

Evidence-Based Practices (EBP) in Teaching Students with Intellectual Disabilities in Saudi Arabia: Obstacles and Solutions

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ABSTRACT The current research examines obstacles to applying Evidence-Based Practices (EBP) when teaching students with Intellectual Disabilities (ID) from the perspective of teachers working in Saudi Arabia. The study employed the qualitative approach, with data collected primarily through semi-structured interviews with eight female teachers with knowledge of EBP, and who had been working with pupils with ID for over a year. This study recommends that a key policy priority should consist of long-term planning, not only to spread awareness of the concept of EBP, but also the enactment of strict laws compelling special education schools and centres to apply criterion-referenced tests to ensure teachers are familiar with such practices.

INTRODUCTION

Education is considered the most effective tool for ensuring the progress and prosperity of society. This indicates a need to ensure considerable effort is made to address the needs of students, particularly those with Intellectual Disabilities (ID) using proven strategies (Alshammari 2019; Qureshi and Jaluli 2020). The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has therefore expressed increased interest in the education of all categories of individuals with disabilities. Alqahtani (2019) noted that this includes ensuring the quality of services provided to those with ID improves their educational outcomes. It is therefore vital to undertake scientific research into this aspect, including at both the local and global level, to identify appropriate educational interventions to improve both the results and behaviours of students with ID, and so raise their level of achievement.

Such strategies have become particularly important after the emergence of the use of Evidence-Based Practices (EBP). In addition, several researchers have observed a decline in the professional performance of teachers of students with ID, due to a tendency to retain traditional practices rather than new developments proven to be

effective (Alhussein 2017; Vaughn 2017; Mohacsi 2020; Lott 2021).

In addition, Greenway et al. (2013), Courta-de et al. (2015), Aldossari (2017), Zinck (2018) and Knight et al. (2019) have indicated that there remains insufficient research into EBP, with a clear lack of studies focusing on teachers of student with ID. There have recently been several Arab studies supporting the aspect of EBP, including Eid (2020), who emphasised the need to pay more attention to the field of research related to EBP, and Shalaby and Alkhatib (2017), who considered it vital to conduct additional research into barriers to EBP implementation. Furthermore, Alhussein (2021) also highlighted the necessity of adopting a qualitative approach to find the most prominent obstacles to the application of EBP, as well as their application. This led the current researchers to identify the existing research gap in this area and investigate the lack of studies examining the obstacles to the application of EBP from the perspectives of teachers of students with ID in Arab environments, specifically the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. To the best of the current researcher's knowledge, there have, to date, been no studies clarifying the views of female teachers of students with ID when it comes to the obstacles, they face in applying EBP, while many studies have confirmed the current lack of research in this field. This therefore resulted in undertaking this research to firstly, identify the main obstacles

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to the application of EBP, and secondly, explore the views of teachers with ID, including their suggestions for potential solutions.

Educational research has recently begun to address the educational and behavioural issues experienced by students with ID, including the effectiveness of existing educational practices. This has highlighted the importance of verifying the extent of such research among middle school teachers of special education, to improve their educational practices, particularly in relation to EBP. These studies include a survey conducted by Alqahtani (2019), which aimed to establish the extent to which 117 special education teachers working in Riyadh benefited from the results of scientific research. The results showed a medium degree of benefit, with the most significant obstacles faced by female teachers being a lack of motivation to refer to the results to benefit their own teaching, along with insufficient time to review scientific research. The results also indicated various obstacles preventing them from benefiting from the research, indicating an urgent need to obtain access to more accurate and comprehensive information concerning these teachers' views of the proposed methods of applying EBP. This confirms the importance of the current study.

Several researchers have confirmed the extent to which EBP are employed by teachers of students with ID. This includes Shalaby and Alkhatib (2017), who used a descriptive-analytical approach on 132 male and female teachers of special education, with the aim of evaluating their application of EBP for firstly, preparing students with disabilities to move to the post-school stage, and secondly, verifying the existence of differences in the level of their application. The results of their study revealed a medium level of EBP application for supporting students to transfer to the post-school stage with, according to the study variables, no statistically significant differences. This prompted the current researchers to investigate the most prominent obstacles to the application of such practices, as addressed in-depth in this study using the qualitative approach.

