

The Impact of Students' Age on their Attitudes Toward Disability – the Albania's Case



Psychology

Keywords: CATCH test, students' age, attitudes.

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Abstract

Children attitudes toward their disabled peers impact the process of scholastic integration of children with special needs. The study aimed to measure the impact of childrens'age on their attitudes towards disability. The paper examined the impact of the age in Albanian childrens'attitudes toward their peers with disabilities. 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. There is a significant relationship between different classes in the general attitude of students. There is a significant relationship between different classes in the affective and behavioral components of students attitude. So, there is not a significant relationship between different classes in the behavioral component attitude of students. There are given some recommendations in order to promote positive attitudes towards pupils with disabilities and to improve the process and structure of learning.

1. Introduction

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).

Allport (1935) defined attitude as "a mental and neural state of readiness, organized through experience, exerting a directive and dynamic influence upon the individual's response to all objects and situations with which it is related" (p. 810) (Norbert Schwarz & Gerd Bohner, 2001).

Combining elements from several definitions, attitudes may be viewed as learned cognitive, affective, and behavioral predispositions to respond positively or negatively to certain objects, situations, institutions, concepts, or persons (Aiken L.R. (2002).

The most popular definition, at least if one surveys recent social psychology texts, would suggest that attitudes consist of three classes of response (affective, cognitive, and behavioral) to a stimulus, or attitude, object. This view, popularized by Milton Rosenberg and Carl Hovland in the early 1960s (Rosenberg and Hovland 1960), basically suggests that an attitude consists of how we feel, what we think, and what we are inclined to do about an attitude object (Fazio R.H., Petty R. (2008).

To understand disability attitudes in the larger perspective, it is essential to take all the three components of an attitude into consideration, where change in one component will affect the overall attitude (Dalal A.K., (2006).

Based on this contemporary attitudes conception it is considered necessary than in addition to measuring pupils' general attitude towards disability, the measuring and the analysing the results of the affective, behavioral and cognitive components.

2. Methodology of preparation and development of this paper

For the realisation of the study it is used the survey technique. The measuring instrument is CATCH scale (Chedoke-McMaster Attitudes Towards Children with Handicaps) Peter L.Rosenbaum, Robert W.Armstrong e Susanne M.King (1986). There are engaged to groups of pupils in this study. One of the groups has peers with disabilities in their classes and the other group does not have peers with disabilities in their classes. The study measures the attitude of pupils towards their pupils with disabilities.

As a secondary method it is used the technique of interviewing teachers of public schools in which there are disabled pupils integrated into their classes for the purpose of obtaining their opinions related to the attitude of the pupils towards the pupils with disabilities, toward the inclusion and involvement of such pupils in the class and for the purpose of identifying problems faced by them in the classroom where are integrated disabled pupils. The interviews are conducted in order to deepen the findings of the questionnaire. They are completed by teachers themselves.

2.1. Aims and objectives of the paper

The main aims and objectives are :

- Measuring the attitudes of pupils toward their peers with disabilities.
- Analyzing the influence of the age of children on the attitudes of pupils toward their peers with disabilities.
- Analyzing the influence of the age of children on the results of the three components of attitudes of pupils toward their peers with disabilities.

2.3. 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.

2.4. General data related to the pupils and teachers who participated in the study

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

2.5. Apparatus / Materials

It is employed the CATCH test to measure pupils' attitudes towards their peers with disabilities.

2.6. 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).

2.7. 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.

2.8. Method of analysis

The data collected from the questionnaires was analyzed by means of the SPSS program, variant 20. It is estimated the reliability of the test (Alfa Cronbach =0,71). 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. Data about the variables are proclaimed by the frequency, the mean, the median, the mode, etc.

2.9. Content of the interviews

The contents of the interviews was thought in a way as to collect the opinions of teachers concerning : 1) the attitude of the pupils towards pupils with disabilities, 2) the indicators of the structure, 3) the indicators of the learning process. In relation to the structure indicators the paper aims to obtain the teachers' opinion about: a) the human resources, such as the number of student per class, the existence of the supportive teacher, teachers' involvement in qualification processes about disability, the existence of other support staff at the school, etc; b) the structural resources, such as: the existence of laboratories for the disabled students in the school, the existence of the necessary space for them, the existence of didactic materials needed to teach disabled children. In relation to the indicators of learning process, the paper aims to obtain the teachers' opinion about : a) the existence of an individualized education plan for the disabled student, b) the relationship between schools and other support institutions, c) the relationship between the school and other schools. The content of the interviews about the indicators of the structure and the indicators of the learning process is based on the book Gherardini P., Nocera S, AIPD (2000) “L'integrazione scolastica delle persone Down”, Erickson.

