



CHILDREN'S ATTITUDES TOWARDS PEERS WITH DISABILITIES: ASSOCIATIONS WITH PERSONAL AND PARENTAL FACTORS

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ABSTRACT:-

The purpose of this study was to investigate the following: (i) associations among children's prior contact with people with disabilities and the three dimensions of children's attitudes towards people with disabilities: children's understanding of and their feelings about people with disabilities and their behavioral intentions to make inclusion decisions; (ii) the connection between youngsters' behavioral goals to settle on consideration choices and the requests of action settings and the kinds of inabilities; and (iii) the relationship between guardians' states of mind and kids' mentalities. Members included 94 ordinarily creating four- and five-year-old preschoolers. Kids' comprehension of handicaps and their earlier contact with individuals with inabilities were observed to be decidedly identified with their sentiments about individuals with incapacities; youngsters' comprehension of handicaps was a critical arbitrator of the connection between their behavioral aims and movement settings or kinds of incapacities. The theorized relationship between guardians' mentalities and youngsters' states of mind was not huge. Preschoolers may profit by having more customary contact with individuals with inabilities to create positive emotions towards their companions with incapacities, which is likewise identified with their comprehension of handicaps. Youngsters' behavioral aims to settle on incorporation choices should be comprehended in connection to their comprehension of incapacities, the request of movement settings, and kinds of inabilities.

KEYWORDS:-Preschoolers, Attitudes towards peers with inabilities, Inclusion.

INTRODUCTION:-

Children as young as preschool ages, however, often display favoritism towards a group of peers who shares similar characteristics (e.g. gender, ethnicity, and developmental status), displaying a negatively biased view and relative discrimination towards peers with characteristics they perceive as different from their own might be most malleable during this

developmental period (i.e. the preschool years). We do have a few thoughts of what helps, for example, youngsters' earlier contact with individuals with disabilities, yet there is an absence of information on what factors add to commonly building up kids' states of mind particularly in early years, and some current discoveries are dubious. Along these lines, the present examination concentrated on the investigation of such states of mind and their contributing elements. This exertion will enable us to propel our comprehension of the advancement of youthful youngsters' mentalities and make suggestions about successful procedures for early mediation to enhance social collaborations between kids with and without handicaps.

Education for all children below the age of 14 years is a Constitutional promise in our country. That is why education of children from the marginalized groups, such as girls, scheduled castes, scheduled tribes, special children etc., is receiving extra attention of the government of India. In particular, children with special needs (CWSN) have been given a special consideration during last few years. These children form a significant group due to their alarmingly large numbers, social history, and economic perspective. Disabled constitute a major chunk of these children and thereby require special treatment for empowering them to contribute in the development; social, cultural, and economic; of a nation. Education and training of children with disabilities thus acquires immense significance.

The term "Children with Special Needs (CWSN)" is a broader concept including children with disabilities. The concept of CWSN is explained in two different perspectives-functional development perspective and perspective of diagnosis. According to the development perspective, development most often occurs in rather predictable stages. Although every child develops in a unique way, all children are expected to interact with their environment at an age appropriate level. Looking at a child's functional development involves observing whether or not the child has mastered certain developmental milestones and expectations for his or her age. With this understanding of typical child development, a child may have a special need when he or she has a delay in one or more areas of development.

The Multidimensional Nature of Children's Attitudes towards Disabilities:-

The Theory of Planned Behavior furnishes a helpful hypothetical model concerning the procedure of the arrangement of one's dispositions towards others by portraying the connections amongst mentalities and genuine conduct. As indicated by the Theory of Planned Behavior, states of mind are reasonably multidimensional and regularly comprise of three measurements. The subjective measurement incorporates individuals' convictions and comprehension about others and also their qualities Components Associated with Children's Attitudes towards People with Disabilities

The Theory of Planned Behavior suggested that there were two fundamental determinants of one's mentalities and particularly one's behavioral aims: individual and social elements. Commonly building up kids' earlier contact and involvement with individuals with disabilities, movement settings where they have to settle on choices to incorporate or reject peers with handicaps and their folks' demeanors towards individuals with incapacities (Nikolarazi and de Reybekiel, 2001) have been recognized as essential determinants of their intergroup states of mind (e.g. Katz and Chamiel, 1989; Vignes et al., 2009). While the initial

two components are thought to be close to home factors, guardians' states of mind towards others were alluded to as social factors that reflect how huge others trust individuals ought to carry on (Rutter and Bunce, 1989).

