



## Role of Inclusive Education in Improving Peer Interaction and Communication Skills

<sup>1</sup>Ankush Kumar and <sup>2</sup>Dr. Sunil Datt Mishra

<sup>1</sup>Research Scholar, Shri Krishna University, Chhatarpur, Madhya Pradesh, India

<sup>2</sup>Professor, Shri Krishna University, Chhatarpur, Madhya Pradesh, India

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Corresponding Author: Ankush Kumar

### Abstract

Communication constitutes the cornerstone of human contact, enabling the exchange of thoughts, the articulation of needs, and the establishment of profound connections with others. For the majority of kids, this occurs instinctively. For kids with communication impairments, even the most basic interaction might seem an insurmountable challenge. These disorders may encompass challenges related to speech, language, voice, or fluency, significantly affecting all aspects of a child's life, including academics, relationships, emotional well-being, and self-identity. These students may encounter a range of emotional and social challenges if they do not have appropriate support. Anxiety, tension, and annoyance are prevalent emotions people contend with every day. The failure to communicate successfully may lead to social anxiety, diminished self-esteem, and a sense of isolation, especially in conventional educational environments that do not accommodate their specific requirements. Furthermore, the heightened danger of bullying, developmental delays, and being misunderstood or underestimated underscores the necessity for a novel approach-one that adopts inclusive education as a formidable answer. The main aim of this article is to examine how inclusive education enhances peer interaction and communication abilities.

**Keywords:** Communication Skills, Inclusive Education, Peer Interaction, Disabilities Students

### 1. Introduction

Individuals who are considered to have special educational needs are those who require more assistance or modifications to their learning strategies in order to attain academic achievement. An essential component of inclusive education for these pupils is the participation of their peers. By providing support and making friends with children who have exceptional educational challenges, peers may be of great assistance in encouraging these students. It is also possible for students with exceptional educational needs to enhance their social skills with the assistance of their peers. Peers may do this by encouraging students with special needs to take part in a variety of activities and by assisting students in developing relationships with other students (UNESKO, 2015) <sup>[13]</sup>. The concept of inclusive education refers to a learning environment that offers assistance, accommodations, and access to all students with disabilities. In order to accommodate all children, regardless of their physical, intellectual, social, emotional, linguistic, or any other condition, educational institutions need to be modified to accommodate them individually. It has become a

widespread practice all over the world to include children who have special needs in the learning environments that are considered to be mainstream. To overcome the stigma that is still prevalent in society, the educational system has the capacity to give quality education to all persons and to rise beyond the stigma that exists. The education system, on the other hand, has the potential to perpetuate disparities that are associated with gender, race, class, or disability. In spite of the fact that other studies demonstrate that children who attend specialized institutions are at a greater risk of becoming socially isolated (UNICEF, 2014) <sup>[15]</sup>, advocates of special education believe that specialized institutions are the most effective solution for educating children who have special needs.

The purpose of this study is to investigate how the cultural factor, in this case the behavior of peers, influences inclusion, and how the latter can become a source of encouragement rather than an obstacle for the realization of comprehensive processes. There are a number of factors that contribute to the successful inclusion of children with special needs in regular schools. However, the purpose of

this study is to investigate how the cultural factor influences inclusion. We have directed our study with a particular focus on the function of support teachers and assistants who interact with kids who have atypical development. This is supported by a number of studies that we have already conducted. The function that they play inside the school is believed to be an important aspect in the correlation that is established through the instructors, parents, and other players employed by the school. Each child have their own unique qualities and requirements that are unique to them. The Individualized Education Program (IEP) is a tool that assists educators in schools in comprehending the requirements of students, while simultaneously facilitating the planning of appropriate activities to accomplish the objectives, which may not be limited to academics but may also be derived from everyday life. The MEST document titled "Inclusive education - Everyone's right" is the best example of the role of the support teacher. In this document, it is stated that the support teacher, in collaboration with the class teacher or class guardian, identifies special needs and organizes, plans joint activities according to the individual needs of the student, and in situations where it is necessary to do individual work, compiles the individual education plan together with the teacher or class guardian, the parent, and the school director. Additionally, the support teacher assists in raising awareness among the school staff regarding the process of all inclusion. A lack of opportunities for education and deficiencies in the learning process "defeat" education in its capacity to fulfill its job as an agent of equality, as stated in the Education for All World Monitoring Report.

