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Investigation of Social Acceptance Levels of Classroom Teachers Regarding Students With Special Needs in Terms of Different Variables¹

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The aim of this study is to determine the social acceptance levels of classroom teachers with inclusive students according to different variables for students with special needs. This is a descriptive and quantitative study conducted in the research screening model. The sample group of the research consists of a total of 374 classroom teachers, 240 of whom are female and 134 are male. In the research, "Personal Information Form" and "Social Acceptance Scale" developed by the researchers were used as the data collection tools. Arithmetic mean, standard deviation, independent sample t test, Anova and Scheffe tests and Pearson's r test analyses were performed on the data. The level of $p < .05$ was considered sufficient for significance in differences and relationships. At the end, it was determined that the social acceptance levels of classroom teachers were generally good. On the other hand, the teachers' social acceptance levels differ significantly according to gender, professional seniority, marital status and the number of inclusive students in the classroom. In addition, significant relationships were observed between the number of inclusive students in teachers' professional seniority and classes and their social acceptance levels. These results were discussed in light of the literature and suggestions were made to increase the efficiency of inclusive education practice and to further improve teachers' social acceptance levels.

Introduction

Concepts such as individual difference and special education, which are one of the prominent concepts of the modern period, have significantly affected the education and training processes as in other fields. Special education is defined as education that aims to provide independent living skills to individuals who show inadequacy in terms of different skill areas compared to their peers (Bryant, Smith & Bryant, 2008; Salend, 2008). Individuals in need of

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special education are grouped according to their disability types and degrees after the necessary diagnosis and evaluation processes and guided according to their needs (Ataman, 2011). The most important point to be considered in these directions is to place the student in the least restrictive environment.

The environment that least restricts the student with special needs in psychological, social and physical aspects is the inclusive education environment. Inclusive education is defined as individuals who show inadequacy compared to their peers in terms of different skill areas at the end of the diagnosis, evaluation, and guidance procedures of experts in their field and individuals who develop normally receive education in the same classroom environment (Batu & Kırcaali-İftar, 2011; Meijer, 2010; Osborne & Dimattia, 1994; Sucuoğlu & Kargın, 2008). The ultimate goal of inclusive education can be summarized as providing equal educational opportunities to individuals with special needs with their normally developing peers, preparing individuals with disabilities for life, and helping them become self-sufficient individuals by training them in normal classes within the scope of their skills and interests.

In order for inclusive students to adapt to society and socialize, they must first be socially accepted by the classroom teacher and their friends. As a matter of fact, Holmes (2011) and Nowicki (2003) describe the formation of a sense of belonging of individuals with special needs to the class they receive education as one of the main purposes of inclusive education. Hayward (2006), on the other hand, states that inclusive education should be given importance in order for all students to achieve the highest success to the extent of their own potential in order to talk about equality of opportunity in education. The fact that individuals with special needs are educated and communicate with their normally developing peers, develop friendships, work together and learn to help each other brings about an increase in their mutual social acceptance.

In order for inclusive education applied to students with special needs to serve the purpose and function briefly stated above, it should be stated that the attitudes and behaviors of classroom teachers and their acceptance levels are very important in education and training processes (Allen & Cowdery, 2015; McLeskey, Waldron & Redd, 2014; Sabrina, 2017). In the literature, it is frequently stated that teachers and stakeholders such as the student's family, school management, peers, school guidance services unit have responsibilities in this process (Aral, 2011; Gibson, 2015; Yeşil, 2003). According to Kargın (2004), classroom teachers have the key role in ensuring the social acceptance of students with special needs by their normally developing peers. It is important for classroom teachers to have a positive opinion about inclusion, to cooperate with other responsible people, to create a positive learning environment and to carry out the process with the opinion that all students are equal (Ainscow & Sandill, 2010; Florian & Rouse, 2009; Yeşil, 2003). Because the behaviors and attitudes of teachers towards individuals with special needs constitute a model for other individuals (Blazar & Kraft, 2017; Özen, 2010); it may positively affect students and positive behaviors can be effective in facilitating the social acceptance of students with special needs.

Social acceptance is defined as people with normal development showing a positive attitude towards individuals with special needs and seeing them as others (Özyürek, 2016), the individual with special needs taking part in activities within the group (Civelek, 1990), and peers generally approaching them positively during the game (Ladd, 2005). In general, social acceptance can be expressed as the social interaction of individuals with special needs and the acceptance of their existence by being adopted in the environment (Aktan, 2018).

