Arab and American Teachers’
Attitudes Toward People Who Stutter:
A Comparative Study

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Central to the societal perception of stuttering is
the phenomenon of stereotyping. Stereotyping
is defined as an “exaggerated belief associ-
ated with a category and functions to justify (rationa-
zize) one’s conduct in relation to that category” (Allport, 1986,
p. 191). A review of the literature indicates that the speech
of people who stutter (PWS) is often subject to nega-
tive stereotyping by various groups of listeners, including
educators (e.g., Dorsey & Guenther, 2000), health care
professionals (e.g., Silverman & Bongey, 1997), employers
(Hurst & Cooper, 1983a), vocational counselors (Hurst &
Cooper, 1983b), speech-language pathologists (SLPs; e.g.,
Cooper & Cooper, 1996), lay people (e.g., Ham, 1990),
and college students (e.g., Ruscello, Lass, & Brown, 1988).
Findings from these studies indicate that PWS are charac-
terized using descriptors such as shy, anxious, withdrawn,
nervous, tense, hesitant, self-conscious, less competent,
introverted, and insecure. A limited number of studies have
explored why these stereotypes occur (Doody, Kalinowski,
Armson, & Stuart, 1993; MacKinnon, Hall, & MacIntyre,

ABSTRACT: Purpose: A limited number of studies have ex-
plored attitudes toward people who stutter (PWS) in different
cultures. Recent studies have looked at the attitudes of Arab
parents toward PWS. The current study explores attitudes
reported by Arab teachers from Kuwait and provides a pre-
liminary comparison with attitudes reported by teachers from
the United States.

Method: This study used an English version and an Arabic
translation of a 14-item semantic differential (SD) scale (Bur-
ley & Rinaldi, 1986) to assess differences in American and
Arab teachers’ attitudes toward PWS.

Results: A majority of Arab teachers from Kuwait reported
neutral to positive attitudes toward PWS on the SD scale.
However, ~1/3 of the Arab teachers reported relatively nega-
tive attitudes toward PWS on items relating to social skills
and employability. A comparison of the American and Arab
teachers’ results indicated generally positive attitudes toward
PWS; however, the American teachers reported significantly
more positive attitudes on 11 of the 14 items in the scale.

Discussion: The significant differences between the 2 groups
may be attributed to a variety of cultural factors related
to perceptions and beliefs about communication disorders,
including stuttering. Familiarity with PWS could be another
factor related to the differences reported. The differences
found between the 2 groups indicates a need for future
studies using different methods to corroborate the results of
this study and further explore factors responsible for the dif-
ference in responses. Limitations with the present study and
recommendations for future research are discussed.

KEY WORDS: stuttering, attitudes, crosscultural, teachers,
stereotyping
Impact of Stereotypes on the Individual

People with disabilities, including PWS, often internalize negative stereotypes and accept them as the truth about themselves (Smart, 2001). This internalization may be exacerbated if such stereotypes are repeated often and from authority figures. For children in school, teachers are authority figures who can have a significant impact on their lives. Previous studies (Lass et al., 1992, 1994; Yeakle & Cooper, 1986) found that teachers and school administrators held largely negative stereotypes about PWS. Yeakle and Cooper (1986) found that teachers who reported having experience with PWS or coursework in speech disorders expressed more realistic attitudes toward PWS, thus indicating that familiarity and/or education can help improve teachers’ perceptions of PWS.

More recently, Irani and Gabel (2008) found a positive shift in kindergarten to 12th-grade (K–12) teachers’ attitudes toward PWS compared to people who do not stutter (PWNS). The results of the study by Irani and Gabel indicated that K–12 teachers reported significantly positive attitudes toward PWS as compared to PWNS for three items on a semantic differential (SD) scale. These items included the descriptors sincere–insincere, physically normal–physically abnormal, and intelligent–unintelligent. The results of this study are promising and in keeping with the positive trend noted by Cooper and Cooper (1996), who found a similar positive shift in attitudes by teachers over 2 decades.

