

Attitude of Students towards Inclusive Education in University of Peshawar

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Abstract

This study was designed to investigate the attitude of students towards inclusive education. The main purpose of this study was to find out the feelings of the students towards handicapped students. This was a descriptive type of study. The tool of the study was questionnaire consisting of three parameter of attitude. The population of the study was the students of institute of education and research, University of Peshawar. 50 students were the sample size of the study and were selected randomly from the population. The data were collected through questionnaire and then presented in tabulation in figures and percentages. The data were analyzed through SPSS and then interpreted. The study found that handicapped students' attitude towards other fellows were friendly. Moreover, the students did not feel shamed while introducing his/her handicapped classmate to other friends. However, most of the handicapped students were in inferiority complex because people did not give any preference to handicapped friend over normal friend. Furthermore, the study concluded that handicapped students could contribute to the welfare of society and state if they have given opportunities and proper attention. It is recommended that awareness program about handicapped students and their needs may be initiated. Inclusive practices may be increased in educational institutions.

Keywords: Inclusive education, Handicap students

1. Introduction

Inclusion is the process of educating children with disabilities in the regular education classrooms of their neighborhood schools, the schools they would attend if they did not have a disability and providing them with the necessary services and support. Students with special needs means students with communication disorders, motor skills disorders, sensory disorders, learning disorders, mental retardation, behaviour disorders and pupils with a chronic disease (Anke de boer 2011).

Since the term 'disabled or person with disability' is also popular in Pakistan and many countries, we would use these terms as well. Students with disability were denied education in the schools in US till 1970. These schools were also not able to give disable children appropriate education. This attitude did not change until the introduction of public law "Education for All Handicapped children Act". This law mandated free and appropriate education for all disable students. In 1990 another law individual with disability act (IDEA) was made which was amended in 1997 and renamed in 2004 as Individual with disabilities education improvement act. Under IDEA many educational services were introduced for students with disabilities (Deutsch Smith & Tyler, 2014; Vaughn, Bos, & Schumm, 2014). IDEA requires educational institutions to educate students with disabilities in the least restrictive environment (LRE). This meant that students with disabilities must be educated in the same classroom with their normal peers.

Inclusion means educating students with disabilities and children without disabilities in the same classroom (Friend, 2014). McLeskey, Rosenberg and Westling, (2013) welcomed these legal changes regarding children with disabilities that came under IDEA. Some leading experts do not like the idea of inclusion of children with special needs in the regular classroom. They believe that some students may not benefit from inclusive setting. They support another approach and recommend special education outside the regular classroom with trained professionals and adapted curricula (Santrock, 2014).

Inclusion got popularity in the last two decades. Now students from different backgrounds such as disabilities, socioeconomic status, languages, race and ethnicity are included in regular classrooms under the practice of inclusive education. Today, educational institutions have to offer education according to the needs of the students. Mainstreaming is nearly the same practice as inclusion. The difference between the two is that mainstreaming demands the students with special needs to achieve the same academic targets as the students without special needs, but the practice of inclusive education ask the schools to educate students with special needs according to his or her situation meaning to accommodate his or her needs (Chopra, 2008).

According to the Individuals abilities Education Act (IDEA), Students with disabilities must be educated in Least Restrictive Environment (LRE). Many people confuse mainstreaming with inclusion and think that these both are the same practices, but they are not the same. In fact, both practices are quite different from each other. Though, mainstreaming includes students with disability into general curriculum but ignores their needs. While under the practice of inclusion the needs of disabled students are not ignored and offered education accordingly (Ibid).

Inclusive education welcomes all students in the classroom regardless of their abilities or disabilities and develops their potential to the last extent. For the success of inclusive education co-teaching arrangement between general and special educators is recommended (Friend & Cook, 2004). The accommodation of students with diverse backgrounds and abilities in one classroom is a challenging job the school staff performs with the cooperation of the community. The creation of better inclusive schools needs the cooperation of community leaders, parents and educators (McGregor & Vogelsberg, 1998).

