THE EFFECT OF GENDER ON THE ATTITUDES BETWEEN UNDERGRADUATE PHYSICAL EDUCATION STUDENTS IN SAUDI ARABIA AND UNITED STATES TOWARD TEACHING STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

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The purpose of this study was to: (a) determine the effect of gender on preservice physical educators' attitudes from Saudi Arabia (98 male) and United States (96 males, 48 females) toward teaching students with physical disability, autism, an intellectual disability, and emotional/behavioral disorders in the three areas of teaching, student learning, and academic preparation; and (b) determine the influence factors of gender, religion, culture, educational setting, and experience on the attitudes of undergraduate physical education students toward teaching students with disabilities. One way ANOVA was used in this study. Based on the results of the analyses, female participants from the United States showed more positive attitudes toward teaching students with specific disabilities than male participants in Saudi Arabia and United States. Females also showed a higher agreement in the affect of the gender factor on physical educators’ attitudes than both males’ participants from the two countries. In contrast, Saudi Arabian male participants significantly had more positive attitudes toward the importance of academic preparation area and the experience factor in influencing positively the physical educators’ attitudes toward the specific disabilities than female participants but not males.

Keywords: Religion, Culture, Educational settings, Experience, PEATID-III.

Introduction

According to Barros and Elia (1998) attitude is defined as an individual's prevailing tendency to respond favorably or unfavorably to an object (person or group of people, institutions or events). It can be positive (values) or negative (prejudice). Negative attitudes towards individuals with disabilities are the biggest challenge for this population (Rizzo & Vispoel, 1991). Moreover, the teacher’s attitude is one of the most important factors to determine the success of classes that includes students with disabilities. Even though inclusion is known as an important educational innovation, numerous researchers have conducted studies to analyze what teachers think about the application of inclusion into physical education environment (Ammah, 2001; Combs & Elliott, 2010; Downs & Williams, 1994; Rizzo & Vispoel, 1991; Rizzo & Wright, 1987; Sherrill & Tripp, 1991).

Studies related to attitude in both general and physical education have grown increasingly popular over the past 20 years (Block & Obrusnikova, 2007; Folsom & Rizzo, 2002; Kozub & Lienert, 2003). In addition, the majority of the researchers of these studies have suggested that teacher’s positive attitude towards inclusion was necessary for the successful inclusion of students with disabilities into general physical education classes (Aloia, Knutson, Minner, & Von Seggren, 1980; Elliott, 2008;
Heikinaro-Johansson & Sherrill, 1994; Hodge, & Ammah, 2005; Hodge & Jansma, 2000, Minner & Knutson, 1982; Rizzo, 1984; Rizzo & Vispoel, 1991; Rizzo & Wright, 1987; Sherrill & Tripp, 1991). To determine the level of positive attitudes, there is a need to initiate methods of improving the attitudes of physical educators toward teaching students with disabilities. Numerous researchers in different countries have studied the relationships between attitudes and a variety of students and physical educator related factors, such as gender (DiLalla, Hull, & Dorsey, 2004; Papadopoulou, 2004), religion (English, 1977), culture (Selway, & Ashman, 1998), educational setting (Bursuck & Friend, 2002; Chen & Jin, 2006), and life experiences (Campbell & Gilmore, 2003; Folsom, & Rizzo, 2002).

These factors have been reported to be very significant and can affect people’s attitudes, either positively or negatively, toward individuals with disabilities. In a previous study by Alsalhe, French, Kinnison, and Silliman, (2011), the focus was on the affect of religion, culture, educational settings, and life experience factors without including the gender factor because one of the groups in that study was only males. Therefore, this present study is focused on the effect of gender on the undergraduate physical educators’ attitudes.

Many researchers have investigated that gender differences which is considered one of the important factors that can affect teachers' attitudes (English, 1977, DiLalla, Hull, & Dorsey, 2004; Papadopoulou, Kokaridas, Papanikolaou, & Patsiaouras, 2004). However, the results of these investigations are inconsistent. For instance, Aloia, Knutson, Minner, and Von Seggren, (1980) and Elliott, (2008) in the United States reported that women physical educators had more positive attitudes toward teaching students with disabilities than men. Downs and Williams (1994) also reported that females’ physical educators held more favorable attitudes than males toward teaching students with disabilities. The attitudes of undergraduate physical educators’ males and females were also compared. Avramidis and colleagues (2000) examined the difference in the attitudes between preservice males and females physical educators and they reported that preservice female teachers had slightly more positive attitudes towards inclusion compared to males. Hodge and Ammah, (2005) reported that females with teaching experience not only showed significantly more positive attitudes toward teaching students with disabilities than females and males with no experience, but also females with teaching experience showed significantly more positive attitudes than males with experience. Similarly, Meegan and MacPhail (2006) who compared between females and males physical educators in Ireland, reported that female educators also held more positive attitudes than male educators toward teaching students with special educational needs.

