

Attitudes Pre-service teachers towards Inclusion of Students with Visual Impairment and Blindness

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Abstract

This study aimed to identify attitudes of pre-service female teachers towards inclusion of students with visual impairment and blindness in regular school. Also aimed to know the impact of some variables (the Academic year, studying course in visual impairment, and previous experience in dealing with people with visual impairment or blindness) on these attitudes. To achieve the aims of this study, a questionnaire was applied to a sample of (130) Pre-service special education female teachers from Mu'tah University to measure the attitudes. The findings of this study indicated that the attitudes were neutral. Also, there are no statistically significant differences due to the academic year, studying course in visual impairment, and previous experience dealing with people with visual impairment and blindness .

Keywords: Attitudes, Pre- Service Teachers, Students with Visual Impairment and Blindness, Inclusion.

Introduction

In Jordan, the teaching of students with visual Impairment and blindness with their sighted peers in regular school is right for them, according to the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Law No. 20 of 2017, for this purpose, the Higher Council for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (HCD) together with the Ministry of Education prepared the Ten- Years Strategy for Inclusive Education 2020- 2030 to educate the largest possible number of students with disabilities in regular schools (Ministry of Education, 2021). This strategy came because a very small percentage of students with disabilities are enrolled in the regular schools; the number of students with disabilities in regular schools in (2016/2017) reached 758, including 311 students with visual impairment or blindness. Inclusive education is teaching students with visual impairment or blindness with their sighted peers in regular schools (Hadidi,2011), and it is a right for students with disabilities (Ministry of Education, 2021; Higher Council for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, 2017, Higher Council for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, 2021),and there are many social and academic benefits for inclusion of students with disabilities with students without disabilities (Hunt, Staub, Alweel&Goets, 1994; AlKhteeb, 2008; Tarawneh, 2016; Altarawneh, 2020); the achievement of students with disabilities increases and their social skills improve when they are inclusion (Duquette, 2008; AlKhteeb, 2008;

Bryant, Smith & Bryant, 2008; Gu, 2009; Waldron & Mclesky, 1998; Parvin, 2015), and the achievement of students without disabilities is not affected by the presence of students with disabilities in the inclusive classes (Sharpe, York & Knight, 1994). Also, inclusion plays an important role in preparing students with disabilities to live independently (Alkhteeb, 2008; Bryant et al., 2008; Duquette, 2008; Hadidi, 2011; Tarawneh, 2016; Altarawneh, 2020; Altarawneh, 2021). The last, Inclusion is less expensive than special education (Alkhteeb, 2008; Bryant et al., 2008; Hadidi, 2011).

The existence of the law does not necessarily mean the obligation to implement it, especially in inclusion, because there are many barriers and challenges to its implementation like, lack of knowledge about People with visual impairment and blindness and negative pictures of people with disabilities (Ministry of Education, 2021; Higher Council for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, 2021), environmental inaccessibility (Temegen, 2018), limited financial and educational resources as well as the scarcity of qualified human resources in the area of inclusive education at regular school (Temegen, 2018; Altarawneh, 2020; Altarawneh, 2021; Ministry of Education, 2021; Higher Council for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, 2021), negative attitudes towards Inclusion (Sharma, Forlin, Loreman & Earle, 2006; Alkhteeb, 2008; Bryant et al., 2008; Altarawneh, 2020; Altarawneh, 2021; Ministry of Education, 2021; Higher Council for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, 2021), lack of an appropriate environment for the inclusion of students with disabilities, and the lack of supportive technology (Ministry of Education, 2021; Higher Council for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, 2021), lack of training among teachers (Temegen, 2018). According to inclusion of students with visual impairment and blindness, unless these students are provided with equal access to core and specialized curricula through appropriate and specialized books, materials, and equipment and positive attitudes towards inclusion of them, no way to ensure the inclusion of the student with visual impairment and blindness. For quality learning of students with visual impairments, some features and conditions should be adhered to. These include special services from specialized teachers, teaching and learning resources, assistive devices like Braille and magnifying glasses, and the use of flexible teaching methods and positive attitudes toward them and towards their inclusion (Webster & Roe, 1998).

