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Professional competencies of intellectual disabilities teachers in early childhood stage as perceived by them

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Abstract---This study aimed to determine the level of professional competencies for teachers of intellectual disability in early childhood from their point of view in the Riyadh region and to identify the differences at that level according to the variable years of experience, academic qualification, and location of the program. The study sample consisted of (92) teachers of intellectual disability in early childhood in the Riyadh region, who were selected by random sampling method. To achieve the study's objectives, the researcher prepared a scale of competencies for teachers of intellectual disability in early childhood. The scale consisted of (47) items distributed over six sub-dimensions, which were responded to using the five-year Likert scale for the level of proficiency. After their psychometric criteria were verified, they were applied to the sample of the study in order to extract the results that showed that the level of possession of professional competencies by intellectual disability teachers in early childhood was generally at a high level. The arithmetic mean of the scale as a whole was (3.87). The same is true at the level of dimensions, where all of them came at a high level, as it ranked first after cognitive competencies in developmental characteristics with an arithmetic average of (3.97), while it came after competencies related to professional development, values, and ethics in the last rank with an arithmetic average of (3.78). The results also showed that there were no statistically significant differences in the average ranks of teachers according to the variables of years of experience and educational qualification. While the results indicate that there are statistically significant differences in the average ranks of teachers according to the alternative educational variable in the total score of the scale between the two categories of teachers of general education schools and teachers of special education centers in favor of the category of teachers of special education centers. Based on the results, the study recommended directing teachers of intellectual disability in early childhood to join specialized programs based on developing their specialized competencies necessary to deal with young children and

the need to provide them with training courses on the supportive resources they need to be effective in their classrooms.

Keywords---intellectual disability, professional competencies, early childhood.

Introduction

Education constitutes a civilizational shift sought by nations, and children's education is a basic source and an essential source of this cultural shift. Early childhood shows a central importance within this framework, because today's children are the men of tomorrow. Likewise, children go through sequential and complex stages of development that directly depend on a number of Standards and competencies that their teachers must have. The evaluation of the teacher's competence is a diagnostic and remedial process at the same time aimed at developing the teacher's professional growth to ensure the creation of good learning opportunities for students. (Hariri, 2007).

The importance of evaluating the professional competence of teachers of intellectual disability lies in knowing the extent to which their academic performance has improved and the extent to which they are provided with an educational experience, and in encouraging creative practices within the learning process. and their educational skills (Brown, 2001). There is a growing realization of the importance of early childhood, and this realization is reflected in the first goal of Education for All, which is the comprehensive expansion and improvement of care in all its meanings in early childhood (Yeboah, & et al, 2021).

All the goals that early special education institutions try to reach depending on the experiences and capabilities of teachers in the different stages of education. Hence, it is necessary for teachers of intellectual disabilities in early childhood to possess competencies and skills that are appropriate for this age group to meet their developmental needs (Kadimat, 2018).

2. Study problem and questions

It has become noticeable that educational development programs, especially in the field of education for people with disabilities, continued to pay greater attention to other components of the educational system, such as the curriculum, books, and aids, while the professional evaluation of the teacher, monitoring his teaching performance, determining appropriate standards and appropriate tools to evaluate this performance, and developing training programs. What is needed to improve his performance is given less attention.

Likewise, through the researcher's interest in intellectual disability and her follow-up to this category, she noticed a lack of interest in the process of evaluating the professional competencies of teachers and a lack of awareness of its importance within the framework of teaching people with intellectual disabilities in early childhood, which is a critical stage that constitutes the capabilities and knowledge of the child. Likewise, this topic has drawn the

attention of the researcher due to the great importance of the early intervention stage as it constitutes a basic pillar for identifying the needs of the child with intellectual disabilities and thus providing appropriate early intervention programs for him. Hence, the idea of the current study came as an attempt to determine the extent to which teachers of intellectual disabilities possess professional competencies in early childhood. More precisely, the problem of our study was to answer the following main question:

What is the level of professional competencies for teachers of intellectual disability in early childhood from their point of view?

The following stems from the main question:

- What is the level of competencies for teachers of intellectual disabilities in early childhood in the Riyadh region from their point of view?
- Are there statistically significant differences at the level ($\alpha = 0.05$) in the means of competency level of teachers of intellectual disability in early childhood in the Riyadh region due to the variable number of years of experience?
- Are there statistically significant differences at the level ($\alpha = 0.05$) in the means of competency level of teachers of intellectual disability in early childhood in the Riyadh region due to the educational qualification variable?
- Are there statistically significant differences at the level ($\alpha = 0.05$) in the means of competency level of teachers of intellectual disability in early childhood in the Riyadh region due to the variable of the educational alternative?

3. Objectives of the study

The current study aimed to determine the level of professional competencies for teachers of intellectual disability in early childhood from their point of view and to study the differences between their averages in the light of variables: number of years of experience, educational qualification, educational alternative. With the aim of emphasizing the importance of evaluating the professional competencies of teachers of intellectual disability in early childhood.

4. The significance of the study

The significance of the research lies in determining the level of professional competencies for teachers of intellectual disability in early childhood from their point of view and providing clear information that benefits those in charge and those interested in the field of early special education about the importance of professional competencies for teachers of intellectual disability in early childhood, and their roles in developing the developmental, social and emotional aspects of this category.