It is expected to provide peer support to the student with special needs and to contribute



positively to the creation of a pleasant learning environment in the classroom (Garrote, 2017). In addition, at the end of their interaction with inclusive education, it has been determined by research that students have improved and there are significant improvements in their ability to live independently (Friend & Bursuck, 2014; Solish, Perry & Minnes, 2010). On the other hand, the state of not being accepted or isolated by the social environment brings many problems such as individuals with special needs moving away from active life, damaging their self-perception, and decreasing their academic achievement (Eguavoen & Eniola, 2016; Lewis & Doorlag, 1999).

In the literature, it is noteworthy that most of the studies on social acceptance of students with special needs focus on peer acceptance. Madden & Slavin (1983) observed that while cooperative learning causes an increase in the social acceptance of socially rejected mentally disabled students, it does not cause an increase in their selection as friends by their normally developing peers. Hartup & Glazer (2004) determined that social acceptance is highly associated with positive peer support and not with negative peer support. Jonson (1950), in his study investigating the social positions of mentally disabled students integrated into normal classes, found that mentally disabled students were rejected by their peers. Gottlieb & Budoff (1972), in their study investigating the social acceptability of students with educable intellectual disabilities who are subjected to inclusive and segregation education, revealed that students with educable intellectual disabilities who are subjected to inclusive education are more rejected than students with educable intellectual disabilities who are subjected to segregation education. Bruininks, Robert, Rynders, John, Gross & Jerry (1974) investigated the social acceptance of children with moderate intellectual retardation who were educated in the city center and countryside, source rooms, and normal classrooms. As a result of the research, they found that both environments did not make a difference in the peer preference of normal students and children with moderate intellectual retardation.

In the study conducted by Alptekin (2010), while it was determined that the teaching activities carried out with the support of peers positively affected the social skill gains of students with special needs, Yaşaran, Batu & Özen (2014), Yaşaran (2009), Şahbaz (1997), Aktaş (2001) and Tekin (1994) determined that the level of social acceptance increased with the pre-education activities or training programs on social acceptance for students with normal development at different times and at the end of their studies on sample groups.

It is noteworthy that in the important part of the studies to express the results briefly above, it is frequently stated that special needs should be increased in different sample groups and towards different variables depending on the quality and quantity difference (Bolat & Ata, 2017; Orhan, 2010; Özgönenel & Girli, 2016). On the other hand, many projects for individuals with special needs have been developed and supported by both public institutions and non-governmental organizations in recent years; research and application studies to meet the educational needs of individuals with special needs continue to increase day by day; and these individuals have become more visible in social and educational life. On the one hand, this situation can be considered as an indication that the welfare levels of the countries have improved, and on the other hand, the results of the scientific studies have begun to be taken into account more. However, it should be noted that the increasing continuation of such studies is important in terms of adapting individuals with special needs to life and becoming self-sufficient individuals in the future. In this context, the main problem of this study is that the social acceptance levels of teachers, who are frequently mentioned by scientists as having a decisive effect on the psychological, social and educational success of students with special needs, can be determined in terms of some variables.

The Purpose of the Research

The main purpose of the study is to examine the social acceptance levels of classroom teachers for students with special needs in inclusive classrooms in terms of different variables. Thus, it is aimed to make determinations about the social acceptance levels of teachers, which are considered as an important variable in terms of academic, social, mental and psychological development of students with special needs, to determine the problem areas and to contribute to the formation of a scientific basis for the measures that can be taken. In this context, answers to the following questions were tried to be found in the research:

- (1) What are the social acceptance levels of classroom teachers for students with special needs?
- (2) Do the social acceptance levels of classroom teachers differ according to the variables of gender, professional seniority year, marital status, having received an education on inclusive education and the number of inclusive students in their classes?
- (3) Is there a relationship between the number of students receiving inclusive education in their professional seniority year and class and the social acceptance levels of classroom teachers?

Method

Research Model

This study is a descriptive study designed according to the relational screening model to describe the social acceptance levels of primary school classroom teachers regarding children with special needs in terms of different variables and to determine their relationships. The independent variables of the study consist of some demographic characteristics of classroom teachers and the dependent variable consists of social acceptance levels.

Population and Sampling

Considering the fact that the research subject was affected by geographical and sociodemographic factors, the study population was determined in this study. In the 2021-2022 academic year, classroom teachers working in public primary schools in Uşak Province of Türkiye and having inclusive students in their classrooms constitute the study universe of the research. For this purpose, the number of classroom teachers with inclusive students in the classroom in the study population was tried to be determined. However, such data was not provided to the researchers by the authorities. For this reason, the number of classroom teachers could be determined in general. There are 1061 classroom teachers working in the city center of Uşak. Of these, 554 are female and 507 are male (URL-1).

