

**KUWAITI EFL TEACHERS AT THE PUBLIC AUTHORITY FOR APPLIED  
EDUCATION: KNOWLEDGE ABOUT DISABILITY LAWS AND ATTITUDES  
TOWARDS DISABLED STUDENTS**

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**ABSTRACT:** *This study aims to identify the Kuwaiti EFL teachers' knowledge about disability laws in the Public Authority for Applied Education in Kuwait and their attitude towards disabled students. A questionnaire of two parts (knowledge and attitude) was distributed to 20 EFL teachers. The results of the first part of the questionnaire showed that 60% of the EFL teachers answered 10 questions or less out of 20 questions which comprised the first part of the questionnaire. In the second part of the questionnaire all EFL teachers had positive attitudes towards disabled students. No significant difference was obtained between female EFL teachers and male EFL teachers regarding their knowledge about disability laws and their attitudes towards the disabled students. The study gave some suggestions and recommendations to increase the EFL teachers' knowledge concerning disability laws in Kuwait.*

**KEYWORDS:** EFL, ESL, disabled students' education, ELT

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## **INTRODUCTION**

The number of students with disability studying in the higher education worldwide in general and in Kuwait specifically is increasing year after year. In Kuwait, this number was 1347 disabled student in 2019. This increasing number made the Ministry of Higher Education in Kuwait to legislate laws in order to guarantee providing special facilities and accommodations to those students who have disability. The law of students with disability was issued in 2002 and applied to all the higher education institutions in Kuwait. In applying this law students with disability will have the same opportunities in learning as any other students may have. These equal opportunities will motivate the disabled students to achieve their educational potential and aims in life.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

In a study done by Leyser, Vogel, Wyland, and Brulle (1998) to examine the faculty's Knowledge about disability laws in the Midwestern University, revealed that many faculty members who participated in the study had inadequate understanding of disability laws. In another study done by Leyser et al. (1998) the participants confirmed the importance of distributing written information of disability laws in the form of a handbook to all the faculty members who might teach disabled students.

Faculty members who have good knowledge about disability laws, have positive attitudes towards students with disabilities (Askamit et al, 1987)

Although some EFL teachers have positive attitudes towards students with disability, they are concerned about the extra time and effort they need to devote to those students (Williamson, 2000). Lewis (1998) concluded in a study done in different colleges in the United States of America that not all EFL teachers who were aware of disability laws had positive attitude towards disabled students.

Despite disability laws are applied in most of the Arab universities, many faculty members in these universities do not conform to these laws for different reasons. (Al-Katabi, 2000). Some EFL teachers are not aware of the importance of these laws. Others are not acknowledgeable enough about them (Murad, 1999).

In a study done by Al-Katheeri in 2004, twenty-five new faculty members at that time in Qatar University claimed that the administration of the university did not inform them about the necessity of following disability laws in the university. Students with disabilities in King Saud University believe that most of the faculty members in their university are not aware of their educational needs. (Salim, 1998). The majority of students with disabilities in the Institute of Technological Studies in Kuwait who participated in a survey exploring the most problems they faced in during their study in the institute agreed that they think they did not have equal opportunities in learning as normal students usually did (Rafi, 2003).

AbdulMuti (2000) suggested introducing seminars and courses to all faculty members in Kuwait University discussing the methods of dealing with students with disabilities and the importance of applying disability laws in teaching and examining the disabled students which would be reflected on the reliability of their evaluation.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Although the Ministry of Higher Education has issued special laws for students with disabilities, and although these laws are applied in all the higher education institutions, EFL teachers at these institutions seem to be not acknowledgeable enough of these laws and do not know how to apply them properly. Furthermore, their attitudes towards disabled

students need to be identified in order to find out the reasons behind this shortage of knowledge.

### **Research Questions**

- (a) What is the level of knowledge of disability laws of EFL teachers in the Public Authority for Applied Education?
- (b) What is the difference in the level of knowledge of disability laws by gender?
- (c) What is the relationship between knowledge of disabilities laws and teaching experience?
- (d) What is the relationship between knowledge of disability laws and number of students taught?
- (e) What are the attitudes of EFL teachers in the Public Authority for Applied Education towards students with disabilities?
- (f) What is the difference in the attitudes of EFL teachers towards students with disabilities by gender?
- (g) What is the relationship between attitudes of EFL teachers towards students with disabilities and teaching experience?
- (h) What is the relationship between attitudes of EFL teachers towards students with disabilities and number of students taught?

