

# Student's Attitudes toward Working with People with Autism: Results From an Elicitation Study Using the TPB

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# Overview

- Background of study
- Methods
- Results
- Discussion
- Time for questions

# Background

- Prevalence of autism spectrum disorders is very high, affecting 1 in every 162 children.
- Increasing numbers of professionals are needed, but recruitment is difficult with high turnover rates.
- Developmental disabilities are not the first choice among newcomers to the helping professions.

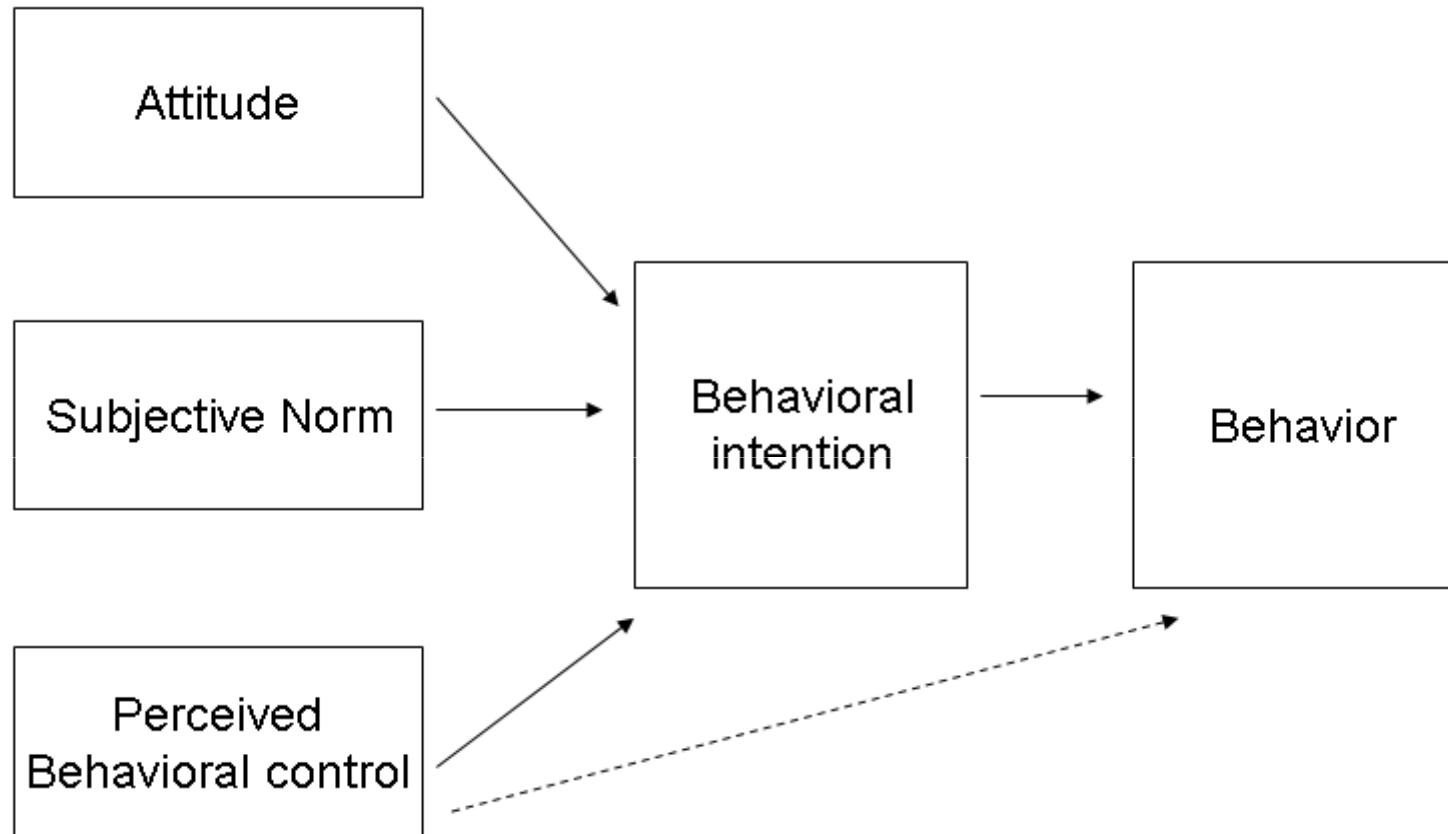
## Why are people reluctant to work with people with disabilities?

- People with disabilities are not viewed as possessing the qualities that society values, thus, professionals may pity them, but see little appeal in investing effort to assist them.

# Study aims

- To examine the attitudes of students towards working with people with ASD by using the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB).
- Once attitudes are known, programs can be established to alter and prevent them thus improving the lives of persons with ASD.

