

**THE ATTITUDE OF MANAGERS AND OFFICE WORKERS OF THE
ERCIYES UNIVERSITY
TOWARDS DISABILITY PEOPLE**

TITLE OF ARTICLE

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Objective: The aim of this study is to determine the attitudes of the managers and officers towards disabled people by using Questionnaire of Attitude Scale towards Disabled (QASTD) and related factors.

Methods: This cross-sectional study was conducted in Erciyes University on 427 people working as managers and officers. Data were collected with a Socio-demographic data form and the Questionnaire of Attitude Scale towards Disabled (QASTD).

Results: The mean QASTD score was 77.94 ± 19.74 , while that of educational environment was 5.16 ± 2.24 , personal characteristics was 13.73 ± 4.86 , working life was 16.08 ± 5.00 , interpersonal

relationships was 15.03 ± 5.02 , family life was 7.02 ± 2.29 , and competency-independent life was 20.90 ± 6.40 . Men, older age groups, secondary school graduates and those who have a disabled person in his/her life had more positive attitudes towards disabled people.

Conclusion: The mean scores obtained from the QASTD scale and subscales were lower than the cut-off points used for the division of negative and positive attitudes.

Keywords: Disability, Attitude, QASTD score, Manager, Officer

INTRODUCTION

People with disabilities are classed as those who are restricted in fulfilling the normal life, in consequence of loss of their physical, mental, spiritual, sensory and social skills at various levels as a result of disease, accident or a congenital disorder (1). The Global Burden of Disease Study data reported that people with moderate-severe disabilities compromised 15.3% of the world's population (2). In other words, the World Health Survey reported that the rate of adults who have difficulty in meeting their daily life activities is 15.6% (3). According to National Disability Research the prevalence of disability was found as 12.3% in Turkey (4). However; in the World Health Study, in which chronic diseases were also included, it was found as 20.6% (2).

When current laws, policies and public infrastructure are examined, it can be observed that there are many environmental barriers, cultural biases and complex attitudes that push people with disabilities out of society and into economic poverty. It is reported in the World Report on Disability, that attitudes towards those with disabilities are important environmental factors that affect all areas of service provision and social life (1). Disabled people have inadequate access to health care, education and employment opportunities. They do not get the required services specific to their impairments and they are excluded from daily life in Turkey just as they are all over the world.

Since many people's feelings reactions towards disabled are related to social attitudes, a change in social attitudes and an improvement in terms of prejudgements and stereotypes towards disabled people are essential (5). Cooperation with disabled people ensures positive attitudes about disability (6). Positive shaping of social attitudes facilitates the integration of disabled people into society, accelerates their acceptance among peers, family, and employers and contributes positively to the enactment of laws regulating the rights of people with disabilities and their lives (7). In order for disabled individuals to be productive and useful individuals of equal status with non-disabled persons, negative attitudes must be transformed into positive attitudes and individual, social and institutional measures and regulations must be set. Hence, it is essential to determine the attitudes of professional groups in decision-making institutions which are representative hold the pulse of social attitudes and behaviours towards the disabled. Studies have shown that attitude plays a determining role in the planning and implementation of disability-oriented services (8). In particular, managers and their professional attitudes are important environmental factors in the daily life of people with disabilities. The attitude of administrative staff towards disabled peoples one of the main determinants, affecting the quality and quantity of the services provided to disabled people. For this reason, it is important to determine the disability awareness of managers in order to ensure the integration of people with disabilities into society and to develop a positive social attitude towards them in public.

The aim of this study is to determine the attitudes of the managers and office workers towards disabled people by using Questionnaire of Attitude Scale towards Disabled (QASTD) and related factors.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Studies have shown that attitude plays a determining role in the planning and implementation of disability-oriented services (8). In particular, managers and their professional attitudes are important environmental factors in the daily life of people with disabilities. The attitude of administrative staff towards disabled peoples one of the main determinants, affecting the quality and quantity of the services provided to disabled people. For this reason, it is important to determine the disability awareness of managers in order to ensure the integration of people with disabilities into society and to develop a positive social attitude towards them in public.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

