

The Perception of Special Education Teachers of the Educational Experiences of Female Students with Moderate Intellectual Disabilities in Self-Contained Classrooms in Saudi Arabia

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Abstract:

Despite the international movement to include students with Moderate Intellectual Disabilities (MOID) in general education classrooms with their typical peers, these students still receive their education in segregated classrooms in Saudi Arabia (SA). This study aims to investigate the teachers' perceptions of the educational experiences of female students with MOID in self-contained classrooms in SA. I conducted this study using qualitative methodology depending on two data sources: interviews and documentation. A third data collection method, conducting observations, was not possible to implement due to the pandemic of COVID-19, which closed the schools during the year of data collection. I used semi-structured interviews with seven special education teachers in SA.

Four main themes emerged from the teachers' perceptions and the documentation review about their experiences being teachers of female students with MOID in self-contained classrooms in SA. The four themes that emerged were: (a) ineffective self-contained classrooms, (b) unclear expectations of students with MOID, (c) inadequate school and education system infrastructure, and (d) lack of understanding of effective inclusive education for students with MOID. Moreover, in the discussion, I described four significant issues related to these themes:



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the absence of inclusive education, inconsistencies in the curriculum taught to female students with MOID, lack of effective leadership in the educational system, and an ineffective system for identification, diagnosis, and reevaluation. Finally, I discussed the implications of the study and outlined recommendations for future research.

Keywords: Inclusive education, intellectual disabilities, Saudi Arabia.

Introduction

Students go to general education schools to get their education in Saudi Arabia (SA). Students with disabilities have a variety of educational placements based on the type and severity of their disabilities. However, students with intellectual disabilities (ID) have limited options for educational placements in SA. To date, there is a lack of literature in SA that has discussed the in-depth educational experiences of students with ID who are placed in self-contained classrooms.

The total population in SA is 34 million, and 7.1% are individuals who have been identified as having disabilities (Saudi Arabia General Authority for Statistics, 2017). In SA, disability is generally viewed through the medical model lens, wherein professionals attempt to care for a child's physical needs without concern for equal access in society and education (Alharbi & Madhesh, 2018). Regardless of whether a student has a disability or is instructed in general education settings, students are currently separated by gender in SA (Alquraini, 2014). Each gender has its own schools, principals, administrators, teachers, and students. Recently, the Ministry of Education started to include male students in early elementary grades (i.e., kindergarten through third grade) in female schools.

In 1990, the Ministry of Education in SA began providing the option of mainstream programs (i.e., special education programs in resource rooms, in self-contained classrooms, or

with teacher-consultancy in general education schools) for students with specific disabilities (Al-Mousa, 2010). These disabilities include hard of hearing, mild to moderate ID, visual impairment, learning disabilities, autism, gifted and talented, and physical disabilities. Students with other disabilities are not provided services in these programs.

In SA, the determination of a disability and the educational placement for a student with a disability is decided solely on the IQ score and solely by a psychologist (Al-Ajmi, 2006; Alnahdi, 2014). Specifically, to get qualified for special education programs for students with ID:

- IQ score should not exceed 75.
- Low intellectual functioning is aligned with limitations in two adaptive skills.
- The severity of ID should not prevent the student from benefiting from the educational program.
- Having an additional disability should not prevent the student from benefiting from the educational program (Ministry of Education, 2016).

In addition, no clear guidelines from the Ministry of Education exist related to educational placements for students with ID.

For students with ID, this combination of policies and issues in implementation results in only for students with mild ID being placed in mainstream programs. For students with moderate ID (MOID), placement is occurring in either mainstream special education programs or residential facilities (Aldabas, 2015; Alnahdi, 2014). In contrast, the only educational placement for students with severe ID is residential facilities, which recently have been required to provide two hours of special education services per day across the regular school year. Unfortunately, unlike the USA, the Ministry of Education does not offer any educational programs within a student's home or a hospital.



