

Experience of Early Intervention Services for Children with Intellectual Disabilities in Saudi Arabia

Kholod K. Alhaddad¹ and Nizar H. Bagadood²

Department of Special Education, College of Education, Umm Al-Qura University, Makkah, Saudi Arabia

E-mail: ¹<s44180529@st.uqu.edu.sa>, ²<nbagadood@uqu.edu.sa>

KEYWORDS Children. Early Intervention Services. Intellectual Disabilities. Saudi Arabia

ABSTRACT This study seeks to identify the most common challenges and opportunities experienced by both the parents of children with intellectual disabilities, and specialists in the field, to identify and improve the services available to them. A qualitative approach is employed, and the data is collected via individual semi-structured interviews with 11 individuals, as follows: five parents of students with intellectual disabilities, who have received early intervention services, and six early intervention specialists. The data is analysed by exploring the topics thematically. The most prominent recommendations are the need to define the specialist fields that provide early intervention services, to issue a guide to early intervention services in Saudi Arabia, and to develop guidance programmes for both parents and workers in the field of supporting children with intellectual disabilities, and to prepare it for an initial follow-up.

INTRODUCTION

Early intervention in the field of supporting children with intellectual disabilities is a global priority, because of its contribution to the prevention of unnecessary difficulties associated with such disabilities, and the reduction of their impact on children, their family, and on wider society. Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 emphasises the need for a greater focus on people with disabilities, and for the enhancement of the services provided to them, because of the developments in society over the past three decades (Guide to Early Intervention and Comprehensive Education in Saudi Arabia 2017).

Consequently, increased attention is currently ascribed to early intervention and the related services that enable experts to observe how children develop and learn, with both professionals and parents seeking to collaborate to better support the children concerned (Bintflah and Almuaqil 2015). Although many schools have recently expanded significantly to incorporate special education centres and diversified early intervention services in Saudi Arabia, there is currently no qualitative assessment of the programmes and services offered from the perspective of parents

and those employed in the field to evaluate the opportunities and challenges they face, to promote their future improvement. A focus on early intervention services for people with intellectual disabilities is crucial as adequate support influences the child's progress, helping them grow and learn, and reducing negative impacts on their future.

A range of previous research explored early intervention services, including the study conducted by Asiri and Alhijn (2017) that sought to identify the barriers to working in an early intervention centre in the view of both the teachers and parents involved. These barriers were found to include parental denial of, and resistance to their child's disability that can cause delays the early intervention process. The most challenging obstacles in the field of early intervention were found to be the lack of specialised cadres, and the absence of academic programmes in the field offered by universities. In addition, social obstacles were also identified, the most important of which was the failure of society regarding early intervention and the recognition of its importance, as well as a lack of interest in prevention in the pre-pregnancy stage, and the negative attitude of society towards families with an intellectually disabled child. Also identified was the failure of early intervention media outlets to disclose their programmes and services. Similarly, the present study seeks to identify the cur-

Address for correspondence:

Nizar H. Bagadood,

E-mail: nbagadood@uqu.edu.sa

rent barriers faced by a specific group of parents and professionals, and to explore the perceived gaps in the curriculum concerned, and the tools employed in teaching children with intellectual disabilities.

The study conducted by Alshahri (2018) aimed to identify the obstacles to obtaining early intervention services for children with intellectual disabilities from the viewpoint of their parents, and to explore the differences between the obstacles for specialist workers in the field and for the families of the children affected. Since the study reported that there is a range of obstacles that limit access to early intervention services, the current study employed a different study sample, method, and study tool to explore the matter further, thereby seeking to contribute to the success and development of future early intervention services.

Meanwhile, the study by Pighini et al. (2014) explored parenting stories to determine the factors that promote successful early intervention services by considering the views and experiences of parents of children at risk of developmental delay or disabilities who received early intervention services. The parents discussed their role in leading the early intervention process that involved sharing strategies and information with early intervention specialists, to help the parents, gain a deeper understanding of the individual developmental characteristics of their children. The parents expressed the importance of this understanding for them, as it taught them how to convey their children's needs to health, education, and other services. The author of the study suggested that further research should be conducted to facilitate a better understanding of the experiences and needs of parents of children with such disabilities more widely. The present study therefore sought to identify the experiences of parents with children with intellectual disabilities of accessing support services, and, uniquely, those of female experts in the field. This study therefore heeded the recommendations of previous studies in conducting additional research on the matter, to understand the experience and needs of parents of children with intellectual disabilities more widely, specifically in Saudi Arabia.

