

**IDENTIFICATION OF STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS
ENROLLED IN MAINSTREAM EDUCATION WITHOUT APPROPRIATE
SUPPORT CONDITIONS: ANALYSIS OF SURVEY RESULTS**

Anar Khalafov

State Agency on Preschool and General Education,
Special education department, head of the special education department
E-mail: anar.khalafov@gmail.com
<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9856-0556>

Gunel Akbarova

State Agency on Preschool and General Education,
Special education department, specialist
E-mail: gunerova17@gmail.com
<https://orcid.org/0009-0006-4411-102X>

Turkan Mardanli

State Agency on Preschool and General Education,
Special education department, specialist
E-mail: merdanliturkan@gmail.com
<https://orcid.org/0009-0002-4316-4526>

Abstract. This study was conducted to systematically identify students in general education institutions who, despite not being placed in specialized settings, experience learning difficulties due to special educational needs. A quantitative descriptive research design (survey method) was employed, and a new survey instrument, along with specific implementation guidelines, was developed to ensure the effective identification of learning difficulties. Data were collected through a large-scale survey covering 1,049,035 students enrolled in 927 general education institutions during the 2024/2025 academic year. The reliability of the instrument and the validity of the results were assessed through comparative analysis with centralized monitoring indicators for grades 4, 6, and 9. The findings indicate that students experiencing difficulties adapting to general education settings can be grouped into two categories: those requiring additional psychological and pedagogical support, and those with special education needs. Furthermore, it was determined that, without additional support mechanisms and adapted learning conditions, these students in mainstream education demonstrate significantly lower academic performance compared to their peers. These results suggest that the effectiveness of inclusive education should not be limited to the physical integration of students with special educational needs into general education institutions. Rather, it also requires ensuring their social inclusion and providing appropriate conditions and specialized support to guarantee access to quality education.

Keywords: students with special educational needs, inclusive education, learning difficulties, special education, mainstream education.

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**XÜSUSİ ŞƏRAİT YARADILMADAN ÜMUMİ TƏHSİLƏ CƏLB OLUNMUŞ
SAĞLAMLIQ İMKANLARI MƏHDUD UŞAQLARIN
MÜƏYYƏNLƏŞDİRİLMƏSİ: SORĞU NƏTİCƏLƏRİNİN TƏHLİLİ**

Anar Xələfov

Məktəbəqədər və Ümumi Təhsil üzrə Dövlət Agentliyi,
Xüsusi təhsil sektoru, sektor müdiri
E-poçt: anar.khalafov@gmail.com
<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9856-0556>

Günəl Əkbərova

Məktəbəqədər və Ümumi Təhsil üzrə Dövlət Agentliyi,
Xüsusi təhsil sektoru, mütəxəssis
E-poçt: gunerova17@gmail.com
<https://orcid.org/0009-0006-4411-102X>

Türkan Mərdanlı

Məktəbəqədər və Ümumi Təhsil üzrə Dövlət Agentliyi,
Xüsusi təhsil sektoru, mütəxəssis
E-poçt: merdanliturkan@gmail.com
<https://orcid.org/0009-0002-4316-4526>

Annotasiya. Bu tədqiqat xüsusi şərait yaradılmadan ümumi təhsil müəssisələrində təhsil alan və sağlamlıq imkanlarının məhdudluğu səbəbindən təlimdə çətinlikləri olan şagirdlərin müəyyənləşdirilməsi məqsədilə aparılmışdır. Tədqiqatda kəmiyyət təsviri yanaşma (sorğu metodu) tətbiq edilmiş, öyrənmə çətinliklərinin effektiv şəkildə müəyyən edilməsi üçün yeni sorğu aləti və onun tətbiqinə dair xüsusi təlimat hazırlanmışdır. Məlumatlar 2024/2025-ci tədris ili ərzində 927 ümumi təhsil müəssisəsində təhsil alan 1,049,035 şagirdi əhatə edən genişmiqyaslı sorğu vasitəsilə toplanmışdır. Sorğu alətinin etibarlılığı və nəticələrin uyğunluğu 4, 6 və 9-cu siniflər üzrə mərkəzləşdirilmiş monitorinq göstəriciləri ilə müqayisəli təhlil əsasında qiymətləndirilmişdir. Nəticələr göstərir ki, ümumi təhsil müəssisələrində dizadaptasiya yaşayan şagirdlər iki kateqoriyada qruplaşdırıla bilər: əlavə psixoloji-pedaqoji dəstəyə ehtiyacı olan şagirdlər və sağlamlıq imkanları məhdud olan şagirdlər. Həmçinin əlavə dəstək mexanizmləri və uyğunlaşdırılmış təhsil şəraiti olmadan ümumi təhsil mühitinə inteqrasiya olunan bu şagirdlərin digər yaşlıları ilə müqayisədə daha aşağı akademik göstəricilər nümayiş etdirdiyi müəyyən edilmişdir. Bu nəticələr inklüziv təhsilin effektivliyinin sağlamlıq imkanları məhdud şagirdlərin yalnız fiziki olaraq ümumi təhsil müəssisələrinə inteqrasiyası ilə məhdudlaşmadığını, eyni zamanda onların sosial inkluziyası və keyfiyyətli təhsil almaları üçün xüsusi şəraitin yaradılmasının zəruri olduğunu göstərir.

