



## Opinions on Awareness Activities Regarding Inclusive Community Life: Experiences of Pre-Service Teachers

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### Article Info

### ABSTRACT

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The aim of this study is to examine the opinions of the Special Education teacher candidates about the awareness activities organized in terms of the rights of children with special needs, their social participation, accessibility and contributing to the social inclusion climate. 56 pre-service teachers studying in the 2nd year of the Special Education Department of the Faculty of Education were included in this study. The data of the research carried out in a phenomenological design was collected through the analysis of the forms containing the written opinions of pre-service teachers in the fall term of 2022-2023. By analyzing the data with document analysis technique, it was gathered under five main themes: "Classification of Organized Awareness Activities, Description of Activities Serving Purpose, Importance of Awareness Activities, Activities That Pre-service Teachers Want to Organize and Suggestions for Activities". In awareness activities, it is noteworthy that the pre-service teachers, who draw attention to social, legal, and physical regulations, emphasize the importance of content that reflects a rights-based view and the fundamental rights of individuals for this purpose. It was also seen that pre-service teachers emphasized the importance of including permanent and continuous awareness activities rather than containing a certain time interval and diversifying them in terms of being aimed at different disability groups. Based on the results of the research, it can be suggested that family and peer participation in awareness activities in inclusive environments, up-to-date and continuity of activities, and information sharing about individuals with special needs can be recommended.

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## INTRODUCTION

Awareness skills play a pivotal role in the inclusive community living of individuals with special needs, starting from early childhood and continuing throughout their developmental stages (İlhan & Esentürk, 2015). These skills encompass the ability to perceive, comprehend, and attentively engage with the surrounding world, enabling individuals to make sense of their environment. The cultivation of such skills is instrumental in fostering positive attitudes towards individuals with special needs, facilitating an understanding of various disabilities, and embracing individual differences (Lindsay & McPherson, 2012). However, individuals with disabilities encounter challenges in attaining equal participation in society and exercising their rights, much like their non-disabled counterparts (Carroll, Witten, Calder-Dawe, Smith, Kearns, Asiasiga, Lin, Kayes & Mavoia, 2018). To address these issues, numerous studies have integrated awareness activities aimed at promoting the rights and inclusion of individuals with disabilities (O'Connor, 2016; Hurst, Corning & Ferrante, 2012; Wardany, Hidayatullah & Wagimin, 2018). These activities can be organized in various ways to effectively cater to the diverse needs of individuals with special needs (O'Connor, 2016; Artman-Meeker, Grant & Yang, 2016).

According to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), it is seen that the right of all children to participate fully and actively in society, to have self-confidence and to receive education under appropriate conditions is emphasized. Therefore, children with special needs, like their peers, have the legal right to support friendship relations, to be accepted, and to have a sense of belonging. Practices related to awareness activities have an important place in children's academic, social and emotional development in order to create social acceptance and cooperative learning opportunities (Columna et al., 2009). Inclusive educational environments are of critical importance for children with special needs, and although students with special needs spend most of their time in school environments, their acceptance by their peers is not at the level expected to be valued, and it is supported by studies that these children feel lonely and insecure (McDougall et al., 2004; Tavares, 2011). Attitudes of children with normal development towards children with special needs are directly related to the acquisition of knowledge about children in their social environment. Among the reasons for the negative attitudes of normally developing children towards their peers with special needs and their exclusion from social activities is due to their lack of knowledge about these children. Awareness activities organized for children with special needs play a major role in changing the negative attitudes of their peers (Hunt & Hunt; 2004; Nowicki, 2006). The number and type of awareness activities differ in terms of knowledge acquisition. It is suggested that awareness raising activities, in which different activities are used together, are more effective on children and should be used in a way that supports each other as much as possible (Flower et al., 2007; Hutzler et al., 2007). In order to gain knowledge in terms of increasing the awareness of children with special needs, many activities such as video screening, drama activities, puppet shows, discussions, use of stories, simulations, group work are used (Flower et al., 2007; Godeau et al., 2010; Pivik et al., 2002).

Awareness activities in the studies;

- a) activities for social communication/interaction
- b) simulation activities
- c) curriculum- based activities and activities involving the use of all components together appear to take place in shapes (Flower et al., 2007).

The awareness activities organized in inclusive environments are briefly given below.

### a) Social Interaction

Researchers focusing on increasing the awareness of children with special needs focus on working with normally developing children with special needs peers by drawing attention to social relations. In this way, they express that they will increase the acceptance of their peers with special needs and develop positive attitudes (Favazza & Odom, 1997). In some of these studies, it is seen that activities such as “*friend circle*” and “*peer network*” are included by highlighting interaction-based activities that include facilitating friendship relations and harmony in inclusive environments (Carter et al., 2013; O'Connor, 2016). Thanks to the activities

that are based on peer interaction and focus on group work, the awareness of children with special needs can be raised by their peers and it is seen that their social acceptance increases. These activities carried out to increase interaction and acceptance among students include different activities for peers (Carter et al., 2013; O'Connor, 2016). Lindsay and McPherson (2012), working with children with Cerebral Palsy, emphasized the importance of peer support for developing awareness and social interaction skills of children with special needs, and included fun activity practices Game-based "Game intervention," which is one of the awareness activities concerning social interaction in children with special needs, is incorporated into the game-based activities. It is possible to realize the social-emotional development and interaction of children, especially with dramatic play activities used from early childhood. Games enable all students to interact and communicate in the classroom (O'Neill, 2013). In this way, it is possible to work together with children with special needs and their peers. In addition to game activities, sports activities encompass another domain utilized for awareness objectives and fostering interaction among children with special needs and their peers. Particularly with adaptive sports activities, children with special needs can participate in these activities and their positive features such as sharing with their peers, developing friendships and cooperation can be supported. Children who learn social behaviors with positive features can adapt to the society they live in more quickly and easily (Özkalp, 2007). Sports activities also support children in terms of better planning and effective use of time, and distract them from aimless activities (Öztürk, 2002).

### **b) Simulation Activities**

When the awareness activities were examined, it became evident that different experiences were incorporated, including simulation, for knowledge acquisition. Pivik et al. (2002) used virtual environments related to simulation, based on a computer program, enabling children with normal development to experience wheelchair use and supported them in gaining knowledge. At the end of his work, he stated that there were positive developments in knowledge acquisition and awareness. In a similar activity, Seidler (2011) focused on increasing students' awareness by developing positive attitudes about inadequacies in his study. In gaining awareness activities of role playing/simulation activities; it is used to reveal the current situation, to gain knowledge about children with special needs and to develop positive attitudes (Hurst et al., 2012). In role-playing/simulation activities, children with normal development take on the roles of different types of disabilities in small groups, revealing the situations they encounter in daily life. It is aimed to gain awareness by making discussions about how to behave in positive and problem situations (Hurst et al., 2012).

