

# STUDENTS' ATTITUDES TOWARD DISABILITY

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## Abstract

Students' attitudes toward disability are important, because, young people, and, in this context, the students represent the future of the country and their attitudes toward disability affect the process of social integration of disabled people.

For the realization of this study it is used the technique of questionnaire. The measuring instrument is the SADP (Scale of Attitudes Toward Disabled Persons) scale to measure students' attitudes. The questionnaire is fulfilled from students of the Faculty of Educational Sciences and Faculty of Economics. The paper aims to measure the mean attitude scores on the SADP scale of students of these faculties of the University "Luigj Gurakuqi" of Shkodër city. The paper aims, also, to analyze the impact of specific academic programme on mean SADP score of students. The data collected from the questionnaires was analyzed by means of the SPSS program, variant 20. It is used the analysis of variance Anova table and eta to examine the impact of specific academic programme on students' attitude toward disability.

There are given the appropriate conclusions. The attitude of students of the Faculty of Educational Sciences and Faculty of Economics toward disability is favourable. The type of the specific academic programme doesn't impact their attitude toward disability. The students have positive opinion about the capability of disabled individuals to adjust to a life outside an institutional setting. The students think that disabled people should have the opportunity for gainful employment and that they should have equal employment opportunities. The students haven't positive opinion about the integration of disabled children in school.

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**Keywords:** Students' attitudes, disability, SADP scale

## **1. Introduction:**

Social integration of disabled people in all aspects of life is an incontestable right. This fact emphasize the basic documents, such as the Convention of Human Rights, the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, etc. Inclusion of disabled people is a priority for our country, just like other developed countries of the West.

Inclusion is a long and difficult process that is not realized immediately. This process has its beginnings in human childhood and continues throughout life. A very important aspect that makes possible the inclusion process is related to the individuals' attitudes toward disability. This process can be more easily realized if the society is open and collaborative with disabled people.

## **2. Theoretical Treatment**

Attitudes are important because they shape people's perceptions of the social and physical world and influence overt behaviors (W.D.Crano & R.Prislin, 2008).

Allport (1935) defined attitude as "a mental and neural state of readiness, organized through experience, exerting a directive and dynamic influence upon the individual's response to all objects and situations with which it is related" (p. 810) (Norbert Schwarz & Gerd Bohner, 2001).

Rusell Fazio [1995, p.247] defines an attitude as "an association in memory between a given object and a given summary evaluation of the object" (G.R.Maio & G.Haddock, 2009).

Attitudes refer to beliefs that are directed towards a person, object or event, and may facilitate positive or negative reactions [Eagly & Chaiken, 1993] (T.L.Perry, M.Ivy, A. Conner, D.Shelar, 2008).

## **3. Methodology of preparation and development of this paper**

### **3.1.Aims and objectives of the paper.**

The main aims and objectives are :

- Measuring the attitudes of students of the Faculty of Educational Sciences and Faculty of Economics toward disability.
- Comparison of students' attitudes of the Faculty of Educational Sciences and students' attitudes of Faculty of Economics toward disability.
- Analyzing the influence of the degree of academic programme of students toward disability.

The research questions are :

The research question 1 : What are the mean attitude scores on the SADP scale of students?

The research question 2 : What is the influence of specific academic programme on mean SADP score of students ?

There are made a lot of studies for measuring students' attitudes toward disability.

According to the study made in America from Kelly Budisch with 163 undergraduates from Midwestern University, it results that the more students understand the issues surrounding disabled people, the more positive their attitude will be (Budisch K. (2004) "Correlates of College Students' Attitudes Toward Disabilities", UW-L Journal of Undergraduate Research VII (2004).

According to the study made with to 100 students in introductory psychology, introductory sociology, and upper level psychology courses at a small Midwestern university, results indicated that social science students had significantly higher level of compassion towards mental disabilities than other majors. These results support the hypothesis that social science majors are more compassionate towards mental disabilities than other majors (Alivia E.Luck).

Tervo et al., (2004) investigated the health professional student attitudes toward people with disability. A cross sectional survey of 338 students of university of South Dakota was carried out, using ATDP scale, SADP and RSI . All students' attitudes were less positive than SADP norms and nursing students held the least positive opinions. No attitudinal differences by gender, those with background in disability had more positive attitude. The author concluded that nursing undergraduate students were at greater risk of holding negative attitudes and recommend specific educational experiences to promote more positive attitudes. (Tervo et al., 2004, 913.) (Olasoji Awoyera, 2011).

