

SCTMG 2020**International Scientific Conference «Social and Cultural Transformations in the
Context of Modern Globalism»****INFLUENCE OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION ON INTERPERSONAL
RELATIONSHIPS WITH PEERS**

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tsygula@mail.ru,***Abstract***

At the current social stage of development, there is a pronounced trend of deterioration in the health of children and adolescents, as well as an increase in the number of children with disabilities. Children with disabilities face great difficulties in communication with their peers and people around them. The purpose of the research is to examine relationships in preschoolers with their peers and classmates with disabilities under inclusive education condition. In our study, we applied observation, sociometry, projective tests, problem cases, and statistical analysis. For psychological diagnostic, the following tests were used: "Captain of the ship" by Romanova, "Me and my friend in a kindergarten" by Miklaeva, "Diagnostic of relationships with peers" by Orlova and Kholmogorova, "The Maze" by Venger, "Pictures" by Smirnova and Kalyagina. Based on the obtained results, it can be concluded that children with disabilities more often are in isolated and rejected position among classmates, they are not interested in interaction with healthy peers and do not respond to the peers' initiative. More often unproductive coping strategies of conflicts are observed. The hypothesis that children of older preschool age with disabilities have interpersonal relations with their peers will be more possible. However, the hypothesis that the relations of challenged preschoolers with younger preschool children is not confirmed. This is evidenced by the calculation of the Mann – Whitney test.

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1. Introduction

The attitude to people is the main component of the links of life. Rubinstein (2019) said that the human heart is woven from its relationship to other people. It can be said that relationships are the basis of the mental and inner being of a person. Attitude is not only the center of the spiritual and moral formation of personality, but it also determines the moral significance of a man.

The most active development of relations is observed in childhood. The experience, which was obtained in the first relations, serves as a basis for the subsequent development of the child's personality and, even, is capable of predetermining the future behavioral traits of a person, features of self-awareness, self-perception among people and attitude to the world (Smirnova & Holmogorova, 2005).

For children of preschool age interpersonal relations is an important factor for their personal and mental development. The need for children to communicate with their peers appears quite early, and its components are formed and expanded during the entire age period (Royak, 1988).

At preschool age, children form not just a kindergarten group, but a small social psychological group. The structure of such a preschool group is complex and not fully understood. In kindergarten groups, the formation of the foundations of collective relations begins. The relationships between children in these groups are a model of interaction between adults and their behavioral norms (Volkov & Volkova, 2018).

At the current social stage of development, there is a pronounced tendency of deterioration in the health of children and adolescents, as well as an increase in the number of children with disabilities (Filinova, 2015).

At the moment, 655,000 children live in Russia and belong to the category of persons with disabilities and incapacities (Kuchmaeva, 2016). It is well known that such children often have difficulties in communication with their peers.

At the same time, it must be noted that over the past decades Russian scientists have repeatedly studied the interpersonal relations of preschool children with peers, but the range of studies devoted to the study of interpersonal relations of children with disabilities in conditions of inclusive education is poorly understood.

Based on this, it is necessary to have special conditions in preschool institutions for the comfortable stay of children with disabilities among peers, as well as the adoption by peers of children with disabilities and the establishment of interpersonal relations (Malofeev et al., 2013).

The aim of our study is to study the characteristics of interpersonal relations of preschool children with peers with disabilities in conditions of inclusive education.

The theoretical significance lies in the fact that the conducted research contributes to the enrichment of a special psychology and pedagogical theory in the field of an inclusive approach in education; the work develops ideas about the value of a peer in the mental development of the child (Elkonin, 2001; Ganoshenko et al., 2001; Kolominsky, 2010; Lisina, 2009; Muhina, 2012; Smirnova, 2012; Uruntaeva, 2001; Veraksa et al., 2016; Zaporozhec, 1986).

Practical significance is determined by the fact that the data obtained during the study can be further used by preschool teachers, educators, and psychologists for organizing work with preschoolers in their interaction with peers who have disabilities.

2. Problem Statement

The peculiarities of interpersonal interaction in inclusive education have been studied by domestic authors just little (Duda & Petrik, 2018; Grebennikova, 2015; Sorokoumova, 2010; Staroverova, 2016). The main reason for the lack of research is the novelty of the problem – the “experience” of inclusive education is estimated at several years. This problem is not specific to our country.

