



Examining the Emotional Distance of the Students at the Department of Exercise and Sports for the Disabled Towards Disabled Individuals (the Case of Turkey)

Engellilerde Egzersiz ve Spor Bölümü Öğrencilerinin Engelli Bireylere Karşı Duygusal Mesafelerinin İncelenmesi (Türkiye Örneđi)

Mustafa HAN¹, Atike YILMAZ²

¹Muş Alparslan Üniversitesi, Spor Bilimleri Fakültesi, Engellilerde Egzersiz ve Spor Bilimleri Bölümü, Muş
· m.han@alparslan.edu.tr · ORCID > 0000-0002-6731-0746

²Muş Alparslan Üniversitesi, Spor Bilimleri Fakültesi, Engellilerde Egzersiz ve Spor Bilimleri Bölümü, Muş
· atiketan@gmail.com · ORCID > 0000-0003-4489-9671

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Sorumlu Yazar/Corresponding Author: Mustafa HAN

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EXAMINING THE EMOTIONAL DISTANCE OF THE STUDENTS AT THE DEPARTMENT OF EXERCISE AND SPORTS FOR THE DISABLED TOWARDS DISABLED INDIVIDUALS (THE CASE OF TURKEY)

ABSTRACT

This research aims to examine the emotional distances of the students studying at the Department of Exercise and Sports for the Disabled in Turkey towards disabled individuals. The general survey method was used for the study. The participants consisted of 188 students (78 women and 110 men). The study uses “The Scale of Emotional Distance towards the Other” and the personal information form created by the researchers. Descriptive statistics, normality distribution, and Mann Whitney U and Kruskal Wallis, which are non-parametric tests, were used in the analysis of the data. The data obtained shows no statistically significant difference in the sub-dimensions of the scale according to the variables of gender, age, university, class, presence of a disabled person in the family, presence of a disabled person in the environment, and the presence of a disabled person in the However, a significant difference was found in favor of the students who preferred the department in the first place in the emotional distance sub-dimensions of the scale in the remote area, in the public area, and in the private area. The results reveal that the emotional distance of the participants towards the disabled individuals was low and the emotional distance of those who preferred the department in the first place was less than the other participants. In addition, activities, where pre-service teachers can interact socially with disabled individuals during their education, are recommended.

Keywords: Disabled, Emotional Distance, Exercise and Sports for the Disabled.



ENGELLİLERDE EGZERSİZ VE SPOR BÖLÜMÜ ÖĞRENCİLERİNİN ENGELLİ BİREYLERE KARŞI DUYGUSAL MESAFELERİNİN İNCELENMESİ (TÜRKİYE ÖRNEĞİ)

ÖZET

Bu araştırma, Türkiye’de bulunan Engellilerde Egzersiz ve Spor Bölümü öğrencilerinin engelli bireylere yönelik duygusal mesafelerinin incelemesi amacıyla gerçekleştirilmiştir. Araştırma da genel tarama yöntemi kullanılmıştır. Araştırma (78 kadın ve 110 erkek) toplam 188 katılımcıdan oluşmaktadır. Araştırmada “Ötekine Karşı Duygusal Mesafe Ölçeği” ve araştırmacılar tarafından oluşturulan kişisel bilgi formu kullanılmıştır. Verilerin analizinde tanımlayıcı istatistik, normallik

dağılımı ve non-parametrik testlerden Mann Whitney U ve Kruskal Wallis testleri kullanılmıştır. Elde edilen verilerde cinsiyet, yaş, üniversite, sınıf, ailede engelli birey bulunma durumu, çevresinde engelli birey bulunma durumu ve sınıfınızda engelli birey bulunma durumu değişkenlerine göre ölçeğin alt boyutlarında istatistiksel olarak anlamlı farklılığa rastlanmamıştır. Ancak ölçeğin uzak alanda, kamusal alanda, özel alanda engellilere karşı duygusal mesafe alt boyutlarında bölümü ilk sırada tercih eden öğrencilerin lehine anlamlı farklılık tespit edilmiştir. Sonuç olarak, katılımcıların engelli bireylere yönelik duygusal mesafelerinin az olduğu ve bölümü ilk sırada tercih edenlerin duygusal mesafelerinin diğer katılımcılara göre daha az olduğu belirlenmiştir. Ayrıca öğretmen adaylarının öğrenim süreleri boyunca engelli bireylerle sosyal etkileşime girebilecekleri etkinliklerin düzenlenmesi önerilmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Engelli, Duygusal Mesafe, Engellilerde Egzersiz ve Spor.