On the other hand, the study by Hodge, Davis, Woodard, and Sherrill (2002) reported that there is no major effect of gender toward teaching students with disabilities. This finding was supported by Kudlacek, Valkova, Sherrill, Myers, and French (2002) who also reported that there is no significant difference between males and females toward teaching students with disabilities in general physical education classes. Moreover, there are many studies (Patrick, 1987; Rizzo & Vispoel, 1991; Rizzo & Wright, 1987; Rowe & Stutts, 1987) where no significant gender difference was reported between the physical educators males and females participants.

**Purpose**

The purpose of this study is to (a) determine the effect of gender on preservice physical educators’ attitudes from Saudi Arabia and United States toward teaching students with physical disability, autism, an intellectual disability, and emotional/behavior disorders; and (b) determine the influence factors of gender, religion, culture, educational setting, and experience on the attitudes of undergraduate physical education students toward teaching students with disabilities.
Method

Participants

Two hundred and ninety-one undergraduate physical education male students from one university in Saudi Arabia and five universities in the United States participated in this study. Of those 291 students, 49 participants’ surveyed were eliminated because they did not match the background that was required in this study (see Table 1). Specifically, 98 undergraduate male participants purposely selected from the College of Physical Education and Sport at King Saud University in Saudi Arabia and 144 undergraduate physical education (96 male, 48 female,) participants purposely selected from the Kinesiology Departments at the University of North Texas (24 male, 5 female), Stephen F. Austin State University (20 male, 6 female), State University of New York at Cortland (26 male, 23 female), University of Wisconsin-La Crosse (17 male, 14 female), and the University of Utah (9 male, 0 female) in the United States. The age of the participants from Saudi Arabia were between 20 to 35 years old (m = 27 years); while the age of males and females’ participants from the United States were 20 to 30 years old (m = 25 years). Furthermore, all participants had not completed an adapted physical education or special education course before this investigation.

Table 1. Demographic Information of both Saudi Arabian and United States’ Participants.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Schools</th>
<th>King Saud University</th>
<th>University of North Texas</th>
<th>Stephen F. Austin University</th>
<th>University of New York at Cortland</th>
<th>University of Wisconsin-La Crosse</th>
<th>University of Utah</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age Range (20-35)</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>M 98</td>
<td>M 24 / F 5</td>
<td>M 20 / F 6</td>
<td>M 26 / F 23</td>
<td>M 17 / F 14</td>
<td>M 9 / F 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have taken APA or SPE class</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christian</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Islamic</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jewish</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culture</td>
<td>Arabic</td>
<td>varied</td>
<td>varied</td>
<td>varied</td>
<td>varied</td>
<td>varied</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational Setting</td>
<td>Segregated system</td>
<td>Inclusionary System</td>
<td>Inclusionary System</td>
<td>Inclusionary System</td>
<td>Inclusionary System</td>
<td>Inclusionary System</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experience</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 M = Male; F = Female.
2 APE = Adapted physical education; SPE = Special education.
3 The order of the religions in this table is based on the Alphabet (A, B, C, etc.).
4 The different cultures identified by the students in the United States were: African American, Asian Caucasian, Hispanic.
5 Participants were asked if they attended segregated or inclusionary schools when they were in grade schools.
Instrument

The Physical Educators’ Attitude Toward Teaching the Disabilities-III survey (Folsom-Meek & Rizzo, 2002) was used in this study. This survey consists of 12 statements, such as: ‘Students labeled with a disability should be taught with nondisabled students in my regular physical education classes whenever possible’; and ‘Students labeled with a disability will develop a more favorable self-concept as a result of learning motor skills in my general physical education classes with nondisabled peers.’

