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Impact of Inclusive Classroom Practices on Students' Social Skills Development

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Abstract

This is the fundamental principle of inclusive education. There has been a global upsurge in this movement. In addition to fostering social integration and improving students' interpersonal skills, inclusive learning gives students a sense of belonging and acceptance. The study shows that even in an inclusive school setting, children with mental disorders will not be able to learn social skills. Nine thousand four hundred and fifty-nine students with intellectual disabilities attended the aforementioned public and publicly-funded schools. Time and other resource limitations meant that the research could only include a subset of the districts originally planned, including every unique and typical characteristic. Inclusive education has the potential to help students become more proficient in their social interactions. The present system of inclusive education is only theoretical; it has to be transformed by reorienting all stakeholders and reshaping their mindsets to include children with intellectual impairments and other special needs, who need extensive assistance.

Keywords: Inclusive Classroom, Social Skills Development, Students, Education

1. Introduction

To be truly inclusive in the classroom, all students must feel secure, valued, and respected regardless of their gender, race, religion, ethnicity, sexual orientation, physical ability, or any other factor that may affect their capacity to learn. By tackling and striving to eradicate negative attitudes and stereotypes based on gender, race, ethnicity, religion, ability, learning style, or any other distinguishing trait, we may actively create an inclusive classroom. In this classroom, students who may have felt "othered" are accepted and encouraged to contribute fully. Because it helps every student feel valued as an individual, accepted for who they are, and a part of the classroom community, inclusion is essential. Students in inclusive classrooms are more likely to develop self-assurance that will serve them well not just throughout their academic careers but also as contributing members of their local communities and global citizens. For kids with special needs, an inclusive classroom is about more than simply helping them succeed in the

classroom. Instead, inclusion in the classroom is beneficial for everyone involved, including students, instructors, school systems, and parents or guardians of kids. Every kid gain from forming connections with classmates from different backgrounds, and every teacher gains from getting to know their students better via these experiences. Because kids who are respected and included are more likely to participate positively in the learning community, administrators and instructors experience fewer absences and disciplinary difficulties within inclusive school cultures. Parents and guardians may be certain that their children are learning and spending a significant portion of their childhood in a secure and supportive setting when they choose an inclusive school.

Many methods exist for making classrooms more welcoming to all students. In general, these approaches focus on getting to know each student on a personal level, making the classroom more engaging and responsive to the needs of all students, and fostering partnerships with others

who have an interest in the kids' success. Though there are many instances of inclusion in the classroom, most of them fit into one of seven types. Within American pedagogy, the phrase "inclusive classroom" is used to describe a setting where all students are welcomed holistically, regardless of their talents or capabilities. Based on the premise that children with special needs would be better prepared for life after high school if they attend a non-segregated classroom. Although disabled people's civil rights were protected by the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 in the US, the inclusion of impaired kids was gradual until the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. After that, about half of the students with disabilities in the US were quickly enrolled in mainstream classes. The effectiveness of programs has been negatively impacted by the heavy workload that school boards and teachers are under due to a lack of funding. Teachers are often unprepared, under a lot of stress, and frustrated. One proposed approach is co-teaching, which entails doubling the number of teachers to facilitate an inclusive classroom. Inclusive education refers to a school policy and practice designed to educate all students, including those with special needs or disabilities, inside general education classrooms. Every student, irrespective of their abilities or traits, is entitled to access and engage in a quality education, a principle that is upheld by it. The objective of inclusive education is to address the distinct needs of every student, irrespective of their abilities, by creating a classroom environment that is inviting and tolerant of all individuals. It stresses the need of removing obstacles to learning and providing suitable adaptations, accommodations, and support services to make sure that every kid can participate completely in school.

To guarantee that all students, irrespective of their various origins and skills, have equitable chances to showcase their knowledge, inclusive classroom assessment has become an essential part of contemporary educational practice. Assessment strategies that are fair, objective, and accommodating to the requirements of all students are necessary in light of the increasing diversity in today's classrooms, which encompasses differences in culture, language, aptitude for learning, and socioeconomic status. Students with various forms of disability, such as visual, auditory, physical, or mental impairments, are becoming more common in college courses as a whole. Because of this variety, there is an immediate need for classroom evaluations that are inclusive of all children, meaning that they all get a chance to show what they know and can do. Research has demonstrated that implementing inclusive classroom assessment practices can have a positive impact on education equity and accessibility. It can help meet students' diverse needs, create a welcoming learning environment that values diversity, improve educational outcomes, promote fairness, enhance educational experiences, and support students from diverse backgrounds to succeed academically.

an inclusive education strategy entails integrating students with special needs into regular classrooms and offering them individualized support so that they may fully participate in the learning process. Children with disabilities may learn alongside peers their own age in an inclusive classroom setting, allowing them to develop physically, intellectually, socially, and emotionally at their own rate.