This is emphasized in the report, inadequate academic achievement, as well as bad connections with both classmates and instructors, have a significant role in explaining low levels of school participation and overall school satisfaction. This observation is further supported by the fact that support teachers in schools are engaged in professional activities. These teachers recognize the significance of education in the creation of an individual's personality, cognitive abilities, and psychosocial characteristics. What, however, happens to FNVs who are confined to their homes and are not even given the chance to learn the word "school" via their experiences? To what extent do children profit from being incorporated into the educational system, and do they realize their potential when they are given the opportunity to do so? What happens to youngsters who go to school and are continually confronted with the discriminating actions of their classmates to whom they are exposed? On the other hand, what about students who quit school after the ninth grade? It is up to us as a society to provide answers to all of these issues because we have the ability to directly affect the process of overcoming these problems and to address these concerns to the individuals who are responsible for developing comprehensive policies in education (Bossaert, 2015) [14]. It is important to conduct this study because it will provide a critical analysis of the national education strategy, it will propose the interventions that ought to be made in the practices of inclusive education in lower education institutions, and it will serve as reference material for a large number of researchers who will continue to conduct in-depth studies in the field of comprehensive education.

## 2. Review Literature

Rakshit, *et al.* (2025) [4]. In order to meet the requirements of all students, the Indian government's National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 stresses diversity, fairness, and accessibility in the classroom. Having a thorough grasp of the ideas and tactics stated in the policy framework is essential for effectively incorporating NEP 2020 requirements into classroom activities. This study delves into the current state of inclusive education practices in relation to the requirements of NEP 2020, examining successful tactics, obstacles, and potential remedies for putting them into action. An extensive literature analysis was conducted to examine the NEP 2020 requirements, inclusive education concepts, and current research on successful tactics and obstacles. To provide light on how to use inclusive education techniques, real-life examples, case studies, and empirical data were combined. Aligning closely with the inclusive education principle, the data show that NEP 2020 stresses fairness, customized assistance, cooperation, and appreciating diversity. Unfortunately, successful implementation is hindered by a lack of resources, attitudes, and training. Nonetheless, there are methods to surmount these challenges and promote inclusive education via innovation, collaboration, advocacy, and professional development. Educators and stakeholders can create inclusive learning environments where all students may succeed and make a positive impact on society by using tactics supported by research and working together. Beazidou, *et al.* (2024) [5]. A plethora of studies on inclusive education has emerged. since the Salamanca Statement came out in 1994. Nonetheless, educational and socioeconomic disparities remain, and this is largely to blame for the continued stagnation. Global educational systems aim and push themselves to critically examine inclusive education. Based on the findings of our literature review, we have identified educational practices as markers of inclusion. Focusing on academic and social inclusion practices as important indicators of inclusive education, this chapter provides an overview of the current progress in inclusive education. Every educator may benefit from the data presented in this study.

Tampubolon, *et al.* (2023) [2]. In order to promote diversity and fairness in the classroom, this journal article analyzes inclusive education techniques. Understanding the significance of meeting the requirements of students with a wide range of learning styles, the research delves into methods for establishing a welcoming classroom for all students. The importance of a student-centered approach that values and celebrates diversity is highlighted by the study. To accommodate a wide range of students, including those with varying levels of ability and backgrounds, it explores the use of adaptable teaching methodologies, individualised lesson plans, and several forms of evaluation. As an added bonus, the paper delves into how inclusive practices may be enhanced via teacher professional development. It delves at the ways in which teachers may better themselves in order to build diverse and inclusive classrooms. Educators, support workers, and administrators must work together to build an inclusive learning environment, according to the report. Important areas of focus also include investigating curricular modifications and implementing universal design principles. This article takes