Attitude is a hypothetical construct; it is the degree of likes or dislikes of a particular topic (Tarawneh, 2016), it is a mental and neutral state of readiness organized through experience Allport 1935 in Hughes (1995). Attitudes are generally positive or negative towards a topic, person, place, thing, or event (Tarawneh, 2016). Knowing the teacher's attitudes is an important and essential factor for the success for inclusion of students with visual impairment into regular schools; this is because teachers are the ones who deal directly with students with disabilities, and one of the basic requirements for successful inclusion is teachers' attitudes and acceptance of students with disabilities. (Altarawneh, 2020; Altarawneh, 2021). The attitudes of pre-service teachers are one indicator to show whether the inclusive education system is successfully implemented (Ediyanto, Maulida, Atika & Kawai, 2020), and Pre-service training may be the optimal time to address educators' concerns and alter any negative attitudes about inclusive education (Sharma et al., 2006). In addition, pre-service teachers' attitudes toward inclusion improve by increasing the

number of courses they will study in colleges or universities about people with disabilities and inclusion, and real training in teaching students with disabilities during their study (Hadidi, 2011; Mintz, 2007; Heyl et al., 2012; Ivey & Reinke, 2002; Sharma et al., 2006; Hemmings & Woodcock, 2011; Sharma et al., 2014; Sharma & Nuttal, 2015; Bhakta, 2017; Goddard & Evans, 2018; Qaudgi&Kurniawati, 2018; Almahdi&Bukamal, 2019; Gilligan, 2019; Nouf et al., 2020; Adigun, 2021; Tuncay&Kizilaslan, 2021; Longley &Carigo, 2021). watching the success stories of people with visual impairment and deal with them in different areas of life because the previous experience in dealing with them improves attitudes towards them (Sharma et al., 2006; Seo& Chen, 2009; Hemmings & Woodcock, 2011; Lyakurwa&Tungaraza, 2013; Sharma et al., 2014; Sharma & Nuttal, 2015; Bhakta, 2017; Qandhi&Kurniawati, 2018; Algarni et al., 2019; Almahdi&Bukamal, 2019; Longly& Craigo, 2021; Tuncay&Kizilaslan, 2021), also, knowledge of legislation and laws related to inclusion (Tuncay&Kizilaslan, 2021).

Also, several variables affect the attitudes of pre-service teachers towards inclusion of students with visual impairment and blindness, including gender (Lyakurwa&Tungaraza, 2013; Sharma et al., 2014; Bhakta, 2017; Adigun, 2021), specialization (Sharma et al., 2014; Qandhi&Kurniawati, 2018), place of residence (Adigun, 2021), type of disability (Hadidi, 2011; Bhakta, 2017), and age of students with disabilities (Hadidi, 2011; Altarawneh, 2020). One of the most important recommendations of UNESCO in 1994 to ensure the successful inclusion of students with disabilities into regular schools is the preparation and training of pre-service teachers in university (UNESCO, 1994) because if the attitudes of pre-service teachers towards people with disabilities and their inclusion are not modified, it is difficult to change these attitudes later (Sharma et al., 2006). This preparation includes teaching pre-service teacher courses related to different disabilities such as visual impairment and courses related to inclusion. Many studies have indicated that the courses taught by the pre-service teacher at the university contribute to improving attitudes towards people with disabilities and inclusion them (Elshakhs, 1990; Sharma et al., 2006; Abu Darwesh&Bsharah, 2007; Hemmings & Woodcock, 2011; Alsoub, 2016; Adigun, 2021). One of the important factors for the success of inclusion for students with disabilities into regular schools is the positive attitudes towards it (Goddard & Evans, 2018; Boyle, Anderson & Allen, 2020), and this study will highlight the attitudes of pre-service female teachers at Mu'tah University towards inclusion of students with visual impairment and blindness in the regular schools. So, the questions of this study are as following:

First: What are the attitudes of pre- services teachers towards the inclusion of students with visual impairment and blindness in regular schools ?

Second: Are there any statistically significant differences between pre- services teachers in the attitudes towards inclusion of students with visual impairment and blindness in regular school due to academic year, studying course in visual impairment, and previous experience with people with visual impairment or blindness?

Methods:**Study Participants**

(130) pre- services female teachers in special education program whose the researcher taught them at Mu'tah University in southern Jordan were chosen randomly to collect data for the study. Table 1 shows the demographic characteristics of study participants.

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of Study Participants

Variable	Level of variable	Number of pre-services teachers	Percent of pre-services teachers
Academic year	First or second	76	58.5%
	Third or Graduate	54	41.5%
Studying course in visual impairment	Yes	31	23.8%
	No	99	76.2%
Previous experience with people with visual impairment or blindness	Yes	56	43.1%
	No	74	56.9%

Study Instrument

Questionnaire were used to measure attitudes of pre- service teachers towards inclusion of students with visual impairment and blindness. And to investigate the effect of variables (Academic year, Studying course in visual impairment, Previous experience with people with visual impairment or blindness) on these attitudes. The study Instrument was developed by the researcher. it finally consisted of (35) items (positive and negative items), the content validity for the questionnaires was established, also computed reliability of the questionnaires by Cronbach alpha's formula, it was (0.844). The highest score on the questionnaire is (175) and the lowest is 35, the scores on the negative items were calculated as the following (strongly agree= 1, agree = 2, neutral = 3, disagree = 4, strongly disagree = 5). And scores on the positive items were calculated as the following (strongly agree = 5, agree = 4, neutral = 3, disagree = 2, strongly disagree = 1).