Because of this, they are able to feel accepted and a part of their peer group. Furthermore, it provides students with many chances to hone valuable life skills such as self-care, functional literacy, numeracy, and safety awareness, as well as communal living. Inclusionary education has come a long way from its beginnings. The current trend toward accommodating children with disabilities in mainstream classrooms is recognized by the phrases "inclusion" and "responsible inclusion". Inclusionary education represents a concept that consistently incorporates an empathetic approach within the educational setting. All children, regardless of their skills, must have fair access to high-quality education, and inclusive education aims to achieve this goal. contends that inclusive schools encourage the active engagement of all students-regardless of ability, race, language, or socioeconomic status-in classroom discourse, cultivate meaningful peer relationships, ensure access to challenging and relevant general education curricula, and enable support from educators and peers to achieve their goals. In progressive academics, the term "inclusive education" is a recent addition to the educational system. Inclusionary education has significantly progressed over the past two decades, facilitated by several legislative measures, educational statutes, constitutional provisions, and social movements. The term "normalization" was initially utilized in European countries. The "Right to Education" statute (RTE Act, MHRD, 2009) is currently a topic of widespread discussion. Students with Special Educational Needs formerly attended either integrated or specialized institutions. A child with special education needs has no opportunity for admission to a mainstream school without the consideration of inclusion.

2. Review Literature

Wahyuni, *et al.* (2025) ^[1]. In Indonesian inclusive school settings, this research investigates how instructors perceive the social skills of kids with special needs. Data was collected using a qualitative case study technique, with instructors who deal closely with kids with special needs participating in in-depth interviews and direct observations. Students often have inadequate social competences, according to the results. This is especially true in verbal communication, compliance with social standards, and relationships with peers, although there is some improvement. Individualized tactics that are suited to each student's specific developmental profile were emphasized by participants as being crucial. Insights from Indonesian teachers on the difficulties and solutions unique to their setting in supporting the social development of children with special needs provide a fresh addition to the existing literature. With this research, we want to better understand how to create inclusive learning programs that support students' personal and social development.

Ranbir, *et al.* (2024) ^[2]. The objective of inclusive education is to guarantee that all students, regardless of their socioeconomic situation or physical or mental capabilities, have access to high-quality education in an inclusive environment. This study examines inclusive education strategies to meet the diverse needs of children in the classroom. This article highlights the significance of achieving educational equality and social justice by analyzing methods for increasing accessibility, bolstering

personalized learning, and cultivating an inclusive and welcoming environment. The article continues by outlining several strategies for inclusive education, such as collaborative teaching methods, individualized instruction, and Universal Design for Learning (UDL), the responsibility of teachers, principals, and aides in fostering welcoming learning environments for all students. In order to address the needs of all students, it stresses the need of building strong connections between teachers and students, offering individualized assistance and accommodations, and encouraging stakeholders to work together.

Tampubolon, *et al.* (2023) [3]. In order to promote diversity and fairness in the classroom, this journal article analyzes inclusive education techniques. Understanding the significance of meeting the requirements of students with a wide range of learning styles, the research delves into methods for establishing a welcoming classroom for all students. The importance of a student-centered approach that values and celebrates diversity is highlighted by the study. To accommodate a wide range of students, including those with varying levels of ability and backgrounds, it explores the use of adaptable teaching methodologies, individualized lesson plans, and several forms of evaluation. As an added bonus, the paper delves into how inclusive practices may be enhanced via teacher professional development. It delves at the ways in which teachers may better themselves in order to build diverse and inclusive classrooms. Educators, support workers, and administrators must work together to build an inclusive learning environment, according to the report. Important areas of focus also include investigating curricular modifications and implementing universal design principles. This article takes a look at how creating learning resources that cater to different learning styles and making curriculum more accessible may help make education more inclusive. Finally, this article provides helpful information on inclusive education approaches, highlighting the significance of promoting equality and diversity in the educational setting.

