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TEZĂ DE DOCTORAT

SUMMARY

Improving learning difficulties in students with special educational needs (SEN) integrated in mainstream schools. An experimental program of school integration through sensory activities.

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Keywords: learning difficulties, special educational needs, school integration, multidisciplinary team, cognitive stimulation program, Sensory Room, Neurofeedback therapy.

The field of education is constantly evolving in a world full of changes to meet current challenges. These challenges are particularly complex for both teachers and students.

Learning must be adapted to align with modern educational objectives, which require students to demonstrate specific competencies for social and professional integration and to reach the required level of competence in a given field. Learning adaptation refers to the ability of a system or an individual to adjust and improve based on experience or changes in the surrounding environment. In the context of technology and automated learning, this concept refers to an algorithm or model's capacity to adapt to new data or situations to enhance its performance. Learning adaptation for a student with Special Educational Needs (SEN) involves specific approaches and strategies to meet the unique educational needs of that student. Each student with SEN can have different requirements and abilities, so adaptation must be personalized for each individual.

Unfortunately, in educational practice, the strategies of teaching often remain anchored in tradition, favoring passive or conservative methods over active-participatory and interactive strategies that stimulate thinking, imagination, and memory through direct student involvement. Not adapting the teaching approach to the student's potential leads to an increase in the number of students with special educational needs. Lagging behind in learning, lack of adapted programs, visible and invisible assessment errors contribute to more students benefiting from a Certificate of School and Professional Orientation (CSPO).

Who are students with Special Educational Needs? Students with SEN are those who have special educational needs requiring individualized attention and approaches to learning. These needs may be related to disabilities or unique educational requirements that set them apart from typical students. Students with SEN may require additional support or adaptations to have equal access to quality education, as they can be both students with disabilities and students without disabilities but with persistent signs of struggling to meet school demands.

The increasing number of students with SEN is also due to the fact that many come from families with low educational levels and precarious socio-economic conditions. Properly integrating them into mainstream education requires a genuine partnership between the school and

the student's family. To make this partnership work, teachers must understand and act correctly regarding the integration of these students and explain to parents the methods that will make the educational process a success.

Adaptation of learning for students with SEN starts with primary education, where teachers often notice that some students struggle to process certain types of information, leading to problems such as lack of organization, difficulties in socialization, susceptibility to accidents, challenges in adapting to change, hyperactivity, or lack of attention.

To properly integrate students with SEN into mainstream schools, a multidisciplinary team assesses the student and confirms their special educational needs. Then, the teacher, together with the school counselor and support teacher, develops inclusion and integration strategies for these students. It is important to note that the term "Special Educational Needs" covers a wide range of individual needs and uniqueness, and each student may have a different combination of needs. Their approach requires individualized attention, a deep understanding of their needs, and a sensitive and respectful approach to ensure they receive appropriate and inclusive education.

This work aims to support school counselors in the school integration of students with special educational needs. The successful functioning of the integration mechanism relies on a functional team. Based on the premise that these students with SEN can be integrated into mainstream schools through adapted programs created by teachers, the role of the school counselor remains advisory, often insufficient. Building on acquired teaching knowledge, it's opportune to use flexible and tailored means to assist these students.

Regarding the structure of this work, it consists of two parts: a theoretical part and a practical part.

Chapter I, titled "Theoretical Considerations Regarding Inclusive Education for Students with Special Educational Needs in Mainstream Education," deals with the theoretical aspects of inclusive education. As the existence of children with various conditions has been observed throughout world history, an approach to Romanian inclusive education is presented based on Romanian and international historical and pedagogical information. In ancient times, individuals with disabilities were subjected to exclusive practices that aimed at the denial of equal rights or the refusal of citizenship. After the emergence of Christianity as an official form of religion, a moral-religious concept was introduced that promoted compassion and tolerance towards individuals with disabilities, although this was not universally applicable. Much later, during the

Enlightenment era, the first concerns about educating children with disabilities emerged. Over time, Romania aligned with the European trend and only after the 1989 Revolution did it promote various educational policies in support of inclusive education. These policies align with European educational principles and policies, which have been discussed and approved in various meetings of education specialists worldwide.