Açar sözlər: sağlamlıq imkanları məhdud şagirdlər, inklüziv təhsil, öyrənmə çətinlikləri, xüsusi təhsil, ümumi təhsil.

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CC BY 4.0. Müəlliflər açıq şəkildə öz əsərlərinin müəlliflik hüquqlarını təsdiq edir və jurnala Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International (CC BY 4.0) lisenziyası çərçivəsində ilk nəşr hüququnu verirlər. Bu lisenziya, əsərin bu jurnalda yayımlandığı və orijinal müəlliflərə istinad edildiyi halda, onun sərbəst şəkildə digər şəxslər tərəfindən yayılmasına icazə verir.

Introduction

In the 2024/2025 academic year, 12,499 children with special educational needs were enrolled in special education in Azerbaijan. Children enrolled in special education constitute 0.73 percent of all learners in general education. In international practice, the proportion of children with special educational needs to typically developing children differs from the indicator observed in Azerbaijan. According to research findings, in 2024 the share of children with special educational needs enrolled in special education in England accounted for 18 percent of all children in general education [Long, R., & Roberts, N., 2024]. This proportion was 15 percent in the United States (2022–2023) [National Center for Education Statistics, 2024, p.1], 11 percent in Norway [Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, n.d., p.1], 7 percent in Germany (2020–2021) [Schlitt-Dittrich, M., 2024, p.2], 7.7 percent in Finland (2018) [Government of Finland, n.d., p.4], and 3.7 percent in France (2021) [DEPP, 2021, pp. 5, 8].

The relatively low proportion of children with special educational needs enrolled in special education in Azerbaijan compared to other countries is attributed to several factors identified by international organizations. In this context, although the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) Azerbaijan Country Office reported that 67 percent of school-age children remain out of education, the facts supporting this indicator were not provided [UNICEF Azerbaijan & Ministry of Education, 2018]. Another report by UNICEF identifies a different cause, noting that children with special educational needs are enrolled in general education without the provision of appropriate support conditions [United Nations Children’s Fund, 2020]. Due to the centralised electronic school admission system, children admitted to general education institutions are not assessed by the teaching staff; instead, they are enrolled solely on the basis of a medical certificate submitted through the electronic platform. Additionally, the requirement for parental consent to refer children enrolled in general education without appropriate support conditions to special education increases the likelihood that children with special educational needs are admitted to general education without their needs being identified.

Although the enrollment of children with special educational needs in general education is sometimes considered a contribution to the development of inclusive education in the country, admitting these children to school without identifying their special educational needs and without providing appropriate conditions leads to various challenges. As noted in a UNESCO (2009) report, early identification of special educational needs is one of the core principles of inclusive edu-

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cation, as it ensures equal opportunities for all children, supports their successful adaptation to the school environment, and contributes to their future development [UNESCO, 2009]. Early diagnosis facilitates teachers' selection of appropriate pedagogical approaches and significantly reduces risks such as low academic performance and social isolation [Mitchell, D., & Sutherland, D., 2020]. Research shows that when schools do not provide adequate support and when children's special educational needs remain unidentified, they are more likely to experience learning difficulties, behavioral problems, and higher levels of stress [Gray, P., et al., 1994]. Such children often face discrimination, which negatively affects their psychological well-being and decreases their motivation to learn [Florian, L., & Black-Hawkins, K., 2011]. Additionally, insufficient teacher preparedness for student diversity may result in the use of instructional approaches that do not match students' potential, preventing them from fully realizing their capabilities [Booth, M., & Ainscow, M., 2002].

