

ALBANIAN PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND OPINIONS ABOUT DISABILITY

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Abstract

Attitudes of pupils toward disability impact the implementation of the mainstreaming process. The paper aimed to measure the attitudes of pupils toward their disabled peers and the paper aimed, also, to get pupils' opinions about the disability. It is used the technique of questionnaire. The measuring instrument was the CATCH (Rosenbaum et al., 1986) questionnaire (Chedoke-McMaster Attitudes Toward Children with Handicaps). Pupils of the fifth grade, sixth and seventh grade of several schools of Shkodër, Lezhë, Kukës, Peshkopia, Tirana, Durrës, Elbasan, Korçë and Vlorë cities of Albania completed the CATCH test. It is employed, also, the technique of interviewing teachers of public schools. The purpose was to obtain their opinions related to the attitude of the pupils towards their disabled peers. In the study participated 1050 students. Based on the analysis of the data, it resulted that the attitude of pupils towards their peers with disabilities was positive. Affective components and behavioral ones were favorable, while the cognitive component was not favorable. Pupils opinions about disability need to be improved. Relevant recommendations of the study were based on the main ways to promote positive attitudes towards pupils with disabilities.

Key-words: *Children's opinions, children's attitudes, disability.*

1. Introduction

The inclusion of people with disabilities in both education and society in general is a global trend (Vash, 2001) (Dyson L.L. 2005. Kindergarten Children's Understanding of and Attitudes toward People with Disabilities. Early Childhood Special Education, Vol.25).

Attitudes have a great role in the inclusive process. This process has its beginnings in childhood, so it is considered necessary measuring pupils' attitudes toward disability.

The fundamental principle of the inclusive school is that all children should learn together, wherever possible, regardless of any difficulties or differences they may have (Peters S J. 2004. Inclusive education : an EFA strategy for all children. World Bank, pg.5).

A major factor contributing to the successful integration of children with disabilities is the understanding of and attitudes that nondisabled children hold regarding their peers with disabilities (Bricker, 1995; Jones, Sowell, & Jones, 1981; Wetstein-Kroft & Vargo, 1984) (Dyson L.L. 2005. Kindergarten Children's Understanding of and Attitudes toward People with Disabilities. Early Childhood Special Education, Vol.25).

2.Theoretical treatment

Attitudes refer to beliefs that are directed towards a person, object or event, and may facilitate positive or negative reactions (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993) (Perry T.L., Ivy M., Conner A., Shelar D. 2008. Recreation student attitudes towards persons with disabilities : considerations for future service delivery. Journal of Hospitality, Leisure, Sport and Tourism Education, Vol.7, Nr.2, USA, pg.5).

According to Allport (1935) an *attitude* is defined as a person's mental and psychological state which composes from his/her experiences. These experiences in turn exert a guided or a dynamic impact on his/her reactions for all objects and conditions that the person confronts. Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) defined *attitude* as a stable behaviour that comes up with a positive or a negative way concerning a particular fact or condition cognitive-emotional-behavioral (Arampatzi A., Mouratidou K., Evaggelinou C., Koidou E., Barkoukis V. 2011. Social development parameters in primary schools : inclusive settings' and gender differences on pupils aggressive and social insecure behaviour and their attitudes toward disability. International Journal of Special Education Vol.26, No : 2, pg.59,60)

Like peoples, attitudes come in varying shapes and sizes. Theorists continue to recognize attitudes as stemming from affective, cognitive, and/or behavioral information (Fazio R.H., Petty R. 2008. Attitudes, Their Structure, Function and Consequences. New York, pg.133).

Lucas (1999) states that, "Attitude is a favorable or unfavourable evaluative reaction toward something or someone, exhibited in one's beliefs, feelings or intended behaviour" (p. 1). Attitudes are very influential in forming an individual's world view (Perry T., Conner A., Shelar D. 2008. Recreation student attitudes towards persons with disabilities : consideration for future service delivery. Journal of Hospitality, Leisure, Sport and Tourism Education, Vo.7, Nr.2, USA, pg.5).