The review of previous studies in the field enabled the identification of the gap in the current research that this study sought to address, namely the opportunities and challenges present-

ed by early intervention services in the view of parents and specialists in such services. As well as being novel in this regard, the current study contributed to the field through its unique spatial boundaries, since no previous study addressed the experience of early intervention services for children with intellectual disabilities from the view of parents and specialists in Saudi Arabia. In addition, most of the previous studies in this area employed a descriptive analytical approach, while the current study used a qualitative approach. The previous studies enriched the theoretical framework of the current study, which employed their theoretical frameworks and findings to develop the study's tool, to define the study's focus, and to determine the appropriate methods for analysing and interpreting the study's findings.

Objectives

The aim of this current research is to identify the most common challenges and opportunities experienced by both the parents of children with intellectual disabilities, and specialists in the field, to identify and improve the services available to them.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

The review of the previous literature in the field demonstrated that there was a lack of qualitative studies of early intervention services, therefore, to meet the present study's goals and address this research gap, this study employed a qualitative approach, to obtain in-depth information from the participants (Alzayoud 2018). Recently, Alhannou (2016) emphasised the importance of employing a qualitative approach when exploring the issues surrounding the teaching of people with disabilities by specialists in special education, and the approach's use was also recommended by other previous studies. The apparent absence of its use in such research is a gap in the literature that has not been addressed previously. The purpose of qualitative research is to describe a phenomenon or an event in a way that reveals human experiences and provides a good understanding of people's experiences (Sawan 2017). It was therefore decided that the best way to describe the experience of the present study's participants of early intervention services in depth was to use a

qualitative research approach, since detailed information is difficult to obtain using other methods (Rima 2016). Specifically, semi-structured interviews were designed, using the review of the previous relevant literature as a guide for formulating the interview questions, due to the scarcity of previous studies that used this tool, and its relevance to the study's objectives and methodology.

The interview questions were developed by referring to previous studies that addressed the same topic as the present study, collecting their focus points and sorting them according to the questions of the current study, and its goals. This approach facilitated the design of the study's tool in its raw form. Piloting interviews were then conducted to test the research instrument and to determine whether it was appropriate and suitable for the purposes of the study and its objectives, and to identify its strengths and weaknesses to avoid potential mistakes in the selection of participants for the study, and in the interviews used to gather the study's data. The pilot interviews identified fundamental errors in the formulation of the questions that required modification. In addition, after considering the strengths and weaknesses of the tool, and identifying the barriers (if any) that hinder female experts in the field of special education, along with the opportunities to assist in their development, the characteristics of the final participant sample was altered. Since the pool of potential participants was limited, due to its nature, the sample for the main study was selected carefully, and focused on experts with more than two years' prior experience in early intervention services, who had taught students with intellectual disabilities in the early intervention stage. The responses received from the participants in the pilot interviews helped to develop the main interview questions of the study and demonstrated that the semi-structured interview format was able to provide the data required.

The number of participants in the study was determined by data saturation and consisted of five parents of students with intellectual disabilities, and six early intervention specialists. The participants were provided with information about the study, thanked for their willingness to participate, and permitted to choose the time of the interview. To ensure that the participants were not exposed to potential risks during their participation in the research, they were also provided

with a complaint protocol. In the event of any problems, a complaint was submitted to the researcher or the researcher's supervisor, in order that the matter could be resolved. After the interviews, the data was kept in a confidential, safe place that only the researcher could access. In addition, for purposes of data confidentiality, the names of all the participants were replaced with codes.

Following the data collection phase, the large and varied amount of data obtained was organised and arranged (Rima 2016) using a thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke 2013), in which the key topics were extracted, the relationships between the topics identified, and the data was classified, explained, and evaluated. The process of researching and analysing is creative in nature, and involves the researcher's experience, knowledge of the subject, observation, and ability to classify and clarify the data (Alabdulkarim 2012). Classification is therefore necessary to facilitate the clear identification and comprehension of each topic that emerges from the data, avoiding confusion or overlap. The data it is transformed into categories and topics, and conclusions then drawn from the data (Braun and Clarke 2013).