a look at how creating learning resources that cater to different learning styles and making curriculum more accessible may help make education more inclusive. Finally, this article provides helpful information on inclusive education approaches, highlighting the significance of promoting equality and diversity in the educational setting. Educators may foster inclusive classrooms that value diversity and inclusion by embracing student-centered practices, investing in professional development for teachers, and modifying curriculum to be more accessible to all students. Educators, legislators, and others who are dedicated to expanding inclusive education may use the results to inform their work.

Lopatynska, *et al.* (2023) <sup>[3]</sup>. With a specific emphasis on students with SHN, this reflective study seeks to investigate effective strategies for establishing a welcoming classroom setting. The first step of the research is a thorough literature assessment that aims to extract the fundamental principles and goals of inclusiveness promotion. Rejecting preconceptions, encouraging cooperation, and promoting self-belief within the school community are vital elements in creating an inclusive atmosphere. Recognizing multiple teaching techniques that cater to different learning styles, temperaments, and distinctive personalities of children is crucial for ensuring inclusion in mainstream educational institutions, according to the research. It stresses the significance of modifying lesson plans and encouraging student agency in the classroom. Essential components of an inclusive educational environment include collaboration, support, and a variety of activities that are appropriate for each child's developmental level. In order for children to do good things, the article stresses the need of a well-organized physical environment, a favorable social and emotional atmosphere, and chances for them to work together. Also, it stresses how important it is to educate the public about SHN, which will increase social preparedness for integration and decrease discontent. Collaboration with parents of SHN children is also recognized as critical, calling for logical family dynamics. Having an accessible environment is crucial, but instructors also need to be ready to teach in an integrated and inclusive setting. But the article does concede that there are a lot of variables that might make integration difficult, and it underscores how important it is for society to be ready to handle the inclusion of those with special needs. This study uses a literature analysis and a reflective approach to provide a clear and enlightening discussion of best practices for making schools more welcoming to students with special health needs.

Kart, *et al.* (2021) <sup>[1]</sup>. A shift toward more inclusive pedagogy is taking place in several nations. When children with disabilities are educated alongside their typically developing classmates, this practice is known as inclusive education. Research on the impact of inclusion for both normally developing and special needs kids is necessary if inclusive education is to gain traction. On the other hand, studies examining the effects of inclusion on disabled kids are more numerous than those examining the experiences of typically developing students in inclusive classrooms. Kids with disabilities benefit academically and socially from inclusion, according to research, but the effects on kids in regular classrooms are less well understood. Thus, this review aims to compile and synthesize research on the

social and academic effects of inclusion on typically developing kids. Inclusive education may have varying impacts on the academic performance of students without disabilities depending on their level of education, and these effects are not uniform. Generally speaking, the research shows that inclusion has either no impact or a neutral effect on the academic performance of normally developing pupils in the lower grades, but either no effect or a negative influence in the upper years. Being in inclusive classes with children who have impairments has also had positive social effects for students who do not have disabilities. Lessening of intolerance, bigotry, prejudice, and discrimination and increasing of acceptance, understanding, and tolerance are the primary societal impacts of inclusion.

### 3. Research Methodology

#### 3.1 Research Design

In this study, it is possible to use the descriptive and correlational research design to investigate the significance of inclusive education in enhancing peer interaction and communication skills in students. The design is suitable since it will enable the researcher to examine the prevailing inclusive education practices and determine their association with social and communication outcomes of students without variable control.

#### 3.2 Population and Sample

The students of the study population are inclusive schools with both students with special educational needs (SEN) and typically developing students. Teachers that engage in the inclusive classroom practice are also included in the study. The sample of the students and the teachers is chosen using a purposive sampling method since it allows picking the participants who have a direct engagement in the inclusive classrooms. Students in upper primary schools and secondary classes are also considered because at these places, peer interaction and communication skills could be easily observed.