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The most frequently used educational placement provided for students with MOID in SA is self-contained classrooms (Aldabas, 2015; Alnahdi, 2014). Self-contained classrooms are for students with disabilities only located in general education schools (no more than ten students in the classroom) working under the administration of the Ministry of Education. These types of disabilities include blind, hard of hearing, ID, multiple disabilities, and autism (Al-Mousa, 2010). Students with other types of disabilities (e.g., learning disabilities and physical disabilities) are usually included in general education classrooms with special education services provided throughout the day (Al-Mousa, 2010). In selected public schools, students with mild to moderate disabilities are educated in special education classrooms (Aldabas, 2015). There are three levels of special education in SA, including (1) primary level, provided in elementary schools, which consist of six grades first grade to sixth grade (until the age of 18); (2) intermediate level, provided in middle schools which consist of three grades seventh to ninth (until the age of 21); and (3) secondary level, provided in high schools which consist of three grades 10th to 12th grade (until the age of 24).

Overall, no research has been done to evaluate the services among this placement, measure the satisfaction of the participants, or understand the situation of the individual experience in our system (Alruwaili, 2016). Therefore, this research is important because it evaluates the educational services provided in the most used special education placement available for students with MOID (i.e., a self-contained classroom in a mainstream program) and provides service delivery recommendations designed to lead to improved students' outcomes.

The purpose of this study is to understand the educational experiences from teachers' perception of students with MOID who have been receiving educational services in a self-contained classroom in a general education school.



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Methods

Research Design

In this study, I investigated the perception of special education teachers of the educational experiences of female students with MOID in self-contained classrooms provided in SA, and the impact of those services, by conducting a qualitative study (Patton, 2002). we conducted this study in Makkah which is the third largest urban city with a population of more than one million in the western region of SA. This large urban city is within driving distance from my home. The self-contained classroom is located in a general education middle school in the city. These middle schools in SA serve only females in grades seven through nine, ages 13 to 15, for students without disabilities; and ages 13-21 for students with disabilities. In SA, self-contained classrooms serve only students with disabilities, are located in general education schools, and serve no more than ten students. These self-contained classrooms work under the administration of the Ministry of Education.

Participant Selection

First, I obtained the permission to conduct this study first from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. Then, I got the permission from the Ministry of Education in SA to allow me to recruit participants for my study. All teacher participants were female and (a) teaching female students between 15-20 years old who are identified as having MOID (IQ ranged 49-36), (b) teaching in self-contained classrooms in a general education school, and (c) teaching in at least their second year as an educator of students with MOID. Moreover, I acquired the informed consent of each teacher to participate in the study consistent with procedures approved by the IRB at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro and the Ministry of Education in SA. For the teacher participants' characteristics see Table 5.

Table 1. Summary of Teachers Participants Characteristics

Dyad	Teacher	Age	Education	Years of Teaching experience
1	Mariam	32	Bachelor in Special Education	7
2	Fatima	30	Bachelor in Special Education	7
3	Sara	45	Master's in Special Education	+20
4	Maha	31	Bachelor in Special Education	9
5	Salma	28	Bachelor in Special Education	6
6	Elham	36	Associate degree in Special Education	10
7	Nuha	37	Bachelor in Math and Associate degree in Special Education	11

I conducted interviews with seven special education teachers from three different schools in Makkah, SA. During the interviews, the teachers each used one of their female students as a reference point for describing student experiences. When requesting documents related to the targeted students' abilities, educational records, IEPs lesson plans, and progress, only some of the teachers provided some of the documents; that is, four of the seven teachers provided a few of the documents, and three of the seven teachers provided no documents.



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Data Collection and Organization

For this study, we planned to use three data sources: interviews, observation, and documents (Roulston, 2010). Due to the pandemic of COVID-19, the schools in SA were closed during the data collection period of this study. Therefore, we had to eliminate observation from our data collection methods.

Interviews

I conducted individual face-to-face or virtual interviews with each teacher participant. Interviews in qualitative research are a process “in which an interviewer generates talk with an interviewee or interviewees for the purpose of eliciting spoken, rather than written data to examine the research problems” (Roulston, 2010, p. 10). Each interview was audio-recorded with a handheld recording device designed to easily capture each teacher’s voice during a face-to-face meeting, or online software during a virtual meeting. The interviews’ length was 40-80 minutes. After transcribing the interviews, I met with each teacher, shared a copy of the transcript of their own interview, and asked each participant to provide feedback about the accuracy of the transcriptions. Their feedback could include edits, clarifications, additions, or deletions related to any of the content of their transcription. No feedback was received that required edits to the transcript.

