

Examination of the Attitudes of Sports Science Students Towards Autism Spectrum Disorder in Terms of Various Variables

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Öz

This study aimed to examine the attitudes of sports science students towards Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) in the context of various variables. The research was conducted in a survey model. To determine the participants' attitudes towards Autism Spectrum Disorder, the "Autism Spectrum Disorder Attitudes Scale (ASDAS)" developed by Flood et al. (2013) and adapted to Turkish by Batum (2019) was employed as the data collection tool. Additionally, a 9-item personal information form was included in the data collection tool, addressing participants' gender, academic class, major, the presence of individuals with autism in their immediate surroundings, willingness to work with individuals with autism, participation in programs, seminars, or courses related to autism, knowledge about the educational settings and processes for individuals with autism, awareness of Autism Spectrum Disorder in society, and preferred educational environment for individuals with autism. The data collected from the participants were analyzed using SPSS-25 software. A total of 239 students, consisting of 89 females and 150 males, participated in the study. The results indicated significant differences in the attitudes of students towards Autism Spectrum Disorder concerning the gender variable and the knowledge sub-dimension of ASDAS, the desire to work with individuals with autism and the social attitude and personal distance sub-dimensions of ASDAS, knowledge about the educational settings and processes for individuals with autism and the personal distance sub-dimension of ASDAS, awareness of Autism Spectrum Disorder in society and the total score and knowledge sub-dimension of ASDAS, the major variable and the personal distance sub-dimension of ASDAS, and the preferred educational environment for individuals with autism and the social attitude and knowledge sub-dimensions of ASDAS. In conclusion, it was observed that attitudes towards Autism Spectrum Disorder are not solely determined by individuals' educational level or knowledge but are also influenced by social, cultural, and individual factors.

Keywords: Sports Science Students, Autism Spectrum Disorder, Attitude

Introduction

Autism spectrum disorder (ASD), as a neurodevelopmental diversity, has aroused great awareness and interest both in the field of health and in the society at large in recent years. Autism spectrum disorder (ASD) is known as a type of developmental disability that is observed in the early stages of development of individuals, integrated with inability to form social bonds, disorder in verbal or non-verbal communication, disorder in establishing and maintaining relationships, repetitive motor movements, insistence on sameness, more or less response to sensory stimuli, and limited repetitive behaviors (DSM-V, 2014; Koroglu, 2014).

Due to the fact that ASD is a lifelong condition, both the individual and the family are affected by the process and face exclusion and rejection by society (Kinnear et al., 2016; Arslan, 2020). The fact that individuals have to live dependent on their families and the state brings with it severe economic problems. For both the family and the society, it is possible to ensure that individuals with ASD participate in social life more independently with early and intensive education. The earlier and more intensive training is given; they are able to take part in society as individuals who are so independent, self-sufficient, productive, and contribute to the economy (Clark and Smith, 1999; Myles et al., 2007; Reichow et al., 2016).

Although sports allow individuals with ASD to participate in physical activities due to their inability to express themselves comfortably; By positively affecting their physical, social and emotional structures, it reduces monotonous behaviors and develops more complex skills (Sarol, 2013). For this reason, the education, personal experiences, beliefs and attitudes of students studying in sports sciences play an important role in the acceptance of individuals with special needs (Jorm, 2000). Attitude is a permanent and relative, cognitive, emotional and behavioral tendency that includes the positive or negative emotions, beliefs, values and behaviors that a person develops towards a particular object, idea, group or event (Oruç, 1993).

Problems such as spatial awareness, body awareness, social communication, academic and speech skills can be seen in individuals with ASD (Elwin et al, 2012; Loukusa et al., 2007). Although it is emphasized that individuals with ASD have problems with balance, postural stability, walking, joint flexibility and movement speed, especially when compared to individuals with normal development, it is generally difficult for individuals to participate in physical activity due to difficulty in self-control, generalization and planning, low motivation and poor motor functions. Many training methods are tried to solve these problems, and one of these training methods is sports education (İnce, 2017).