Inclusive education represents an approach that advocates for the learning and participation of all students, regardless of their differences. The integration of students with special educational needs (SEN) into mainstream education has both advantages and limitations. As advantages, it can be highlighted that students with SEN can develop better social and communication skills through interaction with their peers. Simultaneously, their peers learn to communicate and collaborate with individuals with different needs. In an inclusive environment, teachers are compelled to address varied learning styles and different developmental rhythms, potentially leading to more personalized education for all students. Inclusive education can contribute to combating stereotypes and discrimination, fostering a more open and equitable environment. However, it should not be disregarded that the integration of students with SEN requires adaptations and additional resources to ensure that all students receive the necessary education. This can create pressures on the educational system. Moreover, not all teachers are prepared to manage the diverse needs of students with SEN. The need to adapt the curriculum and teaching methods can pose a challenge for some educators.

Chapter II: Characteristics of Specific Learning Difficulties and Disorders in Primary School Students

This chapter discusses the characteristics of specific learning difficulties and disorders in primary school students. The term "special educational needs" has emerged due to current attention given to the education of individuals with various learning issues. This term is mainly used in relation to students who have learning difficulties, learning disabilities, or learning disorders. The concept of "learning difficulties" covers a wide range of aspects; these manifestations are caused by a variety of factors, and there is no single cause for them. Learning difficulties are an indirect consequence of mental, sensory, emotional, or behavioral disorders, compounded by environmental conditions. Differentiated teaching, adapted to the needs of students with SEN, can only be achieved if the teacher is well acquainted with the individual and age-specific characteristics of the student. A strong understanding of the characteristics of learning difficulties

helps us comprehend the educational imbalances faced by students with SEN and how to intervene in ameliorating these issues. To support students with learning difficulties, it is helpful to understand the classifications of learning difficulties, as well as interventions for students experiencing academic failure. Teachers, together with the intervention team, must observe when a student falls behind in learning and distinguish between learning difficulties and academic failure. If learning occurs consistently, in suitable doses for the individual and age-specific characteristics of the student, we can refer to self-regulated learning, an action that regulates cognitive, emotional, and social activities.

Over time, various taxonomies of learning difficulties have been developed. Through categorizing and classifying different learning difficulties, taxonomies can aid educators and specialists in identifying the specific needs of students. This allows for the development of personalized and adapted educational plans. Taxonomies can provide teachers with a structured framework for planning and providing appropriate instructions to meet the diverse needs of students. When discussing the differential diagnosis of learning difficulties, we refer to the process of excluding other disorders or conditions that could cause symptoms similar to those of a learning difficulty. Differential diagnosis of learning difficulties is applicable to visual or auditory impairments, mental health disorders (ADHD, depression), developmental disorders (autism, Down syndrome), language or speech disorders, genetic or genetic disorders, as well as socio-economic and environmental factors. Strategic cognitive intervention is necessary to modify learning difficulties. If not planned and executed, falling behind will inevitably lead to academic failure.

The relationship between learning and development in the context of learning difficulties is complex and interconnected. Understanding this relationship can aid in the development of more effective approaches to managing and supporting students with learning difficulties. Learning and development are mutually influential processes. Learning can influence development and vice versa. Students with learning difficulties can make progress in their skill development if they receive appropriate support and personalized learning. Adapted learning can target the specific development of skills that are inadequately developed in students with learning difficulties. By providing support and practice, improvement of these skills can be facilitated. Self-regulated learning is directly influenced by motivation, strategies, personal control, behavior, and context (Zimmerman, 2000). It's a process through which students transform mental abilities into

successful strategies. The way a student positions themselves in relation to school tasks dictates the achievement of learning objectives. Our goal is to teach students with SEN to use self-regulated learning to the greatest extent possible, thereby acquiring the necessary skills for progress.