Failure to adapt education to the needs of learners not only negatively affects their learning outcomes but also leads to reduced attendance among children with special educational needs, increased cases of school avoidance, and ultimately, the incomplete realization of their right to education. In such circumstances, students are unable to fully grasp the instructional material and experience difficulties applying the knowledge and skills they acquire both in daily life and at subsequent stages of education. Furthermore, this situation has long-term negative effects on their emotional and social development and may lead to the emergence of secondary difficulties [Vygotsky, L., 1983]. On the other hand, the lack of appropriate conditions and specialists in the school environment negatively affects overall discipline and the learning process of other students, and may also contribute to the formation of negative attitudes toward disability within the institution, leading to conflicts among teaching staff and parents. For these reasons, it is essential to accurately identify the educational needs of children with special educational needs and apply an individualized approach when enrolling them in education.

Research aim

The aim of this study is to identify students enrolled in general education without appropriate support conditions who experience learning difficulties due to special educational needs. To achieve this aim, the following research questions were examined:

- (1) Are children with special educational needs enrolled in general education without the provision of appropriate support conditions?
- (2) Do children enrolled in general education without appropriate support conditions have access to quality education?

- (3) Can the school's teaching staff identify the causes of learning difficulties experienced by students?

Problem statement

In mainstream educational institutions, involving children in the learning process without first identifying their special educational needs and without creating appropriate conditions for them leads to serious pedagogical and social problems. Since such students are educated in an environment that is not adapted to their individual characteristics, they face difficulties in mastering the learning material, which results not only in academic underachievement but also in additional behavioral and emotional challenges.

The absence of suitable support mechanisms causes initial difficulties to deepen and leads to the emergence of secondary impairments. As a result, these students' school attendance decreases, cases of school disengagement increase, and their active participation in the educational process becomes limited. This situation negatively affects children's psychological well-being and also hinders the development of their social skills and their preparation for independent life in the future.

From this perspective, the timely identification of children with special educational needs and the creation of an adequate support environment for them stands out as one of the main challenges facing the modern education system.

Research method

A quantitative descriptive (survey) research design was applied in this study. The use of a quantitative method is appropriate when the research aims to collect data from a large number of participants, measure the obtained data statistically, generalize the results, and confirm relationships between different factors. Descriptive research, on the other hand, allows for the systematic examination of specific characteristics of individuals or events by presenting the existing situation as it is [Garip, S., 2023, pp. 4, 11]. In other words, this method describes the characteristics of a population group or a phenomenon without identifying cause-effect relationships [Oranga, J., & Matere, A., 2025, p. 4]

Therefore, in order to build an extensive database and conduct statistical analysis of the findings, a quantitative descriptive research design was employed in the study.

Main part

In the main phase of the survey, data collection tables were prepared covering information on 1,081,866 students enrolled in 954 schools across the country during the 2024/2025 academic year, and as a result, information on 1,049,035 students from 927 schools was collected.

The schools to be surveyed were identified through random sampling and students enrolled in special education institutions, as well as those in special education classes within general education schools, were not included in the process. For the selected schools, data were collected on students enrolled at all three levels of general education, including school preparation groups (5-year-olds). The list of students enrolled in the schools where the survey was planned to be conducted, along with other relevant information (the class they attend, the name of the school, the student's PIN, and the student's and school's digital IDs, etc.), was extracted from the Information System of General Education Institutions (UTIS). Individual Excel spreadsheets were prepared for each school. Data collection required for the survey was carried out by school psychologists. To support those administering the survey, both written and video instructions were provided. The written guidance included the purpose of the survey, key considerations to be taken into account during its administration, as well as explanations for each criterion and level. The video guide demonstrated the procedure for implementing the survey. In cases where questions arose during the process, a contact number was provided to obtain additional information.

Data collection tool

For the purpose of data collection within the framework of the study, a questionnaire was developed using Microsoft Excel. The survey included information about students presented in columns titled 'Student's first name, last name, and father's name', 'Student's digital ID', 'PIN', 'Grade', 'Grade index', 'School name', 'School's digital ID, and 'City/District'.

The principle of confidentiality was observed during the data collection process. Personal information related to students was used solely for research purposes, was not shared with third parties, and personal identifiers were kept anonymous in the presentation of the results.

To collect information on the difficulties students experience during the learning process, the reasons behind these difficulties, and their severity, four main directions to be addressed in the survey were identified.

(1) Does the student experience difficulties in the learning process?

This question has two response options ("Yes" and "No"). The purpose is to initially identify students who face learning difficulties and to collect baseline data for analysis.

(4) What difficulties does the student experience in the learning process?

