



Attitudes of University Students towards Individuals with A Disability

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ABSTRACT

In this study, we aimed to determine the attitudes of university students towards individuals with a disability. The 160 students were included in our study. 'Attitudes towards Disabled Persons Scale' (ATDP) was used in order to detect the attitudes of students. Conclusively, it has been found that the university students had negative attitudes towards disabled individuals. It has been found that there was a significant difference between the status of having disabled person in the family and ATDP Interpersonal Relationships, Competency-Independent Living subscales and the total scores ($p < 0,05$). It has also been indicated that the attitudes of students who had individuals with special needs in their families were more negative than other students who did not have disabled relatives.

KEYWORDS: Individuals with a disability, Attitudes towards individuals with a disability, Insufficiency, University students.

INTRODUCTION

The common features in the progressive areas of the life cycles are named as normal development. Individuals with different development are defined as 'children with different development', 'children with special needs', 'children require special education', 'children with learning differences', 'differences in development of children', 'individuals with special needs' [1]. No matter what form of naming used for them, today the %10 of the world population struggle to live with their failures according to the determination of the World Health Organization (WHO). Even though they live in different conditions, one common thing that they all share is the exclusion and discrimination. Generally, this problem affects not only the individuals who have special needs and their families but also the whole society and it directly affects the economic and social development of the society [2].

Attitudes, beliefs, feelings, values and people's thoughts on various aspects of different situations are determined by their specific trends. They are composed of the changing attitudes from one person to another, the experiences and the relationships with other individuals. For instance, the attitude of an individual towards other person who has special needs can be shaped according to her/his previous experiences about another person with special needs. These attitudes generally affect the shape and orientation of their behaviors. Social experiences or individuals who share the features can develop similar attitudes towards people with special needs. It is possible that the individuals who have special needs can evaluate the others' attitudes (such as education, entertainment, transportation, access to public services and social networking) as obstacles. It is important to understand the the prevalence of positive and negative attitudes of human groups in order to understand the attitude of the society [3]. When we examine the studies about the attitudes and requirements of

individuals with special needs, it is possible to find different findings. Izci [4] have shown that teacher candidates studying in classroom teaching department have knowledge and skills shortages regarding the individuals with special needs and their education. The author pointed on that these teacher candidates should be trained with respect to the special education and socialization at least two terms. Ozdemir and Ahmetoglu [5] have determined that the perspectives of pre-school teachers on socialization practices are negative as their age and professional experiences increase. Kargin and Sunbul [6] have detected that the attitudes of pre-school teachers towards children with special needs change according to the types of insufficiencies of the children. There are studies on the attitudes and perspectives of families, adoption/denial of children with a disability, life satisfaction, level of despair [7, 8, 9, 10], the attitudes, competences and perspectives of teacher candidates, teachers and administrators regarding the socialization applications [11, 12, 13, 14].

The society has resistance to change the prejudices. It is not easy for individuals to change prejudices and discriminatory behaviors. It is even harder to change the negative attitudes and behaviors of societies. Individuals cannot easily represent their negative attitudes and behaviors. Society prevent these by prohibiting the open views of these attitudes, reproving these open expressions by its existing norms, accusing the ones who have these attitudes, banning, putting constraints and excluding these individuals. Such adversities are punished according to the legal regulations. Social control prevents these responses of individuals. This social limitation cannot eliminate completely these negative attitudes and behaviors and these negative attitudes and behaviors continue with different formats. The new forms of these negative attitudes can be as being over protective regarding the attitude, responding in very indirect and reformulated ways, escape and avoidance and opposite reaction [15].

The most important education is to provide an equal participation of these insufficient individuals in society. The aim of the education is to ensure the integration of individuals into society [16]. The determination of factors that affect the attitudes towards individuals with special needs will shed light on the studies to be performed to change these negative attitudes. Therefore, in this study, we aimed to determine the attitudes of university students forming the younger population in the society towards individuals with special needs. Furthermore, we also examined that whether their attitudes towards individuals with needs were affected in case they have insufficient individuals in their families and close relatives.

METHODS AND SYMPTOMS

Study Group:

In this descriptive study performed to learn the attitudes of university students towards individuals with special needs, 163 second year undergraduate students in School of Health and Midwifery Department of Child Development were included. Students were between 19-22 year old and 108 of them were female and 5 of them were male. The %53.10 of the students was graduated from high school, the %46.90 of them was graduated from vocational high school and the %42.48 of them was known as insufficient in their families and acquaintances.

Data Collection Tools:

We used six subscales that were developed by Prime Ministry Administration for Disabled People (2008) in order to obtain data and evaluate the attitudes of people who were older than 18 years old and normally developed towards disabled individuals. They were developed within "Disability Training: Basic Research on How do the Society Understand Disability". These six subscales were "Attitudes towards Disabled Persons (ATDP)", "Educational Environment (EE)", "Interpersonal Relationships (IR)", "Working Life (WL)", "Family Life (FL)", "Personal Characteristics (PC)" and "Competency for Independent Living (CIL)".