Conceptually, attitudes are thought to be multidimensional and composed of affective, behavioural, and cognitive components. The affective component addresses feelings and emotional reactions, the behavioural component relates to actual or intended behaviour, and the cognitive component reflects beliefs and knowledge (Vignes C., Coley N., Grandjean H., Godeau E., Arnaud C. 2008. Measuring children's attitudes towards peers with disabilities : a review of instruments. Developmental Medicine & Child Neurology, pg.182).

3.Methodology of preparation and development of this paper

3.1. Aims and objectives of the paper. The main aims and objectives are :

- Measuring the attitudes of pupils toward their peers with disabilities.
- Analyzing the results of the three components of attitudes of pupils toward their peers with disabilities.
- Gathering pupils' opinions about disability.

3.2. Sampling. The people group in this study consists of pupils and teachers from public elementary schools in the cities of Shkodër, Lezhë, Kukës, Peshkopi, Tiranë, Durrës,

Elbasan, Korçë and Vlorë. There are used data from “Disability in Albania-Annual Report 2006” published by the National Disability Observatory in order to identify districts where disabled people live. The selection of the cities for conducting the study is done on the basis of these data and on the basis of the fact the study involve different areas of Albania, so the results can be generalised in the national level. So, from 12 main districts the study is conducted in these districts : Shkodër, Lezhë, Kukës, Dibër, Tiranë, Durrës, Elbasan, Korçë and Vlorë and in the cities of : Shkodër, Lezhë, Kukës, Peshkopi, Tiranë, Durrës, Elbasan, Korçë and Vlorë.

There are used statistics from the General Regional Offices of Education to identify the schools which have pupils with disabilities and to identify the classes in which such pupils have been integrated. The pupils are from grades five, six and seven. The inclusion of the subjects has been realized with respect to the ethical principles that should accompany this process, without forcing anyone into this process and having the permission of the respective authorities. The sample for the study consists of pupils without disabilities who study in public schools and of their teachers. The selection of the subjects has been carried out on a rational basis. The sampling is not casual or random, but it is a representative sample of the pupils who study in public primary schools in Albania.

In the study, we had the participation of 1050 pupils in total. 297 pupils or 28,3% of the pupils participating in the study are in grade five, 340 pupils (32,4%) are in grade six and 413 pupils or 39,3% of the pupils participating in the study are in grade seven. In the study, we had the participation of 543 pupils who are boys or 51,7% of the pupils participating in the study and 507 pupils who are girls (48,3%). 502 pupils or 47,8% of the pupils participating in the study have in their class peers pupils with disabilities, while 548 pupils (52,2%) of the pupils participating in the study do not have in their class peers pupils with disabilities. 120 pupils participating in the study (11,4%) live in the city of Shkodër, 128 pupils (12,2%) live in Tirana city, 118 pupils (11,2%) live in Lezha city, 121 pupils (11,5%) live in Elbasan city, 110 pupils participating in the study (10,5%) live in Korça city, 113 pupils (10,8%) live in Durrës city, 131 pupils (12,5%) live in the city of Peshkopia, 142 pupils (13,5%) live in the city of Kukës and 67 pupils (6,4%) live in Vlora city.

There were invalid questionnaires in the cases when the pupils have relatives with disabilities (112), when the pupils filled in two alternatives (24), when they did not fill in more than 5 items of the questionnaire (31), when the pupils have a disabled friend, but not in their own class (26). Here, we are talking about pupils who study in classes where there are no pupils with disabilities. 104 pupils refused to fill in the items of the CATCH questionnaire.

There have been 69 interviews with teachers. There are conducted interviews in almost all the cities where is focused the study.

3.3 Apparatus / Materials. With the pupils it is employed the CATCH test to measure their attitudes towards their peers with disabilities. The CATCH test was given by one of the authors, by Rosenbaum, after he was contacted electronically (via email). A formal request was made so that he would allow me to use the CATCH test. The permission was confirmed electronically and the test was provided by the author Rosenbaum.

3.4. Contents of the questionnaire. CATCH is based on the component model of attitudes proposed by Triandis (1971). According to this model, it is thought that attitudes cover or comprise three dimensions: a) the *affective component*, b) the *implied behavioural component*, and finally, c) the *cognitive component* (Ostrom, 1969; Triandis, 1971)

(Rosenbaum P. L., Armstrong R. W., King S. M. 1986. Children's Attitudes Toward Disabled Peers: A Self-Report Measure. Journal of Pediatric Psychology, Vol. 11, No. 4, page 518).