The question aims to identify the difficulties students face during learning and includes the following response options:

- Cannot hold a pen
- Frequently falls ill

- Gets tired easily
- Cannot speak
- Speech is unclear
- Difficulty understanding instructions
- Cannot hear
- Cannot read
- Cannot write
- Has difficulty with calculations
- Cannot stay still
- Cannot maintain proper posture
- Has difficulty remembering
- Does not get along with others
- Does not complete teacher's academic assignments
- Experiences bedwetting (enuresis)
- Does not communicate
- Uses inappropriate language
- Cannot control emotions

(5) Level of these difficulties

To determine the severity of the observed difficulty and its impact on the learning process, this question includes three response options (“Low”, “Medium”, “High”). The information obtained is crucial for identifying whether a student requires special support.

Low level – Although the student experiences certain difficulties, they are generally able to complete tasks and participate actively in the learning process. Difficulties occur rarely and do not significantly hinder the student's academic or social activities. With support, the student can easily overcome these difficulties.

Medium level – The student regularly encounters difficulties and has trouble completing tasks and fully engaging in the learning process. However, when appropriate support is provided, progress can be observed.

High level – The difficulties experienced by the student are severe and consistently hinder participation in the learning process. The student has significant trouble completing tasks and requires additional support. At this level, the difficulties have a serious impact on both the student's academic and social life.

(6) What are the causes of the difficulties?

The purpose of this question is to investigate the reasons behind the difficulties students experience during learning. Correctly identifying the causes of these difficulties is essential for providing appropriate support and guidance to the students. The survey includes the following possible response options to determine the causes of the difficulties:

- Functional musculoskeletal disorder
- Chronic somatic disease
- Speech impairment
- Partial visual impairment
- Complete visual impairment
- Partial hearing impairment
- Complete hearing impairment
- Intellectual disability
- Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)
- Dyslexia
- Behavioral disorder
- Autism
- Family problems
- Cause of the difficulty is unclear

International studies provide information not only on children with disabilities but also on children who, without having special educational needs, require additional support in learning [Statistics Finland, 2021]. The inclusion of children who need additional psychological and pedagogical support in inclusive education, and the provision of appropriate conditions for them at school, positively affects their learning outcomes [European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education, n.d.; Groom, B., & Rose, R., 2005]. Conversely, the absence of such appropriate conditions can lead to significant learning difficulties and the development of secondary disorders [de Leeuw, R., et al., 2019; Vygotsky, L., 1983].

Based on the data obtained from the survey, students have been grouped into the following categories according to the content of the difficulties they experience in learning, their need for support, and the severity level:

- (1) Students who have special educational needs;
- (2) Students in need of additional psychological and pedagogical support.

The table below presents the classification of students' learning difficulties grouped according to these categories. In grouping the data, the nature of the difficulties experienced by students, their severity levels (1 – 'low', 2 – 'medium', 3 – 'high'), and the grades in which the students are enrolled were taken into account. This methodology enables the identification of appropriate support mechanisms and individualized approaches by considering students' individual needs, developmental levels, and age-related characteristics. Within this classification, students for whom the cause of difficulty was identified as 'intellectual disability', 'autism', 'complete visual impairment', or 'complete hearing impairment' were included in the category of students who have special educational needs across all three levels, while the remaining students were grouped based on the

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indicators specified below (Table 1).

Table 1. Categories of students based on the learning difficulties they experience

What difficulties does the student experience in the learning process?	Students in need of additional psychological and pedagogical support		Students who have special educational needs	
	grade	level	grade	level
Experiences bedwetting (enuresis)			0-11	1,2,3
Cannot hear			0-11	1,2,3
Cannot speak			0-11	1,2,3
Difficulty understanding instructions			0-11	1,2,3
Speech is unclear			0-11	1,2,3
Cannot hold a pen	0-1	1,2,3	2-11	1,2,3
Cannot write	0-1	1,2,3	2-11	1,2,3
Cannot read	0-1	1,2,3	2-11	1,2,3
Does not get along with others	0-11	1,2	0-11	3
Frequently falls ill	0-11	1,2	0-11	3
Gets tired easily	0-11	1,2	0-11	3
Has difficulty remembering	0-11	1	0-11	2,3
Uses inappropriate language	0-11	1	0-11	2,3
Cannot maintain proper posture	0-4 5-11	1,2,3 1	5-11	2,3
Cannot stay still	0-4 5-11	1,2,3 1	5-11	2,3
Has difficulty with calculations	0-1 2-11	1,2,3 1	2-11	2,3
Does not communicate	0-1 2-11	1,2 1	0-1 2-11	3 2,3
Does not complete teacher's academic assignments	0-1 2-11	1,2 1	0-1 2-11	3 2,3
Cannot control emotions	0-2 3-11	1,2 1	0-2 3-11	3 2,3

Development of the Data Collection Tool

The initial phase of the survey was conducted in the Khachmaz district, taking into account its proximity to Baku, the relatively small population, and the presence of both urban and rural schools in the district. In this phase, data from 29,574 students attending 119 schools in the district were analyzed. Data from students enrolled in special education institutions and in special education classes within general education schools were not collected.