Data Collect and Analysis

The researcher conducted this study during the Corona pandemic and distance education. Therefore, the questionnaire was applied to teachers electronically after clarifying the purpose of the study by sending the questionnaire link on Google Drive to teachers through Microsoft Teams; pre-service teachers answered the questionnaire and sent the answer directly to the researcher.

The total score is explained as follow:

- If mean range between (141- 175), the attitudes towards inclusion are strongly positive.

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- If mean range between (106- 140), the attitudes towards inclusion are positive.
- If mean range between (71- 105), the attitudes towards inclusion are Neutral.
- If mean range between (36- 70), the attitudes towards inclusion are Negative.
- If mean 35, the attitudes towards inclusion are strongly negative.

To analysis data and answer the first question of the study, "What are the attitudes of pre- services teachers towards the inclusion of students with visual impairment and blindness in regular schools?" the researcher calculated the mean and standard deviation to the total scores on the questionnaire, and then compared the mean value with the instructions for calculating the scores. To answer the second question, "Are there any statistically significant differences between pre-services teachers in the attitudes towards inclusion of students with visual impairment and blindness in regular school due to academic year, studying course in visual impairment, and previous experience with people with visual impairment or blindness?" The researcher calculated the mean and standard deviation of the total scores on the questionnaire and to know if there are any differences in attitudes towards inclusion of students with visual impairment and blindness due to academic year, studying course in visual impairment, and previous experience with people with visual impairment or blindness, the researcher used 3-way ANOVA test.

Findings and discussion:

To answer the first question," What are the attitudes of pre- services teachers towards the inclusion of students with visual impairment and blindness in regular schools?" the researcher calculated the mean and standard deviation of the total score on the questionnaire. And Table2 shows that.

Table2. Mean and Standard Deviation of the Total Score on the Questionnaire

N	Mean	Std. Deviation
130	94.42	12.32

Table 2 shows that the Mean value is (94.42); this value, according to the instructions for the correction of the questionnaire, means that pre-service teachers' attitudes towards inclusions of students with visual impairment and blindness in the regular school are neutral. This finding agrees with the results of the studies of (Altarawneh 2020; Ediyanto et al., 2020); the reason for the agreement of the finding of the current study with the finding of the study of Altarawneh (2020) is because both studies were conducted in the same place; this may be because pre-service teachers have a perception that public schools in Jordan are not ready to the inclusion of students with disability into them. As for the neutral attitudes of pre-service teachers towards inclusion of students with visual impairment and blindness in regular schools, this may be due to several concerns and barriers such as, lack of readiness of the school environment for inclusion, increase in the number of students in classes, negative attitudes towards people with disabilities, and lack of qualified teachers to teach students with disability in regular classes, The students with visual impairment or blindness need tools, aids and support services that are not found in regular schools.

The finding of the current study differed with the findings of the following studies (Sharma, More & Sonawane, 2009; Lyakurwa & Tungaraza, 2013; Ahsan & Sharma, 2018), which indicated that the attitudes of pre-service teachers towards people with disabilities were negative. This difference may be due to the different places in which the studies were conducted, and the different instruments used to measure attitudes. Also, the current study was more specific to study attitudes towards inclusion of students with visual impairment and blindness.

The finding of the current study also differed from the results of the following studies (Almadi & Bukamal, 2016; Bhakta, 2017; Goddard & Evans, 2018; Nouf, Bader & Abbas, 2020; Longley & Craigo, 2021) which indicated that the attitudes of pre-service teachers towards inclusion of students with disabilities are positive. The reason for this difference may be due to the different places in which the studies were conducted, and the different instruments used to measure attitudes. Also, the current study was more specific to study attitudes towards inclusion of students with visual impairment and blindness.

To answer the second question, " Are there any statistically significant differences between pre-services teachers in the attitudes towards inclusion of students with visual impairment and blindness in regular school due to academic year, studying course in visual impairment, and previous experience with people with visual impairment or blindness?" the researcher calculated the means and standard deviations of the total score on the questionnaire. Table 3 shows that

Table 3. Means and Standard deviations of the total score on the questionnaire

Variable	Level of variable	Number of pre-services teachers	Mean	standard deviations
Academic year	First or second	76	94.5	12.84
	Third or Graduate	54	94.3	11.65
Studying course in visual impairment	Yes	31	92.48	12.79
	No	99	95	12.16
Previous experience with people with visual impairment or blindness	Yes	56	95.64	13.36
	No	74	93.50	11.48

Table 3 shows that there are virtual differences in pre- service teachers attitudes towards inclusion of students with visual impairment and blindness, to know if these differences are statistically significant, 3-way ANOVA was applied. Table 4 shows that .

