



Special Education as a Means of Socialization: A Study of Special Children in Bangladesh

Quazi Farzana Yesmin¹, Sk Obaidullah², Shamsia Wahida Rahman³

¹(Lecturer, Department of English, Fareast International University, Dhaka, Bangladesh & Ph.D. Scholar, Universiti Sains Malaysia, Penang, Malaysia)

²(Ph.D. Scholar, Parul University, Vadodara, Gujarat, India)

³(Lecturer, Department of English, Mirpur College, Dhaka, Bangladesh)

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ABSTRACT: Education is a universal means of socializing human beings and preparing them to participate in groups by illustrating their expectations. Research shows that children with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASDs) would be acquainted with the norms of a given social group or society through special education. As socialization is a lifetime psychological development process, special education could effectively socialize special children. This study aimed to look into the roles of special education in socializing special children in Bangladesh. This qualitative study observed eight special children, four from elementary school and four from secondary school. At the same time, six teachers and each student's parents were interviewed. Content analysis and cross-case analysis were used to examine the data. After receiving special education, the study found that children with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASDs) could socialize more quickly. Furthermore, teachers and parents worked together to increase their social interaction. This study discovered that raising public awareness and paying close attention to special children can increase their chances of being socialized through special education, allowing them to become members of society's mainstream.

Keywords- Socialization, special children, special education, Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASDs), social interaction

I. INTRODUCTION

Socialization refers to the preparation of an individual to adopt the norms and ideologies of a given society. It implies the development of individuals' personalities within a social environment and existing living conditions (Hurrelmann and Bauer, 2015 cited in Höppner, 2017). It is a fundamental procedure in social life that is strongly connected to psychological development. Socialization encompasses learning and teaching throughout the life course that controls human beings' behaviors, beliefs, and actions in society. Education could play the most influential role in socialization as education prepares one to feel, think, and act in society's appropriate ways. The process of an individual's socialization is the process of education. Hence, when it is about the education for special children, the emergence of special education is highly esteemed.

Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASDs) are classified as a neurodevelopmental disorder that is identified by repetitive, restrained, and stereotyped behaviors, interests, and activities and deficiencies in social interaction and communication (American Psychiatric Association, 2013 cited in Parmeggiani et al., 2019; Crowell, 2019 and Hodges et al., 2020). It indicates that deficits in social communication are the core symptom of children with ASDs. In many cases, it is seen that parents are not aware enough of the

psychological disorder of their children. Either the parents may not explicitly identify the symptoms, or sometimes parents themselves cannot accept their children's constrained and stereotyped behaviors. Consequently, these children may be deprived of proper care and education rights.

To reach the goal of education for all and to prepare the special children as expected social beings, like other developed countries in Bangladesh also special education has been introduced and experienced since last decades. This study was conducted on children with ASDs who need special education to be brought up properly. This study aims to explore the roles of special education imparted to the special children in socializing them in the Bangladesh context. As socialization is a lifetime development process and children with ASDs need special care and attention for their psychological development, this paper intends to contribute to the special children's advancement by focusing on the importance and acceptance of special education in Bangladesh.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Since the last few decades, special education has gained widespread support and relevance as a means of ensuring the right to education for exceptional children. The issue of socialization of special children became one of the most talked-about concerns at the same time among the developed countries. Several research works have been conducted on children's socialization, especially the socialization of special children. All of the researchers in these studies focused on the role of education in the socialization of human children, particularly children with ASDs.

According to Tomlinson (2000), school is a component of socialization where personal and collective values are mixed, and school is a builder of one's own life. Limsila (2002) finds that autism spectrum disorder is a psychological disorder about the development in language, social interaction, or behavior that identifies this group of children with special needs. In consequence, their social relationship would be constrained and unnatural. Godon (2004) emphasizes education's "socializing role." He considers free-thinking a foundation for intellectual variety and cognition's inter-subject character. According to Cuypers' (2004) research, an individual's socialization and development in modern school affect decisions, priorities, and reflections.

