

# Teacher Candidates' Attitudes Towards Inclusion Education and Comparison of Self-compassion Levels

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This study has been figured for the purpose of comparing attitudes of teacher candidates' toward inclusion education in terms of several variables and self-compassion levels. Sampling of the study consists of Grade 4 students of (547) Marmara University Atatürk, Faculty of Education and Faculty of Science and Letters. In this study, a personnel information questionnaire is used to collect the demographic data of the participants. Also, to measure participants' attitudes towards inclusion "Attitudes" toward Mainstreaming Scale is used. Besides, to measure self-compassion levels, a SCS (Self-compassion Scale) developed by Neff (2003a) and adopted to Turkish by U. Akın, A. Akın, and Abacı (2007) is used. Self-compassion levels were at medium levels. It has been found that self-compassion total scores and sub-dimension scores affected attitudes towards to inclusion education.

Keywords: teacher candidates, attitudes toward inclusion, self-compassion

## Introduction

People's adaptation to the environment in which they live in or their exhibitions of the expected behaviors from them are possible with education. The education given to the children first comes from families and environments and then schools. However, the expected behaviors from individuals can have different or similar qualities and an education process which considers the differences and similarities, providing them to keep pace with the developing and changing world is needed (Ersoy & Avcı, 2001).

General education services are inadequate for the individuals whose behavioral differences are distinct, and therefore special education services are necessary for them (MEB (Ministry of National Education), 2010). Special education is the type of education given to the children who cannot or partly benefit from the normal education, by teachers who are trained in this area, using special programs and materials in the special education settings (Baykoç, 1992). Special education not only can be performed in special classes and schools, but it also includes handicapped children with appropriate qualities to have education with their peers. The arrangements which are required for handicapped children and normally developing children to have education together, is provided by mainstreaming education. The benefits of mainstreaming education are considered to be closely related to the teachers' attitudes and sensitivity toward mainstreaming.

Today, it is accepted that in education, developing a positive attitude towards the field and learning is as important as teaching that field or subject (Doğan, 2004). There are several factors making mainstreaming education to be successfully held. Teacher's attitude is one of these factors. In principal, although there is no

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great difference between general and special education in planning and implementing education programs, many teachers who will take part in general education classes, graduate without adequate background about special education (Kargın, 2004). For a teacher to prepare environments that facilitates interaction between children with and without disabilities, to teach methods of communication with each other, to model them and to get others to be noticed about handicapped child's qualifications, first of all her/his attitudes and thoughts should be positive (Sucuoğlu & Kargın, 2006). The presence of attitudes requires the development of emotions, beliefs, and thoughts towards facts, events, and individuals beforehand. Facts, events, and individuals are responded in a particular way by means of emotions, thoughts, and beliefs, or so called attitudes towards entities, individuals, events, and thoughts (Özyürek, 2006). In other words, attitudes can be defined as individual's possible form of expected behavior to be put on towards a situation, an event or a fact (Înceoğlu, 2010).

Due to its subject and nature, the area of special education can be considered as not only an area of information, but also an area of compassion (Sover, 2010). It is possible to think that a teacher of intellectually disabled has to show a higher level of compassion about empathy, forming emotional relationships, and understanding other than those of other fields. While compassion feeds from the teacher's professional knowledge, technical competency and ethical understanding, it also considered to be directly related to teacher's psychological well being, level of self-awareness and considerate attitudes. Teacher's well being is a notion which should be advanced in order to increase compassion. Self-compassion helps people to be in balance during difficult experiences and reminds that pities are common for everyone in life, and also teaches the healing effect of self-understanding and to be patient (Hollis-Walker & Collosimo, 2011). Self-compassion can be both counted as an element of teacher's well-being and a premise of sensitive and compassionate approach, which is professionally required. Recent researches showed that the individual's level of self-compassion who works in the social study fields is effective in coping with the professional difficulties (Ying, 2009). The aim of this research is to determine the attitudes of teacher candidates from various fields towards mainstreaming education and whether the level of self compassion has any effect on the development of these attitudes. In the research also, whether the teacher candidates' taking or not taking special education and mainstreaming courses and the condition of having or not having handicapped relatives effects the total scores of ATMS (Attitudes Toward Mainstreaming Scale) and SCS (Self-compassion Scale) will be investigated as well.