Another important effect of stereotyping has been discussed by Smart (2001) as paternalism. Paternalism has been defined as “acting upon one’s own idea of what is best for another person without consulting that person” (Anderson, 1987, p. 177). Paternalism is often done in consideration of the best interests of the person with a disability (PWD) and can be considered appropriate and justified when the PWD may make a decision that would cause harm to him- or herself. However, paternalism can be undesirable and unethical when decisions are made for individuals who are capable of making their own decisions, including PWS. A study by Irani, Gabel, Hughes, Swartz, and Palasik (2009) explored role entrapment of PWS by K–12 teachers using the Vocational Advice Scale (VAS; Gabel, Blood, Tellis, & Althouse, 2004). The survey instrument included an open-ended question at the end of the scale, requesting participants to provide their rationale for not recommending certain jobs to PWS. A majority of the teachers who responded to the open-ended questions indicated that they did not recommend certain careers to PWS because they were keeping the student’s best interest at heart. These were often careers that required more speaking. These results could be interpreted as representative of paternalism.

Culture and Stereotyping of PWS

A comparison of past and recent research related to attitudes toward, and stereotyping of, PWS in America indicates a positive change in attitudes over the past several decades, with various societal groups reporting more neutral to positive attitudes toward PWS on SD scales. However, there is limited research about attitudes toward, and stereotyping of, PWS in different countries and cultures.

Our understanding of cultural differences in attitudes toward people with various disabilities, including stuttering, is extremely important. In the case of stuttering, a review of the literature indicates that the vast majority of treatment research published is primarily from North America, Australia, and the United Kingdom. Thus, it is important for SLPs working with culturally and linguistically diverse populations to understand cultural differences in attitudes toward people with various communication disorders. Additionally, SLPs from other nations are also consumers of research literature printed in top tier, peer-reviewed publications. It is pertinent that SLPs are aware of cultural differences that could impact the conduct of treatment for a variety of communication disorders. For children who stutter, an SLP needs to consider cultural differences when implementing treatment. This can include changes in the structure of the program to account for cultural differences, but also education of individuals who are relevant to the child’s life and treatment process. For school-age children, a considerable amount of time is spent in the schools. Thus, it is important to understand teachers’ attitudes toward PWS.

A number of studies have found cultural differences in the knowledge about, and attitudes toward, people with communication disorders in general and stuttering specifically (Bebout & Arthur, 1992; Mayo, Mayo, Jenkins, & Graves, 2004). These studies indicate that negative stereotypes concerning PWS, established by studies looking at various societal groups in the United States, exist across cultures. Studies that have explored perceptions and attitudes about stuttering among different cultural groups indicate varied beliefs about the cause of stuttering, ranging from a more contemporary perspective that stuttering occurs in early childhood to less traditional conceptualizations of stuttering (Al-Khaledi, Lincoln, McCabe, Packman, & Alshatti, 2009). The less contemporary conceptualizations include beliefs that stuttering has a psychological (Mayo et al., 2004) or emotional (de Britto Pereira, Rossi, & Van Borsel, 2008) basis.
The Arab Culture and Attitudes Toward Stuttering and PWS

Abdalla and Al-Saddah (2009) explored the knowledge, beliefs, and attitudes of teachers in Kuwait about stuttering using an Arabic translation of the Public Opinion Survey of Human Attributes Inventory (POSHA-E; St. Louis, 2005). They also conducted qualitative interviews to gather data about PWS’ school experiences from three children who stutter. The survey results indicated that although some teachers reported positive trends in perceptions and knowledge of stuttering, there remains a lack of adequate knowledge about stuttering in teachers in Kuwait. For example, results indicated that a vast majority of teachers responding to the survey believed that stuttering is caused by a frightening/traumatic event or is psychological in nature. A common theme identified during the qualitative interviews was that of time pressure: All three participants reported that they feel that some teachers would not give them time to speak freely. It is interesting to note that although the results from the survey indicated largely positive trends, the reports from the participants who stutter suggested otherwise.