Socialization is much important for children with ASDs as well. Previous studies show that consistent socialization practice helps such children develop their psychology. Scattone et al. (2006) mention that autistic children have social interaction through various techniques like building a positive relationship with their teachers. Runcharoen (2014) claims that children with autism show improved socialization in communication skills and group activities after joining an inclusive classroom. According to Banjongprasert (2010), the growth and improvement of autistic children's social interaction and communication were related to their teachers, parents, and close friends whom they found in the classroom environment. However, the concept of inclusive education has not been established everywhere, as World Health Organization (2011) comments that children with special abilities are still being educated in special schools in most countries (cited in Duque et al., 2020). Besides, European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education (2017) finds that students, in many cases, students with disabilities and special needs leave school without good skill and development. Moreover, research has also explored a connection between learning challenges and behavior deficiencies of the children with special needs since lower academic achievement is an obstacle to developing behavior difficulties among these students (Oldfield et al., 2017 and Roberts et al., 2019).

After the discussion mentioned above, it can be assumed that children with special needs require special education with special care and concentration for developing their behavior deficiencies. Since children with ASDs suffer from communication and behavior disorders, special education could be a way of their psychological development. Special education and socialization of children with ASDs are concerns in developed countries. Special children in developing and undeveloped nations, on the other hand, continue to be denied access to education. Being a developing country, Bangladesh places a lower priority on special education research. Although exceptional children's socialization has received a lot of attention worldwide, research on special children's socialization through special education has yet to be researched in Bangladesh. The current study intends to investigate the functions of special education imparted to special children in socializing them in the Bangladesh environment. There are no similar studies in-house or overseas to the best of the present researchers' knowledge.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A qualitative method was used to explore the roles and effectiveness of special education to the children with ASDs for socialization. As both inspection and interrogation are potent instruments in complex research like the present one, interview and observation were used to accomplish the study.

3.1. Participants

The study observed eight special children, four from the elementary level and four from the secondary level, suffering from ASDs. They were selected from two different renowned schools of special children located in Dhaka city. The researchers also selected six educators randomly for in-depth-interview: Two of them were male, and four were female educators from the selected schools. All of them were well trained in special education. Apart from the teachers, parents of each student were interviewed to elicit data about the children.

3.2. Instruments

The researchers conducted an in-depth interview in an informal setting on special education as a means of socialization. There were five key questions for the educators and seven key questions for the parents. The questions were open-ended in nature. Each question was followed by some follow-up questions so that the researcher could get deeper insights into the issue. The researchers also prepared an observation checklist that followed the 'Socialization Checklist' of Dr. Sophia Yin (2011) for observing the social activities of the selected special children in both the classroom and home environments. The researchers were primarily interested in how the children interacted with their parents, teachers, and others in their environment, how psychologically and socially developed they were compared to other children, and socialized through education.

3.3. Data Collection and Analysis

The researchers first visited the selected schools to observe the special students in their classroom settings and collect data. As a result, the school administration graciously assisted the researchers and remained with the students in their classrooms. The researchers sat behind the school, taking notes and observing the students' activities following the research checklist. The researchers also obtained permission from the parents and spent time with the children at their homes, observing their interaction and behavior with their parents, siblings, and other family members. After observing the students, the researchers conducted informal interviews with the teachers and parents. All interviews were audio-recorded with the participant's permission, and written notes were taken as a backup to test the data collection. After gathering the data through observation and interviews, the researchers assessed it using content analysis and cross-case analysis.

IV. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The study's findings, based on observations of special children and interviews with educators and parents, are discussed in the following sections. To cross-check the observation and interview results, the first section discusses the interview results, while the second section discusses the observation results according to the checklist.

4.1 Findings of the Interviews with the Educators

Six educators were asked the same four interview questions. A summary of the interview session has been discussed here based on their responses to the questions.

In response to question one about teaching socialization to special children, all of the educators stated that it is difficult due to their psychological immaturity. Children with ASDs frequently struggle with behavior and communication. They make poor eye contact and pay little attention. They, too, are unwilling to sit in a fixed position. Handling and persuading these children takes time, and only after they are persuaded can the teachers begin teaching them. "It's difficult to get verbal responses from the children," one of the teachers said. A minimum response takes at least two to five months, and sometimes up to a year." All of the teachers stated that repetition is used to get the children's attention and that using visual aids (drawings, pictures, toys, etc.) and repeating helps the students remember

