

# **Attitudes of Elementary-Level and Secondary-Level Teachers toward Students with Disabilities \***

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## **Abstract:**

Many studies focused on teachers' attitudes toward the concept of inclusion, there are not many studies specifically focused on teachers' attitudes towards students with disabilities. The purpose of this study was to investigate attitudes of general education teachers toward their students with disabilities and how well teachers' attitudes can be predicted by their personal attributes and professional characteristics. Total of 84 teachers were surveyed from both elementary-level and secondary-level schools in the southeastern United States. In terms of the results of the study, teachers' attitudes toward students with disabilities were mostly positive. Multiple linear regression method did not yield statistically significant results which means that gender, age, years of experience, grade level taught, extent of contact with individuals with disabilities, whether or not teachers have received any training about teaching students with disabilities, and teachers' perceptions toward their own level of expertise were not good predictors of the attitudes toward students with disabilities. The age variable was statistically significant predictor of attitudes when considered by itself.

**Keywords:** Teacher attitudes, students with disabilities, inclusion



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## INTRODUCTION

Changes in the legislation over years had a great influence on the number of students with disabilities in educational facilities, especially in general education classrooms. In 1972, about the half of all students with disabilities were not receiving any educational services (Douvani & Hulse, 2002) and by 2009 about 95% of students with disabilities were served in regular schools (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2013). Increases in the number of students with disabilities in general education classrooms changed the environment of the general classrooms, and required some additional works on teachers' and administrators' previous duties. These changes might have been seen as "problematic" for some teachers and administrators and the cause might be attitudes of the teachers and administrators in general education schools.

Inclusion requires teachers to expect new roles in schools serving students with disabilities and other special needs in schools (Guterman, 1995). In view of the fact that the attitudes are directly related to behaviors, teachers' attitudes toward students with disabilities and the concept of inclusion may have a direct influence on their effective teaching and responsibility taking behaviors for achievement of all students assigned to their classrooms.

The literature has revealed that the attitudes of general education teachers is one of the most important predictors of successful integration of students with disabilities in regular education classrooms (Bacon & Schultz, 1991; Semmel, Albernathy, Butera, & Lesar, 1991; Van Reusen, Shoho, & Barker, 2000), and many studies indicated that the classroom teachers have more negative attitudes than other school staff such as administrators and advisers (Forlin, 1995; Garvar-Pinhas & Schmelkin, 1989; Norwich, 1994). In addition to that, the inclusion of students with disabilities in regular schools has consistently been reported as problematic for teachers and it is related to negative teacher attitudes (Cook, Cameron, & Tankersley, 2007). Therefore, the attitudes of general school teachers toward students with disabilities have a significant role on including students with disabilities in regular education classrooms.

There are various variables that influence teachers' attitudes toward students with disabilities such as teachers' year of experience, knowledge about inclusion and students with disabilities, training teachers received on teaching students with disabilities, extent of contact with people with disabilities, grade level taught, age, and gender (Avramidis & Norwich, 2002). All of these variables, in different levels, contribute to teacher's attitude of students with disabilities and one of the purposes of this study is to ascertain how good predictors they are.

In several studies, the relationship between teachers' years of experience in field of education and their attitudes toward students with disabilities has been explored. In those studies, researchers compared teachers with different years of experiences in the education, and they have found that the less experience the teacher had, the more favorable attitudes they held toward the inclusion of students with disabilities in general education classrooms (Leyser, Kapperman, & Keller, 1994; Soodak, Podell, & Lehman, 1998; Wilczenski, 1994). And Forlin (1995) also found similar results as more experienced teachers were less accepting to students with disabilities, although less experienced teachers were more accepting to those children with disabilities.

Shoho, Katims, and Wilks (1997) argued that increasing teachers' knowledge about inclusion of students with disabilities in regular schools and those students' needs in terms of their education may minimize negative teacher attitudes toward inclusion and students with disabilities. In another study, it is discussed that the ability of teachers to instruct students with disabilities may be a significant determinant of positive teacher attitudes toward students with disabilities (Schumm & Vaughn, 1995).