## Method

## **Research Model**

This research uses relational screening model study which aims to investigate the relationship between teacher candidates' attitudes toward mainstreaming and their level of self compassion. Relational screening model is a research model aiming to detect the existence and/or level of covariance between two or more variables.

# Sample

Students in the Marmara University, Ataturk Faculty of Education are included in the study with the consideration of participant accessibility. Students in Department of Classroom Teacher of Mentally Handicapped (29 students), Department of Science Teaching (33 students), Department of Literature Teaching

(29 students), Department of Math Teaching (29 students), Department of English Teaching (85 students), Department of Psychological Counseling and Guidance (34 students), Department of Geography Teaching (36 students), Department of Pre-school Teaching (71 students), Department of Computer Teaching (58 students), Department of Classroom Teaching (76 students), Department of Music Teaching (46 students), and Department of Chemistry Teaching (21 students) with a total of 547 teacher candidates are participated in the study.

# **Data Collection Tools**

In order to get demographic information of participants, individual information form was used, and in order to assess attitudes toward mainstreaming, ATMS (Attitudes Toward Mainstreaming Scale) were also used, whereas SCS was used to assess self-compassion.

**Individual Information Form.** An individual information form developed by the researcher was used to collect teacher candidates' demographic information.

**ATMS**. Developed by Berryman and Neal (1980) and adapted to Turkish by Atay (1995), the scale's Cronbach Alpha validity was found to be 0.86 in reliability and validity study. The scale is Likert type and consists of 18 items. Validity studies support that the scale has the applicability in the studies assessing teacher attitudes towards mainstreaming and especially attitude change of non-handicapped individuals.

SCS. Developed by Neff (2003a), the scale evaluates the sub-dimensions of self-compassion and relies on the self report of the individual (Soyer, 2010). The scale consists of 26 items and the confirmative factor analysis has confirmed the six sub-dimensions: self-kindness vs. self-judgment, common humanity vs. isolation, and mindfulness vs. over-identification. SCS's Turkish adaptation study was conducted by Akın et al. (2007) with 633 university students who had been studying in various departments of Faculty of Education at Sakarya University. In the confirmatory factor analysis, it was seen that the scale is compatible with the original form. Scale's internal consistency coefficient was found between 0.72 and 0.80 and test re-test coefficient was found between 0.56 and 0.69. It was also found that Scale's corrected item-total correlations aliened between 0.48 and 0.71 and all the differences between the 27% low-high group averages are significant. According to these findings, it can be concluded that the scale has proper validity and reliability.

# **Data Collection**

Personal information form, ATMS and SCS were applied to 547 teacher candidates who had been studying at Marmara University, Ataturk Faculty of Education (Grade 4) and Science and Literature Faculty (Grades 4 and 5). Data collection tools were submitted to lecturers with the required information, and they are distributed by lecturers with informant consent to the students. Five hundred and fifty-two forms were delivered, and 547 of them were accepted to have valid data.

# **Data Analysis and Discussion**

Statistical analysis of data was conducted with SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) 16 data analysis software. Frequency and percentage distributions describing the demographic characteristics of the teacher candidates who formed the research group was conducted, then scales' and sub-scales' participant number (N), arithmetic mean ( $\bar{x}$ ) and standard deviation (s) of scores were determined. One way ANOVA (analysis of variance) was conducted to determine if individual's total scores for ATMS are varied accordingly to the level of self-compassion variable, Tamhane's T2 test was used for to determine in which groups, the attitudes towards mainstreaming scores are varied accordingly to the level of self-compassion variable. To

determine if the SCS and ATMS are varied accordingly demographic variables, Kruskal Wallis-H Test and Independent sample *t*-test were used. Since there is no special technique to determine in which groups the differences occur, groups were compared by two with Mann Whitney-*u* Analysis. Pearson analysis was conducted to determine the correlations between total scores of ATMS and sub-scales of SCS.

