Beliefs of Male Elementary School Special Education and General Education Teachers

Regarding Full Inclusion for Students with Autism Spectrum Disorder in Saudi Arabia

by

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my father, Ahmed, and my mother, Ehlala. To my wife, Asma. and my kids Ryan, Joory, Noor, and Aljawhara. To my brothers, and sisters. Thank you all for your support, patience, and encouragement.

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Abstract

The current educational settings for students with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) in Saudi Arabia consist of special institutions for students with intellectual disabilities and special classrooms within public schools. The Ministry of Education in Saudi Arabia is interested in full inclusion for students with ASD because of the social, psychological, and educational benefits it can provide them. One crucial factor for achieving full inclusion is considering elementary teachers' perceptions and beliefs toward full inclusion, as they are one of the primary stakeholders in this venture. Therefore, elementary general education and special education teachers' beliefs regarding full inclusion for students with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) in Saudi Arabia were examined though this study. The participants of the study consisted of four general education teachers and four special education teachers. The study used a qualitative interview design to gather data. Each participant was interviewed three times. Thematic analysis was used to analyze the data which resulted in four themes: (a) lack of knowledge (b) low self-efficacy (c) inadequate preparation for implementing inclusion and (d) culture influences. Participants who had prior experience with people with disabilities reported positive beliefs and high self-efficacy regarding inclusion for students with ASD in general education classrooms while those with no experience had the opposite. The findings also indicate that there are more similarities than differences among Saudi male general and special education teachers regarding their perceptions of ASD inclusion. Both groups cited a lack of information, unclear policies related to inclusion and limited professional development as barriers to full inclusion with general education teachers noting a lack of knowledge about ASD and its impact on student performance as further impediments.

Chapter One: Introduction

Saudi Arabia has a relatively short educational system history of less than a century. The Special Education system began even more recently in 1960 when Al-Noor became the first institution that served students with blindness (Adhabi, 2018; Alquraini, 2013). The special education system has been progressing since then and is still developing. From 1960 until the current era, the education system has improved its aims to serve all students with disabilities across the Kingdom (Alshahrani, 2014).

Legislation was established by the Ministry of Education in Saudi Arabia to guarantee free education for all students with special needs. In 2001, the Ministry of Education signed the Regulations of Special Education Programs and Institutes as the first legislation for students with disabilities in Saudi Arabia. This legislation mirrored the United States' Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1976 and its Individuals with Disabilities Act of 1990 (Alnahdi, 2014). These policies ensure free public education for students with disabilities and education in the least restrictive environment.

Recently in Saudi Arabia, providing high-quality education has become an important priority; this can be seen in Prince Mohammed bin Salman's Saudi Vision of 2030 (Ministry of Education, 2019). In this policy, the Saudi government commits to improving the education system. The policy created teaching licenses, teacher ratings to evaluate the effectiveness of teachers, and teachers' professional development. The government now provides full sponsorship for in-service teacher to receive professional training at high-ranking universities within Saudi Arabia or outside the country. Furthermore, in 2016, the Ministry of Education

enacted legislation that ensures special education students the right to be educated in the least restrictive environment, with equal opportunity, and free education. In 2017, the number of students with disabilities educated in general education classrooms increased from 3% to 5%. The Ministry of Education's partnership with Saudi Human Resources has also aimed to support employees with disabilities and fulfill their desire to be more independent.

Education plays an important role in every person's life. Therefore, education policy must stand on equality and equity, with educational opportunities for all students, including students with special needs. Over the last two decades, the number of children diagnosed with Autism has drastically increased. According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) March 2020 release, autism spectrum disorder (ASD) prevalence shows a 10% increase in children diagnosed by age 3 years. The CDC report in 2016 shows that of every 68 children there is one child diagnosed with ASD; by the 2018 CDC report, one in every 59 children is diagnosed with ASD. This increase is close to 10% every two years (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2021). The Indivisible with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA, 2004) defines ASD as "a developmental disability significantly affecting verbal and nonverbal communication and social interaction, generally evident before age three, that adversely affects a child's educational performance." Other characteristics often associated with autism are engagement in repetitive activities and stereotyped movements, resistance to environmental change or change in daily routines, and unusual responses to sensory experiences (IDEA, 2004).

There is growing sentiment that the education system should not be divided by special education and general education schools and classrooms; the goal is to educate all children and help them to succeed academically. Previous researchers recommended that general and special education teachers should receive basic courses about collaboration, disabilities, and lesson

planning in the teacher preparation program. This results in them being more engaging and coordinated in the classroom (Aldabas, 2015; Alquraini & Rao, 2018; Folrina & Chambers, 2011). Therefore, engaging student with disabilities in general education alongside their general education peers increases their sense of social acceptance. Inclusion helps students with disabilities cope with their disabilities, increases their self-esteem, encourages them to be socially engaged with their society and to be independent in the future (Alanzi, 2012; Alexander, 1978; Alghazo, & Gaad, 2004; Daniels, 2000).

As the requirements and needs of students affect the program to offer suitable education, a basic understanding of autism is needed. Several programs, methods, and settings need to be evaluated to establish whether there are suitable placements and personalized education plans. Even though the traditional lecture method used in the general classroom is not a norm any longer, classroom instruction is not personalized to meet the requirements of students with autism in order to help them achieve success. Often, these students are lost in either a mix-up of special education classes or a standard education setting that centers on learning techniques that are difficult for them. Classroom teachers are seldom educated to make the instructions adaptable and to identify the needs of students with autism (Alnahdi, 2014; Grissmer, & Kirby, 1997; Teichler, Arimoto, & Cummings, 2013;). Successful inclusion implementation depends on teachers' willingness to accept and teach students with ASD in inclusive classroom (Majoka, 2018; Sharma & Nuttal, 2016). Teachers' beliefs and knowledge about their students' disabilities determine their attitudes and influence their practices (Pantic & Florian, 2015; Walter & Lippard, 2017). The major challenge of educating students with ASD is preparing qualified teachers to support and educate those students (Alnahdi, 2014). Moreover, teachers should be prepared enough to identify students' strengths and weakness, and one of the team to write an IEP

(individuals education program) to meet the student needs (Cordoves, 2013; Moores-Abdool, 2010; Musyoka, & Clark, 2017). It is of immense importance to start preparing and educating teachers on how to meet the learning needs of students with ASD. Included in this study is analysis of literature and strategies concerning autism, the inclusion of special needs students in the general classroom, and models establishing strategies and capacity for program enhancement.

It cannot be denied that teachers' beliefs are an important factor in the education system due to the impact and teacher influence on students and their education programs. Scholars have defined teachers' beliefs in various ways. Pajares (1992) defines belief as "an individual's judgment of the truth or falsity of a proposition" (Fives & Gill, 2014, p. 316). According to Brown and Cooney (1982), beliefs are dispositions to action and major determinants of behavior. Therefore, examining teachers' beliefs about including students with mild ASD in general education is important to ensure proper implementation. Fives and Gill (2014) indicate that beliefs are often occurring in-person behavior that is cumulative over time and experience.

Teachers with positive perceptions toward inclusion are crucial for its proper implementation. Therefore, school staff, including administrators and teachers should regularly attend workshops, courses and conferences regarding inclusion in order to maintain positive perceptions. Prior research has found that teachers who have had prior courses about teaching student with disabilities or previous experiences working with students with disabilities are more likely to have positive attitudes toward inclusion (Brown, & McIntosh, 2012; Garrad, Rayner, & Pedersen, 2019). Similarly, in their study Al-faiz (2006), Al-Mousa (2010), Alquraini (2011), Alshehri (2018),), state that teachers who have background knowledge and experience with students with disabilities develop positive attitudes toward their inclusion more than teachers with no experience.

Inclusion is not a setting; it is a mixture of interaction, collaboration, open-mindedness and support. According to Forlin (2010, p.28), "during their training teachers need to have developed positive values, supportive ideals, high moral principles and strong ethical understanding regarding accepting responsibility for educating all children regardless of the diversity." However, opportunities remain to study how inclusion has been understood, implemented and perceived in Saudi Arabia.IStatement of Problem

The calls for practices of including student with disabilities are increasing and teachers face barriers that affect implementing proper inclusion including their own beliefs (Alnahdi, 2014). Likewise, Adhabi (2018) points out that in Saudi Arabia, teachers preparation programs lack quality, resulting in a decrease of teacher self-efficacy and an increase of anxiety about teaching students with disabilities in the general education setting. Moreover, Alahmadi, (2009) states that teacher attitudes toward inclusion are negative because of the lack of courses, experiences and in-service support.

Research remains to be done to overcome the lack of studies that explore teacher beliefs toward full inclusion of students with ASD in Saudi Arabia. This present study explored in depth the beliefs of special and general education teachers and examined the findings to address the gap between teacher preparation programs and the day-to-day realities of schools.

Purpose and Rationale

This study was conducted in response to the lack of qualitative research examining elementary teachers' beliefs toward full inclusion for students with ASD in Saudi Arabia's public schools. The Ministry of Education and special education law in Saudi Arabia intend to state that a general education classroom is the first and best educational setting for a student with ASD (Alquraini 2011; Al-Mousa, 2010). Therefore, general education and special education

teachers should have the capacity to succeed. To date, there are few qualitative studies that examine the beliefs and experiences of special education and general education teachers toward full inclusion for students with an ASD in Saudi Arabia. This study explores teachers' beliefs toward inclusion in the general education classroom in a public school in Saudi Arabia. The study investigates knowledge that impacts the beliefs of elementary school teachers toward inclusion of students with ASD in general education classrooms.

The Saudi Ministry of Education's Vision 2030 commits to reforming the special education system to improve educational services, curriculum, diagnosis, early intervention, and equal education opportunities for students with disabilities in the least restrictive environments possible (Ministry of Education, 2019). Therefore, teachers' beliefs about including students with ASD in general education classrooms are an important factor of proper implementation of inclusion. This study sought to gain in-depth information about teachers' beliefs of inclusion for students with ASD. The findings from this study may be used for effective implementation of inclusion for students with ASD. The goal of this study is to provide information that will contribute to knowledge about teachers' beliefs regarding inclusion for students with autism so that pre-service and in-service programs can better prepare teachers to engage students with ASD in general education settings, thus increasing opportunities for interaction, learning from peers and academic success.

The following research questions guided this study:

Research Questions

Question1. What are the beliefs of Saudi male elementary school general and special education teachers regarding the inclusion of students with ASD in the general education classroom?

Question 2. What influences the development of the beliefs of Saudi male elementary school general and special education teachers regarding the inclusion of students with ASD in the general education classroom?

Question 3. What do Saudi male elementary school general and special education teachers believe about their efficacy in teaching students with ASD in general education classrooms?

Setting and Participants

This study was conducted in public schools, that implement inclusion for students with ASD in Tabuk City, Saudi Arabia. The participants comprised eight elementary school teachers: four special education teachers and four general education teachers. All participants were male teachers due to Saudi Arabia's single-sex educational system wherein boys and girls are educated separately. Three interviews were conducted with each participant. The study sought to examine special and general education teachers' beliefs toward full inclusion for students with ASD.

Theoretical Framework

Bandura's (1977) theory of self-efficacy best fits the goal of this study. Bandura (1977) indicates that self-efficacy is how someone perceives their own strength and abilities related to their knowledge, skills, and experiences in any situation. This theory works as the best guideline for this study to explore teachers' beliefs of teaching students with ASD in the general education setting. Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2007) stated, "The feelings of joy or pleasure a teacher experiences from teaching a successful lesson may increase her sense of efficacy, yet high levels of stress or anxiety associated with a fear of losing control may result in lower self-efficacy beliefs" (p. 945). Thus, teacher sense of self-efficacy increased with their preparation knowledge, skills, and experiences to teach students with ASD in the general education classroom, the

teacher will be motivated for proper implantation of the inclusion and students' success. Self-efficacy is essential to this study because how teachers feel about their abilities to teach diverse students influences how they instruct lessons to meet the students' needs. Therefore, using self-efficacy theory to explore beliefs is helpful to determine whether teacher preparation programs help build positive beliefs, influencing teachers' attitudes toward educating students with ASD in general education.
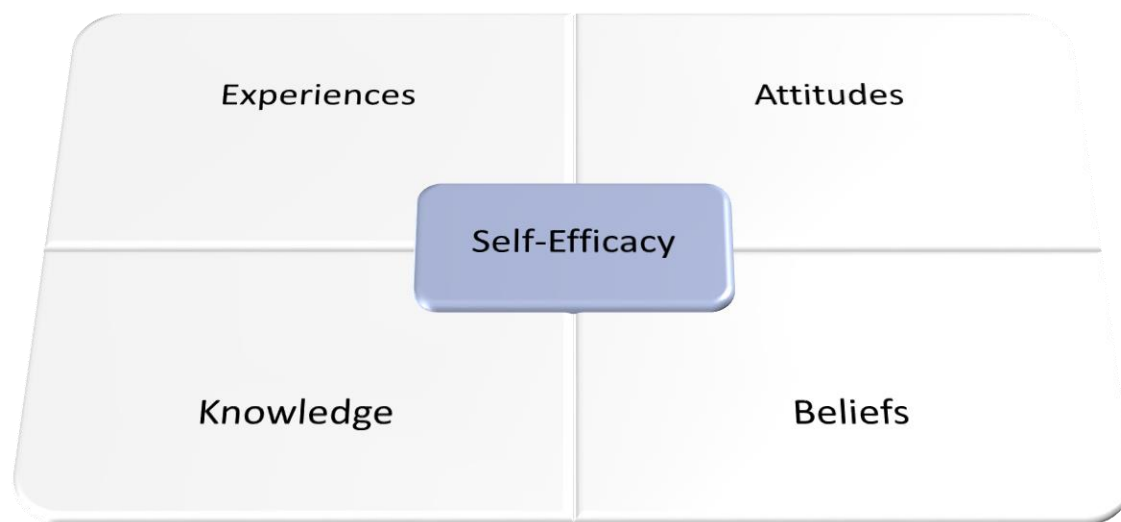
Figure One. Factors Influencing Self-Efficacy

Self-efficacy is influenced by various factors such as teachers' experiences, knowledge beliefs and attitudes. The relationship between these factors determines self-efficacy for the teachers. Knowledge refers to teachers' familiarity of learning theories, understanding individuality of students and learning pedagogies to meet students' needs (McDonald, 1977). Teachers develop self-efficacy through experience, where they engage in practice and achieve their goals. Furthermore, they observe other, more experienced teachers practicing successfully (Bandura, 1977; Pajares, 2002). Teachers' beliefs have a significant effect on shaping teacher

attitudes and knowledge which, in turn, influence teacher performance and interaction in their

classroom (White, 2000). Teachers' beliefs and perceptions are crucial components of teacher

attitudes and affect acceptance of student with disabilities in general education classrooms, as

well as the performance and learning of students with disabilities. Positive attitudes lead to

engagement and the creation of a positive learning environment for students with disabilities

(Fang, 2006). Teachers' beliefs and attitudes can be changed through professional training and

knowledge development that lead to increased self-efficacy in teaching students with disabilities

in the general classroom (Bandura, 1977; Pajares, 1992; Talib, & Paulson, 2015).

