TEACHERS' OPINIONS ON PEER RELATIONS BETWEEN STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS IN PRIMARY EDUCATION

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Abstract

Determining the factors affecting peer relations among students who need special education at the primary education level; peer relations have an important place in determining the problem situations encountered and in solving these problems. Therefore, this study aimed to determine the opinions of teachers about peer relations of students with special needs. For this purpose, the research was designed according to the qualitative research method. The research "content analysis model," one of the qualitative research methods, was used as a research model. The study group of the research consisted of 17 teachers working in two special education schools at the primary education level in Famagusta district of the Northern Cyprus. Teachers' opinions were collected from semi-structured interview techniques. According to teachers' opinions, the main problems encountered in peer relations among students are the problem of adaptation to school and aggressive behaviors. It has been concluded that the peer relationships of students with special education needs are essential for their cognitive development, adaptation to school, and development of learning skills.

Keywords: Peer relations, a student with special needs, teacher views.

INTRODUCTION

Successful communication with an individual primarily depends on knowing and understanding himself/herself correctly and making sense of his/her behaviors and attitudes. In this context, children need to understand each other correctly in their relationships with each other (Ümit, 2010). As well as the time they spend with their families, and children also spend time with the individuals they feel close to, at school, in the neighborhood, or around them. The quality of the child's time with his friends also reveals the importance of peer relationships in social development (Erten, 2012).

The relationship the child establishes with his mother, father, teacher, and other adults is vertical and has an important place in his social development. However, horizontal relationships with their peers also determine the child's self-perception and social development. Thus, it is important in social development (Ollendick, et al., 1992). In the literature, there are studies showing that students who need special education experience difficulties in social skills (Freire et al., 2019; Wiener & Schneider, 2002). Students with special educational needs tend to exhibit lower social behaviors compared to their classmates (Dasioti & Kolaitis, 2018), are less accepted (Avcıoğlu, 2017; Smith & Broomhead, 2019), and have fewer or no friends (Banks et al., 2018; Pinto, et al., 2019). They also show lower friendship quality, higher levels of conflict, more problems in relationship repair, and less stable relationships than their peers (Wiener & Schneider, 2002).

The development process of peer relations provides learning opportunities for children to understand each other better (Hartup, 1989) and to learn about social standards and acceptable social behaviors

about how they should behave (Xinyin, et al., 2003). Thus, the child gets the opportunity to be successful in peer relations by gaining experiences with the experiences he has created with his peers, observing, and imitating (Brandley, 2001). These experiences, which are important for developing peer relations, allow the development of peer relations and behaviors among children (Köse, 2015).

A correlation was found between peer relationships regarding school success, school adjustment, problematic behavior, and loneliness (Birch & Ladd, 1998). Examples of the child's adaptation to school and his friends and the first friendships he establishes are also experienced when he first starts school. The positive behaviors that will exist in the child's life in the preschool period, the sense of trust, and academic success are directly effective with the right relationships to be established (Akman & Gülay, 2010). Progress in peer relations improves the child's sense of belonging to that group and increases social interaction. Children who can adapt to school gain success in the academic field, social interaction, and the use of their skills and are loved by their peers. Children accepted by their social environment are more compatible and willing to go to school. However, the negative dimensions of peer relationships (violence, aggression, etc.) reduce the level of adjustment of children in academic and social areas (Klima & Repetti, 2008; Ladd, 2006; Pianta & Stuhlman, 2004). Children with negative friendship relations, social relations, and social skills deficiency during the school period; during childhood and adolescence, it is seen that their peers reject, dislike, and do not accept them and that they experience communication problems and academic failures (Leve et al., 2007).

