

Attitude of students of general and specialized educational institutions of the Rostov region towards inclusive education

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Abstract. The paper presents the results of a sociological study conducted in the Rostov region among high school students of general and specialized educational institutions in 2020 (N=11727). The purpose of the study is to identify attitudes towards inclusive and collaborative education. Particular attention is paid to the determinants of the type of educational institution of the respondents, the experience of coeducation, and the presence or absence of disabilities among the respondents. Experience of inclusive education and the type of educational institution is a stronger factor in determining attitudes towards inclusive services than the presence or absence of disability. The highest level of ableism is manifested to children with speech, vision, hearing and mental impairments. All respondents unanimously believe that the main positive consequence of inclusion is the ability to communicate, find a common language with different people.

1 A problem statement

The willingness of all subjects of general educational institutions for coeducation is a basic condition for the formation of a friendly environment, real inclusion and increasing the availability of quality education for all categories of children. Diagnostics of the attitude of all participants in the educational process (parents, administrations of educational institutions, students with and without disabilities) to coeducation is both an important indicator of the development of “education for all” and a source of management decisions in the field of education, contributing to the further advancement of the entire system to the right of every child for a quality education.

Even in the pedagogical community, the discussion of the prospects of reforming the school towards an inclusive one continues [1-3]. Numerous studies of teachers' attitudes towards coeducation show the presence of different, sometimes diametrically opposed points of view [4-7].

Lack of unity in adherence to the values of inclusion among teachers and parents, imperfection of inclusive services in education cannot but affect the attitude of students, both with and without disabilities, to the idea of inclusion, generating alienation and leveling all

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steps to ensure a friendly environment, which is tolerant of any educational needs. The study of the opinion of students without disabilities to inclusive education and their willingness to “inclusion”, as well as the determinants of tolerance for coeducation, regularly becomes an object of study [8-11]. These determinants include age [12, 13]; socio - economic situation [14]; type of educational institution [15]; experience of interaction with persons with disabilities both in the school environment and at home [16-18]; gender [19].

Less often, students with disabilities and their opinion about the changes taking place in society and “education for all” come to the attention of researchers [20-22].

Comparative characteristics, which are very interesting in the conditions of the formation of inclusive education in Russia, and significant for further development of the attitude of respondents - students with and without disabilities, as well as respondents with disabilities studying in various types of educational institutions, is extremely rare [21].

1.1 The objective of the work

The study was conducted from March to May 2020. The study involved educational organizations (inclusive and specialized) of all municipalities of the Rostov region. Teachers carried out informing students about the conducted research. The survey method is a questionnaire. Students with disabilities (N=4851 people) and students without disabilities (N=6876 people) took part in the survey. Among the respondents with disabilities, 3.780 people study in general education institutions and 1.071 people - in specialized schools. The total number of respondents was 11.727. Students filled out questionnaires at home using the provided link to the Google form. The survey involved students in Years 7 to 11. The sample type is random. Statistical analysis of the data included descriptive statistics (frequency and percentages). This paper highlights one of the aspects of the research program - the attitude of students towards inclusive education.

2 Results of the research

Understanding of priority forms of education for children with disabilities and attitudes towards inclusive education. The central question of the questionnaire was: “How, from your point of view, should the education of children with disabilities be organized in society?”. The respondents' answers showed a significant difference in the attitude of the respondents of various groups to inclusive services. The opinions of students without disabilities were divided diametrically opposite: 36.9% believe that these should be specialized educational institutions, while 33.6% believe that ordinary schools can provide education for such children. As we can see, with a slight preponderance among students without disabilities, the leading point of view is that specialized educational institutions are suitable forms of education for children with disabilities.

Comparing this picture of the distribution of answers with the opinion of students with disabilities, it is worth noting that their view of inclusive services is closely related to the form of education that is familiar to them. The answers of students with disabilities receiving education in inclusive classes are very close to the answers of students without disabilities in the presence of two diametrically opposite positions (33.21% - “for this there must be specialized educational institutions”; 38.83% - “in an regular schools”). However, unlike their classmates without disabilities, most of them still adhere to the position that the organization of education for children with disabilities should imply inclusive education.