Extent of contact with people with disabilities can be another important variable that influences teacher attitudes towards inclusion and students with disabilities (Avramidis &

Norwich, 2002). Although Leyser, Kapperman, and Keller (1994) found that having more experience yields more positive attitudes, McLesky and Waldron (1996) found that extended contact with individuals with disabilities does not significantly improve teacher attitudes towards individuals with disabilities.

Several studies have focused on grade level taught and its influence on teacher attitudes toward students with disabilities. Teachers in higher grade levels had less positive attitudes toward inclusion than teachers in lower grade levels (Bender, Vail, & Scott, 1995).

Personal characteristics of teachers such as age and gender might be other factors that can influence teachers' attitudes toward students with disabilities in general education schools. Although, age has been reported as a significant predictor of the attitudes of teachers, gender was not a significant predictor of the attitudes of teachers (Leyser, Kapperman, & Keller, 1994).

The purpose of this study is to investigate attitudes of teachers toward students with disabilities in a large school district in the Southeastern United States. Teachers' attitudes will be examined in relation to selected demographic variables such as gender, age, years of teaching experience, grade level taught, extent of contact with individuals with disabilities, whether or not teachers have received any training for teaching students with disabilities, and teachers' perceptions toward their own level of expertise. Following research questions were answered in this study:

(1) What are the mean scores and standard deviations for the "A Survey of Teacher Attitudes Relative the Serving Students with Disabilities" based on participants' (a) gender, (b) age, (c) years of experience, (d) grade level taught, (e) extent of contact with individuals with disabilities, (f) whether or not teachers have received any training about teaching students with disabilities, and (g) teachers' perceptions toward their own level of expertise?

(2) To what extent can teacher attitudes toward students with disabilities be predicted by (a) gender, (b) age, (c) years of experience, (d) grade level taught, (e) extent of contact with individuals with disabilities, (f) whether or not teachers have received any training about teaching students with disabilities, and (g) teachers' perceptions toward their own level of expertise?

(3) To what extent do personal attributes of teachers such as (a) gender, and (b) age contribute to prediction of teacher attitudes toward students with disabilities?

(4) To what extent do professional characteristics of teachers such as (a) years of experience, (b) grade level taught, (c) extent of contact with individuals with disabilities, (d) whether or not teachers have received any training about teaching students with disabilities, and (e) teachers' perceptions toward their own level of expertise predict teacher attitudes above and beyond (f) gender, and (g) age?

(5) To what extent do (a) gender, and (b) age predict teacher attitudes above and beyond professional characteristics of teachers such as (c) years of experience, (d) grade level taught, (e) extent of contact with individuals with disabilities, (f) whether or not teachers have received any training about teaching students with disabilities, and (g) teachers' perceptions toward their own level of expertise?

## **METHOD**

This was a survey research study to explore teachers' attitudes towards students with disabilities in an elementary-level and secondary-level school in southeastern United States. The dependent variable was teachers' attitude scores on the "A Survey of Teacher Attitudes Relative to Serving Students with Disabilities". Independent variables were (a) gender, (b) age, (c) years of

experience, (d) grade level taught, (e) extent of contact with individuals with disabilities, (f) whether or not teachers have received any training about teaching students with disabilities, and (g) teachers' perceptions toward their own level of expertise.

### **Instrumentation**

The data were gathered using a two-part inventory. Part I of the inventory was addressed questions asking about (a) gender, (b) age, (c) years of experience, (d) grade level taught, (e) extent of contact with individuals with disabilities, (f) whether or not teachers have received any training about teaching students with disabilities, and (g) teachers' perceptions toward their own level of expertise.

Part II of the inventory included the "A Survey of Teacher Attitudes Relative to Serving Students with Disabilities" questionnaire. The original questionnaire was developed by Larrivee and Cook (1979) to measure teacher attitudes toward students with disabilities who were in elementary -level schools. This original instrument was later updated and revised by Kraska (2003). Larrivee and Cook (1979) reported the split-half reliability coefficient for the original instrument as .92. Kraska (2003) reported the Cronbach alpha reliability coefficient for the revised instrument as .89. Participants were asked to respond to a paper copy of the 30-item questionnaire on a Likert-type scale ranging from 5 for, "Strongly agree," to 1 for "Strongly disagree." Sample items include statements such as, "Inclusion of students with disabilities will require significant changes in classroom procedures," and "Inclusion of students with disabilities will necessitate extensive re-training of teachers." A total inventory score ranges from 30 to 150, with a higher score indicating a more favorable attitude toward students with disabilities.