## **Results**

A shown in Table 1, sample group's self-kindness sub-scale score have a mean of  $\bar{x}=15.68$ , standard deviation of 4.21; self-judgment subscale score have a mean of  $\bar{x}=12.82$ , standard deviation of 4.06; common humanity sub-scale score have a mean of  $\bar{x}=12.66$ , standard deviation of 3.01; isolation subscale score have a mean of 3.34, standard deviation of  $\bar{x}=10.65$ ; mindfulness subscale score have a mean of  $\bar{x}=13.08$  and standard deviation of 3.05; over-identification score have a mean of  $\bar{x}=10.76$ , standard deviation of 3.38 and total scores of the SCS have a mean of  $\bar{x}=75.65$  and standard deviation of 10.40.

Table 1

Descriptive Values of SCS Sub-dimensions Scores

Groups	N	$\overline{x}$	S	
Self-kindness	547	15.68	4.21	
Self-judgment	547	12.82	4.06	
Common humanity	547	12.66	3.01	
Isolation	547	10.65	3.34	
Mindfulness	547	13.08	3.05	
Over-identification	547	10.76	3.38	
Self-compassion total score	547	75.65	10.4	

Table 2
Descriptive Values of Total Scores of ATMS

Groups	N	$\overline{x}$	S
Total score	547	62.92	9.91

Table 3
Frequency and Percentage Values for Self-compassion Levels

	f	%	% <sub>val.</sub>	% cum.	
Low	89	16.3	16.3	16.3	
Medium	423	77.3	77.3	93.6	
High Total	35	6.4	6.4	100.0	
Total	547	100.0	100.0		

As shown in Table 2, the participants' total score of ATMS calculated as mean of  $\bar{x} = 62.92$  and standard deviation of 9.91.

As shown in Table 3, the sample group was consisted of 89 individuals with (16.3%) low, 423 with (77.3%) moderate, and 35 with (6.4%) high levels of self-compassion.

As Table 4 shows, ANOVA was conduct in order to determine if the participants' total scores of attitude towards mainstreaming scale is varied with self-compassion level. The analysis revealed a significant difference between the groups' means ( $F = 3.86 \ p < 0.05$ ). In order to determine which post-hoc multiple comparison method to use after ANOVA, Levene's test was used to check if the distribution of variances are

homogeneous. Since it appeared that variances are not homogeneous (LF = 3.38, p < 0.05), Tamhane's T2 (Post Hoc Tests algorithms) multiple comparison technique was preferred which is used widely in these cases. Another reason for the preference of the Tamhane's T2 test was its sensitivity to alpha-type error. Tamhane's T2 multiple comparison analysis results are presented in Table 5.

Table 4
Results of ANOVA to Identify If Scores of ATMS Varied According to Level of Self-compassion

Descriptive values				ANOVA results						
Score	Group	n	$\overline{x}$	S	Var. K.	Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	Sig.
	Low	89	60.36	8.76	Btw. G	750.145	2	375.072		
Total	Medium	423	63.52	9.93	Inside G.	52,892.316	544	97.229	2.96	0.022
self-compassion	High	35	62.23	11.54	Total	53,642.461	546		3.86	0.022
	Total	547	62.92	9.91						

Table 5
Results of Tamhane's T2 Test to Identify in Which Groups Scores of ATMS Varied According to Level of Self-compassion

Level (i)	Level (j)	$\overline{x}_i - \overline{x}_j$	SD	p
Τ	Middle	-3.156	1.05	0.009
Low	High -1	-1.869	2.16	0.774
Middle	Low	3.156	1.05	0.009
	High	1.287	2.10	0.893
III:al	Low	1.869	2.16	0.774
High	Middle	-1.287	2.10	0.893

As Table 5 shows, results of the Tamhane's T2 test revealed that the difference was significant at the middle group (p < 0.01). Other groups' mean differences was not found to be significantly different (p > 0.05).