Chapter III, Methodological Aspects Regarding the Identification and Amelioration of Learning Difficulties, presents the stages of identifying students with special educational needs (SEN) and the steps required for a student to obtain a School and Vocational Orientation Certificate, which grants them the right to educational services adapted to their needs. Initial, ongoing, and final assessment are the three necessary stages for evaluating students with both SEN and disabilities. Several dimensions of assessment exist, including medical, psychological, pedagogical, and social evaluations to determine the type and severity of the impairment. Additionally, from a psychopedagogical perspective, curriculum assessment, psychodiagnostics, and scholastic prediction are included. Educational assessments encompass a variety of information types that teachers use to assist each student with SEN during the learning process within mainstream schools.

Initial assessment, conducted in the classroom by the educator, is insufficient if the measurement of academic performance is desired, as it overlooks the formative aspect of learning. In many cases, the identification of these students remains at the initiative of the teacher, who may err in creating conclusive assessment tasks. Besides the usual tests administered in the classroom, the evaluating teacher must take into account the student's life experiences and prior knowledge.

Complex, ongoing, or formative assessment aims to initiate and monitor specific training, practice, and/or intervention programs. It highlights what the student knows and can do, the skills demonstrated during testing, and what still needs to be developed. The composition of the complex evaluation team typically includes the social worker from the Social Assistance Service of the municipality, the family doctor, the classroom teacher or homeroom teacher, the school counselor or itinerant teacher, the speech therapist, the psychologist, and the specialist doctor or kinesiotherapist (if necessary). At the family's request, each of these specialists will prepare an observation report. The objective of this evaluation is to formulate conclusions regarding the situation of the student undergoing the process of obtaining a School and Vocational Orientation Certificate. We have in mind the design and implementation of specific support measures from a medical, social, psychological, or educational perspective. Completion of these evaluations (medical/psychiatric, psychological, educational, and social) leads to compiling the necessary

documentation for the second stage of evaluation: that carried out by the CJRAE (County Centers for Resources and Educational Assistance) - SEOSP (School and Vocational Orientation and Evaluation Service) and COPS (School and Vocational Orientation Commission).

Once the student obtains the School and Vocational Orientation Certificate, the educational facilitator, who promotes and mediates inclusive education, structures their teaching-assessment process according to the student's personalized needs. They will create annual and unit-based adapted plans, a personalized intervention plan, and a psychopedagogical record. The teacher instructing the student with SEN must possess a curriculum-inclusive vision of teaching and assessment, continuously developing their teaching competencies. The quality of inclusive educational practices largely depends on the teacher's ability to relate to students. In this context, we propose correcting this competency by introducing the term "inclusive biofeedback," which involves the student with SEN gaining the ability to manage distractors and create a somatically and psychologically safe environment. Educators play a crucial role in identifying needs and developing suitable strategies to ensure effective and inclusive learning for all students in the classroom, as well as a genuine assessment of these students' knowledge. In this case, assessment will be conducted through individualized and curriculum-based approaches (Individualized Assessment and Curriculum-Based Assessment). Authentic instruction and assessment encourage the development of real skills and enhance students' motivation and engagement in the learning process. Diverse use of assessment methods, techniques, and tools will ensure high-quality education and accurate, authentic assessment.

Chapter IV, Sensory Play as a Learning and Remedial Therapy Method for Students with Special Educational Needs, presents general considerations about play and its psychosocial approach in the context of inclusive education. For students with SEN, it has been demonstrated that didactic and therapeutic play enhances intelligence and the ability to learn (Dulsky, 1942, pp. 119-220). A classification of games has been established based on their intended purpose, educational tasks, content, and role in activities. Didactic play significantly contributes to the development of mental processes. Didactic games can foster skills like logical thinking, problem-solving, decision-making, and strategic planning.

A particular focus in this chapter is on sensory play and activities in the sensory room, which form the basis of the psychopedagogical experiment in the second part of this work. Various types of age-adapted games for primary school students stimulate visual, social, and emotional skills.

