning academic material. Compared to normal students, slow learners need more time to learn. Slow learners are not the same as mentally retarded students. Slow learners can achieve a reasonable level of academic success but need more time. Students who are slow learners still maintain their independence in both learning and daily activities, do not rely on others, and are capable of adapting to different individuals (Pandey, & Kurian, 2016; Darasadhi et al, 2016).

Slow learner students tend to have lower intelligence levels, which leads to lower academic performance (Shaw, 2010; Iswarti, & Hormansyah, 2020; Joseph & Abraham, 2023) they also take longer to respond to questions because their skills are a bit below average compared to other children, either in one subject or in all subjects (Nurfadhillah, et al, 2021), unable to have long-term goals and have problems with symbolic material such as language, numbers, and simple concepts (Asri, et al, 2021; Muhammed, et al, 2020), have problems related to psychology (lack of self-confidence, poor self-image, lack of concentration, and weakness in long-term memory), and have problems with emotional, cultural, and social aspects such as poor social skills and withdrawal from the environment, lack of a sense of security in the environment, and lack of ability to organize (Billy, 2016; Borah, 2013; Hassan & Sylaja, 2013; Pandey & Kurian, 2016; Ruhela, 2014; Suarez, M., et al, 2017; Chauhan, 2011; Darasadhi, K., et al, 2016; Nugroho & Prasetyo, 2019, Cahyono et al, 2024).

So far, there have been many studies on slow learners related to academic abilities and strategies or therapies to overcome them (Bekirogullari, 2018; Koirkana, 2020; Adawiyah, & Daulay, 2022; Ilzam, & Purwoko, 2023), but there have not been many studies examining the interaction abilities or social skills of slow learner students. As social beings, slow-learning students live and interact in society and with peers. Based on the results of observations, most students with special needs in the research school come from low socioeconomic groups, and students are in the foster care environment of grandparents or relatives because their parents work as workers abroad. This condition worsens students' learning of social skills. According to informants, slow-learner students have difficulty adjusting to friends in class and at school. Their struggle is shown in their behavior, which is often isolated; they do not want to mingle

with others or make friends with only certain people. To address limitations in social interaction among slow learner students, teachers include moral-social ethics lessons during class so that these students still gain minimal learning in social interaction skills.

According to Omrod (2008) the social skills of students with special needs with specific cognitive or academic difficulties, social or behavioral problems, and general delays in social and cognitive functioning tend to be low. Santrock (2003) stated that it is important for every individual to have positive relationships with peers. Gresham et al (2011) stated that social skills are behaviors in certain situations that predict important social interaction outcomes for individuals, such as peer acceptance, popularity, judgments of others (regarding social skills), and consistent social behavior. In other words, students with special needs must have social skills to interact and deal with differences in social life.

For slow-learning students, social skills are very important in learning because they are key to interacting with friends and others. Widjaningrum & Hamdan (2019) stated that to develop the social skills of slow learner students, seven things are needed, namely practicing cooperation with peers, having the initiative to establish relationships, having responsibility for their environment, having empathy, having self-control skills, being able to communicate, as well as being able to participate. Several studies indicate that social skills learning is necessary for students with special needs, but its implementation depends on the type of disorder, and teachers need to master learning theory to teach these skills. Therefore, social skills are very necessary for slow learner students (Pournesaei & Rostami, 2022; Khasanah & Rachmadyanti, 2019).

According to Gresham & Elliott (2011), there are 5 aspects of social skills, namely: (1) cooperation, namely the ability to work together with others to achieve goals; (2) assertiveness, namely the ability to convey views and behave positively. The ability to express opinions and feelings clearly and firmly without hurting others' feelings demonstrates an assertive attitude; (3) responsibility, including the ability to act in accordance with the obligations and commitments given, recognizing and accepting the consequences of actions taken; (4) empathy, namely the ability to understand, feel, and see situations from another person's point of view. Someone who has empathy tends to be better at interacting with others, and (5) self-control is the capacity to control one's feelings, actions, and impulses in challenging situations. Referring to the description, in social interaction, a person needs to be able to control themselves, direct themselves, show empathy, work together, and communicate well. Slow-learner students need to possess these social skills to build healthy relationships. However, to realize this, guidance from a special accompanying teacher is needed.

