



Accessibility of students with autism to universities and the special education interventions.

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Abstract: In recent years, students with autism have enrolled in undergraduate programs of study, gaining the right to equal access to higher education. This paper explores the accessibility of students with autism to universities with an emphasis on the curriculum. In the present work, the accessibility of ten students with autism and student the educational and social care interventions are examined. The data collect by the methodology of observations with certain protocols of special education and training (SET) and by the special education interventions from the Agricultural University of Athens and from the University of Peloponnese, in Kalamata. The results note that students who are supported with private or public tutoring in the courses are successfully led to the undergraduate studies, that they have chosen. At the other end of the spectrum are students with difficulties in social skills that are supported only by their psychologist and do not actively participate in the courses.

Keywords: students, autism, accessibility, university courses, special education and training (SET).

I. INTRODUCTION

According to the World Health Organization, autism belongs to those disabilities that are determined based on the degree of functionality of the behavior of the individual. The term "autism" comes etymologically from the word "self" and denotes the isolation of a person in himself (Synodinou, K, 2007, pp. 9-51). The clinical features (Ciccione, A., 2019) of autism include the lack of social interaction and communication, the manifestation of stereotypical repetitive behaviors, the existence of language disorders or the absence of speech, significant or not degree of mental retardation or other medical conditions. although autism is not cured, early and specialized therapeutic interventions help improve the functionality of individuals (Barabé, N ., 2019). The autonomy and self-determination of people with autism, by decision of the UN General Assembly, is promoted through the special education and education programs (United

Nations, 2019) and the Mental Health actions of the Ministry of Health, promoting the smooth integration of people with autism into society (World Health Organization, 2020)(World Autism Awareness Day, 2022). According to (Law 2716, 1999, p. article 1 par. 1) "*the state is responsible for the provision of Mental Health services aimed at the prevention, diagnosis, treatment, care as well as the psychosocial rehabilitation and social reintegration of adults, children and adolescents with mental disorders such as autism and learning problems*".

Autism appeared in Greek legislation with the intervention of the (Hellenic Society for the Protection of Autistic People, 2022) only in 2000 with the (Law 2817, 2000) on the Education of people with special educational needs. It is noted that autism has been included in the irreversible serious and severe disabilities and is entitled to a lifelong disability card. Autism is clinically recognized according to the criteria set for the diagnosis of autism, with the 5th edition of the Diagnostic Manual of Mental Diseases (American Psychiatric Association, 2013) as well as the 11th edition for ICD (ICD-11). These two tools determine the following three (3) symptoms, for students who are interfused with tissue spectrum disorders (ASD) - a) difficulties in social interaction, -b) difficulties in communication and c) stereotypical, repetitive behaviors, activities and interests. It is noted that the diagnostic subcategories (Pervasive Developmental Disorders, Asperger's Syndrome and - not otherwise specified) were deleted. Students with autism are now a diagnostic category, with a group of symptoms (Koumoula, A, 2020, pp. 9-24). Thus, at level [1] the "need for support" arising from difficulties in socialization, flexibility and adaptation is identified. at level [2] the "need for enhanced support" of students is identified resulting from remarkable difficulties in socialization and flexibility - adaptation.

In addition, the rights of students with autism (United Nations, 2006) refer to the needs of daily and student life, education, treatment and lifelong social care and protection. Students with



autism, among others, they often exhibit dysfunctional academic and social behavior. Most of them are unable to think, in the way that the rest of us consider reality and find it difficult to create social relationships, to interact by participating in student groups, as well as to acquire professional skills, which are necessary for their own lives (Drossinou-Korea, M & Bakogianni M, 2018). The accessibility actions aim to support and empower students belonging to vulnerable social groups, so that they can cope with their academic obligations and successfully complete their studies.