5. Procedural definitions

Children with Intellectual Disabilities: They are the group of children who have been diagnosed with an intellectual disability based on the standardized and unregulated tests in force in the centers and institutes in which they are located. Early childhood stage: procedurally defined as a stage that extends from birth to the age of six years of a child's life, where assessment, care, and early education services are comprehensively provided to the child.

Professional competencies: It is defined as the outcome obtained from the responses of special education teachers to the professional competency tool that was prepared by the researcher to achieve the objectives of the study.

6. Theoretical framework

In the field of education for people with disabilities, interest in the issue of professional competencies for teachers of intellectual disabilities has increased over the past years. This is due to helping students themselves take advantage of available educational opportunities and adapt to society and school. There is no doubt that intellectually disabled children generally suffer from weakness in all developmental skills, and hence intellectual disability has received remarkable attention from researchers and workers in the field of people with disabilities (Dyson 2003).

Given the importance of the early childhood stage, the philosophy of early childhood education in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia was based on building a developmental perspective capable of addressing children with the aim of caring for and educating them from birth to six years of age, based on educational theories that aim to engage children through their learning through play to experience and exploring what surrounds them (Education Policy Document in Saudi Arabia, 2022).

Intellectual disability is classified as a developmental disability, and these disabilities appear in the form of a group of neurological disorders in individuals before the age of five years, and these disabilities affect many developmental areas such as language, social, motor, behavioral development, and other fields (Al-Quraiti, 2011).

For intellectual disability, definitions have been revised, including the definition of the American Society, which defined it as a deficit characterized by a clear deficiency in mental function and adaptive behavior, as well as in conceptual, social, and practical adaptive skills, and this disability begins before the age of 18 years (Al-Khatib, 2009). There are several classifications of intellectual disability, and perhaps the most approved classification in the field is the classification that depends on the percentage of intelligence as follows:

First: Mild Intellectual Disability This category includes individuals whose IQ ranges between (55-70) on IQ scales, and they are usually called the (educated) category.

Second: Moderate Intellectual Disability This category includes the total number of individuals whose IQ ranges between (40-55) on intelligence tests, and they are called the (trainable) category. This category has minor problems with some skills such as standing and walking (Al-Rosan, 2021).

Third: Severe Intellectual Disability. This category includes the total number of individuals whose IQ ranges between (25-40) on intelligence tests. The individuals of this category are characterized by having disturbed movements and disturbed language development in many cases (Smith, Patton, & Kim, 2006)

Fourth: Profoundly Intellectual Disability This category includes the total number of individuals whose IQ is very low, i.e. less than (25) on intelligence tests, and they are called (dependants) (Al-Rosan, 2021).

Intellectual disability has a negative impact on the developmental aspects (cognitive, physical, health, psychological, social, and emotional) of the disabled individual. These effects vary according to the type and severity of the disability, and the following are the most important of these effects:

1: Cognitive characteristics: The weak ability to learn is one of the most obvious cognitive characteristics, and there is a rate of (87%) of mentally disabled individuals who show slowness in learning information and skills in cognitive fields, including:

A- Attention: Attention is defined as the ability to focus on a specific stimulus. The mentally handicapped suffer from a weak ability to pay attention, and they have a high tendency to distraction, and poor attention leads to difficulty in learning, and the degree of attention weakness increases with the degree of disability.

B - Memory: The process of remembering is closely related to mental ability, as we find that the mentally disabled have a general weakness in their ability to remember names, subjects, and shapes, and this appears clearly in short-term memory, and this is due to the inability of the intellectually disabled child to use appropriate strategies for remembering that the average child does.

C- Information comprehension: Intellectually disabled children are distinguished by their limited abilities in the field of comprehension, especially in the academic field, where the intellectually disabled lag behind their normal peers by two to five grades, especially in language skills.

D- Transfer of Learning: The intellectually disabled child suffers from the difficulty of transferring what he has learned from one situation to another, that is, he cannot generalize the information he has acquired (Smith, 2004).

2- Language Characteristics:

Intellectual disability negatively affects their ability to communicate and leads to linguistic weakness or delay, as the language of the intellectually disabled person develops slowly and is characterized by immaturity, and his speech is often disturbed, whether in fluency, pronunciation, or voice (Warren & Yoder, 1997).

3- Motor & Physical Characteristics:

The features of motor and physical development of individuals with intellectual disabilities are less adequate compared to their normal peers, especially with regard to fine reflexes, movements, and complex motor skills as well as motor balance (Al-Hadidi and Al-Khatib, 2005).

7. Literature review

When reviewing the theoretical literature, the researcher reviewed a group of research papers that examined the subject of professional competencies for teachers of intellectual disability in early childhood. The study of Al-Anazi (2022) aimed to identify the importance of the necessary inclusion competencies for teachers from the point of view of specialists. The study adopted the descriptive analytical approach and applied the questionnaire. On a sample of 107 specialists

in special education in Saudi Arabia, the results showed that the importance of personal and professional competencies for teachers in the field of inclusion came to a very important degree, on all dimensions and the overall degree, and the results showed that there were no differences in the importance of personal and professional competencies. According to the variable of specialization, and there are differences in the importance of the personal and professional competencies necessary for inclusion teachers according to the degree variable in favor of the postgraduate category.

