



Twice Exceptional in Early Childhood

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Abstract

Twice exceptional children are individuals who have a combination of exceptional talent and learning disorders, such as Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, dyslexia or autism, which pose unique challenges in education. This research aims to analyze the internal and external factors that influence the development of twice exceptional children. Internal factors such as cognitive imbalance and low self-perception often hinder their achievement, while external factors such as lack of educational support and early identification exacerbate the situation. This study utilized the Systematic Literature Review method which involved searching literature from highly reputable sources such as Scopus, Springer, ERIC, ScienceDirect, and Google Scholar. A total of 25 documents obtained from Q1-Q4 and SINTA 2 journals were analyzed using NVivo 12 Pro software. The results showed that twice exceptional children often face major learning difficulties such as Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, dyslexia and autism that affect their academic performance. Internal factors found include cognitive imbalance, low self-esteem and anxiety, while external factors affecting their development include lack of early identification and lack of appropriate educational support. Effective educational approaches involve strength-based interventions, differentiated instruction and training for educators to address their needs holistically. The implications of this research suggest that education policy in Indonesia needs to be updated to create a system that is more inclusive and responsive to twice exceptional children. A multidimensional approach that incorporates cognitive, social and emotional aspects is needed to support the optimal development of twice exceptional children. In addition, training for educators and parental involvement are key factors to create a supportive environment for their development, both at school and in the community.

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INTRODUCTION

The concept of twice exceptional was first introduced by James J. Gallagher in 2004, to describe individuals who have exceptional talent or intelligence while facing the challenges of a developmental disorder or disability, such as Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, dyslexia, or autism (Toffalini et al., 2017). Twice exceptional children exhibit a unique blend of high intellectual strengths and

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challenges that affect their ability to learn and function socially (Castellano & Chandler, 2022; Mollenkopf et al., 2021). In the United States, it is estimated that between 2% and 7% of the special education student population falls into the twice exceptional category with the primary characteristic of high intellectual ability but also basic skills difficulties (Daniels & McCollin, 2009; Raouf et al., 2024; Ritchotte & Zaghawan, 2019; Thevasigamoney & Yunus, 2014; Toffalini et al., 2017). Twice exceptional children also tend to have good creative and problem-solving skills despite often experiencing a significant gap between their potential and academic achievement (Cornoldi et al., 2023; Foley-Nicpon & Rosaline Lin, 2022; François-Sévigny et al., 2022; Sumida, 2010; Wellisch, 2021).

Twice exceptional children face various learning challenges that affect their academic performance, such as Attention-Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, dyslexia and autism (Cornoldi et al., 2023; Foley-Nicpon & Rosaline Lin, 2022; François-Sévigny et al., 2022; Sumida, 2010; Wellisch, 2021). In addition, parents of non-disabled children are often concerned that their child may be negatively affected by classmates who have developmental disabilities, while parents of children with disabilities are sometimes reluctant to provide full information about their child's condition, which risks hindering early detection and necessary support (Pasiningsih Correspondence, 2024).

In Indonesia, it is important to recognize the different types of learning disabilities associated with twice exceptional conditions, given that many children have exceptional potential but also face developmental barriers that are not always visible (Diiska & Syafril, 2024; Elkhaira et al., 2020; Febriani et al., 2023; Lestari et al., 2021). In this country, the limited understanding of twice exceptional means that twice exceptional individuals are often overlooked in the education system (Cain et al., 2019; Dare & Nowicki, 2015; Foley-Nicpon et al., 2013; Latz & Adams, 2011; Mollenkopf et al., 2021; Park et al., 2018; Sumida, 2010).

The urgency of this research is heightened by the lack of in-depth understanding of twice exceptional in Indonesia, which risks leaving twice exceptional individuals unsupported within the existing education system. As the understanding of this condition grows, it is hoped that more effective approaches can be found to support the academic and social development of twice exceptional children, as well as develop educational policies that are more inclusive and responsive to their needs.

Research on twice exceptional has been done by previous researchers, some figures who conducted research related to twice exceptional, as shown in figure 1 below.