### **c) Curriculum-Based Activities**

When we look at the curriculum-based activities in awareness activities, it is seen that they focus on gaining knowledge about different types of disability. Reading activities, puppet shows, videos, class-based activities, exercises and games are used for this (Hutzler et al., 2007; Triliva et al., 2009). Reading activities can be done together with special needs children and their peers on the basis of interaction, as well as individually for the purpose of gaining knowledge. In the reading activities carried out for the purpose of gaining knowledge, information on many characteristics such as the individual characteristics of children with special needs and their strengths can be included. In reading activities, students can also read aloud in order to include group discussion and sharing, and then discussions can be included (Sigmon et al., 2016; Wilkins et al., 2016). Apart from activities based on reading and group activities, awareness-raising activities are also organized in different ways (Moore & Nettlebeck, 2013; Nowicki & Brown, 2013; Ranson & Byrne, 2014). Another study on awareness activities is a puppet show with normally developing children, and these activities can be used to develop knowledge and attitudes towards children with special needs (Dunst, 2014). Awareness is raised by making puppets talk about the characteristics of individuals with special needs, their strengths, the situations they encounter in communication and social skills. Dunst (2014) used the puppet show in order to improve the knowledge and attitudes of primary school students about their peers with special needs. By personalizing the puppets, he touched on important information about his peers with special needs. At the end of the research, it was stated that the puppet show made significant contributions to awareness skills and that associating it with real life increased awareness. On the other hand, Moore and Nettlebeck (2013) chose a

documentary that included the speeches of the athletes about the Olympics and their activities, and in this documentary, they gave general information about different disability groups and conveyed their success stories (Moore & Nettelbeck, 2013). Aiming to raise awareness of children with special needs through comic book drawings, Seidler (2011) asked sixth grade students with normal development on this subject to create a comic about children with special needs. Before this drawing, teachers and students discussed and exchanged information about the inadequacies and judgments of the society. Awareness activities can be used independently or together. Multi-component applications, which include the use of many awareness activities such as curriculum-based activities, social interaction/communication, use of technological and virtual environments, are mostly preferred by researchers in terms of knowledge acquisition and attitude development in children (Seidler, 2011).

As a result, knowledge acquisition in the awareness of children with special needs is of great importance in the development of positive attitudes, and for this, activities that include social interaction, curriculum-based, simulation or all of them together should be used (Ali et al., 2001). When we look at the studies on the awareness of children with special needs in inclusive education environments, it has been seen that while it was observed that positive attitudes developed in environments that provide information about their peers with special needs, group discussion and storytelling, it was stated that children with special needs had difficulties in participating in group activities and adapting to the classroom environment in environments where awareness activities were not included (Öztürk & Yıkımsı, 2013; Tuş & Çifci-Tekinarslan, 2013). In studies that draw attention to peer awareness, it is stated that the acceptance of children with special needs, who have difficulties in academic and social skills and behavioral problems, by their peers decreases, and it is stated that positive attitudes of children with special needs develop along with their characteristics, positive aspects and knowledge acquisition for awareness purposes (Çolak et al., 2013).

In awareness activities organized for children in need of special education, it is important how they are planned and put into practice as well as what kind of content is used. In the study of Atmaca (2023), it was determined that if no other instruction was given to pre-service teachers, cognitive goals were mostly included in the lesson plans or activity plans for the purpose of raising awareness, and psychomotor and affective goals were either little or not mentioned at all. Atmaca (2023) emphasizes that even in extra-curricular activities aimed at raising awareness, independent of the formal curriculum, more importance is given to teaching cognitive information and allocating time, while the learning of the affective and psychomotor domains is revealed to be ignored. In awareness activities organized for children in need of special education, it is important how they are planned and put into practice as well as what kind of content is used. It is understood from this that teachers need professional support in order to effectively plan both formal curriculum and extra-curriculum awareness activities.

Awareness activities play a crucial role in the integration and adaptation of children with special needs into society. However, it is essential for teachers to possess professional knowledge and skills in utilizing these activities effectively. Existing literature indicates a limited number of studies on awareness activities for children with special needs within school environments. Starting from an early age, teachers should implement supportive programs that facilitate communication skills development between children with special needs and their peers throughout primary, secondary, and high school levels. This study aims to contribute to the development of awareness and positive attitudes among pre-service teachers, enabling them to create an inclusive world that upholds the rights and awareness of children with special needs as they embark on their professional careers. Moreover, uncovering the perspectives of pre-service teachers on activities related to the awareness of children with special needs is of significant importance. It is believed that pre-service teachers hold a pivotal role in cultivating awareness and fostering a comprehensive understanding of crucial aspects such as the unique characteristics of children with special needs, adequate training for their educational requirements, and the acceptance of these children within their peer groups and broader environment. In light of these objectives, this research endeavors to explore the opinions and

experiences of pre-service teachers regarding the awareness activities involving peers, families, and society concerning children with special needs.

## **METHOD**

### **Research Model**

This study, which aims to reveal the opinions of special education pre-service teachers about the awareness activities organized in terms of contributing to the rights of children with special needs, their social participation, accessibility, and social inclusion climate, was designed with the phenomenological research method, one of the qualitative research methods. According to Creswell (2017), it is defined as a pattern that takes its source from philosophy and psychology, in which the researcher describes the lived experiences of individuals related to a phenomenon as defined by the participants. In this study, awareness activities related to inclusive social life were handled as a phenomenon and how the pre-service teachers experienced this phenomenon, their comments about their experiences and their suggestions, if any, were questioned with semi-structured forms. While special education teacher candidates continue their undergraduate education in order to increase their professional knowledge and skills based on education, it is believed that they should bolster social awareness through engagement in social activities and awareness-building initiatives. The significance of fostering a culture of coexistence and promoting societal attitudes towards individual differences is deemed comparable to the importance of inclusive education environments in establishing an inclusive mindset. In this way, individuals with special needs, who are members of the society, will be able to come together with other individuals with an inclusive understanding in all areas of life. Therefore, in this study, an answer was sought to the question of what the opinions of special education teacher candidates about awareness activities in developing inclusive attitudes towards individuals with special needs are.

Phenomenological research is generally focused on individual experiences, structured or semi-structured forms are the most common data collection techniques (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2018). Therefore, pre-service teachers reflected their experiences of awareness activities of inclusive community life on these forms. The collected written texts are linked by the researcher and turned into a narrative (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2018). In this study, a semi-structured form consisting of five questions was given to special education pre-service teachers and their written comments on these questions were analyzed by descriptive analysis by dividing them into codes, themes, and categories. As a result of the analysis, five themes were obtained. In the findings section, the themes and sub-themes are given in detail.

