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Examination of the Students' Activity Preferences Toward Their Peers with Special Needs in Terms of Social Acceptance Levels and Various Variables*

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Abstract

The present study aims to examine the activity preferences of typically developing students for their peers with special needs in terms of social acceptance levels and various variables. In total, 1098 typically developing students attending public secondary schools, where there are students who continue their education through inclusion, participated in this study. The causal and comparative model was used in this research. Given the results, it was observed that there is a relationship between the social skill levels, student behaviors, and peer attitudes of the students with typically developing students toward individuals with special needs, and their activity preferences towards students with special needs. Social skills and peer attitudes, which are sub-dimensions of the social acceptance scale, were found to predict activity preferences. Moreover, it was revealed that there was a differentiation between the activity preferences of students with typical development for their peers with special needs and their gender, mother's education level, father's education level, class level, and disability status among their relatives ($p < 0,05$). In schools where inclusive practices are carried out, various activities should be organized for the characteristics of individuals with special needs, so that typically developing students develop positive attitudes towards their peers with special needs and their social acceptance levels should be increased.

Keywords: Inclusive practices, individual with special needs, peer, social acceptance

1. Introduction

Students with special needs are assigned to the same classroom as their peers through inclusive education. Thanks to the education given through inclusion practices, students with special needs gain academic, social, and cognitive gains. It is known that inclusive education is very important, particularly in the acquisition of independent life skills by students with special needs. As stated by Morrison and Gleddie (2019), various elements should be combined for inclusion practices to be successful. It is known that teachers' ability to cope with problematic behaviors, classroom management, and attitudes are effective in successfully maintaining inclusion practices.

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Moreover, the use of materials and technology in classrooms is considered important. The inclusion team plays an important role in the success of inclusion practices. School administrators, classroom teachers, special education teachers, peer students, families of the integrated student, and every other personnel in the team have various duties and responsibilities in the inclusive education process (Çıkılı, Gönen, Aslan-Bağcı & Kaynar, 2020; Klavina & Block, 2008).

The interaction of typically developing students with students with special needs in the classes that provide education through inclusion was shown to be one of the important goals of inclusion practices (Özkan-Yaşaran, Batu & Özen, 2014). It was observed that typically developing peers in classrooms that provide education through inclusion do not have clear information about how they should interact when they encounter students with special needs. The lack of knowledge about the inadequacy of students with special needs causes typically developing students not to know how to behave towards their peers with special needs, and as a result, they do not accept their peers with special needs socially and avoid doing activities together with them (Odom, Zercher, Li, Marquart, Sandall & Brown, 2006). However, learning and behavior patterns that affect the later development of students develop during school periods. In particular, primary school time is a period when students establish social relationships with their peers; in this context, it is a period in which emotional, social, physical, communicative, and mental development continues. At school age, students acquire various knowledge and skills from their friends and environment. This knowledge, acquired in the same environment with their peers, provides the basis for the next steps of their development (Öztürk & Yıkılmış, 2013). To achieve complete success in inclusive education in classrooms where students with special needs are assigned to, they must be a part of the class, be socially accepted, be able to participate in joint activities, and have their social needs met (Batu, 2008).

Social acceptance and activity preferences, which are the behavioral dimensions of positive attitudes toward inclusion, are among these basic aspects (Siperstein, 1980). In particular, students with special needs may differ significantly from those with typical development in terms of physical, cognitive, and adaptive skills. Such differences sometimes determine the interaction levels of students with special needs and their typically developing peers. Such skills can develop when students with special needs and typically developing students receive education together in the same environment. The importance of special needs students receiving education with their typically developing peers made the concept of inclusion one of the most researched topics in Türkiye recently (Rakap, Parlak-Rakap & Aydin, 2016). Children with special needs receive education in classrooms that provide education through inclusion with student-student interaction. Peer relations, peer attitudes, social acceptance, and activity preferences of students with their peers are important factors playing roles in the development of children (Lorger, Schmidt & Bakracevic Vukman, 2015). It is known that peers' attitudes toward them and their being preferred in activities play an important role for students with special needs to create positive self-perception, exhibit positive behaviors, and take responsibility (Juvonen, Lessard, Rastogi, Schacter & Smith, 2019; Olmstead, Guy, O'Malley, & Bentler, 1991; Paseka & Schwab, 2020).