### **METHODOLOGY**

This study aims to identify the Kuwaiti EFL teachers' knowledge about disability laws in the Public Authority for Applied Education in Kuwait and their attitude towards disabled students. The researchers decided to use the quantitative method since it is the best one for gathering data from many numbers of participants.

#### *Research Instruments*

The instrument used in this study was a questionnaire divided into two parts. The first part aimed to measure the EFL teachers' knowledge regarding disability laws applied in the higher education institutions in Kuwait. It consisted of 15 questions. Each question had three responses: YES, NO and DON'T KNOW. The second part of the questionnaire aimed to identify the EFL teachers' attitudes towards disabled students in the Public Authority for Applied Education. It consisted of 15 questions. A Likart 5-level scale was used in this part of the questionnaire. Each question in this part had five responses: strongly agree,

agree, don't know, disagree, and strongly disagree. The Likart scale was used since it usually gives a very accurate measurement of the participants' opinions and attitudes.

#### *Participants*

20 EFL Kuwaiti teachers at the Public Authority for Applied Education participated in this study. 9 of those teachers were females and 11 of them were males. All the EFL teachers were working as full time teachers at the Public Authority when participating in the study. The names of those teachers were selected randomly from the faculty members directory.

#### *Validity and Reliability*

The questionnaire was twice revised and modified to gain the highest standard of validity. The reliability was calculated using a Cronbach Alpha. "According to Pavot, Diener, Colvin and Sandvik (1991) the Satisfaction has good internal consistency" (in pallant, 2005; p:92) with a Cronbach alpha coefficient reported of .71 for the first part of the questionnaire (knowledge) and of .58 of the second part of the questionnaire (attitudes) which is a reasonable value for attitudes questionnaire because it is related to sentiments .

#### *Data Collection Procedures*

The first step that was done in the procedure of data collection was taking the permission from the administration of the Public Authority of Applied Education to distribute a questionnaire measuring the knowledge and attitudes of the EFL teachers regarding the disabilities laws.

After taking the permission of the administration to use the EFL teachers' e-mails, the researchers sent 50 e-mails to the EFL teachers asking them to answer a questionnaire attached to the e-mail with brief explanation of the topic, the purpose of the study and the ethical issues that would be taken into account while conducting the research. Selecting the faculty members was haphazardly.

Twenty out of fifty EFL teachers agreed to answer the questionnaire and then visited by the researchers in their offices to collect the questionnaires.

### **RESULTS**

The SPSS was used to analyze the results of the questionnaire. In part I of the questionnaire, EFL teachers with overall correct answers of 11 or higher out of 15 questions were more knowledgeable in the disability laws. In part II, an overall score of 11 or higher out of 15 was considered as a positive attitude toward students with disabilities.

#### *EFL teachers Knowledge of Disability Laws*

The first research question was to measure the EFL teachers' knowledge about the disability laws which was addressed in the first part of the questionnaire. Table 1 shows the overall EFL teachers' correct answers.

**Table 1: Overall Questionnaire Results (Part I)**

Correct Answers	Number of Teachers	Percentage
21 - 30	1	5%
11- 20	7	35%
<b>0 - 10</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>60%</b>

*Knowledge Results by Gender*

The second research question was about the differences in understanding disability laws based on gender. Female EFL teachers had higher average scores than male EFL teachers. The summary of the percentage of correct answers for EFL teachers by gender is shown in table 2.

**Table 2: EFL teachers Understanding of Disability Laws by Gender**

Q1	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
male	11	14.18	6.096	1.838
female	9	10.00	4.796	1.599

**Table 3: t- Test of Female EFL teachers' scores vs. Male EFL teachers' scores (Part I)**

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means					
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference

									Lower	Upper
SUM	Equal variances assumed	.276	.606	1.675	18	.111	4.18	2.497	-1.065	9.428
	Equal variances not assumed			1.717	17.986	.103	4.18	2.436	-.936	9.300

The means and standard deviation for female EFL teachers and male EFL teachers are shown in Table 2. A two-tail t test was used to compare the two means and showed no statistical significance difference between female and male EFL teachers mean scores ( $t = 1.675$ ;  $df=18$ ). An alpha level of 0.05 used for all t tests. The data show no significant difference between the level of knowledge of female and male EFL teachers about disabilities laws.

#### *Knowledge Results by Teaching Experience*

The third research question looked at the relationship between teaching experience and knowledge of disabilities laws. This relationship is presented in Table 4.