3. Findings of the study

3.1. General data concerning the 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.

Table 3.1. Data about pupils' attitude toward their disabled peers

	N	Mean	Median	Mode	Standard deviation	Minim.	Max.
General pupils' attitude	1050	23,1656	23,3300	23,70	4,43665	10,00	38,15
The affective component	1050	25,7028	26,6700	28,89	6,13149	3,33	40,00
The behavioral component	1050	26,0085	25,5600	24,44	6,30688	4,44	40,00
The cognitive component	1050	17,7874	17,7800	18,89	4,11333	4,44	37,78
Valid	1050						

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 closed to the ideal maximum, but a few of students has it (0,1% of students). The most of the results obtained is ranked in the range of values from 20 to 30, while a small fraction of the values obtained is ranked in the range of values from 30 to 38,15.

In relation to the affective component, 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. The most of the results obtained is ranked in the range of values from 25 to 40, while a small fraction of the values obtained is ranked in the range of values from 3,33 to 15. A significant part of the results obtained is ranked in the range of 15 to 25.

In relation to the behavioral component of attitudes, 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 behavioral component of children attitudes is good. The mean is 26,008, the median is 25,56 and the mode is 24,44. The most of the results obtained is ranked in the range of values from 20 to 35, while a small fraction of the values obtained is ranked in the range of values from 4,44 to 15 and from 35 to 40.

In relation to the cognitive component of attitudes, 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). A good part of the results obtained is ranked in the range

of values from 4,44 to 15, the most of the results obtained is ranked in the range of values from 15 to 25, while a small fraction of the values obtained is ranked in the range of values from 25 to 37,78.

Analyzing the impact of age (students in fifth/sixth/seventh classes) in general attitude of children toward disability

It is used One-Way ANOVA for analyzing the impact of age on children attitudes toward disability. Sig.=0,006. So, there is a significant relationship between students' age and their general attitude. Pupils of seventh classes have a higher average of point (23.65) for the general attitude, whereas the children of fifth classes have a lower average of point (22.57). Such data are obtained through the analysis of variance Anova table and eta (Table 3.2).

Table 3.2. The relationship between the age and the general attitude of students

Class	N	Mean	Median	Standard deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Class 5-th	297	22,5791	22,5900	4,47998	10,00	34,81
Class 6-th	340	23,0884	23,3300	4,37114	10,74	33,33
Class 7-th	413	23,6509	24,0700	4,41448	10,00	38,15
Total	1050	23,1656	23,3300	4,43665	10,00	38,15

The table 3.3. (The table of comparisons between the age and students' general attitude) confirm this fact. The table is obtained through the use of Post Hoc Bonferroni Test.

Table 3.3. The table of comparisons between the age and students' general attitude

(I) Class	(J) Class	Mean Difference(I-J)	Std.error	Sig.
Class 5-th	Class 6-th	-,50933	,35099	,441
	Class 7-th	-1,07184*	,33621	,004
Class 6-th	Class 5-th	,50933	,35099	,441
	Class 7-th	-,56251	,32361	,247
Class 7-th	Class 5-th	1,07184*	,33621	,004
	Class 6-th	,56251	,32361	,247

So, it is clear the fact that there is a significant relationship between the results of general attitude of students of seventh and fifth classes (Sig=0,004).

Analyzing the impact of age (students in fifth/sixth/seventh classes) in the affective component of attitude of children toward disability

Sig.= 0,022. So, there is a significant relationship between students' age and and the affective component of their attitudes. Pupils of seventh classes have a higher average of point (26,08) for the affective component, whereas the children of fifth classes have a lower average of point (24,87),

Table 3.4. The relationship between the age and the affective component

Class	N	Mean	Median	Standard deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Class 5-th	297	24,8747	25,5600	6,29414	3,33	38,89
Class 6-th	340	25,9674	26,6700	6,20123	3,33	40,00
Class 7-th	413	26,0804	26,6700	5,90956	3,33	40,00
Total	1050	25,7028	26,6700	6,13149	3,33	40,00

The table 3.5. (The table of comparisons between the age and the affective component) confirm this fact. The table is obtained through the use of Post Hoc Bonferroni Test.

Table 3.5. The table of comparisons between the age and the affective component

(I) Class	(J) Class	Mean Difference(I-J)	Std.error	Sig.
Class 5-th	Class 6-th	-1,09273	,48568	,074
	Class 7-th	-1,20576(*)	,46524	,029
Class 6-th	Class 5-th	1,09273	,48568	,074
	Class 7-th	-,11302	,44780	1,000
Class 7-th	Class 5-th	1,20576(*)	,46524	,029
	Class 6-th	,11302	,44780	1,000

So, it is clear the fact that there is a significant relationship between the results of affective component of students of seventh and fifth classes (Sig=0,029).

Analyzing the impact of age (students in fifth/sixth/seventh classes) in the behavioral component of attitude of children toward disability

Sig.=0,003. So, there is a significant relationship between the age and the behavioral component attitude of students. Pupils of seventh classes have a higher average of point (26,77) for the behavioral component, whereas the children of fifth classes have a lower average of point (25,20) (Table 3.5).