Reviewing the literature on activity preference and peer behavior, it can be seen that, although there are various definitions, the most accepted definition is "sub-components of the attitude" made by Smith (1968). Considering this definition, attitude is a tendency, which is attributed to an individual and regularly forms his/her thoughts, feelings, and behaviors toward a psychological object. Attitude has three components: cognitive, affective, and behavioral. The existence of an attitude is the sum of these three elements. These components are not independent of each other and there is often a consistency and interaction between them. A classification used by individuals in their thought processes or grouping of the acquired knowledge is the cognitive component, the individual's emotion, and evaluation of the attitude object constitute the affective component, and

the behavioral component makes it obligatory to act on the attitude object (Kartal & Bardakçı, 2019).

Generally, the strength and elements of established strong attitudes are also high. A stronger attitude is associated with a stronger change (Kağıtçıbaşı, 1985; Siperstein, Parker, Norins & Widaman, 2011). It is emphasized that students with strong attitudes prefer students with special needs in their activities, and therefore, positive peer relations are established in the classroom (Lebarič, Kobal Grum, & Kolenc, 2006; Siperstein et al., 2011). It was reported in previous studies that activity preference is the behavioral dimension of the attitude (Siperstein, 1980). Children's attitudes and preferences for activities with their peers begin to develop at the age of 3-4 years. It is known that the effects of parents in the process of raising children and their experiences with students with special needs affect children's attitudes toward students with special needs (Gottlieb, Corman & Curci, 1984). Moreover, various media tools such as newspapers, television, radio, and movies play an important role in shaping this attitude. Depending on these factors, when young children start school, they may have biased information, perceptions, and attitudes toward those who are different from them (Erdoğan & Şanlı, 2019).

It was emphasized that students with special needs are not preferred in common activities (Bakkaloğlu, Sucuoğlu & Özbek, 2019; Baydık & Bakkaloğlu, 2009; Smoot, 2004; Vuran, 2005) and that there is low social acceptance for them, particularly for students with autism and intellectual disability (Fırat, 2021). It was reported in a previous study that negative attitudes toward students with special needs cause students not to prefer these individuals in their activities and social rejection of students with special needs (Lebarič et al., 2006). It is thought that the social acceptance level of typically developing students toward those with special needs is related with the success of students with special needs and their social and emotional harmony, in-class behaviors and activity preferences (Sucuoğlu & Kargın, 2006). Since social acceptance level of students with special needs is reflected in learning achievements, school performance, and student activities, it was emphasized to contribute to students' social relations and social inclusion (Lebarič et al., 2006).

It was stated that various researches and studies should be conducted on the social acceptance of typically developing children in the education process and the level of realization of common activity preferences with them to integrate students with special needs into society (Peters 2004) because one of the biggest difficulties in inclusion is thought to be students with special needs not being accepted by their peers (Siperstein et al., 2011). Individual differences among students with special needs can sometimes create various difficulties in the activity preferences of typically developing students. These differences are considered extremely important for students with special needs during school years. Especially, the primary education time is the period in which students with special needs feel that they are different from their typically developing peers and they experience the feeling of exclusion most intensely. It was reported that, when individuals in need of special education think that they are different from their peers in many issues and their peers feel this, they may encounter significant difficulties, especially in personality development, throughout their lives (Karaca, 2018).

Therefore, it is argued that social acceptance and rejection, defined as the selection of a student with special needs as a member of a group for any activity by typically developing students (Ünal & Yel, 2019), influences many factors and it is frequently stated that variables such as academic competence, problematic behaviors, social skills, physical appearance, age and gender are the main factors (Baydık & Bakkaloğlu, 2009). Therefore, in this study, it is thought that, particularly in Türkiye, it would be important to understand the social acceptance and activity preferences of typically developing students toward students with special needs and to examine their activity preferences in terms of various variables. It may contribute to the development of various

educational intervention approaches by revealing the social acceptance levels of typically developing students towards their peers with special needs in Türkiye. Even though there are many studies examining the views and attitudes of teachers and students toward students with special needs (Pesen & Demirhan, 2021; Uçar, Yildizer, Özböke, Yılmaz & Kocaekşi, 2019), the number of studies examining the attitudes of students with special needs toward typically developing students in classrooms that provide education through inclusion and their preference for them in their activities is limited (Nal & Tüzün, 2011). Secondary school is considered an important breaking point, particularly for peer relations and social development (Steinberg & Morris, 2001), and no study could be found on the relationship between the social acceptance levels and activity preferences of the typically developing students in secondary school toward students with special needs in Türkiye. Therefore, this study is considered important in terms of understanding this in classrooms that provide education through inclusion and their preferring students with special needs in activities.