Kart, *et al.* (2021) [4]. A shift toward more inclusive pedagogy is taking place in several nations. When children with disabilities are educated alongside their typically developing classmates, this practice is known as inclusive education. Research on the impact of inclusion for both normally developing and special needs kids is necessary if inclusive education is to gain traction. On the other hand, studies examining the effects of inclusion on disabled kids are more numerous than those examining the experiences of typically developing students in inclusive classrooms. Kids with disabilities benefit academically and socially from inclusion, according to research, but the effects on kids in regular classrooms are less well understood. Thus, this review aims to compile and synthesize research on the social and academic effects of inclusion on typically developing kids. Inclusive education may have varying impacts on the academic performance of students without disabilities depending on their level of education, and these effects are not uniform. Generally speaking, the research shows that inclusion has either no impact or a neutral effect on the academic performance of normally developing pupils in the lower grades, but either no effect or a negative influence in the upper years.

Mortimore, *et al.* (2015) [5]. Every kid, even those with

special education needs, experiences societal and cultural influences. In response to these pressures, they, too, undergo changes in their social and emotional development and learn to adapt to their surroundings. The problem is that young kids don't often have the chance to acquire and practice important social skills (like confidence and independence) because their classrooms aren't good enough. Although it is equally effective in developing various social skills and capacities in children with ordinary or non-average development, inclusive education for children with special educational needs is not widely practiced in Hungary. With a focus on studies and programs in the UK, this article aims to make the case for inclusive education in Hungary by looking at other countries' experiences. Learning difficulties, social skills, and inclusive education are some of the terms used to describe this field.

3. Research Methodology

The researcher hopes to learn more about how inclusive education helps kids with intellectual disabilities in Kerala schools improve their social skills via this study. Classes VII, VIII, and IX were the only ones included in the research since that is when the individuals were anticipated to have been through a substantial amount of inclusive education. For the purpose of comparing the attainment of social skills, age-appropriate samples were also drawn from the special schools.

3.1 Sample Size

Teachers were to react based on observations of the conduct of students with intellectual disabilities participating in both general and special education programs, as these students lacked the cognitive capacity to provide objective replies. The total number of 300 in sample comprised students from both publicly and privately funded institutions. Additionally, responses from special schools were gathered and evaluated. Responses were gathered from a variety of sources.

3.2 Techniques and Tools for Data Gathering

Normative survey method was adopted for the study. Both quantitative and qualitative strategies were utilized for data collection and analysis. Observations of teachers, peers and parents regarding intellectually challenged children were collected and analysed quantitatively so as to assess the status of different aspects of social skills achieved by them. Observations of experts in the field of inclusive education, special education and psychology were collected through a focus group discussion and were subjected to qualitative analysis

3.3 Analyzing and Managing Data Tool Administration

The investigator personally administered all instruments and provided any necessary explanations or clarifications. Both special education and general education schools had their data gathered independently. Two centres used the established indicators to perform FGD.

Statistical Techniques used: The statistical method used to compare quantitative data was the mean percentage score.

3.4 Ethical Considerations

Every effort was made to ensure that the participants' replies

would remain secret throughout the investigations. No one's answer was ever examined in isolation. The social advantages were the unwavering focal point of the whole inquiry.

3.5 Data Quality Assurance

The analysis was conducted statistically, and the techniques used were standardized, so the highest quality could be guaranteed.

4. Data Analysis

In order to understand the current state of inclusive education programs and how well they help students with intellectual disabilities acquire crucial social skills, the study's respondents' replies are examined individually.

4.1 Social Skills in Children with Mental Disabilities: Consolidation of Responses by Area

Below is a table displaying the mean percentage scores received in each of the eleven domains of social skills. A far lower-than-expected average of 26.47 percent was achieved throughout all eleven categories, as seen in the table. Consequently, it is clear that the existing inclusive education system requires significant adjustments to facilitate the acquisition of essential social skills for children with intellectual impairments. Inclusive education facilitates the acquisition of social skills in students with intellectual impairments, particularly in relationship management (35.82%), collaboration (34.63%), and participation (30.17%). Management of relations has the highest Mean Percentage Score, with 'co-operation' coming in slightly behind. Among the social skills that intellectually disabled students are less likely to acquire via inclusive education are the following: understanding the viewpoints of others (19.06%), readiness and initiative (19.35), and problem solving (20.44). 'Understanding the viewpoint of others which is a challenging intellectual competence' had the lowest score of 19.06. The remaining categories of social competence all had Mean Percentage Scores that were more than 20 but less than 40. With a standard deviation of 5.73, we can see that there is a lot of internal consistency.

