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Disability in the Perception of Students. Results of Research on Attitudes Toward People with Disabilities

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Abstract

The aim of the presented paper is to reveal selected results of research on the perception of people with disabilities and attitudes toward this group as declared by students from pedagogical and non-pedagogical fields of study.

The presented research was conducted with a group of 110 persons, divided into two equal subgroups: 55 students from pedagogical programs and 55 students from non-pedagogical programs. The diagnostic survey method and questionnaire technique were used, utilizing a survey questionnaire. The pilot study presented, allows for the following conclusions: 1. The majority of the surveyed students have a positive perception of individuals with disabilities and exhibit positive social attitudes towards them, with ambivalent attitudes being significantly less frequent. There are also a few negative declarations, but these are relatively rare. 2. The differences between students from pedagogical and non-pedagogical programs regarding their attitudes towards individuals with disabilities are relatively minor and generally not statistically significant. Statistical significance was only found in one case, concerning the emotional and volitional components of negative attitudes (specifically the belief that individuals with disabilities are a "burden" to family and society). This situation requires further analysis. 3. It can be assumed that the attitudes declared by the students towards individuals with disabilities are related to various other factors that influence their overall social perception, internalized patterns of interpersonal behaviour, and, most importantly, direct interactions with people with disabilities.

Keywords: attitudes toward people with disabilities, students of pedagogical fields, students of non-pedagogical fields.

Introduction

Nowadays, in the lives of societies worldwide, „intense social changes related to the processes of globalization and systemic transformation are evident. Alongside progress, these changes often reveal their unintended consequences (...). They show various aspects of human functioning in countless areas of life, on many levels of organization, highlighting previously unknown phenomena and processes occurring within them” (Segiet, 2015, p. 35). One of the significant aspects that continually stimulates research is disability, which is currently not viewed as an issue affecting only the individual or their immediate family environment but also is perceived as an important social issue.

Understanding and social perception of disability have significantly changed not only throughout human history but also over the last few decades of the 20th century. This is particularly evident in the social model of disability, which views it as an issue for society as a whole. Although it directly affects the individual, it is considered in a social dimension as a factor conditioning the development of society towards equalizing developmental opportunities for all its members (Kirenko, 2007, pp. 5–6). This model assumes a specific approach to the rights of people with disabilities and implies a realization of social attitudes towards this group and various problems, which many authors emphasize as „a tendency to establish interpersonal relationships. This generates the need to shape appropriate social attitudes, which, on one hand, will promote inclusion and, on the other hand, eliminate stereotypes, prejudices, and discrimination” (Kazanowski, 2015, p. 34).

People with disabilities are a significant part of society, and statistics show that approximately 15% of the world's population faces challenges or limitations in performing daily activities due to disabilities (Chan & Zoellick, 2013, p. 9). Although disability does not define a person nor strip them of their dignity or human rights, it does mean that the functioning of this group is influenced by both the social perception of disability and societal attitude toward people with disabilities and their issues.

Research in this field has been and will always be particularly important, as the changing reality requires continuous updates in both the perception of disability and the declared and especially the enacted social attitudes. This article presents a selected section of pilot research on the perception of disability and social attitudes towards people with disabilities among a group of students who, at the beginning of their adulthood, are not only pursuing their own life plans but also becoming creators of social life. They constitute the generation that often already has or will have, after completing their education, a significant impact on shaping the living space for themselves and others, including people with disabilities. This is especially relevant for students in pedagogical fields of

science, who will become teachers, educators, or caregivers for people with disabilities, as well as their assistants or facilitators in daily life. During the student years, views on life are formed, personal roles in the social world are defined, and attitudes towards others, including people with disabilities, are solidified. Therefore, addressing this topic seems particularly important.

Perception of disability and its determinants

Each person uses perception to form a subjective image of reality in their consciousness—a result of individual experiences, attitudes, and current emotional states. Perception is active and creative, so individuals not only register but also actively process the information they receive, selecting and interpreting it according to the data stored in memory about their environment. At the same time, this process allows individuals to remember and use information to form judgments and make decisions about social reality (Aronson, Wilson, & Akert, 1997, p. 167). The role of schemas is also crucial, as they enable the classification of not only events, actions, and their sequences but also people and their attributes, which is particularly important when discussing the social perception of individuals with disabilities.

Among the determinants of the perception of disability are sociocultural and ideological conditions of the era, as indicated by the mentioned transformations. Personal dispositions (such as being open-minded, reflectiveness, empathy, and lack of prejudice) are also significant, as they are closely related to generationally transmitted attitudes of parents. It is widely believed that children replicate and reinforce their parents' behaviour patterns and beliefs. The attitudes and actions of teachers are also important, as the trust and authority of a teacher are strong predictors of students' attitudes. Additionally, media messages have a crucial role, especially in the present day, because information, campaigns, and television and radio programs are significant opinion-forming factors. Social perception of disability is also largely influenced by familiarity and direct contact with people with disabilities, as confirmed by both literature on the subject and observations and research by the author.