The most striking was a report by one of the participants, who stated that teachers request she ask questions only after class or during break time. Suggestions such as these can have a negative impact on a child and possibly result in feelings of marginalization. It is important for school-based SLPs to develop a plan to address these situations and reach an amicable solution such that the child can be provided with equal opportunities. Although generalizations cannot be made based on reports from only three participants, it does indicate that each individual’s experience in the school system is different, and it is important for an SLP working with a child in the school system to address the child’s particular school experience.

A study by Al-Khaledi et al. (2009) explored Arab parents’ knowledge and beliefs about stuttering using an Arabic translation of the POSHA-E. In general, they found that many parents attributed the cause of stuttering to psychological or emotional factors, and more than half of the respondents believed that stuttering is caused by parents overreacting when the child has disfluencies. On questions regarding attitudes and beliefs about stuttering, half of the respondents believed that PWS should not occupy influential occupations such as lawyers, doctors, and teachers, indicating some role entrapment, as described by Irani et al. (2009). Many parents also held stereotypical beliefs that PWS are shy or fearful. On a positive note, a majority of the parents reported positive attitudes, and there were no indications of associating stuttering with reduced intelligence. Overall, the results of this study appear to be in agreement with the results of the study by Abdalla and Al-Saddah (2009), which stated that the level of knowledge about stuttering is limited and there is a need to disseminate scientific information about stuttering in Kuwait and possibly other Arabic-speaking countries.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

To the best of our knowledge, only two studies (Abdalla & Al-Saddah, 2009; Al-Khaledi et al., 2009) have explored stereotyping of PWS in Arabic-speaking countries. The results of these studies indicate a lack of knowledge and awareness about stuttering by two important societal groups; namely, teachers and parents. This lack of knowledge can result in negative stereotyping of PWS, putting them at a disadvantage in schools and possibly also vocationally. According to Heite (2000), who explored Icelandic teachers’ attitudes toward stuttering and classroom decision making, most teachers lack knowledge about stuttering, and listeners tend to make judgments based on cultural mythology and their own stress reactions. A lack of knowledge about stuttering by teachers could lead to negative stereotyping of PWS by the anchoring-adjustment process (MacKinnon et al., 2007) wherein teachers might form negative stereotypes about stuttering based on their own experiences with disfluencies.

A vast majority of previous research has explored attitudes of the Western culture toward stuttering. Exploring non-Western attitudes about disorders such as stuttering is also important, both because we are living in an increasingly pluralistic society and because such knowledge has important scientific value. A limited number of studies have explored attitudes and beliefs of populations outside the United States toward stuttering. Additionally, a majority of the treatment research in stuttering is published in North America, Australia, and the United Kingdom, with a majority of the participants belonging to the Western culture. Very little is known about cultural differences in attitudes toward stuttering and how that might influence treatment choices. It is important for SLPs to understand cultural differences when making treatment decisions because attitudes toward the cause, effect, and treatment of a disorder held by the client and the client’s family and community can have a significant impact on the treatment process (Bebout & Arthur, 1992).

The purpose of this study was to explore Arab teachers’ attitudes toward PWS and make preliminary comparisons with attitudes reported by American teachers to look for possible cultural differences using an SD survey instrument. The study posed the following research questions:

- What attitudes do Arab teachers report toward PWS, when measured on an SD scale?
- Are there quantitative and qualitative differences in attitudes reported by Arab and American K–12 teachers toward PWS?

METHOD

Instrumentation

An SD (Burley & Rinaldi, 1986; Collins & Blood, 1990) scale was used in this study to measure participant attitudes. The scale was a 14-item instrument consisting of 14 adjectives paired with their 14 antonyms found in dictionary listings. The bipolar pairs (e.g., sincere–insincere) were randomly distributed to either the low (1) or the high (7) ends of the scale in an equal number of items to reduce the likelihood of participants responding in a stereotyped
manner, thereby reducing the order effect (Silverman, 1977). A 7-point scale was inserted between the adjectives, and participants were asked to circle the number on the scale that is closest to the adjective they feel best describes a person who stutters. For scoring purposes, all negative items were placed on the high end of the scale, and all positive items were placed on the low end of the scale. Thus, a higher score indicated a more negative attitude, and a lower score indicated a more positive attitude. In order to ensure that all responses and ratings were based on the participant’s internal standards, no specific definitions of stuttering were provided to the participants. SD scales, like the one used in this study, have been used previously to measure people’s attitudes toward PWS (Burley & Rinaldi, 1986; Collins & Blood, 1990; Gabel, 2006; Horsley & FitzGibbon, 1987; Silverman & Bongey, 1997; Woods & Williams, 1976).

