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PSYCHOLOGICAL AND PEDAGOGICAL CHARACTERISTICS OF PRIMARY SCHOOL STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES IN THE CONTEXT OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

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Abstract

This study investigates the distinct psychological and pedagogical characteristics of primary school students with disabilities (specifically those with mild intellectual disabilities and orthopedic impairments) navigating the transition into inclusive educational environments. The primary objective was to evaluate how specific cognitive, emotional-behavioral, and communicative profiles impact their academic adaptation and social integration. Employing a mixed-methods design, a sample of $N = 40$ students (aged 8–10) was monitored over a six-month period, split evenly into an experimental group ($n = 20$) undergoing a specialized psycho-pedagogical support program and a control group ($n = 20$) following traditional curricula. Pre-intervention diagnostics revealed prevalent socio-emotional barriers, including high anxiety (65%), low self-esteem (70%), and communication avoidance (60%). Post-intervention data demonstrated that targeted psycho-pedagogical interventions significantly optimized cognitive resilience, enhanced adaptive behavior, and reduced social alienation ($p < 0.05$). The findings establish that successful inclusive practices depend heavily on addressing inner psychological landscapes rather than merely modifying physical school infrastructure.

Keywords: Special education, psychological profile, pedagogical characteristics, primary school, inclusive education, emotional-behavioral adjustment, cognitive development.

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Introduction

The global educational paradigm has undergone a definitive shift away from institutional segregation toward the structural implementation of inclusive education. Integrating primary school students with disabilities into mainstream classrooms is not merely a logistical or infrastructural challenge; it is a profound socio-cognitive transition. At the primary school level (ages 8–10), children undergo a critical shift in their dominant activity—moving from play to structured learning. For a child with atypical development, this transition is compounded by biological limitations that translate into secondary psychological impediments, such as social anxiety, distorted self-perception, and fragmented communicative toolsets.

In Uzbekistan, recent educational reforms have systematically mandated the expansion of inclusive classrooms. However, pedagogical practice often falls into the trap of "mechanical integration"—placing a child with special needs into a standard classroom without adapting the psycho-pedagogical ecosystem to their specific cognitive and emotional processing styles. To bridge this gap, it is crucial to dissect the dynamic psychological and pedagogical attributes of these learners. Understanding these characteristics allows educators to design proactive interventions rather than reactive modifications, ultimately fostering true cognitive and social synthesis.

Literature Review

The theoretical framework of this research is deeply rooted in Lev Vygotsky's cultural-historical theory, specifically his doctrine of compensation. Vygotsky posited that while a primary biological defect (e.g., an orthopedic or neurological impairment) limits physical or sensory interaction, it is the secondary defect—the social isolation and psychological alienation stemming from that impairment—that truly hinders development. Consequently, special education must focus on social and pedagogical compensation to bypass the primary defect.

Contemporary international literature highlights a significant variance in how inclusion impacts young learners. Researchers such as Lindsay (2007) and Florian (2014) argue that the success of inclusive education relies heavily on the emotional well-being and adaptive behavior of the student. Conversely, specialized studies by Shipitsina (2004) and Malofeev (2010) show that without deliberate psychological scaffolding, primary students with disabilities in

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mainstream settings often suffer from "silent exclusion," where they are physically present but socially and instructionally isolated. While local researchers like Muminova (2015) have extensively detailed teaching methodologies within specialized boarding schools, there remains a critical shortage of empirical data regarding the exact psychological and pedagogical transformations that occur when these students enter fluid, inclusive primary classrooms.

Methodology

This study utilized a longitudinal, quasi-experimental mixed-methods design to analyze the psychological and pedagogical dynamics of primary school students with special educational needs.

Participants

The sample comprised $N = 40$ primary school students aged 8–10 years ($M = 9.1$, $SD = 0.7$) diagnosed with either mild intellectual disabilities or congenital orthopedic impairments. The participants were selected from inclusive classes in the Jizzakh region and randomly allocated into two balanced groups:

- **Experimental Group (EG, $n = 20$):** Received standard curriculum supplemented by a 6-month specialized psycho-pedagogical support program.
- **Control Group (CG, $n = 20$):** Exposed exclusively to the standard national inclusive curriculum without structured psychological interventions.

Diagnostic Instrumentation

Three core dimensions were evaluated using adapted international psycho-pedagogical tools:

1. Cognitive-Pedagogical Motivation: Measured via the Luscher Color Test (adapted for emotional state during learning) and structured classroom observation matrices tracking attention span, task persistence, and fatigue thresholds.

2. Socio-Emotional Profile: Assessed through the Phillips School Anxiety Scale (modified for young learners) and the "House-Tree-Person" projective drawing test to evaluate latent self-esteem and defense mechanisms.

