

Original Article

Parental Involvement and Social Adjustment of Children with Intellectual Disability in Inclusive Settings

Andleeb Zehra¹, Zainab Raza², Huma Batool³, Iram Batool⁴, Kiran Batool⁵

¹ Research Officer, PAHCHAAN (Protection and Help of Children Against Abuse and Neglect), Lahore.

² Lecturer, COMSATS University, Islamabad.

³ Assistant Professor, Pulmonology, General Hospital, Lahore.

⁴ Allam Iqbal Open University, Lahore.

⁵ Lecturer, University of Education, Lahore.

Author's Contribution

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^{1,3,4} Analysis/Interpretation/Discussion

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^{1,5} Facilitation and Material analysis

Corresponding Author

Dr. Andleeb Zehra,

Research Officer,

PAHCHAAN (Protection and Help of Children Against Abuse and Neglect), Lahore

Email: andleeb_zehra@hotmail.com

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Abstract

Objectives: The current study was designed to investigate the relationship of parental involvement and the social adjustment of children with intellectual disability studying in the inclusive schools of Pakistan.

Materials and Methods: Two main cities; Lahore and Sialkot were included in the current study due to a relatively larger number of Inclusive schools in these cities. Sample of 150 children were selected from seven inclusive schools managed by Amin Maktab, Lahore and Child and Social Development Organization (CSDO), Sialkot through purposive sampling. The data were collected through two scales developed by Researcher, one for parents i.e. scale for parental involvement and the other is for teachers, i.e. Scale for social adjustment.

Results: Findings revealed that parental involvement in social life of their children and emotional support provided to children by their parents are significant predictors for children's social adjustment.

Conclusion: The results suggest that parents can play important role to increase the social adjustment level of their mentally retarded child and help them to achieve benefits of inclusive setting.

Recommendations: Parental-teacher collaboration should be increased in inclusive settings so that children can grow to their full potential.

Keywords: Social Adjustment, Parental Involvement, Children with intellectual disability, Inclusive Schools.

Introduction

In the last few decades, educational provisions for learners with disabilities have changed. More learners with special needs are studying side by side in regular school with their peers who do not have disabilities. This concept is commonly known as inclusive education.¹ It is based on the principle that all children regardless of ability or disability have a basic right to be educated alongside their peers in their neighborhood schools. This concept was implemented in Western countries in the 1980s, and it has become a matter for the global agenda.²

Inclusion involves bringing the support and rehabilitation services to the learner, rather than moving the learner to the services, in this way learner having impairments can be successful in meeting all the general demands in regular classrooms. Thus, the education system should be molded in such a way that it accommodates all learners; despite of their varied special needs.^{3,4}

The movement toward inclusion of students with disabilities into general education classes has become the overwhelming trend in education. Not only does inclusive education for children with disabilities bring improved academic functioning but it also offers them the opportunity for socialization with their peers without disabilities in general education classrooms.^{5,6}

The role of parental involvement in students' learning has long captivated the attention of society in general and educational researchers in particular. The importance of parents in the education of their children is not a new concept. Parents have been their children's first educators since pre-historic times.^{7,8}

In the inclusive setting, children with disabilities may face adjustment problems. Social adjustment of students can be defined in terms of their peer acceptance, friendships, and participation in group activities. Social adjustment of children with mild-to-moderate behavior and learning handicaps is often a major obstacle to successful mainstreaming in schools.^{9,10}

Findings of the previous researches showed that in comparison to non-handicapped peers, mildly handicapped students are, on average, socially rejected, unpopular, and not wanted as classmates, workmates, or playmates and it is also clear that non-handicapped students reject handicapped peers because of the inappropriate social behaviors exhibited by the latter.⁹

Social comparison theory suggests that human beings usually choose similar others as bases for social

comparisons. If one accepts this line of thought, it seems reasonable to expect that children who spend most school days in special education facilities are not preoccupied with the uniqueness that separate them from children in regular classrooms. When these handicapped children enter regular classrooms, however, and compare themselves with obviously dissimilar peers, the children are susceptible to a feeling of alienation and inferiority that is due to apparent unique characteristics.¹¹

It is contended however that a more constructive approach emphasizes what must be done to increase the capability of the usual classroom learning environment for meeting individual needs instead of assuming that there is something wrong with the child who does not profit from a regular classroom situation. When one takes such an approach, the child's unique characteristics are no longer acceptable excuses for dysfunction in the school or for moving the child to a different and segregated environment.¹²