Definition of Terms

Autism

The term autism was created in 1911 by Swiss psychiatrist Eugen Bleuler to describe

abnormal isolation and social behavior in children (Barna, 2017). Kanner (1943) was the

researcher who published the first case studies about autism. Kanner studied 11 children who

demonstrated social difficulties and anti-social behavior and identified the characteristics of ASD

(Barna, 2017). These symptoms include challenges in social communication, restriction by

change in routines, and repetitive behaviors or words. ASD is defined by the Diagnostic

Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders 5 (DSM 5) as

> a neurobehavioral disorder manifested by persistent deficits in social and
>
> communication interaction, deficits in developing, understanding and maintaining
>
> relationships, as well as abnormal and fixed interests and repetitive behavior.
>
> Symptoms must be present at early childhood and interfere with the daily
>
> function. (DSM 5, 2015)

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA, 2004) defines ASD as "developmental disability significantly affecting verbal and nonverbal communication and social interaction, generally evident before age three, that adversely affects a child's educational performance. Other characteristics often associated with autism are engagement in repetitive activities and stereotyped movements, resistance to environmental change or change in daily routines, and unusual responses to sensory experiences." Similarly, in Saudi Arabia, ASD is defined as "a developmental disorder that affects the ability of learning, communication, social interaction, and repetitive behavior. These characteristics appear before the age of three" (Ministry of Education of Saudi Arabia, 2016)

Full Inclusion

The term "inclusion" refers to children with disabilities being educated alongside their peers without disabilities in general education classrooms for the purpose of interaction and learning from their fellow classmates (Gilhool, 1989). Throughout the history of education, inclusion has had many terms and definitions. In the 1970s the terms "mainstreaming" and "integration" were used in the United States to refer to the inclusion of students with disabilities in general education classrooms. These terms were replaced with "inclusion" in 1994 (Gilhool, 1989). The idea of inclusion extends outside of the school environment to promote and encourage students with disabilities to take part in their communities.

Attitudes

Bohner and Dickel (2011) define attitudes as "An attitude is an evaluation of an object of thought. Attitudes comprise anything a person may hold in mind, ranging from the mundane to the abstract, including things, people, groups, and ideas" (p. 392)

Teacher Beliefs

Beliefs are often formed through personal experience and context, and they are cumulative, developing over time and experience. For instance, those who have a child with disabilities in their family are more likely to believe in equal opportunity for children with disabilities (Fives & Gill, 2014).

Teacher Self-Efficacy

Self-efficacy refers to teacher beliefs in their ability to reach and achieve their goals (Bandura, 1997). In inclusive classrooms, teachers must have high levels of confidence in their capability to teach students with autism in general classrooms and achieve their educational goals.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

Special education in Saudi Arabia is currently experiencing a renaissance in a multidisciplinary manner including changes in legislation, support services, health services and educational accommodations. The literature related to the current study is discussed in this chapter. It also encompasses an overview of the history of special education and legislation in the United States related to students with ASD as well as the history of special education in Saudi Arabia including legislation regarding inclusion for students with ASD. A synthesis of current research examining teachers' perception, experiences and beliefs as well as teacher self-efficacy about including students with ASD in the general education classrooms is also provided.

Autism Spectrum Disorder

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is defined in this study as a neurological disorder of growth that leads to differences or discrepancies in how information is processed that openly affects a child's ability to understand and communicate (Siniscalco, Marsilio, & Antonucci, 2013). ASD is often accompanied by lower level of intellectual capabilities. The symptoms of ASD vary widely between individuals, with some at the high end of the spectrum for functioning, some at the low end and many in between. Intellectual disabilities are not always associated with ASD, and not all those with ASD are low functioning (OCALI, 2015; Walton & Ingersoll, 2013). Difficulties are seen in the child's ability to comprehend and relate to others in the usual way, use language to communicate and interact, think and learn like typical children and respond to stimuli. The effects caused by autism on functioning and learning can lead to frustration, anxiety, and confusion articulated in several ways (Hens, Peeters, & Dierickx, 2016).

Such responses include self-injuries, repetitive behavior, aggression, and social withdrawal. The thinking and learning abilities of children with autism are distinctive and, in most instances, expected (Wehman, Smith, & Schall, 2009).

The characteristics of ASD vary largely and contain a range of disorders based on their severity which is why it is referred to as a spectrum. According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (2010), the various disorders include:

- A neurological disorder that affects communication and social skills and can be diagnosed before the age of three.

- Pervasive Developmental Disorder/ Atypical ASD which is a neurological condition where some of the characteristics of ASD are exhibited.

- Childhood Disintegrative Disorder which is similar to ASD but more severe as it is characterized by severe loss of communication and social skills. Children who have this disorder have a higher chance of developing intellectual disabilities. It appears at an earlier stage.

- Rett Disorder which is manifested by children developing naturally, but eventually losing communication skills. This disorder is more common in girls.

- Asperger's syndrome, the highest functioning of all ASD includes children who develop normally in terms of their language and intellect but develop antisocial behaviors, struggle socially and with changes in routine.

Symptoms of ASD appear early during childhood, and they become clearer when the child has challenges during in person social interaction (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). Diagnosis of ASD often can be made as early as three years old or younger (Zwaigenbaum et al., 2015). Early diagnosis is important for children to receive early

intervention services (Alothman, 2014). It is critical to acquire knowledge about how students with ASD process information, think, and react in given circumstances. This knowledge will help gain insight into several learning and behavior issues (Frankel & Wood, 2012).

Special Education in the United States

The idea of inclusion has been prioritized in American history. Federal legislation began in 1959 with the Training of Professional Personnel Act of 1959 which aimed to educate teachers about disabilities (Rhodes, Fisher & Adelstein, 2007). The Economic Opportunities Amendments of 1972 followed, which gave support to students with disabilities and offered a head start enrollment for childhood programs (Rhodes, Fisher & Adelstein, 2007). In 1973, the Rehabilitation Act was created to protect individuals with disabilities from discrimination. Following that legislation, in 1975 Congress enforced the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (EAHCA). Congress felt this legislation was necessary to protect the rights of students with disabilities. Students with disabilities began to have opportunities to receive education in public schools that were federally funded. These laws were necessary because before the implementation of this legislation, nearly 200,000 individuals with disabilities were living in state institutions with minimal food, clothes and shelter **(**Rhodes, Fisher & Adelstein, 2007). The EAHCA ensures the rights of students with disabilities to (a) free appropriate public education (FAPE) and appropriate evaluation; (b) be educated in the least restrictive environment (LRE); (c) parental participation; and (d) individualized education program (IEPs). The idea of inclusion has continued to evolve. Furthermore, EAHCA legislation has influenced the improvement level of education provided to the students with disabilities significantly. It implied involvement of the students with special needs into the setting of public education.

The Education for All Handicapped Children Act was revised in 1990 and named as The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) (Rothstein & Johnson, 2009). The IDEA is a federal law that protects the rights of students with disabilities (Whitaker, 2011; Yell & Bateman, 2019). Under the IDEA, schools are required to abide by its guidelines. More details about this act include, "The IDEA has significant implications for both general and special educators. The changes reflect the IDEA's increased emphasis on educational results and post-school outcomes for children with disabilities. This emphasis creates increased opportunities for collaboration" (Huefner, 2000, p.11). This protection for students with disabilities was made accessible by being free to parents. The IDEA law provided important guidelines to mandate equitable treatment for all students as it states that students with disabilities are entitled to free and appropriate public education (FAPE) in the least restrictive environment (LRE).

The LRE is whatever environment is least restrictive for each student based on their individual needs, meaning that they should not spend the entirety of their school day in separate classrooms from their peers. "The LRE mandate provides a clear preference for educating students with disabilities in general education classrooms, although separate class services are allowed when such a placement is deemed effective or better meets a student's needs" (McLeskey, Landers, Hoppey, & Williamson, 2011; Yell & Bateman, 2019). According to Forlin, "Inclusion continues to be high on the agenda of education reform and development in most societies and it is, therefore, appropriate that students should have an opportunity to participate fully in discussions and access to teaching that considers issues central to the promotion of inclusive practice" (2010, p.65). Students are also entitled to an Individualized Education Program (IEP), which provides a specific plan that is customized to that individual student's needs.

The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) was authorized in 2001 and ensured necessary funding toward schools to improve the education of students with disabilities and disadvantaged students (Hursh, 2004; Rothstein & Johnson, 2009). NCLB policy guarantees all students with disabilities to receive free and equal opportunity to be educated in general education with their peers as often as possible (U.S. Department of Education, 2010). NCLB's aim is to close the achievement gap by providing all students with free, fair, quality and equal opportunity to reach high-quality education (Mathis & Trujillo, 2016). In 2015, NCLB was reauthorized with ESSA (Every Student Succeeds Act) to ensure more flexibility in terms of evaluating the students' achievements and progress in their studies. According to the ESSA, the states and school districts could apply multiple measures and evaluations to ensure that programs are effective (Darrow, 2016; Rous, 2004).

Special Education in Saudi Arabia

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is located in the Arabian Peninsula with Islam being the official religion and Sharia Law influencing the basic legal system (Alhudaithi, 2015). These religious and political mandates have undoubtedly shaped the country's education system and policies. Additionally, the education system in Saudi Arabia is based on gender segregation with boys and girls placed in separate education facilities from first grade through university (Ferguson & Lopez, 2002).

Even in the modern era, Saudi Arabia finds itself at the developmental stage in terms of legislation and provision of services to people with special needs. The education system in Saudi Arabia began around 1950. Prior to its creation, students were taught at mosques with only basic education provided with writing and reading as the key subjects (Al-Ajmi, 2006). In 1953, the first school was opened for boys, and girls were educated at home until 1960, when the Ministry

of Education opened schools for girls (Al-Munajjed, 2008; Alshahrani, 2014). There was an increase of girls attending public schools by the mid-1970s and through 1980s as 50%, all public and private schools became available for girls as well as cost-free university (Al Hamed, Ziadeh, Al Oteibi, & Mutawalli, 2007).

It is important to note that prior to 1958, there was no protection of educational rights for students with special needs because there was a lack of regulations and corresponding laws (Alquraini, 2013). In the 1960s, the Ministry of Education passed a law that guaranteed equal rights of free education for blind children and students with learning disabilities (Alshahrani, 2014). The Al-Noor Institution was the first institution opened for students with disabilities in the city of Riyadh, but it only served students with visual impairments (Al-Mousa, 2010). In 1965, the Ministry of Education opened special institutions for students with intellectual and hearing impairments in the major cities of Riyadh and Jeddah (Aldabas, 2015).

Before 2001, there was a lack of laws and regulations that supported and protected the rights of education to all students with disabilities (Afeafe, 2000). Saudi Arabia is under developed in terms of special education laws and services, and it is behind countries such as the United States (Aldabas, 2015). However, in 2001, the first regulations in the field were developed in cooperation of the Department of Special Education in the Ministry of Education in Saudi Arabia with knowledgeable experts from the King Saud University's special education department (Alquraini, 2013). The Ministry of Education approved the Regulations of Special Education Programs and Institutes (RSEPI) 2001 to be the first set of regulations for students with disabilities in Saudi Arabia (Alquraini, 2011). The RSEPI set a number of requirements, in particular in terms of providing early intervention programs, proper education for free, services of transition and IEPs (Individual Education Plan) to students with disabilities (Alquarini, 2013).

In addition, another requirement from the RSEPI states that schools for students with disabilities should be minimally restrictive (Alquarini, 2013). During recent years, the Ministry of Education partnered with the King Salman Center for Disability Research, and they intend to build public schools to be safe, creative, and the best learning environment for students with disabilities (Almasoud, 2010). This ensures the proper procedures for the implementation of inclusion. Administrators, teachers and school staff should have the ability to adapt, collaborate, support and exchange knowledge and experiences with each other. However, opportunities remain to study how inclusion has been understood, implemented and perceived in Saudi Arabia.

Teacher Preparation Programs

Teachers preparation programs in Saudi Arabia provide future teachers with general skills required for teaching to enhance their performance and accountability. Generally, those who are interested in becoming special education teachers complete four years of coursework and one semester of practical internships. In the internship phase, students work collaboratively with special education teachers, implementing IEPs for student with disabilities (Al-Kahtani, 2015). In 2017, the Ministry of Education in Saudi Arabia approved teacher licenses for improving teacher quality. Teachers are required to pass qualifying exams with at least 60% to be given a teacher license for three years, and they must renew it every three years. However, recent studies indicate that special education teachers and general education teachers lack knowledge and understanding of the needs of ASD students. Almasoud (2010) indicates that in Saudi Arabia, special education teachers with ASD students in their classrooms lack knowledge and capabilities of adapting their classroom environment. Similarly, Al-faiz (2006) reports that in Saudi Arabia, teachers face challenges when they teach the student with ASD due to the lack of preparation in terms of teaching strategies, evidence-based-practices, and behavioral

management. Aldabas (2015) reports that general education teachers are unprepared for inclusion because there is no course in the general education preparation program addressing special education. Alzahrani and Brigham, (2017) conducted a study on pre-service special education teacher's evaluation of their teacher preparation program in Saudi Arabia. The survey used in this study focuses on information about teacher preparation including coursework, teaching strategies, internship quality and autism program effectiveness. The results of this study show that most of the participants agree that teacher preparation program courses need to be updated, and that there exists a gap between teacher preparation program and the reality of teaching students with ASD in the classroom.

Researchers have concluded that coursework and training about disabilities, students' needs, strategies and support services would address teachers' concerns and change their attitudes and beliefs about having students with disabilities (Harvey, Yssel, Bauserman, & Merbler 2010; Voltz, Brazil, & Ford, 2008). Reynolds and Birch (1977) mention that training teachers prior to their interaction with students with disabilities in the classroom would be beneficial to changing or improving their attitudes, beliefs, and self-efficacy. The main goal for special education teacher preparation programs is to educate and improve pre-service teachers' knowledge about disabilities' causes and students' strengths and weaknesses. This will increase pre-service teachers' positive attitude toward inclusion as well as their self-efficacy (Adhabi, 2018; Athbah, 2015; Evans, 2016)

Haimour and Obaidat (2013) indicate that teachers in Saudi Arabia lack basic knowledge of teaching students with autism by using a survey conducted from 391 teachers that determined their levels of knowledge and experience. The survey questions covered basic information about students with autistic behavior and characteristics. The findings show that less than half of

participants answered the questions correctly (42.7%). For example, only 48% of teachers correctly answered the question "Children with Autism do not make any visual communication during conversation with others" (p.50) and (62%) teachers correctly answered questions related to characteristics of autism such as avoids or does not keep eye contact and restricted or repetitive behaviors. Teachers seem to lack knowledge about the causes of autism with an average of (52%- 59%) of teachers answering that poor parenting could cause autism and genetic factors do not play an important role in causing autism. If teachers are not prepared with basic knowledge about students with autism, it leads to low teacher expectations and could be a precursor to them having challenges educating students with autism.