Furthermore, Knight et al. (2019) examined the implementation of 535 teachers of students with autism spectrum disorder and ID, focusing on twenty-six educational practices. The

results indicated a discrepancy in teachers' implementation of such practices, as well as their reliance on unproven methods, due to experiencing several obstacles. This also indicated an urgent need to shed light on the problems faced by teachers in applying these practices, as well as effective logical solutions to assist their employment.

An additional qualitative case study by Tomasi (2020) explored the experience of special education teachers in selecting and implementing EBP, through a questionnaire employed with a sample of five special education teachers in public schools in Texas. The results indicated that there remains a gap between research and practice, and that only two of the participants implemented EBP. This indicated a need to adopt the qualitative methodology to reach a deep understanding regarding the non-implementation of EBP through semi-structured, one-on-one interviews.

Several studies have discussed the importance of professional development, including that of Mohacsi (2020), which used open and semi-structured interviews to identify how ten special education teachers implemented educational practices for students with developmental disabilities. The results confirmed that special education teachers view professional development as vital for acquiring effective educational practices, particularly development workshops. This current study was therefore based on a desire to expand the search for solutions and proposals in the Saudi environment, to support the application of EBP within special education classes.

Lott (2021) showed the varying levels of knowledge of EBP demonstrated by special education teachers as dictating the selection of practices and methods, with a potentially positive or negative impact on students with disabilities. This study used qualitative methodology, conducting interviews with an intentional sample consisting of six special education teachers, indicating a decisive result concerning the impact of lack of training on the failure to implement practices related to transitioning skills for people with disabilities, in particular the absence of professional development programmes.

The above studies identified obstacles to the application of EBP, along with the need to achieve a broad understanding of additional obstacles facing teachers in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

Objectives

The aim of the current research is to firstly, investigate the most prominent obstacles to the general application of EBP, and secondly, identify solutions to assist in its implementation in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

METHODOLOGY

A review of scientific research methods and the theoretical frameworks of previous studies revealed that the majority examining a similar topic tended to use the quantitative method and the descriptive survey method. The current researchers therefore decided to adopt qualitative methodology, due to it being characterised, as highlighted by Alquraini (2019), by its ability to embody reality and provide a broader scope for researchers and participants to define reality and define its features. These are characteristics rarely found in quantitative statistical research, which uses generalisation, and the creation of a single comprehensive picture, rather than the uniqueness of individual experience. Accordingly, the researchers used phenomenological research, which focuses on the joint description of a particular concept or phenomenon through the experiences of a group of individuals (Creswell and Poth 2019).

Accordingly, the sampling of the current research consisted of female teachers of students with ID in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, focusing on several special education centres, and general education schools accommodating ID education classes in Makkah, Jeddah and Taif. The research participants were also purposively chosen based on their relevance to the study criteria and questions, and thus the purposes of the current research, an approach known as the purposive sampling method (Obeidat et al. 2013; Muhammad 2017). Some of the participants were also selected by referring to participants who met the study criteria and who were asked to nominate individuals with the same characteristics and criteria for the study, that is, the snow-ball sampling method (Alqahtani and Aldihan 2020).

Braun and Clarke (2019) and Alhusseini (2020) pointed out that it is not feasible to determine the number and size of participants in qual-

itative research, but the term 'saturation' is used to indicate that the most recent interviews have obtained information identical to that already collected, and therefore no further interviews are required. Accordingly, eight female teachers fulfilling the nomination criteria participated in the study, with their number determined by the reaching of the saturation stage in the data. To gain sufficient information, the researchers considered the enrichment and diversity in the characteristics of the participants, as well as their differing years of experience and educational level. The participants were informed of the confidentiality of their information, and that their names and identities would be kept confidential (that is, using pseudonyms or symbols), along with the name of the centres in which they worked. The researchers secured written consent from the teachers to record the interviews, to ensure no important information was overlooked, while assuring them that the audio recording was kept in a safe location, to which only the researchers had access, and would be destroyed following the completion of the research.