The CATCH test has been especially designed for children of ages 9 to 13. CATCH contains 36 items, 12 items in each component with an equal number of positively and negatively worded statements. The items are arranged in random order, alternating positive and negative statements. CATCH is scored on a 5-point Likert scale with values ranging from 0 (strongly disagree) to 4 (strongly agree). Negatively worded items are inversely coded. Factor and total scores are derived by summing items, dividing sums by the number of items, and multiplying by 10. A high score represents a more positive attitude (Rosenbaum P. L., Armstrong R. W., King S. M. 1986. Children's Attitudes Toward Disabled Peers: A Self-Report Measure. Journal of Pediatric Psychology, Vol. 11, No. 4, page 520-521).

3.5 Method of completing the questionnaire. The questionnaires have been filled out by the pupils themselves. The questionnaires were distributed in the respective schools. The pupils filled them out in class. The administration of the questionnaires (distribution and collection) was conducted during the months of September, October, November and December.

3.6 Method of analysis. The data collected from the questionnaires was analyzed by means of the SPSS program, version 20. It is carried out the coding of the variables according to the respective rules defined by the authors. There are created respective indexes according to the guidelines.

3.7 Content of the interviews. The contents of the interviews was thought in a way as to collect the opinions of teachers concerning *the attitude of the pupils* towards pupils with disabilities. It is aimed to collect the opinion of the teachers in relation to: a) The attitude of the pupils towards pupils with disabilities; b) the affective component of the attitude of the pupils towards pupils with disabilities; c) the behavior of the pupils towards pupils with disabilities; d) the perception of the pupils towards pupils with disabilities; e) the attitude and behavior of the parents of children without disabilities towards pupils with disabilities who have been integrated into classrooms where their children learn.

3.8 Piloting stage. It is realised the piloting stage. The reliability of the CATCH questionnaire: Alfa Cronbach = 0.71.

4. Findings of the study

4.1. General data concerning the general attitude of pupils towards their peers with disabilities.

The maximum ideal would be equal to 40 and the minimum would be equal to zero, after coding is made according to the rules.

The general attitude of students is good, but it is not too much favourable. The mean is 23,16, the median is 23,33 and the mode is 23,70. The maximum score obtained is 38,15 and it is closed to the ideal maximum, but a few of students has it (0,1% of students). The minimum score obtained is 10 and a few of students has it (0,3% of students).

4.1.1. General data concerning the affective component of attitude of pupils towards their peers with disabilities.

The minimum score obtained is 3,33 (derived from 0,3% of students) and the maximum score obtained is 40 (derived from 0,3% of students). The affective component of children attitudes is favourable. The mean is 25,70, the median is 26,67 and the mode is 28,89.

4.1.2.General data concerning the bihejvioral component of attitude of pupils towards their peers with disabilities.

The minimum score obtained is 4,44 (derived from 0,1% of students) and the maximum score obtained is 40 (derived from 1,1% of students). The bihejvioural component of children attitudes is good. The mean is 26,008, the median is 25,56 and the mode is 24,44.

4.1.3.General data concerning the cognitive component of attitude of pupils towards their peers with disabilities.

The cognitive component of children attitudes is not favourable. The mean is 17,78, the median is 17, 78 and the mode is 18,89. The minimum score obtained is 4,44 (derived from 0,1% of students) and the maximum score obtained is 37,78 (derived from 0,1% of students).

4.2.The illustration of pupils feedback through the interpretation of some of their answers

In relation to the item 1 “I wouldn’t worry if a handicapped child sat next to me in class”, 846 pupils (80,6% of pupils participating in the survey) respond *Agree* or *Strongly agree*. So, a significant proportion of students don’t worry to stay next to a disabled pupil in the class. 129 students (12, 3% of pupils) affirm that they worry, the rest, 74 pupils (7%) can’t decide. So, 203 pupils (19,3%) have unfavorable attitude about staying in a bench with a student with disabilities.