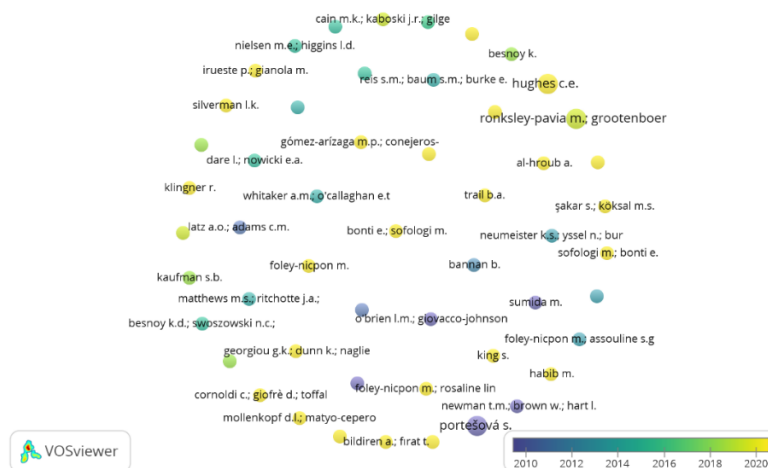


Fig 1. Visualization analysis of twice exceptional studies based on world researchers (Scopus database)

Several researchers have examined twice exceptional in relation to gifted children who have Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, Dyslexia, or Autism (Al-Hroub, 2014; Buică-Belciu & Popovici, 2014; Cornoldi et al., 2023; Reis et al., 2014), twice exceptional who experience bullying (Ronksley-Pavia et al., 2019), twice exceptional who do not reach their full potential due to internal and external factors (Foley-Nicpon et al., 2013; Mollenkopf et al., 2021). This research linking learning disabilities and high intellectual abilities presents complex challenges for twice exceptional children in academic, social, and emotional aspects, and the lack of proper identification and appropriate support is a major obstacle for them to optimize their potential.

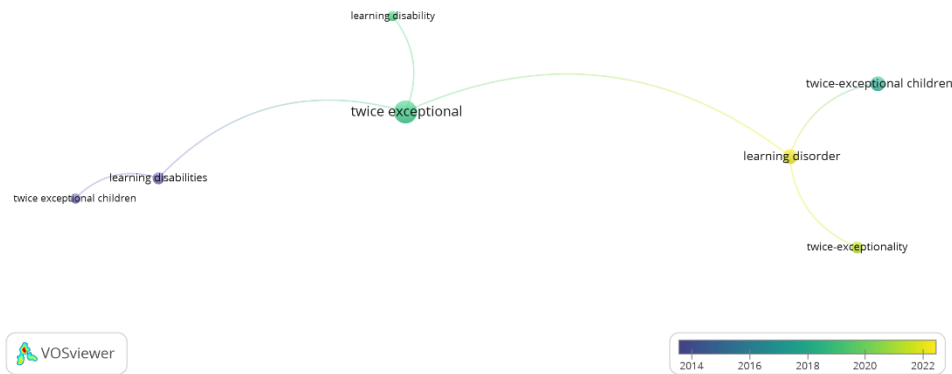


Fig 2. Visualization analysis based on twice exceptional keywords according to world researchers (Scopus database)

Based on Scopus data analysis conducted by researchers since November 16, 20024, there are 55 studies on twice exceptional. Some researchers have examined various concepts related to twice exceptional and disability and learning disorder as well as twice exceptional children (Besnoy, 2018; Bildiren & Firat, 2020; Cornoldi et al., 2023; Foley-Nicpon & Rosaline Lin, 2022; Habib, 2023; Kaufman, 2018; King, 2022; Lesecq et al., 2020; Reis et al., 2014; Ritchotte & Zaghawan, 2019; Ronksley-Pavia et al., 2019; Silverman, 2024).

In Indonesia, there is no research that specifically examines twice exceptional in early childhood. Based on previous research, there is little research on common learning disorders in twice exceptional children, especially in early childhood, so the understanding of the various types of learning disorders and factors of twice exceptional is still very minimal (Febriana et al., 2024; Saputri et al., 2024; Sari et al., 2024). This study aims to examine the different types of learning disorders and the internal and external factors that play a role in the development of twice exceptional children in Indonesia.