Table 6
Results of Pearson Analysis for Determining Correlations Between ATMS and SCS Sub-dimensions Scores

Self-compassion sub-dimensions	Attitudes toward mainstreaming total scores					
Sen-compassion sub-dimensions	$\overline{N}$	r	p	_		
Self-compassion	547	0.141	0.001			
Self-judgment	547	-0.115	0.007			
Common humanity	547	0.209	0.000			
Isolation	547	-0.114	0008			
Mindfulness	547	0.146	0.001			
Over-identification	547	-0.080	0.060			

As seen in Table 6, Pearson analysis results which was used to determine the relationship between sub-dimensions of ATMS and SCS scores revealed positive relationships between ATMS scores and self-compassion; self-kindness sub-scale (r = 0.141; p < 0.01), common humanity sub-scale (r = 0.209; p < 0.01), mindfulness sub-scale (r = 0.146; p < 0.01), and negative relationships between ATMS scores and self-judgment sub-scale (r = -0.115; p < 0.01) and isolation sub-scale (r = -0.114; p < 0.01). No relationship was found between over-identification sub-scale of SCS and ATMS scores (r = -0.80; p > 0.05).

Table 7
Results of the Independent Samples T-test to Determine If the Total Scores of ATMS Varied According to the Variable of Taking Special Education/Mainstreaming Courses

Score	Groups	$N$ $\bar{x}$		a a	ala		T-test		
	Groups	1V	λ	SS	sh	t	SD	p	
Attitude towards	Yes	120	56.50	8.43	0.77	0.54	5.15	0.000	
mainstreaming scale	No	427	64.72	9.55	0.46	-8.54	545	0.000	

As shown in Table 7, means of the total scores of Attitude Toward the Mainstreaming Scale are varied significantly accordingly to the variable of taking or not special education/mainstreaming course (t = -8.54, p < 0.001). The group which had taken the course showed more positive attitudes toward mainstreaming.

Table 8

Results of Kruskal-Wallis H. Test to Determine If Total Scores of ATMS Varied According to the Course Taken

Score	Groups	N	$\overline{X}_{sira}$	$x^2$	SD	p
	None	119	178.35			
Attitude towards	Mainstreaming	12	211.08			
	Special education	211	274.06	74.36	4	0.000
mainstreaming scale	Both	199	333.65		4	0.000
	Other	6	316.42			
	Total	547				

Table 9
Results of Mann Whitney-U Test to Determine in Which Groups Total Scores of ATMS Varied According to the Variable of Source of Information About the Mainstreaming

Groups	None	Mainstreaming	Special education	Both	Other
None	SO = 178.35	<i>p</i> > 0.05	p > 0.05	<i>p</i> < 0.01	p > 0.05
Mainstreaming		SO = 211.08	p > 0.05	p > 0.05	p > 0.05
Special education			SO = 274.06	p > 0.05	p > 0.05
Both				SO = 333.65	p > 0.05
Other					SO = 316.42

As shown in Table 8, the results of Kruskal-Wallis H. test which was conducted to determine if the ATMS total scores are varied with the variable of courses taken revealed that the differences between groups rankings averages are statistically significant ( $x^2 = 74.36$ ; p < 0.001). Since there is no technique to determine from which groups the differences occur, groups are compared binary with Mann Whitney-U analysis.

As shown in Table 9, Mann Whitney-U test was conducted in order to determine in which groups do the ATMS scores varied according to source of information about mainstreaming. The group who had taken both courses showed significantly more scores on mainstreaming attitudes at the level of p < 0.1. The difference of other groups on ranking averages were not significantly different from each other (p > 0.05).

As shown in Table 10, the total scores of ATMS did not vary according to the variable of having a relative with disabilities or not (t = 1.71, p > 0.05).