Difficulties in social communication are not always credited to the diagnosis of autism but to the "Social Communication Disorder" when in fact they do not exhibit stereotypical and repetitive behaviors, obsessive activities and limited interests. Besides, each diagnosis of the student with autism is accompanied by "individual indicators" that provide a more complete picture of his difficulties and abilities and often refer to epilepsy or some other medical condition. The stigma of psychiatric morbidity always remains as an "active pendulum" and several students conceal the fact that they have been hospitalized in a psychiatric clinic after an autistic crisis and it was not manageable by the family environment. Respect for diversity remains an open issue for discussion and on the occasion of the International Autism Awareness Day, in France on April 3, 2022, Cippa submitted a note of reflection on the future for the care and social care of people with autism. The dogmatic conflicts that hinder the progress of care in France (Coordination Internationale entre Psychothérapeutes Psychanalystes et membres associés s'occupant de personnes Autistes [Cippa], 2022). In this note, it also states the critical crossroads of disability and mental health policies whose budgets are largely inadequate in relation to the needs of people with autism.

The purpose of this paper is to highlight the difficulties that exist in the accessibility of students with autism in universities (Drossinou Korea, M, 2020, c) and the support with special education - training and social care interventions with emphasis on the attendance of undergraduate programs of study. They have not co-decided on the choice of the department they attend and when they behave as satellites of parental expectations for the acquisition of a university degree. Also, the topic of accessibility and attendance of courses is considered as part of the linear continuum of interventions, the individual learning-study method and the social skills in higher education. The functionality of the behavior of the student with autism, including mental abilities and accessibility to the facilities that students

have in attending classes in auditoriums and laboratories, is also being studied.

II. METHODOLOGY

The students of this survey make use of the right to equal access to higher education through the facilities provided for people with special educational needs and disabilities in the panhellenic examinations. The accessibility of ten students with autism to two universities, one metropolitan in the capital city of Greece "ATHENS" and one regional city of the south of Greece "KALAMATA", was investigated with an emphasis on supporting them with SET and social care interventions. The data of diagnosis came by the bodies under the responsibility of the Ministry of Education, by mental health centers, by hospital psychiatric clinics in which they receive treatments, psychiatric and psychological and medication support at individual and family level (Murrar, R.M., Bhavsar, V., Tripoli, G. & Howes, O, 2017).

In the methodology of interventions with the individual counseling sessions (Drossinou Korea, M, 2020, b) with some protocols of SET (Drossinou Korea, M, 2020 a) we met [N=10] students with autism [N=7] men and [N=3] women with an average age of 24.5 years. Their support with special education interventions was carried out in the context of social care. In all the behaviors it manifests in the academic community. The study was conducted during the period of the COVID-19 pandemic caused by the SARS-CoV-2 Coronavirus, from February 26, 2020 until June 2022. At the regional, University of Peloponnese [UOP], the School of Humanities and Cultural Studies (SHCS) in Kalamata, data were collected from two male students [N=2] with an average age of 23.2 years. At the Metropolitan Agricultural University of Athens (AUA) data were examined by eight students [N=8] of whom [N=5] five men and [N=3] three women with an M.O. of 25.5 years of age were examined.

At UOP, the supportive interventions with students with autism were carried out through our role as a teacher teaching special education courses but also as an academic advisor, through the Career Office where one hundred and sixty (N=160) individual SET sessions were held used the Targeted, Individual, Structured, Inclusion programs of pre-vocational readiness for students with Special Education Needs (TISIPfSEns) (Drossinou -Koreas, M. and Periferakis, Th., 2018).



III. COURSE AND DATA FROM SPECIAL EDUCATION INTERVENTIONS.

The case studies of students with autism are presented data collected from the observation methodology and methodology with the targeted and supportive SET interventions in the context of the course of the social care program. The names of students do not exist and used only for this study.

[1] ‘ANDREAS’- Student, 25 years old with 20 interventions]. He is a student of a single-parent family, in the department of plant production science, with a transcription from the region. His accessibility to the first individual SET session had the following elements, and he was guided by his mother and the psychologist, shouted and insistently asked that both persons be present at our conversation. It was extremely difficult for both the mother and the student to understand that the conversation would take place between us.

