

Is it True that Being Sociable Helps One Make Friends? Students with Exceptional Disabilities whose Social Status Influences their Ability to Interact with their Peers in Mainstream Classrooms

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Abstract

It is possible that the implementation of inclusive education in educational institutions may make it more difficult for children with exceptional needs to build social relationships with their regular classmates. When it comes to developing healthy relationships with one's peers, it is absolutely necessary to possess the social skills that are suitable for one's age group. It is more likely that students who do not possess adequate social skills will be excluded from engaging in activities that take place in the classroom. The purpose of this study is to investigate the connection between the socioeconomic level of children with special needs and the social skills they possess when they are engaged in inclusive educational settings. In the process of gathering information, there were a total of 989 children who were in grades four through seven that participated. Participation in groups, acceptance by peers, and friendships are the three particular characteristics of social inclusion that are taking into consideration in this study. According to the findings of research, roughly twenty to twenty-five percent of children who have special needs face difficulties in social integration with their respective classmates. Without exception, there is never a discernible correlation between the social rank of an individual and their level of social intelligence. On the other hand, this assertion is not true when it comes to adolescents who are struggling with behavioral issues. One's social standing has a significant bearing on their capacity to interact with other people, and this relationship is mutually beneficial. It may be beneficial for individuals in this demographic to work on strengthening their social skills if they have the goal of establishing and maintaining relationships with their peers, making new acquaintances, and maintaining friendships that they already have.

Keywords- Exceptional Disabilities, Social Status Interact Mainstream Classrooms

Introduction

It is possible that the implementation of inclusive education strategies in educational institutions could impede the social integration of children with special needs and their peers who are developing typically. In order to cultivate and maintain positive relationships with their contemporaries, young people need to possess social skills that are suitable for their age group. It is more likely that students who do not exhibit adequate social skills will be excluded from engaging in activities that take place in the classroom. The purpose of this study project is to investigate the association between the social abilities demonstrated by children with special needs and their socioeconomic level in educational environments that are inclusive of all students. The method of information gathering was carried out with the participation of a total of 989 youngsters who were enrolled in grades four through seven. The purpose of this study is to investigate three unique dimensions of social inclusion: friendships, participation in group activities, and acceptance by peers. According to the findings of research, roughly 25 to 30 percent of children who have special needs experience difficulty in social integration with their peers. There is no correlation that can be considered reliable between a person's social standing and their level of social intelligence. On the other hand, when taking into consideration adolescents who are battling with behavioral issues, this assumption is not correct. The social standing of an individual has a substantial impact on the individual's interpersonal talents, and this link produces mutually beneficial outcomes for both parties involved. People that fall into this demographic and are interested in establishing and sustaining relationships with their contemporaries, as well as making new friends and maintaining friendships they already have, may find that developing and strengthening their social skills is beneficial.

Methodology

The sample consisted of elementary and lower secondary schools located in and around Trondheim, Norway. Due to the comprehensive nature of Norway's inclusion approach,

there is a limited provision of personalized help for special education pupils in contemporary Norway. The majority of students continue to opt for enrollment in traditional educational institutions. All educational institutions within the vicinity of Trondheim were invited to participate. A total of 26 educational institutions exhibited either non-reaction or delayed response, citing various causes. The primary factor contributing to this phenomenon was the schools' recurrent solicitation to participate in research endeavors initiated by diverse academic departments and other training establishments. Certain educational institutions did not provide a response due to the factors elucidated in the subsequent investigation. The final sample consisted of fifteen schools, encompassing a total of fourteen fourth-grade children (aged 9-10) and thirteen seventh-grade classes (aged 12-13). A total of 989 students in the fourth and seventh grades participated in the data collection process.

The formal identification of kids with special needs is not encouraged throughout the public school system of Norway, however the extent to which different institutions have discontinued this practice varies significantly. Due to the potential inadequacy of selecting pupils solely based on a formal declaration, we were compelled to depend on the viewpoints of teachers within the classroom. Educators were requested to provide concise descriptions of kids whom they have identified as requiring special education accommodations. Among the total of 42 fourth graders and 37 seventh graders, teachers identified a proportion of 8.0% of the sample. The official feedback rate was recorded at 4.2%.