INTRODUCTION

Humanity has had to face many psychological, physiological, or anatomical problems due to various reasons in the process from its beginning to the present. These problems have caused individuals to experience feelings of inadequacy due to not being able to perform the activities expected from them sufficiently (Güllüoğlu, 2022; Tatoğlu et al., 2022).. This is a social reality shared by all societies. Although health-related, social, legal, and environmental solutions continue to be produced and developed to solve these problems, they vary according to the period and society (Pesen & Konak, 2021). As well as basically being a medical problem, each health problem is also a social problem. However, fundamentally, there are two different aspects of health-related problems. The first one is the objective aspect, from which the sources of health problems can be investigated adopting economic, cultural, or other perspectives, while the second aspect is the perspective of societies on people's diseases or inadequacy. These perspectives constitute the prejudices of individuals in society. Prejudices can cause each individual perceived as different to be otherized or as part of a group that should be avoided and distanced from (Partici & Yilmaz, 2018). Othering is a phenomenon that arises from stigmatizing thoughts that the other is worthless and inferior, making a claim to superiority, having a normative idea of the world seeing oneself as more valuable, and having a healthy and strong position (Staszak, 2009; Carroll, 2016). Disabled individuals come first among the marginalized groups in societies (Yilmaz, 2018). Differences between disabled individuals and individuals with typical development can be considered as an alienating factor by people who have not had the opportunity to get to know disabled individuals closely (Joffe, 2011; Yilmaz, 2018).

One of the reasons underlying the marginalization of persons with disabilities is the attitude of individuals towards them. Attitudes refer to a set of pre-established feelings, thoughts, and beliefs towards people, groups, objects, or ideas (Gerrig & Zimbardo, 2014; Küçük & Durmuşoğlu, 2022). According to Bandura's social learning theory, attitudes are learned through experiences and these experiences are largely shaped by being influenced by the judgments and thoughts of parents during childhood (Ozyurek, 2006; Ozcan & Ozer, 2018). Attitudes, which can also be defined as the positive or negative evaluation of individuals, objects, or events, greatly contribute to the formation of individuals' behaviors and emotional distances (Card, 2005; Gerrig & Zimbardo 2014; Garcia, 2015). For this reason, they have an important role in adjusting the emotional distance between people in social relations (Büyükdag et al., 2019). Emotional distance, on the other hand, is defined as the criterion according to which members of various social groups accept, reject or approach each other, showing individuals' and social groups' determination to draw the privacy boundaries themselves (Marshall, 1999).

Therefore, one of the most important factors that can lead to the development of positive attitudes and behaviors towards people with disabilities as well as reducing the emotional distance is the educational environment. Education of individuals with disabilities and typical development together contributes to the increase of interpersonal social interaction and the reduction of emotional distance (Wong, 2008). The fact that educational institutions do not pay enough attention to the problem of otherization among students is an important factor that aggravates the problems faced by students with disabilities, while increasing otherization and emotional distance between individuals (Baddeley, 2016; Baak, 2018). Teachers play a critical role in reducing this effect. According to (Pehlivan, 2008), teachers' emotional reactions, intellectual attitudes, and other habits affect students' attitudes and degrees of emotional distance. In creating these effects on students, "physical education and sports" come to the fore as one of the courses with the highest social communication and interaction opportunities. For this reason, the training of physical education teachers in the field of exercise and sports for the disabled plays an important role in the development of positive attitudes towards disabled individuals and in reducing emotional distances (Fazlıoğlu & Dogan, 2013; Acak et al., 2016). Studies reveal that the emotional distance of teachers who work or will work in this field is important in terms of affecting the future behavior of students, so the subject should be further investigated, yet there are very few studies on the attitudes and emotional distance towards disabled students (Gürsel, 2006; Süngü, 2012; Ozer, 2013; Ozer et al., 2013; Yilmaz et al., 2017; Ceylan et al., 2022). Accordingly, this study aims to examine the emotional distances of the students studying at the Exercise and Sports for the Disabled departments of three universities in Turkey, which actively accept students, and the answers to the following questions were sought.