Documents

Documents can provide valuable information that a researcher could not get from observations or interviews (Patton, 2002). Therefore, from each teacher participant, I collected information about the curriculum (e.g., published descriptions, lists of content) they are using with the targeted student, copies of several of their lesson plans, notes about the student and their



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progress, records related to the targeted student’s eligibility for special education services, the student’s IEP, the student’s progress from previous years, and current schoolwork samples. These documents provided background and historical details related to the targeted students’ disability, educational experiences, and growth/progress over time.

Data Security

All the identifiable information (e.g., names) in transcripts and documents was redacted. In addition, participants were identified by a code, rather than by name, and the connection between codes and names were locked securely in a locked location with all the data to which only I have access. To ensure the confidentiality of the participants, I used pseudonyms on all data collected materials.

Data Analysis

I began data analysis by independently analyzing the content of each participant’s transcript. For each teacher, I began to code the transcripts with open coding to get a better understanding of the content and how different sections of the transcript might relate to each other. If I needed additional information to address the research questions more completely, I would go back to the transcripts, or conduct a second interview if needed. Once all data sources were open coded, I grouped the codes that address similar topics or issues, as well as identified codes that are outliers to those topics or issues. I then reread the transcripts in relation to topics, issues and outliers, while considering if the codes and group of codes accurately capture the meanings emerging from the transcripts. I then edited the codes, groups of codes, topics, issues, and outliers to capture the emerging meanings more closely. I repeated this process until I had a finalized list of codes and how they are grouped, which I used for more focused coding; that is, I used the codes and how they are grouped in relation to the research questions.

At this stage, to check for intercoder agreement I asked two research colleagues to independently code the transcription (Creswell, 2014). I then met individually with each of these colleagues to check the agreement between their codes and my codes, looked for similarities and differences in sections that were coded, and then discussed the transcript sections where there were discrepancies in coding. These sections and their codes were discussed until a consensus was formed about the most relevant and accurate code that applies for that section. The percentage of agreement in the codes across coders should be at least 80% (Saldaña, 2013). For this study, the percentage of agreement in codes was 92%.

Data Quality

The study employed various strategies to enhance trustworthiness and accuracy in its qualitative findings, aligning with established criteria such as dependability, confirmability, credibility, and transferability (Creswell & Clark, 2018; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Shenton, 2004; Yin, 2003). For dependability, the researcher used peer debriefing to verify codes and themes from the data (Houghton et al., 2013). To ensure confirmability, a subjective statement was included to disclose potential biases based on the researcher's background and experiences (Patton, 2002). Credibility was reinforced through rigorous methods, triangulation, prolonged engagement, and member checking. This involved conducting detailed interviews with seven special education teachers, using multiple data sources like interviews and documents to triangulate findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Patton, 2002; Roulston, 2010; Tracy, 2010), and spending substantial time with participants to build trust and ensure accurate data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Lastly, transferability was addressed by providing a comprehensive description of the context and methods, allowing readers to determine the applicability of the findings to other settings within Saudi Arabia, although generalization was not the primary goal (Houghton et al., 2013).

Limitations of the Study

The purpose of this study is to get special education teachers' perceptions on the educational experiences of female students ages 15-20 years old with MOID in SA, specifically female teachers in one city in SA. These limitations to one set of participating female teachers from one geographic area made it difficult to generalize the findings to other sets of teachers and other geographic areas (Stake, 2000). This study provided an in-depth understanding of the participating teachers' perceptions of educational experiences of female students ages 15-20 years old with MOID in SA and comparing them to each other helped begin to address issues related to transferability. This criterion happens when the reader can start to evaluate the degree to which any conclusion can be transferable to other individuals, but not be generalizable (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Another limitation is the credibility of the findings related to data quality to ensure that the participants agreed with the findings. I shared the findings of the study with the teachers, and only three of the seven teachers responded to my request to verify the findings. The remaining teachers did not respond to my request by text or telephone calls.