Sociometric indicators derived from peer nomination were commonly employed in conventional school environments to assess the social status of children with exceptional needs. A study conducted in 2006 by Pijl et al. involved surveying students to ascertain their perceptions of friendship within their peer group. Due to ethical considerations, the researchers opted against soliciting unfavorable nominations from the participating teachers, as they were aware that such a request would be perceived as unethical. Only students who were in the same grade level or age group, or in the same classroom, were eligible to nominate their peers. An increasing number of educational institutions in Norway are opting to replace big classroom cohorts with smaller, more manageable groups consisting of approximately 15 students each.

Students engage in collaborative efforts to complete assignments and engage in interdisciplinary study sessions with their peers. This methodology guarantees the inclusion of children from all schools within a specific grade level in the sample, hence ensuring their representation as a reference group.

The number of names eligible for consideration in the semi-fixed vote is limited to a maximum of five. In peer research, it is customary to impose a restriction on the number of nominations, typically limiting it to three. Nevertheless, it is important to acknowledge that this approach may lead to potential inaccuracies due to the fact that it is highly unlikely for every student to have precisely three individuals whom they consider their closest friends (Wasserman & Faust, 1994). A consensus was reached about the establishment of a limit of five nominees, with the stipulation that students were granted the liberty to submit less than five names, should they choose to do so. The utilization of this option seems to result in a marginal decrease in the respondents' autonomy. The study examines the social skills of students in special education, specifically focusing on those aged 19.

The analysis incorporates three unique metrics of social inclusion. The first index, referred to as "in degrees" within the field of social network analysis, quantifies the concept of "peer acceptance" by tallying the number of individuals inside a group that nominate others in response to a positively framed inquiry. Subsequently, an examination was conducted on the interpersonal dynamics among the pupils in the classroom. According to Cullinan et al. (1992), the presence of a shared experience between individuals is a prerequisite for the establishment of a friendship. In order for a genuine friendship to form between two children, it is imperative that both individuals independently choose to establish a bond with one another. The ultimate measure examined the extent to which an individual's identification was aligned with a specific subgroup within the broader class (Farmer & Farmer, 1996).

In this discussion, we are referring to groups of individuals that have strong connections with one another in terms of their physical proximity, emotional intensity, frequency of interaction, or overall positive nature (Wasserman & Faust, 1994, p. 249). Cullinan et al. (1992) propose that individuals with special needs can be deemed socially integrated when they actively engage in collective endeavors, are

acknowledged as peers, and possess at least one shared companion. This aligns with the three indices that have previously been introduced. Social inclusion refers to the state in which a student is integrated into a social group, maintains at least one friendship within that group, and is accepted by their peers.

The researchers provided a description of the social skills exhibited by the students and conducted an evaluation of their social status using the Social Skills Rating System (SSRS: Gresham & Elliot, 1990) based on straightforward criteria. These norms encompass cooperativeness, assertiveness, empathy, and self-control. The subscale of cooperation include quantifiable behaviors like as assisting others, engaging in resource sharing, and adhering to established norms and regulations. Engaging in self-introduction, information-seeking, and responding to insults or peer pressure are all instances of aggressive conduct. Empathy can be exemplified by actions that demonstrate respect for the opinions and feelings of others. Behaviors that manifest in circumstances necessitating compromise and the practice of taking turns are encompassed within the self-control subscale (Gresham & Elliot, 1990, p. [page number]).

The scale comprises a total of 34 components. The measurement instrument consists of two subscales, each including a total of six items. The raw scores for these items range from 0 to 10, resulting in a maximum possible raw score of 40. The age distribution of our sample closely resembled that of the elementary level of the SSRT. Ogden (1995) conducted the translation and validation of the original Norwegian version of the Social Skills Rating System. Consistent with the findings of Gresham and Elliot (1990), the overall dependability coefficient for the student form of the Norwegian version was determined to be 0.83. The study conducted by Gresham and Elliot (1990) identified a clear subtest structure. However, subsequent factor analysis failed to validate these initial findings. Based on Ogden's analysis, the 34 elements assessed in the examination can be reduced to a singular factor, so enabling the examination to be regarded as a comprehensive assessment of social skills. The SSRS was employed in Ogden's modification. The rubric items were orally presented to the students by the test administrator. The data for the tests was collected by a group

consisting of authors and three students who were pursuing their master's theses in the field of education.

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