

Societal Attitudes Toward Persons with Disabilities in the Italian Province of Macerata

Roy K. Chen*, Catia Giaconi**, Noemi Del Bianco***, Ilaria D'Angelo****

Abstract

Persons with disabilities are a marginalized group in most nations. They are often subjected to both subtle prejudice and explicit discrimination. The purpose of the present study was to examine the attitudes of university students toward persons with disabilities. A total of 124 participants were recruited from a public university in Macerata, Italy. The Attitudes to Disability Scale (Power *et al.*, 2010) was used to measure attitudes. The results showed that although many of the participants did not see having a disabled family member as a burden to family, they saw it as a burden to society. Age, major (course), prior contact, and gender were not significant variables in the acceptance of disability. Future directions for research were discussed.

Keywords: attitudes, disability, university students, Italy

First submission: 03/03/2022, accepted: 06/05/2022

Available online: 14/06/2022

1. Introduction

The current epistemological perspective that guides the observation and detection of disability conditions (WHO, 2001; 2007) drives us to focus on the contextual factors that can act as facilitators or barriers to the full and active participation in society of people with disabilities. In this direction, within the same paradigm proposed by the International Classification of

* University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, USA. E-mail: roy.chen@utrgv.edu.

** Università degli Studi di Macerata. E-mail: catia.giaconi@unimc.it.

*** Università degli Studi di Macerata. E-mail: n.delbianco@unimc.it.

**** Università degli Studi di Macerata. E-mail: i.dangelo@unimc.it.

Noemi Del Bianco and Ilaria D'Angelo share joint third authorship of the paper. Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Roy K. Chen, School of Rehabilitation Services and Counseling, University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, 1201 W. University Drive, Edinburg, Texas 78539, USA. Email: roy.chen@utrgv.edu.

Doi: 10.3280/ess1-2022oa13452

Functioning Disability and Health, individual and collective attitudes that are able to motivate positive or negative practices (e.g., stigmatization) toward disability are an important focus of observation.

The international literature presents numerous studies referring to the attitudes that people without disabilities assume toward people with disabilities, highlighting how some factors (e.g., gender, age, type of disability, culture) may or may not influence the representations of people with disabilities (Freer, 2021). For example, some international research (de Laat *et al.*, 2013; Freer, 2021; Olaleye *et al.*, 2012; Schwab, 2017) on gender highlights how females tend to express more positive attitudes towards the care and inclusion of people with disabilities than males. Studies (Blackman, 2016; de Boer, 2014; Freer, 2021) that analyzed age factors, instead, have found that children, in contrast to adults, usually express preferences and positive social attitudes toward their peers. The type of disability also plays a significant role in perceptions (Tamm & Prellwitz, 2001); for example, attitudes toward severe disabilities are less favorable than toward physical disabilities (Tang *et al.*, 2000). Furthermore, in other research (de Laat *et al.*, 2013; Hellmich & Loper, 2018; Shokoohi-Yekta & Hendrickson, 2010), it emerges that establishing friendly bonds with people with disabilities is a complex process that cannot be generalized among the population nor between different cultures. Starting from these considerations, we will investigate in this article the perceptions of people with disabilities in a specific educational context: the university.

2. Overview

In this section, our focus will be aimed at detecting the main attitudes toward people with disabilities within educational contexts. There are, in fact, numerous studies (Avramidis, 2013; Darrow & Johnson, 1994; De Caroli & Sagone, 2006; Fortini, 1987; Freer, 2021; Gash & Coffey, 1995; Goodman, Gottlieb, & Harrison, 1972; Hutzler, Meier, Reuker, & Zitomer, 2019; Tait & Purdie, 2000; Petry, 2018) that have taken place since the 1970s on the representation of disabilities in this specific area. The literature highlights how attitudes towards disability constitute a relevant issue in educational contexts, influencing behaviors, social interactions, fairness, acceptance, and inclusion of people with disabilities (Falanga *et al.*, 2020; Hutzler *et al.*, 2019). In this sense, scholars have reported that negative attitudes and representations can create substantial barriers for these people (Antonak & Livneh, 2000), threatening the very nature of inclusive education. As highlighted by the literature (Abbott & McConkey, 2006; Cook, Cameron, &