Perception and Attitudes of Teachers

Evidence exists that there is a relationship between teacher perceptions and attitudes toward inclusion that foster success and the adaptation of inclusion. Positive attitudes and perceptions motivate teachers to create the best learning environment to meet the needs of all students (Cook, 2004; Vaughan & Hogg, 2002). Prior research reports that teacher perceptions and experiences toward full inclusion for students with ASD have a major impact on their success in this program. Therefore, teachers are central to the inclusion process, and holding a positive attitude creates the power to overcome many obstacles and challenges in the inclusion process (Avramidis & Norwich, 2002; Haimour & Obaidat, 2013; Park & Chitiyo, 2011). Furthermore, Alasim and Paul (2019) argue that teacher preparation programs have a significant influence on teacher perceptions. These influences are linked to developing knowledge through resources and courses focused on inclusion such as professional practices, strategies, and proper implementation.

As mentioned by McCray and McHatton (2011), teachers can have negative attitudes toward including student with disabilities in the general education classroom. These negative assumptions are related to the ideas of lack of skill, knowledge and experiences of including students with disabilities in the general education setting. Thus, it is important to explore a teacher's capacity of teaching a student with ASD. Teachers' knowledge and experiences can affect their attitude toward the full inclusion of students with ASD.

Sharma, Loreman, and Forlin, (2012) in their study report that special education teachers should develop core areas of skill throughout their teacher preparation programs in order to teach effectively in inclusive classroom. These skills include having knowledge about students with disabilities characteristics, developing lesson instruction and strategies to meet individuals' needs, behavior management skills, and ability to work collaboratively with other teachers.

A study was conducted by Hernandez, Hueck and Charley, (2016) to examine general and special education teachers; it shows that special education teachers had more positive attitudes toward inclusion than general education teachers in terms of advantages and disadvantages for inclusion of students with ASD within general education classroom. Moreover, there were several concerns reported by general education teachers such as time consumed, class instruction, and class activities being disruption. Another concern was that inclusion must occur in segregated course rather than being embedded within the regular curriculum (Forlin, 2010). There are some assumptions about the inclusion of special education students in the mainstream courses, such as having children with disabilities in regular classes with neurotypical children will increase acceptance and allow the neurotypical children to act as a social model for their peers as well as increased social interaction between handicapped and non-handicapped children (Forlin, 2010; Huefner, 2000; McCray, & McHatton, 2011).

Čagran, and Schmidt (2011) argue that teachers' attitudes toward inclusion for students with disabilities are determined in part by the type of disabilities of their students. Teacher attitudes were more positive toward including students with physical impairments in their classroom. On the other hand, teachers held more negative attitudes toward inclusion of students with behavioral and emotional disorders as they reported that it is very stressful dealing with fear, anxiety, and anger that reduces teacher effectiveness in the classroom.

A positive attitude is important for proper implementation of inclusion. Therefore, all school staff, administration and teachers should receive continuing education by attending workshops, courses or conferences about inclusion on a regular basis. Inclusion is not a setting, it is a mixture of interaction, collaboration, open-mindedness and support. According to Forlin (2010) "during their training, teachers need to have developed positive values, supportive ideals, high moral principles and strong ethical understanding regarding accepting responsibility for educating all children regardless of the diversity" (p. 5).

Teacher Self-Efficacy

Educating students with ASD in inclusive classrooms can be stressful and challenging. Therefore, teachers should have a sense of confidence in their ability to overcome these challenges and achieve their target goals (Ahmmed et al., 2014; Ahsan et al., 2012; Siniscalco et al., 2013). Teacher preparation plays a crucial role in teachers developing self-efficacy. Teacher self-efficacy is an important element in the success and proper implementation of inclusion for students with ASD. Bandura (1997) states that teachers' perceived self-efficacy influences their teaching strategies to meet students' need and enhance students' success in their classrooms. According to Sharma, Loreman and Forlin, (2012) teachers with high self-efficacy are more likely to have positive attitudes toward inclusion for students with disabilities, thereby boosting

their students' academic success and social engagement. Alternatively, teachers with low self-efficacy consider implementing inclusion for students with disabilities stressful and challenging for both teacher and student, and they avoid these settings.

According to Bandura (1977), individuals develop their sense of self-efficacy through four sources: mastery experiences, when successful experiences increase individuals' self-efficacy; observation (model learning) wherein they observe other successful experiences; verbal persuasion, by way of promotion and encouragement from others; and physiological and influential state which determine how situations impact self-efficacy.

Latouche, and Gascoigne (2019), conducted a study evaluating the effectiveness of brief in-service training workshops aimed at increasing teachers' knowledge of ADHD and self-efficacy. The participants included 274 teachers from 10 schools. The results of their study show that teacher knowledge and self-efficacy increased after the workshop training. Therefore, intervention was effective at improving teacher knowledge and self-efficacy.

Montgomery and Mirenda (2014), conducted a study examining the relationship of three factors related to teacher self-efficacy that they believe are essential for successful inclusion of students with developmental disabilities. These factors include teacher self-efficacy (use of inclusive education, collaboration with others, and behavior management skills), teacher attitudes and teacher concerns about inclusion classroom. The study found that teachers with higher self-efficacy tended to have confidence in their ability to teach in inclusive education and had more positive attitudes about including student with disabilities in general education.

Dixon et al.'s (2014) study on teachers' understanding of differentiated instruction and self-efficacy, compared the result from two school districts. District one was a large white-collar demographic, located within a high socioeconomic status area. District two was included a

largely blue-collar demographic, with diverse students in a lower socioeconomic status area. Results demonstrated that teachers who had professional development in differentiated instruction, had a higher sense of self-efficacy. In general, if the school district believes in differentiation, they should be more supportive in providing professional development through workshops, training, conferences and collaboration with others in order to implement effective differentiation and inclusion in the classroom.

Teacher Beliefs Regarding Inclusion

Scholars have purported that teachers' classroom behavior, including their instruction, assessments, and decision-making, is directly related to their previously held belief systems and personal experiences (Munby, 1982; Pajares, 1992). Those beliefs, in turn, directly affect their confidence and self-efficacy when teaching disabled students within inclusive classrooms (Bandura, 1977; Pajares, 1992; Ross & Gray, 2006; Whitley, 2010). Thus far, studies regarding these belief systems toward teaching in inclusive classrooms are lacking in number and substance. Therefore, it is crucial that they should be further studied in depth in order to best influence those beliefs and change teachers' behaviors and perceptions, thereby making them more effective in inclusive classrooms.

Evidence shows that teachers' beliefs about learning pedagogies, collaboration with others, behavior, expectation and student diversity could change through knowledge improvement and experience. According to Fives, and Gill (2014), "...teachers' beliefs are shaped by engaging in specific actions and practices" (p. 69). Thus, the teacher preparation program plays an essential role in shaping teachers' beliefs by providing them with knowledge, managements strategies, teaching strategies and professional practices. Through these experiences, teachers should develop a sense of self-efficacy as theorized by Bandura (1997).

For instance, Swain, Nordness, and Leader-Janssen (2012) found that there were increases in preservice teacher beliefs about including students with special needs in general education after they completed 20 hours of coursework.

Silverman (2007) examined the epistemological beliefs of general and special education teachers toward inclusion. The participants in this study reported high levels of epistemological beliefs about including students with disabilities in general education classrooms. The study relied on previous research that identifies three factors that should be considered in order for teachers to developed positive attitudes toward inclusion; they must have high expectations of student with disabilities and believe that they can learn and achieve to the best of their abilities (Bishop & Jones, 2003; Weiner, 2003); they must have confidence in their abilities to teach students with disabilities in inclusive settings (Munby, 1982; Pajares, 1992); and they must work collaboratively with general education and special education teachers to support students with disabilities (Glatthorn, 1990).

In general, engaging teachers in specific practices seems to influence teachers' beliefs as well as increase the feeling of self-efficacy in their abilities (Bandura, 1997; Tschannen-Moran & McMaster, 2009; Yilmaz & Cavas, 2008). In a quasi-experimental study by Tschannen-Moran and McMaster, (2009) with teachers who received the professional training development without follow-up training (i.e., in-service support and resources), there were decreased teaching abilities and self-efficacy. Additionally, Lumpe et al. (2012) found that teachers' sense of self-efficacy increased after they participated in 80 hours of professional development programs. Teachers participated in weekly training and support throughout the academic year. The study findings demonstrate that engaging teachers in specific practices increases their sense of self-efficacy.

Inclusion for Students with Autism Spectrum Disorders

The main purpose of including students with disabilities in general education is to receive the instruction, services, and the necessary support that help them to participate fully with their peers in the general education classroom. Inclusion is the placement of children with disabilities into the general education setting (Goodall, 2014) and can be defined as including students with disabilities in the general education classroom for the purpose of engaging them socially and educationally with their peers (Fuchs, & Fuchs, 2015). IDEA legislation protects the rights of students for equal opportunities and free equal education for all students regardless of their ethnicity, race, economic status or religion. Moreover, IDEA ensure FAPE to students with disabilities with the help of provided funding to every state. Furthermore, the act guarantees IEPs (individualized education plan) to students who need them (Batten, 2005; Bhattacharya, 2010; Polat, 2011; Yell & Bateman, 2019). Likewise, it is possible to draw parallels between the RSEPI (Regulations of Special Education Programs and Institutes) the first legislation for student with disabilities in Saudi Arabia, and the IDEA since the latter was the basis for studies implemented by the Saudi Ministry of Education (Al-quraini, 2019). Hence, the RSEPI set a number of requirements, in particular in terms of providing early intervention programs, proper education for free, transition services, and IEPs (Individual Education Plan) to students with disabilities (Alquarini, 2011). In addition, another requirement from the RSEPI states that the schools for students with disabilities should be least restrictive (Alquarini, 2011). Inclusion turned out to be a matter of interest with the establishment of the Regular Education Initiative. The act offers powerful propositions for more emphasis on education for all students. It has also been a contentious debate among educators eliciting strong emotions on both sides. This debate is revealed in the position statements on inclusion issued by advocacy and educational groups

that defend the rights of persons with disabilities (Cipkin, & Rizza, 2010). Teaching students with autism how to build relationships and respect the feelings of others is probably of greater importance as compared to academic learning regarding their future (Stephenson et al, 2021). Since social competence is one of the biggest challenges for students with ASD, schools make every effort to include social awareness in the classroom setting regardless of whether the student with autism is in the special or general education classroom.

Fuchs and Fuchs (2015) suggests that for proper implementation of inclusion, there are elements that should be considered: (a) collaboration between teachers, other professionals, social workers, students' parents, and school administration; (b) continuous development of teachers' knowledge and awareness about using evidence-based practices and assistive technology; (c) support services; and (d) teacher enthusiasm as it is necessary for successful inclusion that teachers have positive attitudes towards including students with ASD in general education classrooms.

Summary

This chapter included a review of literature that is relevant to the study. The history of special education in the US and Saudi Arabia was presented. Then, the role of teacher preparation programs in developing teachers' beliefs by combining knowledge and experience to equip teachers with the knowledge and skills to teach in diverse classrooms was discussed. Finally, studies related to the beliefs of male elementary school special education and general education teachers regarding full inclusion for students with ASD in Saudi Arabia were reviewed.

Chapter Three: Methods

Qualitative Research

Qualitative research methodology provides in-depth information into the experiences of participants, as well as their attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions (Merriam, 1998; Patton, 2014). Furthermore, qualitative research has been used in research related to social sciences allows researchers to examine individuals' behavior, opinions, and experiences (Brinkman & Kvale, 2015). In this study, the researcher used a qualitative approach to dive deep into the participants' worlds and understandings in order to create a comprehensive understanding of the topic and phenomena (Bogdan & Bichlen, 1998). The study sought to gain personal sight of Saudi elementary special and general education teachers' beliefs about including students with ASD in the general education setting.

Research Design

This study investigated teachers' beliefs and experiences toward full inclusion for students with ASD in Saudi Arabia, through a qualitative interview design. Marshall and Rossman (2014) indicate that a qualitative approach was effective in the area of exploring individuals' knowledge, experiences, and beliefs that shape their perception of educating students with ASD in a general education setting. This qualitative study examined the beliefs and experiences of special education and general education teachers at elementary schools about full inclusion for students with ASD in Saudi Arabia. Lichtman (2013) illustrates the purpose of qualitative research as allowing "the investigator to interpret and bring to light an understanding

of particular subjects and events." The purpose of the interviews in this research was to provide insight into the beliefs, knowledge, experiences, opinions, and perceptions of teachers about inclusion of students with ASD in general education classroom (Brinkman & Kvale, 2015).

Through the interview, participants had the opportunity to share their stories using their own words, language, emotions, and voices (Lichtman, 2013). This study was conducted using semi-structured interviews as a guideline. This method was chosen because it gives the researcher space and flexibility to further delve into the interviewee's perspectives. Semi-structured interviews combine both structured and unstructured interview styles and offers the best from both types (Rabionet, 2011). The sample for this research included four general education teachers and four special education teachers in Saudi Arabia.

Creswell (2002) argues that there are many advantages of using interviews to gain information. The interview design allows researchers to collect in-depth information from the participants that could be difficult to gain by other means. The interviewer has control over the interview process and types of details to focus on. Furthermore, the interview might provide non-verbal information by observing the participants' responses and interactions throughout the interview. On the other hand, there are disadvantages of using interview. The interviewee might provide information that he thinks the interviewer want to hear. Additionally, the interviewer might ask leading question, and interruption can affect the interviewees' responses. When using this research design, it is important to mitigate those potential downfalls in order to collect true and unbiased information.

Participants and Sampling

The participants for this study were male in-service special and general education teachers in Tabuk City in the Northern Saudi Arabia. The sample included four special education

teachers teaching students with autism and four general education teachers who are working in public schools with special education classrooms for students with ASD in the public school building. There was no connection or relationship between the researcher and the participants before conducting the research. The participants of the study met the following selection criteria: (1) elementary school general education teachers and special education teachers who teach students with ASD (2) teachers with six years and above of teaching experiences (3) teachers who are working at a public school serving both general and special education students.