This cross-sectional survey was conducted on March-April 2016 on 427 non-disabled volunteers out of 2130 working in positions as managers and officers at Erciyes University. Data were collected with Socio Demographic Data Form and the Questionnaire of Attitude Scale towards Disabled (QASTD) people (4). The QASTD is a five-point Likert (“strongly agree” (5), “agree” (4), “undecided” (3), “disagree” (2) “strongly disagree” (1) scale that consists of 6 factors and 43 items (Table 1). Twenty four items consist of positive attitude statements (2, 3, 4, 6, 10, 12, 13, 14, 15, 19, 21, 24, 25, 26, 27, 29, 30, 31, 32, 34, 35, 36, 38, 41) while 19 items consist of negative (1, 5, 7, 8, 9, 11, 16, 17, 18, 20, 22, 23, 28, 33, 37, 39, 40, 42, 43) attitude statements Negative items in the inventory are rated by inverting them. It can be obtained for both subscales and total QASTD scores. The mean total scores range from 43 to 215. A high score in the QASTD means positive attitudes towards people with disabilities. **Educational Environment (EE)** defines respondents' views on how people with disabilities should be educated. **Interpersonal Relationships (IR)** is related to respondents' attitudes towards forming a relationship with disabled people. **Working Life (WL)** evaluates the respondents' attitudes about the integration of persons with disabilities into the working life. **Family Life (FL)** examines participants' attitudes on how people with disabilities affect their family life. **Personal Characteristics (PC)** describes the beliefs of respondents about the personal characteristics of people with disabilities. **Competency-Independent-Living (CIL)** aims to assess the views of the respondents about the competencies and abilities of people with disabilities to maintain their lives independently.

Statistical Analysis

Data analysed using frequency and percentages. Data obtained from the attitude inventory were firstly analysed for the whole group, then the Student t-test and One-way ANOVA were applied to examine the relationship between the mean of the QASTD scores and independent variables (gender, age group, level of education, marital and occupational status, the presence of a disabled person in or outside the family etc.). The Cronbach Alpha internal consistency factors calculated to determine the reliability of the inventory are given in Table 1.

Table 1. Distribution of the attitude scale against disabled people by factor and item number.

Factors	Number of items	Items	Cronbach α Coefficients
Educational Environment (EE)	3	1, 5, 39	0.64
Interpersonal Relationships (IR)	9	2, 10, 14, 25, 29, 32, 35, 38, 41	0.81
Working Life (WL)	9	4, 6, 8, 28, 33, 34, 40, 42, 43	0.49
Family Life (FL)	3	7, 16, 18	0.49
Personal Characteristics (PC)	7	9, 11, 17, 20, 22, 23, 37	0.82
Competency-Independent- Living (CIL)	12	3, 12, 13, 15, 19, 21, 24, 26, 27, 30, 31, 36	0.86
QASTD	43	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43	0.81

Written consent was obtained from the Ethics Committee of Medical Faculty of Erciyes University and verbal consent was obtained from participants.

RESULTS

The mean age of the respondents was 39.97 ± 10.10 . Sixty two percent of them were men, 56.7% graduated from college, 75.9% were married and 65.6% were civil servants. Ten percent of managers had an academic background such as dean, vice-dean, and head of department/division, college director and deputy manager (Table 2).

Table 2. Demographic characteristics of study group by gender.

Variables	Gender				Total	
	Men (n:265)		Women (n:162)			
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Age Groups						
19-33	73	47.7	80	52.3	153	35.8
34-48	119	62.6	71	37.4	190	44.5
49-65	73	86.9	11	13.1	84	19.7
Educational Level						
Primary school	18	62.1	11	37.9	29	6.8
High school	61	83.6	12	16.4	73	17.1
University/College	137	56.6	105	43.4	241	56.7
Master's/PhD	49	59.0	34	41.0	83	19.4
Marital Status						
Single	39	42.4	53	67.6	92	21.5
Married	224	69.1	100	30.9	324	75.9
Widowed/Divorced	2	18.2	9	81.8	11	2.6
Professional Status						
Academic manager*	33	80.5	8	19.5	41	9.6
Non-academic manager**	12	57.1	9	42.9	21	4.9
Office workers	220	51.5	145	33.9	365	85.5

*Dean, vice-dean, head of department/division, college director, deputy manager.

**University/college secretary, head of department, branch manager.

In our study, 33% of the respondents reported the presence a disabled person in their families or workplace. Only 11.6% of the respondents live together with disabled people in the same house, while the majority of them (88.4%) live in separate houses. When the kinship status was examined for those mentioning the presence of a person with disability in their families, 33.3% of the disabled acquaintances were close relatives, 12.7% were close friends, 18% were neighbours. Only 2.8% of the respondents engaged in activities related with disabled people. The mean score of QASTD is 77.94 ± 19.74 out of 215 points. The mean total and subscale scores were lower than the cut-off points used for the division of negative and positive attitudes (Table 3). This finding shows that the attitudes towards disabled persons were negative in general. The mean **educational environment** score was 5.16 ± 2.24 (Table 3). As many as 95% of the respondents have negative attitudes towards the integration of disabled people into the formal educational environment. Most respondents (89.5%) thought that people with disabilities shouldn't be educated in the same class with their peers and that they should be educated in separate, specially designated environments such as in their homes (80.5%). The money spent on those with disabilities was considered as a waste (91.8%). The mean score of

respondents' about people with disabilities participating in **working life** was 16.08 ± 5.00 (Table 3).