1.1. Purpose of the Research

The present study aims to examine the social acceptance levels and activity preferences of typically developing students for students with special needs. Therefore, it was also aimed to achieve the following sub-objectives.

1. Is there a relationship between the social acceptance levels of typically developing students toward students with special need and their interaction preferences for them?
2. Do social skills, student behaviors, and peer attitudes, which are the sub-dimensions of social acceptance level toward students with special needs, predict the interaction preferences of typically developing students?
3. Does the average score of the activity preferences of the typically developing students for the students with special needs differ according to;
 - a) Their gender,
 - b) Education levels of parents,
 - c) Grade levels,
 - d) Having a person with disability among relatives.

2. Method

2.1. Research Model

The quantitative research method was used in this study. One of the aims of the quantitative research method is to explain the cause-effect relationship and to obtain results from the sample, which can be generalized to the population (Gall, Borg & Gali, 1996). The causal and comparative model was used in this study. Since the effect of an independent variable on the dependent variable is examined in this study, a causal model is a part of this research model. Moreover, the comparison model was used in the present study because of the comparison of the typically developing students' gender, parental education levels, grade level, and having a disability in their relatives with their activity preferences toward students with special needs. In causal comparison studies, there are at least two groups affected by the same condition in different ways, or two groups affected and unaffected by the assumed condition. These groups are examined by considering some variables to understand the possible causes of the current situation and those affecting this situation (Cohen & Manion, 1994). Therefore, the results achieved in this study are expressed with numerical data.

2.2. Research Group

The research was conducted in Konya city center of Türkiye. A total of 1098 students with typical development, attending public secondary schools where inclusive education practices are included, were involved in the research. There are students with special needs who continue their education through inclusion in the classrooms of the students with typical development in the research group. Necessary permissions were obtained from the Provincial Directorate of National Education. Schools with inclusive students in the classrooms were determined. Demographic information of the participant students is given in Table 1.

Table 1

Demographic Information Table of Participant Students

Variables Related to Participants		Gender			
		Male		Female	
		N	%	N	%
Grade	6	175	46.1%	205	53.9%
	7	169	43.8%	217	56.2%
	8	130	39.2%	202	60.8%
Having a Person with Disability among Relatives	Yes	109	38.9%	171	61.1%
	No	365	44.6%	453	55.4%
Education Status of Mother	Elementary School	142	40.0%	213	60.0%
	Secondary School	131	47.0%	148	53.0%
	High School	110	42.0%	152	58.0%
	University	76	46.9%	86	53.1%
	Master's Degree	15	37.5%	25	62.5%
Education Status of Father	Elementary School	56	34.8%	105	65.2%
	Secondary School	126	50.0%	126	50.0%
	High School	127	39.7%	193	60.3%
	University	116	43.4%	151	56.6%
	Master's Degree	49	50.0%	49	50.0%

In Table 1, demographic information of the participants is given. A total of 1098 students studying in the 6th, 7th, and 8th grades participated in the research. 474 male and 624 female students participated in the research on a voluntary basis. There were 175 boys (46.1%) and 205 girls (53.9%) studying in the 6th grade, 169 boys (43.8%) and 217 girls (56.2%) studying in the 7th grade, and 130 males (39.2%) and 202 females (60.8%) students studying in the 8th grade participating to this research.

2.3. Research Instruments and Processes

In the present study, an activity preference form was used to determine the preferences of typically developing students to interact with their peers with special needs, and a social acceptance scale was used to understand the social acceptance levels of typically developing students toward their special needs peers. Measurement tools were distributed directly to the participating groups by visiting the schools determined by the researchers. They were told not to write names on the measurement instruments. It was stated that their answers would not be shared in any way. The participant group was provided with the necessary information by explaining how to carry out the coding before the research.