Findings

Themes Related to Teachers' Perceptions

This section explores themes and sub-themes of the special education teachers about the educational experience of students with MOID in self-contained classrooms in SA. The six major themes with sub-themes that emerged from the data are below:

Theme One: Ineffective Self-Contained Classrooms

The study's theme "Ineffective Self-Contained Classrooms" highlights four sub-themes reflecting the challenges faced by special education teachers in Saudi Arabia. Teachers reported

being overwhelmed by their responsibilities due to a lack of funding, requiring them to use personal funds for materials and develop teaching aids independently (Alnahdi, 2014). They also indicated a lack of consistency in the curriculum across classrooms, with some using elementary-level general education curricula due to the absence of a specific curriculum for middle and high school students with MOID (Aldabas, 2015). Instructional strategies were limited, focusing primarily on math and Arabic, with group teaching being common and one-on-one instruction rare due to large class sizes and insufficient support (Altheyab & Alquraini, 2018). Furthermore, there was a notable lack of systematic data collection on student performance, relying mainly on daily or weekly notes and worksheets, which limited comprehensive tracking of student progress (Alquraini, 2011). Teachers expressed concerns about the effectiveness of their instructional methods and the need for better resources, consistent curricula, and improved support systems to enhance educational outcomes for students with MOID (Alzahrani, 2020). Overall, the study underscores the need for systemic improvements in funding, curriculum consistency, instructional support, and data collection practices to better support special education teachers and their students.

Theme Two: Unclear Expectations of Students with MOID

The study's second theme, "Teachers' Perceptions about Expectations of Students with MOID," reveals two main sub-themes: inconsistent and limited parental expectations and teachers' low expectations for their students. Firstly, teachers noted that parents' expectations varied widely, with some having unrealistically high hopes that the school would resolve all their children's disabilities, while others lacked basic knowledge about their children's disabilities or educational needs (Mariam, Fatima, Salma). In rural areas, teachers observed that parents often felt ashamed of their children's disabilities and had limited awareness of their educational potential (Salma). Teachers felt that most parents relied heavily on them to address their

children's needs without sufficient involvement or understanding of their educational services. Secondly, teachers generally had low expectations for their students with MOID, regardless of the severity of their intellectual disabilities. Teachers in three groups—those with students whose documentation supported MOID (Maha), those with documentation supporting Mild ID (Mariam, Fatima, Nuha), and those without documentation (Sara, Salma, Elham)—expressed varied views. While some teachers believed their students could achieve basic vocational skills and employment (Salma), others found it challenging to project future outcomes due to the lack of post-high school programs (Fatima, Sara). Overall, teachers expressed a need for parents to treat their children equally to their typical siblings and advocate more actively for them, especially against bullying (Mariam, Salma). These insights are tempered by inconsistencies in student documentation, making it unclear whether expectations were based on students with Mild ID or MOID.

Theme Three: Inadequate School and Education System Infrastructure

The study's third theme, "Issues in School Environment and Education System," identifies three sub-themes: communication challenges due to different dialects, lack of collaboration among special education teachers, and administrative issues in accepting new students. Firstly, teachers faced challenges using Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) as mandated by the Ministry of Education, finding it less effective for students with MOID who better understand spoken dialects, leading to difficulties in instruction and communication with students and families (Mariam, Elham, Sara, Salma, Maha, Nuha, Fatima). Secondly, while teachers reported good informal collaboration on behavioral goals and general student discussions, they lacked deep, systematic collaboration on instructional strategies, curriculum content, and student progress, limiting effective teamwork (Elham, Fatima, Mariam, Nuha, Salma, Sara). Thirdly, administrative issues included inappropriate placement decisions, lack of

communication with parents, inadequate identification, and monitoring of students with disabilities, insufficient student evaluation systems, and problematic teacher evaluation practices. Teachers highlighted concerns over the placement of students with autism in ID programs without proper protocol, lack of early identification and intervention, and challenges with the Ministry's evaluation system, which discouraged accurately reporting student progress (Mariam, Fatima, Salma, Nuha). Overall, these issues underscore a need for better alignment and coordination within the education system, improved communication, and accountability from the Ministry of Education to enhance the effectiveness of special education services.

