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INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS OF CHILDREN WITH LEARNING DIFFICULTIES WITHIN THE STUDENT GROUP

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An important aspect in the development of the child's personality is socialization. Early social skills are necessary for a child's psychological development as they begin to form positive relationships with adults and other children from an early age. The important role for achieving expected expectations belongs to the teaching staff, who, in the instructive-educational process, take care that all children behave well, and are accept ed in the group of students.

The article presents the result of the sociometric study in the research cards of the problem of developing competence and communication skills in primary school students, in order to determine the evolution of interpersonal relations within the group/class where there are students with learning difficulties. The study reveals the socio-affective structure of the group at a given time, for a given situation, in our case studying interpersonal relationships through the lens of communication between children with learning difficulties and typical ones. The construction of the sociogram is carried out progressively, implemented with the sociogram of the elections, later completed with that of the rejections. Based on the sociograms, we realize that within the group there is some homogeneity, the number of attractions exceeding the number of rejections.

Keywords*: competence, communication, development, individualization, learning difficulties.*

RELAȚIILE INTERPERSONALE ALE COPIILOR CU DIFICULTĂȚI DE ÎNVĂȚARE ÎN CADRUL GRUPULUI DE ELEVI

Un aspect important în dezvoltarea personalității copilului este socializarea. Abilitățile sociale timpurii sunt necesare pentru dezvoltarea psihologică a copilului, deoarece acesta începe să formeze relații pozitive cu adulții și cu alți copii de la o vârstă fragedă. Rolul important pentru atingerea așteptărilor așteptate aparține personalului didactic, care, în procesul instructiv-educativ, are grijă ca toți copiii să se comporte bine și să fie acceptați în grupul de elevi. Articolul prezintă rezultatul studiului sociometric în fișele de cercetare a problemei dezvoltării competențelor și abilităților de comunicare la elevii din ciclul primar, în vederea determinării evoluției relațiilor interpersonale în cadrul grupului/clasei în care sunt prezenți elevi cu dificultăți de învățare. Studiul relevă structura socio-afectivă a grupului la un moment dat, pentru o situație dată, în cazul nostru studiind relațiile interpersonale prin prisma comunicării între copiii cu dificultăți de învățare și cei tipici. Construcția sociogramei se realizează progresiv, implementată cu sociograma alegerilor, completată ulterior cu cea a respingerilor. Pe baza sociogramelor, ne dăm seama că în cadrul grupului există o oarecare omogenitate, numărul de atracții depășind numărul de respingeri.

Cuvinte-cheie: *competență, comunicare, dezvoltare, individualizare, dificultăți de învățare.*

School is the space where the child is sent by parents (through an agreement or "social contract" with teachers) to get in touch with various types of learning experiences. Overcoming the obstacles proposed by the tasks and demands of curricular activities is an important and essential prerequisite for a new type of experiences, tasks and activities. It is certainly a pyramid (of students' personality) that is continuously being built and rebuilt, through restructuring and readjustments along the way. To the extent that the layers at the base of the pyramid are not well consolidated, there is a chance of an imminent collapse.

If we perceive school as the main instance of socialization of the child (the family being considered the first), school adaptation represents a particularization of the process of social integration of this category of children, a process that has a fundamental importance in facilitating further adaptation in community life by forming behaviors and attitudes, skills and social competences favorable to this process.

The need for communication is not innate. It occurs throughout life and functions, it is formed in the

practical interactions of the child with people in his environment. The child's need for communication with adults first appears as a biological need during the first two months of life, based on primary organic needs. Later, social needs arise, which refer to the need to accumulate new impressions. The criteria for analyzing the formation of the need for communication are: attention to the interlocutor; emotional attitude towards his actions; tendency to self-demonstrate; sensitivity to the attitude of the interlocutor. The need for communication in the child arises as a result of emotional communication with the mother, and with age it acquires an increasingly pronounced character. Subsequently, the child's development depends on the fact by what means this need is realized, what is the place and role of communication in his life, what is the social environment in which he communicates. Collaboration takes place in various forms during direct and indirect interaction, and is not always reduced to the process of communication [2].

Communication is a discipline of intersection, as noted by the authors in the field. It can only live by absorbing and using results, absolution, problem fields from neighboring disciplines. Even more so, when we talk about students with learning difficulties, the fields of communication cannot be studied outside of acquisitions in psychology, sociology, speech therapy, etc. [5]

Communication competence is one of the key competences stipulated in the Education Code, which is why its poor development creates serious learning difficulties in primary school children.