METHODS

The method used in this research is Systematic Literature Review (SLR), which is a term for a way of identifying, evaluating, and interpreting all available research that is relevant to the formulation of the problem or topic area under study (Kitchenham et al., 2009; Dwijayanti & Syafril, 2025). The research method uses systematic literature review (SLR) and Nvivo 12 Pro software data analysis steps, there are 4 stages commonly used i) data input, ii) coding research data such as data from online scientific articles or online magazine data and the like, iii) visualization or displaying schematic images of the coding results that have been done, iv) drawing conclusions based on the resulting visualization images. The design of this method is carried out by identifying, reviewing, evaluating and interpreting all existing research (Brereton et al., 2007).

Data collection techniques are carried out by searching for literature, selecting literature, extracting data, analyzing and synthesizing. The number of documents analyzed was 25 documents from highly reputable journals (Q1, Q2, Q3, and Q4 and sinta 2) obtained through Scopus, Springer, Eric, Sciencedirect, Taylor and Google Scholar with the help of NVIVO 12 software. Data analysis in this study was carried out by analyzing or parsing, distinguishing something to be classified and grouped according to quality assessment criteria. Then the researcher makes a research conclusion, which is a brief statement about the results of the description analysis derived from facts or logical relationships and contains answers to the statements proposed in the introduction.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This analysis identified some important findings related to the types of learning disabilities and the internal and external factors that influence the development of twice-exceptional children.

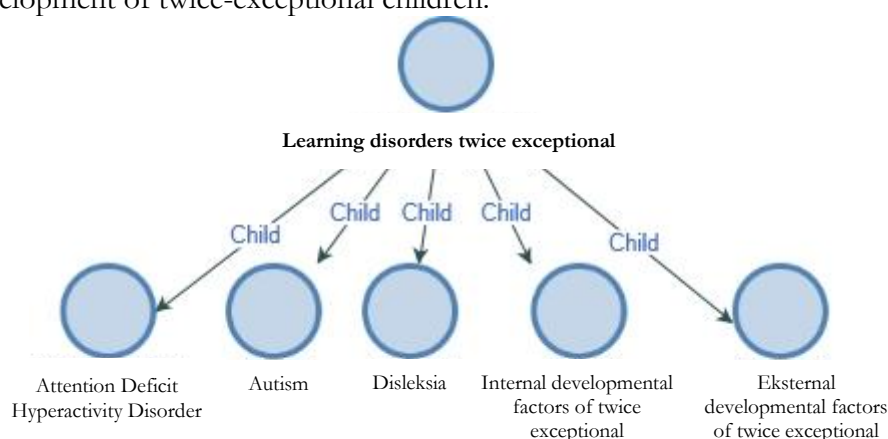


Fig 3. Twice exceptional learning disorder and factors affecting twice exceptional's development

Twice exceptional children are individuals who show a combination of exceptional talent or high intelligence with specific learning disabilities or limitations, such as Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, dyslexia, or autism. This phenomenon often creates unique challenges in their education, as their strengths may mask weaknesses, or vice versa, making it difficult for educators to recognize their special needs (Al-Hroub, 2014; Cain et al., 2019; Ronsley-Pavia, 2015).

Twice Exceptional Learning Disorder

The main learning disorders often experienced by this group include Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, dyslexia, high-functioning autism, and other specific disorders such as math difficulties (Kuo et al., 2010; Matthews et al., 2014; Whitaker et al., 2014). Twice exceptional are children who have exceptional abilities in certain areas, but also have learning disorders such as Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, dyslexia, or autism. Often, their high intelligence can hide their disorder, or conversely, the disorder prevents recognition of their potential. For example, even if a child is gifted in art or math, their difficulties in reading or writing may go undetected (Buică-Belciu & Popovici, 2014; O'brien & Giovacco-Johnson, 2007; Ronsley-Pavia et al., 2019; Thevasigamoney & Yunus, 2014; Toffalini et al., 2017).

According to the Masking theory proposed by Brody and Mills in 1997 high intelligence can mask learning disabilities, so these children are often not identified correctly (Al-Hroub, 2014). The mismatch model described by Foley-Nicpon et al., (2013) highlights the mismatch between their intellectual

potential and academic achievement, as learning disabilities impede their development.