The study was conducted in two public schools in the educational districts of Tabuk City. The department of special education at the University of Tabuk is partnered with more than 22 schools that serve students with disabilities. This study focused on schools with students with moderate ASD, described as level 2 based on the DSM IV. There are five schools serving students with ASD, two of which are public schools. In these two schools, there are five to eight special education classrooms for students with ASD. These classrooms are located in separate buildings or sections away from the general education classrooms. These schools are located in different neighborhoods in order to gain insight into varying perspectives. The assigned school (A) is located at the center of the city and is a newly built school. The assigned school (B) is located in the city suburbs.

Purposive sampling was used for this study. Purposive sampling allows the researcher to select the participants that he/she thinks will help him/her to understand the topic or phenomena of interest (Cresswell, & Plano, 2011). Purposive sampling used in qualitative research allows for identifications and selection of rich information within limited resources (Patton, 2014). This is ideal for the current study due to its qualitative design and interview methods.

Participant Recruitment

Four steps were taken to conduct this study. The first step was getting approval for the study from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of the University of South Florida. In the second step, the planning and development research and study at the General Administration of Education in Tabuk Region was contacted to gain approval for the study. The third step was communicating with the assigned school and collecting information about the participants. The fourth and final steps involved contacting teachers via WhatsApp, to determine their availability and eligibility for the study by asking the following questions:

1. Are you currently teaching in a classroom with students with special needs, or teaching in a school that includes special classrooms for students with Autism?

2. Have you received in-service training on inclusion education practices?

3. For how many years have you been teaching?

Participant Information

1. Mohammed (Pseudonym)

Mohammed graduated in 2005 with a bachelor's degree in Math. He taught in middle school for five years, before he moved to teach in elementary school.

2. Mashari (Pseudonym)

Mashari received his bachelor's degree in Special Education in 2010. He worked in a private school for students with ASD, he was hired by the Ministry of Education as a special education teacher in elementary school.

3. Abdul (Pseudonym)

In 2011 Abdul completed his bachelor's degree in Special Education. Before teaching in an inclusion school, he taught in a special institute for students with disabilities for three years; now Abdul teaches in an elementary school

4. Khaled (Pseudonym)

Khaled received his bachelor's degree in Special Education in 2011. Khaled worked in a special institute for students with disabilities for three years. Nowadays, Khaled teaches in a special classroom in the general education school.

5. Salman (Pseudonym)

In the school year 2010-2011, Salman graduated with a bachelor's degree in Special Education. He was hired to teach at a special institution for students with disabilities.

6. Thamer (Pseudonym)

Thamer completed this bachelor's degree in Arabic language in 2010. He was teaching high school before he moved to the elementary school. During his teaching experience, he had interaction with special education teachers and students with autism. In 2018, he got his higher diploma in special education.

7. Adel (Pseudonym)

Adel completed his bachelor's degree in Arabic language in 2011. He is now teaching grades one and two in the elementary school.

8. Bader (Pseudonym)

In 2011 Bader completed his bachelor's degree in Math. He worked in high school for four years before he taught students at the elementary level.

Table One: Participant Demographics

Name	Major	Teaching classroom	Years of Experience
Mohammed	Math	General Classroom	Seventeen years
Mashari	Special education	Special Classroom	Eleven years
Abdul	Special education	Special Classroom	Ten years
Khaled	Special education	Special Classroom	Eleven years
Salman	Special education	Special Classroom	Twelve years
Thamer	Arabic language	General Classroom	Eleven years
Adel	Arabic language	General Classroom	Nine years
Bader	Math	General Classroom	Ten years

Data Collection

Data collection was essential for the research topic. In this study, interviews were the primary source of data. Semi-structured interviews were used to prompt responses and meaningful information. Every word that participants used during story-telling gives insight into their knowledge, experiences, beliefs, and perspectives (Seidman, 2006). Semi-structured interviews are commonly used to give researchers space and flexibility to engage and ask follow up or clarification questions. The researcher prepared some basic questions to engage the interviewee and let him speak, and the interviewer to changed or added questions based on the participants' responses (Brinkman & Kvale, 2015; Rabionet, 2011). It also gave the interviewer

the opportunity to ask questions based on the participants' responses to gain additional information (Gall & Borg, 2007).

Seidman (2006) shared that researchers should have developed communication skills in order to improve the quality of data collected through interviews. He recommended that researchers should listen more, talk less, wherein they must be active listeners and focus on what the interviewees say, without interruption, and allow the participants to talk and feel confident to reach what Seidman calls their "inner voice" (p. 78). The researcher opens up the conversation with the participants by asking specific questions and then allowing the participants to engage in the conversation, asking follow-up questions to help redirect the conversation and gain in-depth information.

Brinkmann and Kvale (2015) recommended that researchers should consider their ideas and expectations prior to the interview and be open to new information and experiences. The interviewer must show interest and respect to the participant's comments, opinions and experiences. The interviewer must focus on keeping the conversation on the research topic and subjects.

The interview design of this study followed Seidman (2006) and included conducting three separate interviews with each participant. This approach allows the interviewer to gain in-depth information related to the participants' experiences and knowledge. The goal of each interview is described below. All interviews were recorded. Interviews lasted 45-75 minutes. Seidman (2006) recommended, the best timeframe for each interview should be between 45-90, where more than 90 minutes is too long, and shorter than 45 minutes will not provide detailed data.

All interviews were conducted using Microsoft Teams. Each interview was scheduled based on the participants' availability. The interview questions were sent to each participant three days before the interview. This allowed participants to recall their experiences before the interview. Each interview was recorded so that the researcher could go back and listen to the recording. After each interview, data were analyzed, and transcripts were sent to the participants for member checking. Before the first interview, the researcher explained the study goals for the participants.

First Interview

The goal of the first interview was to explore the beliefs of general and special education teachers about the full inclusion of students with ASD in the general education classroom through their life experiences. Participants were asked to describe their childhood, society, schools, opinions about diversity, their experiences, their perceptions, and children with disabilities that they have previously worked with.

Second Interview

The goal of the second interview was to obtain in-depth details about how schooling and teacher preparation programs might have influenced both the general and special education teachers' beliefs about including students with ASD in the general education classroom. This helped determine to what extent teacher preparation program courses influenced or developed general and special education teachers' beliefs.

Third Interview

The goal of the third interview was to gain in-depth information about what factors general and special education teachers feel affect or develop their beliefs. This interview was helpful to draw a conclusion to what extent teacher preparation program courses and practicums

help teachers develop positive attitudes and beliefs toward including students with ASD in general education setting. Moreover, the participants had the chance to reflect and discuss their beliefs, perspectives and ideas regarding including students with ASD in the general education setting (see Appendix A, and B).

Follow up questions:

What is the connection between these factors?

Can you elaborate...?

Can you give me an example of this incident…?

What do you mean by this...?

Can you give an example...?

In which ways do you think this is important...?

Could you provide more information about this...?

Data Analysis

The main data resources were semi-structured interview transcripts of general and special education teachers. The data analysis was done in the Arabic language before it was written in English. The data were transcribed in Arabic. While I was reading the transcript I was highlighting any words or sentences to indicate potential codes. After coding the transcript, I reviewed the codes and searched for any codes that could merge into a theme. Then I translated the themes, sub-themes, and participants' quotes from Arabic to English. This process ensured that the meaning of the participant's words would not be altered through the language translation process. To improve credibility, member checking occurred by sending the themes and transcripts to the participants. Each participant received the transcript for his interviews. The participants were asked to review the transcripts and provide the researcher with their feedback

and indicate the information was accurate. Further, two doctoral candidates fluent in English and

Arabic reviewed the quotes and translation process. The first step of the peer review process was

reading the transcripts of the interview. The peers then reviewed the coeds and themes, checked

the data associated with each theme and checked the definition of each theme and sub-theme.

The peers checked the translation process and verified that the data and translations were

accurate. The data was analyzed using thematic analysis which is explained by Braun and Clarke

(2006) as, "A method for identifying, analyzing and reporting patterns within data." (p. 79).

According to Braun and Clarke (2006), there are six steps for thematic analysis: (a)

Familiarization with the Data, (b) Generating the Initial Codes, (c) Searching for Themes, (d)

Reviewing Themes, (e) Defining and Naming Themes, (f) Producing the Report.

First Step: Familiarization: Become familiar with the data

The familiarization step was the first opportunity for the researcher to know the data. I

believe preparing the questions, recording, and reading the transcripts helped me to be aware of

the data. Once I got each interview transcript, I listened to the interview audio recording and read

the transcripts carefully while comparing my notes to assist me in building my data. Reading the

data multiple times helped in making thorough knowledge of the data (Maguire & Delahunt,

2017).

Second Step: Generate initial codes

Inductive coding methods have been used to analyze interview transcripts. In inductive

coding, the researcher codes while reading the data to build the themes (Chandra & Shang,

2019). I coded each interview transcript separately. while I was reading, I was highlighting any

words and sentences that indicated potential codes. After coding all the transcripts, I combined

any codes that indicated the same idea into categories and labelled them.

Table Two: Example of Coded Data Segments with Sub-Theme

Text Segments	Codes	Sub-Themes
Him: I attend any courses or conferences about autism out of my pocket. I have to develop my knowledge and skills to teach better.	Motivation	In-services Professional Development
Him: the time for practicum semester wasn't enough. They should make it two semester to gain more experience.	Teacher Preparation	Pre-service Teacher Preparation
Him: my neighbor's daughter has Down Syndrome. I only found out they had a child with a disability when she passed.	Personal Belief	Family

Third Step: Search for themes

In this step, I looked at my codes and searched for any codes that could merge to be one theme or might be a theme on their own. Then, I organized all combined codes into broader themes.

Fourth Step: Review themes

In the fourth step, I reviewed, modified, and finalized the themes. I gathered all the data that related to each theme. Then I read the data associated with each theme to insure the data supported the themes.

Fifth Step: Define themes

In this step, I defined the themes. I identified sub-themes with each theme and explained the interaction between the theme and sub-theme. Furthermore, I provided examples from the data that supported the definitions.

Final Step: Write-up

The final step was writing the results section. The researcher presented the themes, sub-themes, and their definitions. The themes and related sub-themes were described in detail.

Credibility of the Study

Regardless of the research approach, whether quantitative, qualitative, or mixed method, researchers seek to ensure valid and reliable data collection, analysis, and results. Maxwell (2013) defines validity as, "The correctness or credibility of a description, conclusion, explanation, interpretation, or other sort of account" (p. 122). To enhance the credibility of qualitative research, researchers utilize member checking, and peer reviews. Member checking occurs when the participants are involved in reviewing the transcription of their interview and confirming the accuracy of the collected data (Creswell & Miller, 2000). As a result, I emailed the transcript for each interview, along with my comments from the interview, and asked the participant to verify the data accuracy. Then I analyzed the data with the participant's comments before I wrote my conclusions.

To increase the validity of the research, peer review was utilized as one of the most effective strategies. Two doctoral candidates with experience in qualitative research and the field of special education examined the data and the manuscripts to check the themes and accurately reflect the data. Their feedback and suggestions have been considered.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical issues were carefully considered in this study. The participants were informed about confidentiality during the data collection, and presenting; their identities were kept anonymous by changing names, place, and city. Verbal consent was obtained from the participants before the first interview. To ensure transparency, an email was sent to each

participant. It contained an overview of the study purpose, and indicated that the researcher would address any questions that participants have about the study. Finally, the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of the University of South Florida approved the study.

Reflexivity Statement

In qualitative studies, researchers are required to examine themselves and consider the connection they have with the study and any conflict of interest that they might have. This approach involves researchers being self-aware of their biases in order to improve the credibility of findings (Attia & Edge, 2017; Probst, 2015). Therefore, reflexivity will be considered in all stages in this study during the data collection, data analysis, writing the findings, and discussion.

According to Galdas (2017), bias could be described as any type of influence that might result in the distortion of research results. Thus, Mruck and Breuer, (2003) recommends that qualitative researchers should describe their thoughts, decisions, experiences and actions throughout the study process. Likewise, Pessoa et al. (2019) argues that the relationship between the interviewee and interviewer should be built on trust and conformability, where the interviewee perceives the realities of their environment and social phenomena surrounding them without any influence of researcher's biases. Therefore, all of the responses of the participants should be recorded, and only the participants' responses during the data collection and analysis will be relied on.

Personal Interest

My interest in this area of special education dates back to my university career in my bachelors, masters, and doctoral degree in which I have been working in special education. My interest is in the area of inclusion for students with ASD. My teaching background is related to teaching elementary third and fourth grades students with ASD. I taught student with ASD in a

special institution designed for students with ASD and intellectual disabilities and special education classrooms in public education. Now, I am working as a teaching assistant at the University of Tabuk. The reason behind the change in my career is that I am looking for improvement. I believe the special education field in Saudi Arabia desperately needs development in the areas of legislation, education and services for students with disabilities to be more independent. Inclusion purposes are wide; they don't involve only students with disabilities; they also involve special and general education teachers, general education students, parents, society etc. My vision for the future after graduating from the University of South Florida is to work with preservice special education program development as well as within the school districts themselves. My goal is to improve preservice special education programs so that they can be more engaging with schools leading to an increase in the quality and equity of services for students with disabilities in my country. I worked with and observed preservice special education teachers, and I think sometimes their perspectives related to the inclusion of students with disabilities are limited. For instance, I observed students in the practicum semester and I asked them "do you consider your school as an inclusive one, and what is the goal of including students with disabilities in general education?" Most of their answers were "Yes" because they teach students with ASD in special education classrooms that exist in general education schools. However, these special education classrooms are in separate areas with separate buildings, teachers, administration, and there was no interaction between special education teachers and students with general education teachers. I believe the purpose of inclusion is to overcome all obstacles that prevent those with disabilities from engaging with their society so they can be independent in the future. Thus, there is a need for more research to be done in the area of inclusion in Saudi Arabia.

Chapter Four: Findings

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate beliefs Saudi Arabian general and special education teachers have regarding including students with ASD in general education classrooms, and how these beliefs influence teachers' performance and attitudes in association with student outcomes.

Research Questions

1. What are the beliefs of Saudi male elementary school general and special education teachers regarding the inclusion of students with ASD in the general education classroom?

2. What influences the development of the beliefs of Saudi male elementary school general and special education teachers regarding the inclusion of students with ASD in the general education classroom?

3. What do Saudi male elementary school general and special education teachers believe about their efficacy in teaching students with ASD in general education classrooms?

Qualitative research design with in-depth interviewing was used to explore the beliefs of special and general education teachers regarding full inclusion for students with ASD in Saudi Arabia. This chapter presents the findings of this study categorized into themes and related sub-themes. A summary of the findings is provided for each research question.

Themes and Sub-themes

Four themes with related sub-themes emerged from the data analysis. The four themes are 1) Lack of knowledge; 2) Self-efficacy; 3) Inadequate preparation for implementing inclusion; 4) Culture influences.

In this section, themes and sub-themes are discussed with supporting comments from the participants. The participant's quotes are in both language Arabic and English. Figure 2 presents Themes and Sub-Themes Map.