Effective social mainstreaming requires the teacher's attention to two overall factors i.e. the social behavior of the mainstreamed student and the regular class environment in which social behaviors will take place. This environment includes many factors, of course, especially the social behavior of the teacher and regular students, as well as consideration of several relationships.¹³

Bennett and Hay¹⁴ conducted research to identify the family characteristics that promote the development of social skills in children with physical disabilities. The results showed that families with highly cohesive, idealized, and democratic family styles strongly influence children's social skills by providing a safe and sound foundation for children to explore their social environment.

The current study is intended to find out the effect of parental involvement on the social adjustment of the children with intellectual disability in the inclusive settings so that parents and families can be more involved in the educational planning of the children and the purpose of inclusion can be fulfilled.

Objectives

This research is carried out to:

- Find out the social adjustment of children with intellectual disability in the inclusive setting
- Investigate the level of parental involvement of children with intellectual disability in the inclusive setting
- Find out the relationship of parental involvement and the social adjustment of

children with intellectual disability in inclusive setting.

Research Questions

- What is the level of social adjustment of children with intellectual disability in the inclusive setting?
- What is the level of parental involvement of children with intellectual disability who are studying in the inclusive setting?
- Is there any relationship between the social adjustment and parental involvement of children with intellectual disability in the inclusive setting?

Materials and Methods

The present study was based on the correlational design in which relationship of parental involvement and the social adjustment was examined. Children with intellectual disability studying in the inclusive settings were focused in this study. Survey was carried out for this purpose, in which parents and teachers of children with intellectual disability in the inclusive setting participated.

Participants

Sampling technique which was used in the present study was “purposive sampling”. Although the limitation of non-probability sampling was considered, but it was justified due to less number of inclusive schools in Pakistan, generalizations for this study will be applicable to all the children with intellectual disability, studying in inclusive settings, who meet the inclusion criteria of the study. Reason for selecting this sampling technique was that there was the low number of inclusive schools in Pakistan and they were not equally distributed geographically. Moreover, it was not easy to locate them in all cities. Researcher picked two main cities of Pakistan in which there was already a relatively larger system of Inclusive schools, run by two large organizations in Lahore and Sialkot. The current study was comprised of 150 children with intellectual disability who were mainstreamed in the inclusive schools of Amin Maktab (Lahore) and Child and Social Development Organization (Sialkot).

Among 150 children, 70 were boys and 80 were girls and they were taken from class one to class four. Inclusion criteria were those children with intellectual disability who have been mainstreamed in their respective schools for at least one year. Data were collected through the mothers and teachers of the selected children for study. Researcher tried to include

fathers of those children as well, but due to their unavailability, they were not included.

Instruments

Data were collected by using following instruments:

- Parental Involvement Scale
- Scale for Social Adjustment

Both scales were developed by the researcher, after reviewing the available literature regarding parental involvement and social adjustment.

Parental involvement scale

It was developed to find out the involvement level of the parents in the lives of their children with intellectual disability with respect to educational, emotional and social aspects. It was four-point scale, included 30 items, having options (Always, Most of the times, Sometimes, Never). Scale was designed to investigate a) educational involvement provided by parents at home, b) collaboration of parents with school personnel, c) involvement of parents to fulfill the emotional needs of children and d) involvement of parents in the social life of their children.

Prior to start data collection, pre-testing was done to validate the instrument. Pre-testing was done on 30 children, selected from the same institutions and their mothers were given scale for parental involvement. It was designed in Urdu to facilitate the respondents. After pre-testing necessary amendments were made in the scale. The validity of the scale was ensured by expert's opinion whereas its reliability was determined by Cronbach's alpha and its value was 0.89.

3.4.2: Social Adjustment Scale

To investigate the social adjustment level of the children with intellectual disability in the inclusive setting, social adjustment scale was developed by the researcher comprised of 33 items, based on social adjustment indicators. These indicators were a) level and quality of interaction of the child with his peers, b) adjustment of the child with the classroom routine and setting and c) self-concept of the child. This scale was designed in accordance with his school activities and therefore teachers reported about the selected children on this scale and it was designed in Urdu. Responses were rated on the four-point scale including options like Always, Most of the time, Sometimes and Never.