From a pedagogical perspective, similar to a sociological approach, the concept of attitude is understood as "a relatively stable emotional or evaluative relationship to an object, or a disposition to have such a relationship" (Mika, 1972, p. 65). The concept of social attitude is very complex. Authors, especially psychologists, identify three interrelated aspects: the "cognitive, emotional, and motivational (volitional) components. The cognitive component involves comparing the individual with accepted standards and patterns and making an evaluative assessment. The emotional component has a positive or negative sign

and is associated with pleasant or unpleasant experiences. The motivational component directs behavior 'away from' or 'toward' the object of the attitude" (Marszałek, 2007, p. 340). Discussions on social attitudes toward people with disabilities reveal that both historically and nowadays, these attitudes are diverse. It is also important to note that attitudes are not static and change over time. Factors determining these changes, both historically and today, include: prevailing social norms, beliefs, social policy, cultural levels, and economic conditions shaping people's quality of life. The way society views people with disabilities often stems from stereotypes, customs, beliefs, ideologies, and politics. This remains true today, as evidenced by substantive analyses aimed at revealing societal attitudes toward people with disabilities (Gazdulska, 2008, p. 287).

There are two opposing types most commonly identified among the attitudes toward people with disabilities: positive (supportive) and negative (unsupportive). The accepting attitude is characterized by a realistic assessment of the abilities and limitations of people with disabilities, acceptance, a willingness to understand, natural and friendly interaction, and being ready to cooperate and assist. The negative attitude is associated with negative feelings, incorrect assessments, and downgrading the abilities of people with disabilities, as well as fear, opposition, or aversion toward their participation in society (Sękowski, 1994; Ostrowska, 2015). Additionally, there are also intermediate attitudes—indecisive—such as sympathy, pity, indifference, curiosity, and observational interest (Larkowa, 1970, pp. 17-20).

Table 1.
Characteristics of the components of social attitudes toward people with disabilities

ATTITUDE	COMPONENT	CHARACTERISTIC FEATURES
POSITIVE	intellectual	recognition, respect
	emotional	kindness, sympathy
	volitional	acceptance, willingness to maintain contact
AMBIVALENT	intellectual	curiosity, interest
	emotional	compassion, pity, indifference
	volitional	observation, admiration
NEGATIVE	intellectual	negative evaluation of traits
	emotional	aversion to the sight of disability
	volitional	avoidance of contact

Source: own elaboration based on literature: Larkowa 1970, pp. 17-20; Gazdulska, 2008; et al.

It is worth emphasizing the "planned process initiated in the early 1990s aimed at integrating people with disabilities into the mainstream of social life by removing various barriers to their participation. This process covered many as-

pects of life and functioning—education, work and employment, access to culture, realization of civil rights, communication, and environmental accessibility" (Ostrowska, 2015, p. 323). Although this has led to an increase in positive attitudes toward people with disabilities (the percentage of such evaluations increased from 38.0% in 1993 to 49.0% in 2013), CBOS data (2007, p. 3) show that: the majority of Poles (48.0%) believe that the attitude of Poles toward people with disabilities is negative, although nearly half of the respondents (45.0%) view it as positive.

Thus, the present continuously demonstrate that disability and the issues faced by people with disabilities are still perceived in diverse ways within the social and public life. In reality, the true attitude and internal, not necessarily verbalized, attitudes toward people with disabilities are often marked by irrational fear or aversion. It is characteristic that these negative attitudes are mostly commonly presented by individuals who have not had direct contact with people with disabilities and who lack knowledge about disability. Given that the sources of negative attitudes are mainly a lack of information and experience in interacting with people with disabilities, it is a reasonable conclusion that systematic expansion of knowledge about the functioning of people with disabilities in all areas of their lives is necessary. This is especially important as it has significant practical implications and can aid in designing actions to support the development of people with disabilities by institutions addressing their issues, educators, and social activists. It undoubtedly contributes to modifying attitudes toward people with disabilities in the spirit of genuine, rather than declared, social inclusion.

Methodological assumptions of the research

Current academic education increasingly emphasizes the holistic development of individuals. Thus, it is crucial to highlight the "need to develop a belief in the dignity of every person, respect for their rights, and democratic participation in economic and social life" (Tomczyszyn, Pańczuk, Szepeluk, 2022, p. 37). Effective implementation of educational activities at the higher education level promotes, or at least should promote, the reduction of behaviours such as intolerance, stigmatization, and social exclusion to which people with disabilities are vulnerable.

The aim of the presented paper is to reveal selected results of research on the perception of people with disabilities and attitudes toward this group as declared by students from pedagogical and non-pedagogical fields of study. The variable of study program (pedagogical vs. non-pedagogical) is considered potentially significant for identifying differences in the perception of disability and attitudes toward individuals affected by it.

The choice of topic was motivated by the fact that students in pedagogical programs are inherently preparing to work with children, adolescents, or adults. They acquire competencies for working in various educational and non-educational institutions, with diverse forms and social groups, including a significant number of individuals with disabilities due to the increasing widespread adoption of inclusive education. Certainly, their future work will require a professional attitude towards both individuals with disabilities and their issues. Therefore, an in-depth examination of their social perception and attitudes toward people with disabilities is crucial. Thus, it was investigated whether and how the perception of disability and students' attitudes differ depending on their field of study.