Thus, in our scientific approach we will focus on those competences that are directly formed in primary school students (grades III and IV).

Education Development Strategy for 2014-2020 „Education-2020", (approved by GD of RM no. 944 of 14.11.2014 Education Code of the Republic of Moldova (Order no.125 of 17.07.2014) in the Official Gazette No. 319-324, art. No. 634 - educational policy documents of the Republic of Moldova, which served as an indicative basis in the expected research activity.

The problem of socialization, interrelation and school adaptation of children was investigated by several researchers from the Republic of Moldova, who elucidated various psycho-pedagogical aspects of it: N. Bucun, A. Racu, D. Gânu, V. Rusnac, J. Racu, L. Malcoci, A. Cara, O. Paladi, P. Jelescu, I. Negura, A. Bolboceanu, S. Cemortan, V. Prițcan, E. Petrov, G. Bulat, etc., emphasizing the importance of developing communication and socialization skills of children with learning difficulties.

At the same time, we find insufficiently investigated the problem regarding the development of communication and socialization competence in children with learning difficulties in general education institutions. I certainly believe that there is a need to investigate this issue, which is driven by:

- the large number of children with SEN, including those with learning difficulties, who, following the deinstitutionalization process, are part of the inclusion process in general education institutions;
- little complex research on this issue;
- implementation of contents of educational policies in order to develop inclusive education.

Therefore, a contradictory relationship is created in the theory and practice of education: on the one hand, the process of school inclusion and deinstitutionalization of children with SEN is actively and insistently promoted, and, on the other hand, the lack of complete research and models for developing communication skills of these children in inclusive school conditions is evident.

The purpose of the research is to develop and apply the pedagogical model for the development of communication and socialization competence in children with SEN, namely in children with learning difficulties, based on the study of their individual particularities. Achieving the goal requires achieving the following general objectives:

1. Identification of conceptual landmarks referring to individual particularities of communication and socialization of children with learning difficulties;
2. Establishing the particularities of communication in children with learning difficulties;
3. Elaboration of a pedagogical model for communication development in children with learning difficulties;
4. Experimental approval and evaluation of the efficiency of the Pedagogical Model for communication development in the activity of children with learning difficulties;

5. Elaboration of recommendations and conclusions for both teachers and their parents.

The important scientific problem solved lies in the theoretical and applicative argumentation of the efficiency of the communication process in children with learning difficulties based on the application of the Pedagogical Model of Communication Development, taking into account the fact that each child is unique.

Once the purpose and objectives of the observational experiment have been formulated, the theoretical concepts analyzed, we will have as starting point the formulation of the general hypothesis of the research: the development of effective communication and interrelationship competence in children with learning difficulties, will lead to facilitating their psychosocial adaptation, if:

- the scientific foundations of communication and their correlation with learning difficulties will be determined;
- the methodological benchmarks of the investigation to find the problem concerned will be determined;
- a pedagogical model for the development of communication in the activity of children with learning difficulties will be elaborated and theoretically and praxiologically substantiated;
- a program for training communication skills of students with learning difficulties in the classroom and their families will be developed and validated experimentally.

The development of communication competence and communication skills in primary school students will also determine the evolution of interpersonal relationships within the group / class in which there are students with learning difficulties. For these reasons, one of the techniques of the general research methodology that we will apply is the sociometric test, because knowing the collective of students does not only imply knowing the personality of its members, but much more.

The sociometric study has a triple orientation:

- First of all, the knowledge by the teacher / class teacher / psychologist of the affinities expressed by the group members and implicitly of the relationships within the class collective;
- Secondly, the students' better knowledge of their own positions in the group;
- Thirdly, improving communication relationships and the psychosocial climate of the school group through specific psychological actions.

According to J. C. Abric, the method of identifying and recording socio-affective relationships is simple. It consists of using a questionnaire that allows all members of the group to talk about the positive or negative relationships they maintain with others, each having to verbalize attitudes of choice and rejection in relation to his peers.

As we can see, the questions were formulated in the same way for both preferences and rejections: for example, name 2 colleagues from the given group with whom you would/would not discuss your favorite book.

Both positive and negative socioaffective indices will have 3 dimensions:

- number of elections/rejections received;
- number of choices/rejections made;

number of mutual elections/rejections. [1, pp. 134-135]

For the finding experiment, in the process of applying the sociometric test, both the experimental sample and the control sample will be extended with a number of typical students, so that up to 10 students (2-4 students with learning difficulties and 4-6 typical students) will participate in the sociometric testing from each class.

