

“SOCIAL PERCEPTION OF UNIVERSITY STUDENTS IN THE US-MEXICO SOUTHWEST BORDERLAND TOWARD INDIVIDUALS WITH DOWN SYNDROME”

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1. Introduction

1.1. Social Perception

To formulate hypotheses either about ourselves or the surrounding world in which we live, we resort to Social Perception (SP, Baron and Byrne 2005), which goes from the way we actively interpret, analyze, remember and use information of the social world in which we develop interacting.

Within the SP, we classify people into groups, based on their common attributes and Franzoi (2000), conceptualizes it as social categorization. That is, we socially construct and share beliefs about the personalities, abilities, and motives of people in certain given social groups and situations, which we call stereotypes (Myers, 2002). These are activated once said categorization occurs; as long as the person analyzed complies with the prototype of that social category, most of our social knowledge is based on stereotypes (Franzoi, 2000).

Franzoi (2000), continues explaining that these fulfill a pair of antagonistic functions: on the one hand, it is faster and more efficient to categorize with stereotypes, but on the other hand, they can lead us to erroneous judgments and false correlations. There is a tendency to think stereotyped in most social situations since it is more economical and has a high degree of certainty. SP that we base on other people or groups will be influenced by stereotypes, usually unfavorable preconceived information, first impressions and personal idiosyncratic constructs.

1.2. Intellectual Disability

Historically, society has considered people with Intellectual Disability (ID), in general as less capable, giving them a treatment of overprotection or discrimination (Molina, Nunes & Vallejo, 2012). In its passage through the different models of disability, which society has been building

over time, the individuals with Down syndrome (DS) present many characteristics of this population, therefore they are included with the rest of the people with ID.

The American Association of Psychiatry (APA) in its edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-V), defines ID as "a developmental disorder intellectual that begins during the period of development and that includes limitations of the intellectual functioning as well as of the adaptive behavior in the conceptual, social and practical domains ". (APA, 2013, p.17) Three criteria must be met; the first is that reasoning, problem-solving, learning, judgment, and other intellectual functions present significant deficiencies; secondly, there must be a deficiency in adaptive behavior, that is, socio-adaptive skills, personal autonomy, and independent life are diminished in relation to their peers of the same chronological age; and third, the beginning of these deficiencies, both adaptive and intellectual ones, must be presented during the development period.

On the other hand, the International Classification of Diseases (ICD) of the World Health Organization (WHO, October 2011), has its own classification of mental disorders for primary care, they give the DI, the denomination of intellectual development disorder (Reed and Anaya, 2012 p.462) and define it as "an incomplete or slow development with a visible deterioration of cognitive, linguistic, motor and social abilities". It is regularly associated with learning difficulties and social adaptation.

1.2.1. Down's Syndrome

Down syndrome is caused biologically by a trisomy in the chromosomes of par 21 and represents the main genetic cause that causes intellectual disability (ID) and occurs approximately between one in six hundred or eight hundred births (Pueschel, 2002, Cunningham, 1990). The expectation, as well as the quality of life for this population have increased considerably in the last

forty years, (Flórez and Troncoso, 2001), and will continue, as a result of better medical services, greater access to educational services and opportunities. of employment, which together favors the autonomous and independent life.

1.2.2. Social perception towards individuals with Down Syndrome Scale (EPSD-3)

The scale of social perception towards people with Down syndrome (DS), named by its authors Molina, Nunes & Vallejo (2012), EPSD-1. It is a completely original scale, easy to apply that allows us to be aware of and study the social perception that the University Students maintain towards people with DS.

Molina et al (2012), develop an explanation of the items handled in this scale which correspond to the result of an exhaustive documentary study as well as a consultancy with prestigious experts registered in the area of intellectual disability. The result was 45 items constituted in the seven most influential areas according to Illán (2011): health, leisure and free time, rights and duties, sexuality, employment, social integration and education. These 45 original items were submitted to the evaluation of thirteen experts of international prestige, assessing the semantic aptitude, the acuteness of the elaborated questions and the degree of prudence in the defined dimensions. As a result of this process, some items were discarded, leaving the original thirty-one that best describe the social perception towards people with DS.

2. Substantiation

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) punctuates that at least 1 out of 10 children in the world is born with a disability or acquires one, therefore the enjoyment of their human rights and personal development are compromised, without the special services they need (Hegarty, 1994). According to ENADID 2014 (National Survey of Demographic Dynamics by its acronym in Spanish) the prevalence of disability in Mexico is 6% (i.e. 7.1 million people) and in the United States an estimated 12.8% (i.e. 40,890,900 out of 319,215,200) reported by the American Community Survey (ACS, 2016), has a disability. From these statistics, we can derive that 5.5% in the United States are in scholar age (i.e. from 5 to 14 years old; UNICEF, 2014) while in Mexico the prevalence is 6.3%. This particular somite is avid of special education services, acknowledge of their rights, and inclusion not only in classrooms but in life in general. Today more than ever there is a great need for knowledgeable, committed and sensitive educators towards the rights of autonomy and independence of this population, it is necessary to mark the importance of education professionals for development of inclusive society, contributing to the future life design and motivating students to become productive and sensitive members of society (Rasco, 2016), impacting positively in the life of individuals with disabilities.