Participants and Survey Distribution

The study was completed in two phases. The first phase of the study evaluated the attitudes toward PWS reported by teachers from Kuwait; it answers the first research question. The second phase compared attitudes reported by the teachers from Kuwait with attitudes reported by teachers from the United States; it answers the second research question.

Kuwait teachers’ attitudes toward PWS. Two hundred and fifty-eight participants were recruited to gather data about Kuwait teachers’ attitudes toward PWS. Participants were recruited from three of six governorates in Kuwait from which approval to conduct the study was obtained. A governorate is roughly equivalent to a province or state in the United States and is an administrative division in the country. Three of the six governorates were randomly selected for conducting this study. The questionnaire was distributed to 15 schools, five in each governorate. Teachers in Kuwait are assigned to different governorates depending on the need for teachers in a particular governorate, and many expatriate teachers from other countries are hired and are placed in schools across the country. Hence, we believe that the sample of teachers responding to the questionnaire was most likely representative of the general population of Kuwait. Principals of the schools contacted for the study facilitated recruiting participants for this phase of the study.

Two professional English–Arabic translators translated the SD scale used for the first phase of this study to Arabic. Two independent linguists from Kuwait University then checked the translation for accuracy. Research assistants from the department of communication sciences at Kuwait University provided the school principals with packages containing a cover letter, consent form, and the translated 14-item SD scale. The principals then distributed the packages to teachers in their respective schools. The completed packages were returned to the research assistants by the school principals. The cover letter specified that anonymity would be maintained, and teachers were not asked to provide their names.

A total of 700 questionnaires were distributed to Arab (Kuwaiti and non-Kuwaiti) teachers from a total of 15 schools. Arab teachers were those who circled “Arab” as their ethnicity and indicated speaking Arabic as their first language. Of the 700 questionnaires that were distributed, 346 (49.4%) were returned, and 258 (36.8%) of those were completed and usable. The remaining 88 questionnaires could not be used for the study because nine participants reported that they stuttered, and 79 surveys were incomplete.

Table 1 presents the demographic information for the Arab teachers who participated in the study. The average age of participants was 35.4 years, and only 29.9% were 40 or more years of age. The majority of the teachers were female (70.2%). More than 40% of the teachers taught at the elementary level, 29.5% at the middle school level, and 30.2% at high schools. The two largest nationalities were Kuwaiti (52.6%) and Egyptian (35.7%). The remaining teachers (11.6%) were citizens of various Arab countries: Bahrain, Iraq, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Tunisia, Mauritania, Lebanon, and Morocco. Although only 32.4% were currently teaching a student who stutters, a larger proportion (61.1%) had taught PWS in the past.

Comparing attitudes toward PWS. This phase of the study involved collecting data from the 83 participants in the United States. The data gathered from teachers in Kuwait were then reduced to match participant characteristics of the data gathered in the United States to allow for comparison of teachers’ attitudes toward PWS.

Data for the U.S. teachers was gathered in a previous study (Irani & Gabel, 2008). Participants from this phase