Students of the Department of Exercise and Sports for the Disabled;

- Is there a significant difference in their emotional distance towards disabled people in terms of age?
- Is there a significant difference in their emotional distance towards disabled people in terms of gender?
- Is there a significant difference in their emotional distance towards disabled people in terms of presence of a disabled person in the family?
- Is there a significant difference in their emotional distance towards disabled people in terms of the presence of a disabled person in the environment?
- Is there a significant difference in their emotional distance towards disabled people in terms of the university?
- Is there a significant difference in their emotional distance towards disabled people in terms of the class?
- Is there a significant difference in their emotional distance towards disabled people in terms of prefer the department you are studying as a priority?
- Is there a significant difference in their emotional distance towards disabled people in terms of there are any disabled people in your class?

METHOD

The study is designed according to the general survey model, which is one of the quantitative research methods. The general survey model is used in studies aiming to collect data to examine certain characteristics of a group (Buyukozturk et al., 2016).

Population and Sampling

The study population comprised 400 students studying at the Exercise and Sports Departments of three universities with active students in Turkey, namely Muş Alparslan University, Malatya İnönü University, and İstanbul Gelişim University; while the sample group consisted of 188 students (110 men and 78 women) who voluntarily participated in the study. Ethical approval for the study was obtained from Muş Alparslan University (Document Date and Number: 01.07.2021-15948).

Table 1. Frequency and percentage distributions according to the demographic information of the participants

Variables	n	%	
Age	18	22	11,7
	19	24	12,8
	20	35	18,6
	21	46	24,5
	22	26	13,8
	23- over	35	18,6
Gender	Female	78	41,5
	Male	110	58,5
Presence of a disabled person in the family	Yes	38	20,2
	No	150	79,8
The presence of a disabled person in the environment	Yes	154	81,9
	No	34	18,1
University	Mus Alparslan University	77	41,0
	Inonu University	74	39,4
	Istanbul Gelisim University	37	19,7
Class	1st Grade	66	35,1
	2nd Grade	56	29,8
	3rd Grade	52	27,7
	4th Grade	14	7,4
Did you prefer the department you are studying as a priority?	Yes	108	57,4
	No	80	42,6
Are there any disabled people in your class?	Yes	87	46,3
	No	101	53,7

Data Collection Tools

The Personal Information Form created by the researchers and the “Scale of Emotional Distance towards the Other” developed by Yilmaz (2018), were used to collect the research data. The emotional distance status of the participants was examined in terms of variables such as gender, age, university, class, presence of a disabled person in the family, presence of a disabled person in the environment, whether the department was preferred in the first place, and presence of disabled people in the class.

The Scale of Emotional Distance towards the Other (SEDTO)

The sum of the scores given by the participant to 32 emotional states under 4 scenarios in the Scale of Emotional Distance towards the Other, developed by Yılmaz (2018), shows the general emotional distance of the individual towards the other. Negative emotions were reverse coded at the stage of calculating the total scores. The Cronbach's alpha value of the scale was .83 for the dimension of emotional distance towards the distant other (EDTDO); .87, for the dimension of emotional distance towards the other in the public sphere (EDTOPUS); .91, for the dimension of emotional distance towards the other in business life (EDTOBL); and, .93, for the dimension of emotional distance towards the other in the private sphere (EDTOPRS). Accordingly, the four-dimensional structure of the scale was found to be reliable (Yılmaz, 2018).

Data Analysis

Data obtained from the research were analyzed using SPSS V23 software. Descriptive statistics method, Shapiro-Wilk and Kolmogorov Smirnov normality tests were used for the analysis. Since the data were not normally distributed, Mann Whitney U and Kruskal Wallis, which are non-parametric tests, were used. The significance level ($p < 0.05$) was used to find the difference between variables.