Tankersley, 2007; Jahoda & Markova, 2004; Falanga *et al.*, 2020), negative attitudes toward people with disabilities can contribute to promoting in them negative feelings and negative self-evaluations, feelings of powerlessness and frustration, and the reduction of learning opportunities. On the other hand, positive attitudes can facilitate the inclusion of people in educational settings, reverberating in general in wider social contexts (Budisch, 2004; Findler, Vilchinsky, & Werner, 2007). In this direction, studies (e.g., Budisch, 2004; Frier, 2021) show how the true understanding of the concept of disability (the degree/level of knowledge and intimacy and familiarity with the person with the disability) is linked to major instances of inclusion. The higher the understanding (such as knowledge of the habits and daily life of people with disabilities) the greater the contacts and relationships students establish with their peers with disabilities.

From the reconstruction of the research carried out in Italy, most of the studies are aimed at the detection of social attitudes toward disability in special education teachers, in teachers who are attending courses for teaching for students with disabilities, and in middle school and college students (Commodari & Pirrone, 2011; Cornoldi *et al.*, 1998; De Caroli *et al.*, 2007; Falanga *et al.*, 2020). In the main research carried out in the middle school grades (Commodari & Pirrone, 2011), positive social representations and attitudes toward pupils with disabilities by peers who attend the same class is noteworthy. The results obtained by Commodari and Pirrone (2011) from interviews with 119 students between the ages of 12 and 13 years confirm that the presence in the classroom of children with disabilities does not involve – except in a few cases – discriminatory attitudes, which can be explained by the persistence of prejudices and stereotypes.

With reference to university students, Falanga and colleagues (2020) divided 83 college students into one experimental group (i.e., in contact with persons with disability) and one control group (i.e., no contact). Results show that after contact with disabled people, students of the experimental group increased their perception of disabled persons as a resource burden rather than a burden for society, while the control group showed no significant differences. Furthermore, the results highlighted the increase of evaluation of scholastic integration as a strategy useful to encourage positive contact with other students. Likewise, the literature (De Caroli & Sagone, 2008; 2011; Falanga *et al.*, 2020; Pedrabissi & Balboni, 2000) focuses on attitudes expressed by teachers toward students with disabilities and their inclusion has indicated that support teachers express more positive attitudes than their colleagues who teach curricular subjects. This is due to a longer and closer contact with students with special needs.

The limited amount of literature on this topic in Italy prompted us to investigate the social representations of a group of students from the University of Macerata, in order to reduce these gaps and to address, in the future, relevant educational and pedagogical answers. There is a gap in the disability literature exploring the general attitudes about individuals with disabilities in Italy. The purpose of the study was to investigate the attitudes toward persons with disabilities in an Italian province. Specifically, five research questions guided the study.

RQ1: What are the general beliefs about individuals with disabilities?

RQ2: Is there a difference in the levels of attitudes toward individuals with disabilities between men and women?

RQ3: Is there a difference in the levels of attitudes toward individuals with disabilities between people who have or do not have a disabled family member?

RQ4: Are there differences in the levels of attitudes toward individuals with disabilities among majors?

RQ5: Is there a relationship between age and attitudes toward individuals with disabilities?

3. Methodology

3.1 Participants

The sample consisted of 124 students attending a large public university located in a northcentral province of Italy. The eligibility criteria for participation were (a) at least 18 years of age, and (b) enrolled in academic courses. Most participants identified themselves as female ($n = 103$, 83.1%) and the average age was 38.75 years old ($sd = 8.15$, range = 23-58). In terms of class standing, fourth year students made up the largest group ($n = 108$, 87.1%), followed by second year students ($n = 10$, 8.1%). Education (e.g., Support Teacher, Special Education) was the most popular major (course) among the participants ($n = 96$, 77.4%), followed by Liberal Arts (e.g., Literature, Music, Foreign Languages) ($n = 12$, 9.7%). With respect to marital status, the majority of participants were single ($n = 65$, 52.4%), followed by married ($n = 54$, 43.5%). Sixty-five (52.4%) participants self-reported having a disabled family member. Table 1 displays the full descriptive summary of the demographic characteristics.