Sample selection was made by considering Covid-19 measures and ensuring economy in terms of time-cost-labor. In this context, the sample of the research was directed to all classroom teachers working as classroom teachers in public primary schools in Uşak Province in the 2021-2022 academic year online Google form; teachers with inclusive students in their classes were asked to fill in the data collection tool on a voluntary basis. 374 classroom teachers with inclusive students in their class responded to the data collection tools. Of the participating teachers, 240 were female and 134 were male; 116 were 1st grade, 102 were 2nd grade, 71 were 3rd grade and 85 were 4th grade teachers. 32 of these teachers did not receive training on inclusive education, 142 of them received specially certified training by different institutions



and organizations at undergraduate level, 90 of them received in-service training within the scope of MoNE, and 110 of them received special training or obtained information through special research.

Data Collection Tools

Two different tools, the Personal Information Form and the Social Acceptance Scale, were used to collect data in the study.

Personal Information Form

It was used to collect data on the independent variables of the research in order to determine the demographic characteristics of the participants.

Social Acceptance Scale (SAS)

It was developed by Ürün & Yeşil (2022) in order to determine the social acceptance levels of classroom teachers with inclusive students in their class towards inclusive students. SAS is a five-point Likert-type scale containing 32 items collected under 4 factors. Factors were named as Exclusion-Negative Judgment (E-NJ) (14 items), Acceptance Effort (AE) (7 items), Acceptance-Positive Judgment (A-PJ), (7 items), Awareness Raising-Acceptance (AR-A) (4 items) considering the items in its content. The KMO value of the scale is 0.952; Bartlett Test values are $\chi^2=9658.671$; $df=496$; $p<0.001$. The factor loadings of the scale items are 0.45 and above. The total amount of variance explained is 66.124%. The item-total correlation coefficients calculated within the scope of discriminant analysis are significant at the level of $p<0.001$. The Cronbach alpha reliability coefficient of the scale was determined as 0.808. The values determined within the scope of the validity and reliability analysis of the SAS according to the factors are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. SAS Validity and Reliability Values.

Factor Name	Number of Items	Factor Load Ranges	Eigenvalue	Explained Variance Amount (%)	Cronbach's Alpha
Exclusion-Negative Judgment	14 Items	0.699-0.841	14.014	43.794	0.970
Acceptance Effort	Item 7	0.588-0.721	3.851	12.035	0.866
Acceptance-Positive Judgment	Item 7	0.505-0.788	2-122	6.631	0.863
Awareness Raising-Acceptance	Item 4	0.813-0.843	1.173	3.664	0.873
SAS General	32 items	0.505-0.843	---	66.124	0.808

The values given in Table 1 show that SAS is a valid and reliable data collection tool that can be used to determine teachers' social acceptance levels (Büyüköztürk, 2012; DeVellis, 2003; Eroğlu, 2008).

Data Analysis

SPSS v25 statistical package program was used for data analysis. Arithmetic mean, t-test, Anova test, Scheffe test and Pearson's r correlation test analyzes were made on the data in line with the sub-objectives of the study. The $p<0.05$ level was considered sufficient as the significance level of the differences and relationships. The arithmetic mean value ranges for teachers' social acceptance levels were interpreted as "very low" in the 1.00-1.80 range, "low" in the 1.81-2.60 range, "medium" in the 2.61-3.40 range, "high" in the 3.41-4.20 range, and "very high" in the 4.21-5.00 range.

Results

The results obtained as a result of the analyses made on the data are presented below.

Social acceptance levels of primary school teachers regarding inclusive students

Table 2. Descriptive Statistical Values of Primary School Teachers' Social Acceptance Levels Towards Inclusive Students

Factors	n	\bar{X}	ss	Level
E-NJ	373	2.09	1.11	Low
AE	374	4.56	0.54	Very high
A-PJ	373	4.45	0.63	Very high
AR-A	374	4.24	0.89	Very high
SAS General	373	4.29	0.60	Very high

In Table 2, it is seen that the social acceptance levels of classroom teachers regarding inclusive students take values between $\bar{X}=2.09$ and 4.56 according to the factors. Teachers' social acceptance levels AE "very high" in terms of AE, A-NJ, AR-A, and SAS in general, and "low" in terms of E-NJ factor, which has a negative content.