2.3.1. Activity Preference Form

This scale, which was developed by Siperstein (1980) and adapted into Turkish by Çiftçi (1997), was developed to determine the behavioral dimension of children's attitudes toward interacting positively with their peers with typical development or special needs. This scale aims to measure a child's behavioral intention, which is thought to be the best indicator of overt or observed behavior (Siperstein, 1980). The scale was developed based on the social cognition theory regarding the development of friendship relations (Bak & Siperstein, 1987). "Social cognitive theory" argues that human learning occurs as a result of the interaction of individual, environmental, and behavioral factors. In addition, it is also argued that individuals in society learn by modeling and observing other people since human beings are social creatures (Bayrakçı, 2007). In this scale, there are statements that reflect the types of activities and interactions that these children like to do with their friends at home, school, and outdoors, determined through interviews with students in the last grade of primary school and secondary school. This scale, which consists of 15 items, has a Likert-type structure. As a result of the reliability study, the Cronbach-Alpha internal consistency coefficient was found to be .90. High scores obtained from the scale indicate that the level of activity preference is high. In this study, the Cronbach Alpha internal reliability coefficient calculated for the overall activity preference form was found to be .916.

2.3.2. Social Acceptance Scale

The "Social Acceptance Scale" was used in order to determine the levels of social acceptance of typically developing students in the inclusion classes for students with special needs. The social acceptance scale developed by Arslan (2010) is a Likert-type scale with a 32-item triple rating. As a result of the exploratory factor analysis for the construct validity of the scale, a three-factor structure was determined. The first of the three factors forming the scale was defined as "Social Skills", the second as "Student Behavior", and the third as "Peer Attitude". As a result of the reliability analysis, the internal consistency coefficient of 32 items was found to be .93. A high score obtained on the scale indicates a high level of social acceptance. In this study, the Cronbach Alpha internal reliability coefficient calculated for the overall social acceptance scale was found to be .849.

2.4. Data Analysis

Measurements of central tendency were examined regarding whether the data met the normality conditions, and it was determined that they were close to each other. Also, the kurtosis and skewness coefficients of the data group to be tested for normality were examined; since these values are between +1 and -1, it is assumed that they have a normal curve (George & Mallery, 2012; Hair, Black, Babin, Anderson & Tatham, 2006).

Table 2

Kurtosis and Skewness Values of the Obtained Data

Scales	N	\bar{X}	Ss	Skewness	Kurtosis
Activity Preference	1098	29.08	8.91	.486	.282
Social Acceptance	1098	76.86	11.29	-.697	.430

Moreover, Pearson product-moment correlation technique was used to estimate the relationship between students' social acceptance levels and their activity preferences. Prediction of social acceptance level of activity preference was tested by using the multiple regression technique. The

t-test was used for independent groups in order to understand whether there is a difference regarding the gender of the typically developing students and the presence of a person with disability among their relatives. One-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to understand the differentiation between the grade levels, father education levels, and education levels of the mothers of typically developing students. In cases with differentiation, Tukey test was used to control the difference between the means to find the reason of the differentiation.

2.5. Ethics

Before starting the data collection process, the ethical permission required was obtained from the Scientific Research and Ethics Committee of Inonu University with a letter dated 30.09.2022 and numbered 2022/13.

3. Results

In this part of the present study, the table representing the correlation between students' activity preferences and social acceptance level and the regression table for the variables that predict students' activity preferences are included. Moreover, considering the situation of typically developing students preferring their peers with special needs in their activities, the results regarding the differences between their gender, parental education levels, grade levels, and having a person with disability among relatives are included.

Table 3

The Correlation Table Between Students' Activity Preferences and Social Acceptance Sub-Dimensions

Scale		Social Skills	Student Behaviors	Peer Attitudes
Activity Preference	r	.551**	.279**	.191**
	p	.001	.001	.001

Examining Table 3, it can be seen that there are positive and significant relationships ($p < 0.01$) between the activity preferences of the typically developing students for students with special needs and social skills, student behavior, and peer attitude, which are the sub-dimensions of social acceptance level. Therefore, the level of preferring students with special needs in activities of typically developing students increases as social skills, student behavior, and peer attitudes increase. As a result of the regression analysis, VIF and tolerance values for social skills, student behavior and peer attitudes, which are among the sub-dimensions of social acceptance levels, were examined. Since VIF values are lower than 3 and tolerance statistics are higher than 0.5, it can be seen that there is no perfect linear relationship between its variables. Therefore, regression analysis was used.

