Autism Awareness Among NNMC Students

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Abstract

Individuals who fall on the autism spectrum display characteristics that make it difficult to cope in society and have difficulty communicating due to their social ability. Previous research has been conducted on individuals with ASD who display aggressive behaviors in public places. This type of behavior may be intimidating to those who are not familiar with ASD. This study is being conducted to show how individuals with ASD interact with others in social settings, and how others respond to them. For this research, a convenience sample survey was conducted on college students to determine how they regard individuals with autism, based upon how intimately they knew someone with autism.

Introduction

As autism has been greatly increasing, my question is, "How many people are informed about ASD (Autism Spectrum Disorder), and what attitudes exist as a result?" It seems that individuals with disabilities are treated differently or ignored. With the rise of ASD, it is important for members of society to learn to interact with people who have this diagnosis. My project is about autism awareness and discovering what college students at NNMC (Northern New Mexico College) think about ASD.

Theory

The purpose of this exploratory study was to examine people's awareness and attitudes towards individuals diagnosed with ASD (Autism Spectrum Disorder). My theory was to find out and explain if NNMC students show bias and critical attitudes towards individuals who are mentally challenged and why.

Hypothesis

One hypothesis was to know how much Northern students knew about autism, and if they knew anyone with ASD. My second hypothesis was to determine their attitudes towards individuals who have autism.

Y= cause / Y=effect

The more ASD increases, bias decreases
The more ASD increases, bias increases
The more ASD decreases, bias increases
The more ASD increases, bias decreases
No relationship = Null hypotheses

Data Collection and Methods

Table 1: Sample Responses to the statement "Autism is a social disability".

	STRONGLY DISAGREE–	DISAGREE–	AGREE–	STRONGLY AGREE–	TOTAL–	WEIGHTED AVERAGE–
	8.33% 7	38.10% 32	45.24% 38	8.33% 7	84	2.54

According to the frequency in table, 1 the sample distribution shows that 88 dependents responded to my survey. There were 4 missing data, 7 strongly disagreed with the statement, 7 strongly agreed, and most were in the middle. Results show that the weighted average of 2.54 show how much students knew about social disability. At this point the null hypothesis shows that there is no variation that exists between the variables or that a single variable is no different from its mean. It is presumed to be true that students were not aware that autism is a social disability.

Table 2a. Dependent variable

Students were asked whether or not they knew a lot about autism. My thought was to determine how much knowledge college students knew about this disorder. Results are portrayed in the Likert scale in Table 2a below.

Table 2a. Respondents answer to "I know a lot about autism."

	STRONGLY DISAGREE–	DISAGREE–	AGREE–	STRONGLY AGREE–	TOTAL–	WEIGHTED AVERAGE–
	8.14% 7	51.16% 44	32.56% 28	8.14% 7	86	2.41

measures of central tendency The statistical *measure* central tendency identifies a single value as representative of an entire distribution. This data shows that out of 88 respondents two did not indicate if they knew about ASD 86 of 44 respondents disagreed that they knew about ASD and 28 agreed to knowing about this diagnoses, with a 2.42 weighted average.

Cross-tabulation Respondents answered to "I know someone with autism." The Likert scale below measured who students knew with autism. Out of 88 respondents 76 answered with 2.60 being the weighted average for family, the weighted average for fiends was 2.80 and a 2.22 weighted average for those who did not know anyone.

(Q3	STRONGLY DISAGREE–	DISAGREE–	AGREE–	STRONGLY AGREE–	TOTAL–	WEIGHTED AVERAGE–
Q1: Family (A)	4.00% 1	52.00% 13	24.00% 6	20.00% 5	32.89% 25	2.60
Q1: Friend (B)	0.00% 0	30.00% 3	60.00% 6	10.00% 1	13.16% 10	2.80
Q1: I do not know anyone. (C)	14.63% 6	51.22% 21	31.71% 13	2.44% 1	53.95% 41	2.22

The following is quantitative data of open–ended comment, that was collected to determine attitudes towards autism. Out of 88 respondents 37 answered the following question and 51 did not comment about attitudes towards autism.

Q4
If anyone of your family members or friends has autism, can you tell me how people react or treat them? You can skip this question if you do not know anyone
Below are a few comment from 37 respondents.

➢ "People treat him differently."
➢ "People are rude and treat him differently. They make rude comments to the parents."
➢ "People ignore him and treat him differently. Sometimes they are afraid of him."
➢ "I've only seen people treat them like they are dumb, unfortunate."
➢ "Everyone seems to belittle him."
➢ "Some people say what's wrong with him this is not normal."

Data Analysis and Findings

Univariate analyses The analysis univariate distributions were used to determine the relationship between the D=dependents and I=independents variables. This survey was conducted on basic measures of location variability at (NNMC) Northern New Mexico College campus. Classes at northern were chosen by connivance sampling. Surveys were given to five selected classes upon my discretion. The participants responded to a survey containing mixed methods of both qualitative and quantitative data. On the day these surveys were given there were between 1-2 absentees in two of these classes. All students who were present participated and returned the survey. I did not ask about the ethnicity of the respondents, yet this college is somewhat diverse. Most students on campus are Hispanic and all respondents are undergraduates. There are a total of 2100 students at this College, of which 88 of them participated in this study. The frequency of the following distribution shows that 86 of 88 students responded knowing about autism.