FINDINGS

Table 2. Kruskal Wallis test results for the scores participants got from the sub-dimensions of emotional distance towards the other scale according to the age variable.

		n	Mean Rank	sd	χ^2	P
EDTDD	18	22	89.02	5	4.983	.418
	19	24	76.67			
	20	35	101.69			
	21	46	103.07			
	22	26	97.65			
	23-over	35	89.39			
EDTDPUS	18	22	104.98	5	3.326	.650
	19	24	85.40			
	20	35	93.69			
	21	46	98.08			
	22	26	101.44			
	23-over	35	85.11			
EDTDBL	18	22	90.66	5	2.246	.814
	19	24	86.58			
	20	35	102.96			
	21	46	96.78			
	22	26	97.37			
	23-over	35	88.76			

EDTDPRS	18	22	111.18	5	5.534	.354
	19	24	94.40			
	20	35	90.83			
	21	46	84.55			
	22	26	90.88			
	23-over	35	103.51			
Total		188				

$P < 0.05$ EDTDD: The emotional distance towards the distant disabled., EDTDPUS: The emotional distance towards the disabled in the public sphere., EDTDBL: The emotional distance towards the disabled in business life., EDTDPRS: The emotional distance towards the disabled in the private sphere.

When Table 2 is examined, according to the age variable of the participants EDTDD χ^2 (sd=5, n=188) = 4.983, $p > 0.05$), EDTDPUS χ^2 (sd=5, n=188) = 3.326, $p > 0.05$), EDTDBL χ^2 (sd=5, n=188) = 2.246, $p > 0.05$) and EDTDPRS χ^2 (sd=5, n=188) = 5.534, $p > 0.05$) sub-dimensions, no statistically significant difference was found.

Table 3. U-Test results for the scores participants got from the sub-dimensions of emotional distance towards the other scale, according to the variables of gender, presence of a disabled person in the family, and in the environment.

			n	Mean Rank	Sum of Rank	U	P	
Gender	EDTDD	Female	78	94.73	7389.00	4272.00	.961	
		Male	110	94.34	10377.00			
	EDTDPUS	Female	78	96.20	7503.50	4157.50	.711	
		Male	110	93.30	10262.50			
	EDTDBL	Female	78	96.16	7500.50	4160.50	.709	
		Male	110	93.32	10265.50			
	EDTDPRS	Female	78	94.38	7361.50	4280.50	.978	
		Male	110	94.59	10404.50			
	Presence of a disabled person in the family	EDTDD	Yes	38	443.64	43920.00	2682.50	.575
			No	150	98.91	3758.50		
EDTDPUS		Yes	38	93.38	14007.50	2460.50	.182	
		No	150	104.75	3980.50			
EDTDBL		Yes	38	91.90	13785.50	2729.00	.669	
		No	150	97.68	3712.00			
EDTDPRS		Yes	38	93.69	14054.00	2755.50	.736	
		No	150	96.99	3685.50			

The presence of a disabled person in the environment	EDTDD	Yes	154	95.04	14635.50	2535.50	.773
		No	38	92.07	3130.50		
	EDTDPUS	Yes	154	97.00	14938.00	2233.00	.169
		No	38	83.18	2828.00		
	EDTDBL	Yes	154	93.88	14457.00	2522.00	.724
		No	38	97.32	3309.00		
	EDTDPRS	Yes	154	91.92	14155.00	2220.00	.138
		No	38	106.21	3611.00		

$P < 0.05$ EDTDD: The emotional distance towards the distant disabled., EDTDPUS: The emotional distance towards the disabled in the public sphere., EDTDBL: The emotional distance towards the disabled in business life., EDTDPRS: The emotional distance towards the disabled in the private sphere.

As a result of Table 3 analysis, the gender variable of the participants and EDTDD ($U=4272.00$, $p > 0.05$), EDTDPUS ($U=4157.50$, $p > 0.05$), EDTDBL ($U=4160.50$, $p > 0.05$) and EDTDPRS ($U=4280.50$, $p > 0.05$) no statistically significant difference was found between the sub-dimensions. In terms of the variable of having a disabled person in the families of the participants, EDTDD ($U=2682.50$, $p > 0.05$), EDTDPUS ($U=2460.50$, $p > 0.05$), EDTDBL ($U=2729.00$, $p > 0.05$) and EDTDPRS ($U=2755.50$, $p > 0.05$) no significant difference was found between the sub-dimensions. In terms of the variable of having a disabled person around the participants, EDTDD ($U=2535.50$, $p > 0.05$), EDTDPUS ($U=2233.00$, $p > 0.05$), EDTDBL ($U=2522.00$, $p > 0.05$) and EDTDPRS ($U=2220.00$, $p > 0.05$) no significant difference was found between the sub-dimensions.

