

FACILITATING SOCIO-EDUCATIONAL INCLUSION OF STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS THROUGH SELF-ESTEEM DEVELOPMENT

Liliana SURDU, Itinerant Teacher

<https://orcid.org/0009-0003-6500-6681>

Poplaca Secondary School, Sibiu, Romania

Abstract. This study examines the role of self-esteem development in facilitating the socio-educational inclusion of students with special educational needs (SEN). The research was conducted during the 2019–2020 school year at Poplaca Secondary School (Romania) and involved a sample of 12 students aged between 7 and 14 years. The methodology included systematic observation, semi-structured interviews, focus groups, evaluation grids, and the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale. The educational intervention, based on a school–family partnership, aimed to enhance students’ socio-emotional development. The results indicate a statistically significant improvement in self-esteem levels and social participation. The findings highlight the importance of inclusive educational practices and collaborative strategies in supporting effective integration.

Keywords: inclusion, special educational needs, self-esteem, inclusive education, school-family partnership.

FACILITAREA INCLUZII SOCIO-EDUCAȚIONALE A ELEVILOR CU NEVOI EDUCAȚIONALE SPECIALE PRIN DEZVOLTAREA STIMEI DE SINE

Rezumat. Acest studiu examinează rolul dezvoltării stimei de sine în facilitarea incluziunii socio-educative a elevilor cu nevoi educaționale speciale (CES). Cercetarea a fost realizată în anul școlar 2019-2020 la Școala Gimnazială Poplaca (România) și a implicat un eșantion de 12 elevi cu vârste cuprinse între 7 și 14 ani. Metodologia a inclus observație sistematică, interviuri semi-structurate, focus grupuri, grile de evaluare și Scala Rosenberg a Stimei de Sine. Intervenția educațională, bazată pe un parteneriat școală-familie, a avut ca scop îmbunătățirea dezvoltării socio-emoționale a elevilor. Rezultatele indică o îmbunătățire semnificativă statistic a nivelului stimei de sine și a participării sociale. Constatările evidențiază importanța practicilor educaționale incluzive și a strategiilor de colaborare în susținerea integrării eficiente.

Cuvinte cheie: incluziune, nevoi educaționale speciale, stimă de sine, educație incluzivă, parteneriat școală-familie.

1. Introduction

Inclusive education represents a fundamental principle of contemporary educational systems, aiming to ensure equal access and active participation of all students in the learning process. In this context, students with special educational needs (SEN) constitute a vulnerable group requiring differentiated educational interventions and tailored psycho-pedagogical support.

Specialized literature highlights that the difficulties encountered by these students are not exclusively cognitive but also involve emotional and social dimensions, such as low self-esteem, anxiety, and relational challenges, which may significantly affect school integration [7].

Self-esteem is considered a key psychological construct, with direct implications for school adaptation, academic performance, and social integration. According to the classical perspective proposed by James, the level of self-esteem is determined by the ratio between personal achievements and individual aspirations [6]. Later, Rosenberg operationalized this concept through the development of a standardized measurement scale widely used in educational research [9].

Empirical studies indicate that higher levels of self-esteem are associated with active engagement in school activities, positive interpersonal relationships, and improved educational outcomes, especially among students with SEN [5]. At the same time, inclusive educational environments characterized by cooperation, support, and individual appreciation contribute to the development of a positive self-image and facilitate socio-educational inclusion [4].

2. Theoretical Framework

The concept of self-esteem occupies a central position in psychological and educational literature, being regarded as a determinant of school adjustment and social integration. In James's view, self-esteem reflects the balance between personal achievements and individual aspirations [6].

Rosenberg's contributions enabled the measurement of this construct through the development of a scientifically validated scale, widely used in research within education and psychology [9].

Students with special educational needs often display lower levels of self-esteem due to repeated experiences of academic failure, adaptation difficulties, and social marginalization [7]. These factors may lead to decreased motivation for learning and difficulties in establishing interpersonal relationships.

Inclusive educational environments, based on acceptance, cooperation, and support, contribute to the development of a positive self-image and strengthen the sense of belonging [4]. Positive relationships with peers and teachers are essential factors in building self-confidence and social competencies.

Research conducted by Gorges et al. highlights the relationship between academic self-concept, self-esteem, and social integration, emphasizing the importance of a supportive educational climate [5].

In this perspective, the school–family partnership becomes a key component of inclusive education, contributing to students’ emotional and social development and supporting the inclusion process [7].

3. Research Methodology

The research was conducted during the 2019–2020 school year at Poplaca Secondary School, Sibiu County, using a single-group experimental design.

Research Aim of this study was to identify educational strategies and school–family partnerships that contribute to the development of self-esteem in the context of inclusive education.

In this context, the proposed **objectives** were:

- assessing the level of socio-educational integration;
- implementing a structured educational intervention;
- analyzing its impact on self-esteem development.

