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 individuals with disabilities.

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 decreases
No relationship = Null hypothesis

Abstract

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 individuals with disabilities.

Data Collection and Methods

Table 1 Sample Responses to the statement “Autism is a social disability.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>STRONGLY DISAGREE</th>
<th>STRONGLY AGREE</th>
<th>AVERAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q1: Family (5)</td>
<td>8.33%</td>
<td>31.30%</td>
<td>2.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q2: Friend (8)</td>
<td>9.88%</td>
<td>80.00%</td>
<td>3.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q3: I have a relative who is autistic (5)</td>
<td>13.66%</td>
<td>55.22%</td>
<td>2.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q4: I have a friend who is autistic (5)</td>
<td>8.00%</td>
<td>80.00%</td>
<td>3.60</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The following is quantitative data of open-ended comment, which 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 beeline him.
- Some people say what’s wrong with him this is not normal.

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 surveys which showed a weighted average of 2.41 of the students ranging in the middle. The statistical information was to determine the 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

Statistically 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 individuals with autism stated that they knew 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 32.96% agreed to knowing about ASD.

Table 2a. Dependent variable

Students were asked whether or not they knew about autism. My theory was to find out of students knew about autism.

Data Analysis and Findings

Univariate analyses The univariate distributions were used to determine the relationship between the D=dependents and I=indepentents variables. This survey was conducted on basic measures of location variability at (NNMC) Northern New Mexico College campus. Classes at northern were chosen by convenience 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 were 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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statements</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
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<tr>
<td>I do not know about autism. I was ended comment, agreed to knowing nothing about autism. This person is my cousin. He's young, real outgoing and funny. I've only met him a couple of times, but I really like him very much.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I do not know about autism. I was ended comment. My family has autism. I love them. I am very close to my cousins.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I do not know about autism. I was ended comment. My cousin, she's 15 years old.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I do not know about autism. I was ended comment. My brother, he's 23 years old.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I do not know about autism. I was ended comment. My friend, he's 10 years old.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I do not know about autism. I was ended comment. My auntie was diagnosed with autism. We are very close, she's my best friend.</td>
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Data Collection and Methods

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References


-Note: Some research on aggressive, autistic, individuals who have autism show bias towards individuals who have ASD because they do not know about this diagnosis. However, I was surprised by how many individuals who have a family member with autism.

Directions for Future Research Based on this study 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 purposes 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.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the following associates at NNMC: Northern New Mexico College for their professional assistance and guidance. Thanks to Dr. Melissa Martinez Flores for her assistance and guidance.

Author Statement

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