Several stages are involved in the analysis of the data, commencing with identifying the relevant data. For the present study, the researcher downloaded the data obtained from the semi-structured interviews to a Word file, then printed and read it carefully, took notes, and recorded their first impressions, to facilitate the next stages of the analysis. The data was then examined and encoded. As Alabdulkarim (2012) explained, during the process of encoding data, a symbol should be assigned to every line or sentence. In the next phase, the key topics, titles, and categories included in the data are identified, the codes re-read, and a comparison made between them to identify the links and relationships between the codings. The codes are then grouped under the potential topics, and all the data related to each topic is gathered. The potential themes are then reviewed and analysed, to verify their identification and naming through a process of continual analysis, to improve the details of each theme. Finally, the results are compiled, including examples of engaging extraction, the final analysis of the data, the explanation of the topics concerned, and the relationships between them.

RESULTS

This section discusses the main axes or aspects of the study, and the similarities and differences between them, and explains how they were identified within the data. It also evaluates the links between the findings of the present study and those of previous research in the same area. These various aspects of this study's findings are conflated within this section, as it was determined that discussing them simultaneously was the clearest form of presentation and added additional meaning to the findings. The main themes discussed in this section emerged from the analysis of the large amount of data collected from the range of participants. The data gathered from the semi-structured interviews with the participants was examined within the framework of each topic. It should be noted that while the data most relevant to each topic identified is discussed below, when the results were reviewed, it was clear that not all the data aligned under specific topics.

The first theme that emerged from the data concerned the administration's policy at the special education centres in Saudi Arabia, which had a significant impact on both the students with intellectual disabilities and their parents. The associated policies and administration are a vital part of a child's education within early intervention centres, as noted by several previous studies, such as those conducted by Aljarida et al. (2012) and Abdelfattah et al. (2016). When discussing the relationship of the centre's management with the parents and specialists, the participants in the present study held differing views of the efficacy of the centre's communication, advice, and opportunities offered. Some of the participants reported that the centre's management failed to heed their needs and the problems facing them and their children and considered dealing with the management of the centre to be problematic. Specifically, some of the parents noted the difficulty of communicating with the specialists at the centre outside of working hours, since it was the centre's policy not to provide the contact details of their female specialists to parents, and communication with them was only possible during the prescribed session dates, with no further communication possible once the session had ended. Meanwhile, some of the other participants reported that additional communica-

tion with the specialists could only be conducted via a notebook, and the mother of a child in receipt of early intervention services explained:

The [means of communication] between me and the specialists [at the centre I mentioned] is a notebook. The timeframe [permitted for communication] was tight. I mean, there is no way that I can go to the specialist to speak [with them], because the [allocated] time is [soon] over, and then it's time for another child. [I was told that] I could use pen and paper to write to [the specialist] at home. I'm trying as hard as I can to comply. (T.A.)

In the studies conducted by Alotaibi (2019) and Alqudsi (2013), one of the opportunities identified for improving communication between the specialists employed in early intervention services and the parents of children using those services was the provision of key information about the child's development, and developing the parents' skills in managing their child, such as increasing the child's ability to generalise their skills, and also enhancing the parents' ability to care for their child. These findings reflected those of Bayrakli and Sucuoglu (2019). In terms of the view of the special education specialists involved in the present study, the participants also considered the management policy of the centre where they were employed to be a challenge, particularly in terms of how the centre communicated with them, and the extent to which it facilitated cooperation. For instance, (M.L.) a specialist at an early intervention centre explained:

Some departments are unable to [communicate well], meaning that lapses and errors can occur. [We hear that] the specialist is unable; no, you are wrong; you are not approachable; you are negligent. They do not understand that all the pressure is on the specialist.

This challenge might be addressed by forging a closer relationship the administrative department at such centres between their specialist staff and the central work team, to promote a sense of loyalty and belonging, focusing on the job satisfaction of the specialists, to improve the quality of their work. This was suggested by Bas-hatouh and Alkinani (2014) who discussed the matter of special education teachers' job satisfaction, since enhanced job satisfaction was found to have a positive impact on the female specialists involved in their study.