To improve the social skills of slow-learner students, guidance and counseling teachers need to design a model that is considered capable of developing cooperation, relationships, responsibility, empathy, self-control, and communication skills so that slow-learner students are expected to be able to express their feelings, be responsible for their behavior, control emotions, dare to communicate with others, and appear confident even though they have limitations in their cognitive abilities. One model that can strengthen the social skills of slow-learner students is child-centered group play therapy (CCGPT). CCGPT is a child-centered play therapy using the Rogerian counseling approach that emphasizes Person-centered. CCGPT effectively combines Rogerian principles to train children to communicate and interact through play. The three core elements of CCGPT are congruence, unconditional positive regard, and empathy (Moss, & Hamlet, 2020). The British Association of Play Therapists (2020) & Association for

Play Therapy, (2020) defines play therapy as a dynamic process between a child and a therapist that facilitates the child to explore past, present, conscious and unconscious issues that affect the child's current life. Meanwhile, play therapy is defined by the Association for Play Therapy (2020) as the systematic use of theoretical models to build interpersonal processes that help clients prevent or overcome psychosocial difficulties and achieve optimal growth and development. Moss, & Hamlet (2020) emphasize that play is considered an important means of forming communication and interaction with others.

CCGPT combines the advantages of child-centered play therapy and group counseling processes (Landreth & Sweeney, 1999). In CCGPT, students/children have the opportunity to understand themselves and learn about themselves, assisted by counselors/therapists and other members. The implementation of CCGPT requires students/children to explore the importance of their own uniqueness, work together, and develop creativity. In addition, it can also help develop interpersonal and intrapersonal skills and resolve emotional problems (Sweeney & Baggerly, 2014). Although CCGPT ideally occurs in a playroom, it can be implemented anywhere and has a truly positive impact on children while still respecting each other during play.

The implementation of the CCGPT technique to improve the social skills of slow-learners is executed through five implementation steps, namely: (1) building rapport, the therapist introduces himself, builds a positive relationship with slow-learner students, and explains the flow of activities and agreements with slow-learner students; (2) structuring, helping children/students understand and develop new, more adaptive thoughts and behaviors. Students are trained to have positive thinking skills; (3) CCGPT-focused play and storytelling practices, namely researchers provide slow learner students with the opportunity to play and tell stories that describe situations of social interaction behavior in everyday life, which include cooperation, assertion, responsibility, empathy, and self-control; (4) learn new behavior with concrete examples to improve social skills. At this stage, negotiation techniques are applied with the understanding that they can train and improve social skills. If slow-learner students are faced with social events that are considered difficult to adapt to due to a lack of self-confidence, they can deal with them appropriately; and (5) evaluation and termination at this stage, the therapist provides support to the subject to apply the lessons learned during the intervention. According to Ray & Cheng (2018), the integration of play therapy and group process frameworks provides benefits to facilitate children's self-control, feelings of empowerment, and extraordinary emotional control abilities so that they have skills in social interaction.

Given the urgency of social skills, especially for slow-learner students in inclusive elementary schools, as a basis for the development of social skills throughout life, it is necessary to implement an intervention using a child-centered group play therapy technique. The goals of this research are (a) to have a detailed account of how the implementation of the child-centered group play therapy technique in learning social skills for slow learner students; (b) to explain the social skills of slow learners after the application of the child-centered group play therapy technique; and (c) to explain the challenges educators and learners have while putting the child-centered group play therapy technique in learning social skills.

## METHOD

A qualitative descriptive method is used in this study. This strategy is founded on a number of factors, such as (1) the data produced is descriptive, consisting of people's words and behavior observed by researchers (Bogdan & Taylor, 1975), and (2)

research findings are collected using researcher observations, which function as a key instrument, of research subjects and their environment (Kirk & Miller, 1986). Operational considerations for using qualitative descriptive methods in this study are that the data collected are in the form of descriptive, informative words related to the results of observations and interviews on the implementation of child-centered group play therapy techniques to improve the social skills of slow learner students and reveal the obstacles faced by teachers in implementing child-centered group play therapy techniques.