Theme Four: Lack of Understanding of Effective Inclusive Education for Students with MOID

The study's fourth theme, "Perceptions of Services for Students with MOID," encompasses two sub-themes: inconsistency in defining inclusion and lack of alignment between teacher preparation, school practices, and inclusive education policies. Firstly, teachers highlighted that their schools, termed "inclusive" by the Ministry of Education, only offer spatial/social inclusion rather than true educational inclusion. They noted that students with MOID are placed in self-contained classrooms within general education schools but do not participate in general education curricula or activities, except during lunchtime, assemblies, and some extracurricular activities (Sara, Nuha, Fatima, Salma). Teachers also mentioned the inadequacy of including students with MOID in art classes due to the curriculum's difficulty and inappropriate student-teacher ratios (Salma, Fatima). They acknowledged that while inclusion helps general education students learn about interacting with peers with MOID, the lack of resources and preparation for staff and students limits its effectiveness (Nuha, Sara). Secondly, teachers discussed the misalignment between their training and the need for inclusive education, citing six main issues: insufficient behavior modification training, lack of multidisciplinary

collaboration for IEP development, absence of essential personnel (e.g., speech pathologists, psychologists), inadequate resources and facilities, outdated or incomplete student records, and the negative impact of long vacations on student retention of skills (Fatima, Nuha, Sara, Maha, Salma). While one teacher felt the services were adequate if curricula were provided, most teachers expressed dissatisfaction, emphasizing the need for better resources, professional support, and effective monitoring of service quality (Elham).

Research Questions and Findings

The study aimed to explore the perceptions of special education teachers about the experiences and impacts on female students with moderate intellectual disabilities (MOID) aged 15-20 in self-contained classrooms in general education schools in Saudi Arabia. However, the main research question could not be directly answered due to teachers' lack of information about their students, possibly exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic and the transition to online teaching (Alquraini, 2011). Teachers lacked detailed knowledge about their students' past educational experiences and current needs, leading to concerns about the quality of instruction and services provided. They identified issues with curriculum inconsistency, limited interaction with general education peers, and reliance on personal judgment for instructional content (Aldabas, 2015; Alzahrani, 2020). Teachers were generally dissatisfied with the current services, citing infrastructure deficiencies, lack of essential personnel, inadequate collaboration on IEP development, and insufficient resources and professional development (Alnahdi, 2014; Altheyab & Alquraini, 2018). Additionally, teachers expressed concerns about the absence of post-high school programs for students with MOID, indicating a need for better support and planning for these students' transitions to adult life (Alshuayl, 2021). Overall, the study highlighted significant challenges in providing effective educational services and support for students with MOID, emphasizing the need for systemic improvements and better resource allocation.

Discussions

Based on the findings delineated in the findings, there are four major issues that emerged from the teachers' perceptions about their experiences being a teacher of female students with MOID in self-contained classrooms in SA. These issues warrant further review and in-depth discussion. These issues include: (a) the absence of inclusive education; (b) inconsistencies in the curriculum; (c) lack of effective leadership in the educational system; and (d) an ineffective system for identification, diagnosis, and reevaluation.

The absence of inclusive education

The study reveals a significant absence of inclusive education for students with moderate intellectual disabilities (MOID) in schools, despite being labeled as “inclusive” by the Ministry of Education. Teachers reported that students with MOID lack access to the general education curriculum, contexts, and peers, remaining segregated in self-contained classrooms typically located on the first floor, separated from general education students on higher floors. This segregation underscores a systemic issue, as one teacher noted, “This separation in practice emphasizes segregation between general and special education teachers” (Alnahdi, 2014). The situation is compounded by a shortage of specialized personnel, interdisciplinary support, and collaboration between special and general education teachers. Teachers highlighted a critical lack of related services, stating there was “no evidence of collaboration among related services personnel, teachers, and families for IEP development or instruction” (Westling et al., 2015). Financial incentives for general education teachers to include MOID students are insufficient without additional classroom support, leading to reluctance in adopting inclusive practices. One teacher explained, “General education teachers would be responsible for 35-40 general education students and 6-10 students with MOID in the same classroom, with no additional support,”