Table 1 - Participant Demographic Characteristics (N = 124)

Variable	N	%
Age	M = 38.75, SD = 8.15	
Sex		
Male	21	16.9
Female	103	83.1
Major/Course		
Education	96	77.4
Science	9	7.3
Liberal Arts	12	9.7
Law & Management	7	5.6
Class Standing		
First Year	2	1.6
Second Year	10	8.1
Third Year	4	3.2
Fourth Year	108	87.1
Marital Status		
Single	65	52.4
Married	54	43.5
Divorced	4	3.2
Widowed	1	0.8
Disabled Family Member		
Yes	65	52.4
No	59	47.6

3.2 Instruments

The Attitudes to Disability Scale (ADS; Power, Green, et al., 2010). The ADS is a 16-item self-report questionnaire designed to measure attitudes toward persons with disabilities. For each of the 16 items, participants are asked to use a 5-point Likert-type scale (1 = *strongly disagree*, 2 = *disagree*, 3 = *neutral*, 4 = *agree*, 5 = *strongly agree*) to describe their levels of agreement. The ADS assesses attitudes in both physically and intellectually disabled groups. The possible total scores range from 16 to 80. Higher scores indicate more favorable attitudes. An example statement includes “People tend to become impatient with those with a disability.” The Cronbach’s α coefficient for the study was computed at .692 (Mertler & Reinhart, 2017).

Demographic Questionnaire. We collected the information on six demographic variables, such as age, sex, major (course), class standing, marital status, and having a disabled family member.

3.3. Procedure

The original questionnaire and the instrument were translated from English to Italian by bilingual research team members. They were then translated back to English by different researchers to ensure the clarity and accuracy of the statements. Requests for participation in the study were announced via the university electronic mail system. Those who agreed to take part then clicked on a hyperlink embedded in the email message that led to an online survey site. The study complied with the ethical research protocols set forth by the institution. The estimated amount of time to complete the questionnaire was 10 minutes. No financial incentives were given to recruit prospective participants.

3.4 Data Analysis

The data set was screened for entry errors and missing values. One case was found to have a missing data point, which was replaced using the substitution of the mean. The pattern of missing data was completely at random (Little, 1988). We then checked the normal distribution of the variables by inspecting their skewness and kurtosis. No univariate and multivariate outliers were detected. For the first research question, we used descriptive statistics to report frequency, percentage to the distribution of the five-point Likert-type responses on each of the 16 items. For the second research question, an independent-sampled t-test was used to compare the group means of the dependent variable (i.e., attitudes toward disability) between male and female participants. An *a priori* analysis using G Power 3.1.9.7 determined a sample of 176 participants was needed for a two-group independent-sampled t-test with a medium effect size of Cohen's $d = 0.5$, power = 0.8, and $\alpha = 0.05$ (Faul *et al.*, 2009). For the third research question, we repeated the same procedure as stated in the second research question. The Bonferroni method was applied to control the possibility of inflating Type I error when performing a series of t-tests, $p = .05/2 = .025$. For the fourth research question, we used a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) to compare differences in the group means (i.e., the dependent variable) among majors (i.e., education, law & management, science, and liberal arts).

3.5 Results

We used descriptive statistics to answer the first research questions. Because of page limit, we only reported the results of selected scenario items. Specifically, we accounted the largest response group and, in some cases, the

second largest response group when deemed necessary. See Table 2 for the full description of the distribution of responses on each of the 16 statements.

Table 2. Patterns of General Beliefs About Disability

	SD		D		N		A		SA	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
1. People with a disability find it harder than others to make new friends.	13	10.5	93	75.0	17	13.7	1	0.8	0	0.0
2. People with a disability have problems getting involved in society.	1	0.8	24	19.4	17	13.7	70	56.5	12	9.7
3. People with a disability are a burden on society.	4	3.2	25	20.2	15	12.1	63	50.8	17	13.7
4. People with a disability are a burden on their family.	71	57.3	36	29.0	8	6.5	8	6.5	1	0.8
5. People often make fun of disabilities.	23	18.5	49	39.5	28	22.6	24	19.4	0	0.0
6. People with a disability are easier to take advantage of compared with other people.	5	4.0	21	16.9	15	12.1	73	58.9	10	8.1
7. People tend to become impatient with those with a disability.	10	8.1	33	26.6	21	16.9	47	37.9	13	10.5
8. People tend to treat those with a disability as if they have no feelings.	4	3.2	30	24.2	26	21.0	59	47.6	5	4.0
9. Having a disability can make someone a stronger person.	9	7.3	47	37.9	23	18.5	40	32.3	5	4.0
10. Having a disability can make someone a wiser person.	0	0.0	8	6.5	23	18.5	70	56.5	23	18.5
11. Some people achieve more because of their disability.	2	1.6	12	9.7	32	25.8	61	49.2	17	13.7
12. People with a disability are more determined than others to reach their goals.	8	6.5	62	50.0	33	26.6	19	15.3	2	1.6
13. Sex should not be discussed with people with disabilities.	72	58.1	47	37.9	4	3.2	1	0.8	0	0.0
14. People should not expect too much from those with a disability.	69	55.6	53	42.7	1	0.8	1	0.8	0	0.0
15. People with a disability should not be optimistic about their future.	75	60.5	41	33.1	1	0.8	6	4.8	1	0.8