Table 4. Kruskal Wallis test results for the scores the participants got from the sub-dimensions of emotional distance towards the other scale according to the university variable.

		n	Mean Rank	sd	χ^2	P
EDTDD	İÜ	77	84.38	2	4.617	.099
	MAUN	74	100.56			
	İGU	37	103.45			
EDTDPUS	İÜ	77	90.25	2	1.995	.369
	MAUN	74	93.61			
	İGU	37	105.11			
EDTDBL	İÜ	77	85.61	2	4.834	.089
	MAUN	74	97.32			
	İGU	37	107.35			

	İÜ	77	94.67			
EDTDPRS	MAUN	74	94.68	2	.009	.995
	İGU	37	93.78			
	Total	188				

$P < 0.05$ EDTDD: The emotional distance towards the distant disabled., EDTDPUS: The emotional distance towards the disabled in the public sphere., EDTDBL: The emotional distance towards the disabled in business life., EDTDPRS: The emotional distance towards the disabled in the private sphere. İÜ: Inonu University, MAUN: Mus Alparslan University, İGU: Istanbul Gelisim University

When Table 4 is examined, according to the university variable of the participants, EDTDD χ^2 (sd=2, n=188) = 4,617, $p > 0.05$), EDTDPUS χ^2 (sd=2, n=188) = 1,995, $p > 0.05$), EDTDBL χ^2 (sd=2, n=188) = 4,834, $p > 0.05$) and EDTDPRS χ^2 (sd=2, n=188) =,009, $p > 0.05$) no statistically significant difference was found between the sub-dimensions.

Table 5. Kruskal Wallis test results for the scores the participants got from the sub-dimensions of emotional distance towards the other scale according to the class variable.

		n	Mean Rank	sd	χ^2	P
EDTDD	1st Grade	66	87.11	3	4.522	.210
	2nd Grade	56	106.81			
	3rd Grade	52	92.98			
	4th Grade	14	85.71			
EDTDPUS	1st Grade	66	92.95	3	1.004	.800
	2nd Grade	56	96.46			
	3rd Grade	52	97.55			
	4th Grade	14	82.64			
EDTDBL	1st Grade	66	90.00	3	1.300	.729
	2nd Grade	56	99.74			
	3rd Grade	52	96.07			
	4th Grade	14	88.93			

EDTDPUS	1st Grade	66	94.72	3	4.154	.245
	2nd Grade	56	103.59			
	3rd Grade	52	83.73			
	4th Grade	14	97.11			
Total		188				

$P < 0.05$ EDTDD: The emotional distance towards the distant disabled., EDTDPUS: The emotional distance towards the disabled in the public sphere., EDTDBL: The emotional distance towards the disabled in business life., EDTDPRS: The emotional distance towards the disabled in the private sphere.

When Table 5 is examined, according to the class variable of the participants, EDTDD χ^2 (sd=2, n=188) = 4,617, $p > 0.05$), EDTDPUS χ^2 (sd=2, n=188) = 1,995, $p > 0.05$), EDTDBL χ^2 (sd=2, n=188) = 4,834, $p > 0.05$) and EDTDPRS χ^2 (sd=2, n=188) =,009, $p > 0.05$) no statistically significant difference was found between the sub-dimensions.