Results related to the differentiation in social acceptance levels of classroom teachers according to some variables

Table 3-7 summarizes the findings regarding the differences in the social acceptance levels of the participating teachers according to their gender, professional seniority, marital status, having children, the number of students receiving inclusive education among their close relatives and neighbours or in their families, the grade level they teach, the number of students receiving inclusive education in their class, and the status of receiving education about inclusive students.

Table 3. Results of T-Test Analysis Regarding the Differentiation of Social Acceptance Levels of Classroom Teachers Towards Inclusive Students According to Their Gender

Factors	Gender	N	\bar{X}	Sd	Levene		t	df	p
					F	p			
E-NJ	Female	240	1.86	0.91	1.139	.102	5.641	371	0.000
	Male	134	2.51	1.30					
AE	Female	240	4.63	0.50	1.034	0.125	3.404	372	0.001
	Male	134	4.43	0.58					
A-PJ	Female	240	4.49	0.65	0.015	.997	1.823	371	0.069
	Male	134	4.37	0.60					
A-RA	Female	240	4.37	0.85	0.356	.551	3.916	372	0.000
	Male	134	4.00	0.91					
SAS General	Female	240	4.41	.55	1.740	.851	5.349	371	0.000
	Male	133	4.07	.62					

As seen in Table 3, female participant teachers' social acceptance levels are higher than men in

terms of factors and SAS in general. While there was a significant difference in favour of women, especially in terms of E-NJ, AE, AR-A and SAS ($p < 0.01$), there was no significant difference in the A-PJ factor ($p > 0.05$).

Table 4. Anova and Scheffe Test Analysis Results Regarding the Difference in Social Acceptance Levels of Primary School Teachers According to Their Professional Seniority

	Profess. seniority	N	\bar{X}	Ss		K T	df	Mean Square	F	p	Schf
E-NJ	(1) 1-2 y.	89	1.69	0.90	Intergr.	24.563	3	8.188	6.93	0.00	1<4
	(2) 3-5 y.	132	2.09	1.18	Intra-gr.	436.038	369	1.182			
	(3) 6-9 y	64	2.17	1.19	Total	460.601	372				
	(4) 10 y.+	88	2.43	1.02							
AE	(1) 1-2 y.	89	4.71	0.42	Intergr.	4.738	3	1.579	5.59	0.00	1> 4
	(2) 3-5 y.	132	4.57	0.52	Intra-gr.	104.554	370	283			
	(3) 6-9 y	64	4.52	0.47	Total	109.291	373				
	(4) 10 y.+	89	4.39	0.66							
A-PJ	(1) 1-2 y.	89	4.62	0.51	Intergr.	10.369	3	3.456	9.09	0.00	1> 4 2> 4 3>4
	(2) 3-5 y.	132	4.51	0.57	Intra-gr.	140.273	369	.380			
	(3) 6-9 y	64	4.48	0.59	Total	150.642	372				
	(4) 10 y.+	88	4.16	0.77							
AR-A	(1) 1-2 y.	89	4.19	1.01	Intergr.	4.843	3	1.614	2.04	0.11	---
	(2) 3-5 y.	132	4.30	0.92	Intra-gr.	292.159	370	.790			
	(3) 6-9 y	64	4.41	0.61	Total	297.002	373				
	(4) 10 y.+	89	4.07	0.87							
SAS General	(1) 1-2 y.	89	4.46	0.54	Intergr.	7.788	3	2.596	7.54	0.00	1> 4 2> 4> 3>4
	(2) 3-5 y.	132	4.32	0.60	Intra-gr.	127,087	369	.344			
	(3) 6-9 y	64	4.31	0.59	Total	134,875	372				
	(4) 10 y.+	88	4.05	0.59							

In Table 4, it is seen that there are significant differences in social acceptance levels of classroom teachers according to their professional seniority in terms of E-NJ, AE, A-PJ and SAS ($p < 0.01$), and there is no significant difference in terms of AR-A factor ($p > 0.05$). At the end of the Scheffe test, it was observed that the difference in E-NJ and AE factors was caused by 1-2 years and 10 years and more senior teachers; In terms of A-PJ factor and SAS General, it was observed that it was caused by 1-2 years and senior teachers in other subgroups.