things. Three teachers stated that they first allow the students to recognize their parents, siblings, friends, and teachers before introducing them to various animals, colors, and things. Two of the teachers stated that they do not allow parents to stay with their children during class because most students become hyper and unwilling to remain in the classroom. Instead of allowing parents to stay with their children, teachers identify them using family photos. Four of the teachers claimed that most parents refuse to cooperate with them, which makes teaching socialization to children difficult. All of the teachers stated that they divide the children into small groups and allow them to play or do group activities such as singing or dancing, allowing them to be introduced to and interact with other children their age. The educators also stated that they taught manners and social norms to the children at every stage of their education, which helped the students develop their skills and sense of socialization. In addition to academic activities, the teachers were convinced that psychotherapy aided the children in quickly adopting socialization. However, three teachers claimed that their institutions had on-staff psychotherapists, whereas the rest had to arrange for outside psychotherapists. In response to question two on the special children's interaction with adults or children with or without disabilities, all the educators claimed that after a certain period of proper schooling, the students become easier with both adults and children with disabilities. In the case of adults without disabilities, the children first feel shy or sometimes frightened. Still, if the adults make the children friendly, they also interact with their excellence. In the case of children without disabilities, the children with autism want to interact with the social. Still, in many cases, the able children become scared of their different way of interaction. Even sometimes, the parents of the able children do not allow them to play or interact with the autistic children. But if any able child comes forward and plays or talks or interacts, otherwise, the children with autism can interact almost the same way as they are trained from their school. Five of the teachers said that the special children first learn to interact with the children like them. But after proper schooling, they become much natural in interacting socially.

In response to question three on the children's reaction to seeing any animals, the teachers said that most students become hyper and scared to see any animals. But after seeing their pictures in the books or animal-like toys, they become introduced to the animals. Four of the teachers claimed that the children become scared after seeing animals like kittens or puppies in practice even after being presented with them virtually. In contrast, two teachers claimed that their students do not become that scared. After overcoming hesitation, they become easy with the animals as the teachers sometimes make introduced the students to the animals practically.

In response to question four on the children's reaction when they are in a new environment, among the six teachers, only two claimed that they arrange an outing with the special children at least once in six months, while the rest of the teachers said that they do not have any scope to take the children for an outing from their institutions. According to the teachers' response, children who can go for a tour from their institutions respond better than the other children.

4.2 Findings of the Interviews with the Parents

This study was conducted on eight students, and each student's parents were selected for inclusion in this interview session. The parents' interview consisted of five questions. The following is a summary of the discussion based on their responses. In response to question one on their teaching socialization to the special children, all the parents agreed that they get better feedback after sending their children to the special schools. After schooling, they help their children interact with people as they learn at their schools. They teach their children to sit properly, eat properly, and talk properly. They help the children communicate with their siblings, other family members, neighbors, and other surrounding people.

In response to question two on the children's interaction with adults and children with or without disabilities, four parents said their children become hyper and scared to see other people around them. In contrast, two parents claimed that their children are not that negative towards other people. However, all the parents claimed that their children's attitudes towards others, either known or unknown, changed after schooling. Likely the teachers the parents agreed that their children are more friendly and comfortable acting with adults and children with disabilities. In the case of adult people without disabilities, their children become shy and frightened at first, but if they try to communicate with the children, they react accordingly. Besides, in the case of children without disabilities, their children act naturally and are willing to play or talk with them most of the time. In the same voice as the teachers, the parents also expected a more flexible, friendly, and cooperative attitude from the people of the

society to interact naturally and to pay more attention to the special children as they can socialize themselves properly.

In response to question three on the children's reaction to seeing any animals, two parents said that their children are acquainted with pets like kittens, puppy or birds. They are used to playing with the animals too. But the rest of the parents told their children that they were scared of those animals before schooling. After schooling, they become more familiar with animals and react with excitement and joy to see any animals they know.

In response to question four on the children's reaction to a new environment, three parents replied that they try to introduce their special children to a new environment. In a new environment, their children react with hesitation first, but they can overcome their hesitation and act spontaneously as they like to do after a while. They shout with joy and excitement to see anything known or unknown and do questions to their parents to know the strange things. They become pleased to go outside. But the rest of the parents said that they usually do not take their children outside of the home before to avoid any unexpected situation. According to the teachers' suggestions, they have started to bring them out of the houses and are getting positive feedback from their children than before.