The aim of the SET interventions focused on the organization of the individual study method with emphasis on time management at home and in his school and on the development of social skills with other students. His accessibility to attending classes and workshops has a positive sign, he has managed to be accepted by a group of his fellow students and satisfactory performance. He has completed his internship in the phytopathology laboratory and has received a topic for the dissertation study. Despite the fact that he has learned and handled the means of electronic communication flawlessly, handwritten notes remain difficult to read. Electronic notes have a limited structure and do not provide proficiency in what studies them in combination with traditions and e-class. The student during this time, has changed four psychologists and two psychiatrists. However, he maintains a permanent relationship with a caregiver teacher, who comes home and gives him a summary of the courses that he attends at his school.

[2] ‘NIKOS’-Student, 30 years old with 20 interventions]. He is an only child with accessibility to the university who was identified through the diagnosis of "evolutionary dyslexia", from a nightly vocational high school. decided to make an internal move to the agricultural economy department with 10%. The aim of the SET interventions focused on the organization of the individual study method with emphasis on the management of time at home and in his school and on the development of social skills. Shortly before his degree and while preparing his papers for the army, he exhibited erratic behavior and had an accident in the left leg. He "turned his foot" in the pavement kennel, because as he stated he was

wearing older the number shoes that he donated because he liked the design of the buckle. His mother take part in a joint session and talked about the problems of domestic violence between the parents and for the father who had left from the house. They were advised to have a recheck of the difficulties in a state hospital where he was given a test for attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), to complete it and send it by post. After that, NIKOS diagnosed in the Autistic spectrum (ASD) type Asperger by the psychiatrist and the psychologist and since then he has been monitored in the outpatient clinics of the clinic until today. Of course, he did not go to the army and on the day of the support of the dissertation he asked for an escort to answer. He was employed for a long time as an usher with small fixed-term contracts in the university community and now works as a seasonal employee in a municipality of the Attica.

[3] ‘APOSTOLHS’ -Student, 33 years old with 30 interventions]. He is an orphan from a father, a graduate with accessibility to the university after diagnosis and in a psychiatric public clinic and constantly taking medication. His accessibility to the school was done by transfer from a regional university and in the program, he was introduced by a friend who met him by chance in the exams and had been helped a lot by the supportive interventions of student and social care. The aim of the SET interventions focused on the organization of the individual study method in the seventy courses owed up to the degree as well as on the control of delinquent behavior with electronic gambling. He played small insignificant sums and, in the end, he lost all the pocket money he had to spend the month. He tried to study systematically in order to meet the obligations of the academic coach and often stated that he was in despair and that he did not deserve anything since he could not control what he was doing with gambling. He was a psychologist on a weekly basis and tried to understand his relationships with his mother who were bad. He was obsessed with the death of his father, did not approve of the second marriage and was angry when she pressured him to have a job because he is too old anymore and she cannot take care of him herself. After the SET interventions in the context of social care, he managed to pass 65 courses and now he is in the thesis and works as a warehouse assistant in a part-time supermarket to save his small expenses. He continues psychotherapy for his dependence as he states on electronic gambling.



[4] **“MARIA”- Student, 21 years old with 10 interventions**]. She comes from the biotechnology department. Her accessibility to the program of individual conferences was carried out in a completely unorthodox way. She presented himself at a public televised workshop, addressed to students about the services provided for socially vulnerable groups and stated shouting and crying that he has autism and needs to get. We were a little strange because she is an excellent student in secondary education "absenteeism", and now, she was encountering asymmetrical difficulties at university. But also, awkwardly why the university does not administer a diagnosis. She was referred to a state hospital and denied the procedure on the pretext that she was away from home and cannot waste time from classes. Her accessibility to supportive student and social care interventions focused on recording the times of her individual study and controlling the time she spends online watching videos. The diagnostic process is ongoing and her accessibility to the university is supported with SET interventions in the organization, planning and definition of priorities in the individual study method. There is a strong concern about obsessions in the study because it always "must" be excellent as well as her stereotypical and repeated repetition in given and daily routines. Whoever realizes these behaviors, cries about the time she loses, gets angry with herself and feels too bad.