A study by Riese, et al. (2012) revealed that peer relationships are effective in children's school success and that learning skills, understanding, and applying activities reflect the importance of peer relationships. In another study, Powers & Bierman (2013) stated that students' relationships with their classmates are important for their classroom environment. They also stated that children who behaved aggressively in primary school had less positive relationships with their peers. Students who do not have strong, positive relationships with their peers experience more problems and difficulties. Positive peer relationships and especially positive emotional support from friends can support the development of academic success (Garcia-Reid, 2007; Perdue, et al., 2009; Shin, et al., 2007). However, there are studies in the literature showing that students with special educational needs have fewer friends, have negative peer relationships, and are less accepted than their classmates without special educational needs (Banks, et al., 2018; Chamberlain et al., 2007; Humphrey & Symes, 2010).

In the study by Uz Baş and Siyez (2011), the perceptions of individuals who are accepted or not accepted by their peers towards peer relations were examined. It has been concluded that children who are better in friendship relations, that is, those who can be friends and maintain this friendship more are more successful in solving the problems that may arise between their friends. In addition, it has been determined that individuals who are accepted by their friends have more social skills than those who are not. These results show that peer relations and social skills interact with each other. Social skills developed among peers have a positive effect on social competence. Children who show progress and exhibit these skills are accepted by their peers and therefore exhibit positive behaviors among peers (Gülay, 2011).

It is necessary for individuals with special needs to be accepted without being marginalized and to have a place in society (Atalay, 2010). For children with special needs to be accepted into or integrated into society, providing specially prepared services to these children and ensuring the competence of school environments and teachers play an important role (Öncül, 2003). Peer relations are a method used to increase the quality of teaching activities of individuals with special needs and to adopt social rules (McKellar, 1986). If my children feel comfortable with their classmates, a more collaborative environment in which classroom rules are adopted has been identified (Urdan & Schoenfelder, 2006). Teachers' attitudes regarding peer relations are important regarding children's adaptation to school, success in lessons, social development, gaining skills, and solving the problems they encounter. In this context, it is necessary to determine the opinions of teachers working in special education on peer relations, determine the factors affecting peer relations among children, develop strategies for peer relations, and identify the problem situations encountered, both for the teacher and the student. In

addition, the lack of studies on peer relations in individuals with special needs within the borders of the TRNC was seen as a deficiency in the literature.

In this context, it will be possible to identify what factors affect peer relations among students, what strategies are used for peer relations, and what teachers do in the face of problems encountered by examining teachers' opinions on peer relations. This information that can be obtained will be important for teachers and students for successful peer interaction among students. Therefore, this study reflects teachers' opinions about peer relations among special needs students. For this purpose, answers to the following questions were sought.

    (a) What are the variables that affect peer relationships among students?

    (b) What strategies do teachers follow to improve student-peer relationships?

    (c) What problems do teachers face regarding peer relationships among students?

    (d) What are the strategies teachers follow to solve problems related to peer relationships among students?

METHOD

In this study, the qualitative research method was preferred based on the need to deeply understand the research topic and examine a social phenomenon with research questions. A semi-structured interview was used based on the qualitative research method to collect data suitable for the research. A semi-structured interview is a type of research that is flexible according to the structured interview technique, the topics of which are determined beforehand, the interviewer can get out of the subject, but the researcher can shape the interview in a way that does not copy (Tavşancıl & Aslan, 2001).

Study Group and Scoping

The teachers who provide education to students with special needs at the primary level in the TRNC formed the target group of the research. To determine the research group, first, an application was made to the TRNC Primary Education Directorate. Then the schools and the teachers to be interviewed were determined. The schools where the teachers were to be interviewed were determined by obtaining the necessary permissions. Afterward, the responsible administrators of the selected schools were interviewed, and information was given about the research. In this study, it was stated that it was aimed at getting the teachers' opinions about the students' peer relations. In this framework, teachers who voluntarily agreed to participate in the research at schools were determined. Preliminary interviews were done with the teachers, and an appointment was requested. Preliminary interviews were conducted with 19 teachers working in two different schools. However, 2 of the pre-interviewed teachers stated that they could not participate in this study, and therefore, 17 teachers were interviewed, and the research data were collected. Demographic information about teachers is given in Table 1.