In response to question five on the differences, the parents noticed that their children's social interactional responded positively. They mentioned that before schooling, handling their children and bringing them up to any social place were uncomfortable for them. One of the parents said, "It was quite tough for us to handle our child at home before schooling. He became hyper and scared to see any people except her mother. He attempted to beat others. That wasn't very comfortable for us, and we couldn't take him outside of the house. After schooling, he has learned the mannerism, and now he acts much politely with people." Another two parents said that their children didn't play with their siblings, didn't act with their neighbors, and used to bother their parents all the time. After schooling, they became calm and controlled gradually. Now they play with their siblings, interact with other family members and neighbors, and become creative, most importantly. They like to do some creative tasks that they are willing to do. Now parents can bring up their special children to the social gatherings. In a word, all the parents claimed that their special children became more socialized after schooling. The parents emphasized psychotherapy also. Four parents claimed that their children are doing better after getting psychotherapy from the school. At the same time, the rest of the four parents demanded the arrangement of psychotherapy at their schools. One special child's parents said that unknowingly the fact of their child's autism, they had sent their special child to a public school at first. Still, after learning about their child's autism, they had sent him to a special school where he got both psychotherapy and formal education. With time, the parents explored their child to be developed in interacting and communicating with people, which increased the credibility of psychotherapy besides formal education to the parents for their special child. Therefore, it can be considered that psychotherapy at schools impacts profoundly on the socialization of children with special needs.

4.3 Findings of the Observations

The researchers observed eight students from two selected schools conduct this research. The researchers observed the students in both their classroom and home environments. The observation findings are discussed in two sections: the first one is classroom observation, and the second one is home observation. Both observations were done by following a checklist.

4.3.1 Classroom Observation

For classroom observation, there were three checklist points on socialization. The points were assigned based on how the special children respond to their teachers, how they react to their classmates individually, and how they react.

The researchers found the students inactive or slightly active in responding to their teachers. When the teachers used repetition in calling someone or commanding someone to do something, the children did not heed them. Gradually, with the variation of the tone of the teachers that seemed attractive to the children, they started responding. The students reacted fast and spontaneously to a teacher with whom they had good intimacy than others. Besides, the students tended to follow others too. When they responded to someone, other children also paid attention to them.

In responding to their classmates individually, the children took less time than responding to their teachers. But they lost their attention to an individual very fast. Children also liked to play with their classmates and share their playthings and other tools.

In responding to their classmates in a group, the children were more willing and lively. Although to make them organized in a group, the teachers finally needed time to do it. The children joined others and sang, danced, and played with them spontaneously.

Observing the children in the classroom, the researchers found that special children take time to respond. But they respond faster in a group of people and like to interact with them. Responding to people, again and again, makes them socialize gradually.

4.3.2 Home Observation

The researchers visited each selected children's home with the parents' permission and cordial help conducting the research. The home observation was done based on three checklist points. They are how the children interact with their family members and surrounding people at home, how much they are communicative and responsive in the home environment, and how they respond more.

The children were found sometimes communicative and sometimes inactive in the home environment. They liked to do their tasks at home according to their sweet wills. But they became active and responsive when they met their siblings and friends with whom they had a better understanding. Some of them were seen to organize their playthings and other tools at the right place. The children were found to interact more actively with the people they know and like most. According to the parents and other family members' comments, the children became more communicative and responsive with others at home after their schooling.

Analyzing the interview results and the observation results, the researchers found that before schooling, the children were irresponsive and non-communicative. After going to school and taking both psychotherapy and formal education, the children's psychological development occurred rapidly. They became more socialized and well-mannered. They became creative and responsive to others. Education has deeply influenced children's social interaction and overall socialization.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS

Some recommendations are made in this part of the paper for promoting special education. The recommendations are made about the findings of the study.

1. The persons involved with the children with autism spectrum disorders (ASDs) need to understand the basic necessity and lack in a special child to improve.
2. The number of well-trained psychotherapists should be increased at every special school as psychotherapy greatly influences socializing the special children.
3. Every special school should arrange a monthly outing with the students as an open space and meet more people to develop their psychology.
4. Parents should take the special children for schooling at an early age.
5. Parents should cooperate with the educators to take special care of the children where they need to develop.
6. Parents should allow their children to meet and interact with the surrounding people, especially with children of the same ages at school. More interaction with their adjoining people could influence their socialization.
7. Awareness should be raised among people of all walks concerning special children's education to create a safe and entertaining environment where they can socialize themselves.

VI. Conclusion

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is a psychological disability that lasts a lifetime. Socialization, on the other hand, is a lifelong psychological growth process. Although socialization begins at home, it is given shape and season by education. It is necessary to teach exceptional children socializing with special care and attention. Proper education can help children with ASDs improve their speech and social interaction. As a result, the special school has shown to be a helpful socialization tool for these youngsters. Special education for special children can help them reintegrate into society through adequate socialization.

Data Sharing The datasets analyzed during this study are available from the authors on reasonable request.

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