### **Data Collection Procedures**

Permission to conduct the study was obtained from the Institutional Review Board for Human Subjects of Auburn University. Researchers also secured permission from schools in two different cities to conduct the study. After all of the permissions granted, researchers reached participants and collected the data.

Information letter for participants prepared by the researchers, which has the information about the research, the survey instrument, risks of the study, as participation being volunteer basis, and the confidentiality of the data being collected during the study. Contact information of researchers was provided for any questions about the study.

Researchers prepared individual survey packets for each of the participants. Each packet included an information letter for participants, a 7-item demographic questionnaire, and the 30-item "A Survey of Teacher Attitudes Relative to Serving Students with Disabilities" survey form. Packages, including total of five pages, were put in a closed envelope.

The survey was administered during a staff development workshop in schools. Prior to distribution of the survey packets, the researcher read the statement of the purpose of the study and the instructions to the participants. Their participation in the study was on a volunteer basis and this information was highlighted in the instructions. Participants were instructed to return all forms in the original envelope. Teachers who did not want to participate in the study were asked to return the survey package uncompleted. The researcher collected all of the completed (n=84) and uncompleted survey forms.

### **Data Analysis Procedures**

The analysis was completed by using IBM-SPSS (version 22) for Windows. Participants' responses to the questions entered into an SPSS spreadsheet one by one by the researchers and checked for the mistakes that might occur during the entering data. Descriptive statistics computed to respond to the first research question. Null hypotheses for research questions two, three, four, and five were tested at the .05 level using multiple regression procedures.

## FINDINGS

Descriptive data were calculated by using SPSS (version 22) and summarized for gender, age, years of experience, grade level taught, extent of contact with individuals with disabilities, whether or not teachers had received any training related to teaching students with disabilities, and teachers' perceptions toward their own level of expertise. Research question one was answered by using demographic information.

**Table 1.**

*Frequency, Percent, Mean Scores and Standard Deviation for Teacher Attitudes*

Variable	Frequency	Percent	Attitude Scores		
			Mean	SD	
Gender					
Male	25	29.8	92.80	11.84	
Female	59	70.2	96.61	14.55	
Age					
20 – 29	12	14.3	92.08	14.45	
30 – 39	28	33.3	93.54	12.71	
40 – 49	24	28.6	94.08	16.23	
49+	20	23.8	101.90	10.43	
Experience					
0 – 5	14	16.7	91.93	15.04	
6 – 10	20	23.8	92.90	12.83	
11 – 15	17	20.2	97.35	11.35	
16 – 20	18	21.4	98.06	16.51	
21+	15	17.9	97.00	13.65	
Grade Level					
K - 8	22	26.2	99.14	12.81	
9 – 12	62	73.8	94.18	14.06	
Time spent					
None to Almost none	17	20.02	93.65	13.73	
Little	23	27.4	99.74	13.21	
Some	31	36.9	93.58	11.68	
Most to Almost all	13	15.5	94.85	19.06	
Training					
No	6	7.1	91.00	6.20	
Yes	78	92.9	95.82	14.22	
Perceived Expertise					
None to Minimal	38	45.2	95.63	13.66	
Adequate to High	46	54.8	95.35	14.14	

Mean scores and the standard deviations of the teachers' attitude scores were summarized in terms of gender, age, years of experience, grade level taught, extent of contact with individuals with disabilities, whether or not teachers had received any training related to teaching students with disabilities, and teachers' perceptions toward their own level of expertise. The total number of teachers who participated in this study was 84; 22 from elementary-level school (26.2%), 62 from secondary-level school (73.8%). The mean scores of the elementary-level school teachers (mean = 99.14) were slightly higher than the secondary-level school