As in developed countries, the importance of special education services to be provided to individuals with special needs is widely accepted in Turkey and it is aimed to provide these services together with their peers with normal development in the least restricted environments (Sucuoğlu and Kargın, 2010). With the Law No. 2916 on Children in Need of Special Education, which entered into force in 1983, physical education teachers have been given the responsibility and obligation to teach students with special needs in their classrooms, along with the inclusion practice that came to the fore for the first time in the Turkish education system (National Education Statistics, 2000-2013). Teacher behavior and personality are also seen as important in the inclusion of children with autism. In inclusive classes with children with autism, the teacher is cheerful and patient (Safran and Safran, 2001; Williams, 1995) should be accepting, understanding, tolerant and model (Safran, 2002).

According to Dahle (2003), teachers who have students with autism in their classrooms should receive training on instructional methods and intervention. Due to its subject and object, OIZ should be considered not only as a field of knowledge but also as a field of sensitivity (Neff, 2004). From this point of view, the training that sports sciences students receive under the name of pre-service education not only changes their own careers, but also contributes to the society having more knowledge. Knowledge and competence in working with individuals with ASD can help sports professionals in this field to fulfill their social responsibilities. For this reason, it is important to learn and evaluate how sports science students make a difference in education and approaches towards individuals with ASD.

Therefore, a physical education program should have a scope and quality that aims to support the development of children in all areas, including motor development, affective development and cognitive development (Sherrill, 1988). In this context, it is an important factor for sports sciences students to develop themselves on OIZ individuals and to shape their careers. It is seen that these trainings provide special competencies, but also those with employers. Students should be prepared in accordance with the demands of the sector by personalizing their own training and understand how these trainings are evaluated in the business world.

Materyal ve Metod

Research Design

Within the scope of this study, the study is in accordance with the general survey model in order to examine the attitudes of sports science students towards autism spectrum disorder in terms of various variables. Research approaches that aim to detect a situation that currently or in the past as it exists are called general scanning (Karasar, 2008). According to Fraenkel and Wallen (2009), the ultimate goal of screening studies is to identify the characteristics of a group.

Research Population and Sample

The population of the study consists of students studying at Karabük University Hasan Doğan School of Physical Education and Sports. The sample consists of 239 students who participated in the study in the 2022-2023 academic year.

Research Instruments and Processes

In the research, data collection tools such as the "Personal Information Form" and the "Autism Spectrum Disorder Attitudes Scale (ASDAS)" were used.

Personal Information Form:

The Personal Information Form included independent variables related to the participants from the Hasan Doğan School of Physical Education and Sports, including gender, age, grade level, department of study, the presence of individuals with autism in their immediate surroundings, willingness to work with individuals with autism, participation in programs, seminars, or courses related to autism, knowledge of where and how individuals with autism receive education, opinions regarding awareness of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) in the community, and recommendations for educational environments for individuals with autism.

Autism Spectrum Disorder Attitudes Scale (ASDAS):

Autism Spectrum Disorder Attitudes Scale (ASDAS)," developed by Flood et al. (2013) consists of three subscales: Social Attitudes (16 items), Knowledge (5 items), and Personal Space (5 items), totaling 26 items. It has also been adapted into Turkish by Batum in (2019).

Data Analysis

Within the scope of the research, the analyzes for the data obtained from the Personal Information Form and the Social Attitudes Scale Towards Autism Spectrum Disorder were carried out through the SPSS 25.0 statistical package program. As a statistical method in the evaluation of data; t-test and one-factor analysis of variance (One Way Anova) tests were used.

