



## Security and Safety of School Students with Special Needs in Saudi Arabia

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### Author's contribution

The sole author designed, analyzed and interpreted and prepared the manuscript.

### Article Information

DOI: 10.9734/BJESBS/2016/25283

#### Editor(s):

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- Complete Peer review History: <http://sciencedomain.org/review-history/15071>

Mini-review Article

Received 26<sup>th</sup> February 2016  
Accepted 30<sup>th</sup> May 2016  
Published 20<sup>th</sup> June 2016

### ABSTRACT

**Aim:** To assess security and safety measures used in schools to protect people with special needs students in Saudi Arabia.

**Methodology:** A descriptive study, focused on the conceptual framework of security and safety measures used for school students with special needs, and analyzed current situation of special needs students in the Saudi society. The current study is based on review of a number of local and regional studies.

**Results and Discussion:** Children with special needs had several problems, some are psychological, educational, and social.

**Conclusion:** Students with special needs are exposed to many educational and physical risks and the Ministry of Education is working on applying modern educational methods and safety measures.

*Keywords:* Security; school safety; students; people with special needs; Saudi Arabia.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The issue of disability or (special needs) is general, but it is an issue of an entire society and it needs efforts of all institutions, public and private sectors in order to reduce and limit the negative effects on people with special needs. Rehabilitation, education and training of children with special needs in order to make them adapt to society is not enough. Saudi Arabia has made great strides in this issue and provided the necessary services for these groups as they are part of the community, since have the same rights and duties. That is according to the education policy in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA), which was issued in 1970 to confirm rights of education, training and care for people with special needs without discrimination [1].

The state has taken over care for them in fields of education, physical, and psychic health, economic, and social situations. It also provided them with chances to work according to their abilities and focused on meeting their needs by giving them all the rights [2]. In addition, there are people with special needs, who do not have the ability to get rid of the risks or stay away from them because of physical injuries and some of these people do not have the ability to understand instructions related to security and safety or perception of risk in case of true emergency because of their poor hearing and visual abilities [3]. Hence the researcher is interested in studying the ways and procedures for the security and safety of school for students with special needs.

### 1.1 Research Problem

Students with special needs suffer from lack of society awareness of their issues. Despite of orientation efforts exerted to enhance their status in the KSA, there are some people who still ignore policies of care of them, including some schools that ignore dealing with them, which may promote student's isolation from society and deny their openness to the world to get all rights designated by the laws of the KSA. Especially, since there are some of those in charge of schools that made some barriers; to force the parents of students with special needs to find an attractive environment for their children outside the framework of public education, that costs them exorbitant financial expenses which is better to be used for other services needed for those special needs children. In addition, having

accidents in some schools, which requires availability of security and safety measures for those students in schools. And here comes the main question:

What are safety and security measures necessary for protecting students with special needs?

#### 1.1.1 Practical importance of study

The current study may serve as a decision-making tool in the Ministry of Education and other ministries with overlapped tasks to develop ways and mechanisms for implementation of safety and security measures in schools of disabled students.

#### 1.1.2 Study objectives

- To identify concepts of security and safety in schools.
- To identify characteristics of students with special needs.
- To identify types of special needs.

## 2. METHODOLOGY

A descriptive study was used, which provides useful information for researchers who are presented with new and relevant findings. The goal of descriptive research is to describe situations or behaviors, and to formulate and identify concepts about what is being studied [4].

The current study is divided into two parts, the first identifies the conceptual framework of security and safety in schools, and students with special needs, and the second focuses on security and safety measures, and concluded with important recommendations and mechanisms to treat those problems by a procedural plan.

### 2.1 Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

#### 2.1.1 Concept of school security and safety

There is a close relationship between school and safety and security. Schools have given an appropriate level of security and safety for the domain educational concept that provides requirements through which the schools are the sources of instructions of security and safety for

students to protect them from injuries. Also, provides guidance to teachers in order to maintain the required level of security and safety, and to reduce the problems that can take place either by accidents or inappropriate behaviors of students. As soon as students enter school, the school principals become responsible for their security and safety.

The concept of security and safety of students with special needs is the most important, because they are part of the community and they have all the rights to live well and to get all assistance and care especially those vulnerable to risk. Security is the state of being or feeling secure; freedom from fear, anxiety, danger, doubt, etc.; state or sense of safety or certainty and safety is a state of being protected from potential harm or something that has been designed to protect and prevent harm [5]. Students with special needs may be exposed to high or even fatal risks when compared with healthy people to go up 3 to 5 times [6]. Hence the concept of security and safety is simply to provide a safe environment as much as possible.

## **2.2 Concepts of Special Needs**

Concepts of Special Needs are different according to health care providers, educators or even with community care providers, but there is general agreement on this term as it means a group of people who cannot perform their daily life activities. Estimation of numbers of people with special needs is problematic. The different approaches followed to estimate special need people notwithstanding, demographers agree that the population of people with special needs is very large. For example, in 2012, the World Health Organization estimated world population of 6.5 billion people. Of those, nearly 650 million people, or 10%, were estimated to be moderately or severely disabled [7].