A completely different picture is given by respondents with disabilities and studying in specialized educational institutions. More than half of these respondents (65.07%) believe that education for children with disabilities should be organized in specialized educational

institutions. Only 15.37% support inclusive services as a form of education for children with disabilities (Table 1).

Table 1. Answers to the question: “How, from your point of view, should be organized education for children with disabilities?”.

Answer options	Normal students	Students with disabilities studying in regular schools	Students with disabilities studying in specialized educational institutions
There must be specialized educational institutions	36.9	33.21	65.07
In an ordinary general school	33.6	38.83	15.37
Homeschooling should be available	11.4	10.68	11.10
They may not study at all	0.8	9.27	2.21
It's hard for me to say	15.7	14.0	2.44
Other (write in)	1.7	1.71	3.81

Thus, the majority of respondents studying in specialized educational institutions are characterized by support for the form of education to which they are directly related, which cannot be said about respondents (with and without disabilities) studying in regular schools.

Closely related to the question of priority forms of education is the question of respondents' attitudes toward coeducation. In general, the majority of respondents without disabilities (66.5%) have a positive attitude towards inclusion. However, almost every 7 students without disabilities have a completely or rather negative attitude towards inclusion.

The data obtained make it possible to identify a direct relationship between the presence of previous experience of communication with children with disabilities and the level of tolerance. We have received confirmation of the theory of contact, according to which acquaintance, bonding can positively influence the attitude towards the group [1,2]. Respondents who have experience of coeducation with classmates with disabilities showed a higher level of positive attitude towards coeducation (75%) and a lower level of negative attitude (6%).

Students with disabilities studying in inclusive classes mostly have a positive attitude towards inclusion (78.72%). However, there are also those among them who rather or completely negatively relate to this form of education - 8.4%.

The presence of such answers is fully explained by the questions that allowed children to write their own answer if the proposed answer options did not suit them. An analysis of the detailed answers in the questionnaires of respondents with disabilities, studied in inclusive classes and, to one degree or another, negatively related to coeducation suggests that some of them would like to see better conditions for coeducation (more qualified teaching staff (“trained teachers”), specialized programs, the possibility of adaptive forms of physical education (“physical education teachers should deal with such children, and not force them to write essays”), tutors, adapted programs). Some of these children say that it would be better to study in general education institutions, but in separate classes (integrative model). A number of others note the territorial and bureaucratic difficulties for admission to specialized schools, the difficulties of inclusive education for those who are deprived of the choice of the form of education. In all fairness, it should be noted that the number of such children is relatively small. However, the problems they point out require special attention.

Almost every second respondent studying in a specialized school (56.6%) showed a more or less positive attitude towards coeducation, although, as we noted earlier, this group does not consider this form of education as the main one. However, almost every second respondent in this group showed some form of negative attitude towards inclusion. Possible reasons for this attitude will be considered by us when analyzing the respondents' perceptions of the positive and negative consequences of inclusion (Table 2).

Table 2. Answers to the question: “How do you feel about the coeducation of ordinary schoolchildren and children with disabilities in regular school?”.

Answer options	Normal students	Students with disabilities studying in regular schools	Students with disabilities studying in specialized educational institutions
Completely positive	32.9	43.46	30.2
Rather positive	33.6	35.26	26.06
Rather negative	11	6.37	14.0
Completely negative	3.2	2.06	6.94
It's hard for me to say	18.8	12.8	22.65

