

Original article:

Attitude of children with special needs and without special needs towards each other in school

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ABSTRACT

Background: Children are expected to develop social skills through interaction with peers in school. In an inclusive school children with special needs are less likely to interact with each other. In these schools attitude of peers towards each other plays an important role. Therefore, it is vital to assess the attitude of students towards each other. The “Chedoke McMaster Attitude towards children with Handicaps (CATCH) Scale” helps to measure the attitude of peers towards children with special needs. The “Scale for Children with Special Needs (SN) helps to measure the attitude of children with special needs towards peers.

Objective: Objective of the study is to assess 1) Attitude of peers towards children with special needs and 2) Attitude of children with special needs towards peers without special needs

Methodology: 30 participants between the age group of 5-17 years with and without special needs were selected for the study from the same inclusive school. Two different questionnaires were used to measure the attitude of children towards each other.

Results: The results showed that most of the students were willing to sit next to the children with special needs. Also, the children with special needs were not afraid of other classmates and were willing to participate in activities with them.

Conclusion: From this study it was concluded that the children without special needs as well as children with special needs had positive attitude towards each other in school.

Key words: Attitude, inclusion, children with special need, children without special need.

INTRODUCTION

“The only disability in life is a bad attitude”- Scott Hamilton.

Children with disability are one of the most marginalized and excluded group in society¹. Disability is an umbrella term covering impairments, activity limitation and participation restriction. Impairment is a problem in body structure or function, activity limitation is a difficulty encountered by an individual in executing task and action. Thus disability is a complex phenomenon reflecting the interaction between features of a

person’s body and features of the society in which he or she lives.²

Worldwide, an estimated 650 million people live with disability and a quarter of them are younger than 18 years of age (World Health Organization 2011). Children and adolescent with disability face inequality in healthcare, transport, education, employment and other aspects of human endeavor³. Young children are expected to develop social skills through interactions with peers in schools. However admission to ordinary school does not guarantee full participation of the children⁴. Inclusion is based on the concept of social equality, wherein all students

are given equal exposure to all educational opportunities, irrespective of their disability or any form of disadvantages⁵. In inclusive classrooms children with disability would be less likely to interact with typically developing peers unless those peers positively and actively initiate the interaction. Since Inclusive Education is a new approach towards educating the children with special needs and learning difficulties with that of normal ones within the same roof, it is vital to improve children's attitude towards disabled person⁶. Studies have shown that negative attitude towards young people with disability is a major barrier to inclusive education⁷. School requires hard work in order to be successful. However, for some students even hard work is not enough. These students are faced with additional challenges in classroom. There are few studies conducted on the attitude of these children. In these children various disabilities can be observed. These disabilities can be Musculoskeletal disorders, Behavioral disorders and learning disorders. The musculoskeletal disorders include Blindness, hearing impairment and permanent motor involvement. Learning disorder is related to processing information that leads to difficulty in reading, writing and computing⁸. Among learning disorders, Dyslexia and Attention deficit/Hyperactive disorder (ADHD) are the most common type of disability accounting for half of all students receiving special education⁸. Experiencing negative attitude and being victimized by peers is associated with self blame, loneliness, anxiety and low self worth. Therefore, it is vital to know the attitude of students in classroom. This study therefore aims to assess the attitude of children without disability towards their peers and vice versa.

NEED FOR STUDY

The majority of children and young people with disability face negative attitude which constitutes to a major barrier to the development of their potential. Various studies were done on attitude of peers towards disabled children. But few studies were done on attitude of disabled children towards peers without disability. This study aims to describe the attitude of both children with and without special needs towards each other.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

Aim of the study: To see the attitude of children with special needs and without special needs towards each other in school.

Objectives of the study: Objective of the study is to assess

- 1) Attitude of peers towards children with special needs and
- 2) Attitude of children with special needs towards peers without special needs.

HYPOTHESES

Null Hypothesis (H₀): Negative attitude of students may be seen towards their peers with special needs. And negative attitude of students with special needs may be seen towards their peers, showing programs should be designed to improve the attitude of the students towards their peers.

Alternative Hypothesis (H₁): Positive attitude of students may be seen towards their peers with special needs. Positive attitude of students with special needs may be seen towards their peers, showing that social contact makes a difference in attitude of the students.

METHODOLOGY

This was an observational type study. The source of data was Vihanga School in Aurangabad. The selection was done by simple random sampling. 30 participants including boys and girls between the ages of 5-17 years were selected. They were divided

into 2 groups of children with and without special needs. . Two different questionnaires were used to measure the attitude of children towards each other.