During the survey conducted in Khachmaz district, continuous contact was maintained with school psychologists via telephone, and their questions were answered promptly. Simultaneously, the feedback and opinions of the school psychologists regarding the survey process were documented and taken into consideration for the second phase of the survey.

It was determined during the trial phase that not displaying the student information and the questions to be answered simultaneously on the screen resulted in time loss. Furthermore, despite the execution process being explained in the written and video instructions, the input of additional information beyond the provided column options by some participants complicated the data analysis process.

In the subsequent phase, to eliminate the aforementioned difficulties, the columns displaying student information and the questions to be answered were narrowed, ensuring their simultaneous visibility on the screen. The columns containing student information and the questions, as well as the first rows of the “Notes” column, were highlighted with specific colors to differentiate them. Additionally, in order to support the individuals conducting the survey, a column titled “Key Points” was added to the table, outlining a series of observations that required attention.

Assessment of Survey Validity and Reliability

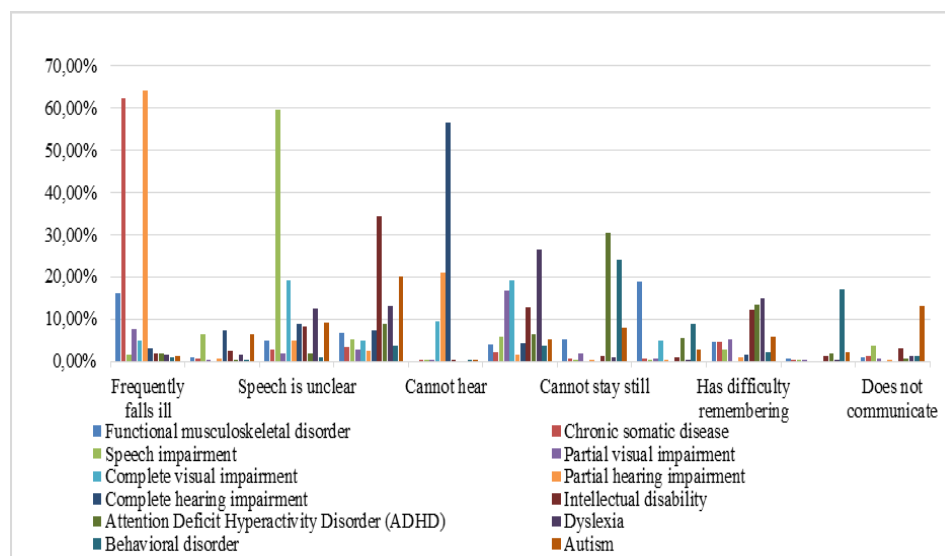
Before starting the analysis of the survey results, in-person meetings were organized with a total of 45 students from several schools, as well as with the school psychologists administering the survey, in order to evaluate the objectivity of the survey and to determine how the previously noted difficulties are observed in a real-world environment. During these meetings, the challenges faced by the students were carefully observed, and detailed discussions were held with the psychologists regarding the congruence of these challenges with the indicators noted in the survey, as well as the nature of the students’ learning difficulties. Consequently, the accuracy of the data provided by the school psychologists in the survey and the reliability of the survey results were confirmed.

To examine the relationship between the variables “What difficulties does the student experience in the learning process?” and “What are the causes of the difficulties?” used in the survey, a crosstabulation analysis was performed in SPSS

(Statistical Package for the Social Sciences).