The research took place over a period of two months. The location of the research was chosen purposively, namely at Bangsri 02 Elementary School, Magetan. The consideration in choosing this school was that, compared to other inclusive schools, it has many students with learning difficulties. The number of slow-learner students in the research school was 19. Data on slow learner students were obtained from the results of a psychological assessment conducted by the Psychology Institute of PGRI Madiun University. Of the 19 slow learners, 8 were selected as research subjects: 4 male and 4 female. The research subjects were in grades V and VI of elementary school; students were selected with mild and moderate levels of slow learning, and the group was adjusted to the ideal number of participants. This study uses data from various sources on the social skills of slow-learner students. The types of data sources include (1) one informant, specifically a special assistant teacher; (2) events or activities related to social skills development; and (3) documents that provide background information on the lives of slow learner students. Passive participant observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation are the methods used to collect data.

The research school has 19 slow learners, and 8 were purposively selected as research subjects. The research subjects are based on the level of learning delay and adjust the ideal number of participants in the group. This study uses data from various sources on the social skills of slow-learner students. The types of data sources include (1) one informant, specifically a special assistant teacher; (2) events or activities related to social skills development; and (3) documents that provide background information on the lives of slow learner students. Passive participant observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation are the methods used to collect data. Checking the validity of the data is carried out using the following techniques: (1) extending the researcher's participation so that interaction between the researcher and informants can take place more intensively, (2) conducting observations diligently and carefully so that the data obtained can reflect the phenomenon as it is, (3) triangulating data sources by comparing the results of observations with the results of interviews and comparing them with the contents of documents used as sources of research data, and (4) checking the findings through focus group discussions.

Data analysis was conducted using an interactive analysis model (Miles & Huberman, 1994) in two stages: during data collection and after data collection. Data analysis was carried out through 3 activity flows that took place simultaneously, namely (1) data reduction, (2) data presentation, and (3) conclusions/verification. Field notes from interviews, observations, and document studies are sorted, selected, and adjusted to the research problem. The reduced data are then analyzed simultaneously and presented as a description of the results. Based on the results of the data analysis, research conclusions are formulated that address the research objectives set.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Results

Based on observations, interviews, and documentation, it was concluded that the implementation of learning for slow learners in inclusive schools requires greater attention from teachers. The presence of two special assistant teachers is considered insufficient to guide and teach social skills to all slow-learner students. Lack of support from the government regarding the implementation of inclusive education, such as the curriculum that must be adapted according to the type of disorders of students with special needs, educators who do not yet have sufficient skills in dealing with the problems of students with special needs, and the lack of facilities and infrastructure that support learning for students with special needs.

Teachers still treat students with special needs, especially slow learners, the same as regular students; they only provide more time for assignments. The results of interviews with special assistant teachers revealed that, in the implementation of inclusive education, parents generally leave it entirely to the school, but in terms of communication between parents and teachers, it is very effective in monitoring the development of students with special needs. This can be said as one form of support in the implementation of inclusive education.

Based on the results of the implementation of the child-centered group play therapy technique, which was previously provided with supplies and training for special assistant teachers with the aim that special assistant teachers obtain material and skills in implementing the child-centered group play therapy technique. For two weeks, the training took place once a week. The training activities focused on aspects of understanding the characteristics and needs of slow learner students, social skills, child-centered group play therapy (CCGPT) techniques, and exercises to strengthen the skills of slow learner students through child-centered group play therapy (CCGPT) techniques.

The implementation of the CCGPT technique to strengthen the social skills of slow learners is completed in five steps, specifically: (1) building rapport; (2) structuring; (3) practicing playing and telling stories focused on CCPT; (4) learning new behaviors with concrete examples; and (5) evaluation and termination. We divided the class into 2 groups, each consisting of 4 slow-learner students. Based on the results of observations carried out during 4 meetings, it is known that overall the special assistant teachers have implemented the CCGPT technique according to the planned stages. In the first and second meetings, the teacher was unable to implement the CCGPT technique well.

During the building rapport stage, the special assistant teacher effectively introduced himself, built a good relationship with slow learner students, and clearly explained the flow of activities. However, at the structuring stage, special assistant teachers have not been effective in encouraging students to develop new, more adaptive thoughts and behaviors, and remain weak in training students to think positively. At the stage of playing and storytelling practice, most students remained passive, especially when asked to tell stories that describe social interaction in everyday life. During two meetings, the teacher struggled to provide concrete examples of new behaviors that could help slow-learner students improve their social skills. Based on the interview results, it was revealed that the special assistant teachers did not fully understand the negotiation techniques for training and improving students' social skills. The most striking weakness lies in the evaluation and termination stages. At this stage, the special assistant teachers are weak at providing students with support so they can apply the lessons learned during the intervention.