PROCEDURE

All the participants from Vihanga School were screened according to inclusion and exclusion criteria. The teachers in that school were briefed about the study. The study was to assess the attitude of both children with and without special needs towards each other. Participants were selected from

groups sharing the same class room with peers with special needs and are familiar with them. To assess the attitude towards children with special needs CATCH scale was used. A similar scale was used to measure attitude of children with special needs towards their peers. These scales are questionnaire which elicits response on Likert scale. These questionnaires were distributed in the classroom with the help of the teacher

Sr No	CATCH SCALE	Agree %	Neutral %	Disagree %
1	I wouldn't mind if a handicapped student sits next to me	60	0	40
2	I wouldn't introduce a handicapped child to my friend	40	13.3	46.7
3	I wouldn't know what to say to a handicapped child	0	46.7	53.3
4	I feel sorry for a handicapped children	40	46.7	13.3
5	I would stick up for a handicapped child who was being teased	53.3	0	46.7
6	I would invite a handicapped child to my birthday party	60	0	40
7	I would be afraid of a handicapped child	13.3	33.3	53.4
8	I would talk to a handicapped child I didn't know	53.4	40	6.7
9	Handicapped children don't like to make friends	33.3	33.3	33.4
10	I would try to stay away from a handicapped child	26.6	13.4	60
11	I would be happy to have a handicapped child as a special friend	46.7	20	33.3
12	In class I wouldn't sit next to a handicapped child	13.3	20	66.7
13	I would be pleased if a handicapped child invited me to his house	53.4	26.6	20
14	I would feel good doing school project with a handicapped child	73.3	6.7	20
15	Being near someone who is handicapped scares me	20	13.3	66.7
16	I would tell my secrete to a handicapped child	60	20	20
17	Handicapped children are often sad	46.7	33.3	20
18	I would not go to a handicapped child's house to play	20	13.3	66.7
19	Handicapped children need lots of help to do things	73.3	13.3	13.4

DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

In this study the total numbers of participants were 30. They were divided into two groups. The first group was of 15 participants without special needs. The second group was of 15 participants with special needs.

Table no 1: Response of participants on CATCH Scale

Table 2: Response of participants on Scale for children with Special needs

Sr No		Agree %	Neutral %	Disagree %
1	I feel awkward to sit next to my classmate	13.4	0	36.6
2	My friends wont introduce me to their friends	60	20	20
3	I wouldn't know how to start a conversation with a child	53.3	20	26.7
4	I always feel my classmates feel sorry for me	40	40	20
5	My classmates always stand up for me when I get teased	86.6	0	13.4
6	I get invited to my a peers birthday party	80	0	20
7	I am afraid of other children	33.3	0	66.7
8	I talk to a new classmate I didn't know	66.7	13.3	20
9	Other kids don't make friends with me	26.6	33.4	40
10	I try to stay away from a other children	22.6	33.4	40
11	I would be happy to have a classmate as friend	80	13.3	6.7
12	In class peers hesitate to sit next to me	46.6	20	33.4
13	I would be pleased if a classmate invites me to his house	80	6.7	13.3
14	I would feel good doing project with my classmates	66.7	13.3	20
15	Being among other children scares me	33.3	26.7	40
16	I would be comfortable sharing my secrets with other children	33.3	26.7	40
17	Children without any physical disability are often happier than me	33.3	33.3	33.4
18	I would not go to other children's house to play	46.6	0	53.4
19	My peers help me to do lots of things	53.4	26.6	20

RESULTS

Table no 1: This table shows the response of children without disability on items of “CATCH Scale”. According to the analysis by percentage sixty percent (60%) participants said that they would not worry if a disabled child sits next to them. Whereas seventy three percent (73%) would be happy to do project with special children.

Table no 2: This table shows the response of children with special needs on items of Scale for children with special needs. According to the analysis eighty six percent (86%) participants do not feel awkward to sit next to their classmates. While sixty six percent (66%) participants said they won't hesitate to talk to a new person.

General findings in this study:

- Most of the students in this inclusive school had a positive attitude towards each other.
- Most of the children believed that children with special needs can be their good friends
- Most of the special kids believed that other children stand up for them in need
- Only few students said they would be scared or would not talk to someone with special needs

DISCUSSION

To be seated next to a classmate is a step forward for acceptance of his peers. Young children develop their social skills in schools through interaction. Thus attitude of peers towards each other play an important role.

The objective of the present study “Attitude of children with special needs and without special needs towards each other in school” was to assess the attitude of children. This study was conducted in an inclusive school in Aurangabad. The students were screened according to the selection criteria and

divided into two groups of children with special needs and other children without special needs. The attitude of children were measured using two scales, 1) Scale for children with Special Needs 2) CATCH scale. This study used more of close end questions. In addition to the previous studies this study accessed the attitude of children with special needs with the help of a simple questionnaire.

Attitude of children without disability was found to be positive towards the children with special needs, as maximum number of participants said that they would not hesitate to sit next to them. Whereas attitude of children with special needs was also seen to be positive as they showed enthusiasm when asked if they were willing to participate in different activities with other children. This showed that the participating children were not easily distracted by the appearance or behavior of children with special need.

The previous study conducted by Olaley aimed to access attitude of peers towards disability and to access the role of gender. The study concluded that children generally had positive attitude towards peers with disability. In this study generally girls had more positive attitude than the male students. The level of previous contact with people with disability also played an important role in attitude of children.

Another study conducted by Hong, Kwon and Jeon also aimed to access the children's understanding about disability. The attitude of preschool children towards disability in relation to their prior contact with people with disability and parental factors were recorded. Unlike previous studies the study concluded that the students had a basic level of understanding of disability.

Contrary to our hypothesis the results were positive. This could be due to interaction of these children

with each other since young age. This study could also suggest that introduction of children to disability or social interaction of children with special needs with typically growing children can play a major role in shaping the children's attitude.

CONCLUSION

From the above study it can be concluded that the children without special needs as well as children with special needs have positive attitude towards each other in school.

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