

Attitude towards inclusive education of students of general educational institutions of the Rostov region, Russia

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Abstract. The paper presents the results of a sociological study conducted among secondary and high school students of general education institutions of the Rostov region in 2020 (N=6876) in order to identify the attitude towards inclusive education and co-education with children with disabilities. The results revealed conflicting and ambiguous attitudes towards inclusive education. Respondents tend to see more positive than negative consequences of inclusion. Analysis of behavioral attitudes showed a different level of readiness for co-education, depending on the nature of the disease. The willingness to study together depends on the experience of interacting with persons with disabilities. The emotional aspect of the relationship is closely related to the stereotypes that are popular in society and the school environment. The cognitive component showed a low level of awareness of the problem of disability in society, the basic needs of this category, and the social policy pursued in the country in the field of inclusion.

1 Introduction

Over the past twenty years, an intensive policy has been pursued in the Russian Federation to combat the legal, financial, social and educational exclusion of persons with disabilities. The most important area of anti-discrimination policy, enshrined in both international and national regulatory frameworks, is to ensure access to quality education at all levels for students with disabilities. Much has been done in this area. However, there are still problems related to the development of the practice of inclusive education.

Inclusive education implies full inclusion, the creation of all structural conditions for the formation of students' belonging to the school community. Expansion of social contacts, inclusion in the local school community are the most important positive consequences of an inclusive form of education. But they are also the most difficult challenges facing the modern Russian education system. Attitude barriers are the most difficult issue in the development of inclusive services [1], but it is fundamentally important to overcome them. The basic structural determinant of inclusion is the attitude of students towards their co-education with children with disabilities. That is why the attitude of students towards classmates with disabilities often attracts the attention of researchers.

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2 Review of research on student attitudes towards inclusive education and co-education with children with disabilities

The study of the attitude of students towards their peers with disabilities in the school environment is an object of psychological, pedagogical and sociological literature. Psychological and pedagogical studies record a close relationship between attitudes and behavior, note the prognostic potential of studying attitudes towards inclusion of various participants in order to model behavioral responses [2, 3, 4, 5], develop psychological and pedagogical methods and technologies to minimize attitude barriers [6, 7, 8, 9, 10], predict further ways of developing inclusive educational services [11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17]. Psychological research attempts to identify patterns between the level of psychological readiness for co-education and other personality-significant qualities [18, 19, 20, 21].

The attitude of schoolchildren to inclusive education in sociological discourse is aimed at identifying the basic social variables that determine this process. These determinants include age [22, 23]; socio-economic situation [24]; type of educational institution [25]; experience of interaction with persons with disabilities both in the school environment and at home [26, 27, 28]; gender [29]. An important area of sociological discourse is the comprehension of attitude barriers in the process of forming an inclusive culture and social civic consciousness of persons with disabilities [30, 31].

But, despite the difference in the methodology and some aspects of the study, it should be noted that the results of psychological, pedagogical and sociological literature are in demand in practice and help to correct managerial decisions in the educational system in order to further move towards integration. Meanwhile, nowadays, there is some imbalance in the study of the problems of the attitude of normal peers to schoolchildren with special educational needs from the standpoint of social determinants in the domestic scientific literature [32].

The diagnostic potential of studying the level of development of inclusive education, predictive capabilities, dynamism of ongoing processes and regional specificity do not reduce the demand for research on attitudes towards inclusive education of students in the presence of a number of works devoted to this issue.

Aim of the study is to determine the attitude of students towards inclusive education and co-education with children with disabilities.

3 Materials and Methods

The study was conducted from March to May 2020. The study involved educational institutions (inclusive and specialized) of all municipalities of the Rostov region. Teachers carried out informing students about the conducted research. The survey method is a questionnaire. Students with disabilities (N = 4851 people) and students without disabilities (N=6876 people) took part in the survey. The total number of respondents was 11,727. Students filled out questionnaires at home using the provided link to the Google form. The survey involved students in Years 7 to 11. The sample type is random. Statistical analysis of the data included descriptive statistics (frequency and percentages). This paper presents an analysis of the responses of only normal students and highlights one of the aspects of the research program - the attitude of students towards inclusive education and co-education with children with disabilities.