which often results in refusal to include MOID students (Alnahdi, 2014). Additionally, the study found a notable lack of training and resources for general education teachers regarding MOID, contributing to negative attitudes towards inclusive education. The absence of collaboration and resources has led teachers to argue that “moving students with MOID to self-contained classrooms in general education schools takes away the students’ rights to services” available in dedicated special education schools (Aljohani, 2019). The study advocates for comprehensive guidelines, sufficient budgets, and resources from the Ministry of Education to support true inclusion, calling for collaborative efforts among teachers, related services professionals, and families to ensure equitable education for students with MOID. This aligns with international movements towards inclusive education, as emphasized by Westling et al. (2015), who stated, “Over the past three decades, professionals, researchers, parents, and other advocates have striven to design and implement educational service delivery models in which all students are included from the outset.” Therefore, it is crucial for Saudi Arabia to implement effective inclusion practices, providing adequate training and support to overcome existing challenges and resistance, as recommended by Asiri (2020), who suggested, “Diagnose the resistance of inclusive education, provide training programs based on the knowledge of the teachers, provide support through school and district administrators, and follow-up assessments to ensure the effectiveness of the plan.” Additionally, it is important to note that “no general teacher preparation programs in SA offer any courses that address special education” (Aldabas, 2015), further highlighting the need for targeted training and resources.

Inconsistencies in the Curriculum

The study identifies significant inconsistencies in the curriculum for students with moderate intellectual disabilities (MOID) in Saudi Arabia, highlighting a lack of clarity on whether to use the special education guidebook or the general education curriculum, leading to varied practices among teachers (Aldabas, 2020). The study discusses three main issues: teacher

preparation programs, the differentiation between special and general education curricula, and the attitudes of special education teachers. Teacher preparation programs segregate future educators into special and general education tracks without inclusive education courses, focusing on theoretical over practical experiences (Almughyiri, 2021). The Ministry of Education mandates distinct curricula for general and special education, resulting in MOID students often receiving repetitive and basic instruction, such as counting or writing, regardless of their grade level (Alshuayl, 2021). Additionally, both special and general education teachers hold low expectations for students with MOID, influencing the simplified content they provide, reinforcing the belief that these students should remain in segregated settings (Alkhatabi et al., 2020). To address these issues, the study recommends integrating inclusive education courses into teacher preparation programs (Aldabas, 2020; Alkhatabi et al., 2020), mandating the same curriculum with appropriate modifications for all students (Kearns et al., 2020; Sabia et al., 2020), and promoting the concepts of presuming competence and the Least Dangerous Assumption to raise teachers' expectations and improve instructional practices (Biklen, 2020; Jorgensen, 2005).

Lack of Effective Leadership in the Educational System

The study highlights significant leadership deficiencies in the Saudi Arabian Ministry of Education regarding support for teachers and systemic educational structures for students with moderate intellectual disabilities (MOID). Teachers reported being overwhelmed by unclear responsibilities, lack of resources, and absence of professional support for evaluating students, necessitating clearer role definitions and consistent expectations from the Ministry (Alper & Ryndak, 1992). Additionally, the mandated use of Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) complicates instruction, as MOID students struggle with learning new dialects different from their home language, potentially hindering their learning process (Alper & Ryndak, 1992). The educational

system also lacks adequate support during student transitions between school levels, proper monitoring of service quality, and effective parent-teacher communication, which is crucial for developing Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) (Al-Kahtani, 2015). Moreover, there are no established postsecondary supports for MOID students transitioning to adulthood, further highlighting leadership gaps (Alshuayl, 2021). These issues underscore the need for comprehensive guidelines and effective implementation plans, including essential resources and personnel, distinct evaluation responsibilities, and enhanced parent involvement to improve educational outcomes for MOID students (Alnahdi, 2014; Alruwaili, 2018). The study recommends systemic reforms to ensure better educational support and transition services, emphasizing the importance of evidence-based practices and interdisciplinary collaboration (Johnson & Semmelroth, 2014; Mertens & McLaughlin, 2004).

