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EPV0400

Longitudinal study of mental abilities in teaching primary school students with intellectual disabilities

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Introduction: The results of achievements in mastering the program material of students of a special school by the end of the fourth year of study are characterized by a large variability in training, which allows us to assert the need to develop and apply special teaching techniques and methods, harmonize the academic workload

Objectives: to study the mental capabilities and identify learning difficulties of fourth-grade students with mental disabilities in elementary school by the end of study

Methods: Two samples of fourth-graders (132 students) were identified: Group 1 - 100 students with mild mental retardation, Group 2 - 32 students with severe intellectual disabilities. Methods: observation, pedagogical experiment, cluster analysis

Results: Clustering criteria: volume and level of assimilation of program material in academic subjects; achievement of subject and personal results.

In group 1 (75%), 3 clusters were identified by academic performance in the main academic subjects, which are uniform in terms of the variability of dynamics, which indicates the homogeneity of the group of students; however, the groups differ in the level of achievement of subject and personal results (sufficient, average, minimal). In group 2 (25%), 3 clusters were also identified, which are variable, but do not duplicate each other, and have an individual spread of indicators in the dynamics of subject and personal results within each cluster, which indicates the heterogeneity of the group of students in each cluster

Conclusions: three levels of dynamics in the education of students with varying degrees of mental retardation were identified. The range in the variations of the results of the 2nd group of students with severe intellectual disabilities indicates the need for individualization of education, selection of partial programs taking into account the special educational needs of each student, and the development of special personalized approaches to education. Apparently, it is also necessary to select the optimal amount of academic workload and the level of complexity of the material studied, compliance with health-saving technologies in accordance with the individual psychological characteristics of the student

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EPV0402

Anxiety disorders and self-esteem levels of primary school children

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Introduction: There is no doubt that childhood is a crucial period in a person's development. Anxiety disorders in modern times are at the forefront, with a huge number of children and adolescents suffering from them. An important asset, a protective shield against anxiety disorders that promotes mental well-being is self-esteem.

Objectives: The present study aims to investigate the level of self-esteem and the differentiation of various anxiety disorders, as well as the assessment of the severity of anxiety symptoms exhibited by children aged 9-12 years, who were attending the 4th, 5th, and 6th grades of public primary schools in the Larnaca district of Cyprus. Additional objectives are to investigate possible associations between these variables and the socio-demographic characteristics of the students in combination with their teacher-reported school performance.

Methods: To 249 students were administered (a) a Sociodemographic Characteristics Questionnaire, (b) the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale, (c) the Spence Children's Anxiety Scale (SCAS), and their teachers were given a questionnaire to assess the academic performance of each student individually.

Results: The protective role of self-esteem in the development of anxiety disorders ($p < 0.001$) and feelings of loneliness and the positive effect on school performance was confirmed by the study. Besides, high levels of self-esteem were associated with reduced feelings of loneliness ($p = 0.001$), increased school performance ($p = 0.020$) and greater satisfaction with teacher help ($p = 0.001$). Additionally girls had more frequent anxiety disorder behaviours compared to boys ($p = 0.028$), especially panic disorders, agoraphobia ($p = 0.020$), specific phobias ($p = 0.012$) and separation anxiety ($p = 0.005$). Interestingly, the study found that stronger feelings of loneliness at school were associated with increased occurrence of anxiety disorders ($p < 0.001$). It was also found that older students were less likely to develop anxiety disorder behaviours ($p = 0.002$), while children with more siblings in a family showed worse ratings of student performance at school ($p = 0.001$). Finally, it appears that school performance was associated with less social phobias ($p = 0.048$) and that those children who received parallel support had lower performance than those who did not ($p < 0.001$).

Conclusions: Promoting increased levels of self-esteem, especially in children, is very important as it can help safeguard mental health. Anxiety disorders are a crucial problem in modern times, so their continuous study and treatment are essential. Holding informational and awareness-raising conferences for teachers, parents, and generally all professionals who come into frequent contact with children at this sensitive age is necessary and indisputable.

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