According to Ajuwon (2008), the supporters of inclusion want to educate all the students in the school/ classroom where the students are provided the supportive services. They believe that the

students with disability can only be benefited from being in the classroom. This is a necessary condition for inclusion that is the student with special needs must spend most of his schooling day in the classroom. This demands the school to provide support and resources to the disabled student, rather than putting him in isolated place (Smith, 2007). Under inclusive education all participate in the same class. In this way, students without disability develop positive attitude towards their peers with special needs. Inclusive practices help the students to know each other and value individual differences in proper way. Supplementary aids and services (SAS) are provided in regular classroom to enable disabled students as active learners with their nondisabled peers. SAS is provided in such a manner that avoids stigmatizing and supports the access to general curriculum (Gaskin, 2005).

Opponents of inclusive education are of the view that the presence of disabled students in the class may harm the education of normal students. (Overtax the efficient operation structure of the school). Callicott (2002) disagreed and says that inclusion has positive effects on the education of all students, as a result of inclusion; students recognize and respect rights and beliefs of other. Opponents of inclusion worry that the normal students might tease disabled students in the inclusive setting. This can be avoided if teachers educate the normal students about disability and create accepting environment in the school.

Mentoring program may be started in the school. Apparently, the teachers should have a positive attitude towards inclusion (Shapiro, 1999). A study in Thailand showed that Students without disabilities learned about differences from being in the same classroom with their peers with special needs. The school leaders reported that they were preparing or trying to prepare, the students without disabilities to welcome their peers with disabilities. Vorapanya and Dunlap (2014) stated that inclusive education provides supportive atmosphere in which all students get education alongside their peers. Students have the opportunities to learn from their teachers as well as from their peers. Rice, states "We all learn from others who are different from ourselves, and among the benefits of inclusion one benefit is very common and that is social interaction among the students. A study showed that natural social interaction among the students develops in inclusive schools (Hollowood, 1992). According to a study when the students with and without disability were included in the same class, this resulted in friendships and social networks among the students (Kennedy, 1995). Inclusive practices have positive academic impact on disabled students. Disabled students usually show higher academic performance in inclusive classroom (Hunt, 1994).

One crucial area is the issue of relation where open attitude to disabled people is must. full integration of disabled people into society is not possible without the existence of open attitudes to people with disabilities in all areas of life including those of an interpersonal nature (Chen, 2002).

Negative attitudes are established as normal practice: "We often observe the impact of negative attitudes in how one individual treats another. But negative attitudes are also the cause of disabling policies and services. negative attitudes that limit and restrict are incorporated in policies and services and thus, disadvantage disabled people" (Massie, 2006).

Morris (2005) identified two common attitudes that present major barriers to participation of disabled people in society. Firstly, that people with disabilities are usually thought to be in need of care and this weakens people's ability to see people with disabilities as independent people. "We are not recognized as actors in community participation but as recipients of other people's community participation". Secondly, people without disability believe that disabled persons do not belong in the communities in which they live. These attitudes are the results of particular social constructions.

Sense the success or failure of any system depends on the attitude of stakeholder involved, it is therefore necessary to find out how the student without disability behaves their disable peers. Because students play their role in the success or failure of teaching learning process, this is of greater importance for success of inclusive education. Only in successful inclusive schools with positive

attitude from students and teachers the goal of educating disable students could be achieved, and that is the demand of the article 25-A -education for all.

In Pakistan the network of special education evolved in the first decade of twentieth century. Khatoon (2003) reported that the schools are not sufficient in number to cater special students. She also reports on the shortage of teachers, non-availability of equipment and books, the lack of parents' involvement, and unhappiness of parents about the education being offered to their kids. Similarly, deaf children are educated in segregated schools that keep them separate from their non-disabled peers. Physical segregation has put an end to social interaction. However due to changes across the world; Pakistan is taking steps towards inclusive education (Akram & Basher, 2008). The lack of policy initiative is one of the major barriers to inclusive education in Pakistan (Bashir, 2005). Being a signatory of the World Conference of Education for all (UNESCO, 1990), Salamanca Declaration (UNESCO, 1994) and the Dakar Framework for Action of Education for All (UNICEF, 2004). Pakistan is chasing the target of education for all. This target could be achieved only if students with special needs could be included in mainstream schools. Pakistan National Policy for Persons with Disabilities (2002) also promises inclusive system of education that can improve the literacy rate as well as the quality of lives of students with disabilities.

2. Objectives of the study

- To find out the attitude of students towards inclusive education.
- To explore the feelings of students towards handicapped students in the sample area.

3. Methods and Procedure

3.1. Population

All students of the IER University of Peshawar constituted the population of this study. There are total 450 students in the IER, so all the students at university level were included in the population of this study.