In relation to the item 15 “I would be happy to have a handicapped child for a special friend”, 524 students (49,9% of students) affirm this fact, 267 students (25,5%) don’t affirm this fact, 248 students (23,6%) can’t decide about this fact.

In relation to the item 23 “I would feel good doing a school project with a handicapped child”, 764 students (72,8%) respond positively, while 146 students (13,9%) are against this fact, while the rest, 137 nxënës (13%) can’t decide about the collaboration with a disabled peer for doing a school project.

Table 4.1. The results of pupils’opinions (expressed through absolute frequency) for the items 1,15, 23

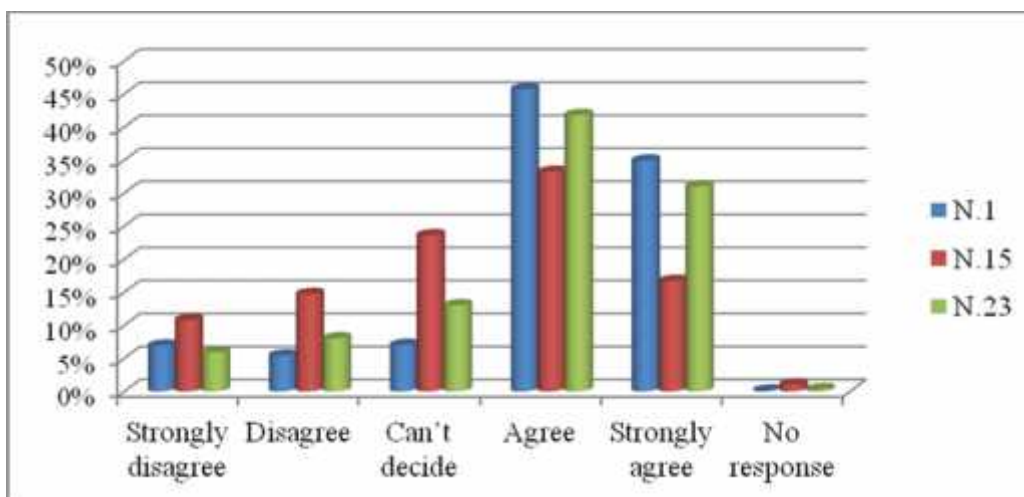
Item	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Can’t decide	Agree	Strongly agree	No response	Total
N.1	72	57	74	480	366	1	1050
N.15	113	154	248	349	175	11	1050
N.23	62	84	137	439	325	3	1050

Table 4.2. The results of pupils’opinions (expressed through relative frequency) for the items 1,15, 23

Item	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Can't decide	Agree	Strongly agree	No response	Total
N.1	6,9%	5,4%	7%	45,7%	34,9%	0,1%	100%
N.15	10,8%	14,7%	23,6%	33,2%	16,7%	1%	100%
N.23	5,9%	8%	13%	41,8%	31%	0,3%	100%

Data about childrens' opinions for the elements 1,15 and 23 are given at the following graph.

Graph 4.1. The results of childrens' opinions (expressed through relative frequency) for the elements 1,15, 23



In relation to the item 7 “I would stick up for a handicapped child who was being teased”, the responses are very positive. 966 students (92%) confirm this fact, 45 students (4,3%) disagree this fact, while 33 students (3,1%) can't decide. So, the data about this aspect of students' attitudes toward their disabled peers are very positive.

In relation to the item 9 “I would invite a handicapped child to my birthday party”, 775 students (73,8%) respond positively, 102 students (9,8%) respond negatively, while 155 students (14,7%) can't decide. So, there is positive attitude of students about this element of behavioral component of attitude toward their disabled classmates.

In relation to the item 32 “I would not go to a handicapped child's house to play”, the answers given by the students are not very positive. So, 304 students (29%) affirm that they would not go to a handicapped child's house to play, 559 students (53,2%) would go to a handicapped child's house to play, while 176 students (16,8%) can't decide. These data are illustrated at the following tables and graph.