This study employed semi-structured individual interviews, which were conducted remotely due to their ability to provide detailed information, along with the views of the participants concerning the obstacles, and proposed solutions, for the application of EBP. Hassan et al. (2019) also noted the benefits of semi-structured, one-on-one interviews being flexible, as this allows the researchers to ask sub-questions to clarify specific points. The interview questions were formulated after reviewing the studies supporting the subject of this research, and its guide prepared in its initial form. Prior to the final study, a pilot study was conducted to assess the efficacy of the interview guide, and ensure its suitability to answer the questions, as well as provide an early indication of the feasibility of the research (Creswell and Poth 2019).

After collecting data from the participants, followed by their unpacking, reading, and reviewing, the researchers employed the topic analysis technique to undertake the data analysis to identify the main topics, which were identified through the participants' responses to the interview questions. In addition, their importance was determined according to the frequency of their use in the context of their conversa-

tion (Maguire and Delahunt 2017; Scharp and Sanders 2018). This method is one of the most used to analyse qualitative data, ensuring the researchers are immersed in the data to facilitate the interpretation and analysis of the findings (Xu and Zammit 2020). This strategy originated with Braun and Clarke (2012) and is comprised of the following seven stages, that is, identifying the data, reading until saturation is achieved, drawing up the initial coding, searching for and categorising the features, reviewing the topics, naming and identification, and the creation of the final report.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section examines the most prominent results arising from the current research. The most significant data emerging from the analysis determined that most of the participants agreed with the need to repeat some of the courses set within the university plan to prepare student teachers for working with students with ID. This finding was also reported by Nassar et al. (2015). One noted, *"I very much hoped the curricula that are offered [in the preparation and qualification stage] would not be a repetition, and I wished that [special education teachers] would inform us about new [topics and information]."* ([G.L.] Teacher, Mainstream School, Jeddah)

The results identified an additional issue related to vocational preparation and qualification programmes, represented by a total focus on courses, scientific materials, and theoretical aspects, to the neglect of practical experience, as well as a lack of field training opportunities to qualify student teachers working with students with ID in the field. This finding is consistent with that of Aldossari (2017) and Alhussein (2015). The following statement illustrates the opinion of one of the teachers, *"Going back to the days of study, it was a complete dependence on theories [that is, theoretical courses], there are no courses for which there was a practical application. We dealt with it as practice, for example."* ([B.F.] Teacher, Specialised Centre, Makkah)

The results also added several further issues, including the inefficiency of existing preparation and rehabilitation programme in develop-

ing the research skills of student teachers training to work with students with ID. These results reflect those of Alqahtani (2019). This included introducing them to the methods of scientific research and providing them with the necessary skills to understand previous research and so search for solutions to any problems that may arrive. *"There was no way in my studies for my bachelor's degree that we went back to previous studies and read the research, for example, we read only Arab research, but not any foreign research that might have been useful."* ([S.G.] Teacher, Mainstream School, Jeddah)

The data analysis also clarified the existing levels of EBP implementation. However, it found that, even when it was applied, the teachers tended to lack awareness of its scientific terms or its importance, or that its strategies have been proven beneficial by scientific research. This study supports evidence from previous observations (for example, Hsiao and Petersen 2018; Jimenez 2019; Lauderdale-Littin and Brennan 2018; Tomasi 2020). This can therefore have a negative impact on their correct application, and on the search for similar practices. *"They use them, but do not know the scientific term, or even how to look for and extract more modern practices. I used to practice some of these strategies on the basis that they were aimed at behaviour modification or active learning, but I only understood the scientific term when I began my master's course, as well as learning that these practices are termed EBP."* ([J.B.] Teacher, Specialised Centre, Makkah)

The results showed that some teachers tend to retain, rather than update, their existing methods. This may be due to an unwillingness to accept criticism of their approach, or the move towards EBP, which may arise from a fear that this could reduce their competence. This finding broadly supports the work of Hussein (2017). This can prove an obstacle to the implementation of EBP, as well as preventing them from developing their own practices, and adopting those proven as effective with students with ID. *"It is possible that he sticks to traditional methods and the same method without change. Perhaps one of the reasons is a lack of knowledge of other practices, so the teacher chooses the thing that he knows and stays within his personal comfort zone and does not bother look-*

ing for new ways. This can also be due to the lack of meetings between teachers to exchange experiences, so that one teacher can benefit from another teacher. So, rather than practicing a method other than her own, this lack of exchange of experiences results in the teacher sticking to a familiar educational method.” ([S.G.], Teacher, Mainstream School, Jeddah)