The presented research was conducted with a group of 110 persons, divided into two equal subgroups: 55 students from pedagogical programs (including: correctional pedagogy with social prevention, and educational care pedagogy) and 55 students from non-pedagogical programs (political science, international relations, management). The diagnostic survey method and questionnaire technique were used, utilizing a survey questionnaire.

The students participating in the study expressed their views on the social perception of disability and attitudes toward people with disabilities by responding to statements related to three identified types of attitudes: positive, ambivalent, and negative. Each statement was detailed and included the mentioned components of attitudes: cognitive, emotional, and volitional.

The list of statements was developed based on extensive discussions with students (during classes conducted using the "brainstorming" method), during which various statement variants defining possible attitudes toward the issue were generated. These statements were analysed and categorized into groups corresponding to the three types of social attitudes toward people with disabilities identified in the literature: positive, ambivalent, and negative. The organized statements were then presented to the students, who were asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed with them (using a seven-point scale to measure the degree of agreement: strongly agree, agree, rather agree, neither agree nor disagree, rather disagree, disagree, strongly disagree).

Due to the limited scope of this article, only selected results will be presented, which relate to the three previously mentioned types of attitudes and include statements addressing:

- Positive Attitudes: These concern to positive feelings toward people with disabilities, willingness to establish contact with them, and the readiness to offer help when needed.
- Ambivalent Attitudes: These involve feelings such as compassion, curiosity, and fears about contact that may lead to avoiding it.
- Negative Attitudes: These are expressed through discomfort nearby people with disabilities, avoidance of contact, and beliefs that they are a burden to others, or making these feelings clearly understood.

Student attitudes toward people with disabilities – results of pilot research

The obtained results (presented in the tables and in the graphs in the following parts of the article) highlight differences in this area between students from pedagogical programs and those from non-pedagogical programs. Due to the necessity of a concise presentation and analysis of the research findings, it seems that this will address the research problem and achieve the aim of the study, which is to understand the students' declarations regarding their attitudes toward people with disabilities and to identify any potential differences based on their field of study.

Positive attitudes toward people with disabilities in the declarations of students from pedagogical and non-pedagogical programs

It was assumed that positive perceptions and attitudes of the surveyed students toward people with disabilities could be indicated by their agreement with the following statements:

- *I have positive feelings toward people with disabilities and am willing to engage with them* (Table 2, Figure 1).
- *When needed, I consider how I might help a person with a disability and provide assistance* (Table 3, Figure 2).

Positive attitudes toward people with disabilities are characterized by their acceptance, experiencing positive emotions, willingness to maintain contact with these individuals (emotional components of the attitude), and being ready to offer help depending on the need (volitional components of the attitude). It turned out that the significant majority of the respondents declare such attitudes.

Table 2.

Positive attitudes of students from educational and non-educational disciplines towards people with disabilities - emotional components

ATTITUDES	STUDENTS				Overall	
	pedagogical field		non-pedagogical field			
	N	%	N		N	%
POSITIVE	47	85,45	38	69,09	85	77,27
AMBIVALENT	6	10,91	15	27,27	21	19,09

Table 2.
Positive attitudes of students from educational... (cont.)

ATTITUDES	STUDENTS				Overall	
	pedagogical field		non-pedagogical field			
	N	%	N		N	%
NEGATIVE	2	3,64	2	3,64	4	3,64
Sum	55	100,00	55	100,00	110	100,00

Chi2 = 4,81, df=2, p=0,090 - The difference is significant at the statistical trend level.

Source: own research.

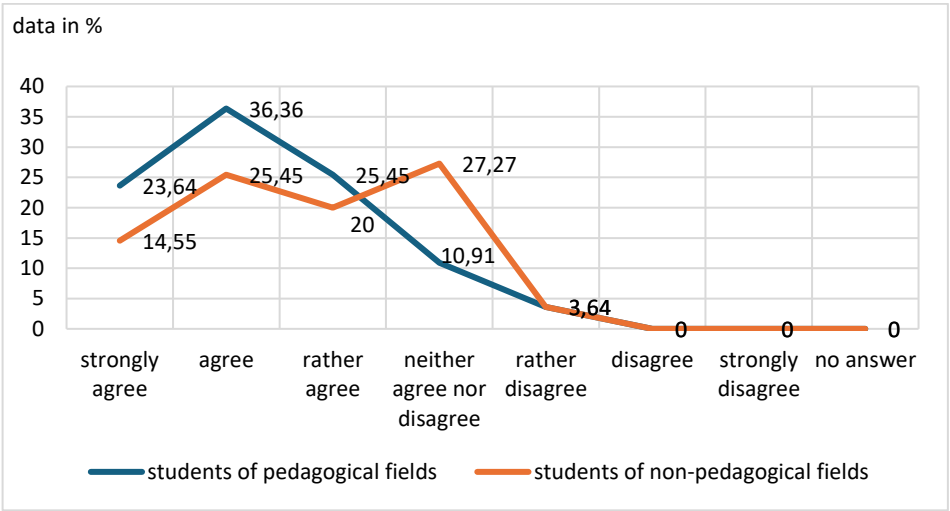


Figure 1.
Students' positive feelings towards people with disabilities and willingness to engage with them in survey responses