Another study is made from Novo-Corti, Isabel, Muñoz-Cantero, Jesús-Miguel, Calvo-Porrall, Cristina (May 2010) in which participated 180 young students matriculated in the University of A Coruña (Spain). Students were in different studies and levels related to Economics, Management and Business Administration. The results obtained show that young people are highly influenced by the values instilled by their families. As for the Intention of helping the inclusion of the disabled, the results show that students prefer that this work would be handled for public institutions (Novo-Corti, Isabel, Muñoz-Cantero, Jesús-Miguel, Calvo-Porrall, Cristina (2011).

So, we can predict than students of the Faculty of Educational Sciences have more positive attitude toward disability than students of the Faculty of Economics.

### **3.2.Sampling**

In the study, we had the participation of 335 students in total. 173 students (51,6% of the students participating in the study) are students of the Faculty of Educational Sciences and 162 students (48,4% of the students participating in the study) are students of the Faculty of Economics. 190 students (56,7%) study in the second academic course, 145 students (43,3%) study in the third academic course. In the study we had the participation of students of different ages. 25 students (7,5%) are 19 years aged, 147 students (43,9%) are 20 years aged, 113 students (33,7%) are 21 years aged, 41 students (12, 2%) are 22 years aged, 6 students (1,8%) are 23 years aged, 1 student (0,3%) is 24 years aged, 1 student (0,3%) is 25 years aged, 1 student (0,3%) is 28 years aged. 60 students (17,9%) are male, 271 students (80,9%) are female, while 4 students (1,2%) haven't given their gender.

In the study we had the participation of students of these branches of Bachelor degree : Psychology, Social work, Teacher of Elementary School (Faculty of Educational Sciences), Administration-Business, Finance-Accounting and Tourism (Faculty of Economics). 45 students (13,4%) study in the Administration-Business branche, 62 students (18,5%) study in the Finance-Accounting branche, 55 students (16,4%) study in the Tourism branche, 68 students (20,3%) study in the Psychology branche, 41 students (12,2%) study in the Social work branche and 64 students (19,1%) study in the Teacher of Elementary School branche.

The students participating in the study live in different areas of northern Albania. 129 students (38,5%) live in Shkodra district, 18 students (5,4%) live in Kukes district, 50 students (14, 9%) live in Lezha district, 1 student (0,3%) live in Rubik, 14 students (4,2%) live in Koplík, 11 students (3,3%) live in Ulqin district, 5 students (1,5%) live in Peshkopia district, 10 students (3%) live in Lac district, 15 students (4,5%) live in Fushe –Kruje, 26 students (7,8%) live in Burrel, 4 students (1,2%) live in Puka district, 4 students (1,2%) live in Rreshen, 3 students (0,9%) live in Lac Vau i Dejes, 16 students (4,8%) live in Tirana district, 10 students (3%) live in Tropoja district, 6 students (1,8%) live in Has, 6 students (1,8%) live in Durres district, 1 student (0,3%) lives in Prizren, 1 student (0,3%) lives in Kelmend, 5 students (1,5%) live in Kruja city.

### **3.3.Apparatus / Materials**

It is employed the SADP (Scale of Attitudes Toward Disabled Persons) scale to measure students' attitudes. It is found in the book Antonak R.F., Livneh H.(1988) "The Measurement of Attitudes toward People with Disabilities", USA, page 159-164).

### **3.4.Contents of the questionnaire**

The SADP, a 24-item summated rating scale, requires the respondent to rate each statement on a six-point scale, ranging from -3, to signify “I disagree very much”, through +3, to signify “I agree very much”. No neutral response option is provided (Antonak R.F., Livneh H.(1988) “ The Measurement of Attitudes toward People with Disabilities”, USA, pg.159-160).

### **3.5.Method of completing the questionnaire**

The questionnaires have been filled out by the students themselves. The administration of the questionnaires (distribution and collection) was conducted during the months of April and May.

### **3.6.Method of analysis**

The data collected from the questionnaires was analyzed by means of the SPSS program, variant 20. It is estimated the reliability of the test. The internal reliability of SADP questionnaire Alpha Cronbach coefficient=0,766. It is carried out the coding of the variables according to the respective rules defined by the authors. There are created respective indexes according to the guidelines.