Students need to see what is happening to connect with their environment. These types of games teach us to use all our senses, improve our observations, perceive changes, and learn patterns. The same principle underlies learning for neurodivergent children, those diagnosed with disorders on the autism spectrum. According to recent statistics in the United States, approximately 1 in 54 children have been diagnosed with autism spectrum disorders, dyslexia, dyspraxia, Tourette syndrome, perceptual disorders (synesthesia), dyscalculia, or Down syndrome (Maenner et al., 2020). The majority of primary schools likely consist of a neurodivergent population. Neurodivergence (Singer, 2017) describes people who process stimuli differently. This means they may need resources to adapt their unique neural pathways. Through sensory play, students with learning disabilities can manage emotions that hinder learning. The installation of sensory equipment allows them to process feelings and emotions, helping them reach their full potential. One such equipment is the Sensory Room, a therapeutic space with various equipment offering students with special needs personalized sensory input, helping them calm down and focus, thus preparing them better for learning and interaction with others. As inclusive education entails using play as a primary activity, we introduce sensory play (Neurofeedback therapy) as a novel element in the context of gamifying the learning process.

Neurofeedback is not a new concept. It is a self-regulation therapy for the brain; it is biofeedback applied to the brain. Because it relies on electroencephalogram (EEG) results, Neurofeedback is also known as EEG biofeedback. Neurofeedback is a therapeutic technique involving real-time monitoring of a person's brain activity and providing visual or auditory feedback to help regulate this activity. This technique is based on the brain's plasticity principle, which is its ability to adapt and modify functioning patterns over time. Neurofeedback can be used in various contexts, including treating various neuropsychiatric disorders and improving cognitive performance. By complementing Neurofeedback therapy with associated activities in schools where students have special educational needs, we can significantly contribute to the integration of these students. The effects of this therapy are well-known, and students engage with enthusiasm. Neurofeedback therapy can recondition and train the brain to enhance the cognitive functions of students with SEN. When combined with activities specific to inclusive biofeedback training, professionals working with these students (school counselors, psychologists) will have a valuable tool for ameliorating learning difficulties and facilitating school reintegration.

Part II of the study presents the Pedagogical Experimental Research on the Improvement of Learning Difficulties through the Use of Sensory Learning Methods for Students with SEN Integrated into Mainstream School. Within the Psychopedagogical Support Cabinet, as a school counselor, a study is proposed that focuses on reducing learning difficulties in students with SEN attending mainstream school using sensory learning methods: sensory room, sensory stimulation-based games and activities, non-invasive Neurofeedback therapy. This is an experimental school integration program.

The research aim supported the development, implementation, and testing of the effectiveness of a psychopedagogical school integration program (cognitive and socio-emotional) based on improving inclusive biofeedback in students with SEN in grades I-IV with mild or moderate risk in academic skill development through the use of sensory methods (sensory room, Neurofeedback therapy), games, and activities specific to inclusive education. These interventions are expected to lead to improved academic performance (in Romanian Language and Mathematics) obtained in the classroom and support sessions.

The research objectives were as follows:

O1 - Development of an experimental school integration program (cognitive and socio-emotional) based on the use of sensory methods: sensory room, Neurofeedback therapy, games, and activities specific to inclusive education.

O2 - Implementation of the experimental program in the Counseling Cabinet of "Mihai Eminescu" Elementary School in Năsăud.

O3 - Implementation of the program on the selected target group of students with SEN who possess an SEN Certificate.

O4 - Implementation of the experimental program activities with the goal of improving inclusive biofeedback as a premise for school integration (cognitive and socio-emotional).

O5 - Establishing causality: analyzing how the current program is related to the academic results of students with learning difficulties.

O6 - Creating a best practices guide so that school counselors can apply the research results in their school practice.

The research questions focused on the essence of the research, clarifying and guiding the experimental process. The following research questions were formulated:

Q1 - What strategies (methods, tools, techniques, organizational forms) can be implemented in the Counseling Cabinet for the integration of students with SEN?

Q2 - To what extent is it possible for the implementation of an experimental intervention program designed in accordance with the activity of the Psychopedagogical Support Cabinet to contribute to the integration of students with SEN?

Q3 - How should the experimental intervention program be designed for primary cycle students with SEN to achieve their integration?