Table Three: Themes and Sub-Themes Map

Themes	Sub-themes
Lack of Knowledge	Limited Understanding of Students With Autism Spectrum Disorder
	Limited Understanding of Inclusion
Self-Efficacy	Teacher Beliefs
	Teaching experience
Inadequate Preparation for Implementing Inclusion	Pre-Service Teacher Preparation
	In-service Professional Development
	Professionalism
Culture Influences	Family Influences
	Religion influences

Theme One: Lack of Knowledge

This theme represents incidents provided by participants which revealed that teachers lack knowledge regarding students with ASD as well as knowledge of inclusion for students with ASD. This theme contains two sub-themes; limited understanding of the student with ASD and limited understanding of inclusion.

Sub-theme One: Limited Understanding of Students with ASD.

The sub-themes highlight the participants' lack of knowledge of children with the ASD. During the interviews, participants were asked about the characteristics of students with ASD, signs of potential ASD diagnosis, or their needs once diagnosed. For example, "Mohammed" described students with ASD as people who have difficulty in communication, who like routines, and who display repetitive behaviors.

Mohammed added, "I see them in the recess, they liked to stay alone. I remember a student during the recess walking in a circle and flipping his hands".

"أنا اشوفهم في الفسحة، هم يحبون انهم يكونون لحالهم. اتذكر طالب خلال الفسحة كان يمشي بشكل دائري ويكرك يدينه"

In the second interview, Mohammed mentioned his thoughts on schools' roles in providing sources of information about students with autism. He stated, "I believe the schools failed in providing information about students with ASD; so we as general education teachers and students can know what autism is so that we can engage students with ASD in school activities"

"أعتقد أن المدارس فشلت في توفير معلومات حول الطلاب الذين يعانون من اضطراب طيف التوحد؛ "حتى نتمكن نحن كمعلمين وطلاب في التعليم العام من معرفة ما هو مرض التوحد حتى نتمكن من إشراك الطلاب الذين يعانون من اضطراب طيف التوحد في الأنشطة المدرسية"

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Bader failed to define the student with ASD in the interview dialog saying "mmmm I don't know how to put this in words, but I can define the student with autism as a student who has major issue in this brain that leads to un-normal behavior such as rocking back and front, prefer to be alone"

"اممم ما أدرى كيف اصيغها بالكلمات لكن انا أقدر اعرف الطالب من ذوي التوحد بان لديه مشكله في عقله تخليه يسوي سلوكيات غير سوية مثل الرفرفة للأمام والخلف، وانه يفضل الوحدة"

Thamer and Adel shared similar understanding of the students with autism. For instance, Thamer mentioned a couple of autism signs such as "they like routine, don't use verbal language, and flap their hands". Also, Adel mentioned the autism signs such as they don't use eye contact, and liking to be separated in his own area. Moreover, Adel shared a story "In the recess, I saw a student with autism sitting alone flipping the car toy in his hand. I tried to talk with him by saying "Hi my name is Adel how are you, "but there was no response from him he didn't even look at me or stop flipping the car. It looks like he is deaf"

"في الفسحة، شفت طالب من ذوي العجزة لهاله في يده سيارة لعبة قاعد يقلبها. واتعهد اني اتكلم معه سلمت عليه، وقلت له انا اسمي عادل كيف حالك، لكن ما كان هناك اي رد منه حتى ما رفع راسه "وشاهدني او وقف لعب السيارة كانه كان اصم"

Sub-theme Two: Limited Understanding of Inclusion

The sub-theme illustrates the participants' limited understanding of inclusion during the interview when they were asked to define "inclusion." Participants showed a lack of understanding of the implementation and benefits of inclusion. For instance, Adel and Thamer defined inclusion as including students with disabilities in general education schools. Thamer shared, "… inclusion is the process where students with disabilities such as students with autism or intellectual disabilities were being included in regular classrooms for a period of time as math or Arabic classes."

"... الدمج هو العملية التي يتم فيها إدراج الطلاب ذوي الإعاقة مثل الطلاب المصابين بالتوحد أو الإعاقات الذهنية في الفصول الدراسية العادية لفترة من الوقت مثل دروس الرياضيات أو اللغة العربية".

Adel mentioned, "Inclusion is an action when the students with disabilities were included in the recess and school activities".

"الدمج هو إجراء يتم فيه إدراج الطلاب ذوي الإعاقة في فترة الاستراحة والأنشطة المدرسية"

Abdul and Salman argued the scarce information, standards, and support for implementing inclusion will negatively reflect on teachers' attitudes regarding inclusion. Abdul mentioned, "There is a lack of understanding of the inclusion and implantation of the inclusion with no support from the school district" (Abdul).

" هناك ضعف في المعلومات المرتبطة الدمج وكيفية تطبيقه. بدون اي دعم من إدارة التعليم "

Salman stated, "There was limited knowledge regarding inclusion in the teacher preparation program. Despite the information was limited, the resources were too old. I believe inclusion should be a core course for both general and special education teachers."

"كان هناك معلومات قليله جدا ومحدودة تتكلم عن الدمج في برامج اعداد المعلم. على الرغم من قله المعلومات حتى مصادر المعلومات قديمة جدا. أنا اعتقد بان الدمج يجب ان يدرس كماده مستقلة وتكون متطلب لمعلمين التعليم العام والتربية الخاصة"

Mohammed shared his story about how the education system is contradictory and confusing in implementing inclusion. He said,

"I have eleven years of experience as a math teacher. I taught on secondary, high, and now teaching elementary schools. I worked in a school where there were no services for students with disabilities. I worked in an inclusion school. There were two separate buildings for general education classrooms and special education classrooms. There was rarely interaction or communication between special education students and teachers and

general education students and teachers. Now, I work in a school that contains general and special education classrooms in the same building. There is a lot of interaction between teachers and students in the morning when the students line up before the first bell rings and in recess. Sometimes we have activities when students with autism interact with other students in general education. So, what is the difference between the inclusion in the two schools?".

"لدي أحد عشر عامًا من الخبرة كمدرس رياضيات. قمت بالتدريس في المرحلة الثانوية والثانوية والآن أقوم بالتدريس في المدارس الابتدائية. عملت في مدرسة لا توجد بها خدمات للطلاب ذوي الإعاقة. عملت في مدرسة الإدماج. كان هناك مبنيين منفصلين لفصول التعليم العام وفصول التعليم الخاص. ونادرا ما كان هناك تفاعل أو تواصل بين طلاب ومعلمي التعليم الخاص وبين طلاب ومعلمي التعليم العام. والآن أعمل في مدرسة تحتوي على فصول للتعليم العام والخاص في نفس المبنى. هناك تفاعل كبير بين المعلمين والطلاب في الصباح عندما يصطف الطلاب قبل رنين الجرس الأول وفي فترة الاستراحة. في بعض الأحيان يكون لدينا أنشطة عندما يتفاعل الطلاب المصابون بالتوحد مع الطلاب الآخرين في التعليم العام. فما الفرق بين الإدماج في المدرستين؟".

Theme Two: Self-Efficacy

Participants believe self-efficacy is influenced by many factors, especially teacher beliefs and teaching experience. This theme covered all experiences and situations associated with interacting with people with disabilities throughout participants' past life and present, which influenced their self-efficacy, beliefs, knowledge, and awareness regarding including students with disabilities in general classrooms. This theme contained two sub-themes, beliefs and related experience.

Sub-theme One: Teacher Beliefs

The majority of the participants stated their beliefs are an accumulation of experience, knowledge, religious value, and personal opinion. There were two points of view that appeared

during the interviews. First, teachers with high self-efficacy believes including students with ASD in general classrooms would be beneficial for students with ASD. Second, teachers with low self-efficacy believe students with ASD should be educated in special classes.

When Mohammed was asked to express his belief, his response was "I believe every student can learn and each one of them has his own way of learning. This embodies how prophet Muhammad dealt with the blind person when he asked him to give him an excuse to pray at home. Prophet Muhammad denied his request and asked him to pray at the mosque so he would not isolate himself from his society."

"أعتقد أن كل طالب يمكنه التعلم، ولكل منهم طريقته الخاصة في التعلم. وهذا مثال على تعامل النبي محمد مع الأعمى عندما طلب منه أن يأذن له بالصلاة في بيته. فرفض النبي محمد صلى الله عليه وسلم طلبه وطلب منه أن يصلي في المسجد حتى لا ينعزل عن جماعته".

During the interview Mohammed pointed out his perspective about the teacher's role in students' success. He stated, "If each teacher looks from a parental perspective, he would do his best in meeting student needs."

"إذا نظر كل معلم من وجهة نظر الوالدين، فإنه سيبذل قصارى جهده لتلبية احتياجات الطلاب".

Most participants mentioned that, many factors influencing and developing their beliefs such as interaction with students with ASD, new knowledge, positive experience with student with ASD etc.

Salma said, "My educational beliefs would continue to develop and change based on my teaching, interaction with children with ASD, and developing the education strategies. For instance, when I was a child the belief regarding children with disabilities was that they should stay at home and never go to school. Nowadays, change in beliefs and perspective toward

children with disabilities to be more engaged in society, I believe these changes are related to people's awareness about children with disabilities and their rights."

" معتقداتي التعليمية في تطور دائم والسبب يرجع الى اكتساب خبرات تعليمية جديده، تفاعلي مع الطلاب ذوي التوحد، التطور الدائم لاستراتيجيات التعلم. على سبيل المثال عندما كنت طفلا كان الاعتقاد السائد للأطفال ذوي الإعاقة بأنهم يقعدون في البيت ولا يروحون للمدارس. ولكن حاليا ومع تطور المنظومة التعليمية أصبح الاعتقاد السائد بان الأطفال ذوي الإعاقة لهم الحق بان يكونوا مدمجين في مجتمعاتهم وهذا يرجع لي الوعي بحقوق ومتطلبات ذوي الإعاقة"

Khaled perception of the teacher's belief was close to Salman's response. His response was, "I believe the teacher preparation courses and teaching experience simultaneously shaped my belief and increased my self-efficacy regarding teaching students with ASD in special or general classrooms. "mmm" Yes These factors motivate the teacher to do his best to reach his goal."

" اعتقد ان برامج اعداد المعلم وخبرتي في التدريس اثرن في تشكيل معتقدات عن التعليم وشعوري العالي بان عندي الكفاءة لتدريس طلاب ذوي التوحد في أي بيئة تعليميه تكون مناسبه لهم سواد كانت في الفصول الخاصه او الفصول العامة"

Mashari, Thamer, and Abdul expressed that, their experience as a teacher and interaction with people with disabilities increase their self-efficacy on teaching student with ASD in general education class. Mashari said, "I believe in myself and I feel confident regarding teaching diverse classrooms. I work hard on developing my knowledge, strategy, and behavior management. I attended conferences, workshops, and online courses to have the skills to create a motivated learning environment and help students succeed."

"أنا اؤمن بنفسي واشعر بالقدرة على تدريس مفصل متنوع. انا اشتغلت على نفسي وطورت من معلوماتي وطرق التدريس وإدارة السلوك. انا حضرت مؤتمرات وورش عمل ودورات أونلاين عشان املك المهارات الي تساعدني أنى اصنع بيئة تعليميه محفزه ومساعده الطلاب."

Thamer response was, "I believe I'm qualified enough to have students with autism in my class due to the daily interaction with them since their classroom is next door. I used to have some of them in my classroom when their teacher was absent. Also, I have a diploma in special education."

"اشعر باني ماهل كفأيه بان يكون عندي طلاب من ذوي التوحد في الفصل. هذا يرجع لأني كل يوم اشوفهم ويتكلم معهم احيانا لان فصلهم جنب فصلي. وأحيانا اذا غاب مدرسهم يجيبونهم عندي في الفصل. ايضا انا عندي دبلوم في التربية الخاصه."

Similarly, Abdul shared, " I feel comfortable in my ability to teach and it is my job to teach and meet all student's needs to learn. However, having a student with autism in my classroom is a challenge that I'm willing to take. I have to attend courses to understand the student with autism so I can prepare lessons and activities that fit his needs."

" أشعر بالراحة في قدرتي على التدريس ومن وظيفتي التدريس وتلبية جميع الطلاب الذين يحتاجون إلى التعلم. ومع ذلك، فإن وجود طالب مصاب بالتوحد في الفصل الدراسي الخاص بي يمثل تحديًا وأنا على استعداد لخوضه. يجب على حضور الدورات التدريبية "فهم الطالب المصاب بالتوحد حتى أتمكن من إعداد دروس وأنشطة تناسب احتياجاته."

Some of the participants don't have any experience with people with disabilities, which reflects on their responses. For instance, Bader response to the question "what is the best education environment for students with disabilities? was," I believe the best educational environment for students with disabilities is special institutions or special classrooms in public education. Including students with disabilities in general education will require more work and time from the teacher and that would affect the teacher's performance in the class and another student's opportunity to learn. "Most of the student in general education needs less than 45 minutes to learn the lesson (45 minutes is the time for each class). On the other hand, the students with disabilities may need more than the class to learn the lesson. You got my point."

"اعتقد ان أفضل بيئة تعليميه للطلاب من ذوي الإعاقة هي معاهد التربية الخاصه وفصول التربية الخاصه في المدارس العامة. ضم الطلاب من ذوي الإعاقة في الفصول العامة يتطلب عمل أكثر ووقت أكثر من المعلم وهذا راح يؤثر على اداء المعلم في الفصل وعلى فرص الطلاب الاخرين في التعليم. المقابل " ممكن تعطيني مثال" نعم اكيد. معظم الطلاب في الفصول العامة يحتاجون اقل من ٤٥ دقيقه عشان يفهمون الدرس. مدة الحصه هي ٤٥ دقيقه. في الجهة الاخرى الطلاب من ذوي الإعاقة يمكن يحتاجون أكثر من حصة عشان يفهمون الدرس. عرفت وش اقصد."

Sub-theme Two: Related Experience

This sub-theme embodies the influence of prior experience with people with disabilities on teachers' acceptance of students with disabilities in their regular classroom. During the interview, Mohammed was asked if he had any experience or interaction with children with disabilities. His response was "Yes, our neighbor has a son with Down syndrome. He was 18 years old, but he played with us even though we were younger than him."

"نعم، جارتنا لديها ابن مصاب بمتلازمة داون. "كان عمره 18 عاما، لكنه كان يلعب معنا رغم أننا كنا أصغر منه."

 Mohammed shared his story with a person with disabilities, this incident has a positive reflection on his acceptance of students with ASD in his class. He shared, "The last school that I worked in and the school that I'm working in now in public which has classrooms for students with intellectual disability and autism. Usually, I tried to communicate with the student… I don't know if it's humanity maybe. Sometimes I help the special education teacher to teach math to students with intellectual disabilities."