**Table 4: the correlation between knowledge and experience**

		Q2	SUM
Q2	Pearson Correlation	1	-.039
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.870
	N	20	20
SUM	Pearson Correlation	-.039	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.870	.
	N	20	20

According to the table above there is a negative non-significant correlation ( $r = -0.39$ ;  $p > 0.05$ ) between knowledge and experience.

#### *Knowledge Results by the Number of Students Taught*

The fourth research question was about the relationship between knowledge of disabilities laws and previous experience of dealing with students with disabilities. The results are illustrated in Table 5.

Table 5: correlation between EFL teachers Scores by the Number of disabled Students they have taught

		SUM	Q3
SUM	Pearson Correlation	1	.129
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.586
	N	20	20
Q3	Pearson Correlation	.129	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.586	.
	N	20	20

The relationship between knowledge and the number of disabled students who were taught was a positive weak and non- significant relationship ( $r = .129$ ;  $p > 0.05$ ).

#### *EFL teachers Attitudes towards Students with Disabilities*

The fifth research question was to identify the EFL teachers' attitudes towards disabled students. All EFL teachers had a favorable attitude towards students with disabilities. No teacher had a less than favorable attitude (attitude scores below 46 points), as illustrated in Table 6.

Table 6: Overall Questionnaire Results (Part II)

Attitude Scores	Number of Teachers
1-25	0
26-45	0
46-75	20
<b>Total</b>	<b>20</b>

#### *Attitude Results by Gender*

The sixth research question asked for the difference in EFL teachers' attitudes towards disabled students by gender. The means and standard deviation for female EFL teachers and male EFL teachers are shown in Table 7. A two-tail t test was used to compare the two means and showed no statistical significant difference between female and male EFL

teachers mean scores ( $t = 1.475$ ;  $df=18$ ). An alpha level of 0.05 used for all t tests. The data show no significant difference between attitude of female and male EFL teachers towards students with disabilities.

**Table 7: The Descriptive Data of the Attitudes Questionnaire According to Gender.**

	Q1	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
SUM2	male	11	68.45	3.503	1.056
	female	9	65.44	5.570	1.857

**Table 8: t- Test of Female EFL teachers Scores vs. Male EFL teachers Scores (Part II)**

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means				
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference
SUM2	Equal variances assumed	1.982	.176	1.475	18	.157	3.01	2.040
	Equal variances not assumed			1.409	12.932	.182	3.01	2.136

#### *Attitude Results by Teaching Experience*

The seventh research looked at the relationship between EFL teachers' attitude towards disabled students and teaching experience. Overall, EFL teachers have a positive attitude towards students with disabilities. Table 8 shows the details.



**Table 9: correlation between Attitudes and experience**

		SUM2	Q2
SUM2	Pearson Correlation	1	-.354
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.126
	N	20	20
Q2	Pearson Correlation	-.354	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.126	.
	N	20	20

There is a negative non-significant correlation between attitudes and experiences of teaching ( $r = -.354$ ;  $P > 0.05$ ).

*Attitude Results by the Number of Students Taught*

The eighth research question looked at the relationship between EFL teachers' attitudes towards students with disabilities and the number of students taught. All the EFL teachers scored in the range of 46 -75, following the earlier pattern (See Table 8). Forty-four EFL teachers (29%) scored at a higher range of 41 -50. This constitutes the bulk of the EFL teachers (142). The EFL teachers who had taught more than 20 students with disabilities had the highest scores, which suggest very healthy attitude towards students with disabilities.

**Table 10: the correlation between EFL teachers' Scores and the Number of Students Taught**

		Q3	SUM2
Q3	Pearson Correlation	1	-.395
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.085
	N	20	20
SUM2	Pearson Correlation	-.395	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.085	.
	N	20	20

From the above table there is a negative non-significant relationship between EFL teachers' attitudes and the number of disabled students they have taught ( $r = -.395$ ;  $p > 0.05$ ).

## **DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The findings of the study revealed that EFL teachers in the Public Authority for Applied Education in Kuwait have a lack of knowledge about the disability laws applied in all the higher education institutes in Kuwait. This lack of knowledge came as a result of the poor recognition of the importance of applying these laws in creating equal opportunities to all EFL learners in the Public Authority. On the other hand, the high cost of providing special facilities and accommodations for the disabled students might have made the administration of the Public Authority for Applied Education to be unserious to make sure that all the staff members are aware and follow the disability laws.

All EFL teachers who participated in this study have positive attitudes towards the disabled students. They do not believe that teaching students with disabilities means spending more time on them which might be at the expense of other academic and administrative duties they are supposed to fulfill. They believe that disabled students are motivated as any other students.