4 Results

4.1. Attitudes towards co-education and inclusive education

The attitude towards co-education with children with special needs in secondary school is very controversial. Only every second respondent, to one degree or another, has a positive attitude towards inclusive education (32.9% - completely positive; 33.6% - rather positively); 11.4% rather have a negative attitude towards inclusive education, 3.2% - completely negative, and 18.8% find it difficult to answer.

The data obtained allow saying that the views of the respondents on the right to co-education of children with disabilities are related to the ideas about the needs of this population group. The distribution of answers to the question "What do you think, what is the main thing missing for people with disabilities in our country?" was as follows: "people with disabilities experience a deficit in the same way as all other people" - 11.2%; "opportunity to feel like full members of society" - 32.6%; "attention and care from others" - 28%; "financial help from the state" - 28.1%.

One of the central questions of the questionnaire aimed at identifying the attitude of respondents to various forms of education for children with disabilities was the question: "How, from your point of view, should the education of children with disabilities be organized in society?". It was revealed that the majority of students believe that "there should be specialized educational institutions" - 58.4%. In one form or another, only a quarter of the respondents support inclusive education services: 15.4% - "in an ordinary general secondary school", 11% - "at home schooling". In answering the question, the respondents were given the opportunity to enter their own answer to the question if there was no suitable one in the proposed answers. And 0.8% took advantage of this opportunity. Most of these self-formulated answers point out that the form of education should be closely related to the nature of the disease.

Table 1. Answers to the question: "How, from your point of view, should the education of children with disabilities be organized in the society?"

Answer options	% of the total number of respondents
there must be specialized educational institutions	58.4%
in an ordinary general secondary school	15.4%
Home schooling should be available	11%
they may not study at all	0.4%
It's hard for me to say	13.9%
Other (write in)	0.8%

The next question set the task of identifying the attitude of respondents to co-education with various categories of children with disabilities. The results showed that the level of readiness for co-education directly depends on the nature of the limitations and differs significantly. The absence of external differences from peers, the latent nature of atypicality is least of all exposed to educational discrimination in the school environment. 77% of students are ready to study in the same class with such children, 12.4% are ready to study with them in the same school, but believe that their education should be organized in a separate class. And only 10.6% believe that such children should study in a special school. The opinion of the respondents on the inclusive education of children with musculoskeletal disorders is significantly different: 53.1% express their readiness to study with them in the same class; 15.2% - in one school, and 31.8% note that they should study in a specialized school. Only 27.4% of respondents are ready to study in the same class with children with

speech, hearing and vision impairments, 24.9% are ready to study with them in school, and 47.8% believe that there should be specialized institutions for such children. Ableism in relation to children with mental disabilities is very significant: only 14.9% are ready to study with children with intellectual disabilities in one class, 19.5% - in one school, and 65.6% believe that they should study in a special school.

There is no unanimity in the attitude towards inclusion among the respondents, although in general, a rather positive assessment prevails. To the positive consequences of inclusive education, the respondents refer, first of all, opportunities for finding a common language with different people, conditions for the development of communication skills - 58.8%, overcoming social stereotypes, psychological barriers - 17.1%; the ability to restrain and control behavior and emotions - 8.7%, expanding ideas about the world and society - 7.5%, participation in non-standard approaches and teaching methods - 1.9%. However, 6% of respondents believe that they see nothing positive in this.

Among the negative consequences, the respondents note, first of all, the danger of a disregard, derisive attitude towards children with disabilities - 35.6%, the possibility of tense and conflict situations in the classroom - 9.9%, the threat of a decrease in the level of educational attainment - 7.2%, and difficulties in perceiving non-standard approaches and teaching methods - 7.2%. It is important that 39.8% of respondents do not see any negative consequences when normal children study together with children with special educational needs.

4.2. Prior personal communication experience and attitudes towards inclusion

It should be noted that stereotypes regarding children with disabilities regarding their ability to study together with other children and successfully master the program are most often a reflection of social stereotypes, and not the opinion of students obtained from personal experience. Only every third person has experience of co-education in one class or in one school (10% - I study in one class; 27.2% - I study in one school).