The general hypothesis necessary for the organization and conduct of the undertaken experiment could be concretized as follows:

c) **General hypothesis** – The participation of students assessed with CES in mainstream education, in a school integration program based on the use of sensory learning tools (sensory games, sensory room, neurofeedback therapy) and centered on inclusive biofeedback, contributes to the reduction of learning difficulties, to school integration and implicitly to the increase of school performance (in Mathematics and Romanian Language) obtained in the classroom.

Specific hypotheses examined the direct relationship between the experimental intervention program and the dependent variables and included:

- the existence of a relationship between the school integration program and the reduction of learning difficulties and implicitly the increase in school performance obtained in the classroom;

- the existence of a relationship between the use of sensory learning tools (sensory games, sensory room, Neurofeedback therapy), school reintegration and the effectiveness of inclusive biofeedback in formal and informal contexts;

- the existence of a relationship between the use of sensory learning tools and the improvement of student-student and student-teacher relationships.

After formulating the hypotheses and research questions, the development of the variables was necessary to ensure that the psychopedagogical intervention aligned with the established objectives.

Independent Variable - The experimental school integration program based on the use of sensory methods (sensory games, sensory room, Neurofeedback therapy) and centered on inclusive biofeedback.

Dependent Variables:

DV1 - The degree of reduction in learning difficulties.

DV2 - School integration (cognitive and socio-emotional) of students with SEN.

DV3 - Academic performance measured by scores obtained in Romanian Language and Mathematics, compared between the pre-experimental and post-experimental periods.

The experimental group consists of 25 students with SEN assessed by the CJRAE, from the primary cycle, grades I-IV. They will benefit from the intervention program implemented at the Psychological Counseling Cabinet of "Mihai Eminescu" Primary School in Năsăud. The selected students in the experimental group are from the classes I-IV at "Mihai Eminescu" Primary School in Năsăud; only students with an OȘP Certificate issued by CJRAE Bistrița-Năsăud were chosen from each class.

Research Methods and Instruments:

In the methodological framework underlying the pedagogical research, the following research methods were identified: pedagogical experiment, questionnaire-based survey, analysis of activity products, observation, focus group. The research instruments used included the sensory room, the SMALSI questionnaire, the questionnaire addressed to teachers, and the observation sheet.

The stages of the experimental research were in line with the aim of our study: examining the socio-psychological and cognitive adaptation characteristics of students with SEN in mainstream schools, while following the research-action stages and the scientific role of the researcher in drawing conclusions and disseminating results. Furthermore, the purpose of the experiment was to validate a strategy that can help children with SEN adapt more easily to primary school classes within mainstream schools. The research had an evaluative approach since the activities conducted during the experimental phase were assessed during the post-experimental phase to draw research conclusions.

The research-action phase took place from October 1, 2022, to February 8, 2023.

Pre-Experimental Phase: October 15 - October 30, 2022; the experimental group was formed, questionnaires were administered to teachers and the SMASLI questionnaire to students in the experimental group; data regarding the grades of students with SEN in Romanian Language and Mathematics were collected.

Formative Experimental Phase: November 1, 2022 - January 27, 2023; the experimental program was conducted.

Post-Experimental Phase: February 1, 2023 - February 8, 2023; the SMALSI questionnaire was re-administered, a focus group was conducted with teachers who had students involved in the experimental program; the average grades obtained by students in Module I were compared to Module II, corresponding to the pre-experimental and post-experimental stages.

School vacation periods and days off were excluded.

During the pre-experimental phase, a series of preliminary investigations were carried out to identify the developmental needs of young students with SEN in terms of emotional, social, and cognitive skills, as well as their role in regulating learning behaviors from the perspective of teachers. This was preparatory for the experimental phase and the actual intervention activity. Additionally, a questionnaire was administered to students in the experimental group to identify underdeveloped learning strategies and the level of school motivation (SMALSI). To monitor academic performance, measured by scores obtained in Romanian Language and Mathematics by students in the experimental group, teachers and support teachers were asked to provide this data.