Statement: *I have positive feelings toward people with disabilities and am willing to engage with them.*

Source: own research

The results presented above indicate that the vast majority of surveyed students, both from pedagogical (85.45%) and non-pedagogical (69.09%) programs, express positive feelings towards people with disabilities and are keen to establish contact with them. Respondents agree to varying extents with the provided statement, with students from pedagogical programs slightly more often indicating agreement (strongly agree, agree, or rather agree). However, the Chi-square test revealed that the difference between students from pedagogical and non-pedagogical programs may be considered significant at a statistical trend level (p=0.90).

These results are promising, and the minor differences in the degree of agreement with the statement (Figure 1) may suggest that pedagogical students have more experience in interacting with people with disabilities or engage in coursework that promotes interpersonal skills, fostering greater openness towards others, including those with disabilities.

Some respondents find it difficult to clearly identify with the statement, and students from non-pedagogical programs are nearly three times more likely to struggle with making a definitive declaration (10.91% of pedagogical students and 27.27% of non-pedagogical students chose "neither agree nor disagree"). This is likely related to the mentioned reduced opportunity for direct contact with people with disabilities.

It is also important to notice that some respondents declared that they rather do not have positive feelings towards people with disabilities and are not eager to establish contact (3.64% in both groups). Although this declaration indicates a negative attitude (and was classified as such in this part of the study), it serves as a clear signal for further in-depth analysis in the continuing project.

Positive attitudes towards people with disabilities are characterized by their acceptance and willingness to maintain contact. Although, if these answers be genuine and not only declarative, but they should also involve a willingness to provide assistance when needed. It appears that the majority of respondents declare their readiness to help people with disabilities, when necessary, as demonstrated by the data below.

Table 3.

Positive attitudes of students from educational and non-educational fields towards people with disabilities - volitional components

ATTITUDES	STUDENTS				Overall	
	pedagogical field		non-pedagogical field			
	N	%	N	N	%	%
POSITIVE	53	96,36	52	94,54	105	95,45
AMBIVALENT	2	3,64	1	1,82	3	2,73
NEGATIVE	0	0,00	2	3,64	2	1,82
Sum	55	100,00	55	100,00	110	100,00

Chi2 = 2,34, df=2, p=0,310 - The difference is not statistically significant.

Source: own research

It is highly encouraging that almost all respondents, regardless of their field of study, express a willingness to help a person with a disability, especially when there is a need. The differences between respondents based on their field of study are minor and statistically insignificant.

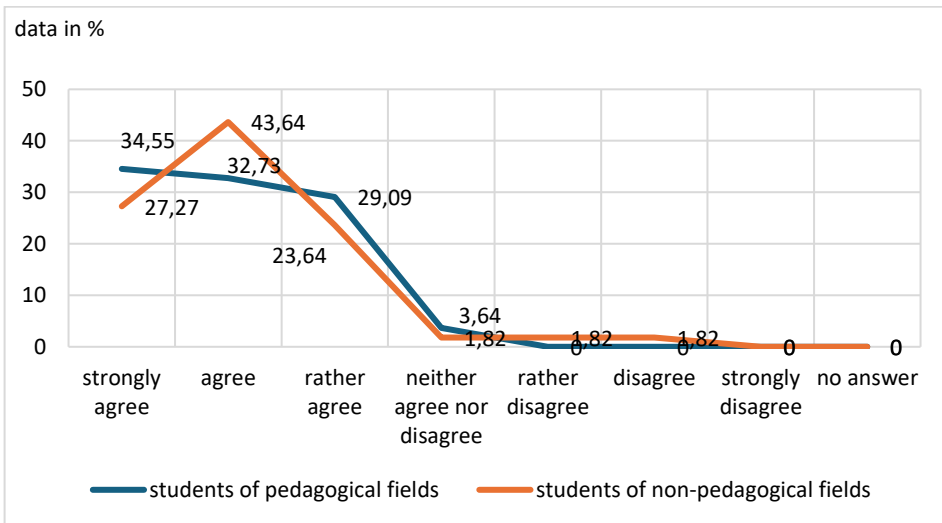


Figure 2.

Students' Declarations Regarding Providing Assistance to People with Disabilities

Statement: *When needed, I consider how I might help a person with a disability and provide assistance.*

Source: own research.

It is worth noticing that while no negative declarations were revealed among students from pedagogical fields (none rejected the statement about providing help to a person with a disability), there were individuals in the group of non-pedagogical students who did not agree or rather did not agree with the statement (1.82% of the total respondents). However, it should be clearly stated that such a result would require in-depth analysis, as it does not necessarily imply a negative attitude toward people with disabilities. It may simply indicate that they would not undertake helping a person with a disability due to a lack of skills or knowledge on how to do so. In such cases, it could be considered an ambivalent attitude, similar to a few individuals (2.73% of the total respondents) who declared that they find it difficult to say whether they would be ready to help a person with a disability in case of need.