The researchers would like to offer some useful suggestions to improve EFL teachers' knowledge about disability laws and enhance the positive attitudes towards the students with disabilities:

- (a) Disabilities laws students should be printed in the form of a handbook and distributed to all the EFL teachers to be read and used as a reference in their offices.
- (b) Training courses and seminars should be held every year to discuss the importance of activating the disabilities laws and how to deal with the students that have special needs.
- (c) Memos and official letters should be circulated to all the EFL teachers emphasizing the necessity of obeying the disabilities laws in the college.
- (d) Establishing official channels for the disabled students to complain about any mistreating because of their disabilities. These complaints should be reviewed by a special committee that has the authority to appose certain types of punishment on the faculty members who violate these laws.
- (e) Recognizing the most popular problems disabled students usually face while studying in their college and finding solutions to them.
- (f) Specializing a certain amount of budget to provide the college with all the facilities and accommodations the disabled students might need during their study in the college. The

existence of these facilities will motivate the EFL teachers to apply the laws and create comfortable environment to all the students with disabilities.

(g) When applying to teach in the Public Authority, prospective staff members must have a certain level of knowledge of disability laws in order to be accepted in the college.

## **CONCLUSION**

In this study the researchers tried to examine the level of knowledge that EFL faculty members in the Public Authority for Applied Education in Kuwait might have about disability laws and their attitudes towards the disabled students. The study found that although the staff members had a low level of knowledge regarding disability laws, their attitudes towards students with disabilities were positive. No Significance was found between males and females in relation to the level of knowledge or the attitudes towards the disabled students. Neither the teaching experience nor the number of disabled students taught played a crucial role in making any difference in the knowledge and attitudes of the EFL teachers.

Since the participants of the study were very few, further research is recommended with more participants from different higher education institutions. Administrators as well as the staff members are recommended to be included in future studies. Expansion to include more variables such as the type and nature of courses taught will help to give better diagnosis of the problem.

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## **Appendices**

### **Appendix (1)**

#### **The questionnaire**

Dear Participant,

The researchers intend to conduct this study to recognize the EFL teachers' level of knowledge about disability laws applied at the Public Authority for Applied Education in Kuwait. The study also aims to identify the EFL teachers' attitudes towards disabled students. I would be very grateful if you could spend a few minutes answering this questionnaire. I would like to confirm to you that your assessment will be completely anonymous. Your questionnaire will be treated secretly.

Thank you for your cooperation.

#### **PLEASE TICK THE APPROPRIATE RESPONSE.**

1. What is your gender?

- Male \_\_\_\_\_
- Female \_\_\_\_\_

2. How many years have you been teaching in the Public Authority for Applied Education?

- Less than 5 years \_\_\_\_\_
- 5 -10 years \_\_\_\_\_
- Greater than 10 years \_\_\_\_\_

3. How many disabled students have you taught in the Public Authority for Applied Education?

- 0 student \_\_\_\_\_
- 1 – 5 students \_\_\_\_\_
- More than 6 students \_\_\_\_\_

**PART ONE: The teachers' knowledge about the disabilities laws**

Circle the right answer.

<b>1</b>	<b>The disabled student is the one who has a disability and has an official document which proves his/her disability.</b>
	YES NO DON'T KNOW
<b>2</b>	<b>All the disabled students are supposed to have special facilities in their place of study even if they do not ask for it.</b>
	YES NO DON'T KNOW
<b>3</b>	<b>It is the disabled student responsibility to provide an accommodation for himself/herself in the place of study.</b>
	YES NO DON'T KNOW
<b>4</b>	<b>Providing special facilities for disabled students by the administration is voluntary.</b>
	YES NO DON'T KNOW

5	<b>The administration of the educational institute has the right not to accept the prospective disabled students if it cannot provide them with the appropriate facilities.</b>		
	YES	NO	DON'T KNOW
6	<b>The teacher is the only person who decides the type of accommodation the disabled student might need in class.</b>		
	YES	NO	DON'T KNOW
7	<b>The only thing that cannot be modified to suit the disabled student is the exam administration.</b>		
	YES	NO	DON'T KNOW
8	<b>The teacher who does not follow the disabilities laws might be punished by the law.</b>		
	YES	NO	DON'T KNOW
9	<b>The teacher must be tolerant when correcting the disabled student's exam.</b>		
	YES	NO	DON'T KNOW
10	<b>Disabled students who needs longer time in writing because of his/her disability must be given extra time in the exam.</b>		
	YES	NO	DON'T KNOW