Note. SD = Strongly Disagree, D = Disagree, N = Neutral, A = Agree, SA = Strongly Agree

When asked their thoughts about whether it was difficult for individuals with disabilities to make new friends (item 1), 93 (75%) respondents disagreed that having a disability made it harder to do so. More than half of the participants (n = 70, 56.5%) agreed that individuals with disabilities were a burden on society (item 3). However, 71 (57.3%) participants strongly disagreed, and 36 (29.0%) participants disagreed that individuals with disabilities were a burden on family (item 4). About 58.9% (n = 73) of participants agreed that it was easier for people to exploit or take advantage of individuals with disabilities (item 6). *Agree* (n = 47, 37.9%) was the largest response group, followed by *Disagree* (n = 33, 26.6%), to indicate that people tended to be impatient with individuals with disabilities (item 7). *Agree* (n = 59, 47.6%) was also the largest response group to indicate that people treated individual with disabilities as if they had no feelings (item 8). *Disagree* (n = 47, 37.9%) was the largest response group, followed by *Agree* (n = 40, 32.3%) to think having a disability could someone a stronger person (item 9). Similarly, 70 (56.5%) participants agreed that having a disability could make someone a wiser person (item 10), and 61 (49.2%) participants agreed that

some people were able to achieve more because of their disability (item 11). When asked whether sex should not be discussed with individuals with disabilities (item 13), *Strongly Disagree* (n = 72, 58.1%) was the largest response group, followed by *Disagree* response group (n = 47, 37.9%). Sixty-nine (55.6%) participants strongly disagreed, while 53 (42.7%) participants disagreed that people should not expect too much from individuals with disabilities (item 14).

We used an independent-sampled t-test to answer the second research question. The group means of male participants and that of female participants were 42.76 (sd = 3.99) and 42.07 (sd = 6.38), respectively. The difference in attitudes toward individuals with disabilities between the two groups was statistically insignificant, $t = .479$, $df = 122$, $p = .633$, $d = .129$.

We used an independent-sampled t-test to answer the third research question. The group means of participants who had a disabled family member and that of participants who did not have a disabled family member were 41.42 (sd = 5.64) and 43.03 (sd = 6.38), respectively. compared participants with and without a disabled family member. The difference in attitudes toward individuals with disabilities between the two groups was statistically insignificant, $t = -1.500$, $df = 122$, $p = .136$, $d = .267$.

We conducted a one-way between-subject ANOVA to answer the fourth research question. The group mean of Education major was 41.73 (sd = 5.71, 95% CI = 40.57-42.89). The group mean of Science major was 46.33 (sd = 5.220, 95% CI = 42.32-50.35). The group mean of Liberal Arts major was 42.33 (sd = 7.64, 95% CI = 37.48-47.19). The group mean of Law & Management major was 42.86 (sd = 7.58, 95% CI = 35.85-49.87). The main effect of major was not statistically significant, $F(3, 120) = 1.659$, $p = .180$, $\eta^2 = .039$.

Finally, we ran a Pearson's product-moment correlation analysis to answer the fifth research question. The correlation between age and attitudes toward individuals with disabilities was statistically insignificant, $r = .098$, $p = .277$.

3.6 Discussion

The purpose of the study was to examine societal attitudes toward individuals with disabilities in Italy. The results are interesting and informative and have implications that can further advance the inclusion of persons with disability in a diverse society.