#### 3.3 Research Variables

- **Independent Variable:** Inclusive education practices
- **Dependent Variables:** Peer interaction and communication skills

Inclusive education is examined in terms of classroom participation, collaborative learning, peer support, and teacher facilitation.

#### 3.4 Tools for Data Collection

Data is collected using the following tools:

1. **Questionnaire:** A structured questionnaire is administered to teachers and students to gather information on inclusive classroom practices, peer interaction, and communication patterns.
2. **Observation Schedule:** Classroom observations are conducted to assess real-time peer interactions, social engagement, and communication behaviors among students.
3. **Interview Schedule (Optional):** Semi-structured interviews with teachers are used to gain deeper insights into the effectiveness of inclusive strategies in fostering peer interaction and communication.

The tools are validated by subject experts, and a pilot study is conducted to ensure reliability.

**4. Data Analysis**

**4.1 Children with Mental Disabilities and Peer Interactions**

About a quarter of the students whose parents report mental health issues are very outgoing and seek out friends at school and in the neighbourhood. Despite the fact that 8% of parents think MH kids don't try to make friends, 64% of parents said their MH kids do it to different degrees. Ten percent of parents think that children with mental disabilities cannot interact with others. Sixty percent of parents say their children with mental disorders may not

want to be friends at all. Thirty percent of parents say their mentally challenged kid does not shy away from peers. Concern that their children may be shy around new people is a worry for one-third of parents whose children have mental disorders. Nearly half of all parents (44%) believe their child shows some hesitation while making new friends. Very few parents hold the view that their children with mental problems are socially awkward. Of the parents whose children have mental problems, just 25% believe that their children often get assistance from their classmates. Among the parents polled, 46% had mixed feelings on the statement "mentally challenged children get only support from friends," while 32% are adamantly opposed, believing that such children get zero social support.

**Table 1:** Children with Mental Disabilities and Peer Interactions

S. No	Responses	Number of Respondents (Percentage of respondents in bracket)		
		Agree	Partially Agree	Disagree
1	Mentally Challenged Children seek for friends both in schools and in the neighborhood	28	64	8
2	They abstain from friends	10	60	30
3	They show hesitation in forming friendships	32	44	24
4	Get support from friends	22	46	32

**4.2 Community involvement, including contact with relatives and friends**

Twenty percent of parents of children with mental disabilities said that their children are given opportunity to build strong relationships with their family and neighbours. Opportunities for creating healthy and pleasant interactions with family members and neighbours are only partly established, according to 72% of parents. 8% of parents have seen those chances to build friendly and healthy relationships with neighbours and relatives are not deliberately made. When asked whether they are receiving assistance in fostering positive relationships with friends, relatives, and neighbours, 28% of parents replied yes. Sixty percent of parents claimed their children are only receiving limited help in building positive relationships with their extended relatives and neighbours. Twelve percent of parents have noticed that their children are not receiving

guidance on how to build positive relationships with their relatives and neighbours. A quarter of parents of children with mental disabilities have noted that their children's schools are crucial in helping their children develop social skills. Schools only have a minor role to play in helping mentally challenged children acquire social skills, according to 46% of parents. According to 28% of parents, schools do not help children with mental disabilities improve their social skills. One in ten parents feel that their children's school has been an inspiration for them to build positive relationships at home and in the community. School has only partly provided models for creating good and cordial ties with family members and neighbours, according to 82% of parents. School has never been a place where students may learn to get along with others and form strong bonds with their immediate and extended families, according to eight percent of parents.