As shown in Table 11, the group who had taken special education/mainstreaming courses did not score significantly different on SCS from the group who had not taken these courses (t = 1.80, p > 0.05).

Table 10
Results of the Independent Samples T-test Determine If Total Score of a Varied According to the Disabled Relatives Variable

Score	Crauma	Cround N	$\overline{x}$ ss	al.		T-test		
	Groups	IV		SS	sh	t	SD	p
Attitude towards	Is	48	65.25	10.65	1.54	1 71	E 1 E	000
mainstreaming scale	None	499	62.70	9.82	0.44	1./1	545	.088

Table 11

Results of the Independent Samples T-test to Determine If Total Scores of ATMS Varied According to the Variable of Special Education/Mainstreaming Courses Taken

Score	Groups	$N$ $\bar{x}$		9.0	sh	T-test		
	Groups	1 <b>V</b>	x	SS	$sh_{\overline{x}}$	t	SD	p
Self-compassion total	No	120	77.16	9.97	0.91	1.80	5.15	0.072
	Yes	427	75.23	10.49	0.51	1.80	545	0.073

Table 12

Results of Kruskal Kruskal Wallis-H Test to Determine If the SCS Total Scores Varied According to the Variable of Courses Taken

Scores	Groups	N	$\overline{\mathcal{X}}_{sira}$	$x^2$	SD	p
Self-compassion total	None	119	296.24			
	Mainstreaming	12	348.13	9.11		
	Special education	211	277.14		4	0.059
	Both	199	252.06		4	0.058
	Other	6	301.83			
	Total	547				

As shown in Table 12, according to the results of Kruskal Wallis-H test which was conducted to determine if taking special education or mainstreaming courses are varied according to self-compassion scores, the groups were not statistically different from each other ( $x^2 = 9.11$ , p > 0.05).

As shown in Table 13, according to the results of the independent samples t test, having or not a disabled relative did not affect the total scores of self compassion total scores (t = 1.90, p > 0.05).

Table 13

Independent Samples T-test Results to Determine Whether Total Scores of Attitude Towards Mainstreaming Scale Varied According to Having a Disabled Relative

Scores	Groups	N/	$\overline{x}$	ss	sh	T-test		
		1V				$\overline{t}$	SD	p
Self-compassion total	Is	48	78.38	8.61	1.24	1.90	545	0.058
	None	499	75.39	10.53	0.47			

# **Discussion**

The aim of this research is to determine the attitudes of teacher candidates from various fields towards mainstreaming education and whether the level of self-compassion has any effect on the development of these attitudes. ANOVA analysis which was conducted to determine if the individuals' total scores of ATMS are

varied according to the level of self-compassion variable revealed that there's a significant relationship between the scores of ATMS and SCS. According to Tamhane's T2 test which was used to determine in which groups ATMS total scores varied according to the level of self-compassion variable, a statistically significant difference was between low compassion group and middle compassion group, in favor of the middle compassion group at the level of p < 0.01. Accordingly, it has been concluded that teacher candidates who have middle or higher self-compassion level, also have positive attitudes toward mainstreaming. This result is important for the teacher candidates who will work in social work field. This was also stated by Ying (2009) that it is easier to handle professional problems for individuals who work at social work fields when they have a high level of self-compassion level. Similarly, Robin and Pals (2002) said that, there's a positive correlation between individuals' self compassion level and developing positive attitudes toward whole life since individuals' with high self compassion level have less harmful emotions toward life experiences. In the same direction, Neff (2011) stated that individuals who have higher level of self-compassion feel more positive emotions. Also, Yazıcı (2009) expressed that teachers' awareness of their own needs, perceptions and emotions influence development of their self-awareness, perception of sorrowful and happy aspects of life, and this also lead them to see these effects on their own life. The findings of this research are in consistency with these statements.