The Al-Dhaimat and Al-Bustanji study (2022) aimed to identify the possession of trained teachers in special education with the necessary competencies to work with individuals with disabilities. The study sample consisted of (148) trainees in the field of special education, in several Jordanian universities. The results showed that the trained teachers in Special education possess the competencies necessary to work with individuals with disabilities to a moderate degree, and the results showed that the most common competencies they have are those related to personal traits, followed by those related to scientific characteristics, and finally, educational and professional competencies. The results also showed that there were no statistically significant differences in the degree of their possession of competencies according to the variables of gender, training institution, university, and the category of disability with which the trainee teacher works.

The Keser and Tanriverdi study (Keser, & Tanriverdi, 2021), it aimed to discuss the competencies and qualifications of teachers in special education schools, special education classes, counseling and research centers, and special educational rehabilitation centers to provide educational support services for individuals with special needs. A set of focus group interviews was conducted as a method of data collection. And (62) teachers participated in the research, where the descriptive analysis method, which is used in qualitative research methods, was used to analyze the study data. The results of the research were examined within six axes. The results of the study showed that teachers (including teachers with disabilities) have difficulty teaching skills and concepts, interfering with problem behaviors, training parents, communicating with families in their mother tongue, planning individual student learning planning, assessing students formally and informally, and adapting to Technology for the goals of the individual educational plan. Furthermore, within the inclusive education system, teachers do not/cannot provide support services to those with diverse languages, religions, cultures, and sexual orientations. On the other hand, this research concluded that teachers who spoke to students and families in their mother tongue were more effective in improving students.

The study of Koyini and colleagues (Kuyini, Major, Mangope, & Alhassan, 2021) aimed to explore the teaching competencies of general education teachers in primary schools within inclusion classes in Botswana. Using the quantitative research approach, (116) teachers completed a 14-item questionnaire entitled Perceived Competencies for the Comprehensive Teaching Scale, and an open-ended question about the supporting resources they need to be effective in their classrooms. The results of the study showed that participants identified adaptive instructional competencies (including setting curriculum goals, modifying learning content, and teaching for different learning styles of students) as the

most important. Teacher assistants and specialist teachers, followed by material resources, were also considered the basic support resources required for them to be able to implement the IEP. While the study of Bani Hamad (2019) aimed to determine the degree to which teachers in the field of special education possess educational technology competencies in southern Saudi Arabia and its relationship to their teaching performance, the descriptive correlative approach was used. The degree to which teachers in the field of special education possess educational technology competencies in the south of Saudi Arabia came at a large level, as well as the level of their teaching performance at a large level. Results: There is a statistically significant correlation between the possession of special education teachers in southern Saudi Arabia for technological competencies and the level of their teaching performance.

Al-Rawi's study (2018), it sought to identify the level of availability and importance of professional competencies for teachers of students with intellectual disabilities in the light of national professional standards. And knowing the extent of the difference in this according to the variables of gender, number of years of experience, and the nature of the educational alternative. The study included (45) male and female teachers working with individuals with intellectual disabilities. The questionnaire consisted of (12) dimensions that were derived from the national occupational standards in Saudi Arabia. The results showed that professional competencies are available in their entirety and that the most available ones appear in working effectively with others and developing fruitful relationships with the community and parents, while the least available lies in the knowledge of general teaching methods and methods, and the rest of the competencies ranged between that. The results showed that the importance of professional competencies was generally high among the study sample. The results of the study also showed that there were no differences due to the variable of gender, years of experience, and the type of educational alternative in estimating professional competencies.

Within the same framework, the survey conducted by Bruns and his colleagues (Bruns, LaRocco, Sharp, & Sopko, 2017) aimed to verify leadership competencies in early special education and evaluate early childhood early intervention service systems in America, and to achieve the objectives of the study a national survey was designed over the web. The sample consisted of (820) individuals, and the analysis of the results revealed six knowledge domains and five competency domains necessary for effective leadership within the framework of early intervention and special education in early childhood. The results showed that the six cognitive domains came within the following domains: evidence-based practices, child development, family-based frameworks, state laws and regulations, federal laws and regulations, and teamwork. The five competency domains consisted of effective relationships, professional learning, use of data, shared responsibility, and effective communication. Al-Lalla's (2017) study aimed to verify the necessary professional standards for teachers of students with intellectual disabilities in the Qassim region from their point of view and to study the differences between their averages in light of the variables: professional experience, and workplace. The sample consisted of (82) teachers, and the study used a questionnaire prepared by the researcher to reveal the necessary professional standards for teachers of students with intellectual disabilities. This

indicates the importance of these standards in preparing teachers, and the results of the study showed that there are no statistical differences in the necessary professional standards from the teacher's and supervisors' points of view due to the variables of professional experience and workplace and on all aspects of the study. Individuals with mental disabilities.

As for the Al-Qudah and Al-Sharadaqa study (2016), it aimed to identify the competencies and needs of teachers and workers within early special education programs. It included (145) teachers and workers from several disciplines except for medical and administrative specialties within the special education centers in the cities of Jeddah and Makkah. In order to achieve the objectives of the study, the researchers developed a questionnaire consisting of two axes: competencies and training needs. The results showed that the study sample members possessed the total competencies contained in the study tool to a moderate degree, and also those competencies were considered necessary according to the estimates of the study sample members as an indication of their importance. The results also indicated that the training needs of the study sample members ranged from a medium degree to a large degree. The results also showed that there were no statistical differences in the degree to which the study members possessed competencies due to the variables: educational qualification, teaching experience, and specialization. And the presence of statistical differences in the importance of competencies due to the variable of specialization in favor of special education teachers, and the absence of statistical differences in the importance of competencies due to the variables of educational qualification and teaching experience.