Findings

Table 1. Frequency and Percentage Distributions of Responses to Participants' Information Form

	Groups	N	(%)
Gender	Female	89	37,2
	Male	150	62,8
Department	Physical Education and Sports Teaching	107	44,8
	Sports Management	84	35,1
	Coaching Education	48	20,1
Grade	1 st Year	73	30,5
	2 nd Year	31	13,0
	3 rd Year	95	39,7
	4 th Year	26	10,9
	Master's Degree	14	5,9
Presence of Individuals with Autism in the Vicinity	Yes	35	14,6
	No	204	85,4
Desire to Work with Individuals with Autism	Exist	190	79,5
	Absent	49	20,5
Participation in Autism-Related Programs, Seminars, or Courses	Yes	89	37,2
	No	150	62,8
Awareness of the Educational Settings and Process for Individuals with Autism	Yes	131	54,8
	No	108	45,2
Awareness of Autism Spectrum Disorder in the Community	Yes	69	28,9
	No	170	71,1
Recommended Educational Environment for Individuals with Autism	Inclusive Education	84	35,1
	Special Education in Regular School	53	22,2
	Special Education School	102	42,7

When Table 1 is examined, it is seen that 37.2% of the participants are female and 62.8% are male; 44.8% studied physical education and sports teaching, 35.1% sports management, 20.1% coaching education; 30.5% of 1. Grade 13 of 2. Grade 3 of 39.7%. Grade 4 of 10.9%. The class was also attended by 5.9% of them in the Master's degree; 14.6% of them had autism in their immediate environment, and 85.4% of them did not; 79.5% wanted to work

with individuals with autism, 20.5% did not want to work; 37.2% attended programs, seminars or courses related to autism, 62.8% did not; 54.8% of them knew where and how individuals with autism were educated, 45.2% did not; 28.9% had awareness of autism spectrum disorder in the society, 71.1% did not; 35.1% of them answered that the recommended educational environment for individuals with autism should be inclusive education, 22.2% should be special education in a normal school, and 42.7% should be a special education school.

Table 2. Skewness, Kurtosis, and Levene's Homogeneity Test Results Regarding the Normality of Participants' Scale Scores

N=239	Skewness	Kurtosis	Levene	p
Scale	-0,156	1,434	2,423	,091

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics on Participants' Intercultural Sensitivity Levels

	N	Minimum	Maximum	\bar{X}	S
Social Attitude	239	22,00	49,00	34,03 (2,12)	4,87
Knowledge	239	5,00	20,00	10,91 (2,18)	2,46
Personal Space	239	6,00	20,00	16,20 (3,24)	3,02
Scale Total	239	38,00	80,00	61,15 (2,35)	6,00

Intervals (5-1)/5=0.80 Criterion: 1.00-1.79=Very Low; 1.80-2.59=Low; 2.60-3.39=Medium; 3.40-4.19=High; 4.20-5.00=Very High

When Table 3 is examined, it is seen that the social attitudes of the participants towards autism spectrum disorder are at a low level when the mean item of the scale total (2.35) is compared at the specified intervals. It is seen that the social attitudes of the participants towards autism spectrum disorder are at a low level when the mean item (2.12) of the social attitude sub-dimension of the scale is compared at the specified intervals. It is seen that the social attitudes of the participants towards autism spectrum disorder are at a low level when the mean item (2.18) of the sub-dimension of the scale of knowledge is compared at the specified intervals. It is seen that the mean of the items (3.24) belonging to the personal distance sub-dimension of the scale of the social attitudes of the participants towards autism spectrum disorder is at a moderate level when compared at the specified intervals.

Table 4. Independent Samples t-Test Results on the Difference Between Participants' Gender Variable and ASDAS

	Gender	N	\bar{X}	S	t	sd	p
Social Attitude	Female	89	34,24	5,16	0,511	237	,610
	Male	150	33,91	4,71			
Knowledge	Female	89	11,33	2,70	2,050	237	,041*
	Male	150	10,66	2,27			
Personal Space	Female	89	16,55	2,68	1,361	237	,175
	Male	150	16,00	3,20			
Scale Total	Female	89	62,13	6,53	1,948	237	,053
	Male	150	60,58	5,60			

*p<,05

When Table 4 was examined, it was determined that there was no significant difference between the gender variable of the participants and the sum of the social attitudes scale towards autism spectrum disorder according to $t(237)=1.948, p=.053>.05$. Since the value is

very close to .05, a difference can be mentioned in favor of women, although not statistically. While there was no statistically significant difference in the social attitude and personal distance sub-dimensions of the scale, it was seen that there was a significant difference in the knowledge sub-dimension according to $t(237)=2.050$, $p=.041<.05$.