Cronbach's alpha internal consistency coefficients of the scale with 43 items were 0.56 and 0.83 in the reliability studies. Participants selected one of the options in five point Likert type scale named as "I totally agree (5)", "I agree (4)", "I am undecided (3)", "disagree (2)", "strongly disagree (1)". The negative items are scored by inverting. Getting high scores of the scale represents a positive attitude [15].

The data obtained in this study were analyzed by using SPSS program. The statistical analysis has been implemented to compare the attitudes of students who have disabled individuals in their families or not and in terms of statistical significance 5% ($p < 0,05$) level was adopted.

Data Analysis:

The data were analyzed by using SPSS program. The student-t test was used in order to compare the PHSCS scores with the gender and the family structure of children. The one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used in order to compare the PHSCS scores between the intelligence scores with the education level of the parents of the children. Pearson Product Moment Correlation coefficient was calculated to determine the relationship between the PHSCS scores of the children and PAS scores of the mothers and fathers.

Findings:

The t-values were calculated and presented in this part of the study according to the ATDP subscale scores, averages of total scores and standard deviations of the study group as well as the presence of disabled individuals in the families and acquaintances of the study group.

Table 1: The ATDP subscale scores, averages of total scores and standard deviations of the study group

ATDP Subscales	Breakpoints	Min.point	Maximum point	The average	Standart Deviation
Educational Environment	9	3	13	4,00	1,59
Interpersonal Relationships	27	9	31	14,68	4,45
Working Life	27	9	64	17,14	6,26
Family Life	9	3	12	7,25	2,23
Personal Characteristics	21	7	32	14,00	4,16
Competency for Independent Living	36	12	38	22,70	5,49
Total	129	43	131	79,78	1,77

It has been found that the scores obtained from subscales and the scores of the total scale were lower than the breakpoints that were determined to separate the positive and negative attitudes (Table 1). These results show that the attitudes of study group towards the individuals with special need are negative.

Student t-test was used to examine whether there was a difference in ATDP scores of the study group in case there was a disabled person among families and acquaintances (Table 2).

Table 2: The t-test results according to the presence of disabled individuals in the family and acquaintance

ATDP Subscales	Disabled Person	N	X	Standard Deviation	t	p
Educational Environment	Yes	48	4,00	1,75	0,000	1,000
	No	65	4,00	1,47		
Interpersonal Relationships	Yes	48	13,68	3,94	-2,068	0,041
	No	65	15,41	4,69		
Working Life	Yes	48	16,47	4,84	-,0966	0,336
	No	65	17,63	7,12		
Family Life	Yes	48	7,08	2,25	-,0705	0,482
	No	65	7,38	2,23		
Personal Characteristics	Yes	48	13,39	4,66	-1,330	0,186
	No	65	14,44	3,72		
Competency for Independent Living	Yes	48	21,04	5,36	-2,855	0,005
	No	65	23,93	5,30		
Total	Yes	48	75,68	17,61	-2,150	0,034
	No	65	82,81	17,27		

*p<0,05

There was a difference between ATDP, IR and CIL subscales scores and total scale scores of the study group in case of the presence of disabled person among their family members or relatives of (p<0,05) (Table 2). The students who do not have any disabled family member or relative had higher IR and CIL subscales scores compared to others who have disabled acquaintances.

Conclusions And Discussion:

According to this study that was performed to determine the attitudes towards individuals with special needs, it has been observed that university students generally have negative attitudes towards disabled people. The overall result is changing from one study to another in the literature [15, 17, 18].

We have shown that the students who have disabled acquaintances have more negative attitudes towards individuals with special needs compared to others who do not have disabled family members or relatives. The similar findings have been obtained in a study that was performed by Turkish Republic Disability Administration [15] throughout Turkey. Families have many responsibilities such as contributing to the education of the individual with a disability, taking care, providing financial support, providing professional support for their behavior and learning problems, having information about the training, getting psychological support, dealing also with children with normal development, coping with problems between spouses and informing people around [19]. Families and acquaintances of disabled individuals may feel stress due to the lack of support, tangible and intangible resources as well as the responsibilities as a result of living together with a disabled person. It is possible that a person who is self-insufficient and thought to be dependent on others affects the family life negatively. Therefore, it can be that people who have disabled individual in their family have negative attitudes towards individuals with special needs.

It is important to develop positive attitudes towards disabled individuals for the education of the society. People with/without disability should be given more opportunities in order to interact with each other. Particularly there can be positive attitudes between children with disability and children with normal

development in case of increased interaction [3]. Occasions can be created in which disabled and normally developed people can be together in order to form a general awareness in society of the disabled individuals. Some applications such as including the features of disabled people in the curriculum in schools and organizing summer camps that can give possibility to both disabled and normally developed individuals to do activities together can provide positive contributions. Awareness studies can be supported by written and visual media and various public spots. To sum up, the help of governmental and non-governmental organizations is needed to develop positive attitudes towards disabled individuals.

Note:

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