teachers (mean = 94.18) in terms of their scores from "A Survey of Teacher Attitudes Relative the Serving Students with Disabilities". The majority of the teachers were female with the percentage of 70.2 (n = 59). Female teachers' mean score from attitude survey were higher than the male teachers mean score, 96.61 and 92.80 respectively. Number of participants in each age group was fairly evenly distributed. The most selected age category was 30-39 and the least selected age category was 20-29. Mean scores of younger teachers scores were lower than the older teachers. In terms of the years of experience that teachers had in the teaching field, the number of the teachers in each years of experience category was almost evenly distributed. Most of the participants had six to 10 years of experience. The least number of years of experience was zero to five years. The mean score of the teachers who had 16 to 20 years of experience was the highest (mean = 98.06) and the mean score of teachers who had 5 years or less experience was the lowest (mean = 91.93). The variable for teachers' time spent with students with disabilities included four categories. The number of participants in each category was almost evenly distributed. For the variable, teachers who selected "little" for the time spent with students with disabilities received the highest mean scores (mean = 99.74). For the training variable, 92.9% of the teachers had received training for teaching students with disabilities (n = 78). Teachers who received training had higher mean score from the attitude survey (mean = 95.82) than the teachers who did not receive any training. In terms of the teachers' perception about their own level of expertise, the distribution of the number of participants in each category was very close to one other, with almost 55% of the teachers perceiving an adequate to high level of expertise; and approximately 45% perceiving no level of expertise to a minimal level of expertise. Each group's mean scores were almost same to each other. These data are reported in Table 1.

The first null hypothesis was formulated to answer the second research question:

Ho1: (a) gender, (b) age, (c) years of experience, (d) grade level taught, (e) extent of contact with individuals with disabilities, (f) whether or not teachers had received any training about teaching students with disabilities, and (g) teachers' perceptions toward their own level of expertise are not statistically significant predictors for teacher attitudes toward students with disabilities.

Entering all predictors (gender, age, years of experience, grade level taught, extent of contact with individuals with disabilities, whether or not teachers had received any training about teaching students with disabilities, and teachers' perceptions toward their own level of expertise) into the regression model did not yield a statistically significant regression model [ $F(7, 76) = 1.31, p = .26$ ]. When considered together, all predictors accounted for only 11% of the variance in teacher attitudes toward students with disabilities.

Examination of the beta coefficients for the individual predictors revealed that none of the predictors were statistically significant at the .05 level of significance. However, it is noteworthy that the age variable was statistically significant at the .06 level. For this reason, Researchers investigated the influence of age on the teacher attitudes toward students with disabilities. Therefore, researchers conducted a bivariate linear regression procedure using only the 'age' variable as a predictor. Results of the bivariate linear regression using only age as a predictor revealed statistically significant results [ $F(1, 82) = 4.53, p = .04$ ]. The age variable accounted for 5% of the variance in the scores on the attitudes toward students with disabilities scale. The beta coefficient for the age variable was 3.15, suggesting that for every increase in age by one year, the scores on the 'Survey of Teacher Attitudes Relative to Serving Students with Disabilities' increased by 3.15 points.

The second null hypothesis was formulated to answer the third research question:

Ho2: (a) gender and (b) age are not statistically significant contributors on prediction of teacher attitudes toward students with disabilities.

Entering the variables gender and age into the multiple linear regression equation did not result in a statistically significant regression model [ $F(2, 81) = 2.88, p = .06$ ], even though the combination of age and gender accounted for 7% on the variance in the scores of the attitudes toward students with disabilities scale. For this model, the beta coefficient for age was 3.15 with a .04 level of significance, indicating that for every increase in age by one year, the scores on the 'Survey of Teacher Attitudes Relative to Serving Students with Disabilities' increase by 3.15 points.

Research questions four and five were addressed by third and fourth null hypothesis. The third and fourth null hypotheses tested for ordered sets of variables. The third null hypothesis was formulated for research question four and tested personal variables (gender and age group), while controlling for professional characteristics (years of experience, grade level taught, extent of contact with individuals with disabilities, whether or not teachers had received any training related to teaching students with disabilities, and teachers' perceptions toward their own level of expertise).

The third null hypothesis was formulated to answer the fourth research question:

Ho3: (a) years of experience, (b) grade level taught, (c) extent of contact with individuals with disabilities, (d) whether or not teachers had received any training about teaching students with disabilities, and (e) teachers' perceptions toward their own level of expertise are not statistically significant predictors above and beyond (f) gender, and (g) age.

