

Investigation of Special Education and Branch Teachers' Attitudes Towards Physical Education and Sports Activities of Individuals with Special Needs

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this research is to examine the attitudes of special education and branch teachers towards physical education and sports activities of individuals who need special education. The sample of study consists of a total of 40 volunteer teachers, 28 female and 12 male, who work as special education and branch teachers at Rize Zehra Usta Special Education Practice School in the spring term of the 2020-2021 academic year. "Personal Information Form", which was developed by the researcher by taking expert opinion, and "Attitude towards Sports Activities of Individuals with Intellectual Disabilities Scale (ATSIIIDS)" developed by İlhan, Esentürk, and Yarımkaya (2016) were used as data collection tools in the research. Survey model, one of the quantitative research designs, was used in the research. SPSS 21.00 statistics program was used in the analysis of the research data. In the findings obtained, a significant relationship was found in terms of the variable of department (branch) from which the participants graduated. It was determined that the attitude levels of the employees who graduated from other departments were higher than those who graduated from the special education department. However, no significant relationship was found in terms of gender, age, education level, having a disabled person in their family, and receiving sports training for the disabled.

Keywords: Attitude, intellectual disability, special education, physical education and sports

INTRODUCTION

The term "people with special needs" is defined as individuals requiring special education in Decree Law (1997) and is included as "individuals who differ significantly from their peers in terms of their individual characteristics and educational qualifications for various reasons"¹. In line with the explanations in this statement, individuals with special needs have difficulties in adapting to the society they live in, since they cannot develop adequately physically and mentally. At the same time, sport is a multidisciplinary concept that closely concerns people.²

Today, it is a fact that together with the dissemination of education, individuals with special needs in the society are also a part of education and education focuses on these people as a privilege. Therefore, education and life services offered to people with special needs should be evaluated in a comprehensive framework that includes emotional, physical, mental health and the area in which individuals interact. When we look at the literature, it is seen that physical activity, physical education and sports activities have a positive effect on the psychological state of children with mental disabilities, make it easier for them to control their anger, make progress in physical and movement areas, allow them to find the opportunity to discover different identity roles and provide an opportunity to take a place in society^{3,4,5}. It is not a correct idea to think of physical education and sports activities as only competition-oriented. Individuals' learning of sports as leisure time skills by integrating them into their own educational fields will also make a very important contribution to their adaptation skills (emotional, social, and communal)⁶.

Individuals with special needs have social, mental and psychological needs just like individuals with normal developmental stages. In this sense, it is necessary to meet their needs in order to survive in the social field. Meeting these needs will contribute positively to their adaptation to the social environment⁶. Generally, it is observed that children with mental needs have difficulties in adapting to social life⁸. It was determined that the adaptation to social life has increased in the mentally handicapped people, especially with the measures taken in terms of education and psychology^{9,10}. Every part of the society should participate in sports activities as much as they can. Sports activities are seen as a method that meets the need for movement, taking the lead among the factors that support the development and shaping of the child in all respects. In the activity, children are constantly struggling with different body features (running, jumping, crawling, climbing, pulling, pushing, carrying, etc.). This state of

struggle has a positive effect on the respiratory system, as well as the circulatory and digestive system¹¹. From this point of view, it is seen that individuals with special needs require physical education and sports activities more. In addition to gaining a new skill through sports activities, it also allows children to acquire positive behavior. Sport is more than acquiring movement skills. When appropriate arrangements are made, stimuli for the development of many concepts such as size, color, number, speed, distance appear during the activity, and many mental processes such as recognition, identification, classification, problem solving, and decision making are also used. The biggest advantage of sports activities is that they give children the opportunity to use their bodies and move while achieving such gains. It is stated in studies that physical education and sports activities enable individuals with mental needs to control their emotions such as aggressive behaviors and irritability that arise as a result of their psychological state due to their inadequacies and the attitudes of the social environment towards them¹².

Attitudes, on the other hand, express how people feel and how they behave in the face of a problem. Attitudes can develop either positively or negatively. In other words, attitude is a state of mental and emotional readiness that emerges as a result of experiences and has a directing or energetic effect on one's behavior towards all relevant facts and events. Based on these definitions, it is obvious that the participation of individuals with special needs in physical education and sports activities will contribute to the development of positive attitudes by drawing the attention of the social environment to this area, preventing negative attitudes and behaviors.