It is suggested that protocols omitting responses to four or more items should not be scored. Protocols with omitted items are scored with the omitted responses assigned a value of zero. Half of the items are worded so that an agree response (i.e., +3, +2, or +1) represents a favorable attitude, and half of the items are worded so that disagree response (i.e., -3, -2, or -1) represents a favorable attitude. The SADP is scored by first reversing the sign of the response (from + to -, or from - to +) for those items which are worded negatively (items #1, 3, 4, 7, 8, 9, 10, 14, 17, 18, 19, and 22). The sum of the responses to the 24 items is then calculated and a constant of 72 is added to the total. This last step eliminates negative scores. Resultant scores can range from 0 to 144, with a higher score indicating a favorable attitude toward disabled people (Antonak R.F., Livneh H.(1988) “The Measurement of Attitudes toward People with Disabilities”, USA, pg.160).

It is used the analysis of variance Anova table and eta to examine the impact of specific academic programme on mean SADP score of students.

### **3.7.Piloting stage**

It is realised the piloting phase. In this phase the internal reliability of the questionnaire Alpha Cronbach coefficient=0,837. In the piloting phase we had the participation of 25 students of Psychology branche, the second course. Alpha Cronbach coefficient was recalculated after two weeks with

the participation of the same subjects and it resulted the same, Alpha Cronbach coefficient=0,837.

#### 4. Findings of the study

##### 4.1. General data concerning the attitude of students toward disability

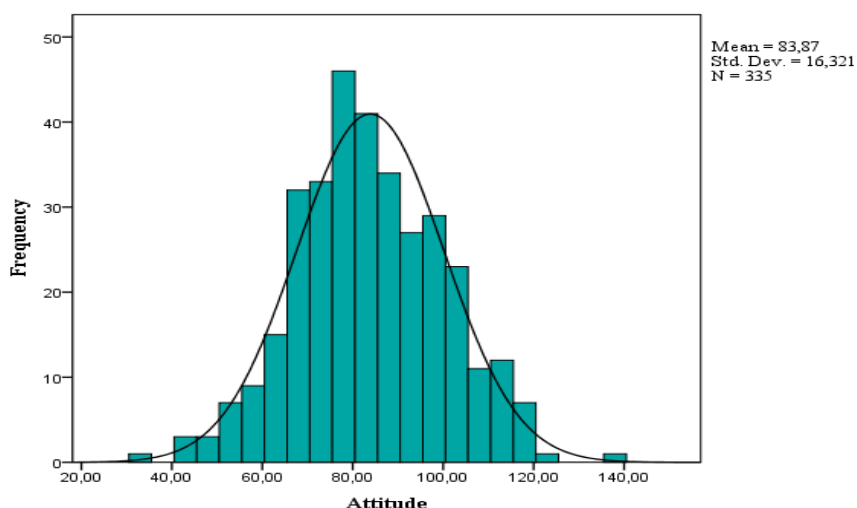
Students’ attitudes toward disability is favourable.

Table 1. Data about students’ attitudes toward disability

	N	Mean	Median	Mode	Standard Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
<b>Attitude</b>	335	83,86	83,00	74,00	16,32	33,00	138,00
<b>Valid</b>	335						

The mean is 83,86, the median is 83 and the mode is 74. The maximum score obtained is closed to the ideal maximum, but a few of students has it (0,1% of students). The minimum score obtained is 33 (obtained from 1 student or 0,1% of students). It is given dhe corresponding histogram (the graph 1).

Graph 1. Data about students’ attitudes toward disability



As we can see, the most of the results obtained is ranked in the range of values from 81 to 119 (184 students or 55.2%) , while a small fraction of the values obtained is ranked in the range of values from 33 to 60 (23 students or 6,9%). A small fraction of the values obtained is ranked in the range of values from 121 to 138 (2 students or 0,6%). A considerable fraction of the values from 61 to 80 (126 students or 37,8%).

## 4.2.The analysis of the influence of specific academic programme on mean SADP score of students

### 4.2.1.The analysis of the influence of the type of faculty on mean SADP score of students

It is used the analysis of variance Anova table and eta to examine the impact of the type of faculty on mean SADP score of students.