Result of the multiple linear regression procedure for ordered sets revealed that professional characteristics (years of experience, grade level taught, extent of contact with individuals with disabilities, whether or not teachers had received any training about teaching students with disabilities, and teachers' perceptions toward their own level of expertise) contributed only four percent of the variance in the scores on the attitudes toward students with disabilities scale above and beyond the personal attributes (gender and gender).

Neither the model using only personal attributes nor the model testing effects of professional characteristics above and beyond personal attributes was statistically significant [ $F(2, 81) = 2.87, p = .07$ ] and [ $F(5, 76) = .71, p = .62$ ] respectively. Even though the prediction model including only gender and age did not yield statistically significant results at .05 significance level, the model was significant at the .07 significance level. As reported previously, age was a statistically significant predictor by itself in the bivariate linear regression model. [ $F(1, 82) = 4.53, p = .04$ ].

Seven percent of the variance in the scores on the attitudes toward students with disabilities can be attributed to the personal attributes (gender and age). When the professional characteristics were included in the model, an addition 4 percent of the variance can be accounted for.

The fourth null hypothesis was formulated to respond to the fifth research question:

Ho4: (a) gender and (b) age are not statistically significant predictors above and beyond professional characteristics of teachers such as (c) years of experience, (d) grade level taught, (e) extent of contact with individuals with disabilities, (f) whether or not teachers had received any training about teaching students with disabilities, and (g) teachers' perceptions toward their own level of expertise.

Result of the multiple linear regression procedure for ordered sets revealed that personal attributes (age and gender) contributed only five percent of the variance in the scores on the attitudes toward students with disabilities scale above and beyond the professional characteristics (years of experience, grade level taught, extent of contact with individuals with disabilities, whether or not teachers had received any training about teaching students with disabilities, and teachers' perceptions toward their own level of expertise).



Neither the model using only professional characteristics nor the model testing effects of personal attributes above and beyond professional characteristics was statistically significant [ $F(5, 78) = 1.00, p = .42$ ] and [ $F(2, 76) = 2.02, p = .14$ ] respectively.

Six percent of the variance in the scores on the attitudes toward students with disabilities scale can be attributed to the professional characteristics; however, when the personal variables (gender and age) were included in the model, an addition five percent of the variance can be accounted for.

## DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Based on the distribution and mean calculation of the data, female teachers' scores for attitudes toward students with disabilities were higher than the male teachers. Previous research about differences between males and females in terms of their attitude toward students with disabilities vary; even though some researchers found significant difference between them, some others did not find the significant difference. It is noteworthy that females received higher scores than males in terms of their attitude scores, and this was parallel to some previous researchers' findings (Alghazo, Dodeen, & Algaryouti, 2003; Leyser, Kapperman, & Keller, 1994; Pearman, Huang, Barohart, & Meliblom, 1992). This finding about the gender differences expanded our knowledge about the field. In terms of the grade level taught, the mean score of secondary-level school teachers were higher than elementary-level school teachers, as concurred with the results of Bender et al. (1995) who found that high school teachers have less positive attitudes. In terms of the 'age' variable, it can be said that teachers who were in the older age category received higher scores than the ones in the younger categories. This result did not match with Leyser, Kapperman, and Keller's (1994) findings that they found younger teacher holding more positive attitudes toward inclusion. Age was also found to be a significant predictor of attitudes when separating it from other variables.

In comparison to the teachers who did not receive any training, teachers who previously received training related to teaching students with disabilities had higher scores on the attitude scale. Thus, the training about teaching students with disabilities is an important area to be considered in education system. Training teachers about students with disabilities and how to best serve them will contribute to the field for better inclusion of students with disabilities. Training teachers might also help to decrease discrimination toward students with disabilities.

The important finding of this study was that gender, age, years of experience, grade level taught, extent of contact with individuals with disabilities, whether or not teachers had received any training related to teaching students with disabilities, and teachers' perceptions toward their own level of expertise were not statistically significant predictors of attitudes toward students with disabilities. They contribute to the attitudes of teachers in some ways, but their contribution was not statistically significant. This information might help administrators while evaluating teachers for different purposes.