Table 5. Independent Samples t-Test Results on the Difference Between the Variable of Having an Individual with Autism in the Participants' Immediate Surroundings and ASDAS

	Immediate Surroundings	N	\bar{X}	S	t	sd	p
Social Attitude	Yes	35	33,34	5,28	0,911	237	,363
	No	204	34,15	4,81			
Knowledge	Yes	35	11,14	3,02	0,589	237	,557
	No	204	10,87	2,35			
Personal Space	Yes	35	16,85	3,24	1,381	237	,168
	No	204	16,09	2,98			
Scale Total	Yes	35	61,34	6,22	0,196	237	,845
	No	204	61,12	5,97			

When Table 5 was examined, there was no statistically significant difference between the variable of having individuals with autism in their immediate environment and the sum and sub-dimensions of the scale of their social attitudes towards autism spectrum disorder.

Table 6. Independent Samples t-Test Results on the Difference Between the Variable of the Desire to Work with Individuals with Autism and ASDAS

	Request to Work	N	\bar{X}	S	t	sd	p
Social Attitude	Exist	190	33,61	4,68	2,665	237	,008*
	Absent	49	35,67	5,31			
Knowledge	Exist	190	10,77	2,37	1,707	237	,089
	Absent	49	11,44	2,73			
Personal Space	Exist	190	16,64	2,79	4,634	237	,000*
	Absent	49	14,48	3,29			
Scale Total	Exist	190	61,04	5,88	0,592	237	,554
	Absent	49	61,61	6,48			

* $p<.05$

When Table 6 was examined, there was no statistically significant difference in the variable of the participants' desire to work with individuals with autism and the sum of the scale of their social attitudes towards autism spectrum disorder and the sub-dimension of knowledge. It was determined that there was a significant difference between the social attitude of the scale sub-dimension in favor of those who did not want to work with individuals with autism according to $t(237)=2.665$, $p=.008<.05$. It was determined that there was a significant difference between the scale sub-dimension and personal distance in favor of those who wanted to work with individuals with autism according to $t(237)=4.634$, $p=.000<.05$.

Table 7. Independent Samples t-Test Results on the Difference Between the Variable of Participation in Autism-Related Programs, Seminars, or Courses and ASDAS

	Participate in Training	N	\bar{X}	S	t	sd	p
Social Attitude	Yes	89	34,49	4,68	1,115	237	,266
	No	150	33,76	4,98			

Knowledge	Yes	89	10,86	2,54	0,247	237	,805
	No	150	10,94	2,41			
Personal Space	Yes	89	16,57	2,81	1,450	237	,148
	No	150	15,98	3,13			
Scale Total	Yes	89	61,93	5,97	1,540	237	,125
	No	150	60,70	5,98			

When Table 7 is examined, there is no statistically significant difference between the variable of participation in programs, seminars or courses related to autism and the sum and sub-dimensions of the scale of social attitudes towards autism spectrum disorder.

Table 8. Independent Samples t-Test Results on the Difference Between the Variable of Knowledge About the Education Place and Process of Individuals with Autism and ASDAS

	Stay Informed	N	\bar{X}	S	t	sd	p
Social Attitude	Yes	131	33,70	4,75	1,144	237	,254
	No	108	34,43	5,01			
Knowledge	Yes	131	10,81	2,62	0,688	237	,492
	No	108	11,03	2,24			
Personal Space	Yes	131	16,61	2,81	2,301	237	,022*
	No	108	15,71	3,21			
Scale Total	Yes	131	61,13	6,14	0,061	237	,951
	No	108	61,18	5,84			

*p<,05

When Table 8 was examined, there was no statistically significant difference in the variable of the participants' knowledge about the educational place and process of individuals with autism and the sum of the scale of their social attitudes towards autism spectrum disorder, social attitudes and knowledge sub-dimensions. It was determined that there was a significant difference between the scale sub-dimension and personal distance in favor of those who had information about the place and process of education of individuals with autism according to $t(237)=2.301, p=.022<.05$.