In contrast to the results of past studies (Kalargyrou *et al.*, 2021; Marini *et al.*, 2011; Seo & Chen, 2009), women in the present study were not more accepting of persons with disabilities than were men. This deviates from the vision we usually have, as women in the Western nations (i.e., Europe, North

America) tend to hold an open-minded views about disability when compared to their counterparts in the non-Western nations (Chen *et al.*, 2002; Hamdy *et al.*, 2011). One plausible explanation is that the Italian women in the sample were highly educated, and therefore, understood that disability laws provide legal protection that shields persons with disabilities from prejudice and discrimination in the employment, educational, healthcare, communication, and transportation settings. Another possible explanation is that Italian women believe in equality and equity among persons of varying abilities. Consequently, they treat disabled persons with the same respect and kindness that they afford to nondisabled persons.

Our findings debunk the connotation that having a disabled family member would make someone more accepting of a disability (Chukwu *et al.*, 2019; McConnell & Savage, 2015). Perhaps compassion fatigue arises from providing constant care on a daily basis, which can take a heavy toll both on the caregiver's mental and physical well-being. Empathy dissipates gradually over times and may be replaced with guilt and resentment, as family members must make deliberate sacrifices, such as forgoing full-time work, cutting back leisure hours, and exhausting financial resources. However, some family members may not consider caring a loved one with a disability a burden. Ethno-cultural practices, religious beliefs, and gender-role expectations can alleviate the encumbrance and make caring activities more bearable (Chen *et al.*, 2017). This internalized sense of duty serves as a psychological buffer that helps family members, regardless of the presence or absence of a disability.

The college major of the study participants was not a significant variable in differentiating their levels of acceptance of persons with disabilities. Consistent with the findings of previous studies (e.g., Au & Man, 2006; McConkey & Truesdale, 2000), it was found that it is counterintuitive to assume that students enrolled in the human and health services majors, such as social work and special education, would presumably be more empathetic toward the marginalized individuals of the society. Tervo, Palmer, and Redinius (2004) posited that knowledge about disability is essential to ameliorate fear and discomfort toward a group of people with whom one is unfamiliar with. There are myriad variables beyond the scope of the present study that can shape how an individual views people with disabilities.

There is no consensus on how prior contact can influence the acceptance of disability. Our findings are incongruent with those of previous studies (e.g., Huskin, 2018; Parashar, Chan., & Leierer, 2008), which espouse that the social distance between disabled and nondisabled persons decreases and the level of willingness to engage in a romantic relationship heightens when the two groups are in frequent contact. It is possible that this study's participants did not feel connected to persons with disabilities despite having prior contact

with them. Ayelet and Roni (2020) found that health professionals held moderately negative feelings about disability even though their work revolved around the rehabilitation of patients with disabilities. Hence, in terms of the acceptance of persons with disabilities, the context of interaction matters more than the frequency of contact (Smart, 2016).

Parallel to the findings of past studies (e.g., Au & Man, 2006; Ayelet & Roni, 2020), our findings indicated that the correlation between age and attitudes toward persons with disabilities could be either positive or negative. People belonging to a specific age cohort within of a nation's population tend to share and undergo common, collective experiences, whether traumatic or jubilant, that are unique to their generation. For example, Americans who were schoolchildren in the 1960s were the first ones to study alongside classmates of different racial and ethnic backgrounds after the U.S. Supreme Court ruled segregated educational settings unconstitutional. In another example, the older generation of Australians who grew up in a more conservative time still largely disapprove of same-sex marriage (Perales & Campbell, 2018). The age of the participants in our study varied markedly, and this may have contributed to the inconclusiveness of this variable's correlation with attitudes toward persons with disabilities.

3.7 Limitations

The study has a few limitations. As with any survey study, participants' self-report responses may be influenced by the pressure to provide socially desirable answers. The use of online data collection method may exclude individuals who do not have access to the internet. The generalizability of the findings is curtailed by the location of the participants. It is possible that people living in other Italian provinces may hold different views toward individuals with disabilities. Furthermore, an overwhelmingly imbalance ratio in the sex composition of participants could skew the results.

3.8 Future Research

The findings of our study show the complexity of understanding the acceptance of persons with disabilities. A holistic approach is recommended to examine the impacts of cognitive, emotional, environmental, psychological, religious, socioeconomic, political, spiritual, and affective variables on a person's schema of reasoning. Investigating a hierarchy of preference for types of disabilities also allows researchers to more accurately identify the most and least stigmatized disabilities (Huskin, 2018; Miller *et al.*, 2009).