The recording of individual responses to the questionnaire can be carried out in a sociometric matrix of choices and rejections.. Keeping students anonymous will be achieved by encoding their name and surname: Edî – student with learning difficulties and Et – typical student. Also, the Individual Fact Sheet of Attractions and Rejections of Students with Learning Difficulties and Typical Students will be completed.

The sociogram is the graphic representation of all socio-affective relationships that exist in the group. Its result reveals the socio-affective structure of the group at a given moment, for a given situation (in our case the study of interpersonal relationships through the prism of communication between children with learning difficulties and typical ones). The construction of the sociogram will be carried out progressively, starting with the sociogram of elections, later supplemented by that of rejections.

In the following we will illustrate the results collected in terms of the 4 samples (E1, E2, C1, C2) extended by the participation of typical students. The number of students in each class (experimental/control sample) will be 10 people.

As reference group will be taken the 2 experimental samples with students from grade III and IV (students with learning difficulties / typical students), analyzed on experimental subgroups from each class of students, according to logic: S1E1 – subgroup 1 of grade III of the experimental sample – 10 students (4 students with SC and 6 typical students); S2E1 – subgroup 2 of class III of the experimental sample, etc. The identification data of the 10 students were coded by $E_{dî1}$.... $E_{dî(n)}$ and E_{t1}... $E_{t(n)}$, where n is the number of pupils in the sample; $E_{dî}$ – student with learning difficulties; E_t – typical student.

According to the research methodology, the sociometric matrix presented below allows us to calculate sociometric indices that will measure the level of attractions and repulsions, the position occupied by each member of the group, the preferential status of students.

Table 1. Attractions and repulsions, experimental subgroup S1E1.

Students	**$E_{dî1}$**	**$E_{dî2}$**	**$E_{dî3}$**	**$E_{dî4}$**	**E_{t1}**	**E_{t2}**	**E_{t3}**	**E_{t4}**	**E_{t5}**	**E_{t6}**
$E_{dî1}$	***							-		
$E_{dî2}$	+	***	-					-		
$E_{dî3}$		-	***	+	-			-	-	
E_{d4}				***			-	-	+	
E_{t1}	-	-	-	-	***		+		+	
E_{t2}	-	-	-	-		***			-	+
E_{t3}	-	-			+		***			-
E_{t4}	-	-	-	-	+		+	***	-	
E_{t5}		-	-	-	+				***	
E_{t6}	-	-						+		***
∑A/∑R	1/5	0/7	0/5	1/4	3/1	0/0	2/1	1/4	1/3	1/1
I_{ss}	1/9	0/9	0/9	1/9	3/9	0/9	2/9	1/9	1/9	1/9
I_{sp}	-4/9	-7/9	-5/9	-3/9	2/9	0/9	1/9	-3/9	-1/9	0/9

Where:
(+) – attraction;
(-) – rejection;
∑A – sum of attractions;
∑R – sum of rejections;
Iss – sociometric status index;
Isp - preferential status index.

If the sociometric status index (I_{ss}) shows the position occupied by a person within the group, then the preferential status index (I_{sp}) indicates the degree of integration of the individual into the group.

Thus, according to I_{sp}, Et1 is preferred within subgroup S1E1, and Edî2 is totally rejected within the group.

The calculation of the cohesion index of the experimental subgroup S1E1 - Ic, will demonstrate how cohesive this group is, applying the formula:

Ic=Rq/Up

Where:

R - the number of mutual relations (9);

U – number of unilateral relations (24);

p=k/N-1; q=1-p; K – Number of choices allowed.

Applying the formula for calculating this index for our group S1E1, we notice that its value is quite small – 1.31 (Table 2).

Ic=(9∗(1-2/9))/(24∗2/9) =1.31

A small cohesion index, as well as the number of mutual relations in rather small draws show us a weak cohesion of the group.

In the next step, the sociometric matrix of choices and rejections (S1E1) demonstrates to what extent attraction/rejection relationships between group members are constructed.

Applying the calculation algorithm described above to all experimental subgroups S1E1-S7E1, the following indices are obtained:

Table 2. Cohesion index for subgroups of experimental sample E1.