Ambivalent attitudes towards people with disabilities in the declarations of students from pedagogical and non-pedagogical fields

Social attitudes towards people with disabilities, as discussed in the introduction, are a complex and varied category. Therefore, between positive and

negative attitudes, a third type is discussed—ambivalent (or intermediate) attitudes. This is justified because perceptions and individual attitudes towards people with disabilities are not always purely positive or extremely negative. As noted by the authors, it sometimes happens that "society, whether consciously or unconsciously, prevents people with disabilities from actively participating in personal and professional life, which somewhat depreciates them. In such cases, interaction with people with disabilities is motivated by compassion and pity, which lead to a positive manifestation, namely the desire to help these individuals" (Gazdulska, 2008, p. 286).

In the research, it was assumed that ambivalent attitudes would be indicated by a high degree of agreement with statements containing emotional components, such as: compassion, curiosity, as well as volitional components, such as avoiding contact (Table 1.). These are as follows:

- *I feel compassion for people with disabilities and wonder what caused their disability* (Table 4., Chart 3.).
- *I admire people with disabilities, but I do not know how to behave around them, so I avoid them* (Table 5., Chart 4.).

Table 4.

Ambivalent attitudes of pedagogical and non-pedagogical students towards people with disabilities: emotional components

ATTITUDES	STUDENTS				Overall	
	pedagogical field		non-pedagogical field			
	N	%	N	N	%	%
POSITIVE	23	41,82	27	50,00	50	45,87
AMBIVALENT	14	25,45	13	24,07	27	24,77
NEGATIVE	18	32,73	14	25,93	32	29,36
Sum	55	100,00	54	100,00	109	100,00

Chi2 = 1,12, df=2, p=0,657 - The difference is not statistically significant.

Source: own research.

The research results showed that a significant part of the respondents has an ambivalent attitude. This is evidenced by the fact that 32.73% of students from pedagogical fields and 25.93% of students from non-pedagogical fields identify to with the statement of expressing compassion towards people with disabilities and curiosity about their causes. This type of response is characteristic of the emotional component of an ambivalent attitude according to the literature (Table 1.). Nearly a quarter of respondents indicated that it is difficult to say definitively whether they identify with the presented statement. In both cases, the choices made by the respondents suggest an ambivalent attitude.

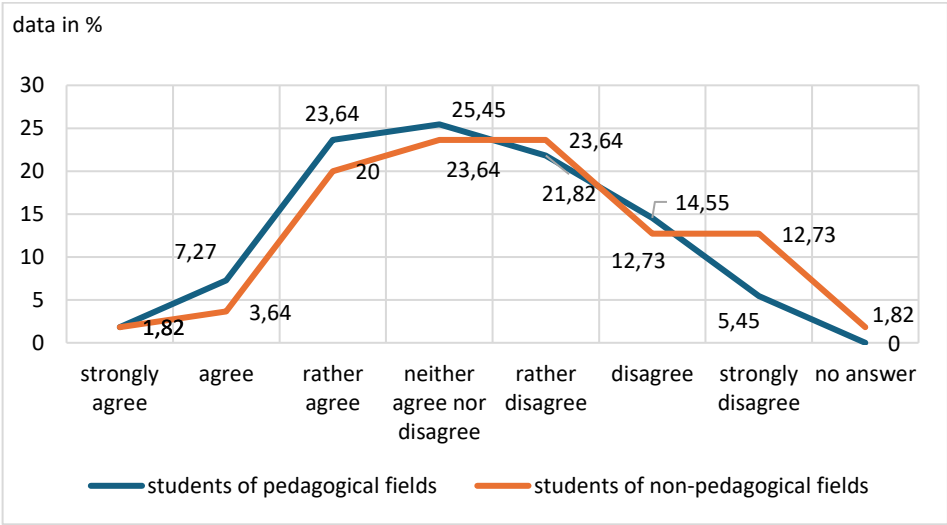


Figure 3.
Compassion Felt Towards People with Disabilities in Students' Declarations
Statement: *I feel compassion for people with disabilities and wonder what caused their disability.*
Source: own research

However, it is important to note that such an attitude is sometimes classified by some authors as negative. Nevertheless, compassion does not necessarily carry negative connotations. It can also be a sign of solidarity with someone and goodwill towards them. In this case, it takes on a more positive attitude, especially if it correlates with taking specific actions to support the person and is close to empathy.

It is also worth noticing that while there are some differences in this regarding on students depending on their field of study (pedagogical or non-pedagogical), these differences are minor and are not statistically significant.

Table 5.
Ambivalent attitudes of students from pedagogical and non-pedagogical fields towards people with disabilities - volitional components

ATTITUDES	STUDENTS				Overall	
	pedagogical field		non-pedagogical field			
	N	%	N	N	%	%
POSITIVE	1	1,85	5	9,62	6	5,66
AMBIVALENT	6	11,11	10	19,23	16	15,09
NEGATIVE	47	87,04	37	71,15	84	79,25
Sum	54	100,00	52	100,00	106	100,00

Chi2 = 4,82, df=2, p=0,090 - The difference is significant at the level of statistical trend.
Source: own research.