In the third and fourth interventions, the special assistant teacher effectively implemented the CCGPT technique. The following section presents the results of observations regarding the implementation of the CCGPT technique during the third and fourth meetings.

**Table 1.**  
 Observation Results of CCGPT Technique Implementation

<b>Stages</b>	<b>Observation Results</b>
Building Rapport	At this early stage, the special assistant teacher was able to build a positive relationship with slow-learner students. In addition, the teacher was able to explain the flow of learning activities well. The students looked enthusiastic in listening to the explanation of the special assistant teacher. Through observation, there was excellent interaction between the teacher and students. The outcome will determine success in the next stage.
Structuring	In the structuring stage, teachers use innovative communication techniques to instill in students how to think and behave well with their friends. Teachers equip students with positive ways of thinking, for example, by guiding students to express the good qualities of their friends in a group. Teachers also encourage each student to have ideals when they graduate from school later.
CCGPT Focused Play and Storytelling Practice	To build positive interactions, teachers invite students to play together in the schoolyard, using play facilities provided by the school. This aims to instill a sense of joy in slow learner students. After that, the teacher asks each student to share something they enjoy most in their daily lives. At this moment, some students were able to tell stories effectively, although they used less varied language. This phenomenon is understandable because so far students have not been trained enough in expressing their thoughts and feelings in front of their peers.
Learning New Behaviors with Concrete Examples	P At this stage, the special assistant teacher applies negotiation techniques to strengthen the social skills of slow-learner students. Negotiation techniques require social skills such as empathy, active listening, communication skills, and language skills to convey ideas clearly to groupmates. The social skills that are intended to be achieved with this negotiation technique are for students to be able to control their emotions, build good relationships, and seek compromise. Teachers train students to be able to control their emotions in stressful situations, build good relationships through friendly conversations between students, and build self-confidence. This technique effectively enhances students' social skills.
Evaluation and Termination	During the final stage, the special assistant teacher assesses all the activities conducted in the previous stages. The teacher culminates the process by formulating the final results attained. The results of these evaluation and termination activities are used to measure the level of success of the objectives that have been set, namely strengthening the social skills of slow learner students who are research subjects.

The measured indicators are adjusted to the characteristics of slow learner students, so not all indicators are selected for measurement. Data were collected qualitatively through observation, interviews with special assistant teachers, and the termination results formulated by special assistant teachers. The results of measuring the social skills of slow-learner students after the CCGPT technique were applied are described in Table 2 below.

**Table 2.**  
 Results of Measuring Social Skills of Slow Learner Students

<b>Social Skills Aspects</b>	<b>Indicator</b>	<b><math>\Sigma</math> Students Who Achieve Indicators</b>	<b>Percentage</b>	<b>Category</b>
Cooperation	1. Listen to other people talking.	8	100%	Very good
	2. Ask permission before using someone else's belongings.	6	75%	Good
	3. Complete assignments on time.	6	75%	Good
	4. Maintain cleanliness and tidiness.	7	87,5%	Very good
	5. Make use of free time.	6	75%	Good
	6. Follow the teacher's directions.	6	75%	Good
	7. Help with housework.	7	87,5%	Very good
Assertion	1. Make friends easily.	5	62,5%	Fairly good
	2. Ask for help when needed.	6	75%	Good
	3. Be confident in interactions.	3	37,5%	Poorly
	4. Participate in several activities.	6	75%	Good
	5. Start a conversation.	6	75%	Good
	6. Volunteer to help others.	7	87,5%	Very good
	7. Express feelings appropriately.	3	37,5%	Poorly
Responsibility	1. Say nice things.	6	75%	Good
	2. Show concern for friends.	7	87,5%	Very good
	3. Waiting for your turn in an activity.	7	87,5%	Very good
	4. Ask permission when you are going to leave.	7	87,5%	Very good