Pilot-testing was done before starting formal data collection procedure. To validate the instrument experts' opinion has been taken. Its reliability was determined by Cronbach's alpha and its value was 0.74.

Procedure

Researcher tracked inclusive schools in Lahore through Amin Maktab that is institute of special

education. Inclusive schooling was their recent project. Likewise, inclusive schools in Sialkot were traced by Child and Social Development Organization. Purpose of the study was explained to the administration of Amin Maktab and Child and Social Development Organization (CSDO), Sialkot. Permission was taken from the directors to conduct research on the effect of parental involvement on the social adjustment of children with intellectual disability in inclusive setting. The administrative staff and teachers provided support at every step of the data collection. 90 students from Sialkot and 60 students from Lahore have been purposively selected from inclusive schools. Inclusion criteria were those mild to moderate children with intellectual disability who have been studying in inclusive setting for at least one year.

Administration of schools provided the necessary records to researcher for selecting the sample for study, so that the researcher can ensure the inclusion criteria for the study. After preliminary consideration, children with intellectual disability from grades one to four were selected. Researcher contacted their class teachers to explain the purpose of the study. Researcher then contacted the parents of the selected children and explained them the purpose of the study. Both fathers and mothers were requested to come, but due to fathers' unavailability researcher only collected data from mothers. Administration arranged meetings of researcher with the mothers in school, according to pre-scheduled pattern.

A structured questionnaire was prepared by researcher to determine the parental involvement level. Mothers were requested to fill questionnaires. The confidentiality was also ensured by the researcher. There were around ten participants who couldn't come on the given time due to their personal problems and on their request, questionnaires were sent to their homes and they were further guided about the study on telephone by the researcher. Those questionnaires were then collected back through administration.

Social adjustment level of these children was assessed by their class teachers. Teachers were requested to give their time for the study and researcher then scheduled the dates and timings given by the teachers. Teachers were requested to fill structured questionnaire developed by the researcher, regarding social adjustment of each mentally retarded child in their classroom. In each class there were around 7-10 children with intellectual disability who were fulfilling the criterion for the study. Researcher completed the data collection phase after collecting all the questionnaires from teachers.

Results

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics (N=150)

Characteristics		n	%
Gender	Male	70	46.7
	Female	80	53.3
Birth order	Eldest	31	20.7
	Middle	87	58.0
	Younger	32	21.3
Mothers' education	Illiterate	8	5.3
	Below primary	55	36.7
	Primary to matric	60	40.0
	Above matric	27	18.0
Monthly income	Below 5000	31	20.7
	5000-10000	78	52.0
	Above 10000	41	27.3
Family system	Nuclear	82	54.7
	Joint	68	45.3
Academic rating by class teacher	Below average	49	32.7
	Average	59	39.3
	Above average	42	30.0

Table 1 shows the demographic characteristics about the children of the children with intellectual disability. It shows that 70 children (46.7%) were male and 80 children (53.3%) are female. Most of the children (58%) are middle born whereas 20.7% and 21.3% are eldest and youngest respectively. Among 150 children, mothers' education of 60 (40%) children are ranged between primary to matric whereas mothers of 55 children (36.7%) are educated till the below primary level. Family income of most of the children (52.0%) is ranged between 5000-10000. Most of the children (54.7%) belonged to nuclear family system whereas 45.3% children belonged to joint family system. Findings indicate that 59 (39.3%) children were considered as academically average students by their teachers whereas 49 (32.7%) and 42 (30.0%) were considered below average and above average respectively.

Table 2: Distribution of participants regarding parental involvement (N=150)

Indicators		n	%
Time spent with children	Less than 2 hours	7	4.7
	2-4 hours	67	44.7
	5-8 hours	48	32.0
	More than 8 hours	28	18.6
Educational Involvement provided in home	Least Involved	36	24
	Moderately	41	27
	Highly Involved	73	49

Collaboration of parents with school	Least Involved	31	20.7
	Moderately	61	40.7
	Highly Involved	58	38.7
Emotional Involvement	Least Involved	29	19.3
	Moderately	58	38.7
	Highly Involved	63	42.0
Involvement of parents in social life	Least Involved	37	24.7
	Moderately	57	38.0
	Highly Involved	56	37.3