**Table 2:** Communication with loved ones and neighbours

S. No	Responses	Number of Respondents (Percentage of respondents in bracket)		
		Agree	Partially Agree	Disagree
1	Opportunities are intentionally created for developing healthy and warm relations with family members and neighbours	10(20)	36(72)	4(8)
2	Support is being provided for developing healthy and warm relations with family members and neighbours	14(28)	30(60)	6(12)
3	Schools play a major role in developing social skills among the Mentally Challenged Children	13(26)	23(46)	14(28)
4	School has been providing models for developing healthy and warm relations with family members and neighbors	5(10)	41(82)	4(8)

**4.3 Taking part in gatherings for social purposes**

In order for children with mental disabilities to improve their social skills, twenty-eight percent of their parents believe that their involvement in social events is crucial. Nearly half of all parents (44%) think that attending social events helps kids hone their social skills to some extent. Participation in social gatherings does not contribute to the development of social skills, according to 28% of parents.

Just thirty percent of parents said their children with mental disabilities had never been excluded from group activities. Nearly half (46%) of parents whose children have mental disabilities only partially agree with this assertion. In the opinion of 24% of parents, children with mental disabilities have been excluded from social events. A quarter of parents whose children have mental disabilities have said that their children are given chances to engage with others on purpose

so that they might learn social skills. The majority of parents (62%), however, believe that children's social skill development is aided by chances for social contacts. Only

fourteen percent of parents said they actively seek out ways for their children to meet new people and practice social skills.

**Table 3:** Being a part in social events

S. No	Responses	Number of Respondents (Percentage of respondents in bracket)		
		Agree	Partially Agree	Disagree
1	Participation in social functions is essential for the development of social skills	14(28)	22(44)	14(28)
2	Mentally Challenged Children have never been kept away from social functions	15(30)	23(46)	12(24)
3	Opportunities for social interactions are intentionally created for the development of social skills	12(24)	31(62)	7(14)

#### 4.4 Recognizing the children's unique strengths and areas of interest

Among parents of children with mental disabilities, forty percent hold the view that their children may have special talents in certain areas. Furthermore, almost half of all parents (48%) hold the view that children with mental disabilities sometimes exhibit exceptional talent in certain areas. Twelve percent of parents hold the view that children with mental disabilities lack aptitude and ability in some areas. Only 36% of parents were able to pinpoint their children's strengths and weaknesses. Half of the parents of

children with mental disabilities were only partly able to determine their children's strengths and areas of improvement. Not all parents are good at gauging their children's strengths and weaknesses. Thirty percent of parents whose children have mental disabilities said they could provide their children the encouragement and support they needed to develop their abilities. Nearly half of the parents (52%) were only able to provide little help and encouragement in developing these abilities. It was shown that 18% of parents were unable to provide inspiration and backing to develop these abilities.

**Table 4:** Recognizing the unique skills and interests of the students

S. No	Responses	Number of Respondents (Percentage of respondents in bracket)		
		Agree	Partially Agree	Disagree
1	Mentally challenged children have aptitudes and abilities in certain areas	20(40)	24(48)	6(12)
2	Aptitudes, and abilities of these children could be identified	18(36)	25(50)	7(14)
3	Encouragement and support could be provided to promote these aptitudes	15(30)	26(52)	9(18)

#### 5. Conclusion

In contemporary classrooms, positive peer connection is essential, significantly influencing students' mindsets, aiding impaired kids, enhancing learning results, and fostering acceptance of diversity. Nonetheless, fostering meaningful peer connection is challenging, particularly in courses with individuals from diverse backgrounds. Peer interaction refers to the engagement, communication, and participation of students in discussions and activities inside the classroom setting. Peer connection is crucial for the social, emotional, personality, and skills development of pupils. Efficient and beneficial Peer engagement is essential for better education and reduces bullying and harassment among students. Reports indicate that kids with impairments are typically marginalized in general education environments. Numerous research has demonstrated that peer contact exerts both beneficial and detrimental effects on the socialization process of kids. It equips a youngster to become a more useful part of society, enabling them to engage with diverse individuals. Peer contact in inclusive education is essential as social skills are cultivated via engagement with others. Peer contact significantly influences kids' social, emotional, and skill development. Moreover, impaired children experience reluctance while engaging with peers in typical environments. Research indicates that the human heart and personality are shaped via interpersonal interactions.

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