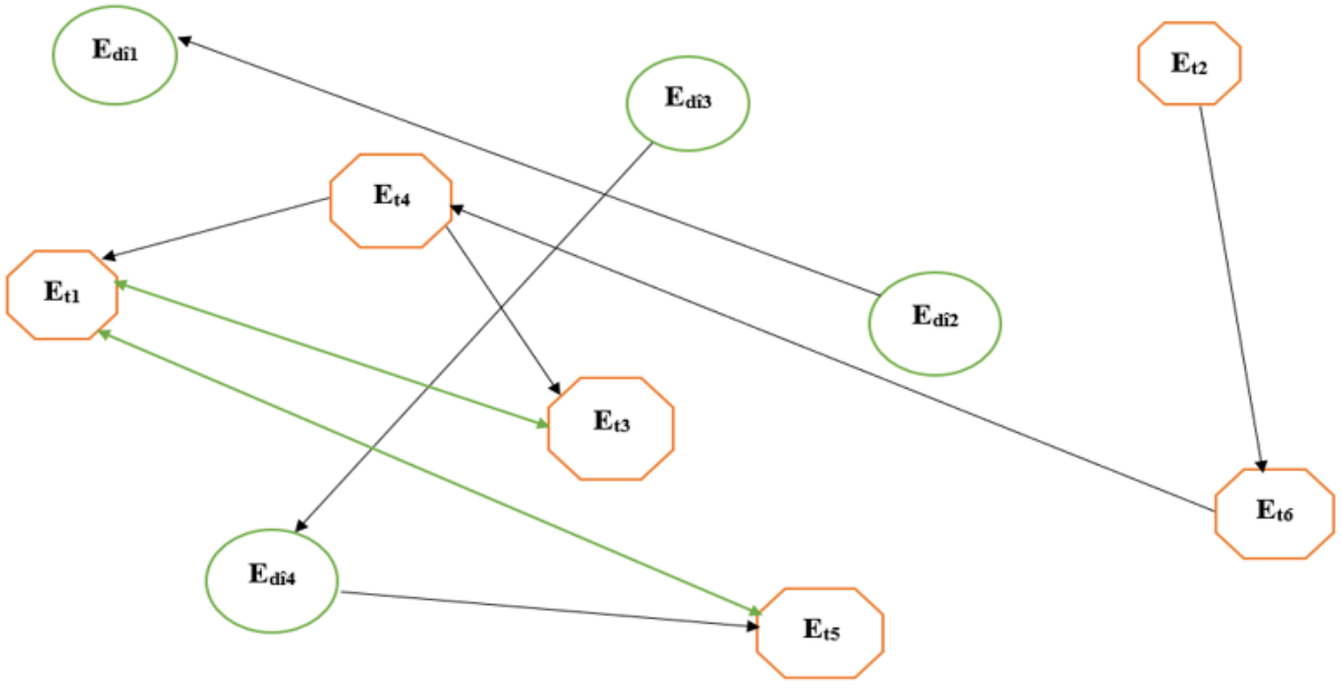
Sociometric indices	**S1E$_1$**	**S2E$_1$**	**S3E$_1$**	**S4E$_1$**	**S5E$_1$**	**S6E$_1$**	**S7E$_1$**
Number of mutual relations, *R*	9	11	14	12	13	8	12
Number of unilateral relations, *U*	24	27	19	22	18	30	16
Number of elections allowed, *k*	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Calculation coefficient, *p*	2/9	2/9	2/9	2/9	2/9	2/9	2/9
Calculation coefficient, *q*	7/9	7/9	7/9	7/9	7/9	7/9	7/9
Group cohesion index, I_c	***1,31***	***1,42***	***2,57***	***1,91***	***2,52***	***0,93***	***2,62***

Table 2 reflects the relationships built between students both in teaching and extracurricular activities. Students opted for the options to *do/not do* projects with 2 of the colleagues of the given group; *discussing/not discussing* their favorite book; communicating/not communicating with their peers, etc.

The sociogram of choices of experimental subgroup S1E1 (Fig. 1) reflects, objectively, the following aspects:

- there are no seconded preferred pupils by all group members;
- there are only 2 mutual attractions established between typical students: E_{t1}-E_{t5}; E_{t1} – E_{t3};
- there are 3 students who are not preferred (of these 2 students are with SC – $E_{DÎ2}$; $E_{dî3}$);
- microgroups of mutual attractions are not attested.