Table 3. Distribution of respondents' scores from the Questionnaire of Attitude Scale Towards Disabled (QASTD) people.

Subscales of QASTD	Cut-off point	QASTD	Research Score Ranges	Scale Score Ranges
		Mean \pm SD		
Educational environment (EE)	9	5.16 \pm 2.24	3-15	3-15
Interpersonal relationships (IR)	27	15.03 \pm 5.02	9-36	9-45
Working life (WL)	27	16.08 \pm 5.00	9-34	9-45
Family life (FL)	9	7.02 \pm 2.29	3-15	3-15
Personal characteristics (PC)	21	13.73 \pm 4.86	7-35	7-35
Competency-independent living (CIL)	36	20.90 \pm 6.40	12-48	12-60
Total	129	77.94 \pm 19.74	43-134	43-215

Most respondents (76.8%) believed that disabled people prefer to receive social benefits instead of working, 84.5% of them had the opinion that disabled employees in the workplace cause discomfort to customers receiving goods or services, 76.6% stated that they are a financial burden to the employers, and 88.6% believed that it is meaningless to employ disabled people when even non-disabled persons cannot find employment nowadays. Of the respondents' 90.4% agree that it is not necessary for disabled people to work and 83.8% of them believed that disabled employees reduce productivity in the workplace. The mean of the **interpersonal relationships** score was 15.03 ± 5.02 (Table 3). Only 7.7% of the respondents stated that they are not disturbed when eating in the same table with disabled people, 12.8% stated that they don't mind others staring while they are with disabled people, 2.8% reported that they don't hesitate to have a conversation with a disabled person when they are in the same environment, 5.9% stated that they are sad when people stare at disabled people, 4.4% reported they don't avoid being alone with disabled people, 3.7% said that they don't feel discomfort hosting people with disabilities in their home, 4.9% stated they don't avoid making friends with disabled people, and 8.4% said that they would work for institutions which supply various services for disabled persons. The mean of the **family life** score was 7.02 ± 2.29 (Table 3). The 24.6% of the respondents stated that people with disabilities would limit family's social life; nevertheless 35.6% of those reported that the presence of a disabled person strongly affects the quality of the family's daily routine, while 77.5% consider that the handicapped person is a burden to the family. The mean score of personal characteristics was 13.73 ± 4.86 (Table 3). The majority of the respondents stated that they have some prejudices related with disabled persons. Most of the respondents thought that they always complain about everything (71.4%), do not trust other people (59.5%) and are boring (87.8%). Their appearances are annoying (81.9%), they are unhygienic (87.4%), selfish (84.8%), angry and aggressive (76.1%). The mean competency-independent score of disabled persons in daily life was 20.90 ± 6.40 (Table 3).

Most of participants believed that people with disabilities "cannot make their own decisions on matters related to their lives (86.4%), they cannot learn much (91.1%), they cannot express their own views (92.8%) like everybody else, they cannot be successful as much as non-disabled people (88.6%), they are not overcome with admiration for their lives like non-disabled people (73.5%), they cannot have a profession like everybody else (87.3%), they cannot marry and have a family (90.9%), they cannot be sportsmen (91.8%), they cannot be successful enough in their lives (94.6%) and they do not have dreams and aims (93.2%) like everybody else".

According to the evaluation of the total and subscales scores related with the socio-demographic and occupational conditions of the respondents, there was a significant relationship between the total QASTD score and gender ($p < 0.001$), age groups ($p = 0.002$), level of education ($p = 0.026$) and having a person with disabilities in their life ($p = 0.015$). Men had a more positive attitude compared with women about disabled people's participation in formal education ($p < 0.001$), and working life ($p < 0.001$) and about their personal characteristics ($p = 0.001$) and autonomies ($p = 0.006$) (Table 4).

