

Impact of Peer Relationship on the Self-Concept of Children with Multiple Disabilities in Pakistan

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Abstract

The present study was established to find out the impact of peer relationships on the self-concept of the student with special need. The self-made questionnaire was developed to investigate the general perception of teachers about peer relationships in southern Punjab. All items were constructed while keeping in view all domains of self-concept, self-esteem, role performance, identity, and body image impact on child social abilities. The study focused on exploring the impact of peer relationships that is helpful, to develop high self-concept, increase the academic achievement of learners with special need. The present research study was conducted in 6 districts of southern Punjab schools and centers involving 101 teachers from the special education department as participants. This research study was quantitative. Questionnaires were developed and approved by experts in the field of special education. The participant' responses were analyzed to infer conclusions. The results of the study support our claims that it is very necessary to have strong peer relations to improve the self-concept of special needs child and it can academically beneficial for them. The research suggests that teachers should be involved in building a good relationship with special need child so, they can achieve good social and academics outs in a better way.

Keywords: *Peer relationship, self-concept, multiple disabilities, teacher perception, self-image, body image, self-identity, role performance.*

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Introduction

Peer relationship is a relation of students with their fellows in a social context. This relation is as important as it develops very positive social-emotional skills along with collaboration, sympathy, and problem-solving skills. As far as it develops a very positive personality of children it could have also some negative effects such as the development of bad habits through oppressions, omission, and divergence (Pepler & Bierman, 2018). Peer relationship could be a very multifaceted process as it has some important characteristic such as; 1) there should be communal interests between peers, 2) common habits make strong bonding between peers, 3) sympathetic behavior between the peers, and 4) in case of any conflicts, ability to resolve the issue.

In peer relationships, the physical and intellectual growth depends on the time spent with the peers and types of activities. There are two significant differences between the peer relationship of youngsters and their parents. Youngsters spent more time with their peers rather than old ones (Pepler & Bierman, 2018).

The self-concept of the children is that what a child thinks about him or her. For example, if a child thinks that "I am a very caring one" or "I am a very friendly" this is the perception about his personality developed by him. This is called the self-concept of children (Pepler & Bierman, 2018).

Roger (2018) explained that self-concept is divided into three parts which are self-image, self-esteem, and the ideal itself. He further added that it is a very malleable and dynamic property and could be changed with the help of motivation and according to the situation faced by the person. Self-concept is a very powerful tool in our personality that develops the behavior of managerial or ordinary thinking. It leads the personality of a child or person toward positivity and negativity. Our behavior is the projection of our self-concept. Self-esteem leads to high confidence or low confidence and could be measured with our achievements and activities and that thinking by which others can judge us.

Types of disabilities

Some important types of disabilities described by the IDEA are listed below (IDEA, 2004).

Autism: It is a developmental disability which is included verbal and nonverbal communication and social skill which is observed at the age of 3 years. Repetitive activities, inability to change regarding environment stereotype movements, and unusual responses to sensory experiences (IDEA, 2004).

Blindness: Blindness can define as the inability to see included partial sighted or fully blind which affects their educational performance (IDEA, 2004).

Deafness: Hearing-impaired students are those who cannot hear and speak including mild, moderate, severe, and profound which affect their educational performance (IDEA, 2004).

Developmental delay: It means that delay in one or more of the following areas, cognitive, physical, communication, or emotional development or in adaptive development (IDEA, 2004).

Emotional developments: It is characterized by the inability to maintain satisfactory interpersonal relationships with peers and teachers, inappropriate types of behaviors, and pervasive mood of unhappiness or depression, a tendency to develop physical symptoms or fears associated with personal and school problems (IDEA, 2004).

Multiple Disabilities: Multiple disabilities mean the child has two or more functional disabilities it may be an intellectual disability or some type of sensory disabilities such as blindness, deafness, or orthopedic impairment, children with multiple disabled abilities need severe educational rehabilitation, and special education program (IDEA, 2004).

Orthopedic Impairment: Orthopedic impairment means a child having one or more physical disabilities that severely affect the lifestyle and educational performance of the child. Orthopedic impairments have many causes such as congenital anomaly, cerebral palsy, poliomyelitis, amputations, and many other impairments (IDEA, 2004).