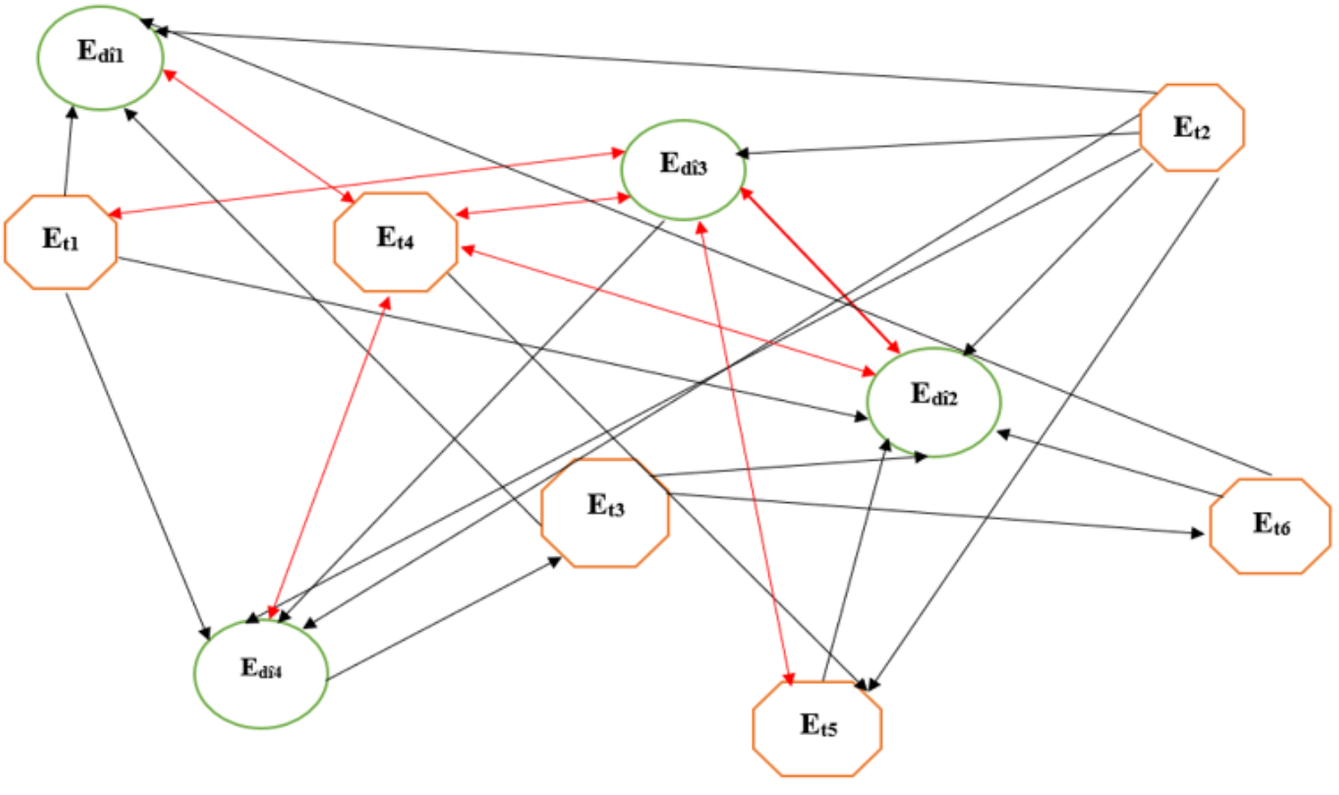
Fig. 1. Sociogram of attractions, experimental subgroup S1E1.



In the same context, the sociogram of rejections of experimental subgroup S1E1 (Fig. 2.) clearly illustrates the following aspects:

- according to the data from the individual sheets, the number of rejections within the group (31 rejections) exceeds about 3 times the number of elections (11 choices) (table 1);
- student $E_{dî2}$ is practically rejected by all group members, followed by $E_{dî1}$ - 5 rejections;
- there are 6 mutual rejections;
- E_{t2} has an unclear position in this group, with zero attractions and rejections;
- among typical students there are also students with multiple rejections - E_{t4};
- members of the microgroup E_{th4} - $E_{dî2}$ - $E_{dî3}$, repel each other.

Fig. 2. Sociogram of rejections, experimental subgroup S1E1.



As a result, from the analysis of all raw data collected, we deduce that the number of attractions per group compared to the number of rejections is higher – Table 3.

Thus, in the 7 experimental subgroups of the E1 sample, a total number of 145 attractions and 169 rejections are highlighted, of which 24.8% – attractions and 57.9% rejections are among students with CI.

At the same time, out of the 7 experimental subgroups, in 3 of them the number of attractions prevails over that of rejections – S3E1, S4E1, S7E1. In some experimental subgroups – S5E1, S6E1 some students with DF are preferred detached by their peers – $E_{dî1}$, $E_{dî2}$.