The second key topic that emerged from the present study's findings was the environment at the centres, a matter that was discussed at length by both the parents and specialists interviewed. In the view of the parents, the centres' classroom environment was ill prepared for its requirements, and was an uncomfortable setting for their children, hampering the provision of quality services. This echoed the findings of the study conducted by Almadi and Alkathiri (2017) and that by Alharthy and Alqahtani (2020). Meanwhile, the specialists interviewed for the present study agreed with the parents that the classrooms concerned were not appropriate for the services provided, as they had only limited space and lacked the facilities necessary. This was noted as one of the most significant challenges faced by both the parents and the specialists. When discussing whether the early intervention centres suited the children's needs, one of the parents whose child had received these services discussed the challenges the children encountered in the classrooms, explaining:

To be honest, the classroom environment is not suitable, and is uncomfortable for our children. There are no facilities in the classroom. The centre's guards' room could have been a classroom, and there was also a classroom on the roof of the building built from hunger [i.e., temporary roof]. In the summer, the sun is hot, and the classrooms are not well ventilated. [The design of] many centres need to be reconsidered, because the children need to be in a well-prepared and comfortable classroom. Also, for children to be educated, it is necessary to prepare the environment appropriately for education purposes. (A.H.)

One of the challenges shared by both the parents and the specialists was the need to ensure that children with intellectual disabilities are integrated into the classroom environment. Some of the female specialists interviewed for the present study discussed this matter, noting the wide discrepancy in age of the children in their early intervention classes, and the administration's failure to recognise this as a problematic issue. This difference in the age of the children in a particular class can be due to several reasons. For instance, the early intervention specialist, M.N. explained of a certain child, "He is late in receiving services. He is seven or eight years old, and his mother

was afraid to get him diagnosed. I mean, the mother knew that there was a problem, but she was afraid for it to be diagnosed." Early signs of a delay in a child's development are many and varied, and when the child presents with such indicators, it is important that their parents take them to a paediatrician to evaluate the symptoms. These indicators can be measured at as young as 18 months old. Early detection and early intervention can improve the speed of a child's progress (Almadi and Alkathiri 2017; Zarafshan et al. 2019; Alqahtani 2020).

A core matter identified was that in addition to the issue of appropriate policies and management, early intervention centres should consider the support and empowerment of the parents of children with intellectual disabilities, and the partnership between parents and specialists. This is an important aspect of special education services that was also discussed in the study conducted by Alsamadi (2016). The findings of the data obtained from the interviews with the parents in the present study evidenced their high level of satisfaction with their relationship with the specialists they had encountered. They explained that most of the specialists with whom they had dealings were clear in their communication, and that they were satisfied with their interactions. One of the mothers (A.S.) explained:

In all the stages my son has gone through, all the female specialists [we've encountered] have been cooperative, may God reward them.

The parents interviewed also reported that the female specialists they had encountered were often excellent, as they were understanding and helped the parents to implement the services provided in different environments and at home. They were also extremely satisfied with the specialists' training. This positive relationship between the two parties is vital as it also promotes a good relationship with the child. This finding reflected that of Bayrakli and Sucuoglu (2019), Alfawair (2015), and Baathman and Altamimi (2016). However, in the view of the specialists interviewed for the present study, their relationship with the parents was not always as required, and some considered it to be challenging, due to some parents' lack of cooperation.

Meanwhile, in terms of the parents' readiness to undergo training in caring for their children, contrary to assumptions, the coronavirus pan-

demic was found to present opportunities that helped parents to prepare themselves for receiving services under the guidance of specialists, and to ready themselves for training. However, many of the parents who participated in the study agreed that there was a lack of clarity in the services provided to their children, while one of the early intervention practitioners reported that there was a lack of awareness of the services a child needs from their parents. Parents must involve their children in early education services to ensure that they receive all the services they need. In terms of the evaluation and follow-up process, the parents differed in their view, as some considered it to be a challenge, while others saw it as an opportunity. Those who viewed it as a challenge had not received reports on the condition of their children and believed that the goals set for them were inappropriate. The specialists interviewed also disagreed on this matter, reporting that while the centre in question offered opportunities for parents to discover the level of their child's abilities, some were unaware of their child's progress. This finding concurred with the studies conducted by Acar and Akamoglu (2014), Alfawair (2015), and Alruwaili and Mhaidat (2016).