The analysis of SCS sub-dimensions scores and ATMS total scores showed a positive correlation between sub-dimensions of self-compassion which are related to positive affections (self-kindness, common humanity, and mindfulness) and ATMS total scores. Negative correlations were found between ATMS and isolation, self-judgment sub-scales of SCS and no significant relation was found between over-identification sub-scale and ATMS. These results emphasize that having positive attitudes toward mainstreaming education is in strong relation with the sub-dimensions of self-compassion concept which are related to positive affections. As the level of self-compassion, self-kindness, common humanity, and mindfulness increase, the level of positivity about attitudes toward mainstreaming also tends to increase. Contrarily, as the level of sub-dimensions which are related with negative affection (self-judgment and isolation) increases, positive attitudes toward mainstreaming level tend to decrease. These results overlaps with the expectations prior to research and supports the thesis of Neff (2003b) who stated that individuals with high level of self-compassion are kind and compassionate to themselves and others.

Schultheiss, Jones, Davis, and Kley (2008) stated that as individuals with strong internal and autonomous motivation sources have high level of satisfaction, their negative responses and attitudes also tend to reduce. This statement and research findings emphasize the effects of teacher candidates' psychological well being and their level of internal and autonomous motivational sources on attitudes towards individuals who need special education and mainstreaming education.

Findings of this research showed that teacher candidates' attitudes toward mainstreaming varied significantly with the variable of taking or not taking special education and mainstreaming courses, the group who had taken the courses showed more positive attitudes. With these findings, it can be once again stressed that special education and mainstreaming lectures should be included in curriculum of teacher education programs. Additionally, in this research, there also appeared to be a statistically significant difference between the group who had taken both of these courses and the group had taken neither of them. Also in a study conducted by Bender, Vail, and Scott (1995), a positive correlation was found between teachers' attitudes and number of the courses had taken during the teacher education program of intellectually disabled. Orel, Zerey,

and Töret (2004) observed that having special education and mainstreaming courses have positive effects on teachers' attitudes toward mainstreaming education. It was seen in the study of Sarı and Bozgeyikli (2003), which was about teacher candidates, the variable of whether having courses on special education and mainstreaming education, was strongly in relationship with teacher candidates' attitudes toward mainstreaming. However, it was an expected result to see that self-compassion variable did not vary from the courses taken.

The analysis of whether participants have a handicapped relative did not cause a difference on self-compassion total scores. When looking through the self-compassion sub-scales, the group with the handicapped relative had significantly more scores on self-judgment and over-identification sub-scales. These results attract attention considering the concept of self-compassion. Although the individuals who have a handicapped relative are expected to show higher levels of compassion which leads to accept the difficult and distressed situations with compliance, it is interesting to see that they got high scores on self-compassion sub-scales which are related to especially to negative affection. In the study of Soyer (2010), the same results were also found in self-compassion total scores. But at the sub-scales, the findings were different; Soyer did not observe a significant difference at self-compassion sub-scales.

According to the results, the variable of whether or not taking special education/mainstreaming course also did not cause a significant difference on self-compassion total scores. At self-judgment, isolation, and over-identification sub-scales, the group who had not taken the course scored more, meaning that they had more negative affection. It is interesting to observe these differences at negative affection sub-scale of self-compassion.

According to the variable of taken courses, SCS total scores did not reveal a significant difference between groups. In the sub-scales, at self-judgment dimension, a significant difference favoring the group had taken both lectures, in isolation sub-scale dimension; a significant difference favoring the group had taken neither of the courses, at over-identification dimension; and a difference favoring the group had taken mainstreaming course have been observed. One of the most dramatic findings of the research is that there was no significant difference between self-compassion level and courses taken.

According to these results, it would be beneficial to conduct studies on developing an awareness of the concept of self-compassion as well as giving information at the special education and mainstreaming courses. Moreover, conducting studies to evaluate the psychological well being of teacher candidates and teachers with different assessment tools, and determining the levels of attitudes toward mainstreaming and self-compassion level of teacher candidates in different universities can be advised.

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