

Self-Determination for People with Sensory Disabilities: Pre- Service Teachers Viewpoints

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Abstract

This study aimed to identify the attitudes of pre- service teachers toward self-determination skills for people with sensory disabilities. To achieve the aims of study, a questionnaire of the attitudes towards self-determination skills was used to collect data from (88) pre- service female teachers from Mu'tah University in Jordan. The results indicated that the attitudes were positive. And there are no statistically significant differences in the attitudes of pre-service teachers towards self-determination skills for people with sensory disabilities due to Academic year and Previous experience in dealing with people with disabilities. And there are statistically significant differences in the attitudes due to the presence of a disability in the individual's family.

Keywords

Pre-Service Teachers, Self- Determination Skills, Sensory Disabilities.

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Introduction

In the Law on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities No. 20 for the Year 2017 in Jordan self – determination is a right for people with disabilities; The fourth article of the law confirmed that the participation of people with disabilities in policymaking, drawing up plans, programs, and decision-making operations related to them (Higher Council for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. From an educational viewpoint, self-determination is a broad term that includes many skills that enable an individual to conform to himself and help him make appropriate decisions in his life without totally or partially dependent on others. These skills are decision-making skills, self-regulation skills, critical thinking skills, goal setting skills, problem-solving skills (Almalky, 2020) self-advocacy (Alquraini, 2017; Thoma, Baker, & Saddler, 2002) Performance independent; choice making and self-awareness (Alquraini, 2017; Black, 2009) these skills work in harmony with each other (Agran, Snow, & Swaner, 1999). It is critical to teach these skills to people with disabilities to succeed in the future in living independently and not relying on others, as well as obtaining and succeeding in work(Thoma et al., 2002) Also, there is a relationship between self-determination skills and quality of life for people with disabilities ((Al-Sharif, 2018; Alquraini, 2017; Thoma et al., 2002; Vicente et al., 2020; M. L. Wehmeyer, 2020) Self-determination skills facilitate transitions for people with disabilities and enable them to make decisions about their future and success (McDonald, 2018; Thoma et al., 2002; M. Wehmeyer & Schwartz, 1997; M. L. Wehmeyer, 1992).

Self-determination skills are important for everyone, regardless of age, occupation, or physical and mental health (Alquraini, 2017), people with disabilities have a greater need to learn these skills than others (Al- Sharif, 2018). For people with disabilities, the right to self-determination is a contentious issue because many people, specialists, and teachers believe that self-determination is not relevant for people with disabilities (M. L. Wehmeyer, 1992, 1998) According to (Alquraini, 2017). many people with disabilities face obstacles that impair their ability to make decisions and solve problems. As a result, they cannot live independently and must rely on others for many of their daily decisions and choices. As a result, many associations of people with disabilities and their families demanded that they be taught decision-making skills to face these challenges and problems and make life-changing decisions. Self-determination skills assist people with disabilities in developing self-concept, thinking, and problem-solving skills, the ability to set and achieve goals, make decisions, understand their rights, and engage in self-advocacy. Furthermore, self-determination teaches people with disabilities how to act, organize, and plan for their success regardless of their disability. There is evidence that people with self-determination skills are socially and academically successful (Al-Sharif, 2018). Self-determination skills can positively influence the future of persons with disabilities in choosing a suitable job and living independently(Alquraini, 2017; Shogren et al., 2019; Shogren & Ward, 2018; M. Wehmeyer & Schwartz, 1997; M. L. Wehmeyer, 1992; M. L. Wehmeyer, Agran, & Hughes, 2000).

People with disabilities develop self-determination skills over time, but they also require individual educational interventions and programs to help them develop these skills (Grigal, Neubert, Moon, & Graham, 2003). Teachers play a critical role in developing and directly teaching students with disabilities self-determination skills. It is essential to support and encourage special education teachers to put these skills into practice by allowing the students with disabilities to make decisions about their educational programs or individual transition plans(Thoma et al., 2002).