Table 4. Distribution of the mean QASTD score according to some socio-demographic characteristics

Characteristics	Educational* Environment	Interpersonal Relationship	Working Life*	Family life	Personal Characteristics *	Competency - Independent Living	Total QASTD
Gender	Mean±SD	Mean±SD	Mean±SD	Mean±SD	Mean±SD	Mean±SD	Mean±SD
Male	5.57±2.42	15.33±5.16	16.86±5.32	7.14±2.37	14.28±5.22	21.55±6.66	80.76±20.14
Female	4.49±1.74	14.53±4.75	14.80±4.15	6.83±2.14	12.82±4.04	19.85±5.80	73.33±18.20
<i>P</i>	<0.001	0.104	<0.001	0.170	0.001	0.006	<0.001
Age group							
19-33	4.95±2.28	14.58±4.95	15.80±4.97	7.91±2.34	13.28±4.85	20.35±6.24	75.90±19.31
34-48	4.96±1.98	15.30±5.11	15.68±4.98	9.71±2.02	13.17±4.28	20.74±6.32	76.59±20.15
49-65	6.00±2.56	15.23±4.94	17.48±4.93	7.94±2.53	15.78±5.57	22.27±6.74	84.72±18.2
<i>P</i>	0.001	0.392	0.016	<0.001	<0.001	0.079	0.002*
Educational level							
Primary & High school	6.06±2.92	15.01±5.07	17.46±5.86	7.18±2.63	15.32±6.34	21.01±7.09	82.07±21.14
College & Faculty	4.99±1.91	15.14±4.97	15.82±4.68	7.03±2.15	13.33±4.21	21.09±6.12	77.42±18.98
Master's/PhD	4.43±1.86	14.72±5.13	15.14±4.46	7.02±2.29	12.93±4.08	20.21±6.34	74.40±19.48
<i>P</i>	<0.001	0.805	0.003	0.670	0.001	0.549	0.026**
Marital status							
Single	5.05±2.36	15.12±5.34	16.34±5.22	7.05±2.36	13.68±4.93	20.72±6.56	78.00±19.87
Married	5.20±2.21	15.00±4.92	16.00±4.94	9.58±2.46	13.74±4.84	20.96±6.35	77.92±19.72
<i>P</i>	0.590	0.836	0.550	0.881	0.922	0.750	0.971
Professional status							
Managers	4.45±1.63	14.79±5.16	15.38±4.71	6.98±2.32	12.93±4.44	20.32±5.62	74.87±19.82
Office workers	5.28±2.31	15.07±5.00	16.20±5.05	7.04±2.28	13.86±4.92	21.00±6.52	78.47±19.70
<i>P</i>	0.001	0.689	0.216	0.871	0.137	0.391	0.189
Existence of handicapped in their life							
Exists	5.02±2.19	15.66±5.42	15.45±4.65	6.91±2.15	13.50±4.58	20.25±5.82	75.42±18.62
Absent	5.28±2.29	14.26±4.70	16.60±5.23	7.11±2.39	13.91±5.08	21.44±6.80	80.02±20.42
<i>P</i>	0.240	0.003	0.017	0.359	0.385	0.052	0.015

*The difference is due to the difference of the third group from the first and second group ($p = 0.003$).

** It is due to the difference between the first and third groups.

The mean subscale scores in educational environment ($p = 0.001$), in working life ($p = 0.016$) and in personal characteristics ($p < 0.001$) was significantly higher in the 49-65 age group and in those who graduated from primary & high school than in their peers. The mean subscale score in family life was higher in the 49-65 age groups than in younger groups. On the other

hand the mean score of educational environment was higher among employees than among other professional groups ($p=0.001$). Office workers think more positively about disabled people being educated in the same class with their peers compared to other respondents.

DISCUSSION

The most basic set in front of disability is the attitudes created and experienced in the social dimension. In the present study, managers and officers working at Erciyes University was asked whether their attitudes could differ towards people with disabilities according to the socio-demographic and occupational characteristics of personnel.

In the present study, it was found that the mean overall and subscales scores were lower than the cut-off points used for the division of negative and positive attitudes (Table 3). For this reason, the majority of respondents have a negative attitude towards people with disabilities.

The educational environment score (5.16 ± 2.24) was significantly lower than the threshold limit value. This result shows that administrative staff has a negative social attitude towards the integration of disabled persons into formal educational environments. Likewise, the vast majority of them think that the training of disabled people is a pointless activity while non-disabled persons do not receive enough education. Therefore, the money spent on their education is considered as a waste. They believe that disabled people should only be educated in their homes or at special schools designed for them, if necessary. When the education levels of the respondents are considered (57% are graduates from college/faculty), this negative attitude is the most important reason why disabled people are excluded from formal educational environments. It may be due to the respondents having very limited knowledge about the difficulties faced in adjusting to special teaching environments and the presence of prejudices against people with disabilities (9, 10).