Table 9. Independent Samples t-Test Results on the Difference Between the Variable of Awareness of Autism Spectrum Disorder in the Community and ASDAS

	Awareness	N	\bar{X}	S	t	sd	p
Social Attitude	Yes	69	34,63	4,93	1,212	237	,227
	No	170	33,79	4,84			
Knowledge	Yes	69	11,52	2,20	2,449	237	,015*
	No	170	10,67	2,52			
Personal Space	Yes	69	16,28	2,78	0,275	237	,783
	No	170	16,17	3,12			
Scale Total	Yes	69	62,44	5,86	2,134	237	,034*
	No	170	60,63	5,99			

*p<,05

When Table 9 is examined, there was no statistically significant difference between the variable of autism spectrum disorder awareness status and social attitudes towards autism spectrum disorder scale, social attitude and personal distance sub-dimension. It was determined that there was a significant difference between the sub-dimension of the scale in favor of those who stated that there was awareness in the society according to $t(237)=2.449,$

$p=.015<.05$. It was determined that there was a significant difference between the total of the scale in favor of those who stated that there was awareness in the society according to $t(237)=2.134$, $p=.034<.05$.

Table 10. One-Way ANOVA Results on the Difference Between the Variable of Department and ASDAS

	Department	N	\bar{X}	S	F	sd	p	Significant Difference
Social Attitude	Coaching Edu.	48	35,02	5,86	1,892	2 236 238	,153	---
	Sports Manag.	84	33,33	4,21				
	Physical Edu. and Sports	107	34,14	4,84				
Knowledge	Coaching Edu.	48	11,54	2,48	2,815	2 236 238	,062	---
	Sports Manag.	84	10,50	2,19				
	Physical Edu. and Sports	107	10,96	2,59				
Personal Space	Coaching Edu.	48	15,58	3,57	2,695	2 236 238	,070	---
	Sports Manag.	84	16,77	2,87				
	Physical Edu. and Sports	107	16,03	2,82				
Scale Total	Coaching Edu.	48	62,14	7,41	1,004	2 236 238	,368	---
	Sports Manag.	84	60,60	4,76				
	Physical Edu. and Sports	107	61,14	6,16				

When Table 10 was examined, it was determined that there was no statistically significant difference between the participants' department variable and the sum of the social attitudes scale towards autism spectrum disorder $F=1.004$, $p=.368>.05$ and social attitude $F=1.892$, $p=.153>.05$, knowledge $F=2.815$, $p=.062>.05$ and personal distance $F=2.695$, $p=.070>.05$.

Table 11. One-Way ANOVA Results on the Difference Between the Variable of Grade Level and ASDAS

	Grade	N	\bar{X}	S	F	sd	p	Significant Difference
Social Attitude	1 st Year	73	33,47	4,64	2,071	4 234 238	,085	---
	2 nd Year	31	34,83	4,98				
	3 rd Year	95	34,76	5,29				
	4 th Year	26	32,07	4,05				
	Master's Degree	14	33,85	3,18				
Knowledge	1 st Year	73	10,61	2,30	1,037	4 234 238	,389	---
	2 nd Year	31	11,03	3,20				
	3 rd Year	95	11,25	2,50				
	4 th Year	26	10,38	1,96				
	Master's Degree	14	10,92	1,68				
Personal Space	1 st Year	73	16,30	2,98	2,917	4 234 238	,022*	2-5
	2 nd Year	31	15,19	2,74				
	3 rd Year	95	15,94	3,19				

	4 th Year	26	17,15	2,79				
	Master's Degree	14	17,92	2,01				
Scale Total	1 st Year	73	60,39	5,34	1,403	4 234 238	,234	---
	2 nd Year	31	61,06	7,83				
	3 rd Year	95	61,96	6,16				
	4 th Year	26	59,61	5,13				
	Master's Degree	14	62,71	4,30				

p<.05; 1=1st year, 2=2nd year, 3=3rd year, 4=4th year, 5=Graduate

When Table 11 was examined, it was determined that there was no significant difference between the class variable and the sum of the social attitudes scale towards autism spectrum disorder $F=1.403$, $p=.234>.05$, social attitude $F=2.071$, $p=.085>.05$ and information $F=1.037$, $p=.389>.05$. It was determined that there was a statistically significant difference between the personal distance sub-dimension according to $F=2.917$, $p=.022<.05$. Tukey test was performed to determine that there was a relationship between the participants according to the class variable. According to the results of this, graduate students (=17.92) 2. It was determined that the personal distance was lower than the students studying in the classroom (=15.19).