The objectives of the pre-experimental phase were designed in correlation with the research variables - V.I.1. the continuity of the experimental program through activities supported in the classroom and support cabinet for the degree of learning difficulties manifestation (V.D.1).

Objective 1 (O1) - Designing a measurement scale for assessing the developmental needs of socio-emotional and cognitive skills from the perspective of teachers, based on indicators found in the specialized literature.

Objective 2 (O2) - Testing the validity of the scale by applying it to a considerable group of teachers to determine the extent to which the formulation of items is appropriate for the level of understanding of teachers working with students with SEN.

Objective 3 (O3) - Designing an intervention program to alleviate the learning difficulties of students with SEN through the use of sensory learning tools.

Objective 4 (O4) - Pre-testing the subject group before applying the intervention program to measure low academic motivation, test anxiety, and concentration/attention difficulties.

The conception and validation of a measurement scale for the developmental needs of socio-emotional and cognitive skills from the perspective of teachers were developed based on the research theme. A scale for measuring the developmental needs of socio-emotional and cognitive skills from the perspective of teachers was designed. To this end, a questionnaire was administered to the 19 teaching staff members who had students with SEN in their classes. The questionnaire

consists of 14 items that evaluate the dimensions of forming cognitive and socio-emotional skills in students with SEN.

In this phase, a questionnaire for assessing learning strategies (SMALSI) was administered to the students. According to the SMALSI Manual (Cognitrom), the SMALSI questionnaire is designed to evaluate ten main constructs related to learning strategies and academic motivation. Among these, seven focus on the student's strengths, while three focus on weaknesses. The SMALSI questionnaire aids in identifying students' emotional disorders. Emotional disorders interfere with difficulties related to academic performance and the learning strategies used; high levels of anxiety lead to cognitive rigidity, reduced learning motivation, unhealthy work habits, and a negative attitude towards school.

After data collection, both qualitative interpretation (detailed interpretation and descriptions) and quantitative analysis (generalization of results, identification of cause-and-effect relationships) of the received responses were carried out for both the Questionnaire for identifying the developmental needs of socio-emotional and cognitive skills in young school-age students and their role in regulating learning behaviors, as well as the SMALSI questionnaire addressed to the students in the experimental group.

The objectives of the experimental phase were designed in alignment with the research variables and aimed at the participation of students in the experimental school integration program based on the use of sensory learning tools (sensory games, sensory room, neurofeedback therapy) and centered on inclusive biofeedback (independent variable):

Objective 1 (O1): Implementing the intervention program for the school integration of students with SEN, based on the use of sensory learning tools (sensory games, sensory room, neurofeedback therapy) and centered on inclusive biofeedback.

Each of the 10 sessions conducted with each student in the experimental group was designed based on the report released by CJRAE. Common to these sessions, they consisted of two parts, completed by each of the 25 students:

Part I - Inclusive biofeedback stimulation, which provides valuable information about the physical, mental, and cognitive state of the student during the activity. Through simple questions related to health, emotional state, or what the student wishes to learn at that moment, the student is assisted in overcoming moments of stress and responding to their needs (5-minute interview). This term serves to open the way to potential distractor control, offering an environment that captures

participants' attention, helping them regulate their body somatically and psychologically. Within this stage, the student will receive several tasks in the form of games that need to be solved.

The second part of the activity will take place through participation in a 20-30 minute neurofeedback session and a brief recap of the activity. Neurofeedback therapy is recommended to be conducted in a quiet, sound-isolated room with diffused lighting, to avoid distracting the subject. Each session follows a personalized protocol based on the objectives set. These objectives are based on the subject's state, recorded in the observation sheet and official documents (Certificate for Special Educational Needs, psycho-pedagogical report).

At the end of the activity, we will ask questions and observe if the student has achieved the proposed objectives:

How do you feel today?

Responses can vary from "good" to "I don't know"; clear, developed responses will be requested, such as "Today, I came in feeling happy/angry."

Have you answered any questions so far (on that day)? How did you feel when you were asked/when you raised your hand?

Responses can vary: "I was nervous," "I didn't know very well," "I didn't know anything and I cried," etc.

How did your classmates react when you answered?