There is a gap between theory and practice (Thoma et al., 2002). Many teachers believe that self-determination education is important for people with disabilities (Agran et al., 1999; Alquraini, 2017; AlTarawneh; Grigal et al., 2003; Martin, Morehart, Lauzon, & Daviso, 2013; McDonald, 2018; Rodriguez, 2006). And many teachers are skeptical that all people with disabilities will be able to choose their fate (Almalky, 2020; Black, 2009; Field, Hoffman, Peter, & Sawilowsky, 1992; Smadi & Al-Zboon, 2014; Vicente et al., 2020; M. L. Wehmeyer et al., 2000). Few teachers include these skills in IEPs or teach them (Alquraini, 2017; Thoma et al., 2002) (Agran et al., 1999; Grigal et al., 2003; Martin et al., 2013). According to many teachers, one of the reasons for their lack of confidence in their ability to teach self-determination skills to students with disabilities is that they did not receive pre-service training on self-determination skills and how to teach them (Smadi & Al-Zboon, 2014; Thoma et al., 2002). However, a few teachers reported that they learned self-determination skills during their pre-service training, which influenced their practice (Shogren et al., 2019).

Special educators must have a theoretical understanding of self-determination skills and knowledge of how to incorporate these skills into individual educational programs and select educational strategies based on scientific research to teach them (Thoma et al., 2002). In addition

to pre-service training, special education teachers' beliefs, perceptions, and attitudes toward self-determination influence how they teach these skills to students with disabilities (Thoma et al., 2002). Teachers will successfully teach these skills to students with disabilities if their beliefs, perceptions, and attitudes are positive about the importance of these skills and teaching them (AlTarawneh; Shogren et al., 2019; Shogren & Ward, 2018)). The preparation of special education teachers includes not only theoretical knowledge but also correcting misconceptions about self-determination. Among these ideas are that self-determination entails completely independent performance, absolute self-control, and self-reliance without the assistance of others (Thoma et al., 2002). Pre-service teacher education helps to improve teachers' attitudes toward people with disabilities and their various rights, including the right to self-determination (Almalky, 2020; M. L. Wehmeyer, 1998). Therefore, this study came because of the importance of self-determination skills and pre-service teachers' attitudes toward the right to self-determination for students with disabilities.

Study Questions:

- 1- What are the attitudes of pre-service female teachers towards self-determination skills for students with sensory disabilities in Jordan?
- 2- Are there statistically significant differences in the attitudes of pre-service female teachers towards self-determination skills for students with sensory disabilities due to the variables of the Academic year, The presence of a disability in the individual's family, and previous experience in dealing with people with disabilities?

Methods

The purpose of this descriptive and analytical study was to learn about the attitudes of pre-service female teachers in Jordan toward self-determination skills for students with sensory disabilities, then to see if these attitudes differed depending on the variables of the academic year, the presence of a disability in the individual's family, and previous experience in dealing with people with disabilities.

Participants:

The study included 88 pre-service female special education teachers from Mu'tah University in southern Jordan. Table 1 shows the demographic characteristics of the study participants.

Table1.
Demographic Characteristics of Study Participants

Variable	Level of Variable	Number	Percentage (%)
Academic Year	First and second	65	73.9
	Third or Graduate	23	26.1
The presence of a disability in the individual's family	Yes	20	22.7
	No	68	77.3
Previous experience in dealing with people with disabilities	Yes	41	46.6
	No	47	53.4

Study Instrument

Questionnaire of Attitudes towards self-determination skills for people with sensory disabilities:

The researchers prepared a questionnaire consisting of (26) negative and positive items to measure the attitudes towards self-determination skills for students with sensory disabilities. The questionnaire content validity was discovered, and its reliability was calculated using Cronbach's alpha and was found to be satisfactory (0.924). The teacher answered the questionnaire by choosing one of the following statements (strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, strongly disagree). The questionnaire was corrected as follows:

Positive items (1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24). (Strongly agree =5, agree = 4, neutral = 3, disagree= 2, strongly disagree= 1) .

Negative items (4, 11, 25, 26). (Strongly agree =1, agree =2, neutral = 3, disagree= 4, strongly disagree= 5) .

After that, the scores are collected on the items, and the interpretation of the score on the questionnaire is as follows:

If total between (105-130), the attitudes are strongly positive.

If total between (79 - 104), the attitudes are positive.

If total between (53-78), the attitudes are neutral.

If total between (27-52), the attitudes are negative.

If the total is (26), the attitudes are strongly negative.

Data Collection:

Due to COVID19, the researchers used the study instrument electronically by sending a link on Google Drive to teachers via Microsoft Teams after explaining the purpose of the study to them.