### **Participants**

In this research 56 pre-service teachers attending the Special Education Department of a state university in the Black Sea Region of Turkey were included. The criteria used in determining the participants were:

- a) Continuing education in the Special Education Teaching Undergraduate Program in Higher Education
- b) Volunteering to participate in the study.

Easily accessible case sampling, one of the purposeful sampling methods, was applied to determine the study group in the research. Easily accessible case sampling adds speed and practicality to research (Patton, 1987). Second year students were included in the sample selection of the researcher in terms of ease and accessibility. In addition to this, in the selection of the study group, especially from the second grade teacher candidates instead of other classes, it was considered important to examine their experiences and their views on awareness activities in addition to the fact that they had taken special education lessons and related field courses in the first year because they had not yet attended the observation lesson in special education institutions during the data collection process. Before starting the study, the participants were informed about the purpose and importance of the research and their voluntary participation status was determined. After obtaining the consent of



the pre-service teachers regarding their voluntary participation, information about the work schedule was given. In order to keep their identities confidential, each of the prospective teachers was given specific codes (for example, PT1, PT2, PT3 ..... PT56). Information about the participants is given in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Demographic information of participants

Participants	Female	Male	Age range	Grade	Department
PT1, PT2, PT3..... PT56	33	23	21-28	2. Grade	Special Education Teaching

A semi-structured form including four demographic and five open-ended questions was used to collect data in semi-structured documents from prospective teachers at the end of the 2022-2023 fall semester. To ensure face and content validity, the opinions of three experts were taken into consideration. The pre-service teachers actively observed various activities in their environment that were related to awareness activities in inclusive settings. Their focus was on assessing the effectiveness of these organized activities in developing awareness and shaping attitudes. Additionally, the pre-service teachers shared their valuable insights and recommendations on how to effectively raise awareness among children with special needs in inclusive education environments. They were asked to reflect on how they experienced this phenomenon by writing their opinions and thoughts on the questionnaire.

**Research Instruments and Processes**

The data were collected by document analysis technique by writing down their opinions and thoughts on the forms presented to the pre-service teachers for document analysis between 07.11.2022 and 05.12.2022. Document analysis, which is defined as obtaining data by examining existing records and documents (Karasar, 2005), includes a number of processes in order to evaluate and examine materials through printed and electronic means (Bowen, 2009).

Pre-service teachers were given forms and one hour to write. During this period, pre-service teachers were asked to express their ideas in writing between 750-1000 words to open-ended questions. Since the pre-service teachers were given a certain amount of time in their written statements, the average word range was limited to 750-1000 words during this period. The researcher examined the written documents provided by the pre-service teachers and determined the relevant codes for the descriptive transcripts. Yıldırım and Şimşek (2018) state that the similarities and differences of the codes that emerge for thematic coding should be determined, and accordingly, the themes that can be combined with the codes that are related to each other should be recognized. In the study, the main themes and sub-themes were reached by taking into account the similarities and differentiation between the codes in the characterization of the codes, and the themes were given their final shape. It has been seen that the pre-service teachers expressed more than one opinion regarding the theme and sub-themes. For example, while the pre-service teachers expressed their opinions about "Social Support" in the sub-themes related to "Awareness Activities" in the first theme, it is seen that the same pre-service teacher also expressed an opinion in the "Informational Support" category. Therefore, the total frequencies in the themes include all the different views of the pre-service teachers, not the numbers.

In the document analysis, special education pre-service teachers were asked to answer open-ended questions in writing about awareness activities organized for children with special needs in inclusive

environments. These questions are;

- 1) What is being done in your environment about awareness activities organized in inclusive environments with children with special needs?
- 2) What extent do you think awareness activities organized in inclusive environments with children with special needs serve their purpose?
- 3) Why do you think awareness activities organized in inclusive environments with children with special needs are important?
- 4) What would you do as awareness activities in inclusive environments for children with special needs?
- 5) What would you recommend for organizing awareness activities in inclusive education environments for children with special needs?

### Data Analysis

Based on the written transcripts of the pre-service teachers, the researcher created appropriate themes and sub-themes. Written transcripts taken from pre-service teachers were made without any intervention, taking into account the inter-coder reliability of three experts, including the researcher. Necessary arrangements were made by talking about the themes and sub-themes “consensus” and situations where there was disagreement, which were created with the data obtained by the experts. Experts used the reliability formula of Miles and Huberman (1994) in the analysis of the written document and in the decision-making process of the theme and sub-themes ( $\text{Reliability} = \frac{\text{Agreement}}{\text{Agreement} + \text{Disagreement}}$ ). As a result of the calculations, the reliability of the research was found to be 92. This ratio was accepted as reliable for the research.

### Ethic

The necessary ethics committee permissions for the research were obtained from the Social Sciences Ethics Committee of Bülent Ecevit University with the decision dated 07.11.2022 and numbered 233108.

### RESULTS

As a result of the document analysis on the phenomenon of awareness activities, they were summarized in five categories as below:

1. *Classification of Organized Awareness Activities*
2. *Identification of Activities that Serve Purpose*
3. *The Importance of Awareness Activities*
4. *Activities that Pre-Service Teachers Want to Organize*
5. *Suggestions for Activities.*

Below are the main themes obtained from the written transcripts of the phenomenon of awareness activities related to inclusive social life and the frequencies of these themes.

#### 1. Theme: Classification of Organized Awareness Activities

The first main theme is for the classification of activities and consists of three sub-themes. In Table 2, these activities of the pre-service teachers were classified under three headings as “*Social Support Activities*”, “*Information Gaining Activities for Awareness Purposes*” and “*Support Activities Related to Legal Rights and Processes*”.