### **2.2.1 Special need definition**

According to WHO, a special need case is a broad term that includes: Impairments, limitations, and restrictions on an individual's body or ability to participate in what is considered "normal" in their everyday society. The special needs may be physical, cognitive, intellectual, sensory, emotional, developmental, or some combination of these. Special needs may be present from birth, or occur during a person's lifetime.

Special needs is an umbrella term, covering impairments, activity limitations, and participation restrictions. An impairment is a problem in body function or structure; an activity limitation is a difficulty encountered by an individual in executing a task or action; while a participation restriction is a problem experienced by an individual in involvement in life situations. Thus, special needs is a complex phenomenon, reflecting an interaction between features of a person's body and features of the society in which he or she lives. Individuals may also qualify as special needs if they have had an impairment in the past or are seen as special needs based on a personal or group standard or norm. Such impairments may include physical, sensory, and cognitive or developmental disabilities. Mental disorders (also known as psychiatric or psychosocial disability) and various types of chronic disease may also qualify as disabilities. Some advocates object to describing certain conditions (notably deafness and autism) as "disabilities", arguing that it is more appropriate to consider them developmental differences that have been unfairly stigmatized by society [8-9]. Others argue that disability is a result of exclusion from mainstream society and not because of impairment [10-11].

### **2.2.2 Types of special needs**

The term "special needs" broadly describes a shortage in a person's ability to function, caused by defects in sensory and motor organs of the body. The severity of disability may classified as mild, moderate, severe [12].

Conditions causing disability are classified by the medical community as [13]:

#### *2.2.2.1 Inherited*

Inherited (genetically transmitted); congenital, meaning caused by a mother's infection or other disease during pregnancy, embryonic or fetal developmental irregularities, or by injury during or soon after birth; acquired, such as conditions caused by illness or injury; of unknown origin[13].

Types of special needs may also be categorized in the following way [13]:

#### *2.2.2.2 Physical*

Any impairment which limits the physical function of limbs, fine bones, or gross motor ability is a physical impairment, not necessarily a physical disability [13].

### 2.2.2.3 Sensory

Sensory disability is impairment of one of the senses. The term is used primarily to refer to vision and hearing impairment, but other senses can be impaired [13].

### 2.2.2.4 Vision

Vision loss of a person requires support of others due to limitation of visual capability [14-16]. This functional loss of vision is typically defined to manifest with best corrected visual acuity, or significant central field defect, significant peripheral field defects [15-19].

### 2.2.2.5 Hearing

Hearing impairment or hard of hearing or deafness refers to conditions in which individuals are fully or partially unable to detect or perceive at least some frequencies of sound which can typically be heard by most people. Mild hearing loss may sometimes not be considered a disability [13].

### 2.2.2.6 Olfactory and gustatory

Impairment of the sense of smell and taste are commonly associated with aging but can also occur in younger people due to a wide variety of causes [13].

### 2.2.2.7 Somatosensory

Insensitivity to stimuli such as touch, heat, cold, and pain are often an adjunct to a more general physical impairment involving neural pathways and is very commonly associated with paralysis (in which the motor neural circuits are also affected) [13].

### 2.2.2.8 Balance disorder

A balance disorder is a disturbance that causes an individual to feel unsteady, for example when standing or walking [13].

### 2.2.2.9 Intellectual

Intellectual disability is a broad concept that ranges from mental retardation to cognitive deficits too mild or too specific (as in specific learning disability) to qualify as intellectual retardation [13].

### 2.2.2.10 Mental health and emotional

A mental disorder or mental illness is a psychological or behavioral pattern generally associated with subjective distress or disability that occurs in an individual, and perceived by the majority of society as being outside of normal development or cultural expectations [13,20].

### 2.2.2.11 Developmental

Developmental special needs is any disability that results in problems with growth and development [21-23].

### 2.2.2.12 Nonvisible

There are many chronic disorders, such as diabetes, asthma, inflammatory bowel disease, epilepsy, narcolepsy, fibromyalgia, and some sleep disorders may be nonvisible special needs [13].

## 3. SECURITY AND SAFETY MEASURES FOR SPECIAL NEEDS STUDENTS IN SCHOOLS

Saudi Arabia is considered the leading Arab state in terms of applying modern educational techniques for school students with special needs. It applied modern methods and techniques that focus on individual senses with low restrictive educational model which is close as possible to normal model of normal students.

The Kingdom has made strides towards moving individuals with special needs from the isolated environment to regular school environment that has become acceptable by a large number of people in the community.

In part two of review, there are two sections, the first is to identify the adverse effects suffered by students with special needs to make recommendations and suggestions to overcome problems and improve performance of special need's students in public and private education.