While Al-Ajami and Al-Dosari (2016) research aimed to verify the reality of the professional competencies necessary for teachers of intellectually disabled students and their importance from the point of view of their teachers in the city of Riyadh. And measuring the degree of its importance for teachers of students with intellectual disabilities. The results showed that the degree of availability of professional competencies came to a medium degree in general on all dimensions of the study from the point of view of the study sample of teachers. Statistically, the teaching and professional competencies are due to the variable of sex in favor of females, and there are no statistical differences due to the variable of teaching experience.

Finally, the study of Obeidat (2010) aimed to assess the competencies of teachers of intellectually disabled students in the light of the standards of professional practice approved by the Council of Exceptional Children in America. The study included (95) male and female teachers working with mentally handicapped students in Jeddah. The researcher used two scales, the first to measure the degree of importance of these standards for teachers, and the second to measure the degree to which they possess these standards. The results of the study showed that teachers' awareness of the importance of competencies came. The results showed that there are statistical differences in the importance of competencies in favor of teachers specialized in special education, and that there are no significant differences in estimating the importance of competencies due to the variables of gender and number of years of experience, and the results of the study showed that there is a medium degree of possession of competencies among

Teachers of students with intellectual disabilities, and the results also showed that there are differences between teachers of students with intellectual disabilities due to the educational qualification variable in favor of special education teachers.

8. Commenting on the literature review

First: Some previous studies emphasized the importance of the study of professional competencies in the field of special education, such as the study of Al-Anzi (2022), the study of Al-Dhaimat and Al-Bustanji (2022), the study of Keser and Tanriverdi (Keser, & Tanriverdi, 2021), the study of Bani Hamad (2019) and the study of Al-Qudah and Al-Sharadaqa (2016).

Second: Some of the previous studies were similar to ours in their focus on studying the professional competencies of teachers of intellectual disability in particular, such as the Al-Rawi study (2018), the Al-Lala study (2017), the Al-Ajami and Al-Dosari study (2016), and the Obaidat study (2010).

Third: Among the previous studies, only two studies were found that focused on the professional competencies of early childhood teachers, which is the survey conducted by Bruns and his colleagues (Bruns, LaRocco, Sharp, & Sopko, 2017), and the study of Judges and Sharadqa (2016).

Fourth: Most of the previous studies emphasized the urgent need for in-service training programs to raise the professional competencies of teachers of special education in general and teachers of intellectual disabilities in particular.

Fifth: In terms of the descriptive survey method, our current study agreed with most of the previous studies.

Sixth: Our current research differed with previous studies in terms of the sample of early special education teachers, as well as in terms of the general objective, by trying to determine the level of professional competencies possessed by early intervention teachers in the city of Riyadh.

9. Method and procedure

Study Approach

Our current study aimed to determine the level of professional competencies for teachers of intellectual disabilities in early childhood from their point of view in the Riyadh region, and to identify the differences at that level according to the variables, years of experience, academic qualification and the location of the program. To achieve the objectives of the study, the descriptive survey method was followed.

Study population and sample

The study population consisted of all male and female teachers of students with intellectual disabilities in the Riyadh region in Saudi Arabia, while the current study sample consisted of the following:

1. The exploratory sample: It numbered (30) teachers of intellectual disability in early childhood, they were chosen at random, and from outside the basic sample, and the study tool was applied to them in order to verify its validity and stability.

2. The main study sample: It consisted of (92) early childhood intellectual disability teachers in Riyadh, who were selected by random sampling method, and Table (1) shows their characteristics according to the study variables:

Table 1. Characteristics of the sample of intellectual disability teachers according to the study variables: years of experience, educational qualification and place of the program (n = 92)

Variable	Variable Levels	Number	Percentage
Years of Experience	5 years or less	19	20.7
	6-10 years old	47	51.1
	11 years and over	26	28.3
Qualification	BA	68	73.9
	Postgraduate	24	26.1
educational alternative	public education schools	31	33.7
	Intellectual disability programs and institutes	39	42.4
	center for special education	22	23.9
Total		92	100.0

Study tool:

To achieve the objectives of the study, the researcher prepared a scale of competencies for teachers of intellectual disability in early childhood, where the theoretical literature on the subject was reviewed and previous studies were reviewed, such as the study of Al-Rawi (2018) and the study of Bruns and colleagues (Bruns, LaRocco, Sharp, & Sopko, 2017). Al-Lala study (2017), Al-Qudah and Al-Sharadaqa study (2016), Al-Ajami and Al-Dosari study (2016), Obeidat study (2010), and Killoran and colleagues study (Killoran, Templeman, Peters, & Udell, 2001). The scale, in its initial form, consists of (48) items distributed over six sub-dimensions, and each sub-dimension consists of (8) items, which were responded to using the Five-Year Likert criterion for the level of proficiency proficiency. as follows:

- 1- Uncommon level: little or no information about adequacy; That is, the information about it is new.
- 2- Familiar level: The adequacy or skill is familiar but more training is needed.
- 3- Known level: that is, the teacher is able to use the competence or skill, but more experience will be useful.
- 4- Application level: The teacher can demonstrate the skill in this area with guidance. That is, he is able to use competence or skill in a variety of situations at a satisfactory level.
- 5- Proficiency level: the teacher can apply the competence or skill successfully and can use the competence or skill at an ideal level.