Other Health Impairment: If the child is struggling with any other disease which affects his daily living or adversely affects on child's achievement level is considered a severe health issue or disorders such as asthma, hyperactive disorder, diabetes, hemophilia, Tourette syndrome, and other kinds of health impairment. These issues may be chronic (IDEA, 2004).

Specific Learning Disability: Specific learning disabilities are a disorder of psychological processing in which child understanding is affected badly. It may be spoken how to use language orally or written. It put the impact on the ability to think, speak, spell, write, speaks or having problem in mathematical calculation. These are perceptual disabilities such as dyslexia, dysgraphia aphasia due to brain dysfunction. It does not include the learning problems caused by sensory impairment, intelligence issues, emotional, behavioral, and economic learning problems (IDEA, 2004).

Speech or Language Impairment: An impairment that causes communication disorders such as speech problems. It includes stuttering, wrong articulation, and can lead to child language impairment, speech problems that can lead a child to poor educational problem educational performance (IDEA, 2004).

Traumatic Brain Injury: If a child got any open or close head injury by an external force such as accident, hit by any object, or any head injury that severely affects the brain it can result in total or partial dysfunction of the brain or psychological impairment it adversely affects a child's cognition, daily living, physical functioning, information processing and educational performance in one or more areas. It does not include congenital brain injuries such as birth trauma (IDEA, 2004).

Visual Impairment Including Blindness: If the child has a vision problem after possible correction from glasses or other aids then the child is considered visually impaired. If the

child's visual acuity is 70/200 it is considered legally blind. A child with minimal vision is considered low vision. It put adversely affects child learning and daily living (IDEA, 2004).

Peer relation and self-concept are considered the main focus of the study of child emotional and psychological behavior. Self-concept is directly propositional to improvement in school, educational achievement, and job placement. In this study, researchers try to explore the effect of peer relationships on the self-concept of children with multiple impairments. This study analyzed the child peer relationship has a great effect on child abilities and self-awareness, social behavior, and academic achievement of the child. Furthermore, this study explores that self-concept plays a vital role in the adjustment of social life. Objectives of the study were; 1) to determine the effect of peer relationship on the self-image of the children with impairment, 2) in the Oder to investigate children "self-concept "and social behavior among the children with multiple impairments, and 3) to determine the role of "friendship" on child social adjustment in life. This study has to respond to the following questions; 1) do children with higher self-concept shows good social behavior? 2) what is the role of peer relationships on the self-image of the child? and 3) do peer relationships have an impact on child adjustment in life?

Literature Review

Peer relationships are very much important but studies show the relationship is not significant between academic achievement and self-concept at the age of 14 and above. The coefficient shows negative results among the adult with disabilities. This relationship is complex however children with learning disabilities shows significant effects on academic achievement on self-concept adolescent with learning disabilities (Emenheiser, 2013).

Self-esteem and motivational efforts have a significant impact on child academic achievement level of Student with learning disabilities to answer the question at what degree or level the peer relationship and socialization effect academic achievement of children with disabilities result finding are not significant; however large sample can determine this factor (Exner, 2010).

Robin & Bukowski (2009) see the peer relationship as a socio psychology process named "behavior contagion" according to Kenneth when children contact their peers, they develop self-perception and child attention change and under varied conditions, child personality alter. Children try to have imitation tendency and modeling. They try to follow or imitate their peers. Strong peer relationships can buffer the child from complex and provide a complement base that influences the child's academic achievement under the varied situation. The child's relationship with peers and its effect on academic achievement is diverse, equally, participants' status can be successful if there is the

presence of "reciprocity" then it can be a more powerful relation and have a positive effect on child achievement otherwise it can lower the child moral.

A positive relationship can increase the happiness and satisfaction, the children who have highly participated in a peer-to-peer relationship can increase the child motivation level. Strong self-concept can increase the learning of children. There is a lack of outcome that measures the relationship between self and academic achievement, however, it is necessary to have some behavior adjustment to increase academic outcomes (Madden, 2011).

There are no systematic ways that determine the concept of "self". The theoretical framework to access or measure the concept of self is still disorganized it's named personality psychology. Culture can also play an important role in awareness of self. The self-esteem of a child relies heavily on his self-concept, through a child can perceive its essential skills and qualities (Subich & Hartung, 2011).