Several views also emerged concerning the reasons why teachers adhere to their methods, including that this is not due to a lack of knowledge or resistance to change, but rather boredom, which results in teaching students without any enthusiasm, following the path of least resistance. *“The reality of frankly [some teachers adhering to certain methods that may be traditional], in my opinion, I expect this is due to boredom with the job after twelve or so years, so she is just waiting for retirement and is unwilling to discuss the fact that any of her strategies may be ineffective from the scientific point of view, and that it is possible to offer alternatives that may benefit the students.”* ([G.L.], Teacher, Mainstream School, Jeddah)

The results indicate that teachers’ perceptions can impact on the application of EBP, and that the lack of acknowledgement of the needs of this group of students tends to render the teacher unproductive. These results corroborate the findings of Lauderdale-Littin and Brenna (2018). This is due to research results being ineffective if the teacher lacks the conviction or the motivation to apply EBP to work with students with ID, including a wish to ensure they reach their full potential. *“Modern teachers, as well as some teachers who have long experience, have specific perceptions of the student, including viewing her abilities as limited. So, some perceptions and concepts of special education teachers themselves impact on an assumption that these students do not possess any abilities, and it is therefore not feasible to use, or adapt, this strategy.”* ([H.M.], Teacher, Mainstream School, Taif)

The analysis identified the importance of highlighting the lack of awareness of the management of educational institutions, along with its impact on teachers, that is, their support and motivation, and the application of EBP. The teachers also mentioned the existence of inflexible policies and regulations imposed by the

management of educational institutions, which limit (or prevent) student teachers’ application of ID practices. This study supports evidence from previous observations (for example, Greenway et al. 2013; Gabbin 2020; Tomasi 2020). This strict approach to policies and regulations can be traced back to a lack of knowledge and awareness, as noted below. *“In many cases, the administration’s policy influences the parents’ communication with the teacher, the teacher’s giving, and the teachers’ dealing with each other. Some school policies do not give the teacher the authority to implement change, and sometimes teachers are obligated to standardise a certain method, or a certain arrangement, in all their classes and are therefore not encouraged to make any change. There were also [in one of the private centres] certain policies and regulations preventing teachers from communicating with parents, with contact only available between the supervisor and parents. I did not agree with that policy.”* ([J.B.], Teacher, Specialised Centre, Makkah)

The analysis of the data also revealed additional problems faced by the multidisciplinary team, including shortcomings in the cooperation between members, with each working on an individual basis when it came to methods, strategies and objectives, without focusing on the suitability of skills, plans and practices. These results are in agreement with Almakanein and Alsmadi (2016). Thus, the lack of team cooperation can be seen to impact on teaching efficiency. *“Students, particularly in private centres, go to more than one specialist, including psychologists, social workers, teachers, or communication specialists, or to employment. Unfortunately, you notice that each of these sets their own goals, methods, strategies, and practices, which can confuse the student.”* ([B. F] Teacher, Specialised Centre, Makkah)

However, despite these findings concerning the role of management in implementing EBP, the analysis of the data also revealed several obstacles related to the classroom environment. These results corroborate the findings of a great deal of the previous work in Greenway et al. (2013), Herron (2017), Knight et al. (2019), Lott (2021), Tomasi (2020) and Wood et al. (2016). This issue can be related to the difficulty of implementing EBP, represented by a lack of resourc-

es, facilities, tools, and capabilities. *"I am in charge. But when I go to the library, and try and find [tools...they are never available [in the school], including printing equipment... So first we need access to the Internet, printers, packaging devices, and stationery, as well as papers, plates, and tangible tools, headphones, optical materials, furniture inside the classroom, shaded curtains for the sun... All the above are not provided. We remain tied to the classroom, which contains a wall, a blackboard, tables, chairs and people."* ([S.G] Teacher, Mainstream School, Jeddah)

The data also indicates that the application of EBP tends to be limited by the characteristics of students with ID, along with the large size of classes. These results match those observed in earlier studies (Herron 2017; Knight et al. 2019; Tomasi 2020). Teachers may sometimes feel short of time and so unable to diversify to the use of educational methods that have been proven effective, leaving them reliant on their traditional methods. *"If the environment is disturbing in one way or another, it affects the teacher's performance, and the student's acquisition of information, whether in terms of lighting and air conditioning, along with its area, and the teacher's ability to change...as well as the characteristics of female students when some have some non-adaptive behaviours, which means there are some strategies I cannot implement. Otherwise, time may be limited, especially if the work environment is stressful and there is an excessive number of students."* ([JB] Teacher, Specialised Centre, Makkah)