Table 3. Individual handouts of attractions and rejections of students with learning difficulties and typical students, subgroups of experimental sample E1 (third grade students).

	S1E1		S2E1		S3E1		S4E1		S5E1		S6E1		S7E1	
Students	*Number of attractions*	*Number of rejections*	*Number of attractions*	*Number of rejections*	*Number of attractions*	*Number of rejections*	*Number of attractions*	*Number of rejections*	*Number of attractions*	*Number of rejections*	*Number of attractions*	*Number of rejections*	*Number of attractions*	*Number of rejections*
$E_{dî1}$	1	5	2	2	0	1	0	2	6	1	1	5	2	2

$E_{dî2}$	0	7	1	5	3	0	1	1	1	0	6	0	1	2
$E_{dî3}$	0	5	0	3	1	6	1	7	0	3	0	7	0	3
E_{d4}	1	4	1	8	0	4	4	0	1	8	1	4	1	3
E_{t1}	3	1	6	1	8	0	2	1	0	1	3	1	6	1
E_{t2}	0	0	1	2	1	2	7	0	2	2	0	0	1	2
E_{t3}	2	1	3	1	3	1	2	1	5	1	2	1	3	1
E_{t4}	1	4	0	2	0	2	3	1	0	7	4	1	0	2
E_{t5}	2	3	3	3	6	1	2	3	0	4	2	3	5	0
E_{t6}	1	1	2	3	6	2	6	2	1	1	3	2	2	3
Total	**11**	**31**	**19**	**30**	**28**	**19**	**28**	**18**	**16**	**28**	**22**	**24**	**21**	**19**

In the logical continuation of the research, the results obtained in the experimental sample E2 are of interest, where students are older (fourth grade) and the configuration of relationships has a completely different aspect.

According to the sociometric status index (I_{ss}) and preferential status index (I_{sp}), in this experimental subgroup S1E2, two students received no choice – Edî3 and Et6, and four typical students received 3-4 choices. However, Edî3 is not integrated into the group, having the lowest ISP of all group members – (-6/9).

Table 4. Sociometric matrix of attractions and repulsions, experimental subgroup S1E2.

Students	$E_{dî1}$	$E_{dî2}$	$E_{dî3}$	$E_{dî4}$	E_{t1}	E_{t2}	E_{t3}	E_{t4}	E_{t5}	E_{t6}
$E_{dî1}$	***	+	-			+			-	
$E_{dî2}$		***	-		+	+				
$E_{dî3}$			***		-		-	+	+	
E_{d4}				***			+		-	
E_{t1}	+		-		***			+		-
E_{t2}		+				***		+		
E_{t3}			-		+	+	***			-
E_{t4}		-			+	-	+	***		
E_{t5}			-	+			-	+	***	
E_{t6}			-		-		+		+	***
∑A/∑R	1/0	2/1	0/6	1/0	3/2	3/1	3/2	4/0	2/2	0/2
I_{ss}	1/9	2/9	0/9	1/9	3/9	3/9	3/9	4/9	2/9	0/9
I_{sp}	1/9	1/9	-6/9	1/9	1/9	2/9	1/9	4/9	1/9	-2/9

Based on the sociograms presented below, we realize that within the group there is a certain homogeneity, the number of attractions exceeding the number of rejections, even if only 2 mutual relationships were formed, one of them being between a student with SC – Edî2 and a typical Et2 student.

This is also confirmed by the group's cohesion index, which has a rather high value – 2.96 (Table 5).

According to the data presented in Table 5, the comparative analysis per experimental group E2 (fourth grade students) demonstrates that:

- in 5 out of 7 subgroups, the number of attractions exceeds the number of rejections;
- in S3E2, the number of draws equals the number of rejections;
- in the 7 experimental subgroups of the E2 sample, a total number of 145 attractions and 119 rejections are highlighted, of which 24.13% - attractions and 51.26% rejections are among students with CI.

Fig. 3. Sociogram of attractions, experimental subgroup S1E2.