The absence of social abilities is a significant boundary in a peer-to-peer relationship. The absence of language and social abilities additionally restricts the different characteristics and capacities of children. Peer to peer relationship is vital in creating positive self-concept of children. Albeit a wide range of impaired youngsters is interested in ASD (autism spectrum disorder) children are in danger of creating peer-to-peer relationships and they are feeble in social relationships. So, their accomplishment in instruction and occupations likewise endures alongside their self-concept (Kittenbrink, 2015).

In the book *Verbal Behavior* (1957), B.F. Skinner portrayed the behavioral standards for language which assume a functioning job in social relationships. In contemplating the self-concept of children by taking peer relationship there are some free factors which could likewise impact the youngster self-concept by the reaction of support of accomplice (Kittenbrink, 2015). Self-concept created by the positive and fascinating relationship could lead the student in accomplishing his life objectives.

The study stated that the self-concept of adolescence which is consisted of 100 sighted and 60 blinds. Findings showed that sighted male has high self-concept as compared to sighted females. The results are not different on a gender basis among blind persons. Overall, the sighted persons have a higher self-concept than blind persons (Halder & Datta, 2012).

The study shows the relation between student behavior and social interaction with peers who are disabling. The results in terms of three attitude components (cognitive, affective, and behavior) showed the natural attitude toward disabling peers. The result stated that adolescences fairly good attitude toward disabling peers. A more positive attitude was shown towards disable peers by Belgian adolescence (Boer, Pijl & Minnaert, 2012)

In this study in an Australian school, eight peers of school students are with multiple disabilities their results showed that students who are in general schools are involved in more communicative interaction rather than special education. Their behavior is grouped into reciprocal behavior activity and social grouping (Foreman, Kelly & Pascoe, 2004).

Research Methodology

Research Design

The main objective of the study is to determine the impact of strong peer relationships on self-concept in children with disabilities. The research design for this study is survey research. The researcher uses a quantitative method and questionnaire to collect information about the impact of strong peer relationships on the self-concept of children with disabilities.

Population

This research study was related to the perception of self-concept and child peer relationship of school students in special education department so, all male and female teachers, rural and urban areas, school and centers secondary and primary schools located in southern Punjab were considered as a population in this research study. The Southern Punjab zone was selected to form the population of the study. A detailed table which shows all the population on the base of gender like male and female, district, area of specialization, designation.

Sample

All the special education staff working in the special education department in southern Punjab was taken as a sample but due to covid 19 privileged in southern Punjab 101 participants were taken as a sample of this study.

Instrumentation

A self-made questionnaire was developed by the researchers keeping in view the four factors of self-concept the questionnaire was substantially divided into four parts and having a preliminary section about the demographics of the respondent. The questionnaire was validated by an expert working in the special education department.

Data Collection & Analysis

Data was collected through google form keeping in view the COVID-19 situation. Many statistical tools such as mean, median, mode, frequency distribution, etc. were applied. However, the results were interpreted in the tables given below.

Sample Description based on demographics

Sr#	Respondents	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Gender			
1	Female	84	83.2
2	Male	17	16.8
	Total	101	100
Designation			
1	Psychologist	8	7.9
2	Educator	21	20.8
3	JSET	36	35.6
4	SSET	32	31.7
5	Other	4	4
	Total	101	100
Area of Specialization			
1	Slow Learner	9	8.9
2	MC	15	14.9
3	PH	4	4
4	VI	9	8.9
5	HI	64	63.4
	Total	100	100
School / Centre			
1	Centre	40	39.6
2	School	61	60.4
	Total	101	100
District			
1	Multan	41	40.6
2	Khanewal	26	25.7
3	Dera ghazi khan	20	19.8
4	Bahawalpur	8	7.9
5	Lodhran	1	1
6	Muzaffargarh	5	5
	Total	101	100

The table illustrates the description of demographic variables outcomes. Frequency analysis illustrates that in the gender section both males and females were part of the population for this study and their participation was not equal as the number of female teachers in the special education department is exceeding the male members. Overall there was a quite sure reaction from all the special educationists working in Special Education Department Punjab. According to the result, their Absolute respondents were 106 of which 101 substantial respondents fill the requirement of our data as asked in the

poll however just a few single respondents have some basic data omission. While interpreting our data analysis the description of respondents on the base of gender there was an enormous number of female’s participants, about respondents of 101, there were 84 females respected teachers which constitute about 83 % of the total population and 17 male teachers which is consist of about 17% of the total population.