Table 6. U-Test results for the scores the participants got from the sub-dimensions of the emotional distance towards the other scale, according to the department being preferred in the first place, and having a disabled person in the class, variables.

			n	Mean Rank	Sum of Rank	U	P	
Did you prefer the department you are studying as a priority ?	EDTDD	Yes	108	102.99	11122.50	3403.500	.013	
		No	80	83.04	6643.50			
	EDTDPUS	Yes	108	104.30	11264.50	3261.500	.003	
		No	80	81.27	6501.50			
	EDTDBL	Yes	108	100.10	10810.50	3715.500	.083	
		No	80	86.94	6955.50			
EDTDPUS	Yes	108	101.61	10974.00	3552.000	.026		
	No	80	84.90	6792.00				
Are there any disabled people in your class?	EDTDD	Yes	87	93.72	8154.00	4326.000	.855	
		No	101	95.17	9612.00			
	EDTDPUS	Yes	87	92.99	8090.00	4262.000	.717	
		No	101	95.80	9676.00			
	EDTDBL	Yes	87	93.37	8123.00	4295.000	.779	
		No	101	95.48	9643.00			
	EDTDPUS	Yes	87	93.11	8101.00	4273.000	.729	
		No	101	95.69	9665.00			
	Total		188					

EDTDD: The emotional distance towards the distant disabled., EDTDPUS: The emotional distance towards the disabled in the public sphere., EDTDBL: The emotional distance towards the disabled in business life., EDTDPRS: The emotional distance towards the disabled in the private sphere.

When Table 6 is examined, a statistically significant difference was found between the EDTDD ($U=3403,500$, $p<0.05$), EDTDPUS ($U=3261,500$, $p<0.05$) and EDTDPRS ($U=3552,000$, $p<0.05$) sub-dimensions in favor of those who said yes in terms of variable “Did you prefer the department you are studying as a priority”. However, no significant difference was found in the EDTDBL ($U=3715,500$, $p>0.05$) sub-dimension. “Is there a disabled person in your class?” in terms of variable, EDTDD ($U=4326,000$, $p>0.05$), EDTDPUS ($U=4262,000$, $p>0.05$), EDTDBL ($U=4295,000$, $p>0.05$) and EDTDPRS ($U=4273,000$), $p>0.05$), no significant difference was found between the sub-dimensions.

DISCUSSION

This study aimed to examine the emotional distances of pre-service teachers who study at the Department of Exercise and Sports for the Disabled, which take place only in two state universities and one foundation university (Muş Alparslan University, Malatya İnönü University, and Istanbul Gelisim University) in Turkey. The study revealed that the mean scores of pre-service teachers’ emotional distance towards the other disabled individuals were high in general. It has been reported in the literature that there are not enough scientific studies (Aydogan & Cetin, 2018) on emotional distance with disabled individuals. Since the scale of emotional distance towards the other was used to measure individuals’ behaviors, attitudes, and distances towards others who are different from themselves (Yilmaz, 2018), the findings obtained in the research were associated with attitude studies.

According to the results, no statistically significant difference was found between the participants’ sub-dimension scores of the emotional distance towards the other scale according to the age variable. Previous studies (Ten Klooster et al., 2009; Lewis & Stenfert-Kroese, 2010; Yarali, 2015) also support the results obtained from this research. Accordingly, the study reveals that the age variable does not affect emotional distance. The impact and importance of the family and educational environments on the development of positive attitudes towards the disabled should not be overlooked. Attitudes emerge from the interaction between family members and develop with socialization in the educational environment (Axinn & Thornton, 1993; Cunningham, 2001; Liu et al., 2010). In this sense, the reason why there is no difference in terms of the age factor between the individuals can be explained by the family environment in which they grew up and the educational environment they experienced in the past.

When the sub-dimension scores of the participants’ emotional distance towards the other scale and the gender variable were examined, no statistically significant difference was found. Studies have revealed that the gender variable is not effective on attitudes (Graf et al., 2007; Jerlinder et al., 2010; Fournidou et al., 2011; Colak & Cetin, 2014; Yarali, 2015; Orakci et al., 2016; Ozcan & Ozer, 2018). However, it is

also possible to come across studies in the literature with opposite results (Kozub & Lienert, 2003; Meegan & MacPhail, 2006; Ergin, 2007), revealing that there were significant differences in favor of women. Since the scale used in the study measures the behaviors, attitudes, and distances of individuals towards others who are different from themselves, we can state that the gender variable does not affect the emotional distance towards disabled individuals.