Table 12. One-Way ANOVA Results on the Difference Between the Variable of Recommended Educational Environment for Individuals with Autism and ASDAS

	Education Environment	N	\bar{X}	S	F	sd	p	Significant Difference
Social Attitude	Inclusive Edu.	84	33,21	4,99	2,988	2 236 238	,049*	1-3
	Special Edu. in a Regular School	53	33,67	4,94				
	Special Edu. School	102	34,90	4,64				
Knowledge	Inclusive Edu.	84	10,39	2,49	3,937	2 236 238	,021*	1-3
	Special Edu. in a Regular School	53	10,83	2,39				
	Special Edu. School	102	11,39	2,39				
Personal Space	Inclusive Edu.	84	16,75	2,95	2,380	2 236 238	,095	---
	Special Edu. in a Regular School	53	16,15	3,44				
	Special Edu. School	102	15,78	2,80				
Scale Total	Inclusive Edu.	84	60,35	5,88	2,151	2 236 238	,119	---
	Special Edu. in a Regular School	53	60,66	7,34				
	Special Edu. School	102	62,07	5,20				

p<.05; 1=Inclusive Education, 2=Special Education in a Regular School, 3=Special Education School.

When Table 12 was examined, it was determined that there was no significant difference between the variable of the educational environment recommended for individuals with autism and the sum of the social attitudes scale towards autism spectrum disorder $F=2.151$, $p=.119>.05$ and personal distance $F=2.380$, $p=.095>.05$. It was determined that there was a

statistically significant difference according to social attitude $F=2.988$, $p=.049<.05$ and knowledge sub-dimensions $F=3.937$, $p=.021<.05$. Tukey's test was performed to determine that there is a relationship between the participants according to the variable of the educational environment recommended for individuals with autism. According to the results of this, it was seen that the social attitude levels of those who recommended special education school ($=34.90$) were higher than those who recommended inclusive education ($=33.21$). In addition, it was observed that the knowledge levels of those who recommended special education school ($=11.39$) were higher than those who recommended inclusive education ($=10.39$).

Discussion and Conclusion

In this study, the aim was to examine the attitudes of students at Hasan Doğan School of Physical Education and Sports at Karabük University in the 2022-2023 academic year towards Autism Spectrum Disorder from various perspectives. Within the scope of this aim, when looking at the descriptive statistics in Table 3, it can be observed that, based on the descriptive statistics results obtained from the participants, the personal space subscale of the Autism Spectrum Disorder Attitudes Scale has the highest average, while the social attitudes subscale has the lowest average. The participants' lack of sufficient knowledge about ASD may have led to their generally low attitudes on this subject. On the other hand, the moderate item average in the personal space subscale indicates that participants may be more understanding and accepting when they have direct interaction with autistic individuals. The reason for this could be that despite not having theoretical knowledge, participants' interactions with autistic individuals in their social lives are more positive.

While examining the relationship between participants' gender and their attitudes towards Autism Spectrum Disorder, it was found that there is no significant difference between the total score of the Autism Spectrum Disorder Attitudes Scale, the social attitudes, and the personal space subscales. However, a significant difference was observed in the knowledge subscale. This difference may be attributed to the varying education, experiences, and perceptions about autism between men and women. When reviewing the relevant literature, it can be seen that there are studies that support the current study (Batum, 2019; Yavuz Kan, 2023; Çeçen, 2021; Arslan, 2023; Karavuş et al., 2021).