### 3.1 The Kingdom's Efforts in Caring for Special Needs Students

According to the educational policies in the Kingdom, which stipulated in articles (54-57) and (188-194) endorse education of eminent and special needs students as an integral part of the

educational system, and keep pace with developments in the field of special education in the Kingdom, the Ministry of Education is aware of problems of students with special needs, in which (20%) of students may need special education services, also the Ministry of Education is convinced of the importance of providing services to these groups and hopes to find improvement in the educational process. The Ministry of Education determined ten axes of educational strategy which aimed to activate the role of regular schools in upbringing and educating children with special needs and expanding role of the institutes of private education to play other roles performed by the aforementioned. These axes are as the following [23]:

- Activating the role of regular schools in upbringing and education of children with special needs based on the principle of the regular educational schools is normal for the vast majority of children, the Ministry of Education seeks to activate the role of ordinary schools through the following steps:
- Expansion of development programs of classes of ordinary schools which can be divided into two types: The first type is those classes that apply special education and curricula, and the second type is those classes that apply the curriculum of normal school such as classes of students who are blind and hearing impaired.
- Utilization of modern educational methods by introducing resources, rooms, roving teacher programs, teacher Advisor programs, and follow-up programs in special education, which supports achievements of educational demands.
- Expanding the role of the Ministry's special education schools by activating the role of regular schools which represent a good educational option for generations, and these institutes should undertake additional roles as follows [24]:

1. Development of specialized programs for care and upbringing children with multiple special needs, and other children who have difficulty to join ordinary schools.
2. Helping these institutes and supporting them with information and services.

3. Providing training centers with specialized training courses for teachers, supervisors and school principals.
4. Enhancement of special education resources in institutes by employing eminent graduates and increasing the training courses.
5. Development of curricula, study plans and textbooks.
6. Development of modern education technology to serve special groups "using vision, hearing, and mobility aids".
7. Development of the organizational structure for special education and creating new departments for special need students.
8. Reassessment of the existing regulations and developing new regulations for future programs.
9. Activating the role of the special education departments by providing manpower, equipment and premises.
10. Activating the role of scientific research in the field of special education.
11. Cooperation and coordination with other relevant representatives in the KSA and abroad.

### **3.2 Methods Used to Enhance Security and Safety Procedures in School of Students with Special Needs**

Table 1, shows safety and security measures that should be taken into account while caring with special needs' students. Merging students with special needs in schools requires the following safety and security procedures. There are intuitive recommendations should be steadfast used, which include [25]:

- Building should be free of close ended pathways.
- Training of all staff on providing first aid.
- Assigning a supervisor for safety and security.
- Performing evacuation trainings.

**Table 1. Shows basic requirements and procedures for maintaining security and safety of the special needs students**

Requirement	Implementation	Proposed time for implementation
Evacuation	<p>Developing a plan for the evacuation of special needs in emergency situations and training all teachers and supervisors regularly on implementation, that training must not use lifts but the stairs.                      Evacuation must be taught by Braille and methods applied hypothetically to explain the school's schemes and escape routes to the blind students.                      Using red lighting for deaf or certain lighting to accommodate the occurrence of danger when it happens.                      Appointing a supervisor for each building includes handicapped classes, to be responsible for safety and implementing emergency evacuation plan with support of trained teachers.                      All employees must be trained in the special needs people's centers for first aid and rescue methods.                      If necessary, special needs students can be evacuated to safe places by blankets.                      Emergency exits must arrive to the grounds or safe space, not to the street.                      Highlight exits and ways of escape.                      It must have a medical center and ambulance for all schools especially those that have students with special needs.</p>	<p>Throughout the year were followed up periodically each month in order to avoid errors or negative points and work on improvement.</p>
Safety and security inside buildings	<p>Develop fire extinguishers with dry chemical powder in the professional workshops and laboratories.                      First aid box in each class and checking them every month.                      Provides alarm commensurate with each type of special needs:                      Example:                      - Hearing room equipped with sound and light (flashers).                      - Visual special needs notified by audio alarms.                      It must provide special emergency slides for students with mobility impairments.                      Using symbols and signs of for emergency exists.                      It must provide keys and electricity plugs which commensurate with each type of special needs.                      It must provide internal doors with protective plastic frames.                      The ground must be appropriate to avoid gliding.                      Windows must be easy to open or close.                      Keeping safety exits and emergency lanes unlocked.</p>	
Training activity	<p>Increasing awareness campaigns for people with special needs in schools with the slogan "schools without distinction" and include series of events and outreach activities directed to students in different educational levels.                      Also focus on educating students on school security and safety procedures and how to deal with students with special needs. Moreover, presenting an educational films.</p>	<p>The Ministry of Education (security management and school safety) assigning an observer to assume the functions of the awareness campaign in schools periodically with participation of the concerned authorities of their respective (Civil Defense, Red Crescent, traffic, health, media, electricity, etc.)</p>

#### 4. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the rights of students with special needs deserves attention of the Ministry of Education to provide all requirements and assistance that would enable them to get a high quality education with low exposure to risk. Students with special needs are individuals in the community who have all the rights and also are part of society. So, laws must be set to protect them and enable them to participate in the community activities.

#### COMPETING INTERESTS

Author has declared that no competing interests exist.

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