The parents who participated in the present study discussed the importance of early intervention services, as they helped to improve their children's progress. They believed that the difference between the children who received early intervention services and those who did not was significant, and that the differences in various skills was reflected in the children's test scores. The interviewees explained that the services promote characteristics such as compassion, harmony, speech, and clarity, and that early intervention services improved their children's behaviour, discipline, self-reliance, independent diet, toilet skills, and social skills. As (A.S.), one of the participating parents, explained:

The positives of the early intervention services were many, the most important of which was that [my son] was educated; at least he went out and saw his friends, he saw new people. I mean, he was mixing in a second environment, and [also] I learned social skills for [communicating with] my son.

DISCUSSION

Early intervention services are one of the most important factors for promoting the successful

development of children with intellectual disabilities (Pighini et al. 2014; Arkobi 2020). Parents face many challenges and obstacles when learning about the condition of a child with such disabilities, the first of which is managing the shock of the diagnosis, and their lack of understanding of the child's situation. Indeed, this can cause some parents to experience psychological problems, and many face wider society's negative perception of their children, which prevents them from integrating into society at a young age. These problems faced by parents often relate to their unrealistic expectations, and the fact that some parents remain in denial of their child's condition. The best kind of support for them during this stage is psychological in nature and helps them to accept the reality of the situation, and the ways in which it can be improved. Among the opportunities for supporting success at this stage, according to the parents and specialists interviewed in the current study is the rapid receipt of services, as they give the parents hope. Learning in the early years is easier and more rapid than learning in any other age group, and the provision of a suitable learning environment is one of the ways in which parents can help their children to accept themselves. However, some of the parents interviewed reported facing challenges to this that delayed their receipt of early intervention services, and in turn had a negative impact on their children who had chronic diseases and health problems. Many children with intellectual disabilities suffer from a variety of health problems from a young age that can be detrimental to their physical and mental well-being. This finding reflected that of Abuzaitoun and Alsager (2017).

The responses of the parents in the present study varied in terms of their level of understanding of early intervention services, according to their age, level of education, and acceptance of their child's disability. This constituted a further challenge identified in the analysis of the interview data. This challenge was exacerbated by the absence of laws and regulations that oblige parents to provide their children with the necessary early intervention services, and the lack of training or awareness sessions provided to parents. The studies conducted by Alrashidi (2018), and Aldulaimi (2019) reflected this matter. Early intervention has a significant impact on both the in-

tellectually disabled individual and their family, and the participants in the present study noted the importance of unifying the methods used in teaching an intellectually disabled child, and the fact that the skills concerned must be generalised, as this promotes the child's chances of success, and encourages child. The findings of the study conducted by Abdelhamid (2018) reflected this belief.

As well as allowing opportunities for parents to participate in the early intervention services provided to their children, early intervention centres can aid in the success of early intervention services. One of the challenges facing early intervention specialists is the belief among parents that they are unable to participate with their child, and a feeling among them that the specialist is responsible for the child's care. However, parents' participation is essential in early intervention services, and is facilitated by staff at the centre working cooperatively with them to obtain accurate information about the child and any previous interventions (Kelly et al. 2012; Baathman and Altamimi 2016).

The early intervention specialists interviewed for the present study agreed that the factors that promote success include the cooperation of parents with specialists, the cooperation of a multidisciplinary team with the child, the application of what is required of parents at home, the ongoing review of the goals, and the appropriateness of the goals and services provided to the child. In addition, the parents reported that an awareness of the child's entry-level behaviour helps in the success of early intervention services, and that diversity in the range of education strategies provided helps to retain the child's attention for as long as possible.