**Table 2.** *Classification of the organized awareness activities of the pre-service teachers*

<b>2.1. Social Support Activities</b>	
Sports Activities-Games-Competition-Fun	16
Artistic Activities (Theatre, Dance, Music)	14
Simulation/ Putting Oneself in the Place of a Special Needs Person	10

Painting-Painting Activities with Peers (Wall-Face-School)	6
Watching Video/Film/Documentary with Peers	6
Reading Poetry	6
Walking Activities	5
Peer/Family Participation	4
Family's Participation in Activities	3
Food, Picnic Organizations	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>73</b>
<b>2.2. Information Gaining Activities for Awareness Purposes</b>	
Magazine-Board-Slide	22
TV Shows-Press	20
Panel -Seminar -Symposium	16
Activities (such as Meeting with Famous People/Celebrities)	14
The Importance of Early Diagnosis	13
Transfer of Knowledge on Various Subjects	11
Public Advertisement-Social Media	9
Sharing the Difficulties of Individuals with Special Needs	8
Positive Attitude	5
Association Studies for Individuals with Special Needs	4
Theater-Cinema Activities	3
Focusing on Later Emerging Inadequacies	3
Family Awareness	3
Organizations in Official/Government Institutions	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>133</b>
<b>2.3. Support Activities Related to Legal Rights and Processes</b>	
Expressing the Problems Experienced	4
Choice of Words	3
Employment	3
Utilizing Educational Services	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>12</b>

In the first theme, which is seen to be related to the classification of the activities, it is seen that the pre-service teachers categorize the activities carried out in their environment related to the awareness of children with special needs in inclusive environments in order to support them socially, to gain knowledge, and to the extent that awareness activities about the legal rights and legal processes of these children are included. In the sub-theme “*Social Support Activities*” within the scope of the classification style theme, pre-service teachers describe how they experienced this phenomenon by giving examples of artistic activities, meal/picnic organizations, competitions, games, video/film screenings, simulations, and family participation in activities. It is seen that they give examples of social support activities as follows:

*PT15 “.... organizing running races, wearing colorful socks, organizing dance performances...”*



PT 32 “ .... An effort is made to raise awareness among students about individuals with special needs along with voice competitions, water sports, stage plays, archery, performing arts, kite festival, Autism, Down Syndrome, Hearing-Visual Impaired, etc. for disabled children.”

PT45 “ .... E-Library project's books, magazines and other materials are supported by the human voice and presented to visually impaired children.”

PT4 “ ..... Choirs and theater plays consisting of children with special needs are staged ...”

PT5 “ ..... Various activities are usually held in schools around us to raise this awareness. Carrying out these activities in schools is especially effective in helping children develop empathy and having a good awareness when they are younger. Children with special needs also accept themselves thanks to these awareness activities, and their social relations are progressing in a positive direction.”

Although many studies have been carried out in our country on the participation of children with special needs in educational services in inclusive environments, there are still deficiencies (Bakkaloğlu et al., 2019; Koçyiğit, 2015). Especially socially, it is apparent that these children face challenges in gaining acceptance from their peers, , they are excluded and they feel lonely. It is seen that they experience similar situations and emotions not only in the school environment, but also in their immediate surroundings. In the examples given by the pre-service teachers in our research, they draw attention to the fact that, evident from their observations, awareness activities are given as social support through games, competitions, artistic aspects, and different group works. In addition, they drew attention to inclusive environments outside the school and included examples such as picnic organizations, walking activities, collaborative painting activities.

Observations reveal that pre-service teachers also highlight the importance of information dissemination during awareness activities conducted within their inclusive education settings for children with special needs. The second of the sub-themes within the scope of the main theme of the classification style was determined as " *Knowledge Acquisition for Awareness*". Examples of banner-poster-magazine-board, TV programs, the importance of early diagnosis, social media accounts, association studies, family/peer awareness and education are as follows:

PT28 “.... first of all, some information activities are carried out in public areas, educational institutions.”

PT33 “.....XXXX Municipality organizes seminars every year in order to raise awareness about individuals with special needs . In these seminars, this municipality tells thousands of students every year the difficulties experienced by individuals with special needs.”

PT27 “.....radio, TV programs about disability groups, programs that produce solutions to the problems of the disabled are broadcast. Theater shows on this subject are organized in schools, films and slide shows are watched...”

PT42 “... ..... . With sign language, songs, marches, theater plays, news are presented, the importance of differences is explained....”

PT54 “.... It aims to provide the society with the necessary information and awareness in order to facilitate a better understanding of individuals with special needs, to ensure their socialization, and to ensure their acceptance.

PT 50 “..... Schools, non-governmental organizations, various associations, municipalities, national education directorates organize activities in coordination with children with special needs. Various seminars, programs, walks, demonstrations are held....”

Knowledge acquisition constitutes an important area used for awareness activities in inclusive environments. Pre-service teachers draw attention to the use of various information sources in raising awareness. It is stated that information and explanation meetings, discussions, videos, TV programs, books

and magazines are used in awareness studies conducted in the international arena (Dyches et al., 2001; Ostrosky et al., 2015). As a result of this research, it has been noted that the pre-service teachers referenced the studies conducted for information purposes, and they mostly stated that they included activities such as books/magazines and discussions, similar to the literature.

Regarding "Legal Rights and Processes", which is the last sub-theme of the "Classification Style" theme, the pre-service teachers pointed out the negative effects of the expressions used in society for children with disabilities and drew attention to the choice of words used. In addition, they emphasized that it is important for families and children with disabilities to share their difficulties in awareness activities and that these children should be supported in order to be able to work in a future job by expressing their written opinions about employment in the future. For example;

*PT 48 "...Generally, corporate public institutions and NGOs organize activities..."*

*PT 35 "... First of all, the concept of disability constitutes the approach perception of the society, not the individual. Disability actually consists of conscious or unconscious judgments and attitudes created by people who do not have any disease or disability. The way to make these individuals unhindered can be solved by making people's mistakes, attitudes and thoughts positive."*

*PT 26 "They also have jobs to do and we should help them get a job. Our laws require that two out of a hundred workers working in the workplaces must be disabled workers."*

As evident in the theme of classification style, it becomes apparent that special education pre-service teachers categorize the activities based on social support, knowledge acquisition, and legal rights regarding awareness activities in inclusive environments. As social support, they highlighted that the games, sports activities and competitions played by children with special needs and their peers would increase their awareness by their peers with normal development and would support their participation in group work. The expressed opinions of the pre-service teachers highlight the utilization of diverse approaches for information sharing, emphasizing the existence of more extensive research on "Information Sharing" compared to the field of "Social Support" within the context of promoting awareness in inclusive education settings. By drawing attention to the importance of the wrong definitions made about awareness in the circles of the pre-service teachers about "Legal Rights and Legal Processes", the wrong expressions in the choice of words, the wrong pictures used, both for the child with special needs and for his family. They articulated that such approaches and comparable ones were encountered in society.

**2. Theme: Identification of Activities That Serve Purpose**

The views of pre-service teachers on whether the awareness activities organized for children with special needs in inclusive environments for full participation in social life have achieved their goal are discussed in the second theme, and their perspectives converge within three sub-themes. These are listed in Table 3 as the Pre-service Teachers' Opinions on How Much Awareness Activities Organized Serve the Purpose.

