UNIVERSITY STUDENTS’ ATTITUDES TOWARDS STATISTICS

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Some factors, such as statistics anxiety, motivation, and attitudes toward statistics are related to performance in statistics. In many countries the influence of attitudes towards statistics on performance has been studied and many scales have been developed to assess these attitudes. The measuring of these attitudes is important because they can supply useful information to the teacher, who can design teaching strategies in agreement with the students' profile.

This study was aimed at assessing the differences of university students’ attitudes towards statistics by course, semester, age and gender, and its relationship with self-perception about performance in statistics. The attitude scale was given to 342 undergraduate students of engineering, administration, psychology and pedagogy. 54.7% of the students were female, with a range of age of 18-65 years old and average of 24.8 years.

A 4-point Likert scale with 20 items served to classify the students’ attitudes in negative and positive. The results suggested a moderate positive correlation between self-perception and performance in statistics. In the same way self-perception performance in statistics presented high correlation with attitudes. We observed significant differences in attitudes among Psychology students and other courses. There were also significant differences in attitudes between the punctuation in the scale and gender. We did not observe significant differences of university students’ attitudes towards statistics by semester or age. These results suggest that special attention should be given to the teaching of statistics at university, because the attitudes towards statistics influence the students’ academic performance.

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