One of the challenges reported by some of the parents of children with intellectual disabilities was the abandonment of the child by the family members, and the belief that the child is the responsibility of the mother alone, which causes some mothers to suffer from psychological problems and pressures. In addition, some of the mothers faced the preoccupation of the fathers, and the failure of family members to adapt to the child with intellectual disabilities, findings that reflected those of Islam et al. (2019). Meanwhile the specialists in the field of early intervention education interviewed for this study explained

that they often face challenges when parents are preoccupied with their other children, neglecting a child with intellectual disabilities, as this can cause the child to relapse, affecting their progress and well-being. This finding was consistent with that of the study conducted by Alshehri (2018), which discussed the barriers to early intervention services, and also the findings of the study by Carroll et al. (2013). The specialists also mentioned that a parent's excessive concern for their disabled child can also prevent the child from receiving the appropriate services. Therefore, one of the biggest challenges reported by the early intervention specialists was the way in which parents handle their children, as some believe that their children receive too much care, when in fact they do not receive enough. In contrast, a spoiled child who receives too much attention can also face challenges, along with their family, including the fact that they do not develop skills in self-reliance and are dependent upon those around them. However, in the view of the specialists, parents who give their children more attention increase the chances of the success of early intervention services for that child. Indeed, parents determine the level of progress and development of the child, whatever their level of development or progress.

CONCLUSION

This study has shown that the most notable findings are the challenges the specialist centre concerned faces, including the lack of cooperation from the centre's management with both parents and employees, a lack of staff, and a lack of suitable classrooms. The challenges related to the cooperation with families include the failure to clarify the services provided to children, and in the specialists' view, challenges regarding the parents' acceptance of their children's disability. While the research findings demonstrate the potential for early intervention services to be exploited, the participants also indicate areas in which they can be improved and developed.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Saudi Arabia is current engaged in improving its special education services for children with disabilities, such as autism and Down syndrome.

However, the experiences discussed by the participants in this study highlighted the need to provide additional support for both special education specialists and the parents of children with intellectual disabilities, to facilitate the development of appropriate early intervention services, including reducing the related fees to suit the situation of the parents. It is also necessary that guidance is issued explaining the importance of early intervention services for children with intellectual disabilities that is provided to a family if their child is diagnosed and classified as a child with such a disability, to raise awareness of the importance of expediting the receipt of the relevant services.

Future research in this field might explore the ways in which early intervention services for children with intellectual disabilities can be improved and developed, such as assessing the training needs of specialist professionals, and enhancing understanding of the needs of parents of children with intellectual disabilities when providing early intervention services, to comprehend the challenges, they face. Additional, more detailed research in the field of special education and the services provided in the context of Saudi Arabia would be particularly valuable.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST DISCLOSURE STATEMENT

We 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 (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.

REFERENCES

- Abdelfattah H, Alsmadi J, Almakani A 2016. Evaluation of special education programs in early childhood in Jordan in the light of global qualitative indicators. *Studies of Educational Sciences*, 43: 817-836.
- Abdelhamid S 2018. The effectiveness of an early intervention program to improve the quality of life for families of autistic children and its impact on the self-awareness of their preschool children. *Journal of the College of Education*, 6: 1-42.
- Abuzaitoun J, Alsager I 2017. Psychological burnout and its relationship to emotional intelligence among workers in special education centres in Jerash Governorate. *Studies in Educational Sciences*, 1: 125-144.
- Acar S, Akamoglu Y 2014. Practices for parent participation in early intervention/ early childhood special education. *International Journal of Early Childhood Special Education*, 6: 80-101.
- Alabdulkarim R 2012. *Qualitative Research in Education*. Saudi Arabia: Scientific Publishing and Printing Presses.
- Aldulaimi N 2019. The effectiveness of early intervention methods in changing mothers' attitudes towards educating their children with special needs. *Journal of the College of Basic Education for Educational and Human Sciences*, 45: 258-279.
- Alfawair A 2015. Evaluating early intervention services for people with special needs in the Sultanate of Oman from the point of view of families. *The Arab Childhood Journal*, 65: 35-54.
- Alhanno I 2016. The extent to which the qualitative research methodology is used in special education. An analytical study of ten refereed Arab journals from 2005 to 2014. *Journal of Special Education and Rehabilitation*, 10: 667-702.
- Alharthy K, Alqahtani F 2020. Effective practices of special education teachers in early intervention programs for children with intellectual disabilities: challenges and solutions. *The Saudi Journal of Special Education*, 15: 141-184.
- Aljarida D, Abuashour K, Alimat S 2012. *Managing Special Education Centres in Jordan From the Point of View of its Employees: Problems and Proposed Solutions*. PhD Thesis, Unpublished. Jordan: Yarmouk University.
- Almadi M, Alkathiri K 2017. The extent to which kindergarten teachers are familiar with strategies for integrating children with special needs. *The Saudi Journal of Special Education*, 6: 91-118.
- Alotaibi W 2019. Families' involvement of early intervention programs for their disabled children in early childhood stage. *Special Education and Rehabilitation Organization*, 31: 20-40.
- Alqudsi D 2013. The reality of parental participation in early intervention programs for children with disabilities from the point of view of workers in early intervention centres. *Damascus University Journal of Educational and Psychological Sciences*, 2: 327-365.
- Alrashidi S 2018. Parental participation and its obstacles in early intervention services for deaf and hard of hearing children in Kuwait. *Journal of Special Education and Rehabilitation*, 27: 70-122.
- Alruwaili A, Mhidat M 2016. *Evaluation of the Effectiveness of Early Intervention Services for Children with Autism Disorder in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia from the Point of View of Workers and Parents*. Master Thesis, Unpublished. Jordan: Yarmouk University.
- Alshahri K 2018. Obstacles to obtaining early intervention services for children with disabilities from the point of view of their parents. *Journal of Special Education and Rehabilitation*, 25: 124-159.