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[5] **“ASPASIA”-Student, 24 years old with 30 interventions**]. Her accessibility to this university was carried out with 10% because she was informed about the services offered by the university to students from vulnerable social groups. She is diagnosed for autism by the Center for Differential Diagnosis and Support in Greek (KEDDY) under the responsibility of the Ministry of Education. The aim of the SET interventions focused on the organization of the individual study method with emphasis on the concentration of attention and the development of social skills with other students. She has been supported for a long time in the past with supportive SET programs from elementary school and with private lessons in middle and high school. Her mother intervened in the interventions by text e-message pointing out both her own difficulties and her daughters in their communication, also, referring to the conflicts over her refusal to continue the sessions with the new psychologist. ASPASIA states that only one teacher in secondary school helped her correct her spelling and does not want to "talk" to a psychologist. She likes to "search the internet", gather information and read psychological books because these ways help her understand the difficulties, she recognizes to herself. The university has made significant progress, owes very few courses, is diligent, attends the lectures and laboratories and studies with handwritten and electronic notes. She has formed friends and her communication has improved with her parents because as she states the distance helped her to rethink some of her wrong and stereotypical behaviors better.

[6] **“MEROPH”- Student, 24 years old with 20 interventions**]. She comes from the department of animal science with an initial diagnosis of obsessive-compulsive disorder from a mental health center. She was given medication, which she was taking with breaks and in between she was taking hashish, substances and alcohol. She wanted to talk about her difficulties. The aim of the SET supportive interventions focused on its reconnection with the courses and the development of social skills, establishing acquaintances, relationships and relationships with other students. In one of the meetings, she came up with a bottle of wine stating



that only in this way can she find the strength and attend the course and not feel alone. Along the way she showed consistency and diligence in the lessons and beyond in 15 lessons in a semester. After her illness with COVID of both herself and her family stopped the effort. Of autistic behaviors. By then the obsessions had been systematically and diligently concealed from both her and the family. She often mentioned that her father, beat her in her back when something was wrong and he did not like it. Thus, she was led to a re-psychiatric diagnosis with ASD with new medication and interrupted the course of individual study of university courses because the priority was the psychological therapy twice a week and she 'll come back in September.

[7] ‘BASILHS’-Student, 23 years old with 15 interventions]. He is an only child, by the department of plant production science, diagnosed with informal autistic elements and dysorthography. The aim of the SET interventions focused on the planning of the courses to be examined with emphasis on the management of individual study time at home and on the development of social skills with other students at the faculty school. He finds it difficult to maintain the contacts and acquaintances he has entered into with other fellow students. He comes to the university's courses very little and chooses to go only to the laboratories because they have mandatory attendances. He does 3-5 hours a week online private tutoring in chemistry and physics. At home he meets once a week the occupational therapist, who tries to organize his study and activity space. To date, his progress in classes and exams is sufficient. He chooses a few courses to be able to manage the study stating that he does not mind extending the time of his studies a little.

[8] ‘IOANHS’-Student, 25 years old with 15 interventions]. He comes from the department of plant production science, which I met for the first time on December 11, 2018 at the career office. It is noted that he has also a brother who suffers from autism. The plant production department was chosen from a friend of a cousin who was studying in the same department and telling him that as an agronomist he would have a secure career. The aim of the SET interventions focused on the organization of the study and the management of financial transactions as the difficulty in moving from home to university using tickets for metro and bus. At home he is cared for by three teachers in mathematics, physics and chemistry. In mother's e-message, who she stated that IOANHS attempted to suicide with the shaver in the bathroom because he considered that

himself is responsible and that he cannot move forward and the mother pays the professors at home and he does not have the intended results that one would expect after so many hours of study. Now, according the therapy of psychologist and the scenario of the racket and brings out the tension and negative thoughts, while his mother learns techniques of inhalation and exhalation in the management of stress.