Table 2 shows that mothers of 67 (44.7%) children spend 2-4 hours with their children whereas 48 (32%) mothers spend 5-8 hours. Mothers of 28 (18.6%) children and 7 (4.7%) children spend more than 8 and less than 2 hours respectively. Majority (49%) of the respondents were highly involved in education of their children whereas 27% and 24% respondents were moderately and least involved respectively. With respect to collaboration of parents with school, 40.7% respondents were moderately involved whereas 38.7% were highly involved. Findings indicate that 42% of the respondents were highly whereas 38.7% and 19.3% were moderately and least involved respectively with respect to emotional requirements of their children. Regarding involvement of parents in the social life of their children, findings reflect that 38% of the respondents were moderately whereas 37.3% and 24.7% were highly and least involved respectively with respect to social life of their children.

Table 3: Distribution regarding level of Social Adjustment (N=150)

Indicators		n	%
Peer interaction	Least adjusted	65	43.3
	Moderately adjusted	42	28.0
	Highly adjusted	43	28.7
Classroom Adjustment	Least adjusted	64	42.7
	Moderately adjusted	64	42.7
	Highly adjusted	22	14.7
Self-concept	Least adjusted	48	32
	Moderately adjusted	53	35.3
	Highly adjusted	49	32.7

Table 3 shows the frequency and percentage of the respondents regarding the level of peer interaction of children with intellectual disability in the inclusive setting. Results show that 43.3% children indicated least level of peer interaction, whereas 28.7% and 28.0% children indicated high and moderate level of peer interaction respectively. Results show that majority of the respondents were least (42.7%) and moderately (42.7%) adjusted in classroom setting.

whereas 14.7% respondents were highly adjusted in classroom setting whereas 35.3% indicated moderate level of self-concept whereas 32.7% indicated higher and 32% showed least level of self-concept.

Table 4: Comparison of groups regarding social adjustment on the basis of their academic ratings by their teachers

	ANOVA				
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean square	F	p-value
Between groups	43.94	2	21.97	113.17	0.000***
Within groups	28.54	147	0.19		
Total	72.48	149			

Table 4 shows the results of ANOVA. ANOVA is applied to compare the mean scores of social adjustment regarding their academic competence. Value of $F(2, 147) = 113.17$, $p = .000$ is significant at $\alpha = 0.05$. It shows that there is significant difference among the social adjustment scores of the three groups of students related to academic achievement.

Significant difference is found ($p = .000$) between the social adjustment scores of two groups of children having below average and average academic competence. Mean scores are higher for the children who have average academic competence ($M = 2.54$, $SD = .57$) than those who have below average academic competence ($M = 1.62$, $SD = .22$).

Significant difference is found ($p = .000$) between the social adjustment scores of two groups of children having below average and above average academic competence. Mean scores are higher for the children who have above average academic competence ($M = 2.96$, $SD = .42$) than those who have below average academic competence ($M = 1.62$, $SD = .22$).

Significant difference is found ($p = .000$) between the social adjustment scores of two groups of children having average and above average academic competence. Mean scores are higher for the children who have above average academic competence ($M = 2.96$, $SD = .42$) than those who have average academic competence ($M = 2.54$, $SD = .57$). It reflects that higher the academic ratings, greater the social adjustment of children.

Table 5: Regression Coefficient indicating Effect of Parental Involvement on the Social Adjustment of Children with intellectual disability in Inclusive Setting (N=150)

Variables	B	SE	B	t	p-value
Constant	.032	.117		.274	.785
Educational involvement provided in home	.092	.084	.099	1.091	.277
Parents' collaboration with school	-.008	.072	-	-.009	.908
Emotional involvement	.336	.066	.361	5.115	.000***
Social involvement	.439	.086	.474	5.105	.000***

*** $p < 0.001$

Table 5 shows that multiple regression analysis was conducted to predict the relationship among parental involvement and social adjustment. Predictors are educational involvement provided by parents in home, parents' collaboration with school, emotional involvement and social involvement provided by parents while the criterion variable is social adjustment of children with intellectual disability.