**Table 3.** Identification of activities that serve purpose by pre-service teachers

<b>3.1. Awareness Activities Serve the Purpose Successfully</b>	<b>f</b>
Social Awareness/positive attitude	14
Successful Disclosure	5
Empathy, Feeling Good/Happy	4
Successful Artistic Activities	3
Legal Rights and Responsibilities	3
Successful in Social Sharing	3

Successful for Inclusive Education	2
Successful in Focusing on Problems	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>36</b>
<b>3.2. Awareness Activities Serve the Purpose at a Medium Level</b>	
Awareness Studies	7
Preventive Measures, Studies	4
Feeling Good/Happy	3
Putting Himself in the Place of a Special Needs Person	2
Ensuring Continuity in Activities	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>3.3. Failure of Awareness Activities</b>	
Failure to Ensuring Continuity (Performing activities only in a certain time interval)	25
Negative Waste of Labor and Non-Purpose	18
Limitation in Diversification/Number of Activities	10
Family Education, Social Relations, Limitation of Information	10
Limited to Only One Type of Disability	8
Limited to Widespread Impact (not all children participating)	8
Limited Involvement of the Environment in the Activity	8
Adaptation of Activities to All Age Levels cannot be made	6
Negative Emotions (Misunderstandings/Misunderstandings, Intensity of Pity)	6
Difficulty in Positive Attitude	6
Insufficient Knowledge Gain on Legal Rights	4
Limited in Providing Equal Opportunity	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>112</b>

In the theme of Activities Serving Purpose, three sub-themes as successful, medium and insufficient were created about how well the pre-service teachers serve their purpose about the awareness activities organized. The pre-service teachers who recognized that awareness activities fulfilled their objectives and fostered the cultivation of a positive attitude were predominantly in agreement within the sub-theme of Social Awareness/positive attitude. They provide an illustration of "Awareness Activities Serving the Purpose Successfully":

*PT 29 "...I think these studies or these activities achieve their purpose in a positive way. Because families and their children participate in such activities and activities, they both make them socialize with the environment and enable them to establish closer relationships with people..."*

*PT 52 "... Thanks to such activities, we are more empathetic towards children with special needs in our society. a more conscious communication style has begun to emerge. Thanks to these efforts, the society has started to act more sensitively in terms of not turning the inadequate situations experienced by children with special needs into an obstacle."*

*PT 19 "... Although the activities carried out through social media have a great impact on a wide scale, these activities are not limited to a certain group of people, but reach many people, in this way many people are informed, and such activities reach their goal...."*

Awareness activities in inclusive environments constitute an important factor for both the child and the family. Woodgate et al. (2019) stated in their study that children and families feel lonely and excluded by the society, they do not have a social world outside home, and they experience discrimination and exclusion. Therefore, it is thought that the social lives of families and children will also improve significantly, thanks to the effect of awareness in their social environment in school

environments. In the data of this study, Several pre-service teachers mentioned that awareness activities fulfilled their intended purpose in terms of promoting social awareness. In the sub-theme of "Awareness Activities Serve the Purpose at a Medium Level", some pre-service teachers stated that awareness activities were moderately successful in terms of preventive measures, positive attitude acquisition, and continuity in activities. In addition, they expressed that the activities conducted had a positive impact on raising awareness but were not effectively implemented. . For example;

*PT32 "... Although the information activities, festivals and sports competitions are beneficial to the society, the missing aspect is the problem of turning the information into action..."*

*PT 47 "... If we say that we can say that we provide service completely, the answer to this question would be no, or let's ask, how long can we make individuals with special needs happy thanks to these studies we have done?"*

*PT 11 "... While some of the studies for individuals with special needs are very effective, I believe that some of them are done just for the sake of being done, go beyond their purpose, do not create any awareness and do not have an effect that makes the lives of these individuals easier."*

They stated that the success of the awareness activities, which the pre-service teachers described as successful, was insufficient due to some features, the lack of continuity of awareness, awareness cannot be achieved in the whole of social life and can only be done in a certain area. In addition, they indicated in their statements that the suitability of the awareness activities for the type of disability was not satisfactory. In the sub-theme of "Failure of Awareness Activities", it was observed that the pre-service teachers mostly drew attention to the "failure to ensure continuity" and pointed out that awareness activities in inclusive environments were unsuccessful. They stated that there were problems especially in terms of time and workforce, it was limited to a certain time. In addition, it was evident from their written statements that they highlighted the insufficiency of the variety and quantity of awareness activities conducted in inclusive services. For example;

*PT 50 "... But I think that the fact that these awarenesses are only for that day does not have much impact on society and children. Studies that are thought to create awareness should have a long-term effect."*

*.PT 38 "... The number of activities is not enough. The number of various activities should increase. Students with special needs in villages can be ignored. Our state needs to increase its financial support a little more in this respect...."*

*PT 20 ".... For example; If a seminar were to be given, it might not arouse curiosity and a desire to learn in primary school children. It can be boring to them. Therefore, the activities should appeal to all ages and every disability should be the focus for a certain period of time. We do not need only special days to create awareness. Something can always be done. In addition, larger activities can be organized on special occasions."*

*PT 11 "... Although there is not much activity around me, most of these studies are insufficient and cannot reach many people. Activity adaptation should be made for each age group."*

*PT29 "..... As it is understood, the diversity and number of the studies do not attract the attention of the society enough, and they do not create awareness at the desired level."*

As per the insights shared by the pre-service teachers, it is noteworthy that awareness activities exhibit continuity within inclusive educational settings, considering factors such as the quantity, variety, and target population of these activities. It is important to highlight that these activities may not encompass all children with special needs. In the literature, similar study results have been reached on this subject, and it is seen that they focus on the diversification of activities, especially for knowledge acquisition. It is also stated that different activities can increase awareness by supporting each other and be more effective on children (Hutzler

et al., 2007; Flower & Burns, 2007). In addition, it is seen that they express their opinions about the importance of peer and family participation in awareness activities in inclusive educational environments for social interaction. Although there are many studies on inclusive education environments for children with special needs, the problems faced by families, teachers and children still draw attention (Kahriman-Pamuk & Mazhar, 2019). It is seen that children experience feelings of not being accepted by their friends, negative attitudes and not feeling valuable in inclusive environments. The findings of this study also support the field regarding the participation of the family in awareness activities.

### 3. Theme: The Importance of Awareness Activities

The opinions of the pre-service teachers on the third main theme are about why awareness activities organized for children with special needs in inclusive environments are important, and Table 4 contains information on the theme and sub-themes.