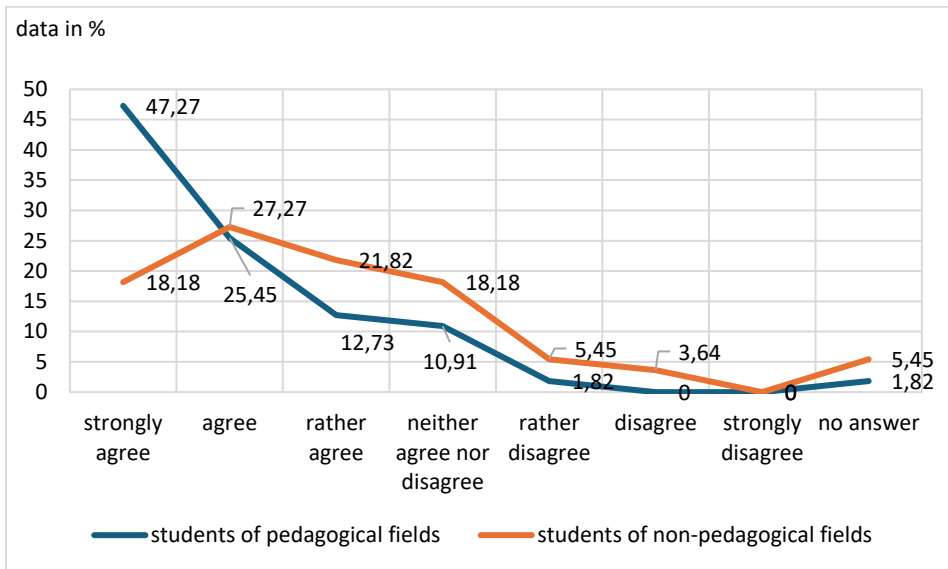


Figure 4.

Admiration for people with disabilities in the declarations of surveyed students

Statement: *I admire people with disabilities, but I do not know how to behave around them, so I avoid them.*

Source: own research

In this part of the study, volitional components of ambivalent (intermediate) related to the sphere of contact between the surveyed students and people with disabilities attitudes was analysed. Participants were asked to indicate their level of agreement with another statement that included information about difficulties in behaving appropriately towards people with disabilities, leading to avoiding contact with them (avoiding "just in case").

The research showed that most of the surveyed students, slightly more often those from pedagogical fields (87.04%) than non-pedagogical fields (71.15%), identified to varying degrees (strongly agree, agree, rather agree) with the statement that despite their admiration for people with disabilities, they do not know how to behave around them and therefore avoid contact. This avoidance of contact, although classified here as a symptom directly indicating a negative attitude, requires deeper analysis. These data probably reflect a low level of knowledge among the respondents about disabilities, and perhaps also a certain lack of interpersonal skills that are necessary for interactions with others, especially people with disabilities.

Among non-pedagogical students, there were also almost twice as many as among pedagogical students who could not clearly respond to the statement presented to them. This situation seems to confirm the above assumption, given

that pedagogical students certainly have more opportunities to acquire knowledge about disabilities and develop skills that help engaging in interpersonal contacts and relationships, including these with people with disabilities.

The revealed differences among the surveyed students, considering the independent variable of their field of study (pedagogical vs. non-pedagogical), can be considered significant at the level of statistical trend ($p=0.90$).

Negative attitudes towards people with disabilities in the declarations of students of pedagogical and non-pedagogical fields of study

Negative social attitudes towards people with disabilities not only indicate a lack of acceptance but also manifest through hidden or expressed rejection, feelings of discomfort in their presence, avoidance of contact with them, and even social exclusion or discrimination (Table 1). In the presented study, it was assumed that negative attitudes towards people with disabilities would be indicated by a high level of agreement with the following statements:

- *I feel uncomfortable seeing a person with a disability, so I try not to pay attention to them* (Table 6., Figure 5.).
- *I believe that people with disabilities are a 'burden' to their family and society, and I tell them this directly* (Table 7., Figure 6.).

The research results revealed that unfortunately, a significant part of the surveyed students, which is approximately 10% (9.26% in both subgroups, regardless of the field of study), show varying degrees of agreement with the statement that they feel discomfort in the presence of people with disabilities and therefore avoid contact with them. Additionally, a similar proportion of respondents (10.18% of all respondents, and surprisingly, slightly more students from pedagogical fields than from non-pedagogical fields) found it difficult to determine how much they agree with such a statement. It can be assumed that among these individuals are those who did not want to express their opinion, aware that it would indicate a negative attitude towards people with disabilities, which is inconsistent with the overall societal trend.

However, it is optimistic that the significant majority of respondents do not identify with the provided statement, which indicates that their attitudes towards people with disabilities can be considered positive. This group constitutes 80.56% of all respondents, with slightly more of them being students from non-pedagogical fields (81.48%) than from pedagogical fields (79.63%). However, these differences are not statistically significant.

Negative attitudes towards people with disabilities unfortunately often lead to inappropriate behaviour towards them. The research aimed to address this

issue by evaluating students' responses to a statement that portrays people with disabilities as a "burden" to their immediate and extended social environment.