Table 1. Demographic information of teachers

Variables		N
Gender	Female	8
	Male	9
	Total	17
Age	20-30 years	3
	31-40 years	6
	41-50 years	6
	51 years and older	2
	Total	17
Graduated Area	Special Education	7
	Class Teacher	2
	Technology and Design Teaching	4
	Education Programs and Programs	1

Table 1. (Continued). Demographic information of teachers

Variables		N
Graduated Area	Computer Engineering	1
	Economics and Administrative Sciences	1
	Psychology	1
	Total	17

Eight teachers participating in the research are female, and nine are male. Three teachers are 20-30, six are 31-40, six are 41-50, and two are 50 and over. Seven teachers graduated from education for the Mentally Handicapped, four from Technology and Design Teaching, two from Classroom Teaching, one from Curriculum and Curriculum, one from Computer Engineering Department, one from Psychology Department, and one from Economics and Administrative Sciences.

Data Collection Tool

The data collection tool consisted of demographic information and semi-structured interview questions. While preparing the interview questions in the semi-structured interview form, 11 open-ended questions were created for teachers by scanning the relevant literature to delve into the peer relations among the students with special needs in the class of special education teachers, peer relations in the school and classroom environment, and possible problems in peer relations. Attention was paid to ensuring that the semi-structured interview questions were clear and understandable. If the questions were not understood, when necessary, some hints or alternative questions were prepared to eliminate such situations. In addition, semi-structured interview questions were qualified to access detailed answers instead of getting short answers. Two special education experts and two assessment and evaluation experts examined the semi-structured interview questions. It was decided that these questions could be used in the interview as they were. Afterward, a pilot study was conducted with two teachers to control the prepared research questions. To collect data for the research, the following questions were included.

These were:

1. What problems do you encounter regarding peer relations among students in your class? Moreover, how often do you encounter these problems?
2. When you encounter problems related to peer relations among students in your class, what do you do to solve these problems?
3. What are the factors that positively affect peer relations?
4. What are the factors that negatively affect peer relations?
5. What do you do when your students are confronted with aggressive behavior by their peers?
6. What do you do when your students are excluded by their peers?
7. Which methods and techniques do you use to evaluate peer relations among your students?
8. When there are problems among the students in your class, how do the students solve these problems?
9. When there are problems among the students in your class, how do you solve these problems?
10. Have you attended a seminar, conference, or in-service training on peer relations? If so, how did what you learned from this participation contribute to improving relations among students in your classroom?
11. What do you do to improve peer relations in your classroom?

Data Collection Process

Research data were collected between April 1 and May 30, 2017. The researcher and teacher interviews were conducted within the appropriate time to collect the data. Interviews were conducted with each teacher participating in the research using an interview form consisting of semi-structured questions and a voice recorder. The interviews lasted between 7 and 15 minutes. The interviews were completed one-on-one in an environment where the researcher and the participant were alone, without being interrupted by anyone. The interviews were held at the designated time, in a classroom deemed appropriate by the school administration. The environment is arranged in such a way that the

participants feel comfortable. In cases where the answers given during the interview were not clear enough, answers were obtained by asking alternative questions. The first researcher who conducted the interview displayed a neutral, unbiased attitude and did not affect the answers. At the same time, the first researcher assumed a role in the natural environment, far enough not to affect the participants' answers and close enough not to lose the information. Thus, it took place in the field to obtain accurate data, and one-on-one interviews were conducted with the participants. The interviews were conducted in a natural environment, so distant that the participants' answers would not be affected and so close that the information would not be lost. The opportunity to see the teachers' experiences was taken by making observations.

Data Inventory and Analysis

The research data were analyzed quantitatively. As a research approach, it was designed in line with the qualitative research approach and analyzed with the content analysis technique. This technique analyzes verbal, written, and other materials with objective and systematic methods (Tavşancıl & Aslan, 2001).

In this study, the data were collected by analyzing it in four stages. These stages are coding the data, determining the theme of the coded data, arranging the codes and themes, and ending with interpreting the findings. The interviews, transcribed for each special education teacher, were read and evaluated. After the interviews with the teachers were completed, the researcher deciphered the audio recordings without changing them.