The linear combination of parental involvement indicators was significantly related to social adjustment, $F(4, 145) = 112.45$, $p = .000$. The sample multiple correlation coefficient was 0.87, indicating that approximately 75.6% of the variance of the social adjustment in the sample can be accounted for by the linear combination of parental involvement indicators. In table 5 parental involvement indicators are presented to indicate the relative strength of the individual predictors. All the bivariate correlations between the parental involvement and the social adjustment were positive and two of the four indices were statistically significant ($p < .05$). Parental involvement's indicator "emotional involvement" has positive effect ($\beta = 0.361$, $t = 5.11$, $p = 0.000$) on social adjustment.

Parental involvement's indicator social involvement has also positive effect ($\beta = 0.474$, $t = 5.10$, $p = 0.000$) on social adjustment

Discussion

The present study aimed to find out the effect of parental involvement on the social adjustment of

children with intellectual disability in the inclusive setting. Along with parental involvement, academic competence was also considered affecting social adjustment of the children with intellectual disability in inclusive setting.

Parental involvement was found to be having positive effect on the social adjustment of children with intellectual disability in the inclusive setting. Significant association among parental involvement, social skills and problem behaviors of children were reported by Nokali, Bachman and Drzal.¹⁵ They stated that when parents are more involved in their children's education, they may be more likely to communicate with the school personnel about their child's behavior and socialization in class.

Parental involvement in the social life and in fulfilling the emotional requirement of their children with intellectual disability were found to be having significant effect on social adjustment of children with intellectual disability than the other indicators of parental involvement i.e. home-based educational involvement and collaboration with school. Wiener¹⁶ also reported similar results. He reported that children who were more attached to their parents have better social and emotional outcomes than those who have uncertain attachments.

These findings are consistent with the findings of Dubeau, Coutu & Lavigne.¹⁷ They reported that different indicators of parental involvement have different effect on social adjustment and not all indicators affect the level of social adjustment.

Social adjustment scores were higher for those children with intellectual disability whose mothers were more emotionally involved and contributed in their social activities. These findings support the study by Dubeau, Coutu & Lavigne¹⁷ who reported that children who experience the confidence of parental involvement were likely to socialize better in school setting. Findings of Sreekanth¹⁸ are also similar as the current study, as he reported that higher the parental involvement, better the child's progress.

Children with intellectual disability in inclusive setting were found to be having low social adjustment level. Study shows that most of the children with intellectual disability showed least level of peer interaction and classroom adjustment. These findings are consistent with the findings of Wiener.¹⁶ He reported that inadequacies in children with disabilities lead to problems in their social relationships. Novicki¹⁹ also reported similar results in his meta-analysis that children with disabilities had lower socio-metric status than their peers. He also reported that students with

disabilities who study in inclusive classroom are at greater risk in social adjustment than their peer without disabilities.

Academic competence significantly affects the social adjustment level of children with intellectual disability in inclusive setting. Children who were reported as academically competent by their teachers, showed higher level of social adjustment, than those who were reported as less competent. These findings are consistent with the findings of the study of Shaffer and Kipp.²⁰ They also reported that academic competence contribute to social competence and peer acceptance.

Conclusion

It is concluded from the current study that children with intellectual disability showed low level of social adjustment, peer interaction and classroom adjustment in the inclusive settings. There are various factors that affect the social adjustment of children with intellectual disability in inclusive setting, but current study focused to find out the relationship between parental involvement and the social adjustment of children with intellectual disability in inclusive setting. Study revealed significant relationship between the two indicators of parental involvement (emotional involvement of parents with their children and involvement of parents in social life of children) and the social adjustment level of children. Effect of academic competence of the child on social adjustment level has also been studied. It was found that academic ratings of children by their teachers have significant impact on the child's social adjustment level, showing that higher academic competence of the child led to higher levels of social adjustment.

Implications

The current study signifies the importance of social adjustment of children with disabilities in inclusive settings. Role of parents cannot be denied when it comes to the better adjustment of the children in schools as well as in homes. The current study suggests bringing parents as greater participants in the activities of their children in school and to make them aware of the demands of an inclusive setting so that they would help their children with respect to their educational, social and emotional needs. Parental-teacher collaboration should be increased in inclusive settings so that children can grow to their full potential. School administration should involve parents to participate in different activities of their children. Parents should be given awareness regarding

their involvement with their children 'social and emotional life.

The current study was delimited to only mild to moderate category of children with intellectual disability who had been studying in inclusive setting for at least one year and data were gathered only through mothers of the children. In future, research can be conducted with sample of disability other than intellectual disability and fathers' involvement can also be considered in the study.

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