The identified **variables** of research were:

- independent variable: educational and cultural activities;
- dependent variable: level of self-esteem and socio-educational integration.

The research **sample** consisted of 12 students with SEN, aged between 7 and 14, diagnosed with various conditions, including intellectual disability, ADHD, and autism spectrum disorders.

Used **instruments** includes:

- systematic observation;
- semi-structured interviews;
- focus groups;
- evaluation grid;
- Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale.

4. Research Results

Data analysis reveals a positive evolution in self-esteem levels across the entire sample.

Table 1. Results of the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale – Initial and Final Scores

Student	Grade											Initial Total / Final Total
		Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6	Q7	Q8	Q9	Q10	
T.A.	I	2/2	2/2	2/2	2/2	2/2	2/1	2/2	2/1	2/2	1/2	19/21
P.A.	II	2/3	2/1	2/3	2/4	2/1	2/2	2/2	2/3	2/4	1/2	19/24
D.A.	III	1/2	1/2	1/3	1/2	2/1	1/1	1/2	1/1	1/3	1/1	11/18
M.MA.	IV	2/4	3/3	3/1	2/2	2/3	2/2	1/1	1/2	3/3	2/3	21/24
M.ST.	IV	1/2	1/2	2/3	2/2	1/2	1/1	1/3	2/2	2/2	2/2	15/21
C.A.	IV	2/2	2/4	2/3	1/3	2/2	2/1	2/3	1/4	2/1	1/3	17/26
C.L	V	3/4	3/3	3/4	3/3	3/3	3/4	3/4	1/4	4/3	3/4	29/36
P.A.	VI	1/2	1/2	1/1	1/2	1/2	1/1	1/2	2/1	1/2	1/2	11/16

P.S.	VI	1/2	2/2	1/3	1/2	2/1	2/3	2/2	2/2	2/1	2/1	17/20
O.D.	VII	2/2	3/4	1/2	2/3	2/2	3/3	2/2	1/2	2/2	1/1	19/23
S.P.	VII	2/3	3/2	2/3	2/2	2/3	3/4	3/3	1/2	2/3	1/2	21/27
M.V.	VIII	2/2	3/3	3/2	2/3	1/3	3/4	3/2	1/3	1/2	1/3	20/27

Source: Processed research data

The analysis of the data presented in Table 1 indicates a positive evolution in the level of self-esteem among all participants. The comparison between initial and final scores shows a consistent increase across the entire sample.

Individual analysis reveals that all students recorded higher final scores compared to their initial results, with particularly notable progress among students in primary education. This finding may indicate a higher responsiveness to socio-emotional interventions at earlier developmental stages.

Moreover, the distribution of scores suggests a reduction in variability, indicating a more homogeneous level of self-esteem within the group after the intervention. This aspect highlights the role of inclusive educational practices in reducing disparities among students.

Furthermore, the improvement in self-esteem reflects the positive impact of a supportive and inclusive learning environment. The use of collaborative activities and active participation contributed to increasing students' confidence and sense of belonging. These results highlight the importance of integrating socio-emotional strategies into educational practice.

Additionally, the results suggest that consistent support and inclusive practices play a key role in students' development. The positive changes observed indicate that a well-structured educational environment can enhance both confidence and participation. This confirms the importance of sustained intervention efforts.

The changes in scores are illustrated in Figure 1.

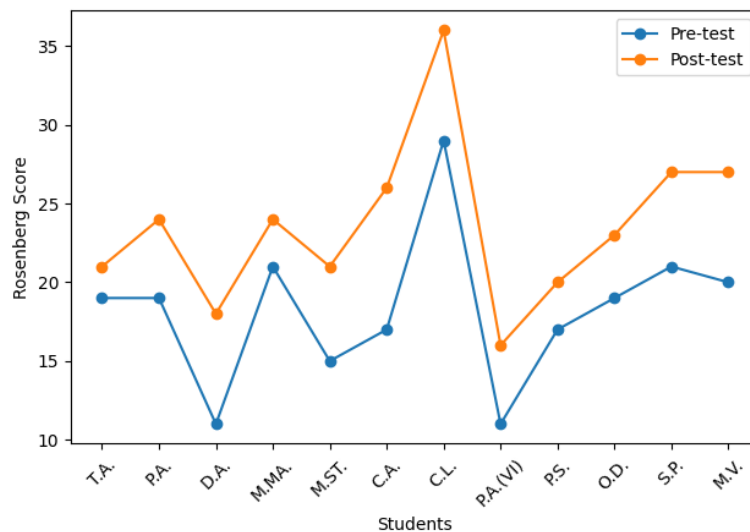


Figure 1. Evolution of Self-Esteem Scores (Pre-test/Post-test)

