



Research Article

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Self-Determination of Persons with Sensory Disabilities

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Abstract

This study aimed to determine female pre-service teachers' attitudes toward self-determination skills for persons with sensory disabilities. Data were collected using a questionnaire of attitudes toward self-determination skills from 80 female pre-service teachers at Mu'tah University in Jordan to achieve the study's aims. The findings indicated that their attitudes were positive. There were no statistically significant differences in teachers' attitudes toward self-determination skills for persons with sensory disabilities depending on the academic year or previous experience with persons with disabilities. In contrast, there were statistically significant differences in attitudes due to the presence of a disability in the individual's family.

Keywords: Self-Determination Skills, Sensory Disabilities, Pre-service teachers

1. Introduction

Self-determination is a right of persons with disabilities under the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), and Article 3 of the Convention states that respect for inherent dignity, individual autonomy, including the freedom to make one's own choices, and independence and all rights of persons with disabilities (United Nation [UN], 2017). Jordan signed this convention in 2007 and ratified it in 2008 (Thompson, 2018). As a result, persons with disabilities now have the right to self-determination. Also, in the Law on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities No. 20 for the year 2017, Self-determination is a right for persons with disabilities in Jordan. The fourth article of the Law confirmed that Respect for the inherent rights and dignity of people with disabilities, as well as their autonomy and freedom of choice, and Involvement of people with disabilities and their organizations in policymaking, plan development, program implementation, and decision-making and operations pertaining to them (Higher Council of the Right of Persons with Disabilities [HCD], 2017; Prime Ministry, 2017).

Self-determination is a broad term that encompasses many skills that enable an individual to

conform to themselves and make appropriate decisions in their life without being completely or partially dependent on others. These skills include decision-making, self-regulation, critical thinking, goal-setting, problem-solving (Alhewaity, 2018; Alquraini, 2017), self-advocacy (Alquraini, 2017; Thoma et al., 2002), choice-making, performance independence, and self-awareness (Alquraini, 2017; Bradford, 2019). These skills complement one another (Alhewaity, 2018). Therefore, it is critical to teach these skills to persons with disabilities to help them live independently and without relying on others in the future and obtain and succeed in work (Thoma et al., 2002). Furthermore, there is a correlation between self-determination skills and the quality of life of persons with disabilities (Alquraini, 2017; Al-Sharif, 2018; Thoma et al., 2002; Vicente et al., 2020; Wehmeyer, 2020).

Persons with disabilities have a greater need to learn self-determination skills than others (Al-Sharif, 2018) until they can make decisions about their future and success (Brown & Cohen, 1996; Cheng & Sin, 2019; Cmar, 2019; Luckner & Sebal, 2013; McDonald, 2018; Shogren et al., 2013; Thoma et al., 2002; Wehmeyer, 2005; Wehmeyer & Schwartz, 1997; Willings, 2019). Self-determination skills are critical for people with disabilities because they help them transition, succeed in their chosen professions, and express their needs and desires. In addition to assisting them in gaining independence in their daily lives, the success in inclusion into society and their sense of being an important part of it. Self-determination skills enable people with disabilities to solve problems, understand their strengths and weaknesses, control their behavior, and select the educational tasks they want to learn (Agran et al., 1999; Alquraini, 2017; Battles & Pierson, 2019; Berry, Ward & Caplan, 2012; McDonald, 2018; McGuire & McDonnell, 2008; Ziadat & Al-Alwan, 2018).

However, the right to self-determination is contentious because many people, specialists, and teachers believe that it is irrelevant for persons with disabilities

(Bambara, et al., 1998; Wehmeyer, 1992; Wehmeyer, 1998). Many persons with disabilities face obstacles that limit their abilities to make decisions and solve problems. Consequently, they cannot live independently and must rely on others for their daily decisions and choices. Therefore, many organizations representing persons with disabilities and their families demand that they are taught decision-making skills to be able to encounter these challenges and problems and make life-changing decisions (Alquraini, 2017). Self-determination skills can help persons with disabilities choose a suitable job and live independently in the future (Alquraini, 2017; Shogren & Ward, 2018; Wehmeyer, 2005; Wehmeyer & Schwartz, 1997). In addition, there is evidence that people with self-determination skills are more socially and academically successful (Agran & Brown, 2015; Al-Sharif, 2018). Self-determination skills develop over time for persons with disabilities, but they also require individual educational interventions and programs to help them develop these skills (Bradford, 2019). Thus, teachers play a critical role in developing and teaching self-determination skills to students with disabilities. It is critical to encourage and support special education teachers in putting these skills into practice by allowing students with disabilities to make decisions about their educational programs or individual transition plans (Thoma et al., 2002).