Table 4. Results of 3- Way ANOVA

Source	df	Mean Square	F	Sig
Academic year	1	.015	0.000	0.992
Studying course in visual impairment	1	200.89	1.31	0.253

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Previous experience with people with visual impairment or blindness	1	204.79	1.34	0.249
Error	-	126	152.4	
Total	130			
P ≤ 0.05				

Table 4 shows that there are no statistically significant differences in the attitudes of pre-service female teachers towards integrating students with visual impairment in the regular school due to the academic year, Studying course in visual impairment, and Previous experience with people with visual impairment or blindness. This result agrees with the findings of the following studies (Almahdi&Bukamal, 2019; Altarawneh, 2020), which indicated that there are no differences in the attitudes of pre-service teachers towards students with disabilities due to the variable of the academic year. The difference between the female students in the Academic years was not large, so there were no differences due to the variable of the Academic year. Also, Table 4 shows that there are no statistically significant differences in the attitudes of pre-service female teachers towards inclusion of students with visual impairment due to the studying course in visual impairment; this result agrees with the results of the following studies (AJuwon et al., 2015; Meyers & Lester, 2016), and disagrees with the findings of the following studies (Ivey & Reinke, 2002; Sharma et al., 2006; Hemmings & Woodcock, 2011; Sharma et al., 2014; Sharma & Nuttal, 2015; Bhakta, 2017; Goddard & Evans, 2018; Qaudgi&Kurniawati, 2018; Almahdi&Bukamal, 2019; Gilligan, 2019; Nouf et al., 2020; Adigun, 2021; Tuncay&Kizilaslan, 2021; Longley & Carigo, 2021). The reason for this difference may be due to the different places in which the studies were conducted, and the different instruments used to measure attitudes. It is also possible that the courses given to pre-service teachers at Mu'tah University are not enough to change attitudes towards inclusion of students with visual impairment or blindness. And they need real training with people with visual impairment and blindness, or they lack real experience in dealing with them. In addition, in this study, a small number of about (31) teachers studied the course Introduction to Visual Impairment.

Table 4 also indicates no differences in the attitudes of pre-service female teachers towards inclusion of students with visual impairment and blindness due to previous experience with them. This finding agrees with the finding of this study (Ediyanto et al., 2020) and disagrees with the finding of these studies (Sharma et al., 2006; Seo& Chen, 2009; Hemmings & Woodcock, 2011; Lyakurwa&Tungaraza, 2013; Sharma et al., 2014; Sharma & Nuttal, 2015; Bhakta, 2017; Qandhi&Kurniawati, 2018; Algarni et al., 2019; Almahdi&Bukamal, 2019; Longly& Craigo, 2021; Tuncay&Kizilaslan, 2021). These studies indicated differences in pre-service teachers' attitudes towards integrating students with disabilities in the regular school due to previous experience with people with disabilities. This difference may be due to the different places in which the studies were conducted, and the different instruments used to measure attitudes. Also, the current study was more specific to study attitudes towards inclusion of students with visual impairment and blindness.

Conclusions

Pre-service teachers' attitudes towards inclusion of students with disabilities in regular schools differ from one place to another; this difference is due to the different laws and legislation related to inclusion from one country to another. And the different economic and social situation that makes regular schools ready to teach students with disabilities. Most of the studies conducted in developing countries indicated that the attitudes towards inclusion of students with disabilities are neutral or negative (Sharma et al., 2009; Lyakurwa&Tungaraza, 2013; Ahsan & Sharma, 2018; Altarawneh, 2020; Ediyanto et al., 2020; Altarawneh, 2021), due to the low economic situation in these countries to ready the regular schools for inclusion of students with disabilities. It is very important to indicate that inclusion is inexpensive compared to establishing special education centers.

Despite the findings of this study, it is necessary to increase the number of courses that pre-service teachers study about legislation related to inclusion, inclusion, and disabilities; this contributes to improving attitudes towards people with disabilities and their inclusion. Also, increasing the number of practical courses, providing real experiences for pre-service teachers to deal with people with disabilities, and watching the success stories contributes to improving attitudes towards people with disability and their inclusion.

Implications

The findings of this study indicated that the attitudes of pre-service female teachers towards inclusion of students with visual impairment and blindness in regular schools were neutral. Conclusion and that there are barriers that prevent the implementation and success of inclusion in regular schools, which has neutral their attitudes. It is important for researchers and decision-makers to know and control these barriers for inclusion to succeed. For this reason, the researcher recommends conducting more studies to find out the barriers to inclusion of students with visual impairment and blindness in Jordan.

Several variables affect pre-service teachers' attitudes towards inclusion of students with visual impairment and blindness in regular schools, the impact of which was not studied by the researcher in this study. Therefore, the researcher recommends studying the impact of these variables (gender, place of residence, type of disability, specialization) on attitudes.

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