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographic item</th>
<th>Arab (N = 258)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age of participants</td>
<td>Mean = 35.4 (SD = 9.0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Range = 22–62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Male = 77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female = 181</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age group</td>
<td>≤30 = 162</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&gt;40 = 69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No response = 27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Citizenship</td>
<td>Kuwaiti = 131</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Egyptian = 89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Other Arab = 29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No response = 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years of teaching experience</td>
<td>Mean = 9.78 (SD = 7.9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Range = 1–32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you stutter?</td>
<td>Yes = 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No = 258</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade level presently teaching?</td>
<td>Elementary = 104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Middle = 76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High = 78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have you taught people who stutter?</td>
<td>Yes = 154</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No = 98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No response = 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you presently have a student in your class who stutters?</td>
<td>Yes = 82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No = 171</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No response = 5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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(U.S.) were identified via an Internet search of K–12 schools in each state. There were 550 potential participants (names and school address) selected randomly from this convenient population of possible teachers. The list included teachers of all disciplines and grade levels. Each participant was mailed a copy of the questionnaire and was asked to complete it and return it to the researchers. The mailed packets contained a demographic questionnaire, the SD scale, a cover letter, an informed consent form, and a postage-paid return envelope. Participants were excluded from the study if they reported on the demographic questionnaire that they stuttered. It was expected that teachers with this background might have a positive bias toward PWS and might report different attitudes than the remaining population.

Of the 550 questionnaires that were mailed, 101 participants returned the questionnaire (response rate of 18.36%). Of the returned questionnaires, 83 (15.09%) were completed and usable. Of the 18 questionnaires that were not usable, four participants reported that they stuttered. The remaining questionnaires could not be used because the participants did not complete the entire questionnaire.

To enable comparison of the responses of teachers in the United States with those in Kuwait, responses collected from both countries (United States and Kuwait) were matched on demographic variables of age, gender, and grade presently teaching, yielding a total of 166 participants (83 American and 83 Arab). Within the Arab participants, 37 were Kuwaiti nationals, 37 were Egyptian nationals, eight were from other Arab countries like Syria and Saudi Arabia, and one did not provide nationality. The teachers were trained in their respective countries and met the teaching certification criteria for employment by the Ministry of Education to teach in Kuwaiti public schools. They were all college or university trained. Table 2 summarizes demographic information for the American and matched Arab teachers responding to the questionnaire.

### Data Analysis

**Descriptive statistics.** Descriptive measures (means and standard deviations) were obtained for each item on the SD scale. Due to the scoring system applied, a higher mean score would be indicative of a negative attitude; a lower mean score would be indicative of a positive attitude. This analysis was completed for data gathered from both phases of the study. Separate analyses were conducted to answer the two research questions of the study.

**Between-group comparisons.** An analysis of variance (ANOVA) was completed for the 14 items on the SD scale as well as the overall mean score. This was first done to explore differences in attitudes toward PWS reported by participants from the United States and Kuwait. Thus, group (American vs. Arab) was the independent variable for this analysis, and the 14 items on the SD scale and the overall mean score were the dependent variables. The initial alpha level (level of confidence) chosen for this study was 0.05. Due to the large number of two-way comparisons conducted, the alpha level was adjusted to reduce the risk of a statistical Type I error (false positive). According to the Bonferroni procedure, the target alpha of $p < 0.05$ was divided by the total number of analyses conducted (14 individual items and the overall mean score), resulting in a more conservative alpha value of $p \leq 0.003$. The use of the Bonferroni in this case could have contributed to the increase in Type II error (Perneger, 1998) while controlling for Type I errors.

### RESULTS

**Research Question 1**

Table 3 lists the number and percentage (descriptive statistics) of Arab teachers who identified 14 traits of a person who stutters as positive (scale points of 1, 2, and 3), nega-