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3. Communicative-Adaptive Status: Evaluated using a simplified Visual Sociometry technique to chart peer acceptance, alongside teacher-reported behavioral checklists scoring independent problem-solving skills.

Intervention Program

The Experimental Group participated in the "Psycho-Pedagogical Resilience and Synthesis" (PPRS) framework for 24 weeks (2 sessions per week, 45 minutes each). The program featured:

- **Cognitive Rehabilitation:** Scaffolding complex tasks into multi-sensory, digestible units to accommodate shorter attention spans.
- **Socio-Dramatic Interaction:** Structured role-play simulations designed to explicitly teach communicative scripts (e.g., asking for help, handling peer rejection).
- **Collaborative Peer Proximity:** Pair-based academic tasks matching EG students with typical peers to build natural social bonds.

Results and Discussion

Baseline measurements highlighted severe psychological vulnerabilities across both groups. Approximately 65% of all monitored students exhibited critical levels of school-related anxiety, primarily tied to the fear of failure and negative evaluation by teachers or peers. Low self-esteem and feelings of personal inadequacy were observed in 70% of the sample, frequently manifesting as passive avoidance or somatic complaints during demanding academic tasks. Pedagogy-wise, these students demonstrated rapid cognitive fatigue, with attention spans dropping sharply after 15–18 minutes of continuous instructional focus, compared to the 30-minute norm for typical peers.

Following the 24-week intervention, a comparative analysis revealed distinct behavioral and psychological shifts between the experimental and control cohorts.

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Table 1 Evolution of Psycho-Pedagogical Performance Indicators Pre- and Post-Intervention

Dimension / Indicator	Control Group (n=20)Pre (%)	Control Group (n=20)Post (%)	Experimental Group (n=20)Pre (%)	Experimental Group (n=20)Post (%)
High School Anxiety	65%	60%	65%	25%
Low Self-Esteem / Alienation	70%	70%	70%	30%
Active Communication Avoidance	60%	55%	60%	20%
High Task Persistence (less than 20 mins)	10%	15%	10%	

The data in Table 1 illustrates that the Control Group experienced minimal natural adjustment over the 6-month period. Their anxiety remained high (60%), and their communicative avoidance dropped only marginally (from 60% to 55%). This confirms that simply placing a child with a disability in an inclusive environment does not automatically trigger positive psychological adaptation.

Conversely, the Experimental Group displayed significant positive transformations. High school anxiety dropped sharply from 65% to 25%, while active communication avoidance plummeted to 20%. Projective test evaluations indicated a substantial reduction in emotional defensiveness and a reconstruction of positive self-worth. Pedagogically, their task persistence more than quadrupled, with 50% of the EG students maintaining focused academic engagement for over 20 minutes without showing signs of severe cognitive fatigue. This improvement was directly linked to the multi-sensory teaching blocks introduced in the PPRS framework.

Sociometric mapping further validated these results: EG students moved from the "isolated" periphery of the classroom social grid toward the "accepted status" tier, as typical peers reported increased comfort interacting with them following the structured socio-dramatic sessions.

The qualitative observations during this study revealed that the pedagogical profile of a primary school student with a disability is highly malleable. Their academic struggles are rarely driven solely by primary intellectual or physical limitations; rather, they are heavily exacerbated by secondary emotional blocks.

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When pedagogical demands are paired with an emotionally secure environment and systematic communicative scaffolding, these students show a remarkable capacity to deploy compensatory mechanisms, vastly improving both their cognitive output and social integration.

Conclusion

The empirical findings of this study lead to the following conclusions regarding the psychological and pedagogical optimization of primary inclusive education:

1. Secondary Psychological Scars Dominate: Primary school students with disabilities enter inclusive settings with profound emotional barriers, characterized by elevated anxiety, fragile self-esteem, and defensive communication patterns. These factors present a greater obstacle to academic success than their physical or intellectual impairments alone.

2. Inadequacy of Bare Inclusion: Standard classroom integration without targeted psychological scaffolding fails to foster meaningful development. Left unsupported, these students remain vulnerable to internal isolation and rapid cognitive exhaustion.

3. The Multi-Disciplinary Requirement: Effective inclusive education demands a shift from a purely instructional approach to a comprehensive psycho-pedagogical strategy. Academic content must be structured around shorter, multi-sensory segments, and explicitly paired with emotional safety nets and structured peer socialization programs.

Ultimately, understanding and addressing the nuanced inner world of these young learners allows educators to transform inclusive classrooms from spaces of mere physical co-existence into vibrant ecosystems of genuine cognitive and social growth.

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