Scale validity:

A: The arbitrators' veracity:

To verify the apparent validity of the competency scale for teachers of intellectual disabilities in early childhood, it was presented in its initial form to (10) arbitrators with specialization in the field of special education in Saudi universities, where they were asked to express their opinion on the appropriateness of the items included in the scale. The percentage of arbitrators' agreement (80%) was approved on the validity of the paragraphs, and accordingly some language modifications were made to four paragraphs, and a paragraph was deleted from the fourth axis, and a paragraph was moved from the second axis to the sixth axis, so that the test in its final form consisted of (47) items by six dimensions.

B: construction honesty:

The validity of the scale construction was verified by calculating the correlation coefficient between the paragraphs and the total score of the dimension to which they belong, as well as calculating the correlation coefficient between the score of each of the dimensions and the total score of the scale. The correlation coefficients of the degree of each paragraph and the sum of the dimension to which they all belong were statistically significant, as shown in Table No. (2).

Table 2. Correlation coefficients between the degree of each item with its dimension and the total score of the scale (n = 30)

Sr.	Dimension	Total	Sr.	Dimension	Total	Sr.	Dimension	Total
Cognitive competencies with developmental characteristics			Sharing competencies with families			Competencies of managing and coordinating educational programs		
1	.639**	.356*	1	.628**	.585**	1	.473**	.413**
2	.649**	.368**	2	.647**	.546**	2	.535**	.453**
3	.479**	.323**	3	.750**	.677**	3	.645**	.598**
4	.509**	.258*	4	.715**	.520**	4	.518**	.443**
5	.347**	.629**	5	.667**	.456**	5	.516**	.600**
6	.634**	.291**	6	.646**	.511**	6	.438**	.412**
7	.535**	.664**	7	.691**	.653**	7	.512**	.501**
8	.506**	.421**	8	.684**	.505**	8	.575**	.327**
Evaluation and Diagnostic Competencies			Early educational services competencies			Professional Development Competencies and Values		
1	.437**	.368**	1	.670**	.469**	1	.239*	.259*
2	.489**	.430**	2	.658**	.581**	2	.564**	.576**
3	.542**	.437**	3	.585**	.616**	3	.495**	.360**
4	.657**	.444**	4	.742**	.512**	4	.562**	.381**
5	.600**	.662**	5	.745**	.408**	5	.434**	.415**
6	.449**	.517**	6	.703**	.595**	6	.506**	.448**
7	.576**	.433**	7	.703**	.470**	7	.431**	.541**
				.670**	.469**	8	.325**	.613**
						9	.372**	.457*

* Significance level at ($\alpha \leq 0.05$) ** Significance level at ($\alpha \leq 0.01$)

It is clear from the previous table that all the correlation coefficients between the items of the scale and the total score of the scale are statistically significant. The correlation coefficients of the items with their dimensions ranged between (.239 - .745), while the coefficients of the correlation of items with the total score of the scale ranged between (.258 - .258). .677), which indicates a high construct validity coefficient.

Scale stability:

For the purposes of the current study, the scale was applied to members of the exploratory sample, which numbered (30) teachers of intellectual disability in early childhood, and the stability was calculated using Cronbach's method to extract the alpha coefficient of stability, and Table (3) shows the stability values of the scale and its dimensions:

Table 3. Alpha coefficients for the consistency of the dimensions of the competence scale for teachers of intellectual disabilities in early childhood (n = 30)

Sr.	Dimension	Cronbach alpha
1	Cognitive competencies with developmental characteristics	.827
2	Competencies related to assessment and diagnosis	.883
3	Competencies related to sharing with families	.863
4	Competencies related to early special education services	.805
5	Competencies related to the management and coordination of educational programs	.894
6	Competencies related to professional development, values and ethics	.876
The overall score of the scale		.857

It is clear from the previous table that the value of the alpha coefficient that was reached according to the application of the equation to the data of the exploratory sample of the total degree of the scale amounted to (.857), which is a high and significant value and achieves stability for the scale, which confirms the validity of the scale for its application to the main study sample.

Standard describing the competencies level for teachers of intellectual disability in early childhood:

To describe the level of competencies of teachers of intellectual disability in early childhood, the researcher calculated the relative weight of the response scores on the scale items as follows:

Class length = range/number of classes.

Range = difference between largest and smallest score (response alternative score) / number of response alternatives on the item.

Range = (1-5) / 3 = 1.33.

Thus, the description of the competencies level for teachers of intellectual disability in early childhood is according to the arithmetic averages, as shown in Table (4).

Table 4. Describe the level of competencies of teachers of intellectual disability in early childhood according to the arithmetic averages

Sr.	Arithmetic means	level of sufficiency
1	1 – less than 2.33	low
2	2.33 - less than 3.66	Medium
3	3.66 _ 5	High

9. Study Procedures

The following steps were taken to prepare the current study:

First: A review of educational literature, previous studies and books related to the competencies of teachers of intellectual disability in early childhood, where the study problem and objectives were identified.

Second: Addressing the King Faisal Center for Research and Islamic Studies, to confirm the name of the current study.

Third: Developing the study tool, which is a scale of competencies for teachers of intellectual disability in early childhood.

Fourth: Extracting the psychometric properties of the scale by applying it to the exploratory sample.

Fifth: Applying the tool to the main study sample.