- Alzayoud N 2018. Early warning signs of autism spectrum disorder in kindergarten from the point of view of teachers in Jordan. *International Journal of Emirates Research*, 1: 121-148.
- Arkobi M 2020. The effectiveness of an early intervention program: preparing children with disabilities and developmental disorders for kindergartens from the age of 3-6 years in a kindergarten centre in the city of Jeddah. *International Journal of Science and Rehabilitation of People with Special Needs*, 9: 11-29.
- Asiri S, Alhijn A 2017. Obstacles to work in early intervention centres from the point of view of teachers and parents and methods of treatment in the eastern region. *Journal of Special Education and Rehabilitation*, 17: 172-174.
- Baathman S, Altamimi A 2016. The level of parents' satisfaction with early intervention services provided to their children with intellectual disabilities and its relationship to some variables: a descriptive study. *Journal of Special Education*, 15: 297-362.
- Bayrakli H, Sucuoglu B 2019. Empowering mothers of children with special needs in early childhood inclusion. *International Journal of Early Childhood Special Education*, 2: 121-143.
- Bintflah S, Almuaqil I 2015. Evaluating the role of early intervention programs in developing social skills for children with intellectual disabilities from the point of view of parents and teachers. *Journal of Special Education*, 10: 1-62.
- Braun V, Clarke J V 2013. Teaching thematic analysis: Overcoming challenges and developing strategies for effective learning. *The Psychologist*, 2: 120-123.
- Carroll C, Murphy G, Sixsmith J 2013. The progression of early intervention disability services in Ireland. *Infants and Young Children*, 26: 17-27.
- Development Company for Educational Services 2017. *Early Intervention Guide - Inclusive Education in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia*. Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.
- Islam S, Small N, Bryant M, Bridges S, Hancock N, Dickerson J 2019. Assessing community readiness for early intervention programmes to promote social and emotional health in children. *Health Expectations*, 3: 575-584.
- Kelly A, Ghalaieny T, Devitt C 2012. Early intervention in Malawi. *Journal of Policy and Practice in Intellectual Disabilities*, 9: 195-206.
- Pighini M, Goelman H, Buchanan M, Schonert-Reichl K, Brynensen D 2014. Learning from parents' stories about what works in early intervention. *International Journal of Psychology*, 4: 263-270.
- Rima M 2016. *Scientific Research Methodology*. Beirut, Lebanon: Friedrich Ebert Foundation.
- Sawan F 2017. *Scientific Research Concepts, Ideas, Methods, and Processes*. Algeria: Ibn Alnadim for Publishing and Distribution.
- Zarafshan H, Mohammadi M, Abolhassani F, Motevalian S, Sharifi V 2019. Developing a comprehensive evidence-based service package for toddlers with autism in a low resource setting: Early detection, early intervention, and care coordination. *Iranian Journal of Psychiatry*, 2: 120-129.

Paper received for publication in December, 2021
Paper accepted for publication in January, 2022