Based on the researcher's analysis, there are three things that twice exceptional children face in learning that affect their academic abilities. As the following picture.

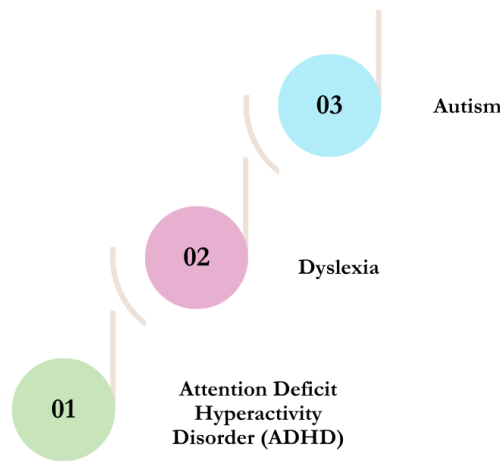


Fig 4. Twice-exceptional children struggle with learning Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)

Children with Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder often exhibit behaviors that interfere with their academic performance, such as inattention, hyperactivity and impulsivity. While they may be highly intelligent in some areas, the disorder can hide their intellectual abilities, so they are often mistaken for underachievers. This happens because their behaviors interfere with their focus and ability to follow lessons, often masking their talents. Brody and Mills' Masking Theory explains this phenomenon, where high intelligence in children with Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder can be masked by their disorder, leading to difficulty in identifying their intellectual potential (Buică-Belciu & Popovici, 2014; Ritchotte & Zaghawan, 2019).

The mismatch model proposed by Foley-Nicpon et al., (2013) suggests a gap between the intellectual potential of gifted children and their academic achievement due to Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). This proves that although these children have exceptional abilities, their disorder prevents them from achieving results that match their potential. Therefore, it is important to have an approach that recognizes both the strengths and weaknesses of dual exceptionality children. The theory proposed by Reis et al., (2014) emphasizes that in supporting children with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), it is important to tailor an educational approach that capitalizes on their intelligence while providing support to overcome their difficulties in focusing attention and managing impulsivity. This approach allows gifted children with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) to optimally develop their potential.

Autism

Twice exceptional children with autism require a holistic and customized approach to education. As described by Gallagher's 2004 twice exceptional theory they may excel in academics or the arts but struggle in social aspects, which are often not clearly identified. This is also in line with Brody and Mills' masking theory, where their high intelligence may hide their social and emotional impairments, hindering the provision of appropriate support (Baykoç et al., 2014; Ronksley-Pavia, 2015; Ronksley-Pavia et al., 2019).

According to the mismatch model (Foley-Nicpon et al., 2013), there is a mismatch between their intellectual potential and actual academic

achievement, especially in the aspects of social and emotional communication. Therefore, a more thorough approach to identification is essential to ensure that their social difficulties and anxieties are not overlooked. Baum and Owen's strengths and weaknesses theory supports these findings by proposing that twice exceptional children need support that balances their intellectual strengths with the need for better social skills.

In addition, Krashen's 1985 affective filter theory suggests that social anxiety can inhibit these children's learning. A safe and supportive environment is essential for them to thrive without the pressures that inhibit their abilities. The multidimensional assessment approach provides a more complete picture of twice exceptional children, combining cognitive tests, interviews and observations to fully understand their challenges and potential.

Dyslexia

Children with dyslexia and high intelligence face unique challenges because despite having exceptional verbal and cognitive potential, they have difficulty in reading and writing. This mismatch between intellectual ability and academic achievement often leads to frustration and decreased self-esteem (Matthews et al., 2014).

The importance of an approach that considers multiple intelligences, as described by Howard Gardner's Multiple Intelligences theory, is particularly relevant here. These children may excel in verbal or spatial intelligence but struggle in linguistic aspects. Daniel Goleman's theory of emotional intelligence also points to the importance of emotional management to help these children cope with frustration and maintain their self-esteem (Al-Hroub, 2014; Toffalini et al., 2017).