According to the results obtained from our research, no statistically significant difference was found between the pre-service teachers from different universities included in the study and their emotional distance scores towards disabled individuals. When the literature is examined, there are not many studies examining the emotional distance of pre-service teachers from different universities towards others. However, Gedik and Toker's (2018), study of attitudes towards disabled individuals on 190 pre-service teachers studying at a state university and a foundation university found that the students studying at foundation universities had higher attitude scores towards the disabled than students studying at state universities. They associated this finding with the socioeconomic and cultural differences of pre-service teachers studying at foundation and state universities. These results can lead to the interpretation that individuals with high socioeconomic and cultural levels have more positive attitudes towards the disabled (Robinson, 2007).

According to the results of the research, no statistically significant difference was found between the sub-dimensions of the presence of a disabled person in the family and the environment and the emotional distance towards the disabled individuals. While a group of studies in the literature (Ten Klooster et al., 2009; Akyildiz, 2017; Karademir et al., 2018; Calbayram et al., 2018; Gulunay et al., 2019; Acak & Narinc, 2020;) support our research results, other studies (Avramidis et al., 2000; Cameron & Rutland, 2006; Colak & Cetin, 2014) have reached results contradicting our study. It can be thought that interacting with disabled individuals and spending more time with them could contribute positively to emotional distance (Parasuram, 2006; Marom et al., 2007;). However, our study reveals that the presence of a disabled person in the family or the environment does not affect the emotional distance towards the disabled.

Emotional distance scores of the 1.,2.,3. and 4th-grade students included in the study were compared, but no statistically significant difference was found between the classes. There are multiple studies in the literature that support our finding that the class level does not change the attitude level towards disabled individuals (Martin & Kudlacek, 2010; Ozturk & Abakay, 2014; Karademir et al., 2018; Gulunay et al., 2019; Acak & Narinc, 2020). On the other hand, Acak et al., (2016), found that the attitude scores of the 3rd and 4th-grade students were higher than the 1st and 2nd-grade students, and the increase in the duration of the pre-service teachers' education on disabled individuals resulted in more positive attitudes towards these

individuals. According to our findings, the class level of the participants does not affect the emotional distance towards disabled individuals.

No significant difference was found between the variable of having a disabled person in your class, which is another variable of our study, and the sub-dimensions of the emotional distance scale. Although there are studies in the literature concluding that studying in the same class with disabled individuals and interacting with them contribute positively to the emotional distance towards disabled individuals (Horner et al., 2002; Ozyurek, 2013; May, 2012), it is also possible to come across studies (Sahin & Guldenoglu, 2013) stating that receiving education in the same class with disabled individuals does not affect emotional distance.

According to the analysis of the data obtained in the study, a statistically significant difference was found in favor of those who said yes to the question of whether the participants preferred the department of Exercise and Sports for the Disabled in the first place, between the EDTDO, EDTOPUS, EDTOPRS sub-dimensions of the emotional distance scale. The fact that the pre-service teachers preferred the Department of Exercise and Sports for the Disabled which provides training in the field of sports for disabled individuals, over the Physical Education Teaching, Coaching Education, Sports Management, and Recreation departments, shows that their emotional distance towards disabled individuals is positive. According to the study titled “The Profile of the Department of Exercise and Sports Education for the Disabled in terms of Graduate Opinions”, (Ilhan & Can, 2020), the pre-service teachers stated that they preferred this department over other departments, and their emotional distance towards the disabled individuals developed positively during their education. In this respect, the study supports the results obtained from this research.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

According to our findings, the variables of gender, age, university, presence of a disabled person in the family or the environment, and the presence of a disabled person in the class do not affect the emotional distance of the pre-service teachers towards the disabled individuals. Also, pre-service teachers who preferred the Department of Exercise and Sports for the Disabled in the first place were less emotionally distant towards disabled individuals. In line with the results obtained, the following practices can contribute to the reduction of the emotional distance between disabled individuals and individuals with typical development: Carrying out awareness-raising activities about disabled individuals at all levels of education; increasing the number of the departments of Exercise and Sports for the Disabled (which operate only in three universities at present) in available provinces or regions; carrying out activities to increase the social integration of students with disabilities and students with typical development during their university education.

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Data Analysis : MH (%50), AY (%50)

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