Source: Processed research data

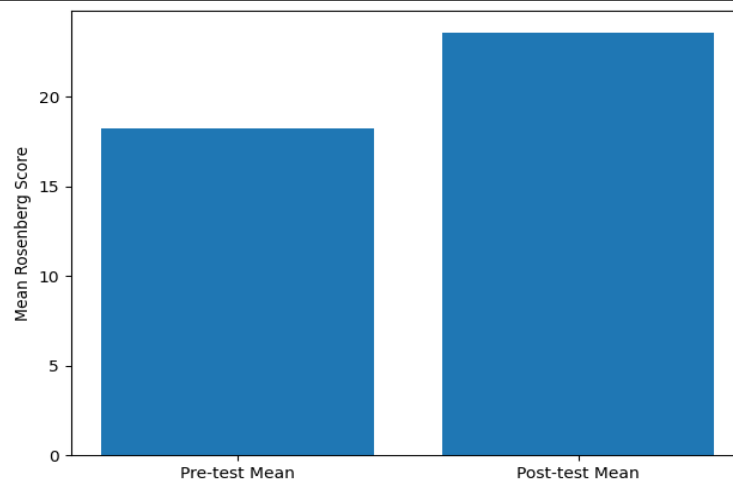


Figure 2. Comparison of the Mean Self-Esteem Scores (Pre-test vs. Post-test)

Source: Processed research data

The conceptual model of the research highlights the relationship between educational activities, self-esteem development, and socio-educational inclusion.

The *conceptual model of the study* is presented in Figure 3.

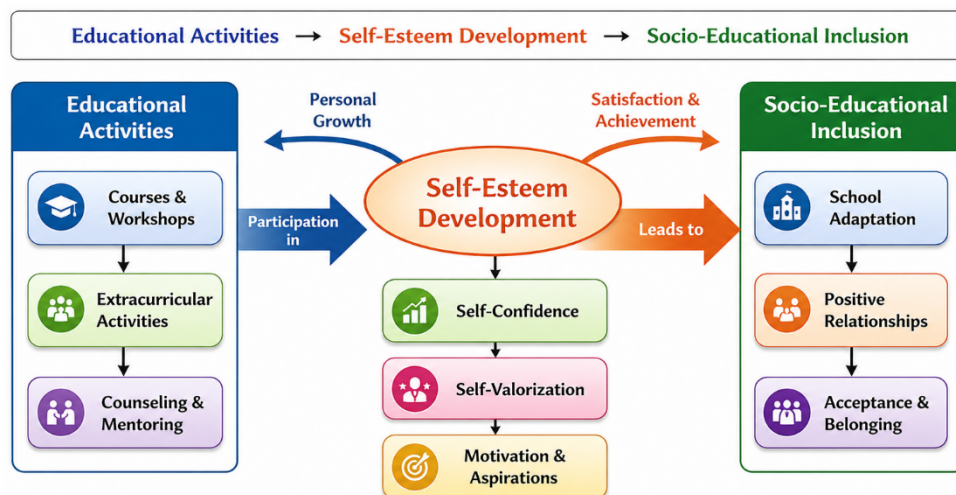


Figure 3. Conceptual Model:

Educational Activities → Self-Esteem Development → Socio-Educational Inclusion

Source: Processed research data

5. Discussion

The research findings confirm the hypothesis that educational strategies centered on cooperation, active participation, and student appreciation contribute to the development of self-esteem and facilitate socio-educational inclusion.

These findings are consistent with the studies conducted by Daniel and King [4], which emphasize the positive impact of inclusive education on behavior and personal development. Similarly, research by Gorges et al. [5] highlights the relationship between academic self-concept and social integration.

The results are also supported by Lindner et al. [7], who emphasize the role of relational factors and educational climate in promoting inclusion. From a theoretical perspective, these findings can be interpreted in relation to James's model [6], according to which successful experiences contribute to strengthening self-perception.

The use of the Rosenberg Scale [9] ensured a rigorous evaluation of changes in perceived self-worth, confirming its relevance in educational research.

6. Conclusions

The development of self-esteem is an essential factor in facilitating the socio-educational inclusion of students with special educational needs. Educational interventions based on cooperation, active participation, and school–family partnerships significantly contribute to students' emotional and social development.

Inclusive education should be conceptualized as a complex, multidimensional process that goes beyond physical integration and aims at the holistic development of the student.

7. Research Limitations

This study presents certain limitations that must be considered. The small sample size limits the generalizability of the findings. Additionally, the absence of a control group restricts the possibility of establishing strong causal relationships. Furthermore, the duration of the intervention does not allow for the evaluation of long-term effects on self-esteem development.

8. Practical Implications and Future Directions

The results highlight the importance of integrating socio-emotional activities and collaborative projects into the educational process. Teachers and educational specialists are encouraged to capitalize on school–family partnerships as a key tool in supporting inclusion.

Future research should include larger samples, experimental designs with control groups, and longitudinal analyses to assess the sustainability of intervention effects.

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Email: lilibirza@yahoo.com