Willingness to study together and the type of health limitation. Attitudes towards collaborative learning vary depending on the nature of the limitations. In the absence of external signs of disability, children with disabilities are least exposed to educational discrimination in the school environment. 77% of students without disabilities are ready to study in the same class with such children, 12.4% are ready to study with them in the same school, but believe that their education should be organized in a separate class. And only 10.6% believe that such children should study in a special school. Respondents with disabilities studying in inclusive classes, with a similar opinion that there is relatively little justification for teaching such children in specialized institutions (6.5%), give more preference to inclusive forms than integrated ones (79.8% - “can study in the same class”; 13.6% - “can study in one school, but in a separate class”). The image of specialized educational institutions as the most optimal for teaching children with disabilities, which was broadcast by the respondents studying in such institutions, was reflected in the answers to the question about the organization of education for children with disabilities who do not have external signs of disability. Although most of these children supported the education of such students in regular schools (in inclusive classes - 59.58 or individual classes of a regular school - 20.4%), the number of those who believe that such children should study in specialized institutions is much higher - 20.1%.

The view of the respondents without disabilities on the inclusive education of children with musculoskeletal disorders is significantly different: 53.1% express their readiness to study with them in the same class; 15.2% - in one school, and 31.8% note that they should study in a specialized school. Respondents with disabilities are more inclined to believe that a specialized educational institution is suitable for this category (33.04% - respondents with disabilities studying in general education schools and 46.9% - respondents with disabilities studying in specialized schools).

Only 27.4% of respondents without disabilities are ready to study in the same class with children with speech, hearing and vision impairments, 24.9% are ready to study with them in one school, and 47.8% believe that there should be specialized institutions for such children. Among respondents with disabilities studying in inclusive classes, the results differ little: 19.84% - “can study in one class”, 33.4% - “can study in a regular school, but in a separate class”, 46.6% - “should study in specialized educational institutions”. But among those who study in specialized institutions, there are much more supporters of education in special educational institutions - 60.7%. About a quarter of them believe that studying in a regular

school, but in a separate class, is also suitable for such children (24.1%). And only 15.2% believe that their education can be organized in the same classes with normal children.

Ableism in relation to children with mental disabilities is very significant: only 14.9% of respondents without disabilities are ready to study with children with mental disabilities in one class, 19.5% - in one school, and 65.6% believe that they should study in a special school. Our study is consistent with the results of other studies conducted in the country regarding the study of different attitudes towards joint communication with various categories of people with disabilities [1, 22]. It is interesting that among respondents with disabilities, there are fewer supporters of coeducation with this category of children in one class - only 13.04% of respondents with disabilities from inclusive classes and 11.4% of respondents with disabilities from specialized schools are ready for such education (Table 3).

Table 3. Answers to the question: "What is the best way, from your point of view, to organize education for children with disabilities?"

Answer options	Normal students	Students with disabilities studying in regular schools	Students with disabilities studying in specialized educational institutions
children with no external signs of disability			
Can study in the same class	77	79.8	59.5
Can study in one school, but in a separate class	12.4	13.6	20.4
Must study in a special school	10.6	6.5	20.1
children with speech, hearing and vision impairments			
Can study in the same class	27.4	19.84	15.2
Can study in one school, but in a separate class	24.9	33.4	24.1
Must study in a special school	47.8	46.6	60.7
Children with musculoskeletal disorders			
Can study in the same class	53.1	44.4	32.9
Can study in one school, but in a separate class	15.2	22.4	20.2
Must study in a special school	31.8	33.04	46.9
Children with intellectual disabilities			
Can study in the same class	14.9	13.04	11.4
Can study in one school, but in a separate class	24.5	26.11	16.07
Must study in a special school	62.7	60.8	72.5

Understanding the positive and negative effects of coeducation. An analysis of the respondents' answers to the question about the possible positive consequences of inclusive services in education allows saying that the overwhelming majority of respondents see positive consequences in such forms of organizing the educational process. The number of those who do not see anything positive differs depending on the presence of joint learning experience. Thus, 12.6% of respondents from specialized schools do not see anything positive in coeducation, while among respondents with disabilities who study with children without disabilities, this percentage is only 3.3%. Among students without disabilities, only

6% do not see the positive consequences of coeducation. At the same time, most of these children do not have experience of coeducation with children with disabilities.

The ranking of potential positive consequences of coeducation showed that all respondents, regardless of the presence or absence of health limitations and experience of coeducation, believe that the main positive consequence of being included in the school community is the acquisition of the skill of finding a common language with the people around them, and the ability to communicate.