This highlights several further important issues identified in the data, including that the teacher's considerable number of responsibilities results in a lack of time, which can mean that they continue to use traditional methods, despite these proving ineffective, rather than applying more modern and proven methods with students with ID. These results are in line with those of previous studies (Kretlow and Bartholomew 2010). One noted, *"When there is only one teacher, other than when there are three teachers, he differentiates, he has a greater percentage of help. It is the multiplicity of tasks that makes the teacher unable to apply practices based on evidence, and have rigid methods, due to choosing the easiest, and the fastest*

route, providing more time to help the rest of the students." ([A.P] Teacher, Specialised Centre, Jeddah)

This indicates that one of the most important factors hindering the application of EBP concerns the lack of training and development programmes provided to teachers of students with ID during their in-service stage. This result appears to be broadly consistent with a number of published studies in other contexts (Vaughn 2017; Cooper et al. 2018; Gabbin 2020; Lott 2021; Mohacsi 2020). The interviews conducted with the participants clarified that they had not attended any training courses or workshops targeting practices and strategies proven effective by scientific research. *"The courses that are given to us do not discuss these aspects [that is, EBP]. To be honest, I have attended forty courses since I was appointed [in the school], there were no training courses giving information about EBP, or the formulation of objectives and the method of writing individual educational plans."* ([S.G] Teacher, Mainstream School, Jeddah)

Furthermore, the results revealed the lack of courses for female teachers and supervisors, with some teachers indicating a significant lack of training courses for all female employees of their educational institution, including when it came to administration. *"The higher authorities [the administration] do not receive training, and therefore this teacher, whether he works properly or not, does not get reinforcement or does not get guidance from the supervisor or the director of the centre... I think the training must be from both sides... The two parties [the administration and the teachers] must be familiar with practices to be able to implement them..."* ([B. F] Teacher, Specialised Centre, Makkah)

All the teachers interviewed agreed that when it came to educating their students with ID, there was an absence of tangible scientific evidence from which they could benefit, with most being directed towards other areas. This highlights that to ensure teachers do not put their faith in unreliable sources, it is vital to offer scientific evidence to guide them to select appropriate practices for their students. *"It comes to composing a social story, we are human beings and can inadvertently give incorrect information. I wish we had a methodology for this subject, for that would lead to identifying*

errors in the field." ([S.G.] Teacher, Mainstream School, Jeddah)

This indicates that the development of teachers (including their acquisition of scientific knowledge) is not limited to attending courses or workshops, which is consistent with previous studies (Alqahtani 2019). The results of the current study have revealed several obstacles faced by teachers during their research, including their lack of mastery of the English language to assist them in learning from a wide range of studies. *"I do not think I face any difficulties in the research process apart from language, because the most recent research tends to take place in the Western world and be written in English. Indeed, my only difficulty is the language."* ([A.P.] Teacher, Specialised Centre, Jeddah)

The results also revealed that lack of clarity in scientific or academic language hampered the implementation of EBP, that is, terms, concepts, abbreviations, and levels of abstraction with which teachers may not be familiar. *"In many cases, the use of language [that is, that of scientific research] is incomprehensible, it is philosophy. Frankly, we want to know what is said and indicated, so give us text without any addition, or repetition in an indirect way, because it takes me time to read, and extract what can amount to approximately two lines... I say use the best words, as long as you put them in an easy, smooth and understandable way, without difficult scientific phrases..."* ([N.M.] Teacher, Specialised Centre, Makkah)

In addition to the above challenges, the data analysis revealed the difficulty of accessing scientific research, or sources helping teachers with their practices. This can be due to teachers' lack of familiarity with firstly, methods of research (including the use of databases), secondly, the available resources, and thirdly, the means of accessing databases and search engines. *"We have a problem searching [for evidence-based practices and evidence], they certainly do not have experience in the subject of scientific research, and modern methods of research. If a teacher works hard and thinks about a modern educational method, she tends to search on YouTube. I expect that they have no background in research in the first place. This lack of understanding of the method of scientific research hinders their knowledge of practices, and their*

application. We need easily accessible research, especially since databases are not simple for teachers to access, even though they have browsers, and secret numbers in them." ([G.L.] Teacher, Mainstream School, Jeddah)

The interviews highlighted the existence of many solutions (and proposed solutions) to improve the educational reality, and benefit from the application of the results of scientific research. In addition, most participants noted several competencies they viewed as vital to facilitate the application and use of EBP, including that teacher of students with ID must be specialists.