Table 4

Regression Table for Variables Predicting Students' Activity Preferences

Sub-Dimensions	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	p	Tolerance	VIF
1. (Stable)	18.599	1,57		11,845	.000		
Social Skill	.664	.036	.535	18.610	.000	.766	1.305
Student Behavior	.009	.065	.004	.136	.892	.721	1.386
Peer Attitude	.145	.063	.061	2.289	.022	.879	1.138

R = .555 $p \leq .000$ R² = .308 F = 162.115 Durbin-Watson = 1.741

Table 4 is the regression table for variables that predict the activity preferences of typically developing students for students with special needs. Durbin-Watson (D-W) test was used to determine whether there is autocorrelation in the model. The D-W value was found to be 1.741. Since this value is close to 2, it suggests that there is no autocorrelation. The level of activity preference of typically developing students with students with special needs increases as the level of social skills and peer attitude, which are among the sub-dimensions of social acceptance level, increases. Therefore, it can be seen that there is a significant relationship between them ($R=.555$, $R^2=.308$, $p<0.001$). Social skills, student behaviors, and peer attitudes toward students with special needs explain 30.8% of the activity preference of typically developing students with students with special needs. Considering the standardized regression coefficient (β) and predictor variable, it was found that social skills and peer attitude, which are sub-dimensions of the social acceptance scale, predicted activity preferences, but the student behavior dimension did not predict activity preference.

Table 5

The Relationship Between Students' Gender and Their Preferences for Interacting with Their Peers with Special Needs

Scale	Gender	N	\bar{X}	Ss	t	p
Activity Preference	Male	474	44.73	8.82	-4.862	.000
	Female	624	47.27	8.39		

$p<0.05$

Table 5 shows the relationship between the gender of the typically developing students and their preferences for interacting with their peers with special needs. Considering the activity preference averages of the students, it is seen that boys = 44.73 and girls = 47.27. As a result of the statistical analysis, it was observed that there is a significant difference between the genders of the typically developing students and their interactions with their peers with special needs [$t=-4.862$ $p<.05$], and it was found that the mean score of the female students is significantly higher than the mean score of the male students.

Table 6

The Relationship Between Students' Maternal Education Levels and Their Preferences for Interacting with Their Peers with Special Needs

Maternal Education Levels	N	\bar{X}	Ss	F	p	Significant Difference
1. Primary School	355	47.19	9.00	2.608	.034	1-4
2. Secondary School	279	46.16	8.25			
3. High School	262	45.70	8.77			
4. University	162	44.69	8.29			
5. Master's degree	40	46.25	8.65			
Total	1098	46.17	8.67			

$p<0.05$

Examining Table 6, it can be seen that the mean activity preference score of the typically developing students, whose mother's education level is primary school, was 47.19, those of them with secondary school graduate mothers was 46.16, those of them with high school graduate mothers was 45.70, those of them with university graduate mothers 44.69, and those of them with mothers having a master's degree was 46.25. The F value for the mean score was determined to be 2.608. According to the analysis of variance results, the activity preferences of the students

differ significantly according to the mother's education level variables ($p < 0.05$). As a result of the pairwise comparisons made to determine the source of the difference, the mean score of the students whose mothers were primary school graduates was found to be significantly higher than those of the students whose mothers were university graduates.