**Table 4.** *The importance of organized awareness activities*

<b>4.1. Important Reasons to See</b>	<b>f</b>
The Prevalence Effect of Insufficiency	18
Raising Awareness	17
Providing Knowledge Gain	12
Ensuring Full Participation in Community Life	11
Revealing Your Difficulties	9
Supporting Social/Emotional Engagement	6
Developing Communication Skills	4
Positive Attitude Development	3
Opportunity Equality	3
Early diagnosis	2
Raising Family Awareness	2
Reason for Incompetence in Relative	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>89</b>

In the theme highlighting the significance of awareness activities, the majority of the pre-service teachers emphasized the influential role of these activities in addressing various aspects related to children with special needs. These aspects encompassed raising awareness, facilitating early diagnosis, promoting family awareness, fostering full participation in social life, enabling knowledge acquisition, cultivating positive attitudes, and supporting social and emotional engagement. The findings pertaining to this theme are presented below: PT22 “...*With these activities, children with visual impairments are brought into society and inclusive education environments. Courage must be instilled. Streets and avenues should not be places that these children are afraid of, but places where they can have fun and have a walk.*”

PT38 “...*If the social and emotional needs of children with autism are met, children with autism will adapt to society more quickly. A lot of hearsay information pollution about autism is circulating in society. I wanted to address the issue of autism in order to minimize this information pollution as much as possible.*”

PT49 “.....*Because as far as I can see, they are marginalized by many people. Since there is a visible inadequacy, most people exclude these individuals even with their looks. Cerebral Palsy is a condition in which a child has difficulty using certain muscles as a result of damage to the brain. But like everyone else, they are individuals, and they have a place in society at least as much as we do.*”

When we look at the information obtained from the forms of pre-service teachers about the importance of awareness activities, it is notable that there are factors such as the prevalence of inadequacy, supporting social emotional participation, and gaining knowledge. It is seen that many factors such as knowledge gain, social participation, attitudes, beliefs, equality of opportunity, cooperation, family participation are together in

the success of inclusive education (Siagian & Kurniawati, 2019). Therefore, the findings obtained on the importance of awareness activities seem to give us information about the important components of inclusive environments.

#### 4. Theme: Activities That Pre-Service Teachers Want to Organize

"Activities That Pre-service Teachers Want to Organize" consists of four sub-themes. Below (Table 5) are the opinions of the pre-service teachers about what kind of activities they want to do within the scope of awareness activities.

**Table 5.** Activities that pre-service teachers want to organize

<b>5.1. Activities Related to Information and Attitude</b>	<b>F</b>
Information activities	14
Poster/brochure preparation	10
Movie/Animation/Documentary	9
Audition/Concert	8
Conference	5
Theater Show	5
Sightseeing/City Tour, Walking	5
Races/Games/Sports Activities	5
Success Stories	4
Physical Arrangements for Disability	3
Bus Painting/Decoration Event	2
Event Communities/Tables	2
Photography Exhibitions	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>74</b>
<b>5.2. Social Interaction Based Activities</b>	<b>F</b>
Simulation Activities	23
Organizing Family Participation Activities (such as picnics, walks)	16
Folk Dances/Dance/Game Activities/Sports Races	13
Peer Group Work	7
Psychological support	7
Successful Examples of People with Disabilities	6
Physical Environmental Regulations	5
Visiting	4
Interview Prepared by Special Education Teachers	4
Audio Story Activities	4
Social Contact (hugs, hugs, etc.)	3
Dancing/Singing	2
Lecture on Sign Language	2
Transferring Experienced Difficulties	2
Activities for Schools	2
Digital Applications, Public Service	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>102</b>
<b>5.3. Financial support</b>	
Raffle, Giveaway, Meal	6



Festival, Kermes	4
Donation Campaign	3
Handicrafts Exhibition	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>5.4. Legal Rights and Responsibilities</b>	
Creating Public Opinion, Meeting with Statesmen	2
Job Employment	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>4</b>

“Activities That Pre-service teachers Want to Organize” theme consists of “Activities Related to Information and Attitude”, “Activities Based on Social Interaction”, “Financial Support” and “Legal Rights and Responsibilities” sub-themes.

In the sub-theme of “Activities Related to Information and Attitude”, pre-service teachers suggest that students with disabilities and their peers perform together in theater performances, share the success stories of individuals with disabilities in awareness activities, and activities based on developing positive attitudes. In addition, they emphasize the importance of activities such as playing basketball, planting saplings, organizing photography exhibitions, and listening to music. For example:

PT15 “.....In these activity tables, there were activities such as finger painting, face painting, dancing, jumping rope, playing ball, dough playing, drawing, singing.”

PT24 “First of all, I would prepare brochures or posters to inform the environment about autism, and these posters and brochures would be in the form of information about autism. For example, I would prepare posters or brochures such as 'I don't like physical contact because I'm autistic' or 'I can't make eye contact because I'm autistic' or 'I don't react when my name is called because I have autism'.

PT32 “...Sports is a sportive activity in order to enable them to mingle with people actively and to keep them away from a sedentary life.”

PT51 “...For example, for children with Down Syndrome with special needs, slogans containing short articles on this subject or drawing attention to awareness can be written with colored paints in certain parts of the school.”

It is seen that especially curriculum-based reading, brochures and posters are used in the sub-theme of “Activities Related to Information and Attitude”. It is apparent that reading and other activities can be done interactively as group work in the classroom environment, as well as individually organized activities. This scenario is considered a notable illustration of the diverse utilization of awareness activities, encompassing not only knowledge acquisition but also fostering social assistance, interaction, and support. Existing literature underscores the positive impacts of engaging in various multidimensional activities that facilitate the development of awareness. (Seidler, 2011).

Most of the pre-service teachers emphasize the importance of social interaction for individuals with disabilities, emphasizing simulation activities, especially in order for the society to develop a positive attitude. Furthermore, it is observed that they articulate their viewpoints regarding visits aimed at fostering social interaction, interviews with accomplished individuals with disabilities, social engagement, collaborative group work, and communal activities within educational institutions. For example;

PT19 “...Children with autism will be able to achieve the feeling of being hugged in these areas. In line with the Blue Hugging Area project, it will be an important step towards the integration of children with autism into society.”

PT31 In the activity titled “Can you replace me for a day?”, a healthy individual who does not have a physical disability will be asked to spend one day in a wheelchair.....”

PT29 “.... Seminars titled “Information about special children...”

PT36 “.....The students played blindfolded in the football match. In volleyball, the students played

*sitting on the floor. Thus, the students experienced the difficulties they experienced and how important and valuable sports are for the disabled. These awareness activities carried out by the students one-on-one enabled the activity to reach its goal, and it also developed empathy in individuals."*

PT44 ".... A theater or short film can be shot and broadcast on all social media, based on the troubles, problems, situations that they like or dislike, how they deal with them when they have trouble, or how they can't cope with them." They provide an illustration of this.