The disabling conditions are Physical Disability, Autism, Mild Intellectual Disability, and Emotional/Behavior Disability which are listed with a 5-point Likert scale (i.e., 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = undecided, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly agree) under each of the 12 statements was used to measure the participant’s responses in this interment. The description of these disabilities were modified from the original study of PEATID-III by Folsom and Rizzo (2002) except for Autism and Physical Disability. Participants were instructed to insert the appropriate label (i.e., disability condition) when responding to each of the 12 statements. There were six positive and six negatively phrased statements were grouped in three areas: teaching students with disabilities in the general classes, effect on student learning, and need for more academic preparation to teach students with the specific disabilities.

The participants also responded to four demographic statements (i.e., gender, religion, culture, educational setting, experience) that were added to the survey based on an extensive review of the literature as possible factors that may impact the participants’ beliefs. A 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = undecided, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly agree) under each of the four demographic statements was used to measure the participant's responses.

To properly measure the 5-point Likert scale mean scores under each area (i.e., teaching, student learning, academic preparation), the total of the item scores for each scale was divided by the number of items within that scale so that the scores can be interpreted with reference to the original 5-point Likert scale. To gain proper scale means, scores for negatively phrased items were reversed (Folsom-Meek & Rizzo, 2002).

Validity and Reliability of the PEATID-III

Validity and reliability of the PEATID-III was assessed for content significance by six nationally prominent researchers with proficiency in educational programs for instructing students with disabilities (Vogler, Koranda, & Romance, 2000). Factor analysis and alpha coefficients were used to support construct validity (Cronbach, 1951). In addition, further proof of validity, as well as, reliability related to the items in PEATID-III was described in a study by Rizzo and Vispoel (1991). More recently, evidence of validity and reliability related to the PEATID-III was reported by Folsom-Meek and Rizzo (2002). The estimation of reliability was ascertained using the coefficient alpha of .88 for the total scale, which is considered ‘good’ (Cronbach, 1951).

In this study, the PEATID-III survey format was modified by: (a) Adding four statements related to possible influential factors (e.g., gender, religion, culture, educational setting, and experience; (b) Changing previous terminology to contemporary terminology in one definition used in the original survey by Folsom-Meek and Rizzo (2002) [e.g., the term mental retardation was changed to intellectual disability]; and (c) Using the definition of autism from the Autism Research Institute (2006); and (d) Using the definition of physical disability from the Foundation of Special Education (2009). The format of the survey was also slightly modified, but there were no change in the original statements.

Therefore, to ensure the modified instrument and demographic factors were still reliable before presenting them to the participants, the survey was completed twice within a one week period at Texas Woman’s University in the fall of 2010 by 50 undergraduate students enrolled in an introductory motor learning class.

Specifically, Cronbach’s Alpha and test and retest reliability were calculated for each subscale based on the two test administrations of the 12 statements of PEATID-III and the four demographic statements to the same 50 students from the motor learning class at Texas Woman’s University. The course
instructor in this class agreed to administer the survey to the participants two separate times. The estimation of reliability was ascertained using the coefficient alpha and was reported at .83 for the total scale, which is considered ‘good’ (Cohen, 1960). For test and retest reliability, interclass correlation procedures were used to determine whether or not there were significant differences between the test and retest trials. A repeated measures analysis of variance program that used was from the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS, 2009). Based on the results, there was no significant difference among the scores from each statement for test and retest trials which means the survey was statistically reliable (p > .05).

For the Saudi Arabian participants, the 12 questionnaire statements from the PEATID-III and statements related to possible influential factors were translated from English to Arabic. To accomplish this translation, the researcher sent the survey to three professors in Saudi Arabia in the discipline of physical education, who spoke and wrote fluently in both Arabic and English, to determine if the content of the statements after the translation was deemed accurate. The three professors unanimously agreed that the content of the 48 statements and the demographic statements related to possible influential factors had the same meaning for Saudi Arabia participants as for the participants from the United States.

Procedures

The survey was sent to both participant groups at the universities. All participants in this study received and signed a consent letter before participation. The procedures of this study were outlined in the cover letter and the right’s of each participant was delineated.

The course professors in all the universities provided participants who had not completed either an adapted physical education or special education course before this investigation. Specifically, during the first adapted physical education class at these universities, the course professors described the study to all the students, and allowed them to ask questions and/or contact the researcher directly by email. At the end of the second class, the course professors: (a) asked the participants to sit at individual desks; (b) explained to the participants the specific steps related to how to take the survey; and (c) explained that they had the option to either complete or not complete the questionnaire.