This study was designed to assess attitudes of teachers toward students with disabilities and the variables that could help us to predict teachers' attitudes; however, it does not directly assess teachers' skills in actually instructing and teaching students with disabilities. Therefore, future research can focus on investigating if the level of teachers' confidence and preparedness to work with students with disabilities has an influence on teachers' attitudes toward students with disabilities. Within the same study teachers' attitude scores can be compared in terms of their instructional models that they actually possess in the classrooms. The information gathered from such study will allow teacher preparation programs and in-training sessions to design better curricula to meet the need of general education teachers. It will also help school districts determine how to best support teachers in the classrooms.



The findings of this study indicated that teachers mainly hold positive attitudes toward students with disabilities. It can be implied that teachers' positive attitude will lead to significant change in the education of students with disabilities. Although none of the prediction models were statistically significant (except the age variable in the bivariate linear regression), selected variables somehow influenced the teachers' attitudes toward students with disabilities.

The current study did not inform or instruct participants about specific disabilities, and they asked to answer survey questions without any bias toward any category of disability. It is likely that teachers answered questions based on what they thought and believed fair for the students with disabilities. If they were instructed toward one specific disability category their answers would have been different and therefore their scores would be different. Another study can be conducted for specific group of disabilities.

In the current study, schools were selected from the state of Alabama, and the number of the participants were small, the study must be replicated with a larger group of participants and in a different region. Also teachers can be categorized in terms of how many students with disabilities they have in their classrooms. The variable of whether teachers had training or not can be also specified with specific trainings such as in-service training or college course that they took, or even self-education from different sources such as books, internet, etc. This might give us important information about how to increase positive teacher attitudes toward students with disabilities and its relation to specific kinds of trainings.

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## İlköğretim ve Ortaöğretimde Görev Yapan Öğretmenlerin Engelli Öğrencilere Karşı Tutumları \*

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### Özet:

Bu çalışmanın amacı Amerika'nın güneydoğusundaki öğretmenlerin engelli öğrencilere karşı olan tutumlarını incelemektir. Cinsiyet, yaş, deneyim, öğretmenin dersine girdiği sınıf düzeyi, öğretmenin engelli bireylerle olan etkileşim düzeyi, öğretmenin engelli öğrencilerle ilgili eğitiminin olup olmadığı ve öğretmenin kendini engelli öğrencileri eğitmekle ilgili ne kadar yeterli gördüğü gibi değişkenler incelenerek, bu değişkenlerin öğretmen tutumlarını belirlemede ne kadar iyi değişkenler olduğu araştırılmıştır. Araştırmanın sonuçlarına göre, öğretmenlerin engelli öğrencilere karşı olan tutumları genellikle pozitif çıkmıştır. Hesaplanan ortalamaların ve standart sapmaların incelenmesi sonucunda; bayan öğretmenlerin erkek öğretmenlere göre, yaşlı öğretmenlerin genç öğretmenlere göre, ilköğretimde görev yapan öğretmenlerin ortaöğretimde görev yapan öğretmenlere göre ve engelli öğrencileri eğitmek için eğitim almış öğretmenlerin almamışlara göre daha yüksek puanlar aldığı gözlenmiştir. Çok değişkenli doğrusal regresyon analizi sonucunda cinsiyet, yaş, deneyim, öğretmenin dersine girdiği sınıf düzeyi, öğretmenin engelli bireylerle olan etkileşim düzeyi, öğretmenin engelli öğrencilerle ilgili eğitiminin olup olmadığı ve öğretmenin kendini engelli öğrencileri eğitmekle ilgili ne kadar yeterli gördüğünün anlamlı değişkenler olmadığı saptanmıştır. Yalnız öğretmenlerin yaşı, tek başına değerlendirildiğinde, anlamlı bir faktör olarak bulunmuştur.