Simulation activities are among the most frequently used awareness activities in the literature, and it is seen that digital animations are made for this. In simulations in digital environments, the characteristics of individuals with disabilities and the situations they encounter in society are tried to be considered (Hurst et al., 2012). The pre-service teachers who participated in the research also mentioned the importance of doing simulations in the digital environment, similar to physical animation, imagining or studies in the field, in awareness activities.

The pre-service teachers highlighted that individuals with disabilities are provided support in terms of their financial needs in awareness activities, and underscored the potential of these activities to make both social and financial contributions. Thus, they stated that sharing the handicrafts of children with disabilities with other people will not only provide interaction with the festivals / bazaar activities to be organized, but also support them financially. They also mentioned that raffles, food organizations and gift giving are activities that can be organized in the context of both social cohesion and financial support. For example;

PT 36 "..... I used to make an exhibition of handicrafts made by disabled people, present them to people, and then sell them by auction. At the end of the day, I would donate the income to the disabled people's foundation so that disabled children will see how valuable what they do is." It is seen that they give an example.

Within the sub-theme of "Legal Rights and Responsibilities," pre-service teachers emphasize the criticality of promoting the employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities. They highlight the necessity of integrating these considerations into awareness activities. Furthermore, it is evident that both the private sector and the government bear significant responsibilities in this regard. For example;

PT18 "..... there are almost no individuals with autism who can work in cafes, markets, shopping malls. It is seen that suitable jobs can be arranged for individuals with autism who are able to work by communicating with employers, providing information about autism .

Pre-service teachers recognize the significance of awareness activities for fostering the professional development of individuals within inclusive society practices, both during their school years and in their post-school lives. They emphasize the need for integrating awareness activities throughout the educational journey, encompassing aspects such as school selection and career choices. By incorporating awareness activities into these transitional periods, pre-service teachers believe that children with special needs can achieve full participation in social life and develop positive attitudes towards their abilities and potential.

## **5. Theme: Suggestions for Activities**

According to the written transcripts of the pre-service teachers, the last theme of the study was determined as " *Suggestions for Activities* ". Awareness activities; the sub-themes were the opinions that it should show features such as positive discrimination, equal opportunity in education, family support, full participation in social life, empathy, support through the press, and information sharing. Pre-service teachers, who attach importance to early diagnosis and family education, mentioned that information studies should be carried out on this issue. In addition, they emphasized that in order to ensure the continuity of the awareness activities organized, it is important that the activities are not limited to certain days, but should be carried out in every aspect of life. Below, the suggestions of the pre-service teachers are given in Table 6 under the themes and sub-themes.

**Table 6:** *Suggestions for organized awareness activities*

<b>6.1. Suggestions for Activities</b>	<b>f</b>
Family Support/Training/Counselling	12
Media/Press Support	8
Full Participation in Social Life, Legal Rights and Responsibilities	8
Continuity of Activities	8
Positive Discrimination, Priority in All Fields	6
Community Information Activities	6
The Importance of Positive Attitude Should Be Emphasized	6
Participation of All Individuals in the Activities	5
Equal Opportunity in Education	4
Making Physical/Environmental Arrangements	4
Employment/Health Support	4
Financial Support to Private Education Institutions	4
Benefiting from IEP Trainings	3
Activities of Non-Governmental Organizations	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>81</b>

Within the theme of "Suggestions for Activities", a notable trend among the majority of pre-service teachers was their emphasis on specific sub-themes such as "family support/education and counseling", "legal rights and responsibilities", "full participation in social life" and "continuity of activities". These sub-themes received more attention compared to others. To provide an illustrative overview, some exemplar suggestions provided by the pre-service teachers in the table are presented below:

*PT1 ".... In my opinion, the first things to be done urgently for children with special needs are positive discrimination, priority in every field, sufficient free education, considering individuals with special needs in all actions for social life, and special legal regulations and legal support for the legal problems they face."*

*PT52 ".... As long as there are posts about individuals with special needs on social media, it will create great interest and awareness. In this way, many people will be informed about autism and awareness of autism will be created."*

*PT11 ".... In order for these activities to be more effective, I think it would be better to involve more people in these activities and to organize more comprehensive and more lasting activities that can last throughout the day, in certain months, in certain weeks, in certain months, in certain weeks, with more frequent intervals."*

*PT 17 ".... For this reason, university students should contribute to the approach of non-governmental organizations to the concept of disability, their participation in non-governmental organizations and volunteering activities, and their contribution to the purpose of these studies."*

*PT9 ".... When a healthy communication with families and the necessary education are given, any children with special needs can be equal to their peers."*

The findings indicate that a significant number of pre-service teachers highlight the importance of family support, counseling, and education as key "recommendations for activities." They emphasize that by implementing these strategies, children with special needs can have equal opportunities for development alongside their typically developing peers. Moreover, pre-service teachers emphasize the value of integrating early diagnosis and early educational services with family education, emphasizing the necessity for continuous implementation of such activities throughout society.

## **DISCUSSION**

The findings of this research, which tries to reveal how special education pre-service teachers

experience the phenomenon of Awareness Activities Related to Inclusive Community Life, have five main themes: "*Classification of Organized Awareness Activities, Description of Activities that Serve Purpose, Importance of Awareness Activities, Activities that Pre-service Teachers Want to Organize and Suggestions for Activities*" appear to gather around it.

"*Awareness Activities Organized*", which is the first theme of the research, pre-service teachers especially; stated that they were made about social support, knowledge acquisition, legal rights, and processes. It is in the written records that their awareness has increased as well as many gains such as providing peer sharing, development of social interaction, communication with activities such as organized sports activities, walking/trips, artistic activities and reading books. Similarly, this situation is in parallel with the findings of studies in the literature that include activities to ensure students' awareness, harmony, and peer acceptance. For example, Tindall (2013), that sports activities are important in raising awareness for children with special needs in inclusive environments, facilitating their acceptance by their peers and increasing interaction, that they adapt the volleyball activity in groups to children with special needs and enable them to play with their peers. Tindall (2013) draws attention to the importance of artistic and sports activities in social development in these sports activities, which have effects such as participation in the group, initiating and maintaining communication, and developing positive attitudes. In addition, pre-service teachers drew attention to the knowledge gains related to awareness in inclusive environments and stated that they mostly expressed their opinions on the use of activities such as participation in seminars, posters, interviews, reading books and magazines. It is stated in the literature that the importance of knowledge acquisition for the awareness of children with special needs is emphasized and activities such as videos, discussions and seminars are included for this purpose (Flower et al., 2007). The results of the research show that social activities such as artistic activities and games are mostly held in inclusive environments, and in terms of information awareness, they write their opinions about activities such as posters, interviews, and seminars. In addition, it is seen that they mentioned the importance of the family's participation in activities and supporting them in terms of information.