The data obtained make it possible to identify a direct relationship between the presence of previous experience of communication with children with disabilities and the level of tolerance. We have received confirmation of the theory of contact, according to which acquaintance, bonding can positively influence the attitude towards the group [4, 11]. However, despite a higher level of readiness for co-education among children who are already studying in the same classroom with people with disabilities, there is high concern that only 21.37% of such respondents believe that children with disabilities should be taught in regular schools together with other children. For other categories of respondents, this indicator is even lower. Thus, only 16.38% of respondents who do not have experience of studying in the same classroom with children with disabilities, but only study in the same school with such children, believe that this category should study in a regular school. Among those who do not have experience of studying in the same class or school with children with disabilities or who found it difficult to answer the question regarding the education of children with special educational needs in their class or school, only 13.9% believe that a regular school is a suitable form of their education.

4.3. An emotional review of attitudes towards inclusion

The development of inclusive education is closely related to the social paradigm of disability, which believes that disability is the result of not only persistent impairment of human health, but also the unwillingness of society to integrate people with special needs, as well as numerous stereotypes and myths that violate social interactions between people

with disabilities and the rest of the community. Supporters of the social paradigm note that the emotional reactions of pity, sympathy, admiration that arise when interacting with persons with disabilities are relics of the medical model and elements of the social construct of disability. For example, the stereotypical view of disability as a disease, which is inherent in the medical model, gave rise to the idea that it was impossible for people with disabilities to contribute to social development. That is why the employment and the daily performance of their work functions aroused among the carriers of this paradigm a feeling of admiration for a person with a disability, who, despite everything, was able to find an opportunity to be economically useful to society.

That is why, following some researchers in the field of inclusive education, we set ourselves the task of analyzing the emotional reactions of students to social contacts with people with disabilities. The majority of respondents feel admiration and respect for persons with disabilities, because such people, in their opinion, overcome a lot (57.1% - often feel this feeling; 23.7% - sometimes). Among the common feelings experienced by respondents when meeting people with disabilities are pity and compassion (52% - often feel this way; 26.9% - sometimes). Some respondents feel fear as a result of the projection of the social status of this category (14.9% - often, and 30.1% - sometimes feel fear for themselves, since no one is immune from serious health problems). 12.6% of respondents often experience awkwardness or embarrassment and 23.8% - sometimes. At the same time, negative emotions in the form of irritation (2% - often; 4.9% - sometimes), anger, indignation (1.3% - often, 3.5% - sometimes) are almost absent in the respondents' answers.

4.4. Stereotypes as a factor in exclusive attitudes

As noted earlier, in the course of the study, we recorded a different attitude of respondents to co-education with children with different nosology. Formed stereotypes hinder readiness for constructive interaction with students with disabilities within the same study group or school community. That is why one of the tasks was to identify the presence of typical stereotyped attitudes among students. Interestingly, almost every second respondent somehow agrees that people with disabilities look and behave differently than other citizens and therefore do not fit into society (15.9 - agree; 41.9% - agree on some things, disagree on others).

Despite the presence of certain stereotypes regarding persons with disabilities, the majority of respondents somehow agreed with the statement that there are much more similarities than differences between ordinary people and people with disabilities (agree - 48.6%, 38.2% - agree on some things, disagree on others, 13.2% - disagree). It is important that it is precisely the presence of a stable view of people with disabilities as a special category that sharply differs from the rest of society that is the basic determinant of the generally negative attitude towards the service of inclusive education. It was this category of respondents who almost in full chose a rather negative or negative answer to the question "How do you feel about co-education in secondary school with children with disabilities?". It is important to note that the overwhelming number of such children (86%) do not have experience of studying in the same class or school with children with disabilities.

Public organizations defending the rights of people with disabilities note that one of the most dangerous stereotypes that significantly complicate the independent life of this category of the population are stereotypes that level the importance of the possibility of a labor contribution of people with disabilities in the economic sphere of society. One of the questions asked to the respondents was: "People with disabilities can work as productively as people without disabilities". Only 21.9% of respondents disagreed with this statement, 36% agreed, and 42.1% partially agreed with it.