Research Design and Statistical Analyses

A non-experimental distractive design that involved survey methodology (Portney & Watkins, 2009) was used to compare the attitudes of the three groups toward teaching students with disabilities. Specifically, One way ANOVA test was used to determine the differences in the attitudes between the three groups in the three areas of teaching, students learning, and academic preparation toward teaching students with physical disability, autism, intellectual disability, and emotional/behavioral disorder, and to determine the affect of the demographic factors between the three groups on the attitude of physical educators toward teaching students with specific disabilities.

Results

Based on the analysis of data, there were significant differences between the three groups toward teaching students with specific disabilities in the three areas of teaching, student learning, and academic preparation, and in the influence of the factors of gender, religion, culture, educational setting, and experience.

Based on the results, there was a significant difference between the three groups in all the areas (teaching $p = .000, f = 114.23$), (students learning $p = .004, f = 5.63$), (academic preparation $p = .015, f = 4.28$). Specifically, males and females from the United States had significant different with higher mean
scores toward the teaching area (males $m = 86.97$; females $m = 92.25$) than participants from Saudi Arabia ($m = 62.00$), but there was no significant difference between males and females from the United States in this area. In the student learning area, females from the United States were significant different with higher mean score ($m = 63.55$) than male participants from both Saudi Arabia ($m = 57.67$) and the United States ($m = 58.55$). There was no significance difference between males from Saudi Arabia and United States in the student learning. In the area of academic preparation, participants from Saudi Arabia were significantly different with higher mean score ($m = 21.83$) than females ($m = 19.31$) participants from the United States, but there was no significant different between males from Saudi Arabia and the United States, or males and females from the United States in this area. The means and standard deviations between the three groups in the three areas are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Description of the Comparison in the Three Areas of Teaching, Learning, and Academic Preparation Between Saudi Arabian and United States’ Participants.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Components / Item</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Teaching</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saudi Arabian Participants</td>
<td>62.00</td>
<td>11.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States’ Participants</td>
<td>89.97</td>
<td>14.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Student Learning</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saudi Arabian Participants</td>
<td>57.67</td>
<td>10.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States’ Participants</td>
<td>63.55</td>
<td>10.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Academic Preparation</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saudi Arabian Participants</td>
<td>21.83</td>
<td>5.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States’ Participants</td>
<td>20.50</td>
<td>4.69</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Based on the group comparisons findings related to the influence of the five factors, there were significant differences in the affect of experience ($p = .010, f = 4.72$) and gender ($p = .000, f = 8.28$) on the attitudes of undergraduate physical education students toward teaching students with disabilities between the three groups. Specifically, Saudi Arabian participants showed significantly higher mean scores in the need for experience ($m = 3.57$) than females participants in the United States ($m = 2.94$), but
there was no significantly different between the males from Saudi Arabia and United States or between males and females participants from the United States on this factor.

In the influence of the gender on the attitudes of physical educators, females from the United States had significantly higher mean score \( (m = 4.18) \) than both males participants in Saudi Arabia \( (m = 3.35) \) and United States \( (m = 3.45) \). However, there was no significant difference between males from Saudi Arabia and the United States in the affect of gender on the physical educators attitudes. Comparison of the influence of the five factors on the attitudes between the participants from Saudi Arabia and United States are presented in Table 3.

**Table 3.** Means Demographics of the Participants from Saudi Arabia and the United States.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographics</th>
<th>Saudi Arabian Participant males</th>
<th>United States Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>3.57</td>
<td>3.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SD</td>
<td>1.37</td>
<td>1.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religion</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>3.73</td>
<td>3.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SD</td>
<td>1.35</td>
<td>1.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culture</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>3.52</td>
<td>3.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SD</td>
<td>1.18</td>
<td>1.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational setting</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>3.57</td>
<td>3.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SD</td>
<td>1.30</td>
<td>1.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experience</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>3.57</td>
<td>3.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SD</td>
<td>1.37</td>
<td>1.15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Discussion**

The gender difference in the attitudes of undergraduate physical education students’ toward teaching students with a physical disability, autism, mild intellectual disability, and an emotional/behavior disorder in the three areas of teaching, student learning and academic preparation were examined in this study. These findings in the three areas support the Theory of Reasoned Action/Planning Behavior (Ajzen & Fishbein 1980) as important areas that may influence individuals' attitudes, and considered as important areas for future physical educators to be successful in teaching students with disabilities (Folsom-Meek & Rizzo, 2002). There were differences between the three groups toward teaching students with specific disabilities in these three areas.