The analysis revealed that for the majority of students who frequently fall ill (62.3%), the cause of the difficulty was associated with chronic somatic illness. Furthermore, among students who experience difficulty understanding verbal instructions, the cause was most frequently identified as intellectual disability (34.4%) and autism (19.9%). For students with hearing difficulties, the causes were primarily indicated as partial hearing loss (20.8%) and complete hearing loss (56.5%) (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Relationship between difficulties and their causes



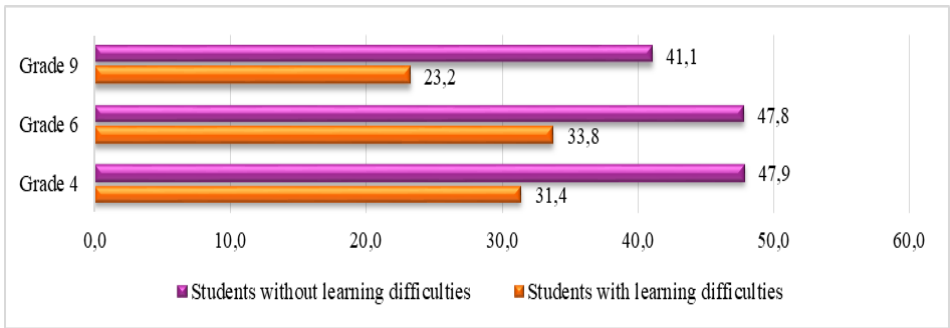
These results demonstrate a logical consistency between the difficulties experienced by the students and their underlying causes.

Additionally, to assess the validity of the survey, a comparative analysis was performed between the results of the monitoring conducted in the 4th, 6th, and 9th grades of general education institutions and the data collected via the survey for the students involved in the same monitoring. For this purpose, a T-test analysis was conducted using SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences). Since the Levene's test in the analysis indicated unequal variances ($p < 0.05$), the Welch's t-test (Equal variances not assumed) was used. The p-value being less than 0.05 across all three grades indicates the presence of a statistically significant difference between the monitoring indicators of students with and without learning difficulties. The monitoring results for students with and without learning difficulties are presented below (Table 2 and Figure 2):

Table 2. Comparison of monitoring results between students with and without learning difficulties

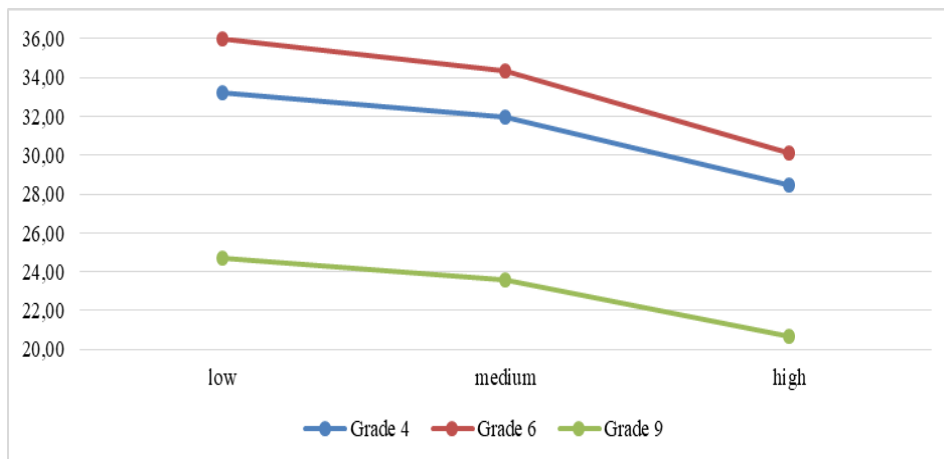
(Independent Samples Test)								
t-test for Equality of Means							95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		T	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
Grade 4	Equal variances not assumed	-52.471	3995.856	0.000	-9.881	0.188	-10.250	-9.512
Grade 6	Equal variances not assumed	-68.355	7145.870	0.000	-10.506	0.154	-10.807	-10.204
Grade 9	Equal variances not assumed	-64.374	5124.085	0.000	-53.629	0.833	-55.262	-51.996

Figure 2. Monitoring results for grades 4, 6, and 9 (in percentage)



To determine how learning outcomes vary among students experiencing different levels of difficulties, the monitoring results of students with learning difficulties and the severity levels of their difficulties were compared for grades IV, VI, and IX. The analysis indicated that as the level of difficulty increases, students' learning outcomes decrease. While the learning outcomes of students with low and medium levels of difficulty are similar, no sharp differences were observed in the outcomes of students with high levels of difficulty (Figure 3).