From the perspective of the information processing model, dyslexia can be seen as a disorder in connecting symbols with sounds, which makes reading and writing difficulties more complex. Therefore, a differentiated approach to learning that accommodates different learning styles is necessary. This strategy allows these children to showcase their talents in a way that suits their strengths, such as using visual media. Overall, a holistic approach that incorporates an understanding of intelligence, emotions and learning styles will help dyslexic and highly intelligent children reach their full potential without feeling frustrated or inferior.

Internal and external factors of twice exceptional development

Based on the results of the researcher's analysis, there are several factors that influence twice-exceptional development. The internal factors include cognitive imbalance, low self-esteem and anxiety, while the external factors that influence their development are lack of early identification and lack of appropriate educational support. As seen in the following picture.

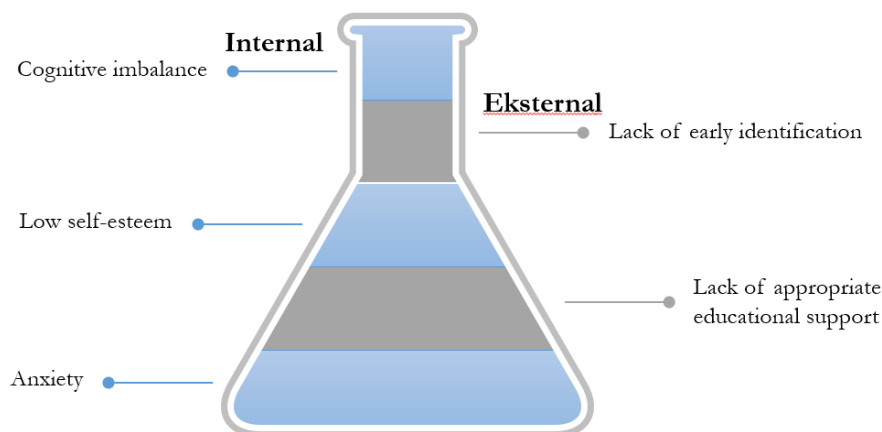


Fig 5. Internal and external factors of twice exceptional development

Internal factors that influence the development of twice exceptional children include an uneven cognitive profile, where these children show strengths in abstract reasoning, creativity, and problem solving, but weaknesses in working memory and processing speed (Al-Hroub, 2014; Cornoldi et al., 2023). In addition, they often face challenges in self-perception, leading to low self-esteem due to repeated experiences of failure and the pressure of social expectations (Latz & Adams, 2011; Park et al., 2018). Neurological factors also play an important role, such as suboptimal attention regulation, executive function and sensory processing (François-Sévigny et al., 2022; Mollenkopf et al., 2021).

Externally, the educational environment is a significant factor. Lack of early identification and the absence of adequate intervention programs often exacerbate the difficulties of twice-exceptional children (Foley-Nicpon et al., 2013; Mollenkopf et al., 2021). Teachers and schools tend to ignore the dual nature of these children, simply labeling them as gifted or disabled without looking at their needs holistically (Al-Hroub, 2021; Sumida, 2010). In addition, family and socio-cultural contexts have a major influence, with parents playing a key role in recognizing and advocating for children's needs, although cultural differences can complicate this process (Park et al., 2018; Sumida, 2010). Systemic challenges such as inadequate education policies also hinder efforts to integrate and recognize their needs in schools (Foley-Nicpon et al., 2013; Mollenkopf et al., 2021).

Successful intervention strategies include differentiated instruction approaches to address both giftedness and disability simultaneously (François-Sévigny et al., 2022; Latz & Adams, 2011). Parental involvement is a key factor in advocating and bridging children's needs with educational institutions (Foley-Nicpon et al., 2013; Mollenkopf et al., 2021). In addition, training for educators to raise awareness about twice-exceptional children is essential to ensure an appropriate and inclusive approach to education (Mollenkopf et al., 2021).

CONCLUSION

Twice exceptional children have a combination of exceptional talent and learning disorders such as Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), dyslexia or autism, which often make identification and intervention difficult. Internal factors such as cognitive imbalance and low self-perception, as well as external factors such as lack of educational support, exacerbate their challenges. Effective strategies include multidimensional identification, strengths-based interventions and training for educators to ensure their needs are met holistically. This approach is essential to support their optimal development.

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