Table 6.

Negative attitudes of students from pedagogical and non-pedagogical fields towards people with disabilities – emotional components

ATTITUDES	STUDENTS				Overall	
	pedagogical field		non-pedagogical field			
	N	%	N	N	%	%
POSITIVE	43	79,63	44	81,48	87	80,56
AMBIVALENT	6	11,11	5	9,26	11	10,18
NEGATIVE	5	9,26	5	9,26	10	9,26
Sum	54	100,00	54	100,00	108	100,00

$\chi^2 = 4,82$, $df=2$, $p=0,950$ - The difference is not statistically significant.

Source: own research

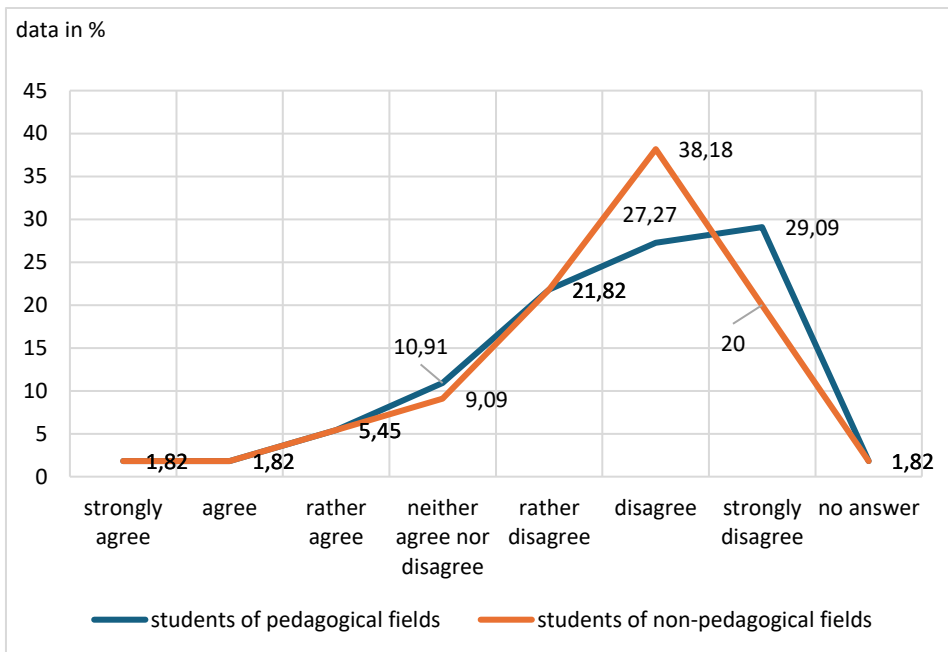


Figure 5.

Experiencing discomfort and avoiding people with disabilities in respondents' declarations

Statement: *I feel uncomfortable seeing a person with a disability, so I try not to pay attention to them*

Source: own research.

Table 7.
Negative attitudes of pedagogical and non-pedagogical students towards people with disabilities – volitional components

ATTITUDES	STUDENTS				Overall	
	pedagogical field		non-pedagogical field		%	%
	N	%	N	N		
POSITIVE	55	100,00	46	85,19	101	92,66
AMBIVALENT	0	0,00	7	12,96	7	6,42
NEGATIVE	0	0,00	1	1,85	1	0,92
Sum	55	100,00	54	100,00	109	100,00

Chi2 = 8,79, df=2, p=0,012 - The difference is statistically significant.

Source: own research

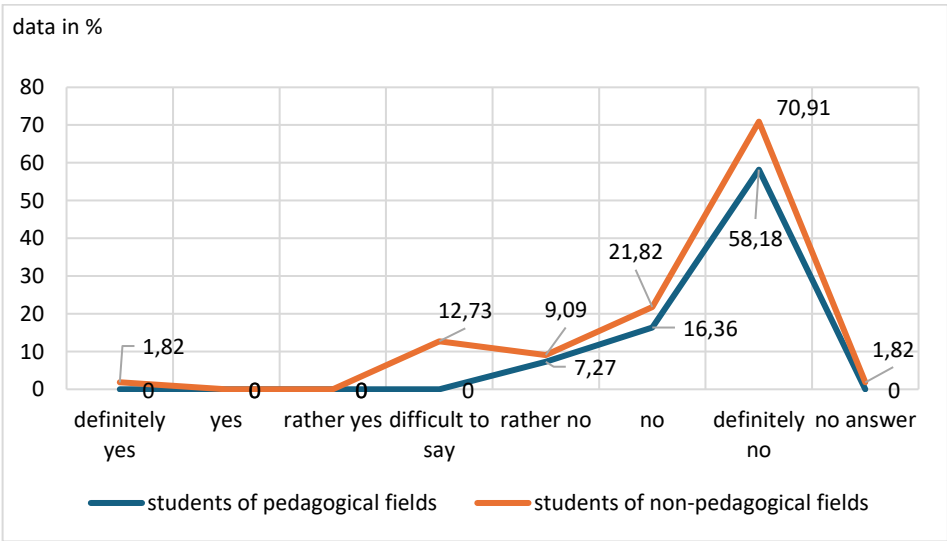


Figure 6.
Perception of people with disabilities as a "burden" on family and society in respondents' opinions
Statement: *I believe that people with disabilities are a 'burden' to their family and society, and I tell them this directly.*

Source: own research

A significant majority of the surveyed students, 92.66%, did not agree with the statement that people with disabilities are a “social burden”. It was found that all students from pedagogical programs (100.00%) rejected this statement, either strongly or any other way. Importantly, not only did no one identify with the statement, but also no one had any doubts about their decision, as no one found it difficult to express their opinion on this matter (difficult to say).