Code numbers (T1 for Teacher 1 or T10 for Teacher 10) were given to the teachers whose opinions were consulted, and necessary explanations were given. The data obtained from the interviews were digitized and expressed as frequency and percentage. Similar items in the expressions were grouped and appropriately themed.

After the interview was transcribed, the suitability of three interview forms and the categories with the interview coding key was determined by the impartial assignment. For this purpose, an empty interview coding key was duplicated for each of the three selected interview forms and presented to evaluate two experts working in the field. In this case, it was ensured that two field experts independently evaluated the interviews, which were converted into written form according to the interview coding key. It was checked whether coding was done on the opinions obtained from the teachers interviewed. To determine whether these codings were processed into the appropriate coding key, the interview coding key, in which the markings were made, compared with the answers given to each question, was taken into account one by one.

Validity and Reliability

To give an idea to other researchers if they do similar work, the results obtained in the study were detailed in-depth. In this study, the researcher personally interviewed the participants face-to-face, and the questions in case of need were asked again without being changed by giving more explanatory information. In addition, the participants were given explanations regarding the purpose of the research before and during the interviews. Participants were notified by signing the agreement that the information obtained during the interviews would only be used for scientific purposes and that their names would be coded and included in the relevant research. The information gathered during the interviews was presented in detail. The themes and codes that emerged from the data obtained from the participants and the relationship of each theme with each other were examined within themselves to ensure integrity.

FINDINGS

In this section of the study, the data obtained within the scope of the research aim were presented.

Findings Regarding the Factors Affecting the Peer Relationships between Students Positively and Negatively According to the Opinions of the Teachers

Teachers stated that the prevalence of exemplary behaviors among students (10 teachers), group activities (teachers), and the feeling of love among students increased (2 teachers) have been at the forefront of the factors that positively affected peer relations among students in their classrooms. At the lowest percent, two teachers expressed that it enabled them to socialize, and the other two stated that the increased feeling of love positively affected peer relations among students.

> T4 expressed this situation as: *"Positively, if students have behavioral disorders or exhibit undesirable behaviors, better students can discourage them, they can set an example. Being a model and the teacher is a model can cause that child to quit that behavior."* T10 said, *"Group work comes first, of course. As I have mentioned earlier, although we encounter problems more frequently when children first come, they get used to and adapt as long as the work in the group continues. This problem disappears over time."*

Teachers declared that the effect of negative behaviors (11 teachers), social environment (4 teachers), and not being in the same age group (4 teachers) were at the top of the list of the factors that negatively affected peer relations among students in their classrooms. On the other hand, sexual urges (1 teacher) and grouping (1 teacher) were the least.

> T4 expressed this circumstance as takes after: *"The negative thing is that if the child has a negative behavior (such as spitting, swearing, gesturing, and lying on the floor) because they mostly imitate each other by seeing each other, this time, the children can take them as an example. The child is also trying to deteriorate the behavior immediately. For example, a child who does not use the toilet and poos on himself/herself, that is, a child who does not have toilet control, the other children who see this situation start to do the toilet on themselves. Alternatively, seeing a child taking off his/her clothes and undressing, the others also undress; when one of them lies on the ground, the others try to lie. In other words, the child accepts what he/she did as right and sees it as right.*
> T11 stated: *"If the child comes from a negative socio-economic environment, this inevitably reflects on the child's attitudes and behaviors. Applying what he/she sees around him/her in the class causes the child to gain negative attitudes and behaviors." Moreover, because he/she sees it, he/she begins to imitate again."*

Findings Regarding Strategies Followed by Teachers to Develop Peer Relationships among Students

Teachers said that they mostly performed game and music activities (8 teachers) and group activities (6 teachers) to improve peer relations. At the very least, they stated that they followed a behavior development program (2 teachers) and do drama work (1 teacher).