Staroverova (2016) studied senior preschoolers with hearing impairments and attending an inclusive group in pre-school educational institutions. The study involved 108 children with congenital hearing loss of 1–2 grades and using colloquial speech when communicating, as well as 102 preschoolers who do not have impaired hearing. The results obtained suggest that preschool children with hearing impairments are closed and shut off in relation to others; they have a pronounced tendency toward distrust and do not seek to attract attention to themselves; they are characterized by anxiety and worry.

The study of interpersonal relationships in an inclusive elementary school on the basis of gymnasium No. 16 in Krasnoyarsk (Duda & Petrik, 2018) showed that there is a favorable psychological climate among students, which is an important condition for the successful development of the personality of students. Based on the results of the study, it was also revealed that the majority of members of the student team formed a true social understanding of friendship. The children in the class are friendly indeed, but despite this, students with disabilities occupy detached positions in the team, which allows making the assumption that children with regular development in this class turned out to be ready to accept classmates who have disabilities. It turns out that the students with disabilities themselves may not be ready to become a full-fledged member of a student team.

Foreign studies of interpersonal relations in inclusive education are also still few in number (Banch & Valeo, 2008; Frostad & Pijl, 2007; Jeffress, 2017; Kemp & Carter, 2002; Silvestre & Rom, 2011; Webster & Carter, 2013). In addition, they are implemented in conditions that are very different from Russian ones in a number of important parameters: in material conditions, in mindset features, in the complexity degree of the structure of health restrictions, in the number of participants, in the volume and nature of the support that these participants receive. All this makes it difficult to use the results of foreign studies.

Australian scientists Kemp and Carter (2002) investigated the social skills and social status of children with intellectual disabilities. Significant differences were found in the amount of time that students with intellectual disabilities and their typical peers spend in collaboration with peers and in isolation. Mean differences were found in interaction with teachers. However, no differences in social status were found between the two groups, and students with intellectual disabilities still spent more than half of their time on the playground in conjunction with normally developing peers.

It should be noted that the range of studies devoted to the study of interpersonal relations of children with disabilities in conditions of inclusive education is poorly understood, the preschool level of inclusive education is still less studied than the school one.

3. Research Questions

Empirical research was conducted on the basis of a private educational institution located in Moscow. The kindergarten works according to the educational standards of the Federal State Educational Standards.

The peculiarity of this kindergarten is the small number of groups in contrast to public institutions (the number of children in groups does not exceed 9), as well as the implementation of inclusive practices (each group has children with disabilities).

The study involved 4 groups of different ages: middle (4–5 years), senior (5–6 years) and 2 kindergarten groups (6–7 years). In total, 35 children of preschool age: 14 girls and 21 boys from 4 to 7 years, 9 children have disabilities (autism spectrum disorder, attention deficit and hyperactivity disorder, mental retardation, general speech underdevelopment) were involved in the research.

4. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to examine relationships in preschoolers with their peers and classmates with disabilities under inclusive education condition.

5. Research Methods

The following methods were used: observation, sociometry, projective drawing, problem situations, and statistical data analysis. As psychodiagnostic methods were used:

- 1) “Captain of the ship” of Romanov, which allowed identifying the sociometric status of the child in the peer group;
- 2) “Me and my friend in kindergarten” of Miklyaeva to assess the presence of close interpersonal relations;
- 3) “Diagnostics of the development of communication with peers” of Orlova, Kholmogorova;
- 4) “Labyrinth” of Wenger, to study communication skills in communication with peers.
- 5) “Images” of Smirnova, Kalyagina, to identify communicative competence in communicating with peers.

All methods were selected taking into account the age of children and their existing disorders.

In addition, the Mann-Whitney U test was used in processing the results, to calculate the reliability of differences in the indicators in 4 groups of preschool children of different age who participated in the study.

6. Findings

The analysis of the data obtained according to the “Captain of the Ship” method showed the following.

In the *middle group*, 50 % of preschoolers are popular in their group. They received two times more positive choices from the average. 25 % of preschoolers are preferred because they received

positive and negative choices. The remaining 25 % are considered rejected, they received mostly negative choices. According to the results of the method in the first group, no isolated children were identified who did not receive either positive or negative choices.

Children with disabilities received the status of rejected in the group, and the one refused to perform the task, alleging that he did not like the ship, he would not want to be the captain of the ship and he was not interested.

In the *senior group*, 67 % of preschoolers are preferred in their group, because they received positive and negative choices. 22 % of preschoolers are popular. They received two times more positive choices from the average. The remaining 11 % are considered rejected, they received mostly negative choices. According to the results of the method in the senior group, no isolated children were identified who did not receive either positive or negative choices.

A child with disabilities in this group has received the outcast status.