Table 1: Enhancing Social Competence in Children with Mental Disabilities: A Consolidation of Findings by Area

S. No	Areas of Social Skill	Mean Percentage Score for the item	Standard-Deviation
1	Participation	30.17	5.73
2	Co-operation	34.63	
3	Emotional regulation	28.45	
4	Management of relations	35.82	
5	Management of Time, and Material	25.29	
6	Communication	28.78	
7	Readiness and Initiatives	19.35	
8	Attention	23.83	
9	Manners and Etiquettes	25.35	
10	Problem Solving	20.44	
11	Understanding the perspective of others	19.06	
Average Mean Percentage Score for the item		26.47	

4.2 Social Skills Among Students with Mental Disabilities in Inclusive Schools: An Analysis of Teacher Survey Responses

Tool No 3 was a questionnaire for teachers consisting of 15 areas to which responses regarding general remarks on the social behaviours of children with intellectual challenges were collected and consolidated. Under each area, the responses of the teachers are stated below. For a particular statement, the agreement of the participant teachers was different. When some teachers had complete agreement, some others had total disagreement. Some teachers expressed partial agreement. The status of the responses is tabled below. Percentage of Teachers coming under each category (Agree/ Partially agree/ Disagree is marked in each column)

4.2.1 Training to Teachers

Only 1% of the 50 educators have gotten training that has been shown to be beneficial; 4% have received training that is only somewhat effective; and 96% have not received training at all. Only 2% of educators are fully informed of the available training programs in this domain. Although 22% of educators have some knowledge in this area, 76% are completely unaware of any training that exists in this field. Training is necessary for 62% of teachers. There is a partial requirement for training among 32% of instructors. There is no requirement for training in this field for teachers, which is 6%.

Table 2: Training Status for Educators

No	Responses	Number of Respondents (Percentage of respondents in bracket)		
		Agree	Partially Agree	Disagree
1	Received effective training programmes in the area	0(0)	2(4)	48(96)
2	Informed about the training	1(2)	11(22)	38(76)
3	Want to be trained	31(62)	16(32)	3(6)

4.3 Analysis of Parent Survey Responses on Social Skills for Students with Mental Disabilities in Inclusive Classrooms

Below, you can see the parents' replies broken down by region. Parents that had their children participate had differing degrees of agreement with one statement. At the same time as some parents were totally in accord, others were completely opposed. A number of educators voiced their mixed feelings. Below is a table showing the current status of the answers. Each column represents the percentage of parents that fall into one of three categories: agree, somewhat agree, or disagree.

4.3.1 Opinions on the approach of inclusive education

Of the 50 parents surveyed, 12% think that inclusive schools are the best option for children with special needs. Only a third of parents fully agree with the assertion. When asked about their children's experiences at an inclusive school, 56% of parents expressed scepticism. The percentage of parents who believe that inclusive schools provide sufficient learning opportunities for children with disabilities is 8%. Only one-eighth of parents think that inclusive schools provide children with disabilities with sufficient educational

opportunity. There is a widespread belief among parents that inclusive schools do not provide sufficient learning opportunities for children with disabilities (74% of them). The current inclusive school system is well-suited to the development of social skills, according to 32% of parents.

Still, 42% of parents think that current inclusive education practices aren't ideal for helping their children develop their social skills. For children with special needs, 26% of parents feel the current system of inclusive education is not the best place to learn social skills.

Table 3: Reactions of parents towards inclusive education as a strategy

S. No	Responses	Number of Respondents (Percentage of respondents in bracket)		
		Agree	Partially Agree	Disagree
1	Children with challenges are rightly considered in inclusive schools	6(12)	16(32)	28(56)
2	They get adequate learning opportunities	4(8)	9(18)	37(74)
3	Prevailing inclusive education system is suitable for the development of social skills	16(32)	21(42)	13(26)

5. Conclusion

Roughly one percent of children is thought to have intellectual disabilities. Children that struggle intellectually will inevitably struggle socially. Deliberate and scientific efforts may be made to teach in these youngsters the bare minimum of social life skills necessary for success. However, our evaluation techniques only capture a subset of social competence, which is mostly defined by obvious behavioural manifestations. In reality, with the right kind of exposure and experiences, young kids may learn greater social skills. Achieving proficiency in social interaction may be accomplished via inclusive education. Children with intellectual disabilities and other special needs require a wide range of supports, but the current system of inclusive education is only conceptual, and it needs to be changed by changing the mindset of all parties involved and providing them with the right training and orientations. All classrooms and school buildings must be redesigned to be welcoming places for all students.

credited.

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