The independent variable measured was about students who knew someone with ASD: (family member, child, sister, or brother, etc.)

Table below states the students who personally knew or had a family member with autism.

Qualitative Table 1. Content analysis of open-ended comments

Theme: Connection	QUOTES	How Often Word Was Said out of 40 responses (N)%
Autism	"My daughter has **autism**" "I've only seen **autism** though T.V. and movies." "He was non-verbal, walked constantly, could do very few abilities- sever **autism** passed away." "My nephew has **autism**. I see him a few times a month." "He is my **cousin**. He is able to communicate. His **autism** presents as needing a lot of order to be comfortable. He is also very smart in math" "I currently work with two students with **autism**. They are 19 and 20." "My auntie was diagnosed with **autism** and multiple brain disorders."	(7) 17.5%
Cousin	"They are my fifth **cousins** and I don't know much about them." "He is a very happy person." I don't really see him. He's my cousin's **cousin**." "Both my **cousin** and stepdad are on the spectrum. I have frequent **contact** with both." "He's my cousin, we see each other a lot." "This person is my **cousin**, he's 15 years old." "I don't see them very often. They are my **cousins**. I only see them for holidays. My	(7) 17.5%
Contact	"I only talked to him once, but in that time we talked quite a bit." "I don't have much **contact** with this family" "I used to babysit him and he is very lovable." "None, I observe very few local residents that seem to have this condition. I see in public." "He's young, real outgoing and funny. I've only met him a couple of times." "**Contact** two times a year as the individual lives out of state."	(6) 12.5%
Brother	"It is my **brother** and he lives with us." "He is my little **brother**." "my **brother**" "From my **brother's** job once in a while. When I go for my brother for a ride."	(4) 10%
Nephew	"**Nephew**. Somewhat when he was younger." "**Nephew** see him almost every other day." "My **nephew** he is 20. I had more contact with him when he was a child."	(4) 10%
Family	"I don't have much contact with this **family**" "He is my great uncle. My grandma takes care of him and my mom helps. I see him a lot." "He is my son. He lives with me." "My nephew is **autistic**. He lives with my mother."	(3) 7.5%
Friend	"He is the son of my **friend**." "family **friend**" "I see him once a moth sometimes more. He is my neighbor." "Very little contact the relationship is a **friend's** son"	(3) 7.5%
Students	"He was identified as being autistic and he is one of my former **students**." "No relation" "-Student" "-See and work with them on a daily basis"	(2) 5%

Discussion

A one-shot case study was measured using both qualitative and quantitative data. There is strong support of information that shows the validity of this study to be accurate. The measurements taken were from Likert scales that were created to test the respondent's knowledge and attitudes about ASD (Autism Spectrum Disorder). Data was also collected from frequency distributions. This study suggests that there is no correlation between the dependent and independent variables. The outcome of this study also states the statistics, which shows 28 out of 44 college students know about ASD. This means that there are more respondents who show bias towards individuals with autism. The statistics for the population at Northern indicates that 51.16% of the students disagreed to knowing about ASD and 32.56% agreed to knowing about ASD, with a weighted average of 2.41% of the students ranging in the middle. The statistical information was to determine students' knowledge and attitudes about autism. At this point we can reject null based on these findings. This concludes that my hypotheses was substantiated. College students who do not know about ASD show bias towards individuals who have this diagnoses.

Conclusions

Statistics show that family members do not know more about autism than those who do not have a family member with autism. It was also interesting that some results showed that individual who did not have a family member with autism stated that they knew more about ASD than those closest to someone who have a family member with autism. This study suggests that there is no correlation between the dependent and independent variables. The statistics for the population at Northern indicates that 51.16% of the students disagreed to knowing about ASD and 32.56% agreed to knowing about ASD, showed a 2.41 weighted average of the students ranging in the middle. This study suggests that there is no correlation between the dependent and independent variables. There are more respondents who show bias towards individuals with ASD than those who know about this diagnosis. The finding stated that my hypothesis is true. Therefore, null was rejected.

Limitations of data I originally had proposed to conduct research on Adult behavior interactions by observing individuals with autism spectrum disorder. However, due to privacy restrictions and time limitation I was not able to conduct a case study on individuals behaviors. Therefore, I began a new study on attitudes towards individuals with Autism.

Why this Study was Conducted I was interested in what students at Northern knew about ASD and if they were bias towards individuals with this disorder. This research, which was conducted shows that students at Northern show bias towards individuals who have ASD because they do not know about this diagnosis. However, I was surprised by how many individuals who had a family members with autism.

Directions for Future Research Based on this study it would be beneficial to create a course at NNMC for psychology, educators, social workers, and correctional officers to learn more about autism. Frequent workshops should be available at Northern for family, friends, and the public to learn more about ASD.

Ethics The data was collected from respondents who gave consent to conduct this survey for informational propose only. Participant were given an equal opportunity to participate in this study. All participants' information will be kept confidential and anonymous. No identifiable information will be shared.

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