In the future, an extension of the reference sample would be desirable as it is not representative of the entire student population in the Macerata context. The survey could also be conducted in non-educational contexts (such as social or rehabilitative ones) to verify whether the education level variable is significant in determining specific attitudes towards disability. This would make it possible to expand our understanding of the representations of disabled people in different settings, facilitating a subsequent investigation linked to the comparison of several contexts. As part of a broader research project, it would be interesting to compare the data obtained with those collected in contexts in other nations. This would allow us to reflect on the inclusive culture conveyed in Italy among students with the highest levels of education and explore other student realities.

4. Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to explore social attitudes of university students toward disability and the representation of disabled persons. The data that emerged from our study, while differing from the results obtained by researchers in other countries, push us to reflect on the reasons behind the general positive attitude observed towards people with disabilities. The collection of data on attitudes remains an important tool for directing both social policies and the training of counselors, operators, and teachers to address the challenges associated with the adjustment to a disability, highlighting the need to design training practices to enhance Quality of Life of people with disabilities (Giaconi, 2015; Schalock, Verdugo, & Braddock, 2002).

References

- Abbott S. & McConkey R. (2006). The barriers to social inclusion as perceived by people with intellectual disabilities. *Journal of Intellectual Disabilities*, 10(3): 275-287.
- Antonak F. R., & Livneh H. (2000). Measurement of attitudes towards persons with disabilities. *Disability and Rehabilitation*, 22(5): 211-224.
- Au K. W., & Man D. W. K. (2006). Attitudes toward people with disabilities: A comparison between health care professionals and students. *International Journal of Rehabilitation Research*, 29(2): 155-160.
- Avramidis E. (2013). Self-concept, social position and social participation of pupils with SEN in mainstream primary schools. *Research Papers in Education*, 28(4): 421-442.

- Ayelet G., & Roni K. (2020). Attitudes toward persons with disabilities among community centers' management staff members: A brief report. *Rehabilitation Counseling Bulletin*, 63(3): 187-191. Doi: 10.1177/0034355219878494.
- Balboni G., & Pedrabissi L. (2000). Attitudes of Italian teachers and parents toward school inclusion of students with mental retardation: The role of experience. *Education and Training in Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities*, 35(2): 148-159.
- Blackman S. (2016). Barbadian Students' Attitudes towards Including Peers with Disabilities in Regular Education. *International Journal of Special Education*, 31(1): 135-143.
- Budisch K. (2004). Correlates of college students' attitudes toward disabilities. *University of Wisconsin – La Crosse Journal of Undergraduate Research*, 7: 1-5.
- Chen R. K., Austin B. S., & Lin C. C. (2017). Acculturation and filial piety as mediators of the relationship between caregiver burden and gender-role expectations. *Internet Journal of Allied Health and Sciences Practice*, 15(4): 1-11.
- Chen R. K., Brodwin M. G., Cardoso, E., & Chan, F. (2002). Attitudes toward people with disabilities in the social context of dating and marriage: A comparison of American, Taiwanese, and Singaporean college students. *Journal of Rehabilitation*, 68(4): 5-11.
- Chukwu N. E., Okoye U. O., Onyeneho N. G., & Okeibunor J. C. (2019). Coping strategies of families of persons with learning disability in Imo state of Nigeria. *Journal of Health, Population and Nutrition*, 38(9): 1-9. Doi: 10.1186/s41043-019-0168-2.
- Cohen J. (1988). *Statistical power analysis for the behavioral sciences* (2nd ed.). Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Commodari E., & Pirrone C. (2011). L'integrazione scolastica del disabile: il punto di vista degli alunni. *Annali della Facoltà di Scienze della formazione Università degli studi di Catania*, 3-91.
- Cook B. G., Cameron D. L. & Tankersley M. (2007). Inclusive teachers' attitudinal ratings of their students with disabilities. *Journal of Special Education*, 40(4): 230-238.
- Cornoldi C., Terreni A., Scruggs T., & Mastropieri, M. (1998). Teacher attitudes in Italy after twenty years of inclusion. *Remedial and Special Education*, 19(6): 133-142. Doi: 10.1177/074193259801900605.
- Darrow A. A., & Johnson C. M. (1994). Junior and senior high school music students' attitudes toward individuals with a disability. *Journal of Music Therapy*, 31: 266-279.
- De Boer A., Pijl S. J., Minnaert A., & Post W. (2014). Evaluating the effectiveness of an intervention program to influence attitudes of students towards peers with disabilities. *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders*, 44(3): 572-583.
- De Caroli M. E., & Sagone E. (2006). Salienza della "disabilità" e vissuti di distanza sociale verso i coetanei con SD in età adolescenziale. *GID – Giornale Italiano delle Disabilità. Salienza della "disabilità" e vissuti di distanza sociale verso i coetanei con SD in età adolescenziale*, VI(3): 33-45.