Sixth: Unloading the data on the computer, and analyzing it statistically.

Seventh: Extracting the results and writing and reviewing the research report.

10. Results

Results related to the first question, which reads: "What is the level of competencies of early childhood intellectual disability teachers in the Riyadh region from their point of view?"

In order to answer this question, the arithmetic averages and standard deviations of the items and dimensions of the competency level scale for teachers of intellectual disability in early childhood were extracted, as shown in the following table:

Table 5. Arithmetic means and standard deviations of the items of the competency level scale for teachers of intellectual disability in early childhood from their point of view (n = 92)

Sr.	Paragraphs	SMA	SD	Order	level
1	I know the natural developmental characteristics of children	4.02	0.73	10	high
2	I am familiar with the necessary activities related to the early childhood intervention stage	4.14	0.64	3	high
3	I have knowledge of the effects of intellectual disability on children in early childhood	4.17	0.74	1	high
4	I fully understand the causes of intellectual disability	4.14	0.62	2	high
5	I have knowledge of the characteristics of	3.98	0.88	17	high

	intellectual disability in the early special education stage				
6	I am familiar with the eligibility criteria for early special education services	4.04	0.78	7	high
7	I know best practices in early intervention	3.71	0.75	39	high
8	I have knowledge of the social and emotional needs of children with intellectual disabilities in early childhood	3.57	0.95	44	medium
Dimension of cognitive competencies developmental characteristics		3.97	0.81	1	high
1	I fully understand the concept of job evaluation	4.08	0.74	5	high
2	I am able to choose and manage the scales used with children with intellectual disabilities in early childhood	3.89	0.73	24	high
3	I can conduct family interviews effectively	3.57	0.72	45	medium
4	I have observational techniques	3.75	0.79	34	high
5	I have the ability to appropriately monitor a child's progress and make changes in the program	3.97	0.64	20	high
6	I have the ability to determine the current level of performance of the child	3.59	0.90	43	medium
7	I can identify the strengths and weaknesses of my students	3.96	0.66	23	high
Dimension of competencies related to assessment and diagnosis		3.82	0.72	5	high
1	I can form an effective partnership with families of children with mental disabilities	3.97	0.67	22	high
2	I fully understand the effects of a child's intellectual disability on the family	3.84	0.75	29	high
3	I respect the culture and diversity of families	3.87	0.80	28	high
4	Sharing information with families of children with mental disabilities	3.99	0.70	15	high
5	Involve families in all activities related to their children	3.71	0.81	40	high
6	I help families access the right information for their child	3.98	0.77	19	high
7	I communicate effectively with families of children with mental disabilities	3.77	0.71	32	high
8	I can design an individual family plan based on the results of the assessment	3.99	0.72	13	high
Dimension of the competencies related to sharing with families		3.89	0.82	3	high
1	I have the ability to create an appropriate and stimulating educational environment for children with intellectual disabilities in early childhood	3.97	0.80	21	high
2	I have the ability to have positive social	4.09	0.81	4	high

	interactions with young children				
3	I can use adaptive tools and equipment for young children with intellectual disabilities	4.02	0.57	9	high
4	Use behavior modification strategies effectively	3.77	0.87	33	high
5	I take into account the individual differences between students with mental disabilities	3.65	0.86	42	medium
6	I have the flexibility to deal with children with mental disabilities	3.73	0.77	37	high
7	Choose activities appropriate to the abilities of mentally handicapped children	3.74	0.77	35	high
Dimension of competencies related to early special education services		3.85	0.89	4	high
1	I have sufficient knowledge of the objectives and procedures of the IEP	3.99	0.64	16	high
2	I can implement the IEP and evaluate progress in its goals	3.98	0.63	18	high
3	I have the flexibility to make changes to the plan if required	4.01	0.58	12	high
4	I have the ability to manage and schedule daily operations in the classroom	4.03	0.56	8	high
5	I can formulate comprehensive, precise, measurable goals	3.89	0.65	25	high
6	I am able to develop and implement an effective transition plan	4.05	0.80	6	high
7	I have knowledge of the early intervention program vision, goals, guidelines, and implementation procedures	3.73	0.95	38	high
8	I can integrate effective therapeutic practices into learning environments	3.73	0.84	36	high
Dimension of competencies related to the management and coordination of educational programs		3.93	0.74	2	high
1	Use self-assessment techniques for professional growth	3.38	1.08	47	high
2	I accept feedback on my performance from others	3.67	0.77	41	high
3	I can provide feedback in a professional manner	4.01	0.76	11	high
4	Participate in continuing education and/or in-service training	3.84	0.84	30	high
5	I abide by the rules of values and ethics in the field of special education	3.54	0.95	46	high
6	I am ready to develop myself professionally to work with children with mental disabilities	3.87	0.97	26	medium
7	I have communication skills with multidisciplinary team members	3.82	0.73	31	high

8	I use educational literature to modify my practices in the classroom	3.87	0.85	27	high
9	I always strive to keep the evaluation information confidential	3.99	0.83	14	high
Dimension of competencies related to professional development, values, and ethics		3.78	0.71	6	high
Total		3.87	0.82		high

It appears from the previous table that the level of possession of intellectual disability teachers in early childhood was generally at a high level, where the arithmetic mean of the scale as a whole was (3.87) and with a standard deviation of (0.82). Likewise, at the level of dimensions, all dimensions of the scale came at a high level, as it ranked first after cognitive competencies in developmental characteristics with an arithmetic average of (3.97), followed by the second place after competencies related to managing and coordinating educational programs with an arithmetic average of (3.93), followed by the third place after The competencies related to the partnership with families with a mean of (3.89), while the competencies related to professional development, values and ethics came in the last rank with a mean of (3.78).