Results and Discussions

To answer question 1 " What are the attitudes of pre-service female teachers towards self-determination skills for students with sensory disabilities in Jordan?". The researchers calculated the mean and standard deviation of the pre-service teachers' scores on the questionnaire, Table 2 shows that. From Table 2, the mean value was (93.76), and this value means that the attitudes of pre-service teachers towards self-determination skills for students with sensory disabilities are positive.

Table 2.

The Mean and Standard Deviation of the Pre-service Teachers' Scores on the Questionnaire

Number of Participants	Mean	Standard Deviation
88	93.76	13.04

This result is consistent with the findings of these studies (Agran et al., 1999; Grigal et al., 2003; McDonald, 2018; Rodriguez, 2006). Moreover, he disagrees with the findings of these studies (Field et al., 1992; Black, 2009). In general, the current study's results indicated that pre-service teachers had positive attitudes toward self-determination skills for students with sensory disabilities. It means that teachers believe that people with sensory disabilities can decide their destiny and make important decisions in their lives. But what these teachers do not know is that self-determination skills are taught to students with disabilities and that teachers have an important role in teaching these skills. Unfortunately, most of the participants in this study indicated that the term self-determination was new to them; they had no information about it because they did not include it in the courses they studied at university. Thus, it makes the gap between rights and practices large because people with disabilities have the right to self-determination. Still, they cannot because their teachers do not have sufficient knowledge and experience to teach self-determination skills to them. Therefore, it requires that pre-service teachers' courses in universities include information on self-determination skills and how to teach them.

To answer question 2, "Are there statistically significant differences in the attitudes of pre-service female teachers towards self-determination skills for students with sensory disabilities due to the variables of the Academic year, The presence of a disability in the individual's family, and previous experience in dealing with people with disabilities? The researcher computed the means and standard deviations of the scores of pre-service teachers according to the variables of the academic year, The presence of a disability in the individual's family, and Previous experience in dealing with people with disabilities. Table 3 shows that.

Table 3.

Means and Standard Deviations of the scores of pre-service teachers According Variables of Study

Variable	Level of Variable	Number	Mean	Standard Deviation
Academic Year	First- (Year)	65	92.38	11.1
	Second			
	Third or Graduate	23	97.65	17.2
The presence of a disability in the individual's family	Yes	20	102.6	14.7
	No	68	91.16	11.4
Previous experience in dealing with people with disabilities	Yes	41	98.4	14
	No	47	89.7	10.7

Table 3 shows that there are apparent differences in the Means. To know if these differences are statistically significant, the researchers conducted a 3-way ANOVA. Table 4 shows that.

Table 4.

Result of 3- Way ANOVA Test

Source	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Academic year	1	267.3	1.9	0.177
The presence of a disability in the individual's family	1	800.8	5.6	0.02*
Previous experience in dealing with people with disabilities	1	298.4	2.1	0.15
Error	84	143.9		
$P \leq 0.05^*$				

Table 4 shows that there are no statistically significant differences in pre-service teachers' attitudes towards self-determination skills for people with sensory disabilities due to Academic year and Previous experience in dealing with people with disabilities. And there are statistically significant differences in pre-service teachers' attitudes towards self-determination skills for people with sensory disabilities due to the presence of a disability in the individual's family, favor to pre-service teachers who have a person with disability in their family. In general, there are no significant differences in attitudes due to academic years. For teachers who have experience dealing with people with disabilities, this does not mean they have sufficient knowledge of people with disabilities and what they can do. As for teachers who have a person with disability in their family, they are probably the most knowledgeable about what people with disabilities can do about self-determination skills, so there were differences in attitudes due to the presence of a disability in the individual's family. However, it needs more research and studies.

Conclusions:

Most study participants told the researchers that the term "self-determination skills" was unfamiliar to them; they had never studied it. This means that these teachers will graduate knowing nothing about, and being unable to teach, self-determination skills to students with disabilities. It is one of the primary reasons that some students with disabilities do not develop self-determination skills. There is evidence that teachers lack knowledge of self-determination skills and how to teach them (Thoma et al., 2002; M. L. Wehmeyer et al., 2000), which necessitates the inclusion of self-determination skills and how to teach them in pre-service teacher education courses.

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