> T1 pointed out this situation in the following lines: *"I do ring exercises in music classes to improve peer relations. I do group activities, simple rhythm exercises, and play simple games. It is like hiding and seeking, hiding something and finding it, so I try to complete this dialogue with play and music"*. T9 described it as *"Group studies to improve friendship relations. One can hold material while the other paints it collaboratively."* also, 14 said: *"We are trying to determine group activities in general terms. We are trying to bring together the children who do not get along well to keep the children together. Alternatively, we determine those kinds of activities on how we can bring the two together at a common point."*

Findings Concerning the Problems that Teachers Encounter in their Classes Regarding Peer Relationships among Students and Solving the Problems

Teachers included the problems of adjustment (7 teachers), aggressive behaviors (6 teachers), and verbal teasing (4 teachers) at the beginning of the problems related to peer relations among students they encountered in their classrooms. They stated that they had the least amount of disobedience (1

teacher), manipulating younger ones (1 teacher), negative things (1 teacher), lack of communication (1 teacher), and emotional problems (1 teacher).

> This situation was expressed by T12 as: *"I mean, they can get angry very quickly. There may be irritability with each other if they do not get along. If they get along, they can have good communication. They can communicate. They do not speak louder anymore. If they have problems, there will be problems in their development process. Their sexual drive is already high. I do not know, probably because they are over 18, so they get into the boyfriend-girlfriend thing. There, they are sometimes influenced by movies or something else. Most likely, they get into girlfriend-boyfriend fights with each other. There are cases of disagreement. It forces us a little bit, like going to the corner and holding hands, kissing, or something. We try not to leave them alone. Alternatively, if there is an individual in that situation, we follow them. We think of where he is and where she is to find them and see where they are. It usually happens every day."* In addition, T14 stated: *"Now we accept all kinds of students. We also focus on hyperactive ones. Since it is a ceramic workshop, we thought it would calm the children down. Some students cannot handle their mobility. We have more problems with them. So, when they yell at each other, the other responds or wants to silence them. That is the kind of trouble we usually have. We find ourselves facing these situations at least once a day."*

Teachers stated that they exhibited verbal warnings (8 teachers), modeling (7 teachers), and keeping students in separate places (7 teachers) were the behaviors at the beginning of their attitudes toward solving the problems they encountered in their classrooms related to peer relations among students. They also expressed that they practiced punishment (1 teacher), keeping students under observation (1 teacher), and informing the family (1 teacher) were the least level they tend to do.

> T1 expressed this situation: *"As three of my four children have expressive and receptive language, I am explaining the issue. What do I do? First, I verbally stated that they must agree that this is a class and that they are friends. Afterward, I try to overcome these problems by assigning roles and responsibilities by grouping them into music or acting lessons as a game."* T4 said: *"First, we inform the families about this issue. Then we keep those children under constant observation in the classroom. We make them sit in different places, and they do not communicate during the lesson. We keep them under constant observation during breaks, so they do not affect the others and cause no harm."*

Findings of the Strategies Followed by Teachers to Solve Problems Experienced Regarding Peer Relationships among Students

In this section, the place has been given to several issues such as what teachers do when they face aggressive behavior and when their peer's peer relations exclude students, the methods and techniques teachers use in peer assessment, how students solve problems that they encounter, among themselves, and teachers' views on what they do to solve the problems they encounter and what they do for their participation in seminars, conferences, and in-service training.

Teachers stated that when there were aggressive behaviors among students regarding peer relations among students, intervening (14 teachers), removing them from the environment (5 teachers), and speaking for the solution to the problem (5 teachers) were the main strategies they follow in solving the problems experienced. They also stated that they took a break for 5 minutes (1 teacher) and applied punishment (1 teacher) at the least level.

> T1 expressed this situation: *"We go next to them and try to warn them verbally. Then, separately from each other, we ask them why they are behaving this way so that we can understand the reason to find the solution accordingly."* T13 mentioned: *"We ask what do we mean by deliberately attacking by someone else, normally too much with the situation, we intervene at that moment, of course, we separate them, then we talk about what can be the problems of both of them. We describe the behavior and why they behave this way, and it will*

not be resolved that way. If the case repeats, we apply negative reinforcement by depriving a loved one of something."