At the level of paragraphs, the third paragraph of the first dimension, which states "I have knowledge of the effects of intellectual disability on children in early childhood" obtained the highest arithmetic mean of (4.17) and standard deviation of (0.74), and thus ranked first among the paragraphs of the scale at a high level, while the first paragraph of the sixth dimension, which states "I use self-assessment techniques for professional growth", obtained the lowest arithmetic mean of (3.38) and standard deviation of (1.08), and thus ranked last among the items of the scale at an average level. Noting that all the paragraphs of the scale came at a high level except for five paragraphs distributed on the first, second, fourth, and last dimensions.

The researcher finds that this result is logical to a large extent, especially since work in the early childhood stage depends mainly on the capabilities, experiences, and competencies of the early childhood teacher in all areas, which must suit this age group to meet their developmental needs, and in these results, the clear interest appears by The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, which works to encourage nurseries and kindergartens, in an effort to raise the educational level in the country and care for children through the selection and training of distinguished competencies to raise the level of kindergartens in general.

It is worth noting that this result is very similar to the study of Bani Hamad (2019), the results of which showed that the degree to which special education teachers possess technological competencies in the southern region of Saudi Arabia is great and that their teaching performance is high. It was also similar to the results of Al-Rawi's study (2018). The results of which showed that the professional competencies of teachers of students with intellectual disabilities in the light of the national professional standards in their entirety are available, as well as the results of the study of Al-Lalla (2017), which showed that all the professional standards necessary for teachers of students with intellectual disabilities in the Qassim region were highly accepted by the point of view of their

teachers. This result is similar to the study of Obeidat (2010), which concluded that the awareness of teachers of mentally disabled students of the importance of competencies was high on all dimensions and the overall degree of the scale. Likewise, this result intersects with the results of the Al-Anazi study (2022), which showed that the importance of personal and professional competencies for teachers in special education came to a very important degree, and for all dimensions and overall degrees.

But at the same time, it differed from the results of the Al-Qudah and Al-Sharadaqa study (2016), which found that teachers and workers in early intervention programs for people with special needs possess the competencies included in the study tool to a moderate degree. on all dimensions of the study from the point of view of teachers of students with mental disabilities. Perhaps the difference here is due to the difference between the nature of the sample between these studies and the current study, where it was limited in the Al-Qudah and Al-Sharadaqa study (2016) to teachers and workers in early intervention programs for people with special needs in general, and in the Al-Dhaimat and Al-Bustanji study (2022) it was limited to trained teachers In special education, as well as the study of Al-Ajami and Al-Dosari (2016) was limited to teachers of students with intellectual disabilities in general in the Qassim region.

The results related to the second question and its text: Are there statistically significant differences at the level ($\alpha = 0.05$) in the average competencies level of intellectual disability teachers in early childhood in the Riyadh region due to the variable number of years of experience?

To answer this question, a non-parametric difference test was used, represented by the Kruskal-Wallis Test, due to the low number of teachers in the two categories of experience less than five years and 11 years and over 30 individuals ($n < 30$), and the results that were reached are clarified. In the following table:

Table 6. The results of the Kruskal-Wallis test for the differences in the average level of competencies of teachers of intellectual disability in early childhood in the Riyadh region due to the variable number of years of experience ($n = 92$)

Obstacles	Years of Experience	number	average rank	Chi-square	Degrees of Freedom	Significance
Scale as a whole (total score)	less than five years	19	40.29	2.223	2	.329
	6-10 years old	47	50.35			
	11 years and above	26	44.08			

The previous table indicates that there are no statistically significant differences in the average ranks of teachers according to years of experience in the total score of the competency scale for teachers of intellectual disability in early childhood from their point of view, as the average ranks of teachers with experience amounted to less than five years (40.29), while The average ranks for teachers with 6-10 years of experience were (50.35), and the average ranks for teachers

with experience were 11 years and over (44.08). The value of the chi-square was (2.223), while the significance level was (329.), a value that indicates that there are no statistically significant differences between the average level of competencies of teachers of intellectual disability in early childhood from their point of view in the Riyadh region due to the variable years of experience.

The researcher attributes this result to the importance of the issue of professional competencies in the field of special education in general and early special education in particular. The same interests within the field of professional competencies as they represent the basis on which they work with young children, and their awareness of the importance of these professional competencies, and this was confirmed by previous studies such as Al-Anazi study (2022), Al-Rawi's study (2018), Al-Qudah and Al-Sharadaqa study (2016) and Al-Ajami and Al-Dosari study (2016) and the study of Obeidat (2010), all of which emphasized the importance of all the competencies included in the tools of those studies, which are very necessary for the field of special education. Thus, we can logically say this result.