Table 4.3. The results of pupils' opinions (expressed through absolute frequency) for the items 7, 9 and 32

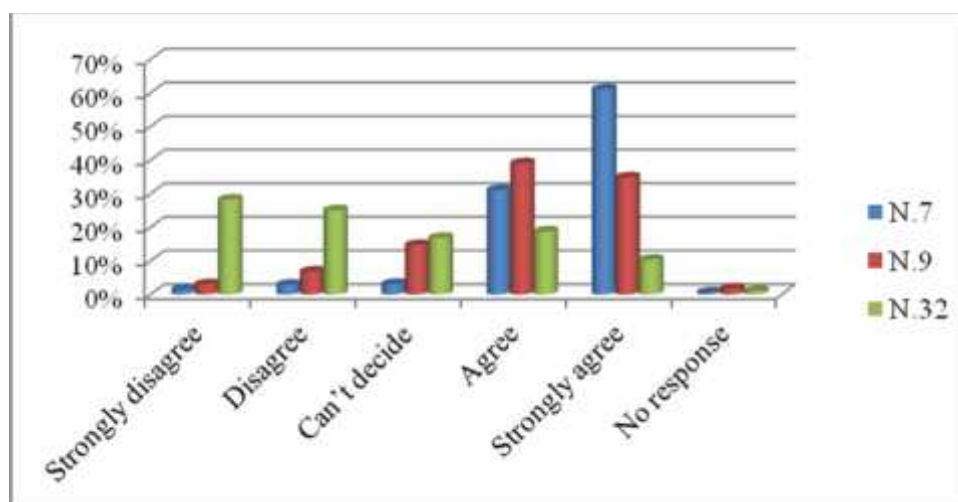
Item	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Can't decide	Agree	Strongly agree	No response	Total
N.7	15	30	33	326	640	6	1050
N.9	31	71	155	409	366	18	1050
N.32	297	262	176	196	108	11	1050

Table 4.4. The results of pupils' opinions (expressed through relative frequency) for the items 7, 9 and 32

Item	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Can't decide	Agree	Strongly agree	No response	Total
N.7	1,4%	2,9%	3,1%	31%	61%	0,6%	100%
N.9	3%	6,8%	14,7%	39%	34,8%	1,7%	100%
N.32	28,2%	25%	16,8%	18,7%	10,3%	1%	100%

Data about childrens' opinions for the elements 7,9 and 32 are given at the following graph.

Graph 4.2. The results of childrens' opinions (expressed through relative frequency) for the elements 7,9 and 32



In relation to the item 5 "Handicapped children like to play", 926 students (88,2%) respond positively, 65 students (6,2%) can't decide about this fact, while 56 students (5,3%) disagree about the fact that disabled students like to play. So, the students think positively about this aspect of the cognitive component of their attitudes toward disabled children.

In relation to the item 17 “Handicapped children are as happy as I am”, 449 students (42,8%) agree, 271 students (25,8%) can’t decide and 326 students (31%) don’t agree. So, we can say that the students think that their disabled peers are not as happy as they are.

In relation to the item 19 “Handicapped children know how to behave properly”, 493 students (46,9%) affirm this afct, 258 students (24,6%) can’t decide and 293 students (27,9%) disagree. So, childrens’ perception about behavior of their disabled classmates is not good.

In relation to the item 27 “Handicapped children are interested in lots of things”, 489 students (46,5%) agree this fact, 273 students (26%) can’t decide and 284 students (27,1%) oppose this fact. So, childrens’ perception about this aspect of cognitive component is not good.

Table 4.5. The results of pupils’ opinions (expressed through absolute frequency) for the items 5, 17, 19 and 27

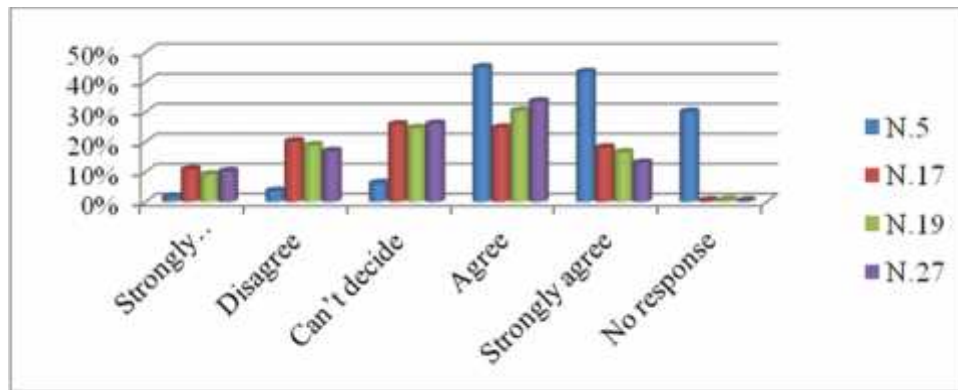
Item	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Can’t decide	Agree	Strongly agree	No response	Total
N. 5	18	38	65	471	455	3	1050
N.17	113	213	271	259	190	4	1050
N.19	96	197	258	320	173	6	1050
N.27	107	177	273	352	137	4	1050