Figure 3. Students' monitoring results by difficulty level (in percentage)



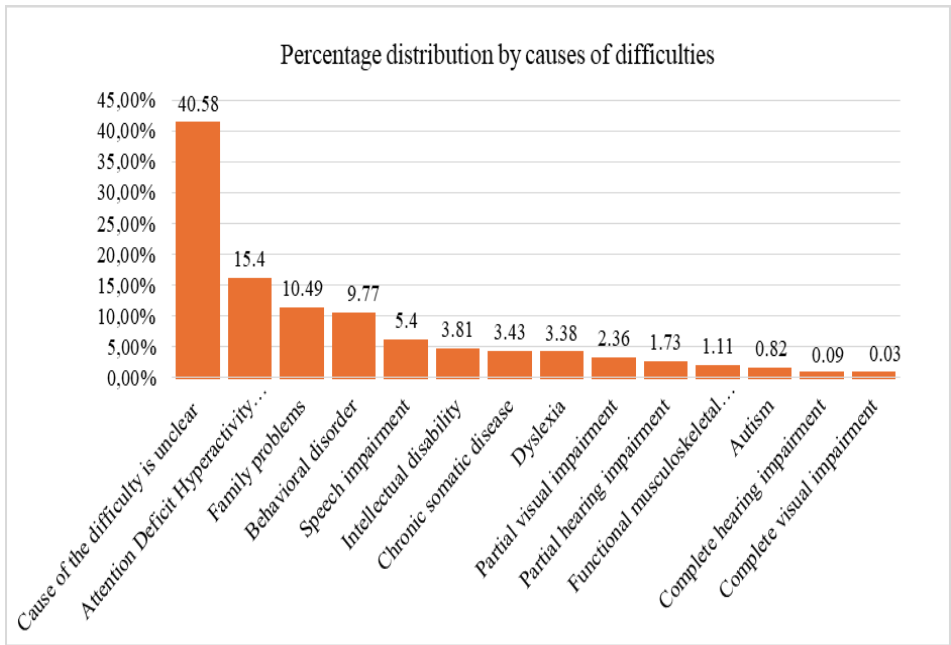
Findings

Microsoft Excel and SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) programs were utilized for the analysis of the survey results.

Based on the survey results, it was determined that 78,264 students experienced learning difficulties. Considering the nature and severity of the difficulties, as well as the grades they were attending, students were grouped into categories based on the table above (Table 1). As a result, it was determined that 5.02% of students have special educational needs, while 2.41% of students need additional psychological and pedagogical support. Furthermore, it was identified that 308 students were continuously absent from school.

Out of these students, the cause of difficulty for 40.58% was not determined by the pedagogical staff of the school. The analysis results also showed that Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) was cited as the second main cause of difficulty for 15.4% of students with learning difficulties (Figure 4).

Figure 4. Percentage distribution by causes of difficulties



The results of large-scale studies conducted in various countries indicate an observed increase in the diagnosis and prevalence rate of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) in recent years.

According to the results of a study conducted in Finland, the prevalence and incidence rates of ADHD more than doubled between 2015 and 2020. Specifically, medication use was higher among boys aged 3-17 than in males of any other age group, and medication use was also more widespread among males than females in almost all age groups [Westman, E., et al., 2025].

According to the results of a study investigating the trends in the prevalence and incidence of ADHD medication use in Norway between 2006 and 2022, the overall prevalence of medication use in the population aged 6-64 increased from 5.2 to 19.4 per 1,000 individuals throughout the study period. This increase was observed particularly strongly after 2020. Simultaneously, the results obtained indicate that children consistently exhibited higher prevalence rates compared to adults across the entire period [Hartz, I., et al., 2024].

According to the results of a study conducted among children aged 3-17 living in family environments in the United States, in 2022, the number of children

diagnosed with ADHD was approximately 1 million higher compared to 2016. Additionally, in the U.S., about one in nine children (11.4%) had been diagnosed with ADHD at least once in their lifetime, and currently, 10.5% have an ADHD diagnosis [Danielson, M., et al., 2024].

Furthermore, due to the lack of early intervention, there is a high probability that ADHD may have developed as a secondary disorder in several students whose difficulty was attributed to behavioral disorder (9.77%). Therefore, there is a need to enhance the knowledge and skills of pedagogical staff in organizing educational work with children with ADHD, both in teacher training and in professional development courses.

The analysis also indicates that there are no significant differences in the proportion of students for whom other limitations were identified as the cause of the difficulty.

Conclusion

According to the survey results, 7.46% of students enrolled in general education institutions experience significant learning difficulties. The fact that these students demonstrate significantly lower academic performance compared to their peers confirms the existence of systemic barriers to accessing quality education. The findings further indicate that approximately one in every twenty students (around 5.02%) is highly likely to have special educational needs. When this proportion is extrapolated to the national level, it can be estimated that nearly 80,000 students within the general education system have special educational needs, yet their special educational needs remain unidentified.