Among the most important self-determination skills that special education teachers should include in individual educational programs for students with disabilities (Konrad, 2008; Tubbergen, Omichinski & Warschausky, 2008) are the following:

First: Choice-making skill: that is, selecting the preferred thing from among several options. Can include this skill in individual educational programs to improve students' ability to choose appropriate objectives and information, and then make decisions and benefit from previous experiences in solving problems (Agran, Storey & Krupp, 2010; Alquraini, 2017; Shevin & Klein, 1984; Stafford, 2005; Tubbergen, Omichinski & Warschausky, 2008; Wolf & Jonnnou, 2022). Second: Problem-solving skill, it includes the ability of an individual with a disability to find suitable alternatives and solutions in solving problems and difficult situations he faces. To develop the ability of students with disabilities to this skill, they should be taught the skills of accurately identifying the problem and developing solutions to it. And then choose the appropriate solution (Agran, Blanchard, Wehmeyer & Hughes, 2002; Alquraini, 2017; Vlachou, Stavroussi, & Didaskalou, 2017). Third: Self-awareness skill, refers to a clear and accurate understanding of the individual's strengths and

weaknesses. Among the skills that can contribute to developing the ability of students with disabilities to self-awareness is teaching them the psychological and physical needs known to all people and realizing the differences between individuals. It also includes teaching them how to identify their basic needs and weaknesses (Alquraini, 2017; Campbell-Whatley, 2008; Merlone & Moran, 2008; Orok, 2019). Fourth: Performance Independent, the ability of the individual to perform the tasks required of him independently. This includes teaching students with disabilities the ability to start and finish tasks on time, use self-management strategies, and follow through on their plans (Alquraini, 2017; Runo, 2012). Fifth: Self-advocacy skill, it means the ability of persons with disabilities to defend and claim their rights within legislation and official laws. Students with disabilities are introduced to their rights and duties, taught the skills necessary to claim those rights, identify sources of support that can contribute to meeting their needs, and assess the quality of services provided to them (Alquraini, 2017; Merlone & Moran, 2008; Rubinstien, 2014; Ryan & Griffiths, 2015).

These skills should be included in educational programs for students with disabilities and presented in an environmental context by encouraging them to practice them in natural and diverse situations, promoting appropriate decisions and choices for students, supporting the goals they set and helping them achieve them, and educating school team members and families about the importance of teaching these skills to students with disabilities ((Bambara, Cole & Koger; 1998; Tubbergen et al., 2008).

According to special education teachers, there is a gap between theory and practice (Thoma et al., 2002). Several researchers posit that educating persons with disabilities on self-determination skills is essential (Agran et al., 1999; Aldosiry, 2016; Almalky, 2020; Alquraini, 2017; Grigal et al., 2003; Martin et al., 2013; McDonald, 2018; Rodriguez, 2006; Thoma et al., 2002; Wehmeyer et al., 2000). However, many teachers are also skeptical that all persons with disabilities have the ability to choose their fate (Aldosiry, 2016; Alquraini, 2017; Black, 2009; Field et al., 1992; McDonald, 2018; Vicente et al., 2020; Wehmeyer, 1998). As a result, a few teachers include or teach these skills in Individual Educational Programs (IEPs) (Agran et al., 1999; Alquraini, 2017; Al-Zboon & Smadi, 2014; Bradford, 2019; Martin et al., 2013; Thoma et al., 2002). One of the reasons why many teachers lack confidence in their ability to teach self-determination skills is that they do not receive pre-service training on how to teach these skills to students with disabilities (Alquraini, 2017; Bradford, 2019; Thoma et al., 2002; Wehmeyer et al., 2000). However, a few teachers reported that they learned self-determination skills that influenced their practice. Special education teachers must have a theoretical understanding of self-determination skills and knowledge of incorporating these skills into individual educational programs and select educational strategies to teach them based on scientific research (Thoma et al., 2002). In addition to pre-service training, beliefs, perceptions, and attitudes toward self-determination influence how these skills are taught to students with disabilities (Thoma et al., 2002). Special education teachers can successfully teach these skills to students with disabilities if they have positive beliefs, perceptions, and attitudes regarding the importance of these skills and how to teach them (Al-Zboon & Smadi, 2014; Shogren et al., 2019). In addition, pre-service training can help teachers improve their attitudes toward individuals with disabilities and their various rights, such as the right to self-determination (Altarawneh, 2021; Shogren et al., 2019). Therefore, this study was conducted because of the importance of self-determination skills and pre-service teachers' attitudes toward the right to self-determination and teaching it to students with disabilities.

1.1 Study Questions

First question: What are pre-service teachers' attitudes toward self-determination skills for students with sensory disabilities?