Teachers pointed out that when they faced the behaviors that students did in case of exclusion by their peers, they mostly involved students in playing games or activities that students could perform jointly (7 teachers), while they least received support from the guidance service (1 teacher) and included their students in different groups (1 teacher).

T1 expressed this situation as follows: *"This is so bad. When such a thing happens, we talk to the children and direct them to the guidance service. Miss Sedef, as the consultant, deals with them and tries to find out exactly what the problem is, what is not and why."* S14 expressed: *"For example, I determine group activities they will do together. I determine the tasks to be done together. I usually bring students together around those studies."*

Teachers stated that while evaluating peer relations among students, the method and technique they used most is observation (10 teachers). In contrast, they used interviews (1 teacher) and peer evaluation forms (1 teacher) the least.

T13 expressed this situation in the following lines: *"Usually we do it through observation, sitting among their instructors and teachers, I follow up, find out and learn what they do not know or what is happening in their class, or I tell them something that they missed in my class or something that I observed. We do this collaboratively, but our evaluations are much more through observation."* T10 declared: *"Observation technique is first and foremost. Apart from observing children, we have guidance teachers about this. The guidance service also observations or individual interviews about this and informs us about it. When the guidance teacher says that this child has some problems with these children and says that this child does not have some problems in terms of peer relations, we increase our observations on those children who need guidance. We can say that it is rather about observation."*

While the teachers stated that they mostly solved the problems that the students encountered among themselves under the teacher's guidance (10 teachers), on the other hand, they stated that the least students solved the problems by talking among themselves (5 teachers).

T7 expressed this situation in the following lines: *"Of course, they can't because I do not have any students in that situation. If I speak from the point of view of my students, I usually become a model, and then students become independent."* While T5 expressed: *"They cannot solve it. They are very young. They need an adult's help, and they need an adult's direction."* T3 stated: *"I see that they cannot solve it. Again, problems are solved due to our trainee teachers and teachers joining the children with some activities and games."*

While the teachers expressed that they mostly paid special attention to the problem (10 teachers) and solved it by talking (5 teachers), they stated that they followed the way of keeping students away from each other (1 teacher) and ignoring (1 teacher) the least.

T3 expressed this situation: *"We solve their problems with activities, games, painting or music activities, playing games in the garden, trying to integrate children somehow because I see that they cannot solve their problems independently."* T4 declared: *"I usually try to solve problems by myself as long as I can. I would take it to the family and administration the last time; it is beyond me. I act decisively. I certainly do not allow students. In other words, I never ignore a behavior because sometimes a behavior you ignore gets stronger and settles in time. This time you cannot stop this behavior. Behaviors that are ignored include: If the child is trying to get attention, especially unnecessarily trying to gather people around himself/herself by thinking that someone somehow hears him, you can ignore him/her. However, you cannot ignore when a child hurts another person, hurts himself/herself, or swears. Because when you ignore it, it gets bigger and goes beyond, and it is reflected in society and becomes a negative example. Therefore, it is necessary to intervene immediately and decisively."*

While 12 teachers answered no, five teachers answered yes regarding the participation of teachers in a seminar, conference, and in-service training on peer relations.

> T3 expressed this situation: *"They have a lot of positive contributions, and we apply them to students. Of course, we see positive benefits both in education and training and in educating children in terms of behavior.''* T4 said*: "I participated, and I even gave a speech on this subject myself. Since I am the Director of Guidance and Research, I have given many seminars on inclusive Education, Special Education, these disabled students, and disadvantaged children. Of course, every job you do will return you like experience. The examples you see, the memories you experience, the seminar parents share these experiences within the scope of in-service training and seminar, administrators' sharing, and teachers' sharing of examples in their classrooms and their schools all set an example for you. Therefore you change how you act and how you intervene differently over time. It sure is very helpful."* T5 indicated as: *"Yeah. I ran into something about inclusive education. I received an education. It was not too much about children who want special education but about how special education children can accommodate and adapt to children with normal development. I have done a lot with peer relationships. Because I worked in all the schools, I worked in all normal schools in England, in primary schools. There is already a different system out there. According to the system there, children are already integrated with other children. However, there is no distinction in any way. They can take the same curriculum with them. More real events and examples were shown. They all were beautiful stuff. You could grab something from each of them because they had been lived through. Because I am not fond of presentations too much but lived events. Also, when you go to seminars and conferences, you go in slides and do not get much attention. You see, but you do not hear. You cannot take in some points. However, you wonder how the events are given, especially in that way. It flows very well, you wonder, there are things you can take for yourself, and you are taking it."*