There is the importance of becoming acquainted about the social perception of University students toward disability (e.g., intellectual disability, physical impairments) since most of these students will become school teachers and will serve this population. Knowing the social perception of university education students towards disability (Molina & Nunes, 2012) will light the way to institutionalize effective educational policies and better practices, development of public policies and respect for the rights of this collective (e.g., to independent living, employment, autonomy).

Some of the limitations we observe are the lack of interest Mexicans and Mexican American higher education students have shown in previous studies on the accomplishment of tasks foreign to their interest as surveys and interviews (Zambrana & Hurtado, 2016). Facing stereotypes and prejudices in the southwest borderland themselves, could put them in defensive attitude throwing skewed data.

3. Problem Statement

Understanding the social perception of University education students toward intellectual disability (e.g., Down's syndrome; D.S.) has been recognized by academics before (Molina et al., 2012; Maureen et al., 2017). However, numerous prejudices of overprotection and exclusion towards people with disabilities are still valid for University students (Molina et al, 2012) although many educational improvements had occur in both neighbor countries; as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA, 2004) in the US emphasizing in special education and related services to achieve this collective's specific needs and prepare them for employment and independent living, and The 2013- 2018 National Development Plan, who projects Mexico as an inclusive nation that propitiates social justice, equity and equal employment opportunities to these group.

In a previous research the EPSD-1 (Social Perception towards individuals with Down's Syndrome Scale by his Spanish acronym) was tested through an analysis of his psychometrical proprieties and some modifications for the Mexican university context were made, producing the EPSD-3 (Madrid & Ponce, 2016), it was not found any study that measures the social perception of education college students toward DS in the southwest borderland (i.e. margin between the northern Mexico states and southwest USA) by other authors, concluding that there is a gap in the literature, neither a study who compares the scale results between them.

Since there are meaningful differences between the education programs (i.e. curricular courses) among University of Juarez (UACJ) and New Mexico State University (NMSU), for instance in New Mexico College of education there is a basic course of special education (SPED 350/ 500 Introduction to Special Education in a Diverse Society), universal to all education students not only to the specialists, and UACJ doesn't, it is important to analyze if there is a significant difference in the social perception toward individuals with DS or not.

Padilla (2000), justifies the need of any research by two different knowledge streams (i.e. search of knowledge); the Greek pursuit of knowledge and reflection per se (i.e. Classic philosophy), thus in the other side there is the Roman utilitarian approach, seeking for a practical contribution. In this lies the position of the present enquiry (1st) evaluate the social perception of university education students towards DS, and contribute to general knowledge, and (2nd) compare both EPSD-3 results and make the practical recommendations that emanate from it.

4. Hypothesis

Having a mandatory introductory course in special education at New Mexico State University (NMSU) has made the social perception towards people with DS more positive in the students of education, than the one their peers in the University of Juárez (UACJ) in Mexico have.

5. Objectives

5.1. Overall objective

To analyze the association between a mandatory introductory course in special education and a positive social perception towards individuals with DS of university students in the southwest borderland.

5.2 Specific objectives

1. To assess the social perception towards individuals with DS by NMSU education students before taking special education introductory course with the EPSD-3 instrument (i.e. pretest).
2. To assess the social perception towards individuals with DS, after those students finished the introductory course, with EPSD-3 (i.e. posttest).
3. To analyze the statistical association between social perception and special education introductory course.
4. To assess the social perception towards individuals with DS by UACJ education students.
5. To compare the statistical differences among both students' groups.

6. State of Art

Based on the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (United Nations Organization, 2006), it has been included in the global discussion of human rights, to people with functional diversity, including people with Down syndrome (DS) in relation to the issue of independent living and autonomy. Therefore, it is vital to review in what circumstances the state of the art of social perception (PS) towards this population (ie people with Down syndrome).

Many studies have been conducted worldwide recently, in terms of PS to or from the SD, here we will analyze some of the main ones, for example, Lalvani (2013), in his qualitative study entitled; Land of isolated toys: social perception of mothers of children with Down syndrome towards educational environments, explores the PS of 19 mothers of children with DS, contrasting their expectations with different school environments, concluding that the PS of the school community, in general, it is unfavorable towards students with DS, although India (the country where this

research was carried out) has already signed this multilateral treaty since March 2007 (Journal No. 2007/64).

The present investigation is based on the studies carried out by Molina and Nunes (2012), The social perception of future teachers about individuals with Down syndrome: application of the EPSD-1 scale and with the scale built by Molina, Nunes & Vallejo (2012), in his scientific article, the social perception towards people with Down syndrome: the EPSD-1 scale.

Finally, this research is also based on the reliability testing of the scale (i.e. EPSD-1) proved by Madrid & Ponce (2017), emerging an instrument from it, the EPSD-3.

7. Methodology

The purpose of this research design is to provide a plan of study that permits accurate assessment of cause and effect relationships between independent and dependent variables. In the recent years the Mixed-methods approaches, have become more popular among educational research (Creswell, 2013) as both quantitative and qualitative methods have unique strengths and limitations of their own. Nowadays the researchers are taking advantage of this singular mixture.