Most of the students note that the main sources of information about people with disabilities are television - 33.6% and the Internet - 30.5%. Only 6.2% of respondents noted that knowledge about the problems and life activities of such people is the result of personal experience of communicating with people with disabilities. For 10.4%, friends and family became such a source of information. Only 8.3% noted the role of schools in shaping the perception of society about the life of people with special needs, which actualizes not only the forms and methods of creating a friendly environment in the institution, but also the formation of an inclusive culture among the younger generation of citizens of our country.

4.5. Attitude towards inclusive education in the context of ideas about social development of society and social policy

Students are little aware of the scale of disability in society, the problems of this category of the population, and the measures necessary to normalize their lives. So, to the question: "Do you think there are many people with disabilities in our society?", only 45.6% answered "very or rather a lot", 18.7% answered "rather not much"; 6% - "very few", and 29.6% found it difficult to answer.

Assessing the level of education accessibility, the respondents note that changes are needed in this area. Only 25% of respondents believe that education is available for people with disabilities, 33.9% say that services are available, but not for everyone, 7.1% believe that they are not available, 19.4% - that if they do not have healthy people who take care of them, then they are not available, and 14.6% find it difficult to answer.

Some of the problems of education accessibility were raised by the respondents in terms of attitudes towards co-education and priority forms of education for persons with disabilities. Answers to these questions assumed the ability to enter your own answer to the question if the answers provided did not fit the respondents. These detailed answers raised the questions of the inaccessibility of specialized educational institutions in the territorial proximity to the place of residence, adaptive programs, technical equipment, accessibility of the environment, accompanying students with special needs. Such a deep vision of the barriers and problems of inclusive education in the course of the study was shown by children in whose social circle (in school or family) there are people with special educational needs.

Despite the fact that students note the presence of a number of problems in the system of joint education and the right to choose the appropriate form of education for students, in general, a fairly large number of respondents see improvements in attitudes towards people with disabilities (53.6% - improved, 33% - did not change, 13.4% - worsened). But at the same time, respondents note that, despite the improvement, not enough attention is paid to this problem.

Table 2. Answers to the question: "From your point of view, is there enough attention paid to people with disabilities in our country?"

Answer options	% of the total number of respondents
Much attention is paid	7.2
Enough attention is paid	26.5
Not enough attention is paid	32.5
Too little attention is paid	11.4
It's hard for me to say	21.9

Noting the difficulties of an inclusive society, respondents believe that the main subjects of assistance for this category should be the state and families and relatives of people with

disabilities. In our opinion, this indicates the need to inform students about the important role of public organizations and civil society in general in the processes of inclusion.

5 Discussion

Our research has expanded our understanding of student attitudes towards inclusive education and co-education with students with special educational needs. The revealed patterns between the emotional attitude to this category of the population, the experience of social contacts with persons with disabilities, the presence of stereotypes, and the attitude to co-education can be used in the practice of educational institutions both in terms of developing additional measures to create a friendly environment in an educational institution and serving as the basis for an effective system of forming an inclusive culture among students.

6 Conclusions

1. The attitude towards inclusive education among students is controversial and ambiguous.
2. The level of readiness for co-education directly depends on the nature of the limitations that children with disabilities have. Children with latent disabilities (general diseases) and disorders of the musculoskeletal system are exposed to the least educational discrimination. The highest level of ableism is manifested in speech, vision, hearing and mental impairments.
3. Respondents tend to note the positive rather than negative consequences of inclusion.
4. In general, students have little experience of interacting with children with disabilities.
5. The obtained data allow identifying a direct pattern between the presence of previous experience of communication with children with disabilities and the level of tolerance.
6. It should be noted that while the readiness for co-education of students who have experience of communicating with children with disabilities is higher, their level of tolerance is also low. This actualizes qualitative research aimed at identifying the determinants of a friendly environment demanded by students and capable of increasing the level of inclusive culture.
7. The most common feelings when interacting with people with disabilities are admiration, respect, pity and compassion, as well as fear of the possibility of being in the same social situation as this category due to a tragic event or illness.

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