Second question: Are there statistically significant differences in pre-service teachers' attitudes toward self-determination skills for students with sensory disabilities depending on the academic year, the presence of a disability in the individual's family, and previous experience in dealing with persons with disabilities?

2. Methods

This descriptive and analytical study investigated pre-service teachers' attitudes toward self-determination skills of students with sensory disabilities in Jordan. In addition, it explored if these attitudes differed depending on the academic year, the presence of a disability in the individual's family, and previous experience in dealing with persons with disabilities.

2.1 Study Participants

The study participants included 80 female pre-service special education teachers at Mu'tah University in southern Jordan. Table 1 presents the characteristics of the study participants.

Table 1: The Characteristics of the study participants

Variable		Number	Percentage
Academic Year	First and second	57	71.3%
	Third or Graduate	23	28.8%
The presence of a disability in the individual's family	Yes	20	25%
	No	60	75%
Previous experience in dealing with persons with disabilities	Yes	40	50%
	No	40	50%

2.2 Study Instrument

The Questionnaire of Attitudes toward Self-Determination Skills for Persons with Sensory Disabilities:

The researchers prepared a questionnaire to assess the attitudes toward the self-determination skills of persons with sensory disabilities, consisting of (26) negative and positive items. The content validity and reliability of the questionnaire were assessed using Cronbach's alpha (0.924). The teachers responded to the questionnaire by selecting one of the following responses: strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, strongly disagree. The questionnaire was scored as follows:

Positive items: (strongly agree = 5, agree = 4, neutral = 3, disagree = 2, strongly disagree = 1) .

Negative items: (strongly agree = 1, agree = 2, neutral = 3, disagree = 4, strongly disagree = 5).

After collecting scores on the items, they were interpreted as follows:

If the total score ranges between:

(105-130): Strongly positive attitudes.

(79-104): Positive attitudes.

(53-78): Neutral attitudes.

(27-52): Negative attitudes.

(26): Strongly negative attitudes.

2.3 Data Collection

Due to the COVID19 pandemic, the researchers administered the study instrument electronically by sending a link to the teachers via Microsoft Teams after explaining the purpose of the study.

3. Findings and Discussions

To answer the first question, the researchers calculated the mean and standard deviation. Table 2 shows deviations in pre-service teachers' scores.

Table 2: Mean and Std. Deviation of the Pre-service Teachers' Scores

Participants	Mean	Std. Deviation
80	93.88	13.4

According to Table 2, the mean value was (93.88), indicating that pre-service teachers' attitudes toward self-determination skills for students with sensory disabilities were positive. This finding is in agreement with those of previous studies (Agran et al., 1999; Aldosiry, 2016; Almalky, 2020; Alquraini, 2017; Altarawneh & Etawi, 2021; Grigal et al., 2003; Martin et al., 2015; McDonald, 2018; Rodriguez, 2006; Wehmeyer et al., 2000). This contradicts the findings of some previous studies (Black, 2009; Field et al., 1992) as well. The present study's findings indicate that teachers believe that students with sensory disabilities can determine their fate and make important decisions in their lives. However, these teachers do not realize that students with disabilities should be taught self-determination skills and teachers play an important role in teaching these skills. Unfortunately, most participants in this study indicated that the term self-determination was unfamiliar to them; they did not know it because it was not covered in the courses they took at university. Persons with disabilities have the right to self-determination, and there is a wide gap between their rights and practices. As their teachers lack the necessary knowledge and experience to teach them self-determination skills, pre-service teacher education courses in universities must include information on self-determination skills and how to teach them.

The researchers calculated the mean and standard deviation to answer the second question. Deviations in pre-service teachers' scores were based on the academic year, the presence of a disability in the individual's family, and previous experience in dealing with persons with disabilities. Table 3 shows the results.

Table 3: Means and Std. Deviation of pre-service teachers' scores based on the study variables

Variable		Number	Mean	Std. Deviation
Academic Year	First- Second (Year)	57	92.3	11.4
	Third or Graduate	23	97.7	17.2
The presence of a disability in the individual's family	Yes	20	102.6	14.7
	No	60	90.9	11.7
Previous experience in dealing with persons with disabilities	Yes	40	98.4	14.2
	No	40	89.4	11

Table 3 shows that there are noticeable differences in the means. The researchers used a 3-way ANOVA to see if the differences were statistically significant. Table 4 shows the results.