3.2. Sample Size

A list containing students of IER university of Peshawar was received from the administration. Fifty students were randomly selected using the lottery method for the research. As far as the distribution of the sample size among five disciplines is concerned, a list of students was provided by the institute. This list of all students served as a sampling frame for the study. Applying the random sampling technique ten students were selected from each discipline. In this way fifty students constituted the sample size of the study.

3.3. Research Instruments

Prior to the data collection, the purpose of the study was described, and consent was taken. The participants were assured of confidentiality. They were required to complete the questionnaire which contained the attitude and feelings of the students towards handicapped students.

3.4. Validity and Reliability

To ensure the validness of instruments and to know the problems, hurdles in respect of collection of data by using the instruments and finding ways to resolve them. Validity was checked by five experts belonging to the field of education. All the suggestions/ observations provided by the experts were then incorporated to finalize the instrument. While Cronbach alpha was used for checking the reliability of the questionnaire. The result of co-efficient was found 0.8.

3.5. Data Analysis

The data were collected through questionnaire and then presented in tabulation in figures and percentages. The data were analyzed through SPSS and then interpreted.

4. Results and Discussion

Table 1: Showing the Response of Respondent's Attitude towards Inclusive Education

Item #	Options	SDA	DA	UN	AG	SAG
1	Students attitude towards inclusive education					
1.i	I would not mind if a handicapped student sits next to me.	7 (14)	2 (4)	0 (0)	4 (8)	37 (74)
1.ii	A handicapped student can help me in my studies.	2 (4)	3 (6)	14 (28)	19 (38)	12 (24)
1.iii	I would like working with a disabled classmate on a school project.	7 (14)	6 (1)	7 (14)	17 (34)	13 (26)
1.iv	A disabled student is able to participate in co-curricular activities.	10 (20)	5 (10)	12 (24)	15 (30)	8 (16)
1.v	I feel a handicapped student is friendly.	1 (2)	2 (4)	6 (12)	28 (56)	13 (26)
1.vi	Disabled students like to play games.	4 (8)	5 (10)	7 (14)	20 (40)	14 (28)
1.vii	A handicapped student can excel normal students in some areas of studies.	2 (4)	5 (10)	10 (20)	12 (24)	21 (42)
1.viii	I prefer my normal friend over disabled peers.	13 (26)	6 (12)	21 (42)	4 (8)	6 (12)

Note. SDA=strongly disagree, DA=disagree, UN=uncertain, AG= agree, SDA=strongly agree.

Figure in parenthesis shows the percentage of responses.

It can be observed from the table1 that two responses rated the most frequently in the combined categories of "agree" and "strongly agree" by the respondent regarding attitude of students without disability towards inclusive education. In response to item# 1.i; 82% respondents were agreed, while 18% disagreed. In response to Item# 1.ii; 'A handicapped student can help me in my study' 62% of the students were agreed with the statement, while 10% disagreed, while 28% of the respondents were uncertain. Regarding item #1.iii; 60% of the respondents agreed with the statement, 14% disagreed, while 14% remained uncertain. In response to item # 1.iv; 46% were agreed, whereas, 30% claimed otherwise and 12% of the respondents were uncertain. 82% of the respondents reported that a handicapped student is friendly, but nearly 6% disagreed, while 12% were uncertain. Item# 1.vi; indicates that 68% of the respondents were agreed with the statement 'Disabled students like to play game.' 18% disagreed, whereas 16% were uncertain. In response to the statement 'handicapped student can excel normal students in some areas of studies', 66% of respondents were agreed, while

14% disagreed, while 20% were uncertain. Item #1.viii shows that 38% of the respondents were disagreed with the statement 'I prefer my normal friends over disabled peers, while 20% agreed with the statement, and 42% remained uncertain.