"[The teachers of students with ID] must be knowledgeable, be a specialist [in special education], and have a background in being familiar with the appropriate strategies. He must also be patient, because people with ID have problems, and must cooperate with both parents and staff. He can also develop himself and attend courses, including workshops." ([P.A.] Teacher, Specialised Centre, Makkah)

On the other hand, teachers with little passion for their profession can be unwilling to undertake research and acquire new practices to serve the needs of students. *"For the teacher to be renewed and become a researcher in the field of special education, we [the field of special education] need to be innovative and flexible. For example, if we give information on a strategy that benefited one batch [that is, this year's students] of students, they many do not prove suitable for the next year's female students. A teacher must be flexible, knowledgeable and passionate about the profession to research more through reading experts and scientific research."* ([G.L.] Teacher, Mainstream School, Jeddah)

As noted earlier, the availability of training courses forms the most prominent obstacle to the implementation of beneficial practices. These results are in line with those of previous studies (Mckinine 2017; Young 2020). Therefore, when the teachers were asked about the most important aspects required for the application of EBP, they stated that training courses should be offered annually, and focus on practice, practical aspects, and the delivery of lessons. *"The first suggestion is to provide intensive training courses to spread the concept of EBP and their effectiveness in the field of special education,*

so that the concept becomes more familiar... As is the case with the individual educational plan, which is considered a concept with which all teachers are ninety percent familiar. It is important to provide training courses as well as courses for parents to help them become familiar with methods of behaviour modification, so that we can obtain a tangible cooperation between the family and the school." ([H.M] Teacher, Mainstream School, Taif)

The participants also made several further proposals, represented by an evaluation by the management of the educational institution of the extent of the teachers' application of EBP, particularly as a positive evaluation can lead to the promotion of more effective practices, including EBP, which is consistent with previous studies (Hazlett 2020). *"It is possible that [EBP] are included in job evaluations, because sometimes questions are placed in items such as 'Does the teacher use various strategies in the classroom or in the preparation of lessons?' It is also possible to give moral reinforcements, such as awarding a prize for teacher of the month or exemplary teacher."* ([J.B] Teacher, Specialised Centre, Makkah)

Moreover, most issues can be traced back to the preparation and vocational rehabilitation programmes undertaken during the teachers' pre-service. This is in agreement with Hazlett (2020). This prompted the current researchers to ask the participants for suggestions and potential solutions for facilitating the employment of EBP in the classroom. The responses centred on the participants' desire for increased opportunities for working in the field during their studies, as well as practical training. *"If there is an increase in field opportunities during the bachelor's degree, this would lead to many problems being solved. I believe that if each semester we had gone out and got to know a class and apply the practices we had learnt, it would have led to a very satisfying outcome."* ([B.F] Teacher, Specialised Centre, Makkah)

Thus, one of the most important proposals arising from this current study is the need to prepare university curricula serving the use of EBP for each category of those with disabilities. In addition, there is a need to ensure teachers are simultaneously trained on the theoretical and practical aspects, rather than using traditional

and repetitive curricula, as these form the greatest obstacle to teachers understanding and applying these practices. *"There should be a curriculum for best practices in general, and not only teaching practices, but also possible ways of cooperating with students with disabilities, dealing with parents, dealing with supervision with the numbers of students we face. Also, to emphasise that there is no need to repeat materials [in the preparation stage]. We must have knowledge of how to search for something new."* ([G.L] Teacher, Mainstream School, Jeddah)

In addition, the participants demonstrated the important role played by administration in supporting and motivating female teachers, including providing incentives (whether material or moral) to attend courses and conferences supporting the application of EBP, which is consistent with previous studies (Knight et al. 2019; Scheeler et al. 2016). *"Motivate the employee, materially or morally. This can also act as an incentive [for the rest of the teachers] to implement these practices and become interested. I also expect that if I recorded [the teacher's efforts] it would motivate them to make more effort, both financially and morally. These are among the most important factors that encourage teachers to implement practices."* ([A.A.] Teacher, Specialised Centre, Jeddah)