The mean subscale score in interpersonal relationships was 15.03 ± 5.02 , which is markedly under the threshold limit value. In this dimension, which was related to the behavioural tendency component of the attitude scale, very few of the administrative staff showed social acceptance towards disabled people. Most of them reported that they avoid being in the same environment, having a social relationship and making friends with disabled people. However, in contrast to our findings, previous studies carried out showed that the majority of participants have a positive behavioural tendency relating with disabled people, both in Turkey and other developed countries such as England and Canada (4, 11, 12).

The mean subscale score in working life is 16.08 ± 5.00 which is under the threshold limit value. The majority of the respondents have a negative attitude about disabled persons' employment. On the other hand 90.4% of them believed that disabled persons' working is not necessary while even non-disabled people cannot find any job. Additionally they stated that they would prefer to get help instead of working with the people with disabilities (4). Contrary to our findings, some studies (11, 12, 13) emphasized that, disabled person scan be productivity as much as the other employees, so they should be employed instead of getting help. These studies indicate that disabled people showed lower absenteeism compared to non-disabled people and they can perform as well as non-disabled employees or higher than ones did (4, 11, 12, 14, 15, 16, 17).

In our country according to working law the rate of employment disabled persons must be in 1:1 or 1:4 in public and private institutions. However this rate 1:5 (21.7%) which was very low. Similarly, in many countries there is a gap between real life experiences and positive attitudes about disabled people's employment and unemployment rate among disabled people is high (4, 14, 16).

The mean subscale score in family life was 7.02 ± 2.29 , which is lower than the threshold limit value. Three quarters of respondents think that the existence of a disabled family member may negatively affect his/her family life, restricts their social life, so they are seen as a burden to their families. Living with a disabled person, especially for families who do not receive social support, can be an important source of stress and reason for exhaustion. Contrary to our findings, some studies have shown that living with a disabled person and frequent interaction with them may encourage positive attitudes towards disabled people (1, 18, 19).

The mean subscale score in personal characteristics was 13.73 ± 4.86 , which is markedly lower than the threshold limit value. The majority of respondents considered that disabled people are selfish, are not willing to be productive, don't trust other people, are not clean, and are boring, angry and aggressive. They mostly complain about everything.

They complain about everything. Contrary to our findings, the Turkish Disability Reports (4) stated that the majority of Turkish people perceive disabled people in the same way as non-disabled individuals. Robinson et al. (2007) found that about half of the respondents in their study saw disabled people as no different from anyone else (12).

The mean self-efficacy-independent life subscale score was 20.90 ± 6.40 , which is well below the threshold limit value. The majority of the respondents think that people are not as competent as non-disabled ones. They believe that disabled people cannot make decisions on their own, cannot express themselves, don't get married and have children, cannot be successful as much as non-disabled persons. However, in previous studies in Turkey (4). Turkey Disability Survey 2002), England and Canada (13, 14) it was shown that men and women from different age groups think disabled people are able to have a job, have a family and children, and have dreams and goals like everybody else.

The mean QASTD score was 77.94 ± 19.74 out of 215 points, which is lower than the cut-off point used for the division of negative and positive attitudes. These findings demonstrated that administrative staffs' social attitudes towards disabled people were negative, in general, which is inconsistent with the literature. The majority of administrative staffs had some prejudices against people with disabilities. They think that disabled people are unproductive, have negative personal characteristics and are dependent citizens in society; therefore, they prefer not to have contact with disabled people in their social surroundings and believe they shouldn't participate in national education and employment. This approach leads to an inhibitory effect on the integration of people with disabilities into society.

The mean QASTD score was relatively positive in men ($p < 0.001$), in the 49-65 age group ($p = 0.002$), in personnel educated at secondary level ($p = 0.026$) and in personnel who have a disabled person in their life ($p = 0.015$) (Table 4). In accordance with our results, in many studies (15, 18) it was reported that gender, age, and level of education are closely associated with attitudes towards people with disabilities. Contrary to our findings, some studies (1, 18) found that women, younger age groups, people with higher levels of education and people who have a person with disability in their life have more positive attitudes.

CONCLUSIONS: The overall QASTD and subscales scores were lower than the cut-off point used for the division of negative and positive attitudes. The administrative staff's social attitudes towards disabled people were negative, in general. There was significant difference between gender, age groups, level of education and people who have a disabled member in their life in terms of their attitudes towards people with disabilities. To raise awareness among managers and officers on disability issues and to obtain the full and effective participation of people with disabilities into society awareness raising programs should be organized to provide information on the definition of disability and the needs of people with disabilities.

Limitations of the Study: All the findings of the present study were obtained from non-disabled personnel in Erciyes University working in administrative services and personnel with a disability were excluded. Therefore, the results cannot be generalized to those with disabilities

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