Table 2: Shows the Responses of Respondent's Feeling Regarding Disabled Students

Items #	Options	SDA	DA	UN	AG	SAG
2	Normal Students feelings regarding disabled students					
i	I feel sorry for a student with disabilities.	3 (6)	9 (18)	9 (18)	14 (28)	15 (30)
ii	I feel happy being with my classmates with special needs.	6 (12)	3 (6)	8 (16)	15 (30)	18 (36)
iii	I would be happy to invite a handicapped classmate to my birthday.	4 (8)	4 (8)	2 (4)	13 (26)	27 (54)
iv	I would stand up for my disabled classmate if he was being teased.	4 (8)	3 (6)	7 (14)	11 (22)	25 (50)
v	I feel a disabled student is as happy as I am.	4 (8)	12 (24)	20 (40)	8 (16)	6 (12)
vi	I feel students with disabilities can contribute to society.	5 (10)	3 (6)	8 (16)	19 (38)	15 (30)
vii	I would like to introduce a disabled classmate to my friends.	5 (10)	1 (2)	7 (14)	16 (32)	21 (42)

Note. SDA=strongly disagree, DA=disagree, UN=uncertain, AG= agree, SDA=strongly agree.

Figure in parenthesis shows the percentage of responses.

From the table above, 58% of the respondents were agreed with the statement 2.i; 'I feel sorry for student with disability' 24% disagreed, while 18% were uncertain. In response to item# 2.ii; 'I feel happy being with my classmate special needs' 66% of the students were agreed, while 18% disagreed, whereas, 16% were uncertain. Nearly 80% respondents were agreed to the statement that 'I would be happy to invite a handicapped classmate to my birthday' whereas, 16% disagreed. Item#5 shows that 72% respondents were agreed to the statement that 'I would stand up for my disabled classmate if he was being teased, few of them i.e. 14% disagreed. Item# 4.10; 28% of the students were agreed with the statement 'I feel a disabled student is as happy as I am' 32% disagreed, while 40% were uncertain. Item# 2.v shows that 68% of the respondents were agreed with the statement 'I feel students with disability can contribute to society.' Nearly 16% disagreed with the statement. Nearly 80% of the respondents were agreed with the statement #15 'I would like to introduce a disabled classmate to my friends' 12% disagreed with the statement, while 8% were uncertain.

5. Findings

- Almost 82% respondents did not mind if a handicapped student sits next to them.
- Approximately 62% of the respondents agreed that a handicapped student could help them in

their studies.

- More than half of the respondents like working with a disabled classmate on a school project.
- Nearly half of the respondents were of the view that a disabled student is able to participate in co-curricular activities.
- Most of the respondents 82% reported that a handicapped students were friendly.
- Nearly 68% of the respondents were agreed that Disabled students like to play game.
- Approximately 66% of respondents were agreed that a handicapped student would excel normal students in some areas of studies.
- Round about 42% respondents were uncertain about giving preference to their nondisabled friend over disabled friend.
- Nearly 58% of the respondents were felt sorry for students with disability.
- Round about 68% of the respondents felt happy being with their disabled classmates.
- Almost 80% respondents like to invite a disabled friend to their birthday party.
- Approximately 72% of the respondents would stand up for their disabled friends being teased.
- Few of the respondent's i.e. 40% responses were uncertain about the statement that a disabled student is as happy as I am.
- Nearly 68% of the respondents were agreed that students with disability can contribute to society.
- Majority of the respondents i.e. 80% liked to introduce a disabled classmate to their friends.

6. Conclusion

The data concluded that extremely positive attitude hold by the respondents towards inclusive education. Most of the respondents did not mind if handicapped student sits next to them. This showed the acceptance of handicapped students by the normal students. More than half normal students accepted the fact that a disabled students could help them in their studies. This shows peer acceptance state of the normal students. Similarly, more than half of the respondents like working with a disabled classmate on a school project or any group activity. Nearly half of the respondents were of the view that a disabled student is able to participate in co-curricular activities. Most of the students confessed the friendly attitude held be disabled students. Nearly quarter of the students' view that a disabled student can participate in curricular and co-curricular activities. Nearly half of the students showed uncertainty regarding giving preference to their normal friends over disabled friends. More than half of the students felt sorry for their disabled friends while same number of the students felt happy being with their disable classmates. Most students would like to invite disabled friends to their birthday parties. Nearly quarter students would stand up for their disabled friends being teased. Thus, opponents of inclusive education are wrong that normal students would tease their disabled peers in inclusive sitting. Less than half of the students have no idea about the happiness level of the disabled students. Almost three forth percent of the students believe that disabled students could contribute to the welfare of the society. Most of the students like to introduce their disable classmate with normal friends.

7. Recommendations

The study recommended that:

- Awareness program about disable students may be initiated. For awareness help of stakeholder may be utilized.
- Inclusive practices may be increased in the educational institutions.

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