When the transcripts were analyzed within the scope of the theme of "*Defining the Activities That Serve Purpose*", it was seen that the pre-service teachers wrote their opinions stating that the awareness activities served successfully, did not serve enough and were unsuccessful. Most of the pre-service teachers, who stated that the activities serve the purpose in providing social awareness, mention the importance of information activities for awareness. It has been seen that the pre-service teachers who described the activities as unsuccessful mostly express their opinions on issues such as the activity being carried out in a certain period of time and the lack of continuity, the limited effect in providing widespread effect, the difficulty in diversifying, and the inclusion of the family in education and activities. The participants, who stated that the activities partially affect the purpose and provide awareness, stated that this effect is in the context of feeling good/happy, awareness activities in the context of preventive measures. In the literature, there are studies that draw attention to curriculum-based activities in terms of knowledge acquisition in awareness activities in inclusive environments. In these studies, it is seen that many activities such as classroom-based activities, book reading, puppet shows are presented on the basis of the curriculum (Sigmon et al., 2016; Wilkins et al., 2016). In this way, children's relations with their peers and awareness within education and training services provide

continuity. In our study, there are many pre-service teachers who stated that they are insufficient in ensuring continuity in awareness activities. Therefore, based on this information, it can be said that awareness of children with special needs will be increased by supporting children with special needs in different lessons with curriculum-based activities.

Within the scope of the "*Importance of Awareness Activities*" theme, pre-service teachers stated that different activities covering all disability groups should be organized in different ways throughout the year in inclusive environments. It is thought that factors such as lack of information and ambiguous expressions, less coverage in the media, and the prevalence of disability in the society play a role in addressing all groups with special needs within the scope of the subject. In the international literature, it is stated that in order to be successful in awareness activities for children with special needs, it is first necessary to clarify why it is important and what our purpose is. For successful intervention, it is necessary to increase diversity and eliminate knowledge acquisition deficiencies (Lindsay & McPherson, 2012). In addition, it is stated in studies that many factors such as awareness activities in inclusive environments, developing attitudes for children with special needs, equal opportunities, benefiting from early intervention services, and ensuring full participation in community life are important (Tavares, 2011). In this study, it is seen that pre-service teachers draw attention to similar points and provide information on equal opportunities for children, full participation in education services and supporting social participation.

Awareness activities related to fulfilling legal rights and responsibilities, activities related to information and attitudes, activities to provide social interaction, and financially are included in the theme of "*Activities That Pre-Service Teachers Want to Organize*" regarding what kind of activities the pre-service teachers will plan for the awareness of children with special needs. Especially in the awareness activities to be organized, it is seen that the majority of pre-service teachers suggest simulations and activities related to putting themselves in the place of the individual with disabilities for equal access to social rights. This situation is similarly supported in the literature, and it is stated that awareness is provided through activities such as reviving the difficulties experienced with students with different disabilities and acting by putting themselves in their shoes (Hurst et al., 2012). Similarly, peer group studies are among the most preferred activities in awareness activities. Including the family in awareness activities and informing activities are among the preferred activities. In the literature, Dukes and Berlingo (2020) stated in their study that quality interaction could not be achieved between students with special needs attending the same school and their peers, and this situation negatively affected their emotional characteristics and behavior patterns. It is also stated in the same study that the in-class activities organized in schools in order to ensure peer interaction, in the form of cooperation within a certain plan, will contribute to both the acceptance of children with special needs and their awareness.

The theme of "*Suggestions for Activities*" to be organized by pre-service teachers about individuals with special needs constitutes the last theme of the research and it is seen that most suggestions are made about family support/education and counseling within the scope of this theme. Considering that the family is the beginning of education, it is thought that it is inevitable that the family is the basis of awareness activities. In addition, it is seen that individuals with special needs also intensely touch on the issues of full participation in social life, awareness of their legal rights and responsibilities, and positive discrimination. These findings also



show parallelism with the pre-service teachers' theme of "not serving the purpose sufficiently" in awareness activities. It is seen that the pre-service teachers expressed the deficiencies that they observed in the suggestions section and made additions.

Communication, social and emotional development of children constitute important dimensions for psychosocial development. Awareness activities include many social activities such as cooperation between students, taking part in group work, working within a plan/program, showing democratic attitudes and behaviors, respecting fundamental rights, raising awareness towards activities, situations and people, and ensuring the development of positive interactions and attitudes with their environment. Enables the development of the skill (Awbrey et al., 2008). Thanks to these activities, students exhibit skills such as meeting students with different individual characteristics and different cultures, grasping their strengths, and gaining knowledge. In addition, it strengthens their social networks and enables them to establish positive relationships with these individuals in their daily lives (Awbrey et al., 2008). Thanks to these activities, the acquisition of skills such as belonging to a group, providing motivation to be successful, maintaining teamwork in a goal-oriented manner, and cooperating are provided. In the development of children with special needs and their typically developing peers, awareness activities contribute to increasing social acceptance, developing empathy skills, acting together as a group, and developing positive attitudes.

### **CONCLUSION, SUGGESTIONS**

As a result, it is seen that the pre-service teachers who have experienced the phenomenon of Awareness Activities for Inclusive Community Life offered for individuals with special needs have different experiences based on their opinions in the written transcripts. It is seen that pre-service teachers have different experiences based on their opinions in the written transcripts. According to the opinions of the pre-service teachers, these activities can be done in different types in order to support children with special needs socially. It is considered important in awareness activities in terms of developing positive attitudes that children with special needs share with children with typical development through activities such as food organizations, excursions, walks, meetings with well-known people, drama, music concerts, folk dance competitions. Pre-service teachers, who also drew attention to peer unity and family participation in these activities, mentioned that information activities, curriculum-based activities, and other activities to understand the difficulties should be included. Another important issue regarding awareness activities is that there are inadequacies in ensuring the permanence and continuity of the activities. The pre-service teachers, who expressed negative opinions about the activities being limited to certain days and not serving the purpose, suggested that awareness studies be carried out that address all inadequacy groups. It is recommended by pre-service teachers that informative awareness studies on early diagnosis and early intervention should be carried out in order to support full participation in community life.

Based on the research findings, it can be suggested that these studies should be carried out in different departments of Education faculties for advanced research, and the studies should be compared with different departments. In addition, studies should be based on practice. Cooperation with different institutions and organizations in activities for the full participation of children with disabilities in community life, and work on family awareness in the early period is suggested.



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