	5. Liked by others/social acceptance.	6	75%	Good
Empathy	1. Understand other people's feelings.	6	75%	Good
	2. Ask a friend for help.	6	75%	Good
	3. Feeling sorry for bad things that happen to other people.	6	75%	Good
	4. Listen to friends telling stories.	8	100%	Very good
	5. Smile.	7	87,5%	Very good
	6. Defend a friend.	6	75%	Good
Self-control	1. Ignore distractions.	6	75%	Good
	2. Avoid things that cause problems.	7	87,5%	Very good
	3. Do good things.	7	87,5%	Very good
	4. Accept punishment.	5	62,5%	Fairly good
	5. Control emotions.	3	37,5%	Poorly
	6. Speak in the right tone.	4	50%	Poorly

According to the information in Table 2 above, out of the 5 aspects and 31 indicators of social skills measured, 27 indicators (87.01%) are performing well, while only 4 indicators (12.9%) are showing low results, which include self-confidence in interaction, expressing feelings appropriately, controlling emotions, and speaking in the right tone. Based on the observations, most slow-learner students have low self-confidence when interacting with teachers and friends in a group. This is evident in their attitudes, which are more silent, shy, and passive when in class, especially when interacting with regular students. In the interview, the special assistant teacher stated that another indicator that needs improvement is instilling an attitude that helps control emotions. Most slow-learning students have poor emotional control.

When they face difficult problems, it is clear that their emotions are not under control. Likewise, when playing, many slow-learner students easily get angry and cry when teased by their friends. These slow-learner students also have difficulty expressing their feelings in front of their friends. Slow-learner students often exhibit a tendency to withdraw and lack fluency in speaking. These four indicators of social skills are important notes in implementing the CCGPT technique in the next phase. In addition, the weakness of the four indicators is also caused by the special assistant teacher's limited mastery of the child-centered group play therapy technique, due to the limited training time. The duration of the child-centered group play therapy intervention is too short, which also prevents the 4 indicators of social skills from being achieved in slow-learning students.

In implementing the CCGPT technique, several obstacles were encountered, both by special assistant teachers and by slow learner students. Drawing on observations and

teacher informant interviews, at least two obstacles were identified that teachers face when implementing the CCGPT technique. Teachers are not confident in implementing the CCGPT technique because they feel they do not have enough good references in the fields of psychology and counseling guidance. This can be seen from the transcription of the interview results with the following teacher.

"Honestly, this is new material for me. So far I do not really understand what social skills are. After receiving several trainings, I just understood about social skills and the importance of social skills for the development of slow learner students. You see, Ma'am, I don't have a background in psychology or counseling, so all this time I've been teaching, I've only been delivering the lesson material in the curriculum, never thinking about the psychological aspects of the students. I'm a graduate of English education. I didn't know I'd suddenly become a special assistant teacher in an inclusive elementary school. But I'm grateful I'm doing this as a noble calling...." (FN 2: 9).

The educational background of special assistant teachers as graduates of English language education becomes a handicap when providing assistance to slow-learner students. Based on the interview results, the teacher honestly stated his lack of knowledge about social skills. Schools do not have sufficient play facilities to support the implementation of this model. Additionally, schools lack a designated room for social skills therapy for students with special needs, which hinders the effective implementation of the CCGPT technique. The results of interviews with teacher informants support this fact.

"...you see, Ma'am, schools in villages are like this. The designation of this school as an inclusive school is unknown, but suddenly there is a decree from the District Education Office. The designation of an inclusive school should be followed by the provision of adequate facilities and infrastructure, but in reality it is not. If it is associated with the implementation of the CCGPT technique, the facilities for playing are not sufficient; this is definitely an obstacle. The Education Office should also provide at least 1 special assistant teacher who has an appropriate educational background; in fact, the average special assistant teacher in inclusive schools throughout Magetan Regency does not have an appropriate educational background...." (FN 1: 12).

In addition to teachers, slow-learner students also face obstacles when following social skills therapy using the CCGPT technique. Slow learners have below-average cognitive ability, so this will hinder their understanding of the material presented by special accompanying teachers. The results of interviews with teachers below prove this.

"Mom can see for herself that teaching students with special needs requires patience and affection. The slow learner students in this school generally come from underprivileged families and have low levels of education. So, at home their environment is less conducive to learning due to the lack of attention from their parents. They tend to be quiet, shy, and have obstacles in socializing with their peers. The main problem that hinders their level of understanding of the material taught by the teacher, yes, lies in their level of intelligence, which is below the average of other normal students. Teaching students in an inclusive class with different levels of intelligence is not easy...." (FN 1: 15).