Teacher candidates' teaching profession in place in the last year of education faculties, in some departments so that they can see and apply Internship education applied from the third grade, in other words, applied education, teacher It is of great importance for the professional development of candidates.¹³

Increasing the living standards of people with special needs is possible by making these people a part of the society and ensuring their integration with the society at the highest level. In order for this integration to be at a high level, life conditions and education should be provided to them without needing or least needing the help and support of others. It is important in this sense that this education to be offered to them is carried out with an interdisciplinary approach. Researchers emphasize that the participation of people with special needs in physical education and sports activities contributes positively to their emotional, social and physical development, as well as their parents' and social

environment's awareness levels. Within the framework of this information, it is important to investigate the awareness levels of special education and branch teachers serving in the field of physical education and sports activities that have a positive effect on all physical, mental and social development characteristics of people with special needs. In this context; The aim of this study was determined as examining the attitudes of special education and branch teachers towards physical education and sports activities of individuals with special needs.

MATERIAL AND METHOD

Research Model: In the research, the survey model, one of the quantitative research designs, was used. The survey model is a research model that adopts to describe a past or present situation as it is. It is based on the review of all current or past data related to the phenomenon or event, etc., which is the subject of the research. No attempt is made to change or influence them in any way¹³.

Sample Group: The sample of study consists of 40 volunteer teachers, 28 female and 12 male, working as special education and branch teachers at Rize Zehra Usta Special Education Practice School, in the spring term of the 2020-2021 academic year.

Data Collection Tools: "Personal Information Form", which was developed by the researcher by taking expert opinion, and "Attitude towards Sportive Activities of Individuals with Intellectual

Disabilities Scale" (ATSAIIDS) developed by¹⁵. were used as data collection tools in the research. In the research, survey model, which is one of the quantitative research designs, was used. Awareness levels of the participants were compared in terms of gender, age, education level, branch, presence of mentally disabled people in the family, and whether or not they received an education for disability.

"Explanation of the Attitudes Scale towards Sports Activities of Individuals with Intellectual Disabilities (ATSAIIDS)": The scale has 28 items and 2 sub-dimensions: "Positive Attitude towards Sports Activities" (PATSA) and "Negative Attitudes towards Sports Activities" (NATSA). The PATSA (Positive Attitude towards Sports Activities) dimension of the scale consists of 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, 13, 14, 15, 17, 18, 19, 21, 22, 23, 25, 26, 27 (21 items), while the NATSA (Negative Attitude towards Sports Activities) dimension includes 4, 8, 12, 16, 20, 24, 28 (7 items). Respondents can give each item between 1 and 5 points. The scale is a 5-point Likert type scale. The rating system is "Strongly Agree (5 points), Agree (4 points), Undecided (3 points), Disagree (2) Strongly Disagree (1 point)".

Data Analysis: Analysis of the research data was made using the SPSS21.00 statistical program. In order to determine the difference between the variables, the T test was used for binary variables, while the One-Way ANOVA test was used for variables with more than two. Statistical significance was accepted as Alpha $p < 0.05$.

RESULT

Table 1: Comparison of participants' scores from ATSAIIDS according to gender variable

Gender	N	X	ss	T test		
				t	sd	p
Male	12	3.58	.31	-.687	38	0,496
Female	28	3.66	.33			

When the table is examined, there is no significant difference between the attitude levels of special education and branch teachers in terms of gender variable. ($p > 0.5$)

Table 2: ANOVA results of participants' scores from ATSAIIDS according to age variable

Age	N	X	Ss	Source of variance	KT	sd	KO	F	P
21-25	14	3.586	.29	Intergroups	0.479	2	,240	2.362	.108
26-30	15	3.557	.28	Ingroups	3.753	37	,101		
31 and above	11	3.814	.38	Total	4.233	39			
Total	40	3.638	.32						

When Table 2 is examined, there is no significant difference between the attitude levels of special education and branch teachers in terms of age variable. ($F = 2.362; p > .05$).

Table 3: ANOVA results of participants' scores from ATSAIIDS according to educational status variable

Educational Status	N	X	Ss	Source of variance	KT	sd	KO	F	P
High school	1	3.821	.	Intergroups	0.560	3	,187	1,829	.159
Associate degree	2	4.089	.83	Ingroups	3.673	36	,102		
Undergraduate	32	3.628	.28	Total	4.233	39			
Postgraduate	5	3.485	.35						
Total	40	3.638	.32						

When Table 3 is examined, there is no significant difference between the attitude levels of special education and branch teachers in terms of educational status variable. ($F=1.829$; $p>.159$).