"المدرسة الأخيرة التي عملت فيها والمدرسة التي أعمل فيها الآن بها فصول دراسية للطلاب ذوي الإعاقة الذهنية والتوحد. عادة، كنت أحاول التواصل مع الطالب... لا أعلم ربما هي الإنسانية. أحيانًا أساعد معلم التربية الخاصة في تدريس الرياضيات للطلاب ذوي الإعاقة الذهنية."

At the beginning of the second interview, Mohammed was asked if he recalled any incident that he wanted to add. He added, "Oh god, I remember in the first or second year as a

teacher. There was a kid with Down syndrome who entered the school every day and the teachers and principal asked him to leave the school. Back in those days' students with disabilities were educated in special institutions. I felt sorry for him, someday I saw him and I gave him a book and I signed and put a star shape in it. He was very happy. So, I asked the teachers if they see him again to sign his book and put a star in it."

"يا إلهي، أتذكر في السنة الأولى أو الثانية كمدرس. كان هناك طفل مصاب بمتلازمة داون يدخل المدرسة كل يوم وكان المعلمون والمدير يطلبون منه مغادرة المدرسة. في تلك الأيام، كان الطلاب ذوو الإعاقة يتلقون تعليمهم في مؤسسات خاصة. شعرت بالأسف عليه، وفي يوم من الأيام رأيته وأعطيته كتابًا ووقعت عليه ووضعت فيه شكل نجمة. وكان سعيدا جدا. فطلبت من الأساتذة إذا رأوه مرة أخرى أن يوقعوا على كتابه ويضعوا نجمة فيه."

Similarly, Abdul shared, "My interest in special education goes back when I was a child. There was a child with an intellectual disability who always played soccer and other games. He was older than me but didn't know how to read, write or use the money at the store. So, I go with these questions to my uncle who has a Ph.D. in special education looking for the answer."

" اهتمامي في التربية الخاصة يرجع لأيام الطفولة. كان فيه طفل من ذوي الإعاقة الفكرية دايم يلعب معنا كوره. كان أكبر مني ولكن ما يعرف يقرا او يكتب او انه يتعامل بالفلوس. كانت هناك تساؤلات كثيره عن الشخص هذا وكنت اروح لخالي ادور إجابات لهذه الأسئلة بحكم خالي دكتور في الربية الخاصه."

Similarly, Thamer shared positive experiences with students with disabilities. He said "I teach first-grade students, and next to my class, there is a special classroom for students with autism. I never saw a person with autism before so I got curious. I asked the special education teacher about autism and how it happened, how they can teach students with autism if some of them cannot talk or communicate with the teacher etc. after a while I got a diploma in special education."

"انا ادرس الفصل الاول الابتدائي، جنب الفصل الي ادرس فيه، فيه فصل للتربية الخاصه فيه طلاب من ذوي التوحد. ما قد شفت شخص مصاب بالتوحد من قبل عشان كذا شدني الفضول. سألت معلم التربية الخاصه عن التوحد كيف يحدث، كيف يمكن انهم يدرسون طالب من ذوي التوحد إذا كان بعضهم ما يتكلمون او يتواصلون مع المعلم الخ، بعد فتره حصلت على دبلوم في التربية الخاصه."

Salman shared that, segregation made him interested in special education. He said "There were students with intellectual disabilities in our elementary school. They were older than us, but when I went to high school I never saw them again. This made me curious, as to why they were in different classrooms, so I moved from one classroom to another. Why are they still in the same classroom?"

"كان هناك طلاب من ذوي الإعاقات الذهنية في مدرستنا الابتدائية. وكانوا أكبر سناً منا، ولكن عندما ذهبت إلى المدرسة الثانوية لم أرهم مرة أخرى. وقد أثار هذا فضولي لمعرفة سبب وجودهم في فصول دراسية مختلفة، لذلك انتقلت من أحد الفصول الدراسية "من فصل دراسي إلى آخر. لماذا لا يزالون في نفس الفصل الدراسي؟"

Mashari mentioned a critical incident that he observed. He said, "… incident affected me as a kid and still remember it, on that day I promised myself to help and support everyone in need especially children with disabilities so I became a special education teacher. It happened with my cousin, she has Down syndrome. There were kids bullying her, they asked her to drink water. She doesn't have the senses of being full so she kept drinking until she threw up. They were laughing at her."

"حادثة أثرت فيّ عندما كنت طفلاً وما زلت أذكرها، في ذلك اليوم قطعت على نفسي عهداً بمساعدة ودعم كل من يحتاج وخاصة الأطفال ذوي الإعاقة، فأصبحت معلمة تربية خاصة. لقد حدث ذلك مع ابنة عمي، فهي مصابة بمتلازمة داون. كان هناك أطفال يتنمرون عليها، ويطلبون منها شرب الماء. ليست لديها حواس حميدة كاملة لذا استمرت في الشرب حتى تقيأت. كانوا يضحكون عليها."

Theme Three: Inadequate Preparation of Implementing Inclusion

This theme spotlighted the inadequacy of the teacher preparation program regarding inclusion. Participants believe this not only reflects on their preparation, but also on their abilities, beliefs, self-efficacy, and knowledge regarding inclusion practices. This theme had three sub-themes teacher preparation program, professional development, and professionalism.

Sub-theme One: Teacher Preparation Program

This sub-theme indicates teachers' sense of lack of teacher preparation programs for educating pre-service teachers about inclusion practices. Most participants agreed that the teacher preparation program failed in preparing teachers for implementing inclusion. They believe the program needs to be updated regarding books, harmony between theoretical and practical aspects, and evidence-based practices.

Salman and Mashari mentioned the same point of criticizing the teacher preparation program regarding the program textbook.

Salman shared, "… I believe the program plan should be updated due to the repetitive content of the courses. For example, I have taken an entrance to behavioral disorder course which is similar to the course I took in the previous semester. The book, articles, and even the assignments are the same."

"اعتقد ان خطة البرنامج في حاجه الى تطوير. لان بعض المواد تتكرر عليك، مثلا ماده مدخل الاضطرابات السلوكية اخذتها مرتين باسم مختلف ولكن نفس الكتاب والبحوث حتى الواجبات نفسها"

Similarly, Mashari said, "The required books were very old and mostly contained the same information. I will give an example. In the first semester, I took a course called Entrance to Special Education. In this course, I studied all about disabilities. In the third semester, I took counseling families who have children with disabilities. This book is similar to the book I took

for entrance to special education with limited information about counseling the family. And this also happens with course curriculum and instruction."

"الكتب المتطلبة كانت مره قديمة واغلبها تحتوي على نفس المعلومات. راح اعطيك مثال، في اول ترم لي اخذت مادة مدخل الى التربية الخاصة. في هذه المادة درست كل المعلومات عن الاعاقات. وفي الفصل الثالث درست ماده ارشاد اسر ذوي الاعاقات. برضوا كان الكتاب يتكلم عن الاعاقات نفس ما اخذت في ماده مدخل للتربية الخاصه مع زيادة بعض الصفحات تتكلم عن الارشاد. وهذا ينطبق أيضا على مادة مناج وطرق تريس ذوي الإعاقة."

In the Second interview, Mashari started with this statement, "… the practicum course was short. We did not get a good time to gain experience."

''الميداني كان مره قصير. ما كان عندنا الوقت الكافي للاكتساب الخبرة."

Participants discussed the knowledge gap between the program's theoretical knowledge and practical. Khaled shared, "There is poor coordination between the theoretical information and practical. We spent seven semesters taking theoretical and general information about disabilities. The eighth semester was practicum which we engaged with active teaching and interaction with students with disabilities. I remember the first reaction for my colleague and I were shocked to be responsible for teaching students with autism. I believe if the program engaging the student as early as the first semester to visit schools and observe actual teaching would increase them draw the big picture about the school environment."

"هناك ضعف في التنسيق بين الجانب النظري والجانب العملي في برنامج التربية الخاصة. لان الطالب يدرس سبع اترام كلها نظري ويتخصص في اخر ترم يمون الميداني. أتذكر كيف كانت نظرتي انا وزملائي في اول يوم دوام كانت صدمه. ما توقعنا ان التدريس بيكون كذا. اعتقد يجب على تطوير البرنامج وان تكون هناك زيارات للمدارس في اول ترم. كذا الطالب راح يكون عنده الفكرة الكافية عن طبيعة العمل ويكون عنده تصور عن البيئة التعلمية."

Abdul added on the same point, "undoubtedly the courses need to be updated. "ahhh" I believe, every semester student should have a course where they visit school and observe real active teaching."

"لا شك أن المواضيع بحاجة إلى التطوير. نعم، أعتقد أنه يجب على الطلاب أخذ مادة كل فصل دراسي لزيارة المدرسة ومراقبة المعلم."

Furthermore, participants revealed that their program doesn't have any courses related to disabilities or diversity. Mohammed shared, "There were no courses related to students with disabilities in our program."

"ما كان هناك اي مواد تتعلق بالطلاب من ذوي الاعاقة"

Sub-theme Two: Professional Development

This sub-theme limited training, support or available resources participants had while they were teaching. In this sub-theme, I let the participants reflect on what they think of professional training in their school. Mohammed said "There is absence of professional training in the school that I'm working in. The last offer I received to attend training was last year or the year before. Most of the professional training is outside the city and I have thirty students. I can't leave them for a period of time". Also Mohammed added, "There is no substitute teacher in the school."

"لا يوجد تدريب احترافي في المدرسة التي أعمل بها. آخر عرض تلقيته لحضور التدريب كان العام الماضي أو العام الذي سبقه. معظم التدريب المهني يكون خارج المدينة ولدي ثلاثون طالباً ولا أستطيع تركهم لفترة من الوقت."

Salman expressed that the training he received through workshops did not add anything to his previous knowledge. He said, "Once I attended a workshop titled Strategies for engaging students with disabilities, it was the repetitive information from the teacher preparation program.

However, I believe the workshop needs to be updated with new strategies based on evidence-based practices."

"حضرت ورشة عمل بعنوان استراتيجيات دمج الطلاب ذوي الإعاقة. تم نسخ جميع المعلومات من مواد برنامج إعداد المعلم. أعتقد أن ورش العمل يجب أن تعتمد على ما يعرف بالممارسات المبنية على الأدلة."

Abdul expressed that a focus on new research is needed to make professional development more relevant. He shared, "I believe the in-service development should be reorganized, to be more professional based on the newest research-based and frequent. Therefore, teachers will be aware of the newest research related to their education field."

" اعتقد ان الدورات التدريبية ممنهجه وانا تعتمد الى أحدث الدراسات وان تعطى بشكل متكرر. وبالتالي يصبح المعلم مطلع وملم بالأبحاث الجديدة كلن على حسب تخصصه"

Mashari reflected that the geographical location of the school might be a factor contributing to the lack of professional development focused on autism and Khaled felt that the presenters lacked qualifications specific to autism. Mashari shared, "This year I will complete my 10th year as a special education teacher. There was only one workshop about autism, but when I went to the workshop most of the time they talked about learning disabilities with few and general information about autism. Maybe because we live in a small city there is a lack of professional development."

"السنة هذي راح أكمل عشر سنوات لي كمدرس توحد. كان هناك دوراه عن التوحد. ولمى رحت لها كانت اغلب المعلومات الي تناقش معلومات متعلقة بصعوبات التعلم واخر الوقت تلكم عن التوحد بمعلومات عامه. ربما انا نعيش في مدينة صغيرة هناك نقص في الدورات."

Khaled added, "oh, listen to this situation, there is no standard on who will present or deliver the professional development. For example, I attended a workshop about communication

with students with disabilities. The lecturer is a general education teacher. All the presented

information was basic and general. The benefit from this workshop was zero."

"آه، اسمع للموقف هذا. ليس هناك أي معايير للشخص الي يبي يسوي ورشة عمل او دوره. مثال، انا حضرت ورشة عمل

عن التواصل الطلاب من ذوي الإعاقة. المقدم كان مدرس تعليم عام. كل المعلومات الي يعرضها كانت معلومات عامه كل

الناس

تعرفها."

Sub-theme Three: Professionalism

The majority of the participants agreed that professionalism has a noticeable impact in

the special education field. Salman and Khaled argue the importance of professionalism related

to making decisions. They refer to people with great teaching experience and knowledge in the

field of special education.

Salman expressed that the important of professionalism on policy makers. He stated,

"most of the staff in the department of policy makers and legislations at the ministry of education

in Saudi Arabia are ether special education teachers who had few years of teaching experience or

general education teacher with no background in special education field."

"معظم العاملين في قسم صانعي القوانين والتشريعات بوزارة التعليم في المملكة العربية السعودية هم معلمو التربية الخاصة

الذين لديهم سنوات قليلة من الخبرة في التدريس أو معلمو التعليم العام ليس لديهم خلفية في مجال التربية الخاص."

Similarly, Khaled stated "From my point of view, it is a huge mistake when you hire a

general education teacher or person with no background in special education as a head of the

special education department in the Ministry of Education or schools district. His lack of

knowledge and experience will affect the support and services that teacher and student should

receive."

"من وجهة نظري، خطأ كبير إنك توظف مدرس تعليم عام او شخص بدون خبرة في التربية الخاصه بوظيفة مدير إدارة التربية الخاصه في الوزارة او مدير إدارة التربية الخاصه في ادارة التعليم. عدم معرفته وقلت خبرته قد تأثر على الدعم والخدمات المقدمة للمعلمين والطلاب."

Mashari cited a lack of professionalism reflected in the failure to provide adequate supplies and technology to teachers whose classrooms had students with autism: "... the classroom wasn't ready to teach a student with autism in it. There were no learning tools such as blocks, laptops, or learning toys that we could use to teach students with autism. I contacted the school district, their response was we would send it to your schools. After waiting for three months I drove one hours and 30 minutes to Tabuk school district to get what I needed for my class. This wasn't professional and it's not the teacher's responsibility, the school district should provide everything that would help students to learn."

"الفصل ما كان مهيأ لتدريس الطلاب من ذوي التوحد فيه. ما كان هناك وسائل تعليميه مثل مكعبات او العاب تعليمة ممكن ان تستخدم في تعليم الطلاب من ذوي التوحد. اتصلت بإدارة التعليم وردهم كان انا راح نرسل للمدرسة. بعد ما انتظرت ثلاث شهور سقت السيارة لمدة ساعة ونص الى ادارة التعليم في تبوك عشان اخذ وش احتاجه للفصل. هذا موب مهني ماهي من مهام المعلم، يجب على ادارة التعليم انها توفر كل الوسائل التي تساعد الطالب على التعلم"

Theme Four: Cultural Influences

This theme highlighted the motivation behind participants pursuing a teaching certificate. There are many factors participants mention that influence their decision to enter the education field. The participants' most mentioned motive is religion, humanity, and helping others. This theme arose from three sub-themes.