An Ineffective System for Identification, Diagnosis and Reevaluation

The study reveals significant deficiencies in the Saudi Arabian educational system concerning the identification, diagnosis, and reevaluation of students with disabilities, particularly those with moderate intellectual disabilities (MOID). The system lacks effective processes for early identification, leading to delayed recognition of developmental delays, as highlighted by Alquraini (2011), who noted that assessments often begin only when children start school, missing early intervention opportunities. Aldabas (2015) emphasizes the need for policies mandating early identification and intervention from birth. Additionally, there are infrastructure issues in diagnosing students, with outdated psychological exam results and discrepancies between documented diagnoses and teachers' descriptions of students' disabilities (Alquraini, 2011; Ministry of Education, 2019a). Despite guidelines requiring multidisciplinary assessment and regular reevaluation (Regulations Guidebook of Special Education, 2016), these are not consistently enforced, leading to ineffective diagnosis and service provision (Alnahdi,

2014; Altheyab & Alquraini, 2018). The reevaluation process is also flawed, with teachers lacking access to up-to-date IEPs and current psychological assessments, resulting in unnecessary re-evaluations and instructional delays (IDEA, Sec.300.304; AAIDD, 2021). The study calls for comprehensive reforms, including early assessment initiatives, adherence to multidisciplinary diagnostic practices, and regular, professional reevaluations to ensure accurate and effective educational planning and support for students with MOID (Alquraini, 2013; Alnahdi, 2014).

Implications of the Study

The results of this study have several implications for teachers, parents, and decisions-makers in the Ministry of Education in SA. First, teachers of students with MOID need to change their mindset so that they have high expectations of their students, presume the competence of their students, and understand the Least Dangerous Assumption. This change in mindset would assist in changing teachers' perceptions and beliefs about their students' abilities. Second, parents have a vital role in their children's education since they know the most about their children. They need to be more involved and included in their children's education, including the development and monitoring of their children's IEPs. It is essential to raise the awareness of the significance of parental involvement for all teachers and school administrators.

Third, decision-makers in the Ministry of Education in SA have many responsibilities to students with MOID and their families. Many of the challenges mentioned in this study are under the responsibilities of the Ministry of Education because they have the power to improve current services. Although the Ministry of Education has developed some guidelines, it is crucial that they monitor how schools are implementing those guidelines and determine whether the guidelines are sufficient to result in positive outcomes for students with disabilities. Fourth, the Ministry of Education should mandate that the general education curriculum be taught to all

students, regardless of their disabilities, with accommodations and modifications for each student as needed. Fifth, decision-makers in the SA Ministry of Education should establish a policy for early identification systems and collaborate with the Ministry of Health to identify young children who are at risk of having a disability as early as possible in order to provide them early intervention services.

Recommendations for Future Research

There are some challenges and barriers to inclusive education for students with MOID in SA, therefore it is essential to address these challenges and barriers so students with MOID will receive effective instruction along with their typical peers in general education classrooms. This study used qualitative methods to investigate teachers' perceptions of the education of their students with MOID; it also used qualitative methods to review the content of documentation in the student's files. While this study begins to describe teachers' perceptions of services, there is a need for more research to understand several other aspects of educational services for students with MOID. Some of these aspects might include instruction that occurs in classrooms and other settings, the curriculum content on which the students receive instruction, the outcomes of the students' services, and processes used to develop and implement the students' services. The field, therefore, would need to begin to answer research questions related to "why" things are happening to schools. To study this and many other aspects of special education services, it would be necessary to use qualitative methodologies. Moreover, this study was conducted on female teachers due to cultural barriers. Future research, therefore, should include male teachers who teach male students with MOID in self-contained classrooms and other educational placement options in SA. It would be helpful to compare the experiences of male teachers with those of female teachers to establish whether there is a difference between the services provided for male and female students with MOID in SA.



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