Table 4: ANOVA results of participants' scores from ATSAIIDS according to branch variable

Branch	N	X	Ss	Source variance	of	KT	sd	KO	F	P	Significancy
Special education (1)	27	3.554	.28	Intergroups		0,792	2	,396	4,258	,022	3-1
Branch teacher (2)	8	3.714	.30	Ingroups		3,441	37	,093			
Other (3)	5	3.971	.43	Total		4,233	39				
Toplam	4	3.638	.32								

When Table 4 is examined, it is seen that there is a significant difference in the attitude levels of special education and branch teachers in terms of the branch variable ($p<0.5$). According to the results of the Tukey test, which was conducted to determine between which branch the attitude levels of special education and branch teachers differ, it was determined that the attitude levels of the participants in the other category ($X=3.97$) were higher than those of the participants with special education branch ($X=3.55$).

Table 5: Comparison of the scores of the participants from ATSAIIDS according to the variable of having a disabled person in their family

Is there a disabled person in the family?	N	X	ss	T test		
				t	sd	p
Yes	5	3.90	.47	1,967	38	0,57
No	35	3.60	.29			

When Table 5 is examined, there is no significant difference between the attitude levels of special education and branch teachers in terms of having a disabled person in their families. ($p>.05$).

Table 6: Comparison of the scores of the participants from ATSAIIDS according to the variable of receiving sports education for the disabled

Have you received sports training?	N	X	ss	T testi		
				t	sd	p
Yes	9	3.71	.47	,781	38	,440
No	31	3.61	.28			

When Table 6 is examined, no significant difference was found between the attitude levels of special education and branch teachers in terms of the variable of receiving sports training for the disabled. ($p>.05$).

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

In this study, which was conducted to examine the attitudes of special education and branch teachers towards physical education and sports activities of individuals with special needs, the following findings were reached.

There was no statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the participants from ATSAIIDS in terms of gender. When various attitude studies on individuals with disabilities are examined in the literature, there are studies in which female participants have a higher attitude than male participants, and the findings of these studies are not in line with our research^{16,17}. It can be said that this result is due to the fact that the sample did not show similarity.

Another finding obtained in the study was that there was no statistically significant difference between their mean scores from ATSAIIDS in terms of age variable. In the studies conducted, it was determined that there was a low, positive and significant relationship between the age variable of the participants and the scores they got from ATSAIIDS, and the level of attitude increased as the age increased. This is not in line with the findings of our study. This result shows that age is not only a factor that

determines the attitude towards physical education and sports activities.

In another finding of our study, when we look at the statistics between the education level variable and their mean scores from ATSAIIDS, no significant difference was detected. In similar studies, although there is no statistically significant difference between the department they studied and the mean score they received from ATSAIIDS, the results obtained show parallelism with our research¹. Examination of teacher candidates' attitudes towards individuals with special needs in terms of some variables. It can be said that this does not affect the awareness of the participants towards physical education and sports activities for the disabled^{18,19}.

Another finding is that there was a statistically significant difference between the branch variable and their mean scores from the ATSAIIDS. Accordingly, it was seen that the attitude levels of the participants in the other category were higher than the attitude levels of the participants in the special education branch. This can be thought to be due to the fact that the participants with special education branches did not receive any training on physical education and sports activities for the disabled²⁰.

When the variable of having a disabled person in the family and their mean scores from ATSAIDS were examined, no statistically significant difference was found between them. This result is in line with the results of some studies in the literature. Similarly, as a result of their research,¹⁶ stated that "There was no significant difference between the groups in terms of the presence of a disabled person among the relatives of the students and the presence of a disabled person among their friends". In this sense, it can be thought that the presence of a disabled person in the family does not affect the attitude towards them. This can also be interpreted as a positive result of awareness activities for the disabled in our country in recent years²⁰.

In addition, there was no significant difference between the attitude levels of the participants in terms of the variable of receiving sports training for the disabled. In the literature, it was found that the awareness levels of the participants who received training were higher than the participants who did not receive training, and it was found that the awareness levels of the participants who took physical education and sports lessons for the disabled in their undergraduate education were statistically significantly higher than those of the participants who did not. This does not show parallelism with our research findings.

As a result, the following recommendations can be made based on the findings obtained in terms of the participants of the study:

- Our research was conducted on a limited sample group. Keeping the sample group larger and continuing the studies by considering different variables may benefit both researchers working in this field and individuals with special needs to have positive perceptions in the society towards physical education and sports.
- Carrying out informative activities under the name of physical education and sports for individuals with special needs in the in-service training, seminars and conference programs of special education and branch teachers, who direct the education life of individuals with special needs, can positively affect the level of awareness.
- The effect of the special education and branch teachers in special education institutions to work in institutions providing sports training for the disabled on the awareness can be investigated.

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