Children's prior contact with people with disabilities :-

Research has demonstrated that regardless of whether the experience is organized, contact with individuals with inabilities can enable youngsters to create uplifting states of mind towards these people (e.g. Precious stone, 2001; Esposito and Reed, 1986; Favazza and Odom, 1997). Youngsters who had more successive contact with individuals with incapacities had a tendency to have more inspirational states of mind towards them (e.g. Favazza and Odom, 1997). Notwithstanding, it isn't clear how much presentation youthful youngsters have with individuals with incapacities in their day by day life and how this introduction to or contact with individuals with inabilities is related with kids' states of mind towards peers with handicaps.

Children's prior contact with people with disabilities:-

The total score of children's prior contact with people with disabilities was created by summing all possible instances where children may have encountered people with disabilities in their everyday lives (e.g. 'Have you met a person with a disability?' and 'Do you have a family member with a disability?'). These questions were asked to both children and their parents, so the data were corroborated from two sources. When the two sources provided conflicting information, we selected parents' responses over children's. More specifically, children were asked in their interview whether they had a friend, neighbor, or family member with a disability while parents were asked to report relationships with the person with a disability in broader contexts including family, work, neighborhood, and so on. When a child responded 'no' to all the categories but if his or her parent indicated that they had a family member or neighbor with a disability, we used the parent's report (i.e. 4 out of 94 cases). The average was 2.05 (SD = 1.32; range = 0 to 6), which indicates that these children have contact with about two people with disabilities on a regular basis.

The Multidimensional Nature of Children's Attitudes towards People with Disabilities :-

Our hypotheses about the associations among the three dimensions of children's attitudes towards people with disabilities was partially supported as there was a significant association between children's understanding of disabilities and their feelings about people with disabilities. This result can be interpreted in two ways: (i) the better children understand disabilities, the more likely they are to have positive feelings about people with disabilities; or (ii) as children have more positive feelings about people with disabilities, they are more likely to get to learn about disabilities. This finding is somewhat consistent with prior literature that suggested that the understanding of another group of people might promote positive feelings about the group (e.g. Katz & Chamiel, 1989; Okagaki et al., 1998). However, children's behavioral intentions to include peers with disabilities in their play were related neither to their understanding of disabilities nor to their feelings about people with disabilities.

Activity Contexts and Types of Disabilities:-

We hypothesized that typically developing preschool children's behavioral intentions to make inclusion decisions in hypothetical situations would be associated with the demand of the activity context (i.e. whether or not the disability interferes with the activity) as well as the types of disabilities. According to our findings, understanding of disabilities prevented children from making inclusion decisions when the disability interfered with the presented activity. Unlike the findings from previous studies (e.g. Diamond & Hong, 2010; Diamond & Tu, 2009; Nabors & Keyes, 1997; Nowicki & Sandieson, 2002) where the demand of activity was a significant main effect of children's inclusion decisions, the activity context itself did not predict children's intentions to include or exclude a peer with disabilities. It was the level of children understands of disabilities that had a moderating effect. From previous studies, we knew that the demand of activity contexts mattered in children's inclusion decisions; however, to understand the demand of activity contexts, children should be able to use their understanding of disabilities (e.g. what a child in a wheelchair can and cannot do in certain activity context) and their understanding of the contexts at the same time.

