A photograph showing three students in a library. Two students are in the foreground, looking down at an open book together. A third student is partially visible behind them. Bookshelves filled with books are in the background.

# Prevalence Estimates of Special Education Needs: A Focus on Emotional and Behaviour Disorders

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# Introduction

*This study addresses the issue of determining point prevalence of special education needs in Trinidad and Tobago. The purpose of the study is to provide accurate estimates of special education needs (SEN) and suggest some strategies for the resolution of data issues related to establishing up-to-date prevalence estimates of students with SEN.*



# Introduction

“Disability is part of the human condition. Almost everyone will be temporarily or permanently impaired at some point in life, and those who survive to old age will experience increasing difficulties in functioning” (World Health Organisation, 2002).



# Introduction

- There has been a paradigm shift in the treatment of issues related to disability.
- Historically, people with disabilities have largely been provided for through segregated methods such as residential institutions and special schools.
- **Policy has now shifted towards community and educational inclusion.**



# Introduction

The United Nations Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities of Persons with Disabilities have incorporated the human rights of people with disabilities, culminating in 2006 with the adoption of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) which came into force in May 2008.



# Introduction

- Estimates for the number of children (0-14 years) living with disabilities range between 93 million and 150 million (WHO, 2011).
- Therefore, ensuring that these children with disabilities receive good quality education in an inclusive environment should be a priority of all countries.



# Background

- There is an urgent need to provide some insight into the prevalence of special education needs as assessed by stakeholders such as parents, teachers and other professionals.
- Additionally, an investigation of data issues related to establishing up-to-date prevalence estimates of students with special education needs in Trinidad and Tobago is needed to support future work in the area.



# Background

- In Trinidad and Tobago the reality is that there is little baseline data to justify concerns being expressed and to support decisions being made about children and youth with special education needs.
- The development of an inclusive/special education policy needs at least baseline data on special education needs.



# Question?

**How prevalent are special education needs in  
Trinidad and Tobago?**

- How prevalent are emotional and behavioural disorders in primary school age children?
- What are the data issues related to establishing estimates of children with emotional and behavioural disorders?



# Perspectives

In The United States of America, the number of children and youth ages 3-21 receiving special education services was 6.5 million in 2009-10, or about 13 percent of all public school students (US Department of Education 2012).



# Perspectives

- In the United Kingdom, the number of pupils with special educational needs in England increased from around 1.53 million (19 per cent of pupils in 2006 to approximately 1.69 million (21 per cent of) pupils in 2010. (UK Department for Education 2012)
- Canadians aged 5 to 14, 4% of all children in that age group, have a disability of some sort. (Statistics Canada, 2003)