Table 4: 3 - Way ANOVA Results

	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Academic year	1	323.9	2.149	0.15
The presence of a disability in the individual's family	1	871.2	5.8	0.02*
Previous experience in dealing with persons with disabilities	1	271.7	1.8	0.2
Error	76	150.7		
P ≤ 0.05*				

Table 4 shows no statistically significant differences in pre-service teachers' attitudes toward self-determination skills for persons with sensory disabilities depending on the academic year and previous experience dealing with them. However, there were statistically significant differences in

pre-service teachers' attitudes toward self-determination skills for persons with sensory disabilities depending on the presence of a disability in the individual's family, favoring pre-service teachers who have a family member with disabilities. There were no significant differences in attitudes depending on the academic year. Teachers with experience of working with persons with disabilities do not necessarily have a sufficient understanding of persons with disabilities and what they can do. Teachers with a disabled family member are likely to be the most knowledgeable about what persons with disabilities can do in terms of self-determination skills; thus, there were differences in attitudes depending on the presence of a disability in the individual's family. However, further studies are required to confirm this hypothesis.

4. Conclusion

The term "self-determination skills" was unfamiliar to most study participants; they had never studied it. This implies that these teachers will graduate without learning about self-determination skills. Therefore, they will not teach them to students with disabilities. This is one of the primary reasons some students with disabilities do not develop self-determination skills. Furthermore, there is evidence that teachers lack knowledge of self-determination skills and how to teach them (Wehmeyer et al., 2000; Thoma et al., 2002; Alquraini, 2017; Bradford, 2019). Therefore, self-determination skills and how to teach them should be included in pre-service teacher education courses. There is evidence that training special education teachers to teach self-determination skills to students with disabilities helps them measure and teach them to students with disabilities (Agran et al., 1999; Al-Sharif, 2018; Battles & Pierson, 2019; Bradford, 2019; Geenen et al., 2012).

The most important self-determination skills that should be included in individual educational programs for students with disabilities are choice-making, problem-solving, self-awareness, performance independent, self-advocacy. They can be taught these skills by teaching them how to choose from among several options, identifying problems and finding appropriate solutions to them, introducing a person with a disability to his strengths and weaknesses, and helping him to understand himself, as well as teaching the self-management skill related to starting and ending the tasks in time, teaching students with disabilities how to meet their needs and awareness of their rights and responsibilities (Alquraini, 2017; Bambara, et al., 1998). There is evidence that teaching self-determination skills to students with disabilities contributes to improvement these skills (Loman, et al., 2010), as indicated by the following studies: (Agran, Hong & Blankenship, 2007; Bakken & Parette, 2008; Cmar & Markoski, 2019; Field, Martin, Miller, Ward & Wehmeyer, 1998; Fontana-Lana & Petitpierre, 2017; Luckner & Sebal, 2013).

In Jordan, there is a real problem with the level of commitment of special education programs to teaching self-determination skills. This level was low in Individual Educational Programs (IEPs), teaching strategies, and self-evaluation (Al-Zboon, 2012; Al-Zboon & Smadi, 2014).

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Appendix A:

The Questionnaire of Attitudes toward Self-Determination Skills for Persons with Sensory Disabilities

#	Item	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
1	Persons with sensory disabilities can make various decisions on their own					
2	A person with sensory impairment can choose the appropriate life partner.					
3	Persons with sensory disabilities can succeed in a job of their choosing.					
4	Others should make decisions about the lives of persons with sensory disabilities.					
5	Persons with sensory disabilities can plan for their future.					
6	Persons with sensory disability can rely on themselves without relying on others.					
7	Persons with sensory disabilities can deal with money (selling, buying, spending, saving) without relying on anyone.					
8	A person with a disability can choose the job that suits them.					
9	A person with a sensory disability can organize their life independently without the need for assistance.					
10	A person with disability has the right to pursue the hobby they want. A person with sensory impairment is not responsible for their decisions.					
11	A person with a sensory disability is not responsible for his decisions.					
12	Persons with sensory disabilities can bear the consequences of their own decisions.					
13	Persons with sensory disabilities can offer perspectives on different matters in their lives.					
14	A person with sensory disabilities is responsible for his actions.					
15	Persons with sensory disabilities have the right to change their job if it does not suit them.					
16	It is best to consider and respect the tendencies and interests of persons with sensory disabilities.					
17	Persons with sensory disabilities can defend their rights.					
18	Persons with sensory disabilities have sufficient abilities to make the right decisions in their lives.					
19	Persons with sensory disabilities can make and implement plans.					
20	Persons with sensory disabilities can do the things they want without affecting others.					
21	If persons with sensory disabilities want to succeed, they will succeed.					
22	Persons with sensory disabilities can set and achieve short-term goals.					
23	Persons with sensory disabilities can control their behavior.					
24	A person with sensory disabilities can be a leader who manages various projects.					
25	Persons with sensory disabilities are unable to make appropriate decisions regarding their lives.					
26	A person with a sensory disability is not responsible for their actions.					

Note: Positive items are: (1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24).

Negative items are: (4, 11, 25, 26).