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**Table 2.** A summary of demographic data for the American and matched Arab participants in this study.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographic item</th>
<th>American (n = 83)</th>
<th>Arab (n = 83)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age of participants</td>
<td>Mean = 44.48 ($SD = 9.4$)</td>
<td>Mean = 43.41 ($SD = 7.79$)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Range = 25–63</td>
<td>Range = 25–62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Male = 24</td>
<td>Male = 24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female = 59</td>
<td>Female = 59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you stutter?</td>
<td>Yes = 0</td>
<td>Yes = 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No = 83</td>
<td>No = 83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you know someone who stutters?</td>
<td>Yes = 0</td>
<td>Yes = 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No = 83</td>
<td>No = 83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade level presently teaching?</td>
<td>Elementary = 27</td>
<td>Elementary = 25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Middle = 27</td>
<td>Middle = 28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High = 29</td>
<td>High = 30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have you taught people who stutter?</td>
<td>Yes = 64</td>
<td>Yes = 55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No = 19</td>
<td>No = 27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No response = 1</td>
<td></td>
<td>No response = 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you presently have a student in your class who stutters?</td>
<td>Yes = 73</td>
<td>Yes = 22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No = 10</td>
<td>No = 59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No response = 2</td>
<td></td>
<td>No response = 2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
positive (scale points of 5, 6, and 7) or neutral (scale rating of 4). Close to one third of the Arab teachers considered a person who stutters not likeable (34%), unsociable (32%), hostile (35%), of weak character (48%), or unemployable (31%). At least 20% of the respondents identified a person who stutters as being not trustworthy (25%), having a poor sense of humor (22.1%), mentally unstable (24%), or emotionally maladjusted (20%). A quarter of the teachers or more reported a neutral standing (rating of 4) rather than committing to a positive or negative direction.

Research Question 2

Descriptive statistics. Table 4 lists the mean score and standard deviations for each of the 14 items and the overall mean score on the SD scale. The scores on the individual items on the SD scale for Group 1 (i.e., American teachers) ranged from 1.93 to 2.94 and for Group 2 (i.e., Arab teachers) from 2.84 to 4.37, indicating that participants from both groups reported overall positive to neutral attitudes toward PWS. On the SD scale used in this study, a score of 4 indicates neutral attitudes, lower scores indicate positive attitudes, and higher scores indicate negative attitudes. The overall mean score on the SD scale for Group 1 was 2.36 (SD = 1.12) and for Group 2 was 3.35 (SD = 0.78).

Between-group comparisons on the SD scale. An ANOVA for each item on the SD scale was completed to explore any significant differences between American and Arab teachers’ reported attitudes toward PWS. Results are displayed in Table 4 and indicate significant differences (p ≤ 0.003) on 10 items. These 10 items include likeable–not likeable, trustworthy–not trustworthy, physically normal–physically abnormal, good sense of humor–poor sense of humor, mentally stable–mentally unstable, sociable–unsociable, friendly–hostile, strong character–weak character, employable–unemployable, and emotionally adjusted–emotionally maladjusted. It should be noted, however, that Arab teachers in general reported positive to neutral attitudes toward PWS on most of the items on the SD scale, as indicated by the mean scores for each item (<4 indicates positive attitudes). For the SD item, strong character–weak character, the mean score for Arab teachers was found to be 4.37 (SD = 1.59), indicating a slightly negative response for that one particular characteristic.

An ANOVA was conducted for the overall mean score on the SD to determine overall group differences in attitudes toward PWS. The results are displayed in Table 4 and suggest a significant difference between American and Arab teachers in their overall attitudes toward PWS (p ≤ 0.003). A mean score of 2.36 was reported for the American teachers and 3.35 for the Arab teachers. Thus, both American and Arab teachers reported positive attitudes, with American teachers reporting slightly more positive attitudes overall.

DISCUSSION

This study used a 14-item SD scale to examine Arab teachers’ attitudes toward stuttering. Additionally, the study examined crosscultural (American–Arab) differences in K–12 teachers’ attitudes toward PWS as reported on an SD scale.

To answer the question of what attitudes Arab teachers report toward PWS, we analyzed descriptive statistics for a group of Arab teachers from Kuwait who responded to the 14-item SD scale. A majority of the teachers responding to the survey reported neutral attitudes toward PWS on all 14 items. However, it is important to note that close to one third of the teachers considered PWS as not likeable, unsociable, hostile, of weak character, or unemployable. Although it is encouraging that a majority of the Arab teachers reported neutral to positive attitudes on all items, it is also important to note the significant differences in attitudes between American and Arab teachers.
of the scale, a fairly large number of teachers also reported relatively negative attitudes. These results thus lend some support to the study of Arab parents’ attitudes toward stuttering, reported by Al-Khaledi et al. (2009). They found that half of the respondents believed that PWS should not work in influential jobs and held stereotypical beliefs that PWS are shy or fearful.