- De Caroli M.E., Sagone E., & Falanga R. (2007). Sé professionale e atteggiamenti sociali verso la disabilità negli insegnanti di sostegno della scuola dell'infanzia, primaria e media inferiore. *Giornale Italiano delle Disabilità*, 7: 15-26.
- De Laat S., Freriksen E., & Vervloed M. P. (2013). Attitudes of children and adolescents toward persons who are deaf, blind, paralyzed or intellectually disabled. *Research in Developmental Disabilities*, 34(2): 855-863.
- Falanga R., De Caroli M. E., & Sagone E. (2020). Is it possible to enhance positive attitudes towards people with disability? A training with Italian university students. *New Trends and Issues Proceedings on Humanities and Social Sciences*, 7(3): 27-33.
- Faul F., Erdfelder E., Buchner A., & Lang A.-G. (2009). Statistical power analyses using G*Power 3.1: Tests for correlation and regression analyses. *Behavior Research Methods*, 41(4): 1149-1160.
- Findler L., Vilchinsky N., & Werner S. (2007). The multidimensional Attitudes Scale toward persons with disabilities (MAS): Construction and validation. *Rehabilitation Counseling Bulletin*, 50(3): 166-176. Doi: 10.1177/00343552070500030401.
- Fortini M. E. (1987). Attitudes and behavior toward students with handicaps by their nonhandicapped peers. *American Journal of Mental Deficiency*, 92(1): 78-84.
- Freer J. R. (2021). Students' attitudes toward disability: A systematic literature review (2012-2019). *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 1-19. Published online: 08 Jan 2021. Doi: 10.1080/13603116.2020.1866688.
- Gash H., & Coffey D. (1995). Influences on attitudes towards children with mental handicap. *European Journal of Special Needs Education*, 10(1): 1-16. Doi: 10.1080/0885625950100101.
- Giaconi C. (2015). *Qualità della Vita e adulti con disabilità*. Milano: FrancoAngeli.
- Goodman H., Gottlieb J., & Harrison R. H. (1972). Social acceptance of EMRs integrated into a nongraded elementary school. *American Journal of Mental Deficiency*, 76: 412-417.
- Hamdy N. N., Auter P. J., Humphrey V. F., & Attia A. (2011). A cultural perspective: A survey of U.S. and Egyptian students regarding their perceptions of people with disabilities. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, 1(5): 83-93.
- Hellmich F., & Löper M. F. (2018). Primary school students' attitudes and their perceived teacher behavior towards peers with special educational needs. *Empirische Sonderpädagogik*, 10(2): 151-166.
- Huskin P. R., Reiser-Robbins C., & Kwon S. (2018). Attitudes of undergraduate students toward persons with disabilities: Exploring effects of contact experience on social distance across ten disability types. *Rehabilitation Counseling Bulletin*, 62(1): 53-63. Doi: 10.1177/0034355217727600.
- Hutzler Y., Meier S., Reuker S., & Zitomer M. (2019). Attitudes and self-efficacy of physical education teachers toward inclusion of children with disabilities: a narrative review of international literature. *Physical Education and Sport Pedagogy*, 24(3): 249-266.