Table 7

The Relationship Between the Education Levels of Typically Developing Students's Father and Their Preferences for Interacting with Their Peers with Special Needs

Father's Education Levels	N	\bar{X}	Ss	F	p	Significant Difference
Primary School	161	47.45	8.76	4.612	.001	1-5
Secondary School	252	45.95	9.17			3-5
High School	320	47.03	7.82			
University	267	45.60	8.54			
Master's Degree	98	43.37	9.53			
Total	1098	46.17	8.67			

$p < 0.05$

Table 7 shows the comparison between the father's education levels of the typically developing students and their preferences for interacting with their peers with special needs. Considering the activity preference averages of the students, it can be seen that those whose fathers are primary school graduates had a score of 47.45, those whose fathers are secondary school graduates had a score of 45.95, those whose fathers are high school graduates had a score of 47.03, those whose fathers are university graduates had a score of 45.60, and those whose fathers have master's degree had a score of 43.37. The F value for the mean score was determined to be 4,612. Given the analysis of variance results, the activity preferences of the students differ significantly in terms of their father's education level ($p < 0.05$). As a result of the pairwise comparisons made to determine the source of the difference, the mean scores of the students whose fathers were primary school graduates and those whose fathers graduated from high school were found to be significantly higher than those of the students whose fathers were university graduates.

Table 8

The Relationship Between Students' Grade Levels and Their Preferences for Interacting with Their Peers with Special Needs

Grade Levels	N	\bar{X}	Ss	F	p	Significant Difference
6th Grade	380	46.69	8.45	5.970	.003	6-8
7th Grade	386	46.83	8.41			7-8
8th Grade	332	44.81	9.08			
Total	1098	46.17	8.67			

$p < 0.05$

Table 8 shows the comparison between the grade levels of the typically developing students and their preferences for interacting with their peers with special needs. Considering the averages of the statistical analysis, it can be seen that the average score of the students studying in the 6th grade was 46.69, that of the students studying in the 7th grade was 46.83, and that of the students studying in the 8th grade was 44.81. The F value for the mean scores was found to be 5.970. Given the results of the analysis of variance, the activity preferences of the students differ significantly by the grade-level variables of the students. ($p < 0.05$). As a result of the pairwise comparisons

conducted to determine the source of the difference, the mean scores of the 6th- and 7th-grade students were found to be significantly higher than the 8th-grade students' mean scores.

Table 9

The Relationship Between the Situation of Existing A Person with Disability Among the Relatives of the Students and Their Preferences to Interact with Their Peers with Special Needs

Scale	A Person with Disability Among Relatives	N	\bar{X}	Ss	t	p
Activity Preference	Yes	280	47.47	8.01	2.908	.004
	No	818	45.73	8.84		

p<0.005

Table 9 shows the comparison between the presence of a person with disability among the family members of the typically developing students and their preferences for interacting with their peers with special needs. Although the mean score of the students who have a person with disability among relatives was found to be 47.47, that of the students who do not have a person with disability among their relatives was determined to be 45.73. As a result of the independent sample t-test analysis, it was observed that the mean score of preference to interact among the typically developing students who have a person with disability among relatives was significantly higher than that of the students who do not have a person with disability among relatives [t=2.908 p<.005].

4. Results, Discussions and Suggestions

Considering the results achieved in the present study, it was observed that there is a relationship between the social skill levels, student behaviors, and peer attitudes of typically developing students toward students with special needs, and their activity preferences with students with special needs. Social skills and peer attitudes, which are sub-dimensions of the social acceptance scale, were found to predict activity preferences. Since social skills are necessary for an individual to establish mutual and healthy relationships with other people, previous studies revealed that children who have well-developed social skills and positive attitudes due to their social acceptance level can interact more positively with their peers (Lorger et al., 2015) and previous studies also showed that if the level of social acceptance decreases, social interaction and peer closeness decrease (Wendelborg & Kvello, 2010). As a result of this study, it was revealed that the attitudes of typically developing students predicted their preferences for interaction with students with special needs. This result is an important finding. It has long been stated that peers play an important role in ensuring the quality of inclusive education (De Boer, Pijl & Minnaert 2012; Nowicki, 2006; Spörer et al., 2020) because the social acceptance of students with special needs reflects both learning outcomes, school performance, and student activities, and accordingly, it expresses aspects regarding students' social relations and social inclusion (Leboric et al., 2006).

In the present study, among the questions in the activity preference form, the mean scores for the items "helping teacher together" and "working together in the classroom" were high, while the mean scores for the items stated as "playing together after school" and "playing at our house" were found to be low. In a study carried out by Gümüş and Tan (2015), the Activity Preference Form was also used and the mean scores for "helping the teacher together" and "working together in the classroom" were high, whereas the average scores for "playing together after school" and "playing at our house" were low. It is suggested that this situation may result from the information

and guidance that students with special needs who lack adequate social skills should be included in classroom activities by teachers.