<b>11</b>	<b>The course content must be modified according to the disabled student's needs.</b>
	YES NO DON'T KNOW
<b>12</b>	<b>The disabled student has the right to complain about any mistreatment received by the teacher because of his/her disability.</b>
	YES NO DON'T KNOW
<b>13</b>	<b>Applying the disabilities laws is the responsibility of both the administration and teachers.</b>
	YES NO DON'T KNOW
<b>14</b>	<b>The teacher has the freedom to accept the disabled student in his/her course.</b>
	YES NO DON'T KNOW
<b>15</b>	<b>The disabled student has the right to bring special equipment to the class if this helps him/her to understand the lesson provided that they do not distract others.</b>
	YES NO DON'T KNOW

**PART TWO: The EFL teachers' attitudes towards the disabled students**

Circle the answer that suits you most.

1	<b>To achieve equal opportunities in learning, special facilities should be given to the disabled students.</b>
	Strongly agree   Agree   Don't know   Disagree   Strongly disagree
2	<b>Teaching disabled students needs extra time and effort from the teacher that can be saved and used in other academic and administrative duties.</b>
	Strongly agree   Agree   Don't know   Disagree   Strongly disagree
3	<b>Disabled students cannot understand as fast as the normal students because of their disabilities.</b>
	Strongly agree   Agree   Don't know   Disagree   Strongly disagree
4	<b>It is not always necessary to make sure that teachers are obeying the disabilities laws.</b>
	Strongly agree   Agree   Don't know   Disagree   Strongly disagree
5	<b>It is preferable to provide disabled students with special facilities but it is not a must.</b>
	Strongly agree   Agree   Don't know   Disagree   Strongly disagree
6	<b>Disabled students always find their disabilities an excuse to come late to class.</b>



	Strongly agree   Agree   Don't know   Disagree   Strongly disagree
<b>7</b>	<b>Reading the disabilities laws increases the administrative work at the expense of the academic work.</b>
	Strongly agree   Agree   Don't know   Disagree   Strongly disagree
<b>8</b>	<b>The teacher has to be willing to spend extra time with the disabled student after the class to make sure he/she gets all the points of the lesson.</b>
	Strongly agree   Agree   Don't know   Disagree   Strongly disagree
<b>9</b>	<b>After getting the qualification, the disabled students will be as efficient as the normal students in their prospective jobs.</b>
	Strongly agree   Agree   Don't know   Disagree   Strongly disagree
<b>10</b>	<b>The administration is supposed to facilitate the place of study for disabled students even if this will cost more money.</b>
	Strongly agree   Agree   Don't know   Disagree   Strongly disagree
<b>11</b>	<b>The disabled students have the same motives as others to study hard.</b>
	Strongly agree   Agree   Don't know   Disagree   Strongly disagree
<b>12</b>	<b>It is not necessary to hold training courses and seminars about dealing with disabled students.</b>
	Strongly agree   Agree   Don't know   Disagree   Strongly disagree

<b>13</b>	<b>It is recommended to have a counseling office for staff to consult in issues regarding the disabled students.</b>
	Strongly agree   Agree   Don't know   Disagree   Strongly disagree
<b>14</b>	<b>Disabilities are not necessarily work as a barrier against disabled students to be distinguished.</b>
	Strongly agree   Agree   Don't know   Disagree   Strongly disagree
<b>15</b>	<b>It is possible for the teacher to provide students who have sight disabilities special formats in handouts and tests.</b>
	Strongly agree   Agree   Don't know   Disagree   Strongly disagree

**APPENDIX (2)****Attitudes and experience****Correlations**

		SUM2	Q2
SUM2	Pearson Correlation	1	-.354
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.126
	N	20	20
Q2	Pearson Correlation	-.354	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.126	.
	N	20	20

There is a negative non-significant correlation between attitudes and experiences of teaching.

Knowledge and experience

### Correlations

		Q2	SUM
Q2	Pearson Correlation	1	-.039
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.870
	N	20	20
SUM	Pearson Correlation	-.039	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.870	.
	N	20	20

There is a negative non-significant correlation between knowledge and experience.

Knowledge and number of disable students **Correlations**

		SUM	Q3
SUM	Pearson Correlation	1	.129
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.586
	N	20	20
Q3	Pearson Correlation	.129	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.586	.
	N	20	20

The relationship between knowledge and the number of disabled students who were taught was a positive medium but non- significant relationship.