**Keywords:** Öğretmen tutumları, engelli öğrenciler, kaynaştırma eğitimi



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## GENİŞLETİLMİŞ ÖZET

**Problem:** Engelli öğrencilerin eğitimi ile ilgili yasal düzenlemeler, okullardaki engelli öğrenci sayısında ciddi artışa sebep olmuştur. Bu sayının artışı sınıflarda gerek öğretmenler açısından gerekse idareciler açısından çeşitli düzenlemeleri gerekli kılmıştır. Engelli öğrencilerle birlikte oluşmuş yeni sınıf ortamları öğretmenlere ve idarecilere yeni vazifeler yüklemiştir ve bu durum zaman zaman problemler çıkmasına sebep olmuştur. Kaynaştırma eğitimi öğretmenlerin yeni becerilere sahip olmasını gerektirmektedir. İnsan davranışının tutumları ile doğrudan ilişkili olduğu gerçeğinden yola çıkarak, öğretmenlerin engelli öğrencilere karşı olan tutumlarının onların sınıf içindeki davranışlarını doğrudan etkileyebileceği söylenebilir. Kaynaştırma eğitiminin başarılı olmasının öğretmenlerin engelli öğrencilere karşı olan tutumları ile ilgili olduğu birçok araştırmada ortaya konulmuştur ve bunun yanında öğretmenlerin genellikle okullarda çalışan diğer personelden daha negatif tutuma sahip olduğu da araştırmalarda belirtilmiştir. Öğretmenlerin engelli öğrencilere karşı olan tutumları birçok faktörden etkilenmektedir. Öğretmenlerin tutumlarını öğretmenin cinsiyeti, yaşı, deneyimi, öğretmenin dersine girdiği sınıf düzeyi, öğretmenin engelli bireylerle olan etkileşim düzeyi, öğretmenin engelli öğrencilerle ilgili eğitiminin olup olmadığı ve öğretmenin kendini engelli öğrencileri eğitmekle ilgili ne kadar yeterli gördüğü gibi faktörler çeşitli seviyelerde etkilenmektedir. Bu çalışmanın amacı güneydoğu Amerika'daki ilköğretim ve ortaöğretim okullarında çalışan öğretmenlerin engelli öğrencilere karşı olan tutumlarının incelenmesi ve bahsedilen değişkenlerin öğretmenlerin tutumlarını belirlemede ne kadar iyi değişkenler olduğunun belirlenmesidir.

**Yöntem:** Nicel araştırma yaklaşımına göre gerçekleştirilen bu çalışmada Larrive ve Cook (1979) tarafından geliştirilen ve daha sonra Kraska (2003) tarafından revize edilen "Öğretmenlerin Engelli Öğrencilere Karşı Olan Tutumları" adlı ölçek kullanılmıştır. 30 maddelik ölçekle birlikte adaylardan bilgi formu doldurması da istenmiştir. Bilgi formunda öğretmenlerin cinsiyeti, yaşı, ne kadar deneyime sahip olduğu, öğretmenin dersine girdiği sınıf düzeyi, öğretmenin engelli bireylerle olan etkileşim düzeyi, öğretmenin engelli öğrencilerle ilgili eğitiminin olup olmadığı ve öğretmenin kendini engelli öğrencileri eğitmekle ilgili ne kadar yeterli gördüğü ile alakalı sorular soruldu. Ölçek Amerika'nın güneydoğusunda bulunan bir ilköğretim okulunda ve bir lisede çalışan öğretmenlere uygulanmıştır. Katılımcıların % 70,2'sini (n=59) bayan öğretmenler % 29,8'ini (n=25) ise erkek öğretmenler oluşturmaktadır. 84 öğretmenden toplanan veri SPSS (sürüm 22) yazılımı kullanılarak analiz edilmiştir. Tanımlayıcı istatistikler ve .05 seviyesinde çoklu regresyon analizi yapılarak değişkenler incelenmiştir. Daha sonra değişkenlerin tek tek beta katsayıları incelenmiştir ve değişkenlerden biri için (yaş) iki değişkenli lineer regresyon analizi yapılmıştır.

