

Community's Attitudes Toward People With Down Syndrome in Palestine, West Bank

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Abstract :

Background: Down syndrome is a genetic disorder caused by the presence of all or part of a third copy of chromosome 21, from all genetic disorders this cause the most intellectual disability in the world, contributed with enormous body abnormalities like dysmorphic otolaryngologic features, Congenital heart defects, Behavioral changes with loss of skills, social withdrawal, psychomotor retardation and autism.

Aim of the study: to view the Community's general Attitudes toward People with Down syndrome including the educational interaction, work involvement and the capability to interact with people with Down Syndrome. In addition, to determine the attitude and feelings about the inclusion of people with Down syndrome into governmental schools.

Method: mixed study quantitative and qualitative approach (phenomenological study using constructed interview). The selection (simple sampling) of people aged above 18 years (282 subjects) (116 male, 166 female), healthy, free from disabilities, which doesn't have any first degree relatives with DS. For the qualitative part of the study using a purposive sampling selection of subjects (4 male, 4 female) of teachers who have been working in governmental primary school above 5 years, to interview with them using constructed interviews who work in Nablus governmental schools or in Jenin governmental schools.

Result: The results of our study reveal that, from the Palestinian people 23.75% strongly agree with the inclusion of people with Down syndrome in the general schools, but there is 55.9% strongly agree with the suggestion of including them in special schools. 39.5% agree with working with people with Down syndrome, 49.5% strongly agree with working of people with Down syndrome in some areas under supervision. Despite that, 43.3% disagree, and 22.1% strongly disagree due to people with Down Syndrome have difficulties in engaging to the community. In addition, 40.2% agree, and 23.8% strongly agree in spending time with people with Down syndrome in their usual life. From the collected data from the teachers interviews, three themes emerged, the results indicated to five teachers was accepted with the inclusion, and three of them was not agreed with the inclusion because it will be dangerous and unhealthy for the students with Down syndrome.

Conclusion: Our study showed that attitudes toward educational inclusion of the people with Down syndrome in the general schools was positive, with preferring to send students with Down

Syndrome to special schools, also the attitudes about work inclusion of people with Down syndrome in the community was very positive, but they think that people with Down syndrome cannot work in every area that normal people do, with preferring to be working under guidance, regarding attitudes about personal interaction toward people with Down syndrome. In the other hand, most of teachers are holding negative attitudes toward the inclusion and acceptance of teaching students with Down syndrome due to fearful of teaching. Moreover, they think there is a big responsibility and they are not good prepared for this kind of teaching. These results may be helpful in the development of educational materials about Down syndrome and in guiding policies on educational and occupational inclusion.

Key wards:Community', Attitudes, Down syndrome, Inclusion.