Figure 1: The Theory of Planned Behavior



Note: Based on Ajzen (1991)

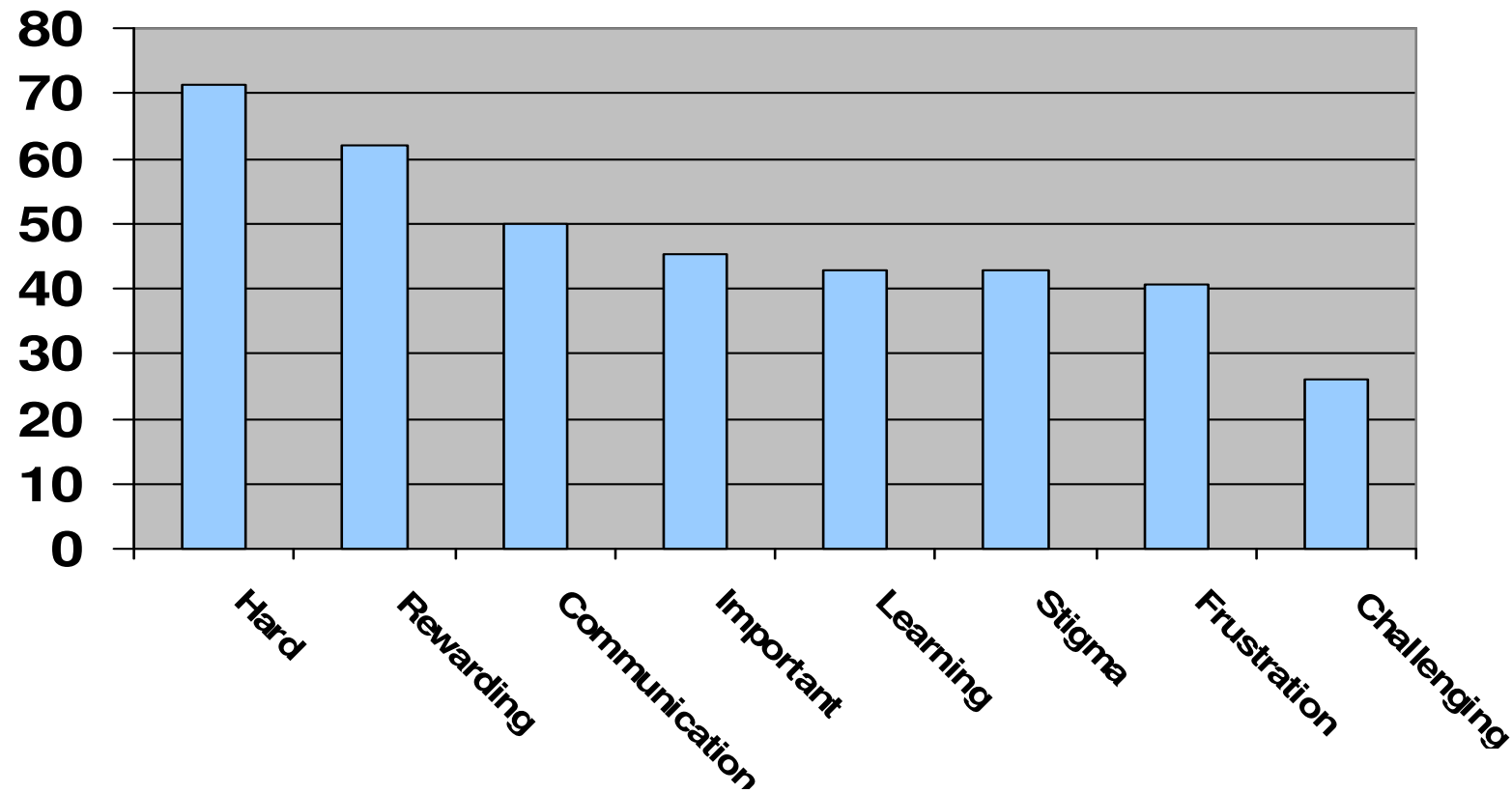
# Participants

- 42 female participants.
  - 10 social work;
  - 8 education;
  - 7 nursing,
  - 9 occupational therapy
  - 8 speech and language therapists.
- Age ranged from 20 to 33 (mean = 24.60, SD = 2.52).

# Instrument

- TPB-based elicitation questionnaire.
- Students were asked to list their thoughts in response to each of the following:
  - 1) What do you believe are the advantages/ disadvantages of working with people with autism?
  - 2) Are there any individuals or groups who would approve/ disapprove of your working with people with autism?
  - 3) What factors or circumstances would enable/ make it difficult or impossible for you to work with people with autism?