This result is similar to the study of Bani Hamad (2019), which revealed that there are no statistically significant differences in the degree of special education teachers' possession of technological competencies due to the variable of teaching experience. Occupational according to the variable years of experience. Likewise, it was similar to the results of Al-Lala's study (2017), which showed the absence of statistical significance in the necessary professional standards from the point of view of teachers and supervisors due to professional experience. It was also similar to the results of the Al-Qudah and Al-Sharadaqa study (2016), which showed that there were no statistically significant differences in the study members' possession of competencies due to the variable of teaching experience. It was also similar to the study of Al-Ajami and Al-Dosari (2016), the results of which showed that there were no statistically significant differences in the study trends about teaching and professional competencies according to the variable of teaching experience. The importance of competencies is due to the variable number of years of experience.

The results related to the third question and its text: Are there statistically significant differences at the level ($\alpha = 0.05$) in the average competencies level of intellectual disability teachers in early childhood in the Riyadh region due to the educational qualification variable?

To answer this question, a nonparametric difference test was used, represented by the Mann-Whitney Test, due to the low number of teachers in the postgraduate category of 30 individuals ($0 < n < 3$), and the results of the Mann-Whitney test that were reached are shown in the following table:

Table 7. The results of the Mann-Whitney test for differences in the average level of competencies of teachers of intellectual disability in early childhood in the Riyadh region according to the educational qualification variable (n = 92)

Obstacles	Qualification	number	average rank	Total Ranks	Man Whitney U	g value	Significance
Scale as a whole (total score)	BA	68	48.77	3316.5	661.5	1.375	.169
	Postgraduate	24	40.06	961.5			

It is noted from the previous table that the average rank of teachers with a scientific qualification (Bachelor's) as a whole amounted to (48.77), while the average ranks of teachers with a postgraduate qualification as a whole were (40.06). The value of g reached (1.375), while the significance level was (.169), a value that indicates that there are no statistically significant differences between the average level of competencies of intellectual disability teachers in early childhood from their point of view in the Riyadh region due to the educational qualification variable.

Likewise, the researcher attributes this result to the importance of professional competencies in the field of early special education, as they are the basis on which early intervention is based. That all teachers are exposed to the same experiences and the same in-service training programs regardless of their educational qualifications, from here we can say in other words that teachers from both groups (bachelor and postgraduate studies) have professional qualifications almost equally.

It is worth noting that this result is similar to the study of Al-Qudah and Al-Sharadaqa (2016), the results of which indicated that there are no statistically significant differences in the study members' possession of professional competencies in early intervention programs for people with special needs due to the educational qualification variable, but at the same time it differed with Al-Enzi study. (2022) which found statistically significant differences in the importance of personal and professional competencies for comprehensive education teachers according to the degree variable in favor of the postgraduate category (Masters, Ph.D.). It also differed from the results of Obeidat's study (2010), which showed that there are differences between teachers of mentally handicapped students due to the educational qualification variable and in favor of teachers with specialization in special education, and the reason for this difference is due to the difference in the nature of the sample and the objectives of the two mentioned studies versus the current study.

Results related to the fourth question and its text: Are there statistically significant differences at the level ($\alpha = 0.05$) in the average competency level of intellectual disability teachers in early childhood in the Riyadh region due to the educational alternative variable?

To answer this question, a non-parametric difference test was used, represented by the Kruskal-Wallis Test, due to the low number of teachers working in special

education centers for less than 30 individuals (<30n), and the results obtained are illustrated in the following table:

Table 8. The results of the Kruskal-Wallis test for the differences in the average level of competencies of teachers of intellectual disability in early childhood in the Riyadh region due to the variable of the educational alternative (n = 92)

Obstacles	The educational alternative	number	average rank	Chi-square	Degrees of Freedom	Significance
Scale as a whole (total score)	public education schools	22	34.09	7.663	2	.022
	Intellectual disability programs and institutes	39	47.03			
	Special Education Center	31	54.65			

The previous table indicates that there are statistically significant differences in the average ranks of teachers according to the educational alternative in the total score of the competency scale for teachers of intellectual disability in early childhood from their point of view in the Riyadh region, where the average ranks of teachers working in public education schools as a whole were (34.09), While the average ranks for teachers in programs and institutes of intellectual disability were 47.03, and the average ranks for workers in special education centers were 54.65. The value of the chi-square was (7.663), while the significance level was (.022.), a value that indicates the existence of statistically significant differences between the average level of competencies of intellectual disability teachers in early childhood from their point of view in the Riyadh region due to the variable of the educational alternative, and when analyzing the trend The differences show that the differences between the two categories of teachers of general education schools and teachers of special education centers are in favor of the category of teachers of special education centers, while the differences between the rest of the categories are not statistically significant.

Perhaps the differences here can be attributed to the greater interest shown by the private centers, which are based on the principle of reputation and high standards to ensure their continuity. Distinguished and most able to provide early special education services, and therefore the most believe in the need to pay attention to development based on professional competencies.

This result was similar to the study of Al-Dhaimat and Al-Bustanji (2022), whose results showed that there are no statistically significant differences in the degree to which the study sample possesses competencies according to the variable of the training institution. It was also similar to the results of Al-Rawi's study (2018), which showed that there were no statistically significant differences in estimating professional competencies according to the variable of the type of educational place.

11. Recommendations

The researcher recommends the following:

Directing intellectual disability teachers in early childhood to in-service training programs based on the principle of developing the professional competencies necessary to deal with young children.

It the necessity of providing early childhood intellectual disability teachers with training courses on the supportive resources they need to be effective in their classrooms.

- Work to improve the work environment for teachers of intellectual disabilities and improve all services provided to them in order to raise their cognitive abilities and improve their attitudes towards students with intellectual disabilities.

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