Table 5. Anova and Scheffe Test Analysis Results Regarding the Difference in Social Acceptance Levels of Primary School Teachers According to Their Marital Status

	Marital Status	N	\bar{X}	Sd		K T	df	Mean Sq.	F	p	Schef
E-NJ	(1) Married	192	2.22	1.14	Intergr.	8.953	2	4.476	3.67	0.026	1>3
	(2) Single	148	2.00	1.08	Intra-gr.	451.648	370	1.221			
	(3) Div./Sep.	33	1.72	.98	Total	460.601	372				
AE	(1) Married	193	4.49	.57	Intergr.	2.176	2	1.088	3.77	0.024	1<3
	(2) Single	148	4.59	.50	Intra-gr.	107.116	371	.289			
	(3) Div./Sep.	33	4.75	.44	Total	109.291	373				
A_P	(1) Married	192	4.39	.64	Intergr.	1.706	2	.853	2.12	0.122	---
	(2) Single	148	4.49	.62	Intra-gr.	148.936	370	.403			

	(3)Div./Sep.	33	4.60	.61	Total	150.642	372				
AR-A	(1) Married	373	4.45	.63	Intergr.	2.170	2	1.085			
	(2) Single	193	4.23	.86	Intra-gr.	294.832	371	.795	1.37	0.257	---
	(3)Div./Sep.	148	4.20	.93	Total	297.002	373				
SAS	(1) Married	192	4.22	.62	Intergr.	2.848	2	1.424			
	(2) Single	148	4.32	0.56	Intra-gr.	132.028	370	.357	3.99	0.019	1<3
	(3)Div./Sep.	33	4.53	0.56	Total	134.875	372				

In Table 5, it was observed that the social acceptance levels of classroom teachers differed significantly according to their marital status in terms of E-NJ and AE factors and SAS in general ($p < 0.05$); while there was no significant difference in terms A-PJ, AR-A factor ($p > 0.05$). At the end of the Scheffe test, it was determined that significant differences were caused by the social acceptance levels of teachers who were married and divorced or living separately from their spouses.

Table 6. Results of ANOVA and Scheffe test analysis regarding the difference in social acceptance levels of primary school teachers according to their status of receiving inclusive education

	Training Status	N	\bar{X}	Sd	K T	df	KO	η^2	p	Scheff
E-NJ	(1)Not trained	32	2.43	1.10	Intergr	35.237	3	11.746	10.199	
	(2)Bachelor's	142	2.23	1.09	Intra-gr.	425.363	369	1.153		0.00
	(3)In-service	89	2.31	1.17	Total	460.601	372			1>4 2>4 3>4
	(4)Other	110	1.62	0.94						
AE	(1)Not trained	32	4.29	0.88	Intergr.	5.082	3	1.694	6.015	
	(2)Bachelor's	142	4.57	0.41	Intra-gr.	104.209	370	0.282		0.00
	(3)In-service	90	4.46	0.56	Total	109.291	373			1<4 2<4
	(4)Other	110	4.69	0.49						
A-PJ	(1)Not trained	32	4.17	0.89	Intergr.	8.457	3	2.819	7.316	
	(2)Bachelor's	142	4.46	0.59	Intra-gr.	142.185	369	0.385		.000
	(3)In-service	89	4.30	0.65	Total	150.642	372			1<4 2<4
	(4)Other	110	4.64	0.52						
AR-A	(1)Not trained	32	4.00	0.95	Intergr.	8.147	3	2.716	3.478	
	(2)Bachelor's	142	4.19	0.82	Intra-gr.	288.855	370	0.781		0.02
	(3)In-service	90	4.14	0.94	Total	297.002	373			1<4
	(4)Other	110	4.45	0.88						
SAS	(1)Not trained	32	4.01	0.77	Intergr.	11.557	3	3.852	11.527	
	(2)Bachelor's	142	4.25	0.50	Intra-gr.	123.319	369	0.334		0.00
	(3)In-service	89	4.15	0.59	Total	134.875	372			1<4 2<4
	(4)Other	110	4.54	0.58						

In Table 6, the social acceptance levels of classroom teachers differed significantly in terms of sub-factors and SAS overall according to their status of receiving inclusive education ($p < 0.05$). Considering the negative content of the E-NJ factor at the end of the Scheffe test, it was observed that the social acceptance levels of the teachers who received certified education or conducted researches on inclusive education with special endeavours in the other scope were better than those who did not receive education or received undergraduate education in the SAS across the AE and A-NJ factors; and in the AR-A factor, it was observed that the social acceptance levels of these teachers were better than those who did not receive any education.