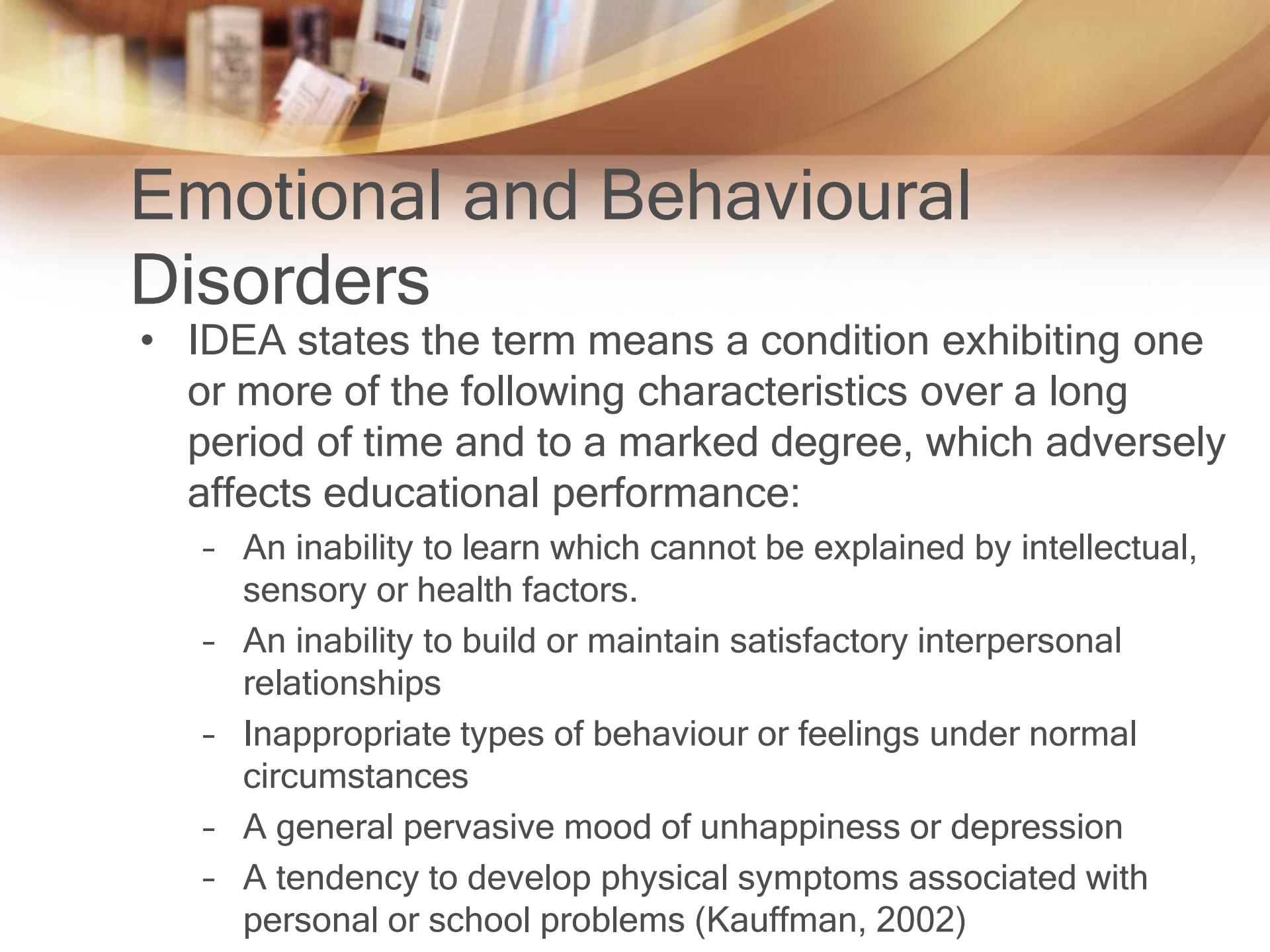


# Perspectives

In Trinidad and Tobago the Student Support Services (2004) identified students with special educational needs as:

1. Children with deficits of hearing, vision or mobility.
2. Children who are educationally disadvantaged.
3. Children with significant learning disabilities.
4. Children with emotional or behavioural difficulties.
5. Children who are gifted and talented.

The last comprehensive estimate of children with special needs remains 16.1% of children age 3 through 16. (Marge, 1984)



# Emotional and Behavioural Disorders

- IDEA states the term means a condition exhibiting one or more of the following characteristics over a long period of time and to a marked degree, which adversely affects educational performance:
  - An inability to learn which cannot be explained by intellectual, sensory or health factors.
  - An inability to build or maintain satisfactory interpersonal relationships
  - Inappropriate types of behaviour or feelings under normal circumstances
  - A general pervasive mood of unhappiness or depression
  - A tendency to develop physical symptoms associated with personal or school problems (Kauffman, 2002)



# Objectives

- To provide an estimate of those students who have a special educational need (emotional and behavioural difficulties) in Trinidad and Tobago using up-to-date and relevant data.
- To investigate data issues related to establishing up-to-date prevalence estimates of students with special educational needs in Trinidad and Tobago.



# Methodology

- Participants were randomly selected from 23 primary schools throughout Trinidad and Tobago.
- Data from the document checks and questionnaires were analyzed qualitatively and quantitatively, to determine themes and trends.
- Informal interviews with stakeholders.
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# Instruments

- Data collection instruments included a researcher developed interview protocol.
- A standardized parent-informant questionnaire - Child Behaviour Checklist

# Child Behaviour Checklist

- The **Child Behavior Checklist (CBCL)** used in this study is a commonly used method of identifying problem behaviours in children. There are two versions of the checklist, preschool (CBCL 11/2 -5) and school age version (CBCL 6-18).
- In this study the school age checklist was used. **The Achenbach System of Empirically Based Assessment (ASEBA)** is especially useful for multicultural applications, because the wide range of problem items can be rated by different informants without specialized training.



# Child Behaviour Checklist

- Typically completed by respondents such as parents or caregivers.
- Used to identify specific problems as well as syndromes (Achenbach & Rescorla, 2001).
- Categories of syndromes include - anxious/depressed, somatic complaints, social problems, thought problems , attention problems rule breaking and aggressive behaviour.



# Limitations

- Relatively small sample
- Limitations of CBCL
- Minimal time to train research assistants
- Some stakeholders reluctant to provide information

# SYNDROME SCALES

## Internalizing

SYNDROME	NORMAL	BORDERLINE	CLINICAL	SEN%
Anxious Depressed	18	4	1	22
Withdrawn Depressed	15	6	2	35
Somatic Complaints	12	9	2	48

# Total Problems (internalizing and externalizing)

SYNDROME	NORMAL	BORDERLINE	CLINICAL	SEN%
Social Problems	14	6	3	39
Thought Problems	18	4	1	22
Attention Problems	12	7	4	48

# Syndrome Scales

## Externalizing

SYNDROME	NORMAL	BORDERLINE	CLINICAL	SEN%
Rule Breaking	14	4	5	39
Aggressive behaviour	14	8	1	39

# Initial Analysis

SYNDROME	SEN Estimates %
Anxious Depressed	22
Withdrawn Depressed	35
Somatic Complaints	48
Social Problems	39
Thought Problems	22
Attention Problems	48
Rule Breaking	39
Aggressive Behaviour	39

Estimated SEN - 36.5 %



# Data Issues

- Lack of trained personnel throughout the system.
- Inconsistent data collection and lack of an integrated system of data collection.
- A general apathy towards inclusion and special education.
- A culture of decision making without data, a resistance to data based decision making.
- A lack of consistency in how data is collected.



# Recommendations

- Ongoing research ...
- Promote data legitimization in Inclusive/special education
- Promote innovation and indigenization ... create our model for data capture



**Thank You!**

**COMMENTS ...**