Emotional Intelligence of Learning Disabled Children:

"Emotional intelligence" has become a major topic of interest in scientific circles as well as in the lay public since the publication of a bestseller by the same name in 1995 (Goleman, 1995). Despite this heightened level of interest in this new idea over the past decade, scholars have been studying this construct for the greater part of the twentieth century; and the historical roots of this wider area can actually be traced back to the nineteenth century. Publications began appearing in the twentieth century on social intelligence in 1920. Many of these early studies focused on describing, defining and assessing socially competent behavior (Chapin, 1942; Doll, 1935; Moss and Hunt, 1927; Moss *et al.*, 1927; Thorndike, 1920). Doll, (1935) published the first instrument designed to measure socially intelligent behavior in young children.

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Wong, (1982) investigated organized strategies and self-checking behaviors in selecting retrieval cues in gifted, normal-achieving and learning disabled children. The results indicated that compared to the others, LD children lacked self-checking skills. Moreover, they were less exhaustive than the others in their selective search of retrieval cues. However, they did use some form of organized strategy in selecting the retrieval cues. Such organized strategy appears to be less efficient than that of gifted children. Additionally, unlike the gifted, both normal-achieving and LD children failed to choose retrieval cues of maximal use in aiding recall. The results also indicated that prior recall of the story resulted in all children choosing more items of most thematic importance. Generally, the results were taken to support Torgesen's conceptualization of LD children as inactive learners.

Cline and Reason, (1993) raised important questions concerning the lack of attention to issues of equal opportunity in the literature on specific learning difficulties. The authors identify five objectives for professional practice and research.

Huntington and Bender, (1993) reported that as recently as 5 years ago, very little information on the emotional well-being of adolescents with learning disabilities (LD) was available. However, a great deal of research has been conducted recently and some of the implications are unnerving. Research on self-concept, attributions, anxiety, depression, and suicide among adolescents with LD is examined for the purpose of detecting consistency of indicators concerning these emotional and developmental variables. The research indicates that the emotional development of many adolescents with LD is not notably positive, and these students appear to be at increased risk for severe depression and suicide. The discussion highlights methodological pitfalls and developmental issues. Practical implications are suggested.

Kulkarniet *al.*, (2001) reported that learning disabilities (LD) is one of the important causes of poor academic performance in school going children. Learning disabilities are developmental disorders that usually manifest during the period of normal education. These disabilities create a significant gap between the true potential and day to day performance of an individual. Dyslexia, dysgraphia and dyscalculia denote the problem related to reading, writing and mathematics. Perinatal problems are certain neurological conditions, known to be associated with LD; however, genetic predisposition seems to be the most probable etiological factors. Evaluation of a child suspected to be having LD consists of medical examination, vision and hearing test analysis of school performance. The psycho-behaviour assessment and education testing are essential in the process of diagnosis. The experienced persons in the field of LD should interpret the results of such tests. With Individualized Remedial Education Plan (IEP) most children learn to cope up with disability and may get integrated in a regular stream.

METHODOLOGY:-

The role of adults – especially parents – may still be important in early years when children’s attitudes towards others emerge and are malleable to change. By initiating discussions about people with different ability levels in an explicit way, adults may be able to enhance even young children’s understanding, acceptance of, and feelings about peers with disabilities and eventually promote children’s social skills. They also can provide children with useful information about people with disabilities (e.g. characteristics and capabilities of children with disabilities) in order to help children gain positive feelings about people with disabilities. When children have positive feelings about people with disabilities, they may become more curious about people with disabilities. Given the findings of this study and previous literature that show children’s emerging understanding of people with disabilities and the malleability of their attitudes in early years, we suggest that it is never too early to discuss and teach about people with disabilities at home and in the classroom.

CONCLUSION:-

Finally, even though we did not collect data on how children learned about disabilities, there is evidence that children acquire knowledge of disabilities from various sources that make independent contributions to children’s understanding about disabilities (Vignes et al., 2009). While older children who may be more active information seekers appeared to use media and

books as a main source of information (Vignes et al., 2009), younger children may depend more on adults to obtain information. Although we did not find a significant association between parents' attitudes and children's attitudes towards disabilities, this finding would not necessarily imply that parents do not play an important role in children's attitudes towards peers with disabilities.

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