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION, and SUGGESTIONS

In line with the first sub-objective of the study, when the problems faced by teachers regarding peer relations between students in their classrooms are examined, it is seen that students mostly have adaptation problems towards school and aggressive behaviors (physical or verbal aggression behaviors). These results are similar to the results of the study conducted by Ogelman et al. (2015), in which aggressive behaviors emerged among the factors affecting peer relations. According to these results, students' adaptation problems and aggressive behaviors are among the negative behaviors frequently encountered in peer relations. In parallel with this result, in the study conducted by Schwartz et al. (2000), it was determined that negative behaviors are an important factor in the emergence of problems among peers. Based on this result, the fact that children are separated from their families in a different environment and are among people they do not know can be considered the reason for the emergence of the adaptation problem. When children show aggression physically or verbally, unrest in the family, being exposed to violence in the environment or witnessing events, and the effect of visual media may lead children to aggression.

Practices such as verbal stimulation applied by teachers, ensuring that they are in separate corners, and modeling students who exhibit exemplary behavior have been identified as strategies for maintaining healthy peer relations. The use of violence against children, who are generally seen as weak because they know or think they are strong, is a hindering factor in establishing a healthy relationship between children (Olweus, 2003). In this context, it is important to distance students from each other to eliminate this situation. Modeling strategy is an important strategy implemented among peers (Song, 2006; Schwartz, et al., 2000). Students who do not have strong and positive relationships with their peers; experience more problems and difficulties in peer relationships. In the literature, there are studies showing that students with special educational needs have fewer friends, have negative peer relationships, and are less accepting than their classmates without special education needs (Banks, et

al., 2018; Chamberlain et al. 2007; Humphrey & Symes 2010). Considering the results in this context, there may be a situation of abandoning the behavior with the perception that the children's behavior is noticed by the teacher with the stimulation by the teachers in the conduct of a healthy peer relationship. Children can be calm by staying away from each other. We can show an example of a stimulant situation in the emergence of positive behavior in the child.

When the positive aspects of peer relations are looked at, it has been determined that it allows the spread of exemplary behaviors. The determination of this is understood from the fact that exemplary students influence the students, and it is a method preferred by classroom teachers to increase the desired behaviors. The importance of increasing the behaviors that would be right for the individual to see himself in peer relations is emphasized. In this regard, it was determined that similar results were obtained in the study of Akpınar and Kranda (2016) on the positive aspects of peer relations. Children can model many behaviors of their teachers (Ostrosky & Jung, n.d.). For this reason, it can be thought that teachers help their peers by taking their helping behaviors as an example.

When teachers encounter students exhibiting aggressive behavior, immediate intervention is the most preferred behavior to prevent this situation. In addition to this, enabling students to move away from the environment they are in is another solution. The negative relationship between the parents and the child under aggressive behaviors (Papalia, et al., 2003) affects the tendency of violence in children due to egocentrism (Ogelman et al., 2015). In this context, it is a precaution that teachers immediately intervene in such situations or remove them from the environment as a precaution for children who tend to be aggressive. In addition, considering that aggressive behaviors are affected by the negative events around them (Bandura, 1977), health education and training situations will be in question in the classroom environment by taking precautions in these issues.