In contrast, among students from non-pedagogical programs, there were individuals who had difficulty with this (12.96%), and one person explicitly declared that they strongly agree with this statement. Considering that this is a negligible percentage of all respondents (0.92%), it could be treated as an extreme result falling within the measurement error categories. However, an in-depth analysis of this issue using the Chi-square test showed that the differences in this case are statistically significant ($p=0.012$). Therefore, this issue requires further in-depth analysis, both quantitative and qualitative.

Summary

Today's discussions increasingly emphasize that "disability is a relative characteristic, primarily arising from the nature of the relationship between an individual and the environment in which they find themselves and must operate" (Gąciarz, 2014, pp. 10-11). At the same time, the idea of social inclusion and the full integration of individuals with disabilities into the of society is gaining popularity in everyday practice. One of the crucial conditions for effectively realizing this idea is overcoming irrational fears, concerns, and anxieties in interactions with people with disabilities. This is also a prerequisite for achieving genuine acceptance of people with disabilities and for realizing, rather than declaring, positive social attitudes towards this group.

The pilot study presented, conducted with a group of 110 students from both pedagogical and non-pedagogical programs, although it does not permit far-reaching generalizations, allows for the following conclusions:

1. The majority of the surveyed students have a positive perception of individuals with disabilities and exhibit positive social attitudes towards them, with ambivalent attitudes being significantly less frequent. There are also a few negative declarations, but these are relatively rare.
2. The differences between students from pedagogical and non-pedagogical programs regarding their attitudes towards individuals with disabilities are relatively minor and generally not statistically significant. Statistical significance was only found in one case, concerning the emotional and volitional components of negative attitudes (specifically the belief that individuals with disabilities are a "burden" to family and society). This situation requires further analysis.
3. It can be assumed that the attitudes declared by the students towards individuals with disabilities are related to various other factors that influence their overall social perception, internalized patterns of interpersonal behaviour, and, most importantly, direct interactions with people with disabilities.

In summary, each attempt to understand and describe the social perception of disability, as well as efforts to update knowledge regarding social attitudes leading to their modification and continuous update, contributes to the realization of the concept of social inclusion. This article is such an attempt by presenting the results of research on the attitudes of students from pedagogical and non-pedagogical programs towards individuals with disabilities, conducted as part of a broader project.

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Niepełnosprawność w percepcji studentów. Wyniki badań nad postawami wobec osób z niepełnosprawnością

Streszczenie

Celem prezentowanego artykułu jest ukazanie wybranych wyników badań dotyczących postrzegania osób niepełnosprawnych i postaw wobec tej grupy deklarowanych przez studentów kierunków pedagogicznych i niepedagogicznych.

Prezentowane badania przeprowadzono w grupie 110 osób, podzielonych na dwie równoliczne podgrupy: 55 studentów kierunków pedagogicznych i 55 studentów kierunków niepedagogicznych. Zastosowano metodę sondażu diagnostycznego oraz technikę ankietową z wykorzystaniem kwestionariusza ankiety. Przedstawione badanie pilotażowe pozwala na sformułowanie następujących wniosków: 1. Większość badanych studentów pozytywnie postrzega osoby z niepełnosprawnością i wykazuje wobec nich pozytywne postawy społeczne, przy czym postawy ambiwalentne występują istotnie rzadziej. Pojawiają się również nieliczne deklaracje negatywne, ale są one stosunkowo rzadkie. 2. Różnice pomiędzy studentami kierunków pedagogicznych i niepedagogicznych w zakresie postaw wobec osób niepełnosprawnych są stosunkowo niewielkie i generalnie nieistotne statystycznie. Istotność statystyczną stwierdzono tylko w jednym przypadku, dotyczącym emocjonalnych i wolicjonalnych komponentów negatywnych postaw (w szczególności przekonania, że osoby niepełnosprawne są „ciężarem” dla rodziny i społeczeństwa). Sytuacja ta wymaga dalszej analizy. 3. Można przypuszczać, że deklarowane przez studentów postawy wobec osób z niepełnosprawnością są związane z różnymi innymi czynnikami, które wpływają na ich ogólną percepcję społeczną, zinternalizowane wzorce zachowań interpersonalnych oraz, co najważniejsze, bezpośrednie interakcje z osobami z niepełnosprawnością.

Słowa kluczowe: postawy wobec osób z niepełnosprawnością, studenci kierunków pedagogicznych, studenci kierunków niepedagogicznych.