- Jahoda A., & Markova I. (2004). Coping with social stigma: People with intellectual disabilities moving from institutions and family home. *Journal of Intellectual Disability Research*, 48: 719-729.
- Kalargyrou V., Pettinico W., & Chen P. J. (2021). Attitudes toward people with physical disabilities: An examination of social context, discipline, disability type, and demographics. *Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation*, 54(2): 117-133. Doi: 10.3233/JVR-201124.
- Little R. J. A. (1988). A test of missing completely at random for multivariate data with missing values. *Journal of American Statistical Association*, 83(404): 1198-1202. doi: 10.1080/01621459.1988.10478722.
- Marini I., Chen R. K., Feist A. M., Flores-Torres L., & Del Castillo A. (2011). Student attitudes toward intimacy with persons who are wheelchair users. *Rehabilitation Education*, 25(1): 15-26.
- McConkey R., & Truesdale M. (2000). Reactions of nurses and therapists in mainstream health services to contact with people who have learning disabilities. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 32(1): 158-163.
- McConnell D., & Savage A. (2015). Stress and resilience among families caring for children with intellectual disability: Expanding the research agenda. *Current Developmental Disorders Reports*, 2(2): 100-109. Doi: 10.1007/s40474-015-0040-z.
- Mertler C. A., & Reinhart R. V. (2017). *Advanced and multivariate statistical methods: Practical application and interpretation* (6th ed.). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Miller E., Chen R. K., Graf N. M., & Kranz P. L. (2009). Willingness to engage in personal relationships with persons with disabilities: Examining category and severity of disability. *Rehabilitation Counseling Bulletin*, 52(4): 211-224. Doi: 10.1177/0034355209332719.
- Olaleye A., Ogundele O., Deji S., Ajayi O., Olaleye O., & Adeyanju T. (2012). Attitudes of students towards peers with disability in an inclusive school in Nigeria. *Disability, CBR & Inclusive Development*, 23(3): 65-75.
- Parashar D., Chan F., & Leierer S. (2008). Factors influencing Asian Indian graduate students' attitudes toward people with disabilities: A conjoint analysis. *Rehabilitation Counseling Bulletin*, 51(4): 229-239. Doi: 10.1177/0034355207311317.
- Perales F., & Campbell A. (2018). Who supports equal rights for same-sex couples? Evidence from Australia. *Family Matters*, 100: 28-41.
- Petry K. (2018). The relationship between class attitudes towards peers with a disability and peer acceptance, friendships and peer interactions of students with a disability in regular secondary schools. *European Journal of Special Needs Education*, 33(2): 254-268.
- Power M. J., Green A. M., & The WHOQOL-DIS Group (2010). The Attitudes to Disability Scale (ADS): Development and psychometric properties. *Journal of Intellectual Disability Research*, 54(9): 860-874.

- Schalock R. L., Verdugo M. A., & Braddock D. L. (2002). *Handbook on quality of life for human service practitioners* (pp. 1-430). Washington, DC: American Association on Mental Retardation.
- Schwab S. (2017). The impact of contact on students' attitudes towards peers with disabilities. *Research in Developmental Disabilities, 62*: 160-165.
- Seo W. S., & Chen R. K. (2009). Attitudes of college students toward people with disabilities. *Journal of Applied Rehabilitation Counseling, 40*(4): 3-8.
- Shokoochi-Yekta M., & Hendrickson J. M. (2010). Friendships with peers with severe disabilities: American and Iranian secondary students' ideas about being a friend. *Education and Training in Autism and Developmental Disabilities, 45*(1): 23-37.
- Smart J. (2016). *Disability, society, and the individual* (3rd edition). Austin, TX: Pro-ed.
- Tait K., & Purdie N. (2000). Attitudes toward disability: Teacher education for inclusive environments in an Australian university. *International Journal of Disability, Development and Education, 47*(1): 25-38.
- Tamm M., & Prellwitz M. (2001). 'If I had a friend in a wheelchair': Children's thoughts on disabilities. *Child: Care, Health and Development, 27*(3): 223-240.
- Tang C. S., Davis C., Wu A., & Oliver C. (2000). Chinese children's attitudes toward mental retardation. *Journal of Developmental and Physical Disabilities, 12*(1): 73-87.
- Tervo R. C., Palmer G., & Redinius P. (2004). Health professional student attitudes toward people with disability. *Clinical Rehabilitation, 18*(8): 908-915.
- World Health Organization (2001). *International Classification of Functioning, Disability, and Health*. World Health Organization.
- World Health Organization (2007). *International Classification of Functioning, Disability, and Health: Children & Youth Version: ICF-CY*. World Health Organization.