In the *first kindergarten group*, 33 % of preschoolers are popular in their group. They received two times more positive choices from the average. 45 % of preschoolers are preferred because they received positive and negative choices. The remaining 22 % are considered rejected, they received mostly negative choices. According to the results of the method no isolated children were identified in the third group, who did not receive either positive or negative choices.

Two children with disabilities have received the status of rejected, and 1 child – preferred status.

In this group, according to the results of the applied method, there is a significant number of preferred and popular children and none of isolated and rejected.

In the *second kindergarten group*, 33 % of preschoolers are preferred in their group. They received positive and negative choices. 45 % of preschoolers are popular, since they received two times more positive choices from the average. 22 % hold the status of rejected. According to the results of the method, no isolated children were identified in the fourth group.

Children with disabilities received the status of rejected in their group.

Analysis of the parameters and the number of friends drawn in the pictures allows making the following conclusions according to the method “Me and my friend in preschool”.

In the *middle group*, 13 % of the testees depicted a child with disabilities in their drawings. 25 % of children show cohesion. 50 % of the testees have additional elements in their pictures. 63 % of the testees, following the instructions, depicted in their drawings 1 friend. 12 % of the testees depicted 2 friends. 12 % of the testees depicted 3 friends. 13 % did not depict friends in the picture.

In the *senior group*, 11 % of the testees depicted a child with disabilities in their drawings. 67 % of children show cohesion. 22 % of the testees have additional elements in the pictures. 100 % of the testees, following the instructions, depicted in their drawings 1 friend.

In the *first kindergarten group*, 22 % of the testees depicted a child with disabilities in their drawings. 22 % of children show cohesion. 55 % of the testees have additional elements in the picture. 100 % of the testees, following the instructions, depicted in their drawings 1 friend.

In the *second kindergarten group*, 22 % of children depicted a child with disabilities in their drawings. 44 % of children show cohesion. 0 % of testees have additional elements in the picture. 78 % of the testees, following the instructions, depicted in drawing 1 friend. 22 % of the testees depicted 2 friends.

According to the method "Diagnosis of the development of communication with peers" the following results have been revealed.

In the *middle group*, 25 % of the group demonstrates an average level of interpersonal communication. 37 % have a high level of communication, and only 38 % have a low level.

Three children with disabilities are characterized by a low level of communication.

In the *senior group*, 44 % of children have high and medium levels of communication. 12 % are diagnosed with a low level of communication.

A child with disabilities has a low level of communication.

In the *first kindergarten group*, 44 % of the groups were diagnosed with moderate, 33 % – high, 23 % – low level of communication.

2 children with disabilities are diagnosed with low and 1 child – with average level of communication.

In the *second kindergarten group*, 78 % of the group is diagnosed with an average level of communication, 11 % have a high level and 11 % have a low level of communication.

Children with disabilities were diagnosed with low and medium levels of communication.

The following results of observation of communicative activities with peers were recorded according to the methods of "Labyrinth".

For the *middle group*, 4 types of communication are typical: 1, 2, 4, 5 – 25 % is each type.

1 and 2 types of interaction are typical for children with disabilities, i.e. there is almost no cooperation, or there is unsustainable attention to the actions of the partner (respectively).

For the *senior group* 4 types of communication are typical: 22 % each – 1, 2 and 5 types of communication. And 34 % – 3 type of communication.

For a child with disabilities 2nd type of interaction is typical, i.e. there is an unstable attention to the actions of the partner.

For the *first kindergarten group* 4 types of communication are typical: 22 % each – 3, 4 and 6 types of communication. And 34 % – 2 type of communication.

For children with disabilities 2nd, 3rd, 4th types of interaction are typical, i.e. there is an unstable attention to the actions of the partner, or there is interaction between the partners, but the situational and impulsive-spontaneous nature or partner is perceived as an adversary with opposing interests and attitudes (respectively).

For the *second kindergarten group*, 4 types of communication are typical: 22 % each – 4, 5 and 6 types of communication. And 34 % – 3 type of communication.

For children with disabilities, 3rd and 4th types of interaction are typical, i.e. there is interaction between the partners, but the situational and impulsive- spontaneous nature or partner is perceived as an adversary, with opposite interests and positions (respectively).

Using the "Pictures" method, the following levels of communicative competence in communication with peers were identified.

In the *middle group*, 63 % of the testees have a low level, 25 % – medium and 1 % – high levels of communicative competence.

Children with disabilities have a low level of communicative competence.

In the *senior group*, 33 % of testees have a low level, 23 % have a high level and 44 % have an medium level of communicative competence.

A child with disabilities has a low level of communicative competence.