The teachers also suggested the benefits of providing technology in the classroom to assist in the application of EBP, as well as breaking the monotony of the daily routine and the resulting boredom. *"Technology in general can be useful. The centre has access to the Internet and there is a laptop, for example, interactive technologies are available, so we can teach the teachers how to search and organise. I don't know that technology in general helps in employing practices."* ([A.P] Teacher, Specialised Centre, Jeddah)

Moreover, the participants indicated the need for tangible cooperation between ministries, through access to research and its dissemination to a wide range of teachers, as well as introducing them to available programmes. *"I hope that there will be a link between the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Higher Education with the outputs of the studies and programmes applied by the researchers, which will allow us to become acquainted with their*

results. I wish teachers could be aware of such studies, as they tend not to be familiar with the outcome of any research." ([S.G] Teacher, Mainstream School, Jeddah)

However, the participants also indicated a need to provide tangible scientific evidence to guide the practice of teachers of students with ID, including examples and methods of application. They felt that it was vital that these were made available in centres and schools, including to management, to facilitate their application. *"This would provide tangible evidence for the teacher, and the ministry plays a considerable role in spreading the concept of EBP, while the administrations are central to transmitting the impact within each department. It is also possible to make proposals for practical lessons through the Internet, which can be both effective and cover the largest possible number of students."* ([H.M] Teacher, Mainstream School, Taif)

Several participants also noted the need for the curricula for students with ID to be flexible, as well as constantly developed, and for teachers to be provided with enriching extracts offering support on how to apply EBP. *"If, for example, these things [practices] were present, for example, in the curriculum itself, I would sometimes see that the curriculum leads to additional ideas or, for example, as enrichment."* ([S.G] Teacher, Mainstream School, Jeddah)

CONCLUSION

This study has examined the recent emergence of EBP as a method of making decisions based on realistic results supported by scientific research and studies. It also discussed how scientific research in the field of special education has tended to examine the use and extraction of educational, behavioural, and communicative practices, based on evidence, and identify the most important effective interventions in the classroom. This was viewed as vital, due to teachers' need for practices based on evidence and proven practices to work effectively with students with ID. In addition, this study identified that the choice and implementation of such practices represents a major challenge for teachers. This is due to their pupils' lower than normal IQ, which impacts their mental development,

including their cognitive mentality, as well as further social, linguistic, and emotional aspects, causing a comprehensive developmental delay. This highlights the importance of using the most appropriate and proven practices.

The researchers consider that the importance of these educational developments should not be overlooked, due to the potential to achieve effective results and improve teachers' practice. The educational process based on EBP is characterised by its attractiveness, removing any waste of the teachers' time and effort, as well as increasing the motivation of students' families to undertake effective participation, and hold a positive view of the programmes for their children's care.

This research therefore concludes that it is vital to ensure that educators of students with ID are familiar with EBP, including how it can be implemented in practice. However, this study has identified a large gap between special education research and the practice of teachers on the ground. This study has attempted to bridge this gap by identifying several obstacles to the use of EBP. These need to be addressed to firstly, improve the teaching of students with ID, secondly, facilitate their acquisition of skills, and thirdly, reduce any undesirable behaviours.

The current researchers have found a minimal process of integrating and benefiting from this aspect in contemporary classrooms, forming a serious obstacle that requires more, through a consideration of the views of teachers of students with ID.

RECOMMENDATIONS

This study recommends that a key policy priority should consist of long-term planning, not only to spread awareness of the concept of EBP, but also the enactment of strict laws compelling special education schools and centres to apply criterion-referenced tests to ensure teachers are familiar with such practices.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST DISCLOSURE STATEMENT

The researchers do not have any interests that might be interpreted as influencing the research. Additionally, this manuscript has not

been submitted to any other journal, nor is it under consideration for publication with any other entity.

ETHICAL CONDUCT STATEMENT

That Internal Review Board's (IRB) approval for the use of human subjects was granted prior to conduct of the research and guidelines were adhered to throughout the research process.

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