The activities of the students in the experimental program will be recorded in an observation sheet.

The post-experimental phase took place from February 1, 2023, to February 8, 2023. Tests, worksheets, and grades obtained by the students in the pretest-posttest phase were monitored. The SMALSI questionnaire was administered again to the experimental group. The purpose of the activities in this phase was to verify the stability of the results obtained in the previous experimental intervention over time.

The objectives of the post-experimental phase were designed in correlation with the research variables V.I.1. the continuity of the experimental program through sustained activities in the classroom and support cabinet for the degree of manifestation of learning difficulties (V.D.1):

Objective 1 (O1): Designing a questionnaire addressed to teachers to reflect their conclusions regarding the conduct of the experimental program (focus group).

Objective 2 (O.2): Collecting, analyzing, and processing the data from the questionnaire (focus group) to evaluate the efficiency of the experimental program from the perspective of teachers.

Objective 3 (O3): Testing the group of subjects after the implementation of the intervention program to measure low academic motivation, test anxiety, and difficulties in concentration/attention.

Objective 4 (O4): Collecting, analyzing, and processing SMALSI questionnaire data to measure low academic motivation, test anxiety, and concentration/attention difficulties after the implementation of the intervention program.

Objective 5 (O5): Analyzing the results obtained by students in Romanian Language and Mathematics, comparatively, pretest-posttest.

In this phase, statistical analysis of the data was conducted following the reapplication of the SMALSI questionnaire and statistical comparisons between the pre-experimental and post-experimental phases. The scores in Romanian Language and Mathematics obtained by the students in the pre-experimental phase were compared with the scores obtained in the post-experimental phase, as well as their correlations with the research variables. Through the focus group conducted with teachers, important insights were obtained about how they understood the integration of students with SEN into mainstream schools and to what extent they believe the conducted program influenced the personalities of the students in the experimental group.

Ethical considerations of the research were elaborated.

The results of the Preexperimental Stage

The results of the questionnaire regarding the identification of the developmental needs of socio-emotional and cognitive skills in young school-age students and their role in regulating learning behaviors were correlated with the research variables. The aim of the study is to discover a connection between the cognitive and socio-emotional skills of primary school students with Special Educational Needs (SEN), as well as how a teacher can recognize the importance of these skills and help students acquire them to facilitate their integration into school. The cognitive and socio-emotional skills of students with SEN from "Mihai Eminescu" Primary School in Năsăud were investigated based on the knowledge and observations of the teaching staff. To measure these elements, Likert scales with 3, 5, and 7 points were used. The statistical analysis of the research data was conducted using SPSS version 29. To create a single variable, the mean of items for each

question was calculated. The reliability of each scale was assessed using Cronbach Alpha, yielding significant values. The calculation of Cronbach Alpha correlation coefficients indicates strong consistency among the questionnaire variables. As the content validity criteria of the items were met, focusing on the degree of learning difficulties and socio-emotional integration of students, the Cronbach Alpha correlation coefficients show that this instrument is useful for evaluating teachers' knowledge in the field of special educational requirements. The content validity of the questionnaire items provides the possibility to analyze and discuss the responses provided by teachers, which can lead to the design of initial and continuous training programs to enrich knowledge about special educational requirements.

Correlations were established between the research variables and the obtained correlations in the following four directions:

- Cognitive processes and skills;
- Pre-academic skills;
- Socio-emotional skills;
- Decisive skills in the integration of students with SEN.

The correlation coefficient values indicate that the relationships between the analyzed variables are moderate to strong, with coefficients ranging from 0.40 to 0.70.

The study's results support the achievement of the proposed goal. According to the study, it was considered that there is a connection between the cognitive and socio-emotional skills of primary school students with SEN and their integration into mainstream education. This depends on how teachers recognize their importance and stimulate these skills. Thus, educational and teaching-learning activities for students with SEN can be optimized.