First, in the area of teaching, female’s participants from the United States had more positive attitudes toward ‘teaching’ students with a specific disability than the male’s participants from Saudi Arabia. However, there were no significant different between females and males from the United States and between males participants from Saudi Arabia and the United States. Therefore, female participants from the United States who had positive attitudes related to the area of teaching supported the Theory of Reasoned Action/Planning Behavior (Ajzen & Fishbein 1980), which indicated that teaching can change the individuals’ attitudes.
The findings related to teaching is comparable to the results of previous researchers, such as Rizzo and Kirkendall (1995) in the United States who examined the attitudes of preservice physical educators toward teaching students with emotional/behavior disorders and intellectual disabilities. These findings are also similar to the findings of Downs and Williams (1994) who evaluated the attitudes of undergraduate students from universities in Denmark, Belgium, Portugal, and England toward including students with disabilities in the general physical education classes. Furthermore, Campbell and Gilmore (2003) in Australia reported that the undergraduate physical education students not only acquired more accurate knowledge about intellectual disabilities, but their attitudes towards students with disabilities, in general, became more positive.

In addition, Chen and Jin (2006) in Hong Kong stated that even though preservice physical educators had concerns and different opinions toward teaching students with disabilities, overall there was support for the inclusion concept and positive attitudes towards teaching students with disabilities. Similar results were reported by Jeong (2008) in Korea and Zamzami (2005) in Saudi Arabia who evaluated physical education teachers’ beliefs and intentions toward teaching students with disabilities.

One the other hand, Block and Rizzo (1995) in the United States, Bartoová, Kudláček, and Bressan (2007) in the Republic of South Africa, and Papadopoulou, Kokaridas, Papanikolaou, and Patsiaouras (2004) in Greece did not support the results of the present investigation. However, these researchers compared the attitudes by the levels of the disabilities (i.e., moderate, severe) in their investigations.

Second, the area of student learning represents students with varying abilities learning together in physical education class. According to Folsom-Meek and Rizzo (2001), the area of student learning includes: (a) both groups of students work together, (b) working together motivates students without disabilities, and (c) students with disabilities will learn more rapidly in classes with peers. In the recent investigation, female participants from the United States had more positive attitudes toward the implementation of inclusion in physical education classes to positively affect the students’ learning for both students with and without disabilities than males’ participants from Saudi Arabia and the United States. This finding was supported by the finding of numerous researchers such as Block and Zeman, (1996); Rarick and Beuter, (1985); Vogler, Koranda, and Romance, (2000) in the United States who reported that including students with disabilities does not negatively influence the learning of their peers without disabilities. However, this finding was not supported by Folsom-Meek and Rizzo (2002) who reported that future professionals were concerned about the student learning. It should be noted that all participants in Folsom-Meek and Rizzo’s study had already taken an adapted physical education class, which may caused the differing result.

Third, in the area of academic preparation to teach students with disabilities was an important area related to attitudes toward teaching students with disabilities. Even though there were just two items that comprised this area, these items were related to the need for additional coursework and the need for more academic training to teach students with disabilities. In the present investigation, the Saudi Arabian participants had more positive attitudes toward the importance of academic preparation on the affect of the physical educators positively toward teaching students with disabilities than just females’ participants from the United States. However, there was no difference between the females and males participants from the United States in this area. This result is comparable and supported by the results of Aufsesser (1982); Kowalski and Rizzo, (1996); Marston and Leslie, (1983); Rizzo, (1986); Rizzo and Kirkendall (1995); and Rizzo and Vispoel, (1991) in the United States who reported that the more academic preparation, the more positive the attitudes were toward teaching/working with individuals with disabilities. On the other hand, these findings were clearly not supported by Folsom-Meek and Rizzo (2002) in the United States who reported that undergraduate physical education students had disagreements about the need of academic preparation.