Table 7. Results of The ANOVA and Scheffe Test Analysis Regarding the Difference in Social Acceptance Levels of Primary School Teachers According to The Number of Inclusive Students in Their Classrooms

	Number of student	N	\bar{X}	sd		K T	df	Mean Square	F	p	Schf
E-NJ	(1) 1 stud.	330	2.03	1.09	Intergr.	9.222	2	4.611			
	(2) 2 stud.	26	2.57	1.03	Intra-gr.	451.379	370	1.220	3.780	.024	2>1
	(3) 3+ stud.	17	2.44	1.31	Total	460.601	372				
EA	(1) 1 stud.	330	4.56	0.54	Intergr.	.551	2	4.611			
	(2) 2 stud.	27	4.43	0.44	Intra-gr.	108.741	371	1.220	.939	.392	--
	(3) 3+ stud.	17	4.65	0.53	Total	109.291	373				
A-PJ	(1) 1 stud.	330	4.46	0.64	Intergr.	1.002	2	.501			
	(2) 2 stud.	26	4.26	0.57	Intra-gr.	149.640	370	0.404	1.239	.291	--
	(3) 3+ stud.	17	4.51	0.50	Total	150.642	372				
AR-A	(1) 1 stud.	330	4.27	0.87	Intergr.	3.705	2	1.852			
	(2) 2 stud.	27	4.05	0.76	Intra-gr.	293.298	371	.791	2.343	.097	--
	(3) 3+ stud.	17	3.87	1.22	Total	297.002	373				
SAS	(1) 1 stud.	330	4.32	0.61	Intergr.	2.149	2	1.074			
	(2) 2 stud.	26	4.04	0.44	Intra-gr.	132.727	373	359	2.995	.051	--
	(3) 3+ stud.	17	4.15	0.54	Total	134.875	372				

In Table 7, it is observed that according to the number of students receiving inclusive education in the classroom, the social acceptance levels of classroom teachers differ significantly in the E-NJ factor ($p < 0.05$), and there is no significant difference in terms of other factors and SAS in general ($p > 0.05$). At the end of the Scheffe test, when the negative content of the E-NJ factor (exclusion-negative judgment) was taken into consideration, it was determined that the teacher, who had 1 inclusive student in her class, showed a social acceptance farther from exclusion and negative judgment.

Table 8. Results of Perarson's r Test Analysis on the Relationships Between Social Acceptance Levels of Classroom Teachers and Professional Seniority and The Number of Students Receiving Inclusive Education in Their Class

Variable		E-NJ	EA	A-NJ	AR-A	SAS General
Professional Seniority	0.221**	-0.205**	-0.247**	-0.040	-0.236**	0.221**
Number of Students Receiving Inclusive Education in Class	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.441	0.000	0.000
	0.125*	-0.002	-0.023	-0.112*	-0.105*	0.125*
	0.016	0.974	0.651	0.031	0.042	0.016

In Table 8, it is seen that there is a positive and significant relationship between the social acceptance level of primary school teachers for the professional seniority year in terms of E-NJ factor ($p < 0.001$); and a negative and significant relationship in terms of A-NJ sub-factors and SAS in general ($p < 0.001$); on the other hand, there is no significant relationship in terms of AR-A factor. There is a positive and significant relationship between the number of inclusive students in the grades and the E-NJ sub-factor ($p < 0.05$), and a negative and significant relationship between AR-A and SAS in general ($p < 0.05$).

Conclusion and Discussion

At the end of this study, which examined the social acceptance levels of classroom teachers in terms of some variables, it was determined that although the social acceptance levels of teachers were generally very high, they were more problematic than other dimensions, especially in terms of excluding students with special needs and having negative judgments. When the literature is examined, it can be said that the studies on the subject are mostly related to peer social acceptance (Aktan, Budak & Botabekovna, 2019; Bakkaloğlu, Sucuoğlu & Özbek, 2019; Fırat & Koyuncu, 2019) or the attitudes and evaluations of teachers, students and administrators regarding the inclusive practice (Çalbayram, Aker, Akkuş, Durmuş & Tutar, 2018; Güteryüz, 2014); no study has been found to determine the social acceptance levels of teachers. However, based on the result of Orhan's (2010) study, in which he determined that preschool education teachers' views on the practice of inclusive education in general were negative, it can be said that teachers' acceptance levels regarding the practice of inclusive education are at least low. On the other hand, Sivrikaya (2022) and Aktan, Budak & Botabekovna (2019) determined that normally developed students studying in primary schools generally have high social acceptance towards students with special needs; Bakkaloğlu, Sucuoğlu & Özbek (2019) determined that students with special needs have lower social acceptance than students with normal needs; Fırat & Koyuncu (2019) determined that normally developing high school students put significant distance to their peers with special needs and their social acceptance levels are not sufficient. Accordingly, it can be said that students and teachers or administrators generally have good social acceptance levels regarding the presence of students with special needs in inclusive classrooms; but they may experience problems due to some lack of infrastructure and knowledge-skills.