No statistically significant difference was found between the variable of having individuals with autism in the participants' immediate surroundings and the total score and subscales of the Autism Spectrum Disorder Attitudes Scale. This may suggest that individuals' attitudes toward ASD are influenced more by societal, cultural, media, or educational factors rather than direct personal experiences. When examining the relevant literature, there are studies that support the current study (Batum, 2019; Yavuz Kan, 2023; Yaralı, 2016; Arslan, 2023; Karavuş et al., 2021).

No statistically significant difference was found between the variable of the desire to work with individuals with autism and the total score and the knowledge subscale of the Autism Spectrum Disorder Attitudes Scale. In the social attitudes subscale, individuals who did not wish to work with individuals with autism had a significant advantage, while in the personal space subscale, those who wished to work with individuals with autism had a significant advantage. This may be due to the participants' preference for individual work rather than

working with individuals with autism in a professional setting. When examining the literature, there are studies that support the current study (Çeçen, 2021; Sarı and Bozgeyikli, 2003).

No statistically significant difference was found between the variable of participation in autism-related programs, seminars, or courses and the total score and subscales of the Autism Spectrum Disorder Attitudes Scale. This may suggest that attitudes towards autism can be shaped not only through education or information but also by many factors, such as individuals' personal experiences, prior knowledge, social environment, and cultural values. When reviewing the relevant literature, there is a qualitative study that supports the current study (Yavuz Kan, 2023).

No statistically significant difference was found between the variable of knowledge about the education place and process of individuals with autism and the total score, social attitudes, and knowledge subscales of the Autism Spectrum Disorder Attitudes Scale. However, a significant difference was observed in the personal space subscale. This may be attributed to the fact that students who have knowledge about the education processes of individuals with autism may have a better understanding of the challenges and needs related to autism, making it easier for them to interact with these individuals.

No statistically significant difference was found between the variable of awareness of Autism Spectrum Disorder in the community and the social attitudes and personal space subscales of the Autism Spectrum Disorder Attitudes Scale. However, a significant difference was observed in the total score and the knowledge subscale, favoring those who expressed awareness in the community. This difference may be attributed to awareness campaigns, educational efforts, and information dissemination related to autism, which could lead to increased awareness among individuals. However, it may also be due to the fact that people may not rapidly change their fundamental societal attitudes and personal space preferences. Biber (2018) obtained similar results in their study.

No statistically significant difference was found between the variable of department and the total score, social attitudes, knowledge, and personal space subscales of the Autism Spectrum Disorder Attitudes Scale. As a reason for this, it can be said that the significant factor influencing individuals' societal attitudes toward autism may be factors other than the department they are enrolled in, such as social, cultural, or individual factors.

While examining the relationship between the variable of grade and attitudes toward Autism Spectrum Disorder, it was found that there is no significant difference between the total score, social attitudes, and knowledge subscales. However, a statistically significant difference was observed in the personal space subscale, with graduate students having a lower personal space than 2nd-year students. The reason for this difference may be that during their graduate studies, students delve more deeply and comprehensively into physical education and sports for individuals with disabilities, engage in more interactions with individuals with autism, or tend to create more awareness in this regard compared to 2nd-year students.

While examining the relationship between the variable of the recommended educational setting for individuals with autism and attitudes toward Autism Spectrum Disorder, it was found that there is no significant difference between the total score and the personal space subscale. However, a statistically significant difference was observed between the social attitudes and knowledge subscales. As a result of this difference, those recommending special education schools had higher levels of social attitudes and knowledge compared to those

recommending inclusive education. This may be because participants recommending special education schools may have been exposed to autism-related issues more or may have a deeper understanding of the educational needs of individuals with autism. On the other hand, individuals believing that special education schools provide a personalized approach to education for individuals with autism may have led to this difference.

In conclusion, attitudes toward Autism Spectrum Disorder are not solely limited to individuals' level of education or knowledge. It is also influenced by social, cultural, and individual factors. In this context, it is observed that not only increasing social awareness but also individuals' personal experiences and cultural values can play a crucial role in the formation of these attitudes.

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