There were differences between the three groups related to the demographic information (e.g., gender, religion, culture, educational setting, experience). These five factors were identified in the Theory of Reasoned Action/ Planning Behavior (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980) as factors that may influence individuals’ attitudes.
There were differences between the groups in the influence of the experience and gender factors on the attitudes of the physical educators. Saudi Arabian participants agreed that experience factor was more important to influence the physical educators’ attitudes toward teaching students with specific disabilities than only females participants from the United States. There was no difference between females and males from the United States and males from Saudi Arabia and the United States in the experience factor. Moreover, female participants from United States agreed that gender is very important factor to impact the physical educators’ attitudes toward teaching students with specific disabilities than both males from Saudi Arabia and the United States. There was no difference between males from Saudi Arabia and the United States in the influence of gender.

Related to the influence of the experience on the attitudes of physical educators, there were numerous investigators (Folsom-Meek, Nearing, Grotheluschen, & Krampf, 1999; Gouveia, 1997; Kowalski & Rizzo, 1996; Marston & Leslie, 1983; Patrick, 1987; Rizzo, 1986; Rizzo, 1993; Rizzo & Kirkendall, 1995; Rizzo & Vispoel, 1991; Rizzo & Wright, 1987; Starr, 2001) who reported similar results. These investigators stated that the experience was very important in positively changing the attitudes of the physical educators toward teaching students with disabilities.

Other investigators have examined the gender factor and reported similar results. These investigators (i.e., Aloia et al. 1980; Avramidis & colleagues, 2000; Downs and Williams 1994; Hodge & Ammah, 2005; & Meegan & MacPhail, 2006) reported that females had more positive attitudes toward teaching students with disabilities. On the other hand, studies by Hodge, Davis, Woodard, and Sherrill (2002); Kudlacek, Valkova, Sherrill, Myers, and French (2002); Patrick, 1987; Rizzo and Vispoel, 1991; Rizzo and Wright, 1987; Rowe and Stutts, 1987) reported that there were no major effect of gender toward teaching students with disabilities.

The factor of the educational environment (e.g., where the participants attended the school), there were no differences between the three groups. All the participants in both countries agreed on the importance of the educational environment. In addition, there are many investigators such as, Bursuck and Friend (2002), LaMaster, Gall, Kinchin, and Siedentop (1998), Gouveia (1997), Sharpe (2001), Starr (2001), Rizzo and Vispoel (1991) and Rizzo and Wright (1987) who support the findings of the present investigation related to this factor. These researchers examined the attitudes of preservice physical educators toward teaching in an inclusionary environment in the physical education class. There was only one research study located related to the affect of the segregation setting. This was a study by Alsahle et al. (2011) who examined the effect of the educational settings (inclusionary & segregation) between participants from Saudi Arabia and United States. These researchers reported that all the participants from both countries highly agreed that the educational setting can affect the physical educators’ attitudes toward teaching students with disabilities.

The findings of culture and religions’ factors indicated that there were no differences between the participants. All participants highly agreed about the affect of these factors on the physical educators’ attitudes toward teaching students with disabilities. These findings are similar and supported by Alsahle et al. (2011) who reported that there were no significant differences in the culture and religious factors between male participants from Saudi Arabia and the United States because all participants highly agreed on the affect of these factors on the physical educators’ attitudes.

Conclusions

The results of this investigation are considered reasonable. For example, the males from Saudi Arabia, who were educated in separate schools from their peers with disabilities, showed lower attitudes toward teaching students with specific disabilities and the possibility of the students learning in the inclusionary environment than males and females participants from the United States. However, the Saudi Arabian participants did show more positive attitudes toward the importance of academic preparation and experience with individuals with disabilities in influencing the physical educators’ positive attitudes toward teaching students with specific disabilities. Therefore, Saudi Arabian specialists may need to
review the appropriateness of the segregated educational system in physical education classes, which does not provide the students an opportunity to experience and interact with students with disabilities as an inclusionary educational system does. Further, the faculty members in physical education teacher preparation in the universities in Saudi Arabia may need to develop more appropriate preservice curriculum related to attitudinal development toward individuals with disabilities for their undergraduate physical education students.

For the participants from the United States, even though those participants educated in the inclusionary environment, there was a gender difference in the area of student learning. Females’ participants were more positive toward the possibility of students with and without disabilities learning together than the males’ participants. Therefore, specialists in the public schools and faculty members in physical education teacher preparation in the universities in the United States may consider developing new strategies to develop positive attitudes for male participants regarding the ability of students with and without disabilities to learn in the inclusionary environment.

References