It was emphasized in previous studies that there is a strong relationship between students' social acceptance levels and the social skills of students with special needs, whereas the lowest relationship was found between social acceptance level and problem behaviors (Bakkaloğlu et al., 2019). It can be seen that activity preference and social acceptance level have a similar relationship for typically developing students. It is known that peer attitude is effective on students' self-concept, self-respect, and especially their behavior toward others. In previous studies, it was emphasized that peers who have negative attitudes toward students with special needs want to interact less with these individuals (Aktaş, 2001; Sucuoğlu & Kargın, 2006).

Košir (2013) stated that social skills training should be included so that typically developing students can choose students with special needs in their activities. As a result of this study, it was determined that the typically development students have a high level of preference for activities with students with special needs. In particular, it can be seen that the average scores obtained from helping the teacher together and going on a picnic together are high. Some of previous studies revealed that the attitudes of typically developing students toward students with special needs and their level of performing activities together are high (Griffin, Summer, McMillan, Day & Hodapp, 2012). Siperstein, Glick and Parker (2009) stated that children with and without special needs are considered equal by their peers and classroom activities take place together. As a result of the study, it was determined that typically developing female students have higher preference levels for interaction with students with special needs when compared to male students. In previous studies, it was reported that girls accept their peers with special needs more quickly and allocate more space to their joint activities (De Boer, Pijl, Post & Minnaert, 2013; Georgiadi, Kalyva, Kourkoutas & Tsakiris, 2012). Examining the results reported this study and previous ones, it was confirmed that the gender variable differs significantly in social acceptance. As a result of the present study, it was observed that typically developing students' preference for engaging in activities with students with special needs decreases as their grade level increases. Previous studies showed that the attitude toward students with special needs changes systematically with the increase in grade level. (Ayril et al., 2015; Blacher et al., 2014; Gifford-Smith & Brownell, 2003; MacMillan & Morrison, 1984; Swan & Ray, 2014). Ayril et al., (2015) stated that typically developing students' social acceptance levels for students with special needs decrease slightly as their age group and class levels increase. It was reported in previous studies that the typically developing students between the ages of 10 and 13 years choose their peers with special needs in some play activities (Hall & McGregor, 2000), but their preference for activities with their special needs peers decreases as their grade level increases (Hall & McGregor, 2000).

As a result of this study, it was determined that typically developing students' level of activity preference for students with special needs decreases as the education level of their parents increases. The reason for this result was reported a previous study (Öncül & Batu, 2005) to be the presence of limited cooperation between school and family regarding classrooms that provide education through inclusion and families have limited information about inclusive education. This result is also considered a result of the fact that the parents of typically developing children are aware of the existence of students who receives special education services only through their children who attend the classrooms that provide education through inclusion.

In order for inclusive education to be carried out successfully, the peer attitudes and social skills of students with typical development towards students with special needs should be improved and supported. Therefore, it can be ensured that students with typical development prefer their peers with special needs more frequently in their activities. Reviewing previous studies, it was reported that peer attitudes improve when students learn more about individuals with special needs

(Favazza & Odom, 1997; Godeau et al. 2010). Considering the results achieved in this study, it can be seen that comprehensive intervention studies should be carried out, including information on preparation activities for inclusion. Within the scope of orientation training, particularly during the beginning of the academic year, training can be given to students with typical development regarding the characteristics of students with special needs. In schools where inclusion practices are carried out, various activities should be organized for the characteristics of individuals with special needs, so that students with typical development develop positive attitudes towards their peers with special needs and their social acceptance levels should be increased. However, all interventions should involve parents and teachers, not just typically developing students. In this study, this condition was neglected by examining only the attitudes of students with typical development. This is one of the limitations of this study. Only a quantitative study was carried out. Supporting the research with qualitative findings is among its other limitations.

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Ethics Committee Permission:

Before starting the data collection process, the ethical permission required was obtained from the Scientific Research and Ethics Committee of Inonu University with a letter dated 30.09.2022 and numbered 2022/13.