

SCHOOL ADJUSTMENT OF PHYSICALLY CHALLENGED CHILDREN (13-17 YEARS)

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ABSTRACT The present study was conducted to explore the Social Adjustment Of Physically Challenged Institutionalized Children at a residential institution of Jammu. The study was exploratory in nature and case profiles were prepared based on the individual interviews, observations and rating scales. The data presented below shows the analysis of these tests on 10 adolescents (13-17 years) individually. The results revealed that the most of the children were in the category of well adjusted in school environment. Sociometric analysis revealed that most of the children had positive relationship with their peers, but there were few who needed guidance in forming social relationships, as they remained isolated.

INTRODUCTION

Physically handicapped individuals are those who have non-sensory physical limitations i.e. limitation not because of sense organs like eyes or ears, but because of other organs like limbs, bones, joints or muscles.

The physical challenge is a relatively visible challenge and it becomes more so by the societies prejudices for a disfigured body. The person who doesn't appear normal is an applied label, which makes his adjustment difficult. Though the society has modernized enough to accept the disability and work out ways to face these challenges, yet these facilities have not reached everywhere.

School is one of the mechanisms of adjustment for the physically challenged, because they usually have normal functioning brains. It is only in their physical stature that problems are there and there are various orthetic and prosthetic devices to aid their adjustment to environment. The teachers training curriculum too prepares the teachers for teaching special children in regular classrooms.

According to *Ottaway's view*, "The school may be regarded as a social invention to serve society for the specialized teaching of young".

Healthy environment in school can help them in better adjustment and fighting with the clichéd beliefs. They may require a little more efforts on the part of the teachers and the students to help them in better adjustment. A teacher or educator should be less interested in the physical

aspects of disability and should be more concerned with the manner in which it affect his functioning in a learning situation (*Panda, 1994*).

Along with the self and the teacher, it is the peer group too which helps in proper adjustment in every field. *Hardman (1990)* suggests that the classroom can be a useful place to discuss disabilities and to encourage understanding and acceptance of the child with a physical or health impairment. He says that classmates should learn to use appropriate terminology and to offer the correct kind of assistance when needed.

Some adjustments are also required in the structure of the school building, but may not be possible in the improvised government schools, which usually cater to the needs of these children, in India. So it is the children only who have to make major adjustments in a society still marked with prejudices and lack of planning especially in the educational sector.

METHODOLOGY

The study was exploratory in nature hence in-depth data was collected from 10 physically challenged institutionalized children in the age group of 13-17 years. Purposive sampling technique was used to select the sample. Tools used for the collection of data were: School Adjustment Checklist – is a 45 item checklist, yielding scores in 7 different dimensions of the school adjustment – general characteristics, frustration reactions, school adjustment, social adjustment, large group relationship, behaviour related class assignment, and annoying behaviour; Sociometry – was administered on individual child to know the preference of his/her peers regarding different activities as with- whom does the child like to sit, class representative, liking for sharing things, like to play with, share lunch with, like to talk, cracking jokes and best friend.

After the collection of data, both qualitative as well as quantitative analysis were done. For quantitative analysis, statistical measures were used. Mean and standard deviation were calculated to know the level of children’s adjustment as measured on school adjustment checklist.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The sample of the study consists of 10 physically challenged children both males and females. Results revealed that majority of the respondents were females in the age group of 13-17 years, were 1st born and the age of onset of disability in most of these children was after birth. Table 1 reveals the mean educational qualification of the respondents was 8th class and was from nuclear families. Mean age of joining the institution was 9 years; visits made to home by children were yearly whereas visits made by parents to the institution were weekly.

Table 1: BACKGROUND INFORMATION

<i>Variables</i>	<i>Mean</i>
Studying in class	8 th
Type of family	Nuclear
Age of joining the institution	9 years
Visits made to home by children	Yearly
Visits made to institution by parents	Weekly

Table 2 reveals that majority of the children were well adjusted to average adjusted in School Adjustment Checklist.

Table 2: SCHOOL ADJUSTMENT CHECKLIST

<i>Categories</i>	<i>Well adjusted</i>	<i>Average adjusted</i>
School environment	6	4
General category	2	8
Frustration reaction category	8	2
School adjustment category	10	-
Social adjustment category	4	6
Large group relationship*	2	7
Behaviour related	7	3
Annoying behaviour	10	-

* Child was poorly adjusted in the large group category

Table 2 reveals that the majority of the children were well adjusted in School Adjustment Checklist and only 2 children were average adjusted; teachers gave high rate to all their students in Teachers Rating Scale (TRS); where as it is inferred that majority of the children rated their teachers in the category of high on the Teacher Student Interaction Checklist. Peer Student Interaction Checklist (Sociometry) analysis reveals that most of the children have positive relationship with their peers, but there are few who are isolates and need guidance in this direction.

Table 3 Showing The Peer Interaction Of Children

Choser	Rekha	Ritu	Sunny	Arti	Madhu	Meena	Shivani	Jyoti	Shruti	Ashwani
Choser										
Rekha	--	--	2	--	1	--	--	3	--	--
Ritu	--	--	--	--	1	--	2	3	--	--
Sunny	1	2	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	3
Arti	--	3	--	--	--	--	--	--	2	1
Madhu	--	1	--	--	--	--	--	2	--	3
Meena	--	1	2	--	--	--	--	--	3	--
Shivani	1	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	3	2
Jyoti	--	1	2	--	--	--	--	--	3	--
Shruti	--	1	2	--	3	--	--	--	--	--
Ashwani	--	2	1	--	--	--	--	--	3	--
1 st choice	2	4	1	--	2	--	--	--	--	1
2 nd choice	--	2	4	--	--	--	1	1	1	1
3 rd choice	--	1	--	--	1	--	--	2	4	2
Total	2	7	5	--	3	--	1	3	5	4

Analysis of Sociometry

The most popular and widely used form of Sociometric evaluation is the sociogram. In this approach, all children were given the opportunity to answer the specific questions, which were designed to know what they feel about each other.

In this sociogram, Ritu received most of the points so she is the star in the sociogram. She has been chosen many times by her peer group. It was inferred that she was the most familiar child in the group.

Those who have emerged as **co-stars** are Sunny, Shruti and Ashwani, they received large number of points but they were not the most familiar child in the group.

Those who have emerged as co-stars are Sunny, Shruti and Ashwani, they have received large number of points but the group less preferred them. They were as popular as Ritu in the group.

Neglectees are Madhu, Rekha, Jyoti and Shivani. Although they were not totally rejected by their peers, but still were not viewed as desirable. They were not familiar within the group.

Arti and Meena have been identified as **isolates** in the sociogram. Arti and Meena were those children who received no points at all in the matrices format. They were seen totally rejected by their peers.

SUGGESTIONS

- 1) *For Parents:* Polio vaccination should be given in time to their children; precautions should be taken during pregnancy; children with disability shouldn't be neglected in the family.
- 2) *For Teachers:* Teachers should not be biased; should not lay stress on academics only should encourage children even in their small achievements; games and sports should be included in the curriculum of these children.
- 3) *For Institutions:* Vocational training in computer education and other fields should be given to these children, as these are needed in the modern world. Also life skill education should be imparted to them.
- 4) *For Community:* Community members should have positive attitude towards these children and should give them some time.
- 5) *For Government:* Government should see the proper functioning of the dispensaries in the far flung areas especially hilly areas to which these children mostly belong and should organize seminar and camps on courses, prevention, cure, adequacy of rights and rehabilitation provided to such children.

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