According to another finding of the study, female teachers have higher social acceptance levels than men. There is a significant difference in favor of women, especially in terms of E-NJ, QA, FO-K and SAS. Although there is no significant difference in the A-NJ factor, the score of female teachers is still higher. It is noteworthy in the literature that there are different results regarding the differentiation between the level of social acceptance according to gender. Çalbayram et al. (2018), in their own studies and in many studies conducted at national and international level, stated that the mean scores of women were higher than men; they stated that women have more positive attitudes and that they can be explained by gender characteristics such as being more sensitive to the feelings and thoughts of others, being caring, being compassionate, loving, compassionate, and emotional. Kuester (2000) lists gender as one of the factors affecting the attitudes of classroom teachers towards inclusive students (Cited in Orhan, 2010). Apaydın & Barış (2021), on the other hand, stated that there was no significant difference between the attitudes of the participants towards disabled individuals according to their gender in their own studies, but in some studies conducted on healthcare professionals, it was seen that women had more positive attitudes towards disabled individuals than men. Unlike these, in studies conducted on peer social acceptance, Özgönenel & Girli (2016) observed that the gender variable of their peers did not affect the social acceptance level of inclusive students. Similarly, Senel (1995) determined at the end of his study that the gender variable had no effect on the attitudes of individuals with disabilities. Accordingly, it can be said that there are studies revealing that gender is the basis for differentiation in the social acceptance levels of individuals with normal development towards individuals with special needs and that women have a higher level of social acceptance and attitude in studies where the difference is observed. The fact that women have higher levels of social acceptance and positive attitudes can be explained by the dominance of maternal feelings or the fact that their feelings of warmth and compassion are more dominant as a requirement for them to be more interested in their own children in general.



Yılmaz & Zembat (2019) found that although there are many studies in their own studies and the literature concluding that emotional intelligence levels do not differ according to gender, there are also many studies revealing that women have high emotional intelligence levels; they attributed the lack of difference in their studies to the fact that all preschool teachers have to constantly communicate and interact with children. Accordingly, it can be said that as a result of the fact that women's emotional intelligence is higher than men, it can be expected that the social acceptance levels for students with special needs are at a better level.

A result of this research is that teachers with low seniority generally have higher social acceptance levels. Teachers with special needs have lower social acceptance levels than those with a professional seniority of 10 years or more, and those with special needs have lower social acceptance levels than those with a professional seniority of 10 years or more. This situation can be explained based on the wear and tear of the time spent in the profession and the more limited courses or subjects with special education and inclusive education in the education programs where senior teachers are trained. It is noteworthy that a similar result was reached at the end of the study titled "How the Society Understands Disability" conducted by the Prime Ministry Disability Administration of the Republic of Turkey. In this study, it was determined that social attitudes towards individuals with special needs were more positive in young individuals (Apaydın & Barış, 2021). Similarly, Orhan (2010) found that preschool teachers think more negatively about the practice of inclusive education than prospective teachers in his study, in which he compared the results of his own research with different research results.

Another result reached in the research is that teachers' social acceptance levels differ significantly according to their marital status in general. The social acceptance level of teachers who live separately from their spouses is higher than married teachers in terms of E-NJ and EA factors and SAS in general. This situation can be interpreted as a result of the increase in the roles of classroom teachers (teaching, spouse, motherhood/fatherhood, brotherhood, and so on) and the decrease in their tolerance towards inclusive students or the fact that separated-divorced teachers are more successful in understanding the difficulties of students with special needs depending on their own difficulties. On the other hand, Kabar (2017) determined that there is no difference between teachers' commitment to work according to their marital status in terms of work engagement or work motivation level, which can be said to be related to social acceptance level, although there is no determined finding between social acceptance level and marital status in the literature, and similar results were obtained in different studies.