One of the main reasons for the under-identification of special educational needs is the attitude of parents toward this process, often influenced by the fear of social stigma associated with disability. Although, according to existing legislation, such assessments are conducted with parental consent, in necessary cases they may also be enforced by a court decision to safeguard the child's right to education [Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan on Education of Persons with Disabilities. Special Education., 2001]. However, the findings suggest that, in practice, these administrative measures are rarely implemented. As a result, thousands of students remain "invisible" within mainstream education settings and are deprived of the opportunity to realize their full potential.

In addition, the study reveals gaps in the organization of support for students who require additional psychological and pedagogical assistance in schools. It was found that 2.41% of students in this category experience serious learning difficulties due to the lack of appropriate support. When applied at the national level, this indicates that more than 38,000 students in general education institu-

tions require additional psychological and pedagogical support. Although current school-based services such as psychological services, extended day groups, and extracurricular activities are designed to assist typically developing students with learning difficulties, significant concerns persist about their actual effectiveness and their ability to fully meet students' needs. Without appropriate support mechanisms (such as special educators, resource rooms, individualized education plans, etc.), these students are deprived of equal access to quality education.

Existing regulatory frameworks require the systematic assessment of students' psychological well-being, academic performance, and developmental progress, as well as the implementation of appropriate support measures for those experiencing learning difficulties [Regulations on the Organization of Psychological Services in Educational Institutions, 2020]. However, the results of this study indicate significant gaps in the practical implementation of these requirements. Specifically, in 40.58% of students with learning difficulties, the root causes of their difficulties have not yet been identified by school staff.

The study demonstrates that placing students in general education institutions without providing appropriate support conditions does not ensure genuine inclusion. The statistically significant differences observed in centralized monitoring results for grades 4, 6, and 9 between students with learning difficulties and their typically developing peers indicate that, in the absence of individualized support mechanisms, these students are deprived of their right to equal quality education. However, these findings should not be interpreted as a justification for excluding such students from mainstream education. Rather, the effectiveness of inclusive education should be measured not by the mere physical presence of the student in school, but by the creation of an adapted and high-quality learning environment that responds to their individual needs.

Relevance of the research. In the modern education system, ensuring inclusivity extends beyond the physical integration of students into the general education environment and also requires the timely identification of their individual educational needs and the provision of adequate support mechanisms. However, in Azerbaijan, the school admission process being based solely on a medical certificate and parental consent leads to children being enrolled in education without the identification of their special educational needs. As a result, these students enter the general education environment without the necessary support and participate in the learning process as an "invisible" group.

Compared to international practice, the relatively low proportion of children involved in special education within the overall student population in Azerbaijan indicates, in many cases, that children are included in education without the creation of appropriate conditions tailored to their needs.

In this context, the present study highlights the issue of identifying students in general education institutions whose special educational needs remain unassessed. At the same time, it emphasizes, on a scientific basis, the necessity of evaluating the effectiveness of inclusive education not merely through physical integration but through the provision of support mechanisms adapted to students' individual needs. From this perspective, the study holds significant relevance both theoretically and practically.

Scientific novelty of the research. The scientific novelty of the research lies in the application of a large-scale empirical approach and in the systematic assessment of students' learning difficulties through a specially designed new survey instrument. As a result of the study, a data-informed classification framework has been developed, taking into account the nature, severity, and grade levels of students' learning difficulties. This model categorizes students into two main groups: "students who have special educational needs" and "students in need of additional psychological and pedagogical support." Such an approach enables a more precise identification of educational needs and facilitates the implementation of individualized instruction.

At the same time, a comparative statistical analysis conducted using the results of centralized monitoring across grades 4, 6, and 9 demonstrates that there are statistically significant differences between students with learning difficulties and their typically developing peers. These findings provide a scientific basis for the necessity of implementing individualized support mechanisms.

Practical significance of the study. The practical significance of the study is associated with the provision of a reliable empirical basis and a newly developed and practically applicable survey instrument for the early and more accurate identification of students with special educational needs within the general education system. This instrument can be used for conducting periodic monitoring in general education institutions and for systematically tracking students' educational needs.

At the same time, the research findings serve as an important prognostic foundation for the planning and expansion of special education services. The data obtained through the survey make it possible to determine the real scale of special educational needs and, on this basis, to carry out strategic planning at the state level, define investment priorities, and ensure a more efficient allocation of resources.

In addition, the results highlight the importance of enhancing specialist training in the field of special education and psychological-pedagogical support. This is of significant relevance both for strengthening existing human resources and for the effective implementation of new service models.

Overall, the study and the survey instrument developed on its basis make a practical contribution to the more flexible, needs-based, and scientifically grounded management of the education system.

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