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Assessment of social development and abilities in children with mental disabilities

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Abstract

This study aims to find out the distribution of social developmental and adaptation skills of children with mental disabilities regarding different variables and it also reveals whether or not the social skills of children with mental disabilities differ according to their parental characteristics. In order for children with mental disabilities to be active members of the society, it is of utmost importance to be sensitive to the social skills education carried out at schools and make the families conscious of the areas related to these special children's development and education.

Keywords: Special education, health sciences, children with mental disabilities, social development, social skill

1. Introduction

Social development complying with social expectations is the person's social stimuli, especially against the exigencies of printing and precision of the group's life to develop.

Social ability in social development of the children have an other importance. Social abilities, communication, solving problems, making decisions, directing him/herself, peer relations, etc. are the abilities which starts the positive social relations and permits to carry on (Kapıkıran, et al. 2006). These abilities can be assessed by sharing, helping, obeying rules, taking initiative, communication and other behavioural measurements (Smart and Sanson, 2001). In order to be effective in social life, a child should adjust to the living social environment and socialization.

The individual who interacts with the social environment learns new behaviours or renew an existing behaviour by using the methods of simulation, observation and the model (Bandura, 1977).

The child begins the first social relations in the family. Then, although it is restricted, it passes to peer communication. The first serious experience with peers and adults are lived in the school.

Children with mental disabilities need the most support in this subject. Therefore, proper education of children with mental disabilities proficient in learning environments, going from easy to difficult, current issues were repeating the attention should be create through experiences.

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In this study, it is aimed to determine the social skills of teachers working in special schools and to determine the children's social adjustment skills who attend to these schools with ages between 7-15 years as well as to investigate the relationship between the social adjustments skills and family and teacher characteristics.

2. Method

This study included 43 children with mental disabilities whose ages were between 7-15 years and who were attending to Education Application School in Salihli, Manisa during 2010-2011 education-teaching year.

Personal information forms and Behaviour Scales in order to assess the social development and social compliance abilities of the children with mental disabilities by their teachers were used to collect the datas. Social Skills Inventory developed by Riggio was utilized to determine the level of teachers' social abilities. The research has a descriptive study design.

According to the collected datas, arithmetical means and standard deviation of datas were calculated as well as t-test and Pearson correlation analysis were performed. Datas were analyzed by SPSS 18.0 statistical programme.

3. Results

The mean age of the 43 children was $11,07 \pm 2,14$ years (min:7- max:15). 4 (9.3%) of the children in study group were attending in first class, 11 (25.6%) in second class, 4 (9.3%) in third class, 7 (16.3%) in fourth class, 7 (16.3%) in fifth class and 10 (23.3%) in sixth class.

In this case, by the age group of children increases, insufficiency of families particularly in fulfilling the demands of the game and friends reveals that the state of special education needs for families.

Of the all children in the study group, 14 (32.6%) were girls and 29(67.4%) were boys. As levels of formal education, special education institutions, the number of male students, are more than the number of female students.

The mean age of the teachers who were involved in the study was $34,80 \pm 4,44$ years (min:28- max:44) and 7(70%) were women, 3 (%30%) were men. All of the teachers have a graduate degree, professional experience means was 12.10 ± 3.87 (min:6-max:18) years and worked for 6.10 ± 3.41 (min:2- max:13) years mean duration of their service.

In assessing the social abilities of the children with the mental disabilities; the teachers were requested to assess the each children whom they teach by social ability behaviour scale. As the result of the research, ten teachers assessed 43 children and mean of social developmental characteristics of the children with mental disabilities were $64,81 \pm 20,76$ (min:25- max:100).

When social development characteristics of the children with mental disabilities were investigated between genders; In Social interaction, social independence and collaboration abilities boys had a mean of $66,38 \pm 22,04$ and the girls had a mean of 61.57 ± 18.14 in which the boys had a mild more success when compared with the girls.

According to the variable of gender; a statistically significant difference was observed between these two groups. In between variable age of students' with mental disabilities and social skills levels a significant relationship has been found.

As a result of the comparison according to family characteristics, when the educational level of parents are examined; the students with parents who graduated from high school and university were more successful in social independence, social interaction skills than students with parents who graduated from primary school ($p:0.000$).