The second most important consequence is the ability to overcome social stereotypes in relation to persons with special educational needs. It is important to note that respondents without disabilities (17.1%), respondents with disabilities who study together with other schoolchildren (16.6%) assess the potential possibility of coeducation for debunking social stigma higher than students in specialized schools (12.6%).

Among the three leading positive consequences of inclusion, the respondents included the ability to restrain and control behavior. It is interesting that among the respondents, the highest percentage of answers was given by students of specialized schools (9.8%) (Table 4).

Table 4. Answers to the question: "What do you think are the positive consequences of coeducation with children with disabilities in the same class?".

Answer options	Normal students	Students with disabilities studying in regular schools	Students with disabilities studying in specialized educational institutions
ability to communicate, find a common language with different people	58.8	62.3	55.4
ability to restrain and control behavior and emotions	8.7	8.4	9.8
expanding ideas about the world and society	7.5	8.2	7.06
overcoming social stereotypes, psychological barriers in communication with other students	17.1	16.6	12.6
participation in non-standard approaches, teaching methods	1.9	1.1	2.1
I don't see anything positive	6.0	3.3	12.6

Among the negative consequences, all respondents note, first of all, the danger of a disrespectful, derisive attitude towards children with disabilities (35.6% - respondents without disabilities; 30.71% - respondents with disabilities studying in regular schools, 31.4% - respondents with disabilities studying in specialized schools). In general, students from specialized institutions showed the highest rates in anticipation of the negative consequences of coeducation. Comparing the answers of students of regular schools, it should be noted that respondents with disabilities are less likely than students without disabilities to see negative consequences in inclusive learning formats (Table 5).

Table 5. Answers to the question: “What do you think are the negative consequences of coeducation with children with disabilities in the same class?”.

Answer options	Normal students	Students with disabilities studying in regular schools	Students with disabilities studying in specialized educational institutions
Tensions and conflicts in the classroom	9.9	9.89	13.64
Disrespectful and derisive attitude towards children with disabilities	35.6	30.71	31.4
Decline in educational attainment	7.2	6.08	8.64
Difficulties in perceiving non-standard approaches and teaching methods	7.5	6.48	8.52
I see nothing negative	39.8	46.7	37.63

3 Conclusions

Among students without disabilities, a contradictory attitude towards the inclusive form of education of children with disabilities was revealed, with, in general, a positive attitude towards coeducation.

There is a direct relationship between the presence of previous experience of communication with children with disabilities and the attitude to coeducation.

The presence of experience of inclusive education, the type of educational institution is a stronger factor in determining the attitude towards inclusive services than the presence or absence of disability.

The lowest level of support for school inclusion was shown by students of specialized educational institutions.

The attitude of respondents with disabilities and students of general education institutions towards inclusion is controversial, but the level of their support for inclusive education is higher than that of students without disabilities.

Critical attitude towards inclusion of respondents with disabilities studying in regular schools is associated with imperfection of services and methods of coeducation.

The level of willingness for coeducation directly depends on the nature of the limitations that children with disabilities have. Children with latent disabilities (general diseases) and disorders of the musculoskeletal system are exposed to the least educational discrimination. The highest level of ableism is manifested to children with speech, vision, hearing and mental impairments.

Respondents tend to note the positive rather than negative consequences of inclusion.

Regardless of the presence or absence of health limitations, experience of coeducation, the respondents believe that the main positive consequences of being included in the school community are the acquisition of the skill of finding a common language with the people around them, the ability to communicate; the ability to overcome social stereotypes in relation to persons with special educational needs; debunking social stigma; the ability to learn to control behavior.

Regardless of the presence or absence of health limitations, experience of coeducation, respondents believe that the main negative consequence of inclusion is a disrespectful and derisive attitude towards children with disabilities.

Students of specialized schools showed a high level of mistrust in inclusive forms of education, including their influence on the possibility of breaking down prejudices and communication barriers.

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