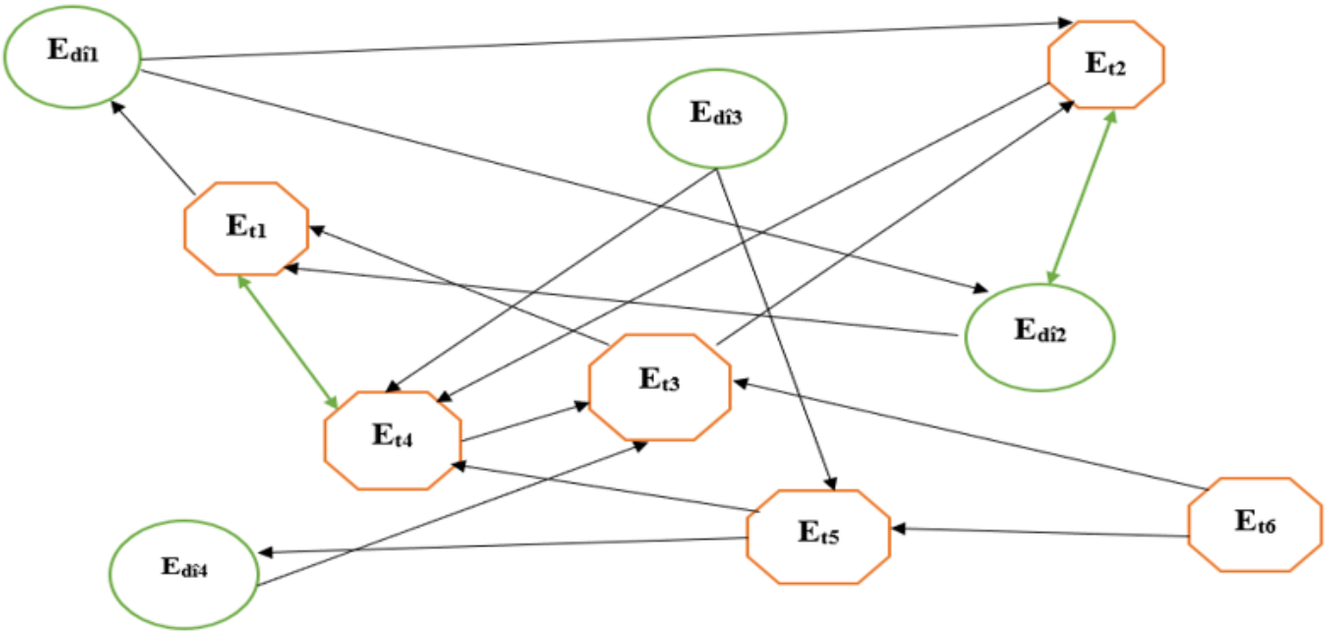


Fig. 4. Sociogram of rejections, experimental subgroup S1E2

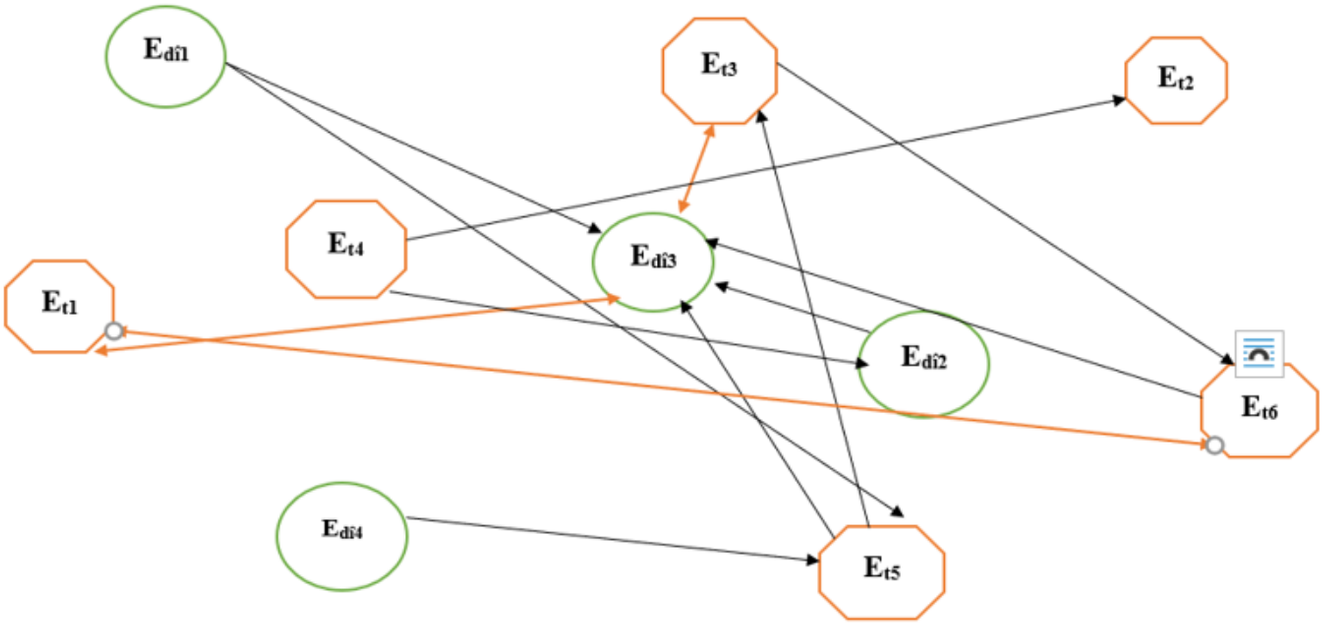


Table 5. Individual record of attractions and rejections of students with learning difficulties and typical students, subgroups of experimental sample E2 (fourth grade students).