Following the application of the SMALSI Questionnaire for assessing learning strategies, the necessary steps for interpreting the results were followed. According to the SMALSI Manual, the scales targeting students' weaknesses (MOTSCA, TANX, and DIFCON) were measured. Scoring was done manually, verifying each questionnaire to ensure the accuracy of completion and taking measures for students to complete or correct their responses. Raw scores, T scores, and INC (inconsistent responses) scores were calculated for the experimental group, and the index score for inconsistent responses was calculated for each respondent. The data from the three considered scales were statistically analyzed using SPSS version 29. To create a single variable, the mean of

items for each question was calculated. The reliability of each scale was assessed using Cronbach Alpha, resulting in significant values (between 0.96 and 0.97).

The SMALSI Questionnaire was re-administered in the postexperimental phase. It was considered relevant that in this period, after the experimental phase, the progress of the experimental group (pretest-posttest phase) could be observed. It was taken into account that these students need to be integrated into their original class groups, and a qualitative and quantitative measurement of data was undertaken. Some lower frequency scores are due to eight students having a psychiatric diagnosis of ADHD or hyperkinetic disorder. Considering these aspects, it was noted that the progress of these eight students was lower than that of other students in terms of the DIFCON scale. Small differences were also observed in the MOTSCA scale in the postexperimental phase, as the experimental group included seven students with borderline intelligence, with IQ scores between 70 and 90. However, the progress of these students is reflected in the difference between the average scores obtained during Module I and Module II in subjects like Romanian language and Mathematics. The increases are significant, and it can be said that the experimental program contributed to optimizing the academic performance of the students included in the experimental program. This is reflected in the improvement of students' concentration, attention, cognitive and socio-emotional skill development during the experimental program's duration.

In the postexperimental phase, a focus group was conducted with teachers who have students with SEN in their classes and who participated in the experimental program. As a qualitative method, the aim was to understand how these teachers perceived the conducted activities and whether they aligned with the activities undertaken by the students to maintain program continuity. Through this focus group, it was noted whether the teachers involved in the program understood that cognitive stimulation is a relatively easy process to apply in the classroom, with exercises that can be selected not only for students with SEN but also for other students. Additionally, inclusive biofeedback requires minimal knowledge of sanogenesis but is crucial for the psycho-physiological and mental integration of students in the learning process. The interview guide was presented, containing two sections:

Section I: Cognitive skills, with three questions addressed.

Section II: Socio-emotional skills, with three questions addressed.

After the discussions were concluded, the obtained data were processed. Through content analysis of the transcribed responses, common points and positive feedback from the discussions were identified. The responses were synthesized, revealing that as the program began to function, the students' needs to be in a community, establish relationships with peers of the same age, be part of a group, and compete with other teams became more pronounced. Concerning participation in school activities, these students displayed a positive, visible trajectory. The fear of taking tests, answering questions in class, and engaging in group or team activities nearly disappeared. An increase in interest in reading and visits to the library was observed. In relationships with classmates, significant improvements were evident: classmates no longer laughed at them, major conflicts ceased to exist, and teamwork and mutual assistance became stronger. These results can be correlated with the research variables.

CONCLUSIONS

This paper presents a comprehensive, flexible program for successfully addressing the inclusion of students with SEN in mainstream schools. The learning environment is friendly and caters to the needs of students in the current program and beyond. The specific hypothesis was formulated through a direct relationship between the experimental intervention program and dependent variables, tracking the relationship between the use of sensory learning methods (sensory games, sensory room, neurofeedback therapy) and scholastic reintegration (cognitive, socio-emotional) in formal and informal contexts throughout the intervention. Also, through the application of the SMALSI questionnaire and the implementation of the experimental program, a relationship between the use of sensory learning methods and improvements in relationships between student-student and student-teacher was observed. We believe that the benefits of the program serve all educational stakeholders (students, school counselors, teachers/educators, support teachers) in the short, medium, and long term. The hypotheses have been validated.

The research limitations primarily relate to the number and diversity of subjects, the potential use of other methods and techniques to explore variable relationships, and the inability to conduct research for other categories of students (those with learning difficulties but without an OSP Certificate) due to time constraints. Another limitation is the reduced capacity of schools to acquire the necessary equipment for conducting the experiment.

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