To answer the question of whether there are quantitative and qualitative differences in attitudes reported by Arab and American K–12 teachers toward PWS, we compared the mean scores reported by each group. Both groups reported generally positive attitudes toward PWS, but the American teachers reported significantly more positive attitudes toward PWS. Although the report of generally positive attitudes toward PWS by the American teachers appears to follow a trend that was noted by Irani and Gabel (2008), there is no previous research exploring the attitudes of Arab teachers. It should be noted, however, that the Arab teachers reported positive to neutral attitudes toward PWS with mean scores for each item on the SD scale around 4 or slightly lower (lower scores on the SD scale indicate more positive attitudes).

One possible reason for this difference in attitudes could be due to demographic variables such as prior experiences with students who stutter. Seventy-seven percent of the U.S. respondents had taught a student who stutters, and only 66.3% of the Arab respondents reported teaching a student who stutters. Additionally, 88.0% of the U.S. respondents reported currently teaching a student who stutters compared to only 27.2% of the Arab respondents. According to Klasen (2002), individuals who have long-standing contact or familiarity with a person who stutters reported fewer negative stereotypes than the general population. Thus, considering that a majority of teachers from both groups reported teaching a student who stutters could be an important contributor to the responses obtained on the SD scale.

The results of this study, although not directly comparable to the Al-Khaledi et al. (2009) study, do indicate a need to disseminate scientific information about the cause of stuttering and its impact on the individual in Kuwait and possibly other Arab-speaking countries. The Al-Khaledi et al. study used the POSHA-E scale to explore attitudes, knowledge, and beliefs that Arab parents in Kuwait have about stuttering and found that negative stereotypes, misconceptions about stuttering, cultural beliefs, and a lack of awareness of the disorder among parents in Kuwait exist. Similarly, the current study found that teachers in Kuwait reported less positive attitudes toward PWS as compared to their U.S. counterparts. Information regarding the reasons for their responses was not gathered as part of this study. Abdalla and Al-Saddah (2009) indicated that teachers in Kuwait possibly lack adequate knowledge about stuttering, which negatively affected the school experiences of the PWS who were interviewed.

**Limitations and Future Directions**

The major limitations of this study include the small sample size for each group and the lower response rate for the group of American teachers responding to the study. Additionally, the low response rate received from both populations could be reflective of a positive response bias. Seventy-seven percent of the U.S. respondents and 66.3% of the Kuwait respondents had taught a student who stuttered in their class, and 88.0% of the U.S. respondents reported currently teaching a student who stutters compared to 27.2% of the Kuwait respondents. Thus, familiarity with the population under study could play a role in the response patterns obtained in this study. The use of alternate implicit methods such as those suggested above would allow one to further document and corroborate these results. Additionally, a combination of implicit and explicit
measures of attitudes could be used to explore and gain a deeper understanding of the effect that education and experiences with PWS have on people’s attitudes toward PWS.

Future studies could use a mixed methods design to assess teachers’ views about stuttering and the school experiences of PWS to gain a more holistic understanding of teachers’ attitudes toward stuttering and how that affects students who stutter in the schools, in both the United States and Kuwait, and possibly other countries as well.

Conclusion

A limited number of studies have explored attitudes and beliefs about stuttering across various cultural groups. To date, only two studies have explored stereotyping of PWS in Arabic-speaking countries. Thus, the purpose of the current study was to add to our knowledge of attitudes toward PWS in Kuwait and to explore cultural differences in attitudes towards PWS by K–12 teachers using a 14-item SD scale.

The results indicate that a majority of teachers from Kuwait reported neutral to positive attitudes toward PWS on the SD scale. However, close to one third of the teachers reported relatively negative attitudes toward PWS on items relating to social skills and employability. A comparison of both groups of teachers indicated reports of positive attitudes; however, the American teachers reported significantly more positive attitudes as compared to the Arab teachers. The differences found between the two groups indicates a need for future studies using different methods to corroborate the results of the current study and explore factors, including familiarity or long-standing contact with a person who stutters, that may be responsible for the difference in responses.

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