Table 4.6. The results of pupils’ opinions (expressed through relative frequency) for the items 5, 17, 19 and 27

Item	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Can’t decide	Agree	Strongly agree	No response	Total
N.5	1,7%	3,6%	6,2%	44,9%	43,3%	0,3	100%
N.17	10,8%	20,2%	25,8%	24,7%	18,1%	0,4%	100%
N.19	9,1%	18,8%	24,6%	30,4%	16,5%	0,6%	100%
N.27	10,2%	16,9%	26%	33,5%	13%	0,4%	100%

Data about childrens’ opinions for the elements 5, 17, 19 and 27 are given at the following graph.

Graph 4.3. The results of childrens’ opinions (expressed through relative frequency) for the elements 5, 17, 19 and 27



4.3.Data obtained from the interviews developed with teachers. In general, the teachers think that pupils have good attitude toward the disability. There are different views regarding the staying in a bench with a disabled classmate. Children generally express the desire to stay in a bench with a disabled classmate, but there are pupils who refuse to do it. The situation is the same for the parents. There are parents that do not concern that their child is staying in a bench with a disabled classmate. There are parents who worry too much and respond by insisting that their child not to be in a bench with such pupils. According to teachers, parents think that their child would remain behind in school and ask that their child to be in a bench with a good student. Opinions of pupils toward disabled children are different. There are positive opinions, but there are negative opinions. There are cases when these pupils are ridiculed, notably the mental disabled children. Regarding the interaction of pupils with their disabled classmates, the teachers think that exist the interaction, but it is more limited to the child that is staying in a bench with the disabled child. The interaction is good during the game. There are also cases in which the interaction is difficult, especially in the cases when the disabled children don't understand the rules of the game and they aren't able to implement them.

5.Conclusions

The attitude of pupils towards their peers with disabilities is positive, but there is still a lot to be done in this aspect. The affective and behavioral components of the attitude of the pupils towards their peers with disabilities are favorable, whereas the cognitive component of the attitude of the pupils towards their peers with disabilities is not favorable. In general, the teachers think that pupils have good attitude toward the disability. The teachers have difficulties in their work with disabled pupils. These difficulties are related to the structure indicators and to the indicators of teaching process.

The students, in general, don't worry to stay next to a disabled pupil in the class. They prefer to do a school project with a disabled peer. A good part of the students prefer a disabled child for a special friend. Almost all children prefer to stick up for their disabled peer if he is being teased. Children, in general, prefer to invite a disabled child to their birthday party, but, a small part of them doesn't prefer to go to their disabled peer house to play. Children, in general, have good perception about their disabled peers desire to play. They have wrong perception about their disabled peers happiness. Children, in part, have wrong perception about disabled pupils behavior and their interests. The interaction of pupils with their disabled classmates exists, but it is more limited to the child that is staying in a bench with this child. The parents' attitudes toward disability exerts influence on children

attitudes. The parents often oppose and insist that their son or daughter does not sit on a bench with a student with disability.

6.Recommendations

The promotion of positive attitudes of pupils towards their peers with disabilities, especially the improving the cognitive component of pupils attitudes towards their peers with disabilities.

Improving students' perceptions about the disabled peers happiness.

Improving students' perceptions about disabled pupils behavior.

Improving students' perceptions about disabled pupils interests.

Increasing students' interaction with their peers with disabilities and increasing the quality of this interaction.

The awareness of the parents in relation to the integration of disabled pupils in schools, as a necessary process.

Creating the necessary conditions to achieve appropriate standards requires inclusive education.

7.References

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