According to the views of teachers, social developmental characteristics of children with mental disabilities in terms of parents' income level are examined, any significant relationship was found.

Another result obtained from this study is that the children with mental disabilities exhibit more social independence skills than social interaction skills.

The results of social ability levels of the teachers assessed by SSI are shown in Table :1

Table 1. Mean Scores of SSI and Inferior Scales of Teachers

	<i>SSI SCORE</i>	<i>EE</i>	<i>ES</i>	<i>EC</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>SS</i>	<i>SC</i>
N	10	10	10	10	10	10	10
Mean	256,30	42,90	44,40	34,10	40,20	43,80	50,90
Min	228	32	33	28	32	33	42
Max	276	56	65	46	49	57	62
SD	17,31	6,67	8,86	6,49	5,71	6,60	6,38

As a result, teachers who participated in the research took an mean 256.30 points in SSI, 42.9 points on the emotional expressivity inferior scale (EE), 44.4 points on the emotional sensitivity inferior scale (ES), 34.1 points on the emotional control inferior scale (EC), 40.2 points on the social expressivity inferior scale (SE), 43.8 points on the social sensitivity inferior scale (SS) and 50.9 points on the social control inferior scale (SC). Points examined, particularly in the social control and emotional sensitivity inferior scales of the mean is higher than the scores of points stand out from other inferior scales.

According to these findings in social control dimensions; teachers' may be considered as, the self-assured, capable of adapting to social situations easily; in emotional sensitivity dimension as capable of establishing empathy, to establish that individuals. The results of the scale and inferior scales in the highest and lowest points among the teachers are shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Social Ability Score Distribution of each Teacher

<i>Teachers(by numbers)</i>	<i>SSI SCORE</i>	<i>EE</i>	<i>ES</i>	<i>EC</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>SS</i>	<i>SC</i>
1st	276*	56	44	32	46	46	52*
2nd	244	39	46	30	36	46	47
3rd	269	42	49	29	45	57	47
4rd	269	43	44	41	49	44	48
5th	231	41	33	29	35	49	44
6th	228	32	36	46	32	40	42
7th	253	41	37	42	38	33	62*
8th	262	49	46	30	43	40	54*
9th	256	48	44	28	43	38	55*
10th	275*	38	65	34	35	45	58*

In Table 2; when the personal information's of teachers who had the maximum scores from SSI and inferior scales. Were investigated it was seen that these scores were concerning the women teachers in the study group.

According to gender variable, when the difference of Social Skills Inventory (SSI) and scores of inferior scales were investigated, significant difference in social control was found and no difference in other inferior scales and in SSI scores were found.

Table 3. t-test Result of the Social Control Scores According to Gender Variables of the Teachers

Gender	N	Mean	SD	t	p
Female	7	53.29	6.02	7.601	0.024*
Male	3	45.33	2.89		

*p<0.05

According to these datas, female teachers can be thought as more friendly, enterprising, sincere and self confident in social relations compared to male teachers.

The relationship between teachers' years of service with the institution they work and the SSI scores were examined and in between teachers' years of service with the institution and the score of SSI (r:-0.698, p: 0.025) and Social expressivity scores (r:-0.708, p : 0.022) were found to have negative and significant relationship.

By the service year of teachers increased, SSI and social expressivity score including communication skills, group loyalty scores decreased.

Finally, relationship between score of SSI and inferior scales scores were examined. A significant positive relation between SSI score and social expressivity inferior scale (r: 0.705, p:0.023) ; SSI score and emotional sensitivity inferior scale (r:0.703, p:0.023); emotional expressivity and social expressivity (r:0.726, p:0.017) were found.

4. Discussion and recommendation

The most important purpose of the developmental counselling at schools is to support the social aspect of the children. In order to understand the importance of social ability education and the results of the studies in this field indicate the need for the programmes and teachers to support the social compliance and social abilities of children.

For this reason, responsiveness to the social ability education of the children with disabilities at schools and increasing the awareness of the families about the child development and education that have major roles in the education of the children with disabilities are required.

In order for children with mental disabilities to be active members of the society, it is of utmost importance to be sensitive to the social skills education carried out at schools and make the families conscious of the areas related to these special children's development and education.

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