[9] ‘BLASHS’ Student, 23 years old with 25 interventions]. He comes from the department of philology. His accessibility to the university became with oral examinations from the General Lyceum with the diagnosis of autism and certification for disability by a regional center. The aim of the SET interventions focused on the physical attendance the university courses, assessments of the specific learning difficulties he encountered and stress management techniques in the classroom. His writing presents a picture of a second-grade student in the first semester of elementary school. According the school narrative, he mentions that he did speech therapy from two years old until the fifth grade and that he had philologist professors at home to read from the first grade until now at the university, where every weekend he takes classes with a teacher. The student comes and goes daily by bus from the city where he lives in the city that is the university on his own, he is left-handed, he does not drive a car and does not play any musical instrument. He takes handwritten notes on deliveries from the others. According the family narrative he mentions that he lives with his mother and sister, his father has been diagnosed with bipolar disorder, he abused them and has been removed from home after the divorce. He is pursuing a social skills program in a day center which takes care of his psychosocial rehabilitation and professional reintegration with funding from the European social fund. The center is staffed only by a social worker who provides continuous care to reduce the burden of stigma on mental health from autism. The student states that he wants to complete his studies and work as an employee in the Municipality, remains in the courses of philology and attends twice a week occupational therapy course.

[10] ‘PARASKEUAS’-Student, 23 years old with 25 interventions]. He comes from the department of philology. His accessibility was initiated through the process of the panhellenic examinations as a candidate student with special needs and was examined orally due to the diagnosed with pervasive disorders on the autism spectrum by the KEDDY in Greek, in the gymnasium. In the first individual



session he came accompanied by the mother who introduced herself as a philologist, a principal in a gymnasium and referred to the medication she receives for the thyroid [Tyroeadis4 100 ml daily] and the "light" autism compared to his brother's "heavy" autism. She pointed out that despite her efforts, her son finds it difficult to concentrate attention, to remember and when she writes quickly, he makes too many mistakes. Indeed, he finds it difficult to study with handwritten and electronic notes, makes many smudges, presents illegible text. The aim of the SET interventions focused on the organization of the individual study of the university courses, utilizing the facilities in the written exams for longer during the written exams. The steps of interventions for organizing a study were based on text books, the internet and e-class. It was recommended to use the mobile phone by downloading files such as the curriculum, taking mobile photos from the lectures that he did not have time to take notes, taking pictures of handwritten notes from a notebook of other students. It was supported in the organization and classification of downloads into electronic folders for each course separately.

THE LIMITATIONS OF RESEARCH

Based on the data of social care interventions by the observation methodology (Pellicano, E, Crane, L, Gaudion, K, 2017) focusing the participatory autism research with some SET recording protocols, the accessibility of students with autism in universities is placed under certain constraints. The first refers to the discontinuity of the data on the linear continuum of specific educational interventions and the history of diagnoses for autism. These descriptions from the data of diagnosis are unclear. Also, the individual study method of university courses is unknown as metacognition and memory skills and they use it limited. The students prefer to study with the internet, to old topics, from the e class and with the notes of others such as private caregivers. Finally, the research constraint of communication with parents through which expectations for obtaining a university degree are stated. data, students refer to the face of the mother in decision-making and care in difficulties.

IV. RESULTS - CONCLUSIONS - PROPOSALS

The accessibility of students with autism to universities support with the special education interventions with emphasis the Cognitive, Emotional and Social Difficulties. La CIPPA as an International Coordination between Psychoanalyst

Psychotherapists and Collaborating Members who care for autistic people discuss the future for the care of autism in the face of the psychiatric crisis into a society which has changed the way of approaches the autism. The 2001, Matthew, gave a lecture in the Athens to the first European conference on autism in Greece referring to need for provide services for people with autism in an ethical way (Matthew, P, 2001, pp. 56-68) .The title of conference was ‘ ‘ In search of Ariadne's Thread ‘ ‘ and into has discussed the complexity of the autism. Twenty years later the academical society research the meaning from the relationships between the students with and without special educational needs and disabilities as the autism at the University. The importance of meaningful contact and interaction with fellow students resist under the Promotion of Educational Innovation. According our view, It is a long away from the point of education, vocational training from the narratives for future work of young people with autism (Drosinou-Korea, M, 2020, d).