**Bulgular ve Tartışma:** Araştırmada ilköğretim ve ortaöğretim öğretmenlerinin genel olarak engelli öğrencilere karşı olumlu tutum sergilediği bulunmakla beraber ilköğretim öğretmenlerinin tutum puanları (ort.=99.14) ortaöğretim öğretmenlerinin puanından (ort.=94.18) biraz daha yüksek çıkmıştır. Bayan öğretmenlerin puanları da (ort.=96.61) erkek öğretmenlerin puanlarından (ort.=92.80) yüksek bulunmuştur. Bunun yanında öğretmenlerin yaşlandıkça engelli öğrencilere karşı daha olumlu tutum sergiledikleri sonucuna da ulaşılmıştır. Regresyon analizine tüm belirleyicilerin birlikte girilmesi (öğretmenin cinsiyeti, yaşı, deneyimi, öğretmenin dersine girdiği sınıf düzeyi, öğretmenin engelli bireylerle olan etkileşim düzeyi, öğretmenin engelli öğrencilerle ilgili eğitiminin olup olmadığı ve öğretmenin kendini engelli öğrencileri eğitmekle ilgili ne kadar yeterli gördüğü) istatistiksel olarak anlamlı bir model ortaya koymamıştır [ $F(7, 76) = 1.31, p = .26$ ]. Ancak varyansın % 11'i bu belirleyiciler tarafından belirlenmektedir. Değişkenlerin tek tek beta katsayıları hesaplandığında yaş faktörünün .06 seviyesinde anlamlı olduğu bulunmuştur. Bundan dolayı yaş faktörü için iki değişkenli lineer regresyon analizi yapılmıştır ve yaş faktörünün öğretmenlerin engelli öğrencilere karşı olan tutum puanlarını istatistiksel olarak etkilediği bulunmuştur [ $F(1, 82) = 4.53, p = .04$ ]. Analiz sonucuna göre öğretmenlerin bir yaş yaşlanması ölçekten aldıkları puanları her sene için 3.15 puan artırmaktadır. Katılımcıların kişisel özellikleri

(yaş ve cinsiyet) ile profesyonel karakteristikleri (deneyimi, girdiği sınıf düzeyi, engelli bireylerle olan etkileşim düzeyi, engelli öğrencilerle ilgili eğitiminin olup olmadığı ve kendini engelli öğrencileri eğitmekle ilgili ne kadar yeterli gördüğü) gruplanarak ayrı ayrı analiz edilmiştir. Ne kişisel özellikler [ $F(2, 81) = 2.87, p = .07$ ] ne de profesyonel karakteristikler [ $F(5, 76) = .71, p = .62$ ] öğretmenlerin engelli öğrencilere karşı olan tutumlarını belirleme de istatistiksel olarak anlamlı modeller ortaya koymamıştır. Kişisel özellikler öğretmenlerin toplam puanlarını % 7 etkilerken profesyonel karakteristikler öğretmenlerin engelli öğrencilere karşı olan tutum puanlarına % 4'lük bir katkı sağlamaktadır.

**Sonuç ve Öneriler:** Araştırmanın sonucuna göre bayan öğretmenlerin engelli öğrencilere karşı olan tutumlarının daha pozitif olması daha önceki yapılan araştırmalarla paralellik göstermektedir. Ancak lise öğretmenlerinin ilköğretim öğretmenlerinden yüksek puan alması ve öğretmenlerin yaşlandıkça daha pozitif tutum sergilemeleri daha önce yapılan araştırmaların birçoğu ile farklılık göstermektedir. Bunun yanında engelli öğrencileri eğitmekle ilgili eğitim alan öğretmenlerin puanları diğerlerine göre daha yüksek bulunmuştur. Öğretmenlerin engelli öğrencilerle ilgili eğitimlere katılarak bilgi birikimlerini artırmaları ve tutumları ile ilgili pozitif bir artış sağlanarak, engelli öğrencilerinin eğitiminin kalitesi artırılabilir. Bu çalışmanın bir diğer önemli sonucu, öğretmenin cinsiyeti, yaşı, deneyimi, öğretmenin dersine girdiği sınıf düzeyi, öğretmenin engelli bireylerle olan etkileşim düzeyi, öğretmenin engelli öğrencilerle ilgili eğitiminin olup olmadığı ve öğretmenin kendini engelli öğrencileri eğitmekle ilgili ne kadar yeterli gördüğünün bilinmesinin öğretmenin tutumlarını tahmin etmede yeterli olmadığı sonucudur. Bu çalışma öğretmenlerin tutumları ile birlikte eğitim yaklaşımları ve eğitim gereksinimleri göz önüne alınarak tekrarlanabilir. Bunun yanında çalışmada genel olarak engelli öğrencilere karşı tutumlar incelenmiştir, otizm, öğrenme güçlüğü gibi daha özel engeller seçilerek ve örneklem genişletilerek çalışma tekrarlanabilir.