**Table 2.** The relationship between the type of faculty and students' attitude

Faculty	Mean	Median	N	Std.Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
FES	82,83	81,00	173	16,72	43,00	138,00
FE	84,96	84,00	162	15,85	33,00	121,00
Total	83,86	83,00	335	16,32	33,00	138,00

So, there is not a significant relationship between the type of the faculty where students study and their attitude toward disability (Sig=0,232). As we can see from table 2, the students of the Faculty of Economics have a higher average of point (84.96), whereas the students of the Faculty of Educational Sciences have a lower average of point (82.83), but this relationship isn't statistically significant. So, the type of the faculty where students study doesn't impact their attitude toward disability.

### 4.2.2.The analysis of the influence of specific academic programme on mean SADP score of students

It is used the analysis of variance Anova table and eta to examine the influence of specific academic programme on mean SADP score of students

**Table 3.** The relationship between the specific academic programme and students' attitude

Specific academic programme	Mean	Median	N	Std.Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Administration-Business	80,22	78,00	45	13,40	52,00	112,00
Finance-Accounting	87,19	87,00	62	17,68	45,00	121,00
Tourism	86,34	84,00	55	14,95	33,00	118,00
Psychology	85,38	88,50	68	17,52	43,00	119,00
Social work	83,53	80,00	41	14,63	54,00	112,00
Teacher of Elementary School	79,67	77,00	64	16,83	45,00	138,00
Total	83,86	83,00	335	16,32	33,00	138,00

There is not a significant relationship between the specific academic programme and students' attitude (Sig=0,052). As we can see from table 3, the students of the Finance- Accounting Bachelor programme have a higher average of point (87.19), whereas the students of the Teacher of Elementary School Bachelor programme have a lower average of point (79.67), but this

relationship isn't statistically significant. So, the type of the Bachelor programme degree doesn't impact students' attitude toward disability. Some of students' opinions are illustrated below through the respective tables.

**Table 4.** Results of students' opinions (expressed through absolute frequency) for items 12, 16, 20

Item	I disagree very much	I disagree pretty much	I disagree a little	I agree a little	I agree pretty much	I agree very much	Missing	Total
N.12	14	42	49	123	75	30	2	335
N.16	5	19	18	80	115	98	-	
N.20	25	43	43	103	70	49	2	

**Table 5.** Results of students' opinions (expressed through relative frequency) for items 12, 16, 20

Item	I disagree very much	I disagree pretty much	I disagree a little	I agree a little	I agree pretty much	I agree very much	Missing	Total
N.12	4,2%	12,5%	14,6%	36,7%	22,4%	9%	0,6%	100%
N.16	1,5%	5,7%	5,4%	23,9%	34,3%	29,3%	-	100%
N.20	7,5%	12,8%	12,8%	30,7%	20,9%	14,6%	0,6%	100%

**Table 6.** Results of students' opinions (expressed through absolute frequency) for items 10, 17, 19

Item	I disagree very much	I disagree pretty much	I disagree a little	I agree a little	I agree pretty much	I agree very much	Missing	Total
N.10	37	67	50	70	85	26	-	335
N.17	55	98	49	88	31	14	-	
N.19	14	42	49	108	99	22	1	

**Table 7.** Results of students' opinions (expressed through relative frequency) for items 10, 17, 19

Item	I disagree very much	I disagree pretty much	I disagree a little	I agree a little	I agree pretty much	I agree very much	Missing	Total
N.10	11%	20%	14,9%	20,9%	25,4%	7,8%	-	100%
N.17	16,4%	29,3%	14,6%	26,3%	9,3%	4,2%	-	100%
N.19	4,2%	12,5%	14,6%	32,2%	29,6%	6,6%	0,3%	100%

**Item 12** Disable individuals are able to adjust to a life outside an institutional setting.



**Item 16** The opportunity for gainful employment should be provided to disabled people.

**Item 20** Equal employment opportunities should be available to disabled individuals.

**Item 10** Disabled adults should be involuntarily committed to an institution following arrest.

**Item 17** Disabled children in regular classrooms have an adverse effect on other children.

**Item 19** Disabled people show a deviant personality profile.

The relationship between students’ attitude and each item cited above is not statistically significant. This is measured through tests of significance. So, *for the item 10* : Asymp. Sig.=0,516 and Approx. Sig.= 0,516, *for the item 17* : Asymp.Sig.=0,307 and Approx. Sig.= 0,307, *for the item 19*: Asymp. Sig.=0,375 and Approx. Sig.= 0,375, *for the item 12* : Asymp. Sig.=0,796 and Approx. Sig.= 0,796, *for the item 16* : Asymp. Sig.=0,175 and Approx. Sig.= 0,175 and *for the item 20*: Asymp. Sig.=0,116 and Approx. Sig.= 0,116.