	S1E2		S2E2		S3E2		S4E2		S5E2		S6E2		S7E2	
Students	*Number of attractions*	*Number of rejections*	*Number of attractions*	*Number of rejections*	*Number of attractions*	*Number of rejections*	*Number of attractions*	*Number of rejections*	*Number of attractions*	*Number of rejections*	*Number of attractions*	*Number of rejections*	*Number of attractions*	*Number of rejections*
$E_{dî1}$	1	0	0	5	0	7	1	1	3	4	1	1	4	1
$E_{dî2}$	2	1	1	0	1	4	2	1	2	0	1	4	2	1
$E_{dî3}$	0	6	4	0	0	1	2	8	0	2	0	5	0	0
E_{d4}	1	0	0	6	2	1	0	1	2	1	2	0	1	0

E_{t1}	3	2	7	0	2	3	4	1	3	0	2	5	2	4
E_{t2}	3	1	0	0	5	1	5	0	3	1	0	0	3	1
E_{t3}	3	2	4	1	6	2	2	0	3	0	2	1	8	0
E_{t4}	4	0	2	2	2	0	1	1	2	1	1	3	4	1
E_{t5}	2	2	2	1	2	2	2	4	1	0	4	0	2	3
E_{t6}	0	2	1	4	1	0	1	0	3	0	2	1	1	0
Total	**19**	**16**	**21**	**19**	**21**	**21**	**20**	**17**	**22**	**9**	**15**	**20**	**27**	**11**

We note that the share of rejections of students with learning difficulties in grade IV (E2) is decreasing compared to the share of rejections of students with learning difficulties in grade III (E1): from 57.9% to 51.26%.

In the same context, according to the data in Table 6, it is shown that the group cohesion indices for the subgroups in E2 are very varied, the most related group being S6E2, followed by S1E2 and S3E2. The S7E2 group is quite dispersed, with few reciprocal relationships, Ic being equal to 1.27 – the smallest of the experimental samples.

Table 6. Sociometric indices for subgroups of experimental sample E2.

Sociometric indices	**$S1E_2$**	**$S2E_2$**	**$S3E_2$**	**$S4E_2$**	**$S5E_2$**	**$S6E_2$**	**$S7E_2$**
Number of mutual relations, *R*	11	10	13	9	7	12	8
Number of unilateral relations, *U*	13	20	16	19	17	11	22
Number of elections allowed, *k*	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Calculation coefficient, *p*	2/9	2/9	2/9	2/9	2/9	2/9	2/9
Calculation coefficient, *q*	7/9	7/9	7/9	7/9	7/9	7/9	7/9
Group cohesion index, I_c	***2,96***	***1,75***	***2,84***	***1,65***	***1,44***	***3,82***	***1,27***

In conclusion, we mention that the data presented represent for the teacher conclusive evidence for identifying ***group communication networks***, the configuration of rejection, attraction and indifference relationships, the position and status of each student, especially the one with learning difficulties.

Based on a closed or defensive climate, communication effectiveness suffers, and behaviors that prevail in a closed communication environment make certain value judgments (students feel incompetent, inferior). In the context of inclusive education, the student with learning difficulties must be supported and encouraged by the teacher to reveal his/her personality, to capitalize and develop his/her potential.

The educational institution and teachers, in particular, are responsible, together with the family, for shaping personality and integration into social life.

In social interactions, qualities such as: respect, compassion and empathy are formed. At the same time, children train language skills and develop competence in solving interrelationship problems. It is certain that there are children who face difficulties in the socialization process, for whom social interactions are a real challenge.

These are children with special needs, who are usually shy, isolated for whom cognitive developmental delays, language disorders, behavioral disorders and emotional disorders are specific. In these cases, successful integration into a group of children. It can also be beneficial for cognitive development. Socialization is an important necessity for every child, both in the family and in the school institution, or in various social groups.

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