The morality of a society is measured by the attention it pays to its most vulnerable members (Winnicott W. D, 2016) such as students with autism and allows them, as well as other citizens, to live with dignity without examining the social behaviors declared with hyperactivity or hypoactivity. The results showed that the accessibility of students with autism in universities depends on the private care they receive at the initiative of the family. Indeed, students with autism who are supported with private lessons at home by caregivers manage to better balance the difficulties they face in the academic curriculum.

The special education interventions of student and social care at the Metropolitan AUA in the framework of the program for the treatment of vulnerable social groups successfully supported the metacognitive skills in the management of the accessibility process and the transition to the academic program. These were based on important data regarding the peculiarities in the individual study method and the functional adaptive behavior in the community. On the other hand, students with significant difficulties in social skills that are supported only by the psychologist.

The problems in social communication include difficulties in social interaction and communication and are together with stereotypical, repetitive behaviors, activities and interesting elements for which they are "stigmatized". Students, therefore, with these dominant traits of autism, avoid daily contact with the school, do not participate actively and physically in the courses, do not recognize their abilities and approach the world and



reality in a special way of viewing.

The concluding discussion highlights important elements of loneliness [1], helplessness [2] and fatigue [3] which seem to overwhelm most students with autism. In support of this conclusion, two extracts from the twelfth individual SET 'session with a student is quoted, who declares that he is unable to cope with his academic obligations.

[first excerpt- written Saturday night]

I am unable to cope with my obligations. I do not know if I will give a lesson in this exam period. I have been under a lot of pressure because I feel very alone and I do not see anyone interested in me as my phone does not ring at all in my day. I am very difficult and I feel very depressed. if you wish we do not continue the sessions I understand it. and he told me that a professor in chemical plant protection theory that I give on Monday will help me. I may be able to read that out tomorrow. I do not have time for the general viticulture theory. In conclusion, my strengths have been greatly reduced because I only see indifference from everyone. Be well.

I don't get strength from anywhere. I am hopelessly alone.

[second excerpt- written Monday morning]

Good morning. I am not well unfortunately. I am under a lot of pressure from my mother to read to become what she wants Mr. Perfect with school work and of all I have no other strength and stamina to read to pass a lesson. I make a big struggle to start to be trusted by me or my friends or my family being close to four months clean without gambling but because it is a short time, I have not managed it and it saddens me a lot. You have helped me incredibly much I have tremendous gratitude and sympathy but I have nothing else to give to anyone else.

Unhappily eternal student and reprehensible by everyone without anyone acknowledging anything that I am making a huge struggle to stand on my feet and become independent. be well].

As (Stampoltzi, Agl., Kalouri, R. & Tsitsou, E, 2018) reports, there are people of high intelligence and functionality with autism who are never diagnosed, they face the problems on their own. Also, there are students on the Autism Spectrum who meet barriers, and for them promoted opportunities and ways to support higher education.

The proposals highlight the need for further monitoring of issues related to the education of students with autism in universities, because in our opinion it is a critical group that can be addressed with as little impact on the psyche of the students themselves and their families.

Acronyms

1. Special education and training [SET]
2. Agricultural University of Athens [AUA]
3. University of Peloponnese [UOP]
4. Autismspectrumdisorders [ASD]
5. Coordination Internationale entre Psychothérapeutes Psychanalystes et membres associés s'occupant de personnes Autistes [CIPPA]
6. Targeted, Individual, Structured, Inclusion programs for students with Special Education Needs [TISIPfSENS]

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Thanks

All my students lead me every day to their "want" and "can".

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