Sub-theme One: Family

Salman, Thamer, and Bader expressed a similar idea of family influences on becoming a teacher. For instance, Salman said, "…both of my parents were teachers so I believe they influenced me to choose teaching as a future job."

" الوالدين مدرسين اعتقد تأثرا فيهم اخترت الدريس كمهنتي المستقبلية"

Similarly, Bader shared, "My oldest brother is a teacher and he supported my decision to go to the College of Education."

" أخي الأكبر معلم هو الي كان يشجعني إني ادخل الى كلية التربية"

Khaled and Mashari expressed that having a family member with a disability influenced them to become special education teachers. Mashari shared, "Many reasons influenced my decision to special education at the University of Tabuk. First, my humanity and sympathy toward children with disabilities before I entered the program. Second, my cousin has a disability, and I believe seeing him and his family struggle influenced me to pursue special education. Third, honestly, salary is also the reason behind going to special education. As you know the salary for special education teachers is higher than for general education teachers."

" هناك أسباب كثيره وراء قراري في دراسة التربية الخاصة في جامعة تبوك. أولا انسانيتي وتعاطفي تجاه الأطفال من ذوي الإعاقة قبل دخولي للبرنامج. ثانيا، ابن عمي عنده إعاقة واعتقد شوفته يعانون أثر فيني وخلاني ادخل التربية الخاصة. ثالثا، لأكون معك صادق الراتب أحد الأسباب الي خلتين اختار التربية الخاصة. زي ما انت عارف راتب معلم التربية الخاصة اعلى من راتب المعلم العادي."

Similarly, Khaled shared his story of being a special education teacher, "I will never forget that day when my niece was diagnosed with autism. I was in my first year of college… Two reasons motivated me to specialize in autism. First, to understand my niece's needs and help

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my sister and the autism was a new major in Saudi Arabia and easy to find a job with good salary."

" ما راح أنسي هذاك اليوم يوم بنت اختي تشخصت بان معها توحد. كنت في اول سنه لي في الجامعة... هناك أسباب شجعتني إني ادخل التربية الخاصه. أولا، عشان فهم الي تمر فيه بنت اختي وأقدر اساعدهم. السبب الثاني، ان التوحد كان تخصص جديد عندنا في السعودية وكان أسهل في أنى الاقي وظفه والراتب عالي."

Sub-theme Two: Religion

Most of the participants mentioned that they have been influenced by religious common values such as helping others, kindness, etc. These values motivate them to be fair, and supportive and ensure the needs of everyone have been met in their class. Most of the participants shared the same idea of religion ensures equity referring to equal opportunities for people with disabilities. For instance, Abdul, Salman, and Bader stated, "Islam is my religion, one of the Islamic elements is that all people are the same."

"ديني هو الإسلام، واحده من تعاليم الإسلام هي الاحسان وان كل الناس سواسيه"

Similarly, Khaled stated, "I believe my religion guided my life. So it's a good deed supporting and helping others."

"أعتقد أن ديني هو الذي قاد حياتي. لذا فمن العمل الصالح دعم الآخرين ومساعدتهم."

Mashari, Thamir, and Bader mentioned, "I believe my religion influenced me to be a teacher. Islam sees teaching as a prophet job."

" انا اعتقد بان ديني أثر علي في ان أكون معلم. في الإسلام نرى ان التعليم هو عمل الأنبياء."

Salman shared "there is a story that happed with our prophet Mohammed that teach us about caring for others and no segregation. Someday a person who was a blind to the prophet Mohammed to asked him for an excuse to pray at his home because he is blind. The prophet Mohammed answer was if you can hear the call for prayer you should go to the mosque to pray.

Back on those days the mosque was not for praying only, it was the center of communication with other people in their communities. We learn from this story no matter what issue or disabilities you shouldn't be isolated from your community"

"هناك قصه حدثت مع نبينا محمد عليه الصلاة والسلام تعلمنا عن الاعتناء بالأخرين وعندم الانعزال عن المجتمع. في يوم ما اتى الى النبي شخص اعمى يطلب منه العذر للصلاة في بيته لكن النبي عليه الصالة والسلام سأله هل تسمع الاذان قال نعم قال إذا اجب الدعاء. في هذئك الايام كان المسجد موب بس للصلاة كان مكان تجمع للناس. لتعلم من هذه القصة بانه بغض النظر عن المشكلة الي تعاني منها او الإعاقة لا يجب ان تنعزل عن المجتمع"

Sub-theme Three: Parents Involvement

Most of the participants mentioned there is a lack of involvement and communication with students' parents. Mohammed shared "I recommend that the school district use an app to for communication with parents. Using my personal phone number for communicate with the parents, it's kind of annoying because sometimes I received call or text late at night"

" اقترح على إدارة التعليم بأن توفر ابلكيشن للتواصل بين المدرسين وأولياء الامور. استخدامنا لأرقامنا الشخصية للتواصل مع أولياء الامور مزعجا قليلا، بعض الايام تجينا اتصالات في وقت متأخر"

Salman and Abdul shared "sometimes you call the parent to discuss their child education challenges, they wouldn't come, they only come to school if there incident happened with their child"

" في بعض الأحيان نتصل بولي الامر لنناقش بعض الصعوبات التي تواجه الطفل ولكن ليس هناك أي تجاوب. بعض الإباء يأتون للمدرسة فقط إذا كان فيه مشكله تخص ابنهم"

Khaled shared "I had two experience with parent involved in their child education. I remember I had a student who has autism, every morning I check his backpack to check the note from his mom she was very responsible and caring about her child . She always asked what lesson did he take; did he follow the teacher order in the classroom. On the other hand, I had a student every

day I put my note in to his backpack and there is no response they didn't even open his backpack"

" انا عندي تجربتين مع متابعة أولياء الامور لأطفالهم. اذكر كان عندي طالب من ذوي التوحد، كل يوم الصباح اشيك على الشنطة واحصل ملاحظه من امه كان جدا مهتمة ومسؤوله عن تعليم طفلها. دايم تسال وش الدرس الي اخذه هل يتبع تعليمات المدرس في الفصل. في المقابل كان عندي طالب كنت أرسل معه ملاحظه بالشنطة لكن ما فيه أي اجابه من الاهل، ما توقع انهم يفتحون الشنطة"

Summary of Findings

This chapter presented the findings gathered from analyzing eight Saudi general and special education teachers' responses to interview questions regarding their experiences teaching students with autism. The six-step thematic analysis approach provided by Braun & Clarke (2006) was used as follows: 1: Become familiar with the data; 2: Generate the codes; 3: Search for themes; 4: Review themes; 5: Define themes; and 6: Writing.

The purpose of this study was to explore general and special education teacher's beliefs regarding full inclusion for student with ASD. The findings were carefully categorized with the three research questions; a) What are the beliefs of Saudi male elementary school general and special education teachers regarding the inclusion of students with ASD in the general education classroom? B) What influences the development of the beliefs of Saudi male elementary school general and special education teachers regarding the inclusion of students with ASD in the general education classroom? and c) What do Saudi male elementary school general and special education teachers believe about their efficacy in teaching students with ASD in general education classrooms?

Research Question 1: What are the beliefs of Saudi male elementary school general and special education teachers regarding the inclusion of students with ASD in the general education classroom?

Most of the Saudi general and special education teachers in this study hold positive beliefs regarding including students with ASD in general education settings. These beliefs were associated with participant's positive past experiences with students with ASD or disabilities in general, religion belief, and humanitarian work. However, two general education teachers believe the special institution is the best environment for educating student with ASD regardless to the type of the ASD category.

Research Question 2: What influences the development of the beliefs of Saudi male elementary school general and special education teachers regarding the inclusion of students with ASD in the general education classroom?

Most of the participants expressed their beliefs developed cumulatively through knowledge and experiences in teacher preparation programs, religion, culture, and family. Furthermore, six participants reported that religion values that all people are equal and glorification of teaching as a prophet's job. Most of the participants who have positive experience with people with ASD and reports the desire of developing their knowledge and skills believes all students should be educated in public schools with no discrimination based on disabilities unless the special classroom is the best learning environment for them.

Research Question 3: What do Saudi male elementary school general and special education teachers believe about their efficacy in teaching students with ASD in general education classrooms?

Most of the participants reported high self-efficacy regarding including students with ASD in general education classrooms. Two participants explained their high self-efficacy associated with the knowledge and experiences during their teacher preparation program. Furthermore, four participants expressed their comfort with teaching in diverse classrooms and relayed that including students with ASD is associated with their teaching experiences. However, some participants expanded their response to include requests from school districts to provide courses and resources related the ASD and how to teach students with ASD. Two participants reported low self-efficacy and mentioned including student with ASD will increase the pressure on the teacher and students as well. They ended their response with "Students with ASD should be educated in special classrooms" and "student in general education would lose their opportunity to learn because a student with ASD will take more time from the teacher.

Chapter Five: Discussion

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore the beliefs of general and special education teachers regarding the full inclusion of students with ASD in general education classrooms in Saudi Arabia. Three research questions guided this study:

1. What are the beliefs of Saudi male elementary school general and special education teachers regarding the inclusion of students with ASD in the general education classroom?

2. What influences the development of the beliefs of Saudi male elementary school general and special education teachers regarding the inclusion of students with ASD in the general education classroom?

3. What do Saudi male elementary school general and special education teachers believe about their efficacy in teaching students with ASD in general education classrooms?

This chapter provides a discussion of the main findings of the study, the implications of the study, the limitations of the study and a conclusion.

In this section, the findings of the investigation into the beliefs of Saudi general and special education teachers regarding including students with ASD in general education setting are discussed. Several main findings related to teachers' beliefs regarding full inclusion for students with ASD, teachers' self-efficacy in teaching students with ASD in their classroom, and teacher preparation programs concerning developing teacher beliefs resulted from this study.

Saudi General Education Teachers' Knowledge About Students with Autism

The findings indicate that Saudi general education teachers who participated in this study have a limited understanding of students with disabilities in general and specifically students with ASD. The findings show similarities with prior research on general education teachers. Further, the literature review supports the idea that general education teachers have limited knowledge and skills regarding educating students with ASD in their classes. Thus, for the current study, two participants had a general and limited knowledge of students with ASD. They had experience with students were at different ends of the spectrum but displayed characteristics such as need for routine and inability to speak. Moreover, two participants did say they had an interaction with a student with ASD. One participant said he had a student with ASD in his class for 40 minutes weekly for 5 weeks. Another participant mentioned participating in school activities while students with ASD were involved. In contrast, two participants did not have information about or interactions with students with ASD before. This is similar to Aldabas's (2015) findings that general education teachers lack knowledge about students with ASD. Alzahrani, and Brigham (2017) also stated that general education teachers lack knowledge of the disabilities and this is related to their teacher preparation programs not having any courses to discuss students with disabilities.

The findings of this study are consistent with the existing literature indicating general education teachers have limited knowledge about disabilities in general, especially regarding the needs of students with ASD. However, this study adds to the existing literature by highlighting the knowledge gap among Saudi general education teachers related to students with disabilities and their educational needs. For instance, some general education teachers' responses highlighted the lack of courses, knowledge, and skills gained through their program. These limitations

become challenges for some of them to adapt to a diverse classroom. Furthermore, it has important implications for future research and professional development of teacher preparation programs within the Saudi Education Department.

Saudi Teachers' Knowledge and Inclusion Practices in General Education Classrooms

The results of the study demonstrated that the participants' beliefs regarding including students with ASD in general education classrooms are relativistic at best. The participants' responses indicated that their knowledge and practice of implementing inclusion were limited, and they experienced a lack of resources and support affecting their implementation of inclusion in the general education setting. Therefore, the teachers that did understand the needs of students with disabilities theoretically were unable to provide for those needs in practice within the classroom.

Participants reported that they believed implementing inclusion requires qualified teachers, which would require changes in the teachers' preparation program for both general and special education teachers. For example, participant Salman said, "There was limited knowledge given regarding inclusion in the teacher preparation program." Another participant, Mohammed, stated, "The term of inclusion is new to me." Similarly, Thamer shared that, "There was no course that addressed the topic of inclusion in the program." Salman, Mohammed, and Thamer's responses are consistent with the results of Alzahrani, and Brigham (2017) who found that teachers hold negative attitudes regarding inclusion for students with ASD due to their belief that they are not qualified to teach inclusion classes. Participants argue that teacher preparation programs' lack of courses and experiences related to inclusion extend their challenges of adapting to diversity in classes; however, they recognized that they did not have the knowledge to do so effectively.

Additionally, participants mentioned the lack of legislation and resources related to implementing inclusion. For instance, Khaled said, "The standards of implementing inclusion are not clear." A second participant, Abdul, shared "Each school district applies the term of inclusion in different situations. That has a negative influence on understanding and implementing inclusion." Another participant, Mashari, mentioned, "The resources related to including students with disabilities are so limited." This is consistent with Al-Kahtani (2015) who found that teachers experienced key challenges in implementing proper inclusion due to deficiencies in the laws and limited resources. Without across-the-board legislation regarding inclusion of students with disabilities, teachers are unsure of their regions' laws and requirements, and furthermore there is no inclusion code for school districts to follow. As a result, each school district defines and implements inclusion differently.

Another finding of this study was that the school environment has a great influence on implementing inclusion successfully. One participant, Bader expressed, "Including students with ASD or other disabilities in general education classrooms is a big step that I believe we are not prepared for yet. Even the schools' buildings are not ready and need some changes." Similarly, Abdul shared, "... most of the public schools are old buildings not accessible for students with wheelchairs." A third teacher, Thamer mentioned that class size affects teachers' desire and ability to teach inclusively. He shared, "It would be easier to include students with special needs like students with ASD in small-size classes. However, I have 38 students in my class, and it would be challenging to have even two or three students with disabilities like ASD. In this case, it becomes a challenge to meet all the students' needs in the class." It is clear from these testimonies that even if teachers are willing and educated about implementing inclusive classes, the size and setup of school buildings and classrooms make it very difficult if not impossible.

The findings of the current study are similar to prior literature, indicating teachers face challenges in implementing inclusion of students with disabilities, namely ASD within the general education classes. Many teachers showed limited knowledge related to the tenets of inclusion, including its theoretical principles but especially its implementation. Participants mentioned that there are no clear standards or rules of inclusion for schools across the board to ensure proper implications throughout the country. They also lamented the fact that even if they were prepared with theoretical knowledge, clear legislation and resources, schools are simply not prepared, physically, to support inclusive practices due to building structure and class size.