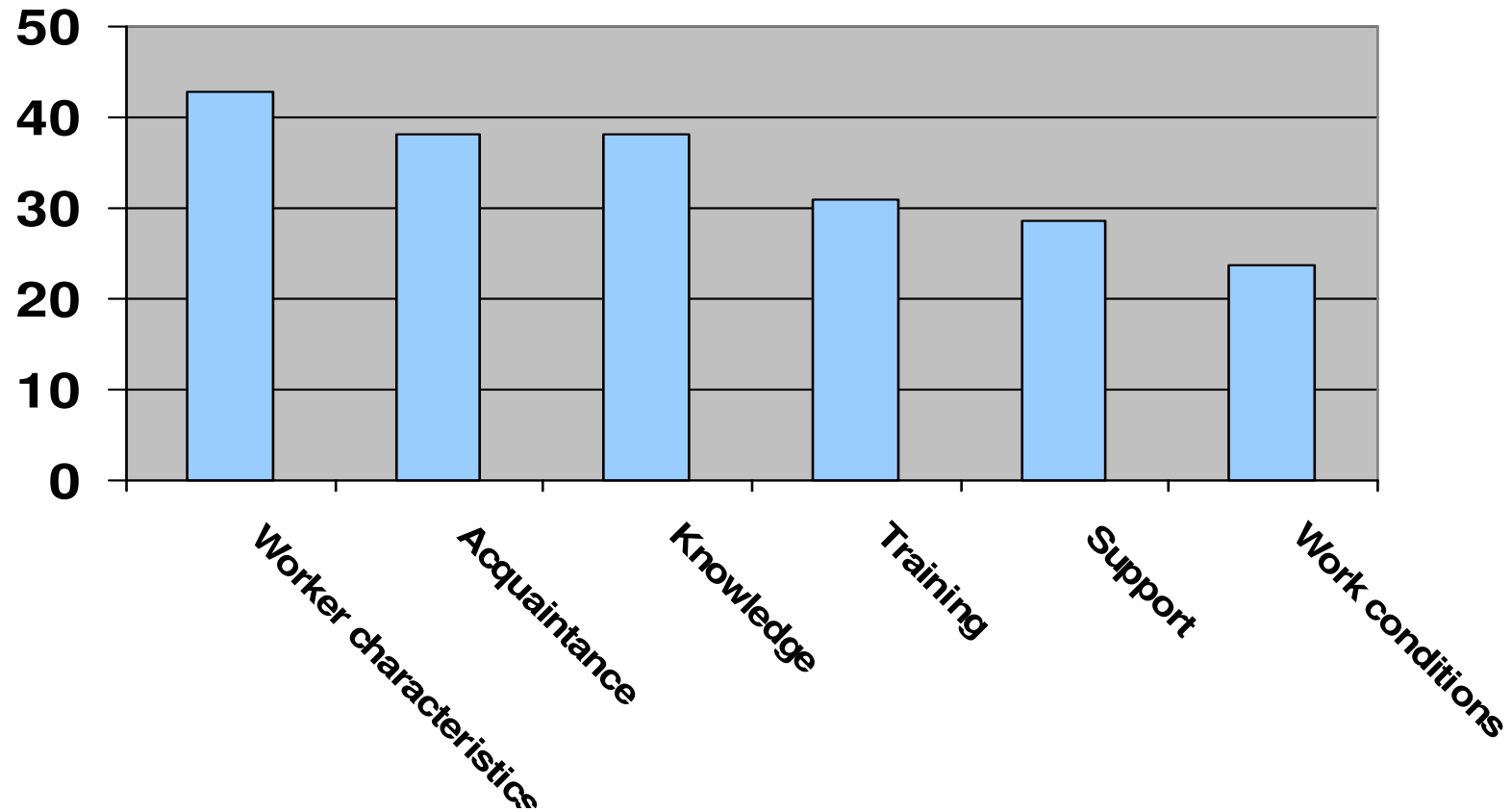
# Results - Attitudes



# Results - Subjective norms

- Parents
- Other family members
- Friends
- Colleagues
- Spouses

# Results - Perceived behavioral control



# Discussion - Attitudes

- Negative belief-based disadvantages are cause for concern, as students attempt to avoid interactions with that population.

# Discussion – Subjective Norms

- In career selection, it is highly important to get positive views from significant others.
- While searching for a career field, it might be appropriate for university programs to invite family members to take part in meetings.

# Discussion – Perceived control

- Socialize future professionals via curricula that will expose students to persons with autism.
- Curriculum should be conducive for positive attitude formation.

# Implications

- Introduce attitude development issues early in the education process. Combine effective educational approaches with positive contact.
- Provide training and contact carefully and gradually.

# Implications

- Differences between professions is important for university programs and service providing agencies.
- University programs should add courses to reduce stigma and fear.
- Provide support and ongoing training within the workplace, especially for social work and education professionals.



Questions????