Nevertheless, the complexity of applying mixed methods requires that researchers carefully design such studies. The timing of quantitative and qualitative components is a primary consideration. The phases of data collection are either sequential or concurrent (Creswell, 2013), depending directly on the goals of each component and the project deadline time. In the first mentioned (i.e. sequential) as the name implies data collection follows a sequence, once you have the first phase, this will update the second stage or the second phase directly support the interpretation of data collected at the beginning (i.e. first phase) this design is longer as every data collection takes a time of his own. The concurrent data collection (i.e. triangulation strategy),

conducts qualitative and quantitative phases at the same time, giving equally weight to each phase, reducing the amount of time required to collect data and consequently be more efficient.

Another concern is the weight given to each phase. While the weight of each phase may be equal, it is more common that one phase is emphasized based on the primary logic that guides the Mixed-method study. Studies using deductive logic will tend to weight the quantitative portion more heavily and seek to explain a phenomenon, while those employing inductive or exploratory logic will emphasize the qualitative portion.

Creswell (2013) explains how one popular mixed-methods approach: the sequential explanatory strategy. In this approach, quantitative data are collected and analyzed first and the results used to inform the subsequent qualitative phase. Often the qualitative phase is useful in helping to understand unexpected results that arise in the initial quantitative phase. This approach is commonly employed by researchers who are more comfortable with quantitative research and weight is given primarily to the quantitative findings, which explains why this strategy is considered explanatory.

7.1. location of the investigation

The actual migratory situation the borderland between northern Mexico and the southwest US are facing is not new, as a matter of fact, the flow of migrants, the economical trade, and the cultural exchange has been there since the very beginning (Gaggiotti, 2017), communities all over this borderland are interrelated, families living in both sides, divided by one line, ideas, fine arts and entertainment are in a give-and-take situation.

Although Texas occupies almost half of this called southwest border, Chihuahua shares half its borderland with New Mexico (i.e. there is an antique relationship between them that goes as far as the royal road), in this unique frontier, communities (e.g., El Paso, TX., Las

Cruces, NM. And Juárez, CH.) are strong cross-border cultural identity and solid economic ties (Gagliotti, 2017).

7.2. Level of research

This is an explanatory research; those investigations are responsible for looking for the *why* of the facts by establishing cause-effect relationships.

7.3. Population

The students of education are a very important collective in the sensitization of their students first, and then, in the whole community social perception towards individuals with DS, guiding society in direction of a positive change in the actual social image of this individuals, and therefore in the quality of life for this group (Molina et al., 2012).

According to the Quick Facts (NMSU, 2014-2015), there were enrolled a total of 2,239 students in the College of education, from where 772 were graduates and 1,467 undergraduates. From this population we will pull a sample by a non-probabilistic draft, in this procedure the probability of been selected to integrate the sample is unknown.

7.4. Variables

7.4.1. Independent Variable.

The course SPED 350/500: Introduction to Special Education in a Diverse Society offered by the Department of Special Education and Communication Disorders from the New Mexico State University (worth 3 semester credit hours). Its mandatory for every undergraduate student of this department regardless of their major.

7.4.2. Dependent Variable.

The social perception of education undergraduate students from both sides of the border, towards individuals with Down syndrome, measure with the EPSD-3 scale and in-depth interview.

7.5. Design of data collection phases.

The research design applicate a Mixed-method approach. The goal is to draw the unique strengths of each qualitative and quantitative methods. In order to provide a more wide-ranging understanding than would not be possible using only one of them. This study design is to integrate the results of analysis of a large-scale data set with results from in-depth interviews integrating both methods since the research question up to data collection analysis. Willing to provide statistical information on the social perception of students towards individuals with DS, along with quotes from youngsters about how they perceive individuals with DS independent living and autonomy rights. Together the two components will make available a larger insight than either alone, with the quantitative phase giving generalizability and the qualitative phase providing context to the findings (Creswell & Plano, 2018)

8. Chapters structure.

Headland	Chapter Title	Content
Introduction	Non	Definition and justification of object of study. Presentation Of the investigation.
Chapter I	Social Perception	Theoretical approaches of the main authors for conceptualize, characterize and discuss their processes and factors that intervene in them.
Chapter II	Intellectual Disability	Human rights: indepent life and autonomy of individuals with intellectual disability, a widespread development

		historical presentation of the integration, inclusion and exclusion.
Chapter III	Methodology	Definition and characterization of Mixed-method paradigm, the in-depth interview. The Likert scales.
Chapter IV	Findings	
Chapter V	Discussion and Recommendations	

9. Schedule of Activities.

Year	Semester	Activities
2018	Spring	Bibliographic review
	Fall	Writing Chapter I, and II
2019	Spring	Validate the EPSD-3 with a NMSU population.
	Fall	Methodology Redaction Apply EPSD-3 and in/depth interview in NMSU Students
2020	Spring	Apply EPSD-3 and in/depth interview in UACJ Students. Writing Chapter IV and V.

	Fall	
2021	Spring	Publication of an article with this data.
	Fall	Grade Defense

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