A result of this study is that the social acceptance levels of classroom teachers differ according to the quality of education they receive, do not receive or receive on subjects such as special education or inclusive education. In particular, it was observed that teachers who improved themselves in terms of inclusive education and teachers who received education at the undergraduate level had better social acceptance levels than others, especially with their own special efforts. Accordingly, it can be said that the trainings to be taken on these subjects will improve the social acceptance levels of teachers, especially if they are given in appropriate content, periods and depending on the request and need. In his study comparing different research results on this subject, Orhan (2010) stated that educational activities are necessary to improve the knowledge, attitudes and competencies of pre-school teachers about inclusive education in general; with different research results, he stated that positive changes have emerged in teachers' attitudes and behaviors towards children with special needs. Apaydın & Barış (2021) and Kılıç (2018) state that with the information and training studies to be carried out on students with special needs and their education, it has been determined that their social acceptance levels and attitudes towards them have changed significantly and positively.

A result observed at the end of the research is that classroom teachers with 2 inclusive students in their classrooms have higher exclusionary attitudes and negative judgments than those with 1 student; on the other hand, there is no difference in other dimensions and social acceptance levels in general. This situation can be interpreted as the factors other than the exclusionary attitude and negative judgment dimension and the number of inclusive students in the classroom at general social acceptance levels do not significantly affect the social acceptance levels of classroom teachers. On the other hand, it can be said that dealing with two inclusive students is more difficult than dealing with a student and helping them, and it is effective on teachers' attitudes and behaviors in terms of exclusionary attitude and negative judgment. Because in the study conducted by Ayril et al. (2013), a similar result was obtained and it was stated that there was no linear relationship between the number of inclusive students in their classes and their social acceptance levels; on the other hand, the social acceptance of those in the 4-student classes was higher than those in the 2-student classes and this situation was difficult to explain. Bolat & Ata (2017, 174), on the other hand, determined that school administrators had to consider different variables such as classroom availability, disability type, age group when placing inclusive students in the classroom. This situation paves the way for students to reflect their negative judgments due to the lack of equal or fair distribution between teachers from time to time; therefore, teachers' social acceptance levels may have decreased in classrooms with 2 inclusive students.

Another finding of the study is that there is a significant relationship between the social acceptance levels of classroom teachers and their professional seniority and the number of inclusive students in their classrooms. As the professional seniority of primary school teachers' increases, their exclusion and negative judgments towards inclusive students' increase, while their efforts to accept them, positive judgments about acceptance and social acceptance levels in general decrease. As discussed above, the narrowing of the tolerance limits due to the high level of professional attrition that can be observed in teachers in parallel with the increase in professional seniority; the fact that the subjects and practices of special education or inclusive education in the education programs of teachers with high professional seniority or in social life have not been included as comprehensively as today may have had an effect on this result (Apaydın & Barış, 2021; Kılıç, 2018; Orhan, 2010). On the other hand, the number of inclusive students in the classroom and their disability status or level can also be interpreted as a variable that leads to an increase in the exclusionary attitudes and negative judgments of classroom teachers.

Recommendations

Variables such as gender, professional seniority, education on inclusion, marital status, type of disability in children, which also have clues about teachers' social acceptance levels in this study, should be taken into account; on the other hand, the processes of selecting and training teachers by determining the power of influence of other variables should be regulated in line with these data. In this context:

- Priority should be given to educational activities that will support the social acceptance levels of preschool and primary school teachers, which are the first steps of educational processes.
- The trainings should not only be limited to teachers but should also include parents.
- In order to ensure teachers' willing participation in educational activities, incentives such as prioritizing appointments and giving more additional course fees should be used in addition to legal regulations.



- The contents of the training programs should be determined and organized by analysing the needs of the teachers working in the field.
- Care should be taken to ensure that the emotional ground is strong in pre-service or in-service training activities.
- Teachers with low occupational burnout should be assigned to the classes where inclusive education is provided. In this context, teachers with low professional seniority may be preferred.

Another finding of the study is that there is a significant relationship between the social acceptance levels of classroom teachers and their professional seniority and the number of inclusive students in their classrooms. As the professional seniority of primary school teachers' increases, their exclusion and negative judgments towards inclusive students' increase, while

Apart from these, in the new studies to be conducted based on the existing studies in the literature, it can be suggested that researchers conduct studies on the social acceptance levels of teachers working in different teaching levels and for students with different special needs. In addition, it can be said that conducting studies associated with different variables that have an effect on the level of social acceptance will make significant contributions to the literature.

Declarations

This study was produced from the master thesis study by the first author. On the other hand, the second author was the supervisor for the study. In addition, the research was conducted with the permission of Sakarya University Educational Research and Publication Ethics Committee.

Note

This study was produced from the master's thesis prepared by the first author, under the supervision of the second author, in Sakarya University Institute of Educational Sciences, Department of Classroom Education.

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