However, the disability factor carried by slow-learner students can psychologically hinder the improvement of their social skills. The character of slow-learner students, who tend to be less confident, quiet, and appear shy, and less able to interact, necessitates a little more time at all stages of implementing the CCGPT technique. For this, emotional support and motivation from the teacher are needed.

## Discussion

The lack of educators with experience and training as special assistant teachers is one of the obstacles in inclusive schools. This conclusion aligns with the statement of Sofwan & Habibi (2016), who stated that there are still many obstacles and shortcomings in the implementation of inclusive education in Indonesia.

The results of interviews with teachers revealed that no special preparation was made to deal with students with special needs, especially slow learners. This is supported by the results of research Muazza, et al (2018), which state that in implementing inclusive education policies, schools have not been able to meet the standards set by the government. In line with several previous research results, it states that the existence of good school management, the availability of necessary resources, parental involvement, and support from schools can contribute to the success of implementing inclusive education (Chan & Yuen, 2015a; Chotitham & Wongwanich, 2014; Liang, et al, 2020; Heemskerk et al, 2012; Yada et al, 2021).

All stages carried out by the teacher are in accordance with the syntax for implementing the CCGPT technique in learning social skills for slow-learning students. This assertion is supported by research by Landreth et al (Ray & Cheng, 2018) which states that CCPT therapy helps children develop interpersonal and intrapersonal skills. According to Andriani (2018) the CCGPT intervention, it helps students manage their emotions, which improves social relationships and allows them to acquire new skills, such as negotiating effectively and developing a positive mindset by limiting negative thoughts. Sweeney et al. (2014) stated that in CCGPT techniques with group settings, students find opportunities to understand themselves, learn about themselves as perceived by the therapist and other group members, and explore the importance of individuality and uniqueness, cooperation and compliance, and creativity and originality.

Following the implementation of the CCGPT technique, we measured the social skills of students who struggled with learning. Gresham & Elliott (2008) formulated the aspects and indicators of social skills that we measured. According to the special assistant teacher, this may be due to awareness of the weaknesses of slow-learning students. This is because slow-learner students are less motivated and need support from significant others, especially from parents and teachers (Arjmandnia & Kakabarace, 2011; Vindhya & Bhuvaneshari, 2015).

Most slow-learner students use a flat tone when speaking, resulting in unstructured, difficult-to-understand sentences. The study's findings are consistent with the opinion of Shamsaei et al. (2017), who stated that a person's communication with others can affect social acceptance. According to research by Asri et al (2022) out of 76 special assistant teachers in inclusive elementary schools in Magetan Regency, only 2 had an educational background in psychology and special education. Another obstacle faced by teachers lies in the lack of facilities and infrastructure in schools to support the implementation of the CCGPT technique to strengthen the social skills of slow-learner students.

This is supported by the results of research by Widjaningrum & Hamdan (2019) which states that students with special needs have obstacles in cognitive and social abilities so that, in general, their social skills are low. This is in accordance with Rosita's (2024) research, which states that a holistic approach involving teachers, parents, an inclusive school environment, and teaching and training methods is essential for improving self-confidence in interaction, emotional control, and emotional regulation.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the research and discussion, 3 conclusions were formulated. Teachers have quite good skills in applying CCGPT techniques in improving the social skills of slow-learner students. The application of the model has been carried out in accordance with the syntax, namely building rapport, structuring, practicing playing, and telling stories focused on CCGPT, learning new behaviors with concrete examples, and evaluation and termination. The results of measuring the social skills of slow learner students show that 27 indicators (87.01%) are achieved well, and only 4 indicators (12.9%) have low results, namely, self-confidence in interaction, expressing feelings appropriately, controlling emotions, and speaking in the right tone. Some of the obstacles faced by teachers and students in implementing the CCGPT technique in strengthening the social skills of slow learner students are the low knowledge of teachers about the fields of psychology and counseling guidance, the lack of available facilities and infrastructure so that they do not support the implementation of the CCGPT technique, and the disability factor experienced by slow learner students, which hinders the improvement of the social skills of slow learner students. Therefore, the recommendation based on this study's results is the need for teacher training in implementing CCGPT techniques and the provision of special therapy rooms to equip teachers with the skills to implement them. Further research is expected to implement CCGPT techniques by modifying art elements to increase emotional expression and self-confidence.

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