In the *first kindergarten group*, 78 % of the testees have a low level, and 11 % each have high and medium levels of communicative competence.

Two children with disabilities have a low level of communicative competence.

In the *second kindergarten group*, 56 % of the testees have a medium, 33 % – low and 11 % – high level of communicative competence.

A child with disabilities has a low level of communicative competence.

To determine the significance of differences in 4 groups of preschool children of different ages, we use one of the methods of mathematical statistics (“Mann-Whitney U-test”). To do this, we hypothesize: children with disabilities will more often hold the status of isolated and rejected in the group of peers, they will have no interest in their peers, a desire to interact with their peers, there will be no response to peer initiatives, more often there will be an unproductive way to resolve conflict situations.

To confirm this hypothesis, we will form a united group of children with disabilities consisting of 9 people and compare indicators of this group with those of the senior group.

Table 01. U-value of Mann-Whitney test when comparing interpersonal relations between groups of children with different health conditions

Indicators	Methods		
	Captain of the ship	Diagnostics of the development of communication with peers	Pictures
Rank 1	51	51	49
Rank 2	102	102	104
Empirical result, U_{emp}	6	6	4
Critical value $p \leq 0.01$	11	11	11
Critical value $p \leq 0.05$	18	18	18
Area of interest	Significantly	Significantly	Significantly

To calculate the results by the methods “Me and my friend in preschool” and “Labyrinth”, the Mann-Whitney U test was not used because the methods do not contain quantitative results.

Table 1 indicates that in 3 psychodiagnostic methods U_{emp} is in the area of importance. These findings suggest the first hypothesis of the study to be confirmed.

Next, we formulate another hypothesis: older preschool children with disabilities will have significantly more favorable interpersonal relationships with peers than preschool children with disabilities in younger preschool age. To clarify the effect of age on the nature of interpersonal relationships with peers, we will also use one of the methods of mathematical statistics (“Mann-Whitney U-criterion”).

To confirm this hypothesis, let's combine the middle one with the senior and the first kindergarten with the second kindergarten group, and compare the indicators.

Table 02. U-value of Mann-Whitney test when comparing interpersonal relations between groups that differ by age

Technologies	Captain of the ship	Diagnostics of the development of communication with peers	Pictures
Rank 1	306	325.5	325
Rank 2	324	304.5	305
Empirical result, U_{emp}	153	133.5	134
Critical value $p \leq 0.01$	82	82	82
Critical value $p \leq 0.05$	102	102	102
Area of interest	Insignificant	Insignificant	Insignificant

To calculate the results by the methods “Me and my friend in preschool” and “Labyrinth”, the Mann-Whitney U test was not used because the methods do not contain quantitative results.

Table 2 indicates that in 3 psychodiagnostic methods U_{emp} is in the zone of insignificance.

These findings suggest the second hypothesis of the study not to be confirmed. It can be assumed that the hypothesis was not confirmed due to the influence of such additional factors as: the psychological characteristics of the child, the type of disorder, the number of children with disabilities and normally developing peers in the group, the internal climate in the preschool group, which is created by teachers as well.

7. Conclusion

Thus, the purpose of the research is achieved. In connection with the peculiarities of interpersonal relations of preschoolers with disabilities with their peers and the difficulties encountered in interacting with peers, recommendations were developed for teachers and educators working with these groups of children:

1. To improve the psychological climate within the group for the development of harmonious interpersonal relations use the means of special tools designed to adjust the psychological atmosphere: pedagogical situations, games, methods of mental self-regulation;
2. Take into account the age and individual characteristics of children;
3. Avoid criticism in the presence of other children, be attentive to them;
4. Apply positive assessments (for example, while playing, focus children's attention on successful and minor points in the actions of a child with disabilities: “Guys, look how interesting Kolya came up with building blocks! Let’s help him together!”).
5. To encourage the child to be proactive, supporting him/her by praise, to enhance the interests and support initiatives in the child.
6. To expand the circle of communication, using joint activities, games, teamwork.
7. Group play therapy (harmonious distribution of roles among children with difficulties interacting with peers so that all members of the group are involved).
8. Constantly monitor game action to avoid conflicts.
9. Prevent the negative vibes in the relations of children with each other.

Compliance with the proposed recommendations will help educators, teachers, and psychologists of preschool educational institutions to harmonize interpersonal relations in a childrens' group where children with disabilities are educated, it also will help to build communication skills and improve the sociometric status of children with disabilities.

The organization of psychological support for children with disabilities in a private preschool educational institution can be a direction for further research in this area.

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