Then again, if we talk about the classification of assignments, a productive outcome is found because practically all the experts partook in presenting their reactions. SSET's, JSET's, Educators, Psychologists, and others specialist such as Audiometrists, and Speech therapists have recorded their reactions. A significant amount of participants was senior special education teachers which were 121 out of 36 which is about 36%and a minimal number of respondents were others officials because of few numbers in school.

When we describe the deviation of the respondent concerning their locality in southern Punjab there is likewise an extreme number of participants from Multan city as having a greater number of institutes and schools. On the other hand, when we compare the result on the bae of the area of special education reaction recoded by the teachers of Hearing Impaired out reached which likewise mirror the enormous number of Hearing-impaired schools in southern Punjab. The Schools and Centers analysis is accepted as the school has more staff than the center, 60% of reactions were recorded from the school, and the rest 40% was from centers.

Table

Sr#	Statements of Questions	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	M	SD
1	Positive social relationships help to shape the development of self-esteem in children with disabilities.	99(98%)	2(2%)	0(0%)	4.55	0.54
2	With healthy self-esteem children with disabilities are assertive in expressing their needs and opinions.	99(98%)	2(2%)	0(0%)	4.35	0.52
3	Successful peer relations validate one’s sense of personal worth.	93(92%)	5(5%)	3(3%)	4.17	0.65
4	When the child is excluded from or bullied by peers, his/her self-esteem is greatly affected.	93(92%)	6(6%)	2(2%)	4.33	0.68
5	Good peer relationships can lead the special child to a high self-concept.	97(96%)	2(2%)	2(2%)	4.38	0.63

6	Strong peer-relationship encourages self-esteem of Special children.	95(94%)	4(4%)	2(2%)	4.33	0.65
7	Poor peer relationships can result in a negative image of himself/herself.	90(89%)	7(7%)	4(4%)	4.14	0.71
8	Children with disabilities who show friendly behavior are more likely to play a vital role in society.	98(97%)	2(2%)	1(1%)	4.38	0.58
9	Children with disabilities are less social when they are not in peer relationships.	94(93%)	5(5%)	2(2%)	4.17	0.6
10	Children with disabilities having peer relationships are more confident.	95(94%)	2(2%)	4(4%)	4.21	0.67
11	Special needs children who are labeled illustrate less cooperative behavior.	74(73%)	17(17%)	10(10%)	3.78	0.86
12	The children with disabilities are more friendly to their other special children rather than normal peers.	79(78%)	10(10%)	12(12%)	4	0.99
13	Children with disabilities mostly like to play with those who are in positive peer relation with them.	97(96%)	2(2%)	2(2%)	4.36	0.63
14	Special children with good peer relations are more expressive in their feelings (anger, happiness, jealousy, and hate).	91(90%)	6(6%)	4(4%)	4.24	0.74
15	Poor Peer relations can affect the personal identity of the child.	84(83%)	7(7%)	10(10%)	3.97	0.85
16	If the special need child knows about himself/ herself properly, he will use his/her capabilities properly.	95(94%)	5(5%)	1(1%)	4.28	0.6
17	Peer groups can influence the	86(85%)	8(8%)	7(7%)	4.01	0.77

	development of a school-age special child.					
18	Peer relation can guide a special child to know his/her strength.	92(91%)	4(4%)	5(5%)	4.16	0.72
19	The special children protected by their peers are more likely to accept their self-image.	83(82%)	10(10%)	8(8%)	3.94	0.82
20	A negative peer relationship shows a negative impact on the personal identity of the student with disabilities.	91(90%)	5(5%)	5(5%)	4.12	0.71
21	The special needs child feels more confident with their peer.	88(87%)	8(8%)	5(5%)	4.13	0.76
26	Special Child appearance is the reason that made fun of other peers' groups.	60(59%)	17(17%)	24(24%)	3.48	1.1
27	Special children are very sensitive to how peers communicate about their physical appearance.	89(88%)	5(5%)	7(7%)	4.08	0.81
28	Children with disabilities can be teased easily on their body shape by their non-disabled peers.	81(80%)	13(13%)	7(7%)	4.04	0.92

Table

Statistical technique Independent Sample t-test was used to compare the male and female response and results were interpreted in below tables

Gender	N	Mean	df	Sig.	t
Female	80	114.46	93	.091	.632
Male	15	116.86			

**P > .05 Level of Significance*

The table results (Independent Sample t-test) show that there is no significant difference found in the opinion of male and female respondents because the significance value is (0.091) which is greater than (0.05) value and t (0.834) value also does not support any difference on the base of gender.