Table 3.6. The relationship between the age and the behavioral component

Klasa	N	Mean	Median	Standard deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Class 5	297	25,2040	25,5600	6,34168	7,78	40,00
Class 6	340	25,7842	25,5600	6,29885	4,44	38,89
Class 7	413	26,7717	26,6700	6,21650	7,78	40,00
Total	1050	26,0085	25,5600	6,30688	4,44	40,00

The table 3.6. (The table of comparisons between the age and the behavioral component) confirm this fact. The table is obtained through the use of Post Hoc Bonferroni Test.

Tabela 3.7. The relationship between the age and the behavioral component

(I) Class	(J) Class	Mean Difference(I-J)	Std.error	Sig.
Class 5-th	Class 6-th	-,58020	,49869	,735
	Class 7-th	-1,56770*	,47770	,003
Class 6-th	Class 5-th	,58020	,49869	,735
	Class 7-th	-,98749	,45979	,096
Class 7-th	Class 5-th	1,56770*	,47770	,003
	Class 6-th	,98749	,45979	,096

So, it is clear the fact that there is a significant relationship between the results of behavioral component of students of seventh and fifth classes (Sig=0,003).

Analyzing the impact of age (students in fifth/sixth/seventh classes) in the cognitive component of attitude of children toward disability

Sig.=0,117. So, there is not a significant relationship between the age and the cognitive component attitude of students. Pupils of seventh classes have a higher average of point (18,1) for the cognitive component, whereas the children of sixth classes have a lower average of point (17,51) (Table 3.8).

Table 3.8. The relationship between the age and the cognitive component attitude

Class	N	Mean	Median	Standard deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Class 5	297	17,6581	17,7800	4,13050	5,56	30,00
Class 6	340	17,5130	17,7800	4,04629	4,44	30,00
Class 7	413	18,1062	17,7800	4,14416	6,67	37,78
Total	1050	17,7874	17,7800	4,11333	4,44	37,78

The table 3.9. (The table of comparisons between the age and the cognitive component) confirm this fact. The table is obtained through the use of Post Hoc Bonferroni Test.

Table 3.9. Table of comparisons between the age and the cognitive component

(I) Class	(J) Class	Mean Difference(I-J)	Std.error	Sig.
Class 5-th	Class 6-th	,14509	,32634	1,000
	Class 7-th	-,44806	,31260	,456
Class 6-th	Class 5-th	-,14509	,32634	1,000
	Class 7-th	-,59314	,30089	,147
Class 7-th	Class 5-th	,44806	,31260	,456
	Class 6-th	,59314	,30089	,147

So, it is clear the fact that there is not a significant relationship between the age of students and the results of cognitive component.

4. Conclusions

The general attitude of children toward their disabled peers is good, but it is not too much favourable. The affective and behavioural components of attitude are favourable. The cognitive component of children attitudes is not favourable. There is a significant relationship between the age and the general attitude of students. There is also a significant relationship between the age and the affective and behavioral components attitude of students toward their disabled peers. Pupils of seventh classes have a higher average of point, whereas the children of fifth classes have a lower average of point. There is not a significant relationship between the age and the cognitive component attitude of students.

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. Students who have a student with disability in their class are confronted with many difficulties. In general, the number of students in classes where are integrated disabled students is not different from the number of students in the other classes and, in general, there are a lot of pupils in the classes. 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.

The lack of an individual education plan is another factor that has his impact on children attitudes toward their disabled classmates. If we work with such a plan, the objectives would be made on the basis of the student's capabilities and the work would be done by the teacher to achieve such objectives. In this way, students with disability will be viewed more positively by other students. The homeworks of students with disabilities are not being promoted. There are positive experiences in this regard. In some schools it is formed the angle about disability, in which, in addition to providing disability concepts, are, also, reflected the homeworks of students with disabilities, such as their drawings. Promotion of such works promotes positive attitudes towards disabled students.

6. Recommendations

The recommendations are related to the improving attitudes toward disability. The recommendations are also related to the improvement of the learning process, in order to increase the quality of integration of disabled children in public schools. Recommendations related indicators of structure (such as human and structural resources) and indicators of the learning process. Given the concept of inclusive education and taking into account the information obtained from teachers, it is important to create the right conditions for the realization of such a process. In this way, improving the learning process through intervention on indicators of this process, in

addition to reducing social barriers, we can be able to talk about the process of inclusive education as a complete and efficient process. The following would be necessary:

Students' awareness about the right of disabled children to be educated and not to be discriminated. Finding ways and forms to achieve such awareness, for example, displaying the homeworks of students with disabilities, organizing various activities together, or increase interaction during the game.

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. 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. Students should receive information about disability. This can be achieved through subjects of literacy and reading. Teachers have the opportunity to stimulate conversation with students through these subjects, to encourage them students to carry out projects related to disability, impacting directly on improving students' perceptions of their peers with disabilities.

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