It has been determined that in case of exclusion of students by their peers, teachers try to eliminate this situation by choosing activities or games where they can meet on a common denominator. In addition, it is another method that they try to explain that there is a wrong behavior by talking to children. Game preference also plays an important role in developing students with special needs (Sevinç, 2004). In the study by Özyürek and Saka (2017), the unhappiness of the individual being left alone and the aimless spending of time was mentioned. However, it was stated that play activities with their peers are the most preferred situation; they always want to interact and are happy. In this case, it has been determined that the choice of play activities is important in the recovery of the individual, who is excluded by his peers, to the environment, in the elimination of negative behaviors or situations.

Observation methods and techniques used for peer assessment of teachers appear before us. In the study titled school adjustment and peer relations in children conducted by Gülay (2011) on this subject, the importance of using the observation technique is emphasized. In the literature, it is seen that teachers' behaviors against aggressive behaviors of students are mostly; verbal communication (Güven & Cevher, 2005), they frequently use imperative sentences, direct their attention more towards children who exhibit undesirable behavior, offer solutions, cognitive persuasion, provide guidance and II. type of punishment (Dobbs, et al., 2004), responding to problem behavior (Asi & Karabay). In this sense, the observation method and technique are important tools for achieving a successful peer relations process. In addition, in the study conducted by Ogelman et al. (2015), they expressed observation as the easiest way to understand peer relationships. Based on this result, we can emphasize the importance of keeping students under observation to have a successful process and prevent undesirable behaviors.

In case of a problem among the students, it is the first solution that they receive support from their teachers. In this case, it can be emphasized how important the guidance teachers of students with special needs are. It is seen that teachers have priority preferences in finding solutions for their students in the face of problems, and they take shelter in them. Referring to the importance of teachers, Rowe (2003) mentioned that the development of students' cognitive, affective, and behavioral skills comes to the forefront in creating a healthy environment and having a successful process. From this

point of view, students' getting support from their teachers in finding solutions and sheltering them in the face of problems reveals the importance of classroom teachers. It is seen that the teachers look for solutions to the problem by showing special interest in the solution of the problems they encounter among the students, and the causes of the problem are discussed and tried to be eliminated. Being in interaction with students and establishing a dialogue with them can eliminate the problems to be experienced. Because children can be influenced by adults, namely their teachers, and their teachers can influence their students (Rodkin & Hodges, 2003). In this context, the interaction between teacher and student is important (Baker, 2006; Chudgar & Sankar, 2008). It can be emphasized how important teacher relations are for special-needs individuals.

It has been observed that teachers need to participate in seminars, conferences, and in-service training for peer relations in the majority. It is important to meet society's needs and renew and develop the teacher in parallel with our world's technological and scientific developments (Oral, 2014). From this point of view, it is important for individuals who do the teaching profession, such seminars, conferences, in-service training, and so on to improve themselves. In this regard, it was determined by Karasu & Mutlu (2014) that children with special needs are more successful in raising individuals with teachers who have received adequate training in this field. The importance of the development of teachers in understanding peer relations emerges (Ogelman & Sarıkaya, 2013). Based on this result, we can say that it is possible to prepare teachers for todaywith seminars, conferences, and in-service training, and to cope with problems in different ways through training.

It has been determined that the teachers' preferences for games, music activities, and group work, where they can meet on common ground, are used in developing peer relations. The importance of joint activities to be carried out in this sense will contribute to developing peer relations. In addition, the support given by teachers for the development of peer relations reveals the importance of their social and psychological adjustment (Szewczyk-Sokolowski, et al., 2005). In the study of Ogelman et al. (2015), findings parallel these results.

In line with the results obtained from this research, teachers can contribute to developing students' peer relations by preparing an environment for activities to help students adapt to school more easily. Teachers must take precautions against students' physical or verbal negative behaviors. Recognizing children prone to violence beforehand will be an important step in preventing such situations. Teachers who provide education to individuals with special needs are not appointed from outside the field is important for developing peer relations and the academic development of these children. Once and for all, the participation of teachers in conferences, seminars, and in-service training for self-improvement will contribute to their personal development.

Ethics and Conflict of Interest

This research is produced from the first author's master thesis under the supervision of the second author. The authors declare that the study has not unethical issues and that research and publication ethics have been considered carefully. The authors declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

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