It is made the illustration of the students’ opinions giving the number of students for each faculty (table 8) for items 12, 16, 20, 10, 17 and 19.

**Table 8.** Results of students’ opinions (expressed through absolute frequency) divided by the faculty for items 12, 16, 20, 10, 17 and 19

Item	I disagree very much FES/FE	I disagree pretty much FES/FE	I disagree a little FES/FE	I agree a little FES/FE	I agree pretty much FES/FE	I agree very much FES/FE	Missing	Total
<b>N.12</b>	6/8	20/22	27/22	68/55	35/40	16/14	2	335
<b>N.16</b>	1/4	13/6	13/5	39/41	57/58	50/48	-	335
<b>N.20</b>	18/7	22/21	24/19	53/50	28/42	28/21	2	335
<b>N.10</b>	25/12	33/34	25/25	35/35	42/43	13/13	-	335
<b>N.17</b>	26/29	49/49	20/29	50/38	20/11	8/6	-	335
<b>N.19</b>	8/6	16/26	23/26	57/51	54/45	14/8	1	335

Regarding the item 12 “Disable individuals are able to adjust to a life outside an institutional setting”, approve it 119 students of the Faculty of Educational Sciences and 109 students of the Faculty of Economics.

Regarding the item 16 “The opportunity for gainful employment should be provided to disabled people”, approve it 146 students of the Faculty of Educational Sciences and 147 students of the Faculty of Economics.

Regarding the item 20 “Equal employment opportunities should be available to disabled individuals”, approve it 109 students of the Faculty of Educational Sciences and 113 students of the Faculty of Economics.

Regarding the item 10 “Disabled adults should be involuntarily committed to an institution following arrest”, approve it 90 students of the Faculty of Educational Sciences and 91 students of the Faculty of Economics.

Regarding the item 17 “Disabled children in regular classrooms have an adverse effect on other children”, approve it 78 students of the Faculty of Educational Sciences and 55 students of the Faculty of Economics.

Regarding the item 19 “Disabled people show a deviant personality profile”, approve it 125 students of the Faculty of Educational Sciences and 104 students of the Faculty of Economics.

### **Conclusion**

The attitude of students of the Faculty of Educational Sciences and Faculty of Economics toward disability is favourable, but is needed his further improvement. The most of the results obtained is ranked in the range of values from 81 to 119, while a small fraction of the values obtained is ranked in the range of values from 33 to 60.

The type of the faculty where students study doesn't impact their attitude toward disability. The type of the Bachelor programme degree doesn't impact students' attitude toward disability. The students have positive opinion about the capability of disable individuals to adjust to a life outside an institutional setting. The students think that disabled people should have the opportunity for gainful employment and that they should have equal employment opportunities. The students have positive opinion about the equal employment opportunities that should be available to disabled individuals. The students haven't positive opinion about the integration of disabled children in school. The students haven't positive opinion about the personality of disabled people.

### **Recommendations**

The following would be necessary:

The improvement of students' attitude toward disability, especially for the students of the Teacher of Elementary School Bachelor programme and Administration- Business Bachelor programme.

The improvement of students' opinion regarding the capability of disabled people to adjust to a life outside an institutional setting, especially for the students that study in the Faculty of Economics.

The improvement of students' opinion regarding the scholastic integration of disabled children, especially for the students that study in the Faculty of Educational Sciences.

The improvement of students' opinion regarding the personality of disabled people, especially for the students that study in the Faculty of Educational Sciences.

So, it is very important that students' opinions about disability improve. Based on attitude change theory, it is necessary that interventions be focused on the basic knowledges about attitudes. For this, people's information about disability has a great impact on their attitudes toward disability (McCaughey T. (2009)). The students need to have more information about disability, even from childhood and now. So, based on Fundamental Attributions of Behavior, it is very important to work hard for changing children's perceptions about disability.

The promotion of positive attitudes of students. It is necessary to increase students' participation in activities that are related to the social inclusion of disabled people. Students need to participate at activities that focus on supporting marginalised people, specially disabled people.

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