Table

The difference in the opinion among teachers about the impact of peer relationships on self-concept based on the type of school or center (Independent Sample t-test)

School or Centre	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	df	t	Sig.
Centre	36	115.69	11	93	.632	.144
School	59	114.32	9.78			

**P > .05 Level of Significance*

The table shows that the calculated significance value (.144) was more than the standard significance level (.05) so, its shows that statistically significant difference is not found among the center's participants and school teacher participants which does not support the claim.

Table

The difference in the opinion among teachers about the impact of peer relationships on self-concept based on the type of their designations (one way ANOVA test)

Designation	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	38.665	37	1.045	.777	.791
Within Groups	76.640	57	1.345		
Total	115.305	94			

**P > .05 Level of Significance*

The table shows that the calculated significance value (.791) was more than the standard significance level (.05) so, its shows that statistically significant difference is not found among the different designations of participants which does not support the claim.

Table

The difference in the opinion among teachers about the impact of peer relationships on self-concept is based on the area of specialization of participants (one-way ANOVA test).

Area of Specialization	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	69.029	37	1.866	.854	.691
Within Groups	122.290	56	2.184		
Total	191.319	93			

**P > .05 Level of Significance*

The table shows that the calculated significance value (.691) was more than the standard significance level (.05) so, it shows that statistically significant difference is not found among the different areas of specialization of participants which does not support the claim.

Table

The difference in the opinion among teachers about the impact of peer relationships on self-concept is based on different districts of participants (one-way ANOVA test).

Name of District	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	64.082	37	1.732	.877	.660
Within Groups	112.507	57	1.974		
Total	176.589	94			

**P > .05 Level of Significance*

The table shows that the calculated significance value (.660) was more than the standard significance level (.05) so, it shows that statistically significant difference is not found among the different districts of participants taken for analysis which does not support the claim.

Findings & Conclusions

The main purpose of this study was to discover the peer relationship impact on the self-concept of children with disabilities in the Special education department Punjab. For this reason, a survey was conducted on a five Likert scale including the potential purposes behind the peer relationship of children with special needs. In this study to see the impression of teachers, psychologists, were included to pay their significant opinion for peer relationships for special need children. 98% of assessments were recorded that Positive social relationships help to shape the development of self-esteem in children with disabilities. About 97% of respondents are in settle that children with disabilities who show friendly behavior are more likely to play a vital role in society. 94% of respondent are in favor that special need child knows about himself/ herself properly, he will use his/her capabilities properly. In the overall reaction of expert's perception shows that peer relationship has a strong impact on child social, moral and emotional stability. Only a few people response was in disagree which is not a significant value to be discussed.

Discussion

The basic purpose or motivation behind this study was to investigate the impact of peer relationships on the self-concept of children with disabilities. How special need child interact with their peers, how they are influenced by their age mates and how they feel about their body image and all these factors put an impact on child social, moral, academics and their potential abilities are affected as perceived by their specialists such as teachers, psychologist, speech therapists, etc.

The discussion of the study indicated that according to the perception of teachers the strong peer relation can lead a child toward a better understanding of himself/herself. Poor peer relations can cause lack of interest, poor self-concept, negative attitude toward society, stress, anxiety, and poor academics. Research supports the findings of Wardhani (2014), who found that peer groups had an impact on the self-esteem of students. However, the findings of this study contrast with those of Kristiani (1994), which showed that there is a negative link between self-esteem and close connections with learning performance.

Recommendations

- The future recommendations research, also include the importance of obtaining data for all disabled children attending private schools and academies to having a greater sample size for future research.
- Although comparing the different levels of disabilities regarding the impact of peer relationships on self-concept is a costly and labor-intensive process, it is highly recommended that in future a study.
- The peer relationships can also measure in the context of low performance and high-performance students can know the effects on academics.
- It is highlighted the importance of further investigation in a cultural context and socioeconomic influences on the child's self-concept.

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