Self-Efficacy of Saudi Male Elementary School Teachers

The study findings demonstrated that teachers who were experienced with people with disabilities reported high self-efficacy in teaching students with ASD in general education classes. Furthermore, this coincides with the self-efficacy theory of exploring the interconnection of past events that influence participants' beliefs throughout their lifetimes. Bandura (1977) explained that the four resources of developing self-efficacy are: mastery experiences, observation, verbal and social experiences and emotional arousal. During the interviews participants shared some of these resources. For example, Mohammed shared, "In my first year of teaching, I had an incident with an intellectually disabled person where every day that he came to school, the teachers would ask him to leave. One day I saw him entering the school, then asked him to come with me to my classroom. I let him sit at a desk, and I gave him a notebook. After the class was over, I took the notebook and drew a star. He was so happy. I asked all the teachers in the school if they see him to just draw a star in his notebook as a form of encouragement. After a while, I read that he was enrolled in special education classes." Because of his experiences, Mohammed developed positive beliefs about students with disabilities, and he

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reported high self-efficacy in regards to teaching students with ASD in the general education classroom.

The findings suggest that the participants in this study who had experience with people with disabilities had developed positive beliefs regarding integration and inclusion. Many participants shared positive experiences with people with disabilities in their childhood, through their educational journey, or during their teaching. Mohammed shared an optimistic feeling regarding inclusion for students with ASD. He shared, "I have always said that if the teacher looks at his students as his own children, he will do his best to meet the students' needs, support, and be fair." His beliefs motivated him to include youth with intellectual disabilities in his classes. Abdul added, "I have the knowledge and positive teaching experience so yes, I'm confident about including students with ASD in my class." Similarly, Mashari stated, "I believe in myself and I feel confident regarding teaching diverse classrooms. I work hard on developing my knowledge, strategy, and behavior management." Mohamed, Abdul and Mashari's beliefs align with Alasim and Paul's (2019) study which reported that the knowledge and experience teachers are exposed to during their teacher preparation programs influence their development of positive beliefs about including students with ASD in general education settings.

Further, participants in this study pointed out that lack of knowledge, resources and support correlated with low self-efficacy. One participant, Bader, expressed, "I do not have knowledge about students with ASD, and I do not know where to go if I have questions related to their needs." Also, Mohammed shared that, "there is no interaction or connection between general education and special education administrations on spreading awareness of the disabilities." This viewpoint aligns with McCray and McHatton's (2011) study that indicated that

general education teachers reported negative attitudes and poor self-efficacy toward inclusion for students with disabilities. These negative attitudes are linked to limited knowledge of disabilities.

Another participant expressed that self-efficacy evolves over time with improvement in knowledge and experience. Salman said, "My educational beliefs would continue to develop and change based on my teaching, interaction with children with ASD and developing the education strategies." This sentiment echoes Fives and Gill's (2014) finding that teachers' beliefs are shaped throughout their interaction with students, new knowledge and experience.

The findings of this portion of this study related to research questions one and two align with prior research indicating that many general education teachers have low self-efficacy and beliefs regarding including students with ASD in general education. In particular, the majority of teachers had inadequate knowledge and experience with people with disabilities, especially those with ASD. Many participants reported that years of experience provided them with the skills to teach diverse classrooms. This is similar to the study done by Alasim and Paul (2019) which found that teachers with more teaching experiences hold more positive attitudes toward inclusion.

Preparation for Implementing Inclusion Education Practices at the Pre-Service and In-Service Levels

Participants' report concerns about inadequate preparation programs for enriching teachers with theoretical and practical knowledge and experiences for effective engagement in inclusion practices. Two main factors related to their concern were identified through the participants' dialogue. The first factor was the lack of courses addressing educating students with disabilities in a general education setting. The second factor was insufficient coordination between the theoretical knowledge and the practical training necessary in the teacher preparation

programs, highlighted by limited interaction with the students with disabilities in practicum during the last semester of the program. This is similar to Alzahrani and Brigham's (2017) study wherein they refer to barriers related to inclusion including inadequate preparation programs, redundancy of courses, lack of training, limited resources, and lack of courses addressing the inclusion of students with disabilities.

Participants in this study pointed out that the preparation programs desperately require updating. Participants voiced concerns related to the program textbooks containing outdated knowledge and repetitive information. They propose that special education courses throughout the country require the same textbooks and assignments regarding the inclusion of students with disabilities in the general education classrooms. This sentiment echoes Aldabas's (2015) study, which suggested reevaluating teacher preparation programs regarding program courses, knowledge, and effective practical training.

Similarly, participants shared that the limited professional development courses regarding inclusion of students with disabilities left many long-time teachers with outdated information and an inability to practice inclusion. Many of the other participants echoed that there was a lack of opportunities in participating in professional development such as courses or workshops, and when teachers do have the opportunities to attend the workshops, the takeaways are limited due to the information being repetitive and out-of-date. Participants expressed that successful inclusion required consistent professional development targeting teachers' knowledge and skills. This need mirrored findings by Latouche, and Gascoigne, (2019), who conducted a study evaluating the effectiveness of brief in-service training workshops aimed at increasing teachers' ADHD knowledge and self-efficacy. The results of their study found that teacher knowledge and

self-efficacy increased after the workshop training. Therefore, the intervention was effective at improving teacher knowledge and self-efficacy.

The findings of the current study are consistent with existing literature on the lack of preparation in terms of updated knowledge, practical training, and courses related to inclusion. This study provides insight into concerns regarding challenges faced by general and special education teachers during their preparation programs and in-service training.

Cultural Influences

The findings of this study indicated that cultural influences have a great effect on teachers' beliefs. Most participants reflected on how they developed beliefs in their lifetime in comparison with the changes due to new knowledge or experience they gained. Mohammed expressed how his family members had influenced his decision on becoming a teacher. He said, "…both of my parents were teachers, so I believe they influenced me to choose teaching as a future job." Similarly, Bader shared, "My oldest brother is a teacher, and he supported my decision to go to the College of Education.".

Further, participants agreed that their religious values shaped their decision of choosing education as their future career and their beliefs regarding the acceptance of students with ASD in their classrooms. Abdul shared, "Islam is my religion, and one of the Islamic tenets is that all people are the same." Also, Khaled added, "I believe my religion guided my life. So it's a good deed supporting and helping others." Thamer expressed that, "I believe my religion influenced me to be a teacher. Islam sees teaching as a job of a prophet."

Implications for Future Research

The findings of this study suggest that in-service teachers in Saudi Arabia need professional development that targets teachers' knowledge and necessary skills for effective

engagement in inclusive classrooms. To address this shortcoming, it is recommended that future research be conducted to develop training programs that effectively improve teachers' performance and ability to teach in inclusive classes. s. The findings of this study indicate that there are additional barriers beyond teacher beliefs that should be addressed for effective implementation of inclusion. These barriers include obstructive policies, structural impediments, financial issues, and environmental challenges. Any department that serves both general and special education should be included in the research, including teacher preparation programs, school districts and teachers to ensure and evaluate the effectiveness of the developed programs. It is crucial to include all stakeholders within school systems in order to provide the most effective inclusive classrooms for teachers, parents and, most importantly, students. Therefore, working collaboratively connects all of the pieces of the inclusion puzzle while creating and following all laws and standards that would promote an educational environment regarding including students with ASD in a general classroom setting.

The findings of this study suggest that current teacher preparation programs in Saudi Arabia do not effectively prepare teachers with the proper knowledge and skills to understand or implement inclusive classroom practices. Therefore, it is important that future research be conducted on the effectiveness of teacher preparation programs to identify specific areas for reform and provide a plan for necessary changes to improve the program's outcomes. These changes should ensure improvement in teachers' knowledge, skills, performance and self-efficacy that, together, decrease the gap between the program's theoretical training and field expectations and reality.

Further, the findings of this study align with prior literature indicating teacher beliefs and self-efficacy are correlated with their knowledge and ability to perceive challenges within their

inclusive classrooms. Future research requires evaluation of programs effectiveness in providing teachers with sufficient knowledge and field experience which will ultimately lead to an increase in teachers' sense of self-efficacy and beliefs regarding inclusive education practices.

Implications for Practice

The findings of the current study have significant implications for the education system, its practices and teacher preparation programs within Saudi Arabia. The government in Saudi Arabia is currently seeking development within the education system to ensure equal opportunities and the least restrictive environments for all students, including those with disabilities. The current percentage of disabled students educated in general education classrooms is three percent; the Ministry of Education in Saudi Arabia aims to reach 10 percent by the year 2030 (Ministry of Education, 2019). Results obtained in this study demonstrate that there are multiple modes of improving the educational environment for proper implementation of inclusion. For example, the study's participants' responses indicate a need to refine teacher preparation programs; suggestions include rebuilding the curriculums, early active observations of inclusive classrooms, and effective practicum experiences under professional supervision. Participants stated that teachers would be more likely to develop positive beliefs and high self-efficacy to teach diverse classrooms containing students with ASD if these things were implemented within teacher training programs. The current study suggests that courses including observation earlier in the program would allow for students to examine real-life experience of teaching classes with students with ASD.

The results of this study shed light on the need for professional development at the in-service level, which would equip teachers with knowledge and skills to increase their sense of self-efficacy and belief in having the ability to teach students with ASD in a general classroom.

It is necessary for teachers to feel supported and encouraged to move forward in implementing inclusion. Consistent professional courses or workshops would keep teachers up to date with the newest research, best practices, and strategies that address the needs of all stakeholders within the educational system, parents and students most of all. The Ministry of Education must, therefore, lead and standardize these developments to ensure the validity of these courses to improve teachers' performance.

Limitations

Limitations were present throughout the study. Hermeneutic limitations during the data analysis procedure occurred, as there are difficulties associated with translating. Since the study was conducted in Saudi Arabia, the primary resource for the study was interviews, and therefore the whole process was conducted in Arabic. Translation of some ideas or terms might result in possible misconceptions which affect the data validity. Furthermore, while the transcript and data analysis were processed in Arabic, then the themes were translated from Arabic to English, mistranslating might have occurred. To reduce this limitation, peer debriefing was employed by a doctoral candidate who specialized in special education and was fluent in both English and Arabic languages. He was asked to review the participants' quotes and ensure that the words used were appropriate in English and represented the meaning of the participants.

The second limitation that occurred is that some participants might not have felt comfortable relaying their true and complete thoughts regarding the study's questions. One of the major factors in this study is experience; asking participants personal questions might result in them feeling uncomfortable which could have led to responses that were incomplete or false. Thus, the participants were assured that privacy was essential and that participants in the study would remain anonymous, and only information would be shared with others. Most of the

participants agreed to video recording while being interviewed; however, two preferred their interview to be audio-only. Observing body language and facial expressions are important while conducting interviews, but the power of words overcomes this obstacle. Finally, all of the participants in this study were male, because the Saudi education system utilizes single-sex education. Therefore, the female perspective was not included or represented in this study.

Conclusion

This study aimed to explore the beliefs of Saudi elementary general and special education teachers regarding full inclusion for students with ASD in general education classrooms. The beliefs of teachers about class diversity and how they perceive their classrooms are important factors that could provide policymakers insight and data into how to improve teachers' performance. Despite the benefits for including students with ASD alongside their peers, it is important to investigate teachers' abilities to adapt to these students' needs and in their classes. The findings of the study indicate that participants had limited knowledge and understanding of implementing inclusion, and had doubts about their abilities to teach students with ASD in general education. Furthermore, participants suggested that the teacher preparation programs in Saudi Arabia desperately need reform. The program outcomes should enrich teachers with knowledge and skills to confidently teach and make decisions with higher self-efficacy.

Additionally, participants' comments revealed a lack of in-service professional development. For example, one participant reported that through his eight years of experience as an elementary teacher, there were few conferences or workshops that targeted students with ASD. Despite the limited opportunity to attend workshops, when teachers were able to attend, the information always repeated. Therefore, one of the current study's recommendations is

urgent professional development targeting teacher knowledge and skills that would result in increased teachers' self-efficacy to implement inclusive classroom practices.

This study was framed, in part, using the Self-Efficacy Theory (Bandura, 1977), which illustrates how humans develop their beliefs through their lifetime experiences. According to this theory by Bandura, teachers within the Saudi education system could achieve self-efficacy and belief in their ability to teach in inclusive practices through practical mastery, which could be provided during teacher training programs early and often; through observations, which again should be included frequently during training; encouragements, which should be offered by school leadership as well as in continued education post-graduation. Bandura (1977) also notes that situational experiences on a personal level impact self-efficacy, which can also be lessened through supportive administration and collaboration with all stakeholders. Considering the steps of developing self-efficacy outline a bigger picture of events that occurred in participants' lifetimes that developed and shaped their beliefs.

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Appendix A: Interview Protocol Question (Interview One)

Special Education Teacher	General Education Teacher

1. How have family, social life, religion, culture, and life experience influence you to become a teacher?
 	
    A. What is the connection between these factors?
 	
    B. Can you explain more ....
 	
2. Why did you choose to go to the college of education?
 	
    A. Can you give me an example of this incident?
 	
3. What are the factors that influenced you to go to special education?
 	
    A. What do you mean by this…
 	
    B. If you can go back and have to the same chance what will you do, and why?
 	
4. Have you had any health, economic, or social incident that impacted your lifestyle for period of time?
	1. How have family, social life, religion, culture, and life experience influence you to become a teacher?
	
	    A. What is the connection between these factors?
	
	    B. Can you Explain more ….
	
	2. Why did you choose to go to the college of education?
	
	    A. Can you give me an example of this incident?
	
	3. What are the factors that influenced you to go to the education field?
	
	    A. What do you mean by this…
	
	    B. If you can go back and have to the same chance what will you do, and why?
	
	4. Have you had any health, economic, or social incident that impacted your lifestyle for period of time?

A. How does that made you feel.

B. In what way your family or friends support you.

5. What experiences did you have in your lifetime that have influenced in relation to Education?

    A. Can you give me an example?

6. When you were a young, were their students with disabilities in your school or neighborhood?

A. May you describe your perception of them.

B. Would you compare your perception of them in past and now, is it different? explain Why and how?

7. Can you talk about your experience when you were a student, your relationship with colleague, and teachers?

A. Is there any incident you want to share..

A. Describe how you felt about..

B. From who did you get the support.

5. What experiences did you have in your lifetime that have influenced in relation to Education?

    A. Can you give an example?

6. When you were a young, were their students with disabilities in your school or neighborhood?

A. May you describe your perception of them.

B. Would you compare your perception of them in the past and now, is it different? Explain why and how?

7. Can you talk about your experience when you were a student, your relationship with colleague and teachers?

A. Is there any other incident you want to share..

8. Tell me about your experience throughout your education journey? Do you recall critical incident you faced?

   A. What kind of help did you receive?

   B. At the time of the incident were you satisfy with the helped that you received?   Explain your response.

9. In which way have this incident made you think about student with special needs differently?

   A. Can you talk more about this…

   B. Why do you think of that..

10. Is there any of your family member has disability or older people that need special need?

    A. How does that make you feel..

    B. Describe your feeling or thought when you are with them in public.

    C. Could you explain more about what happened here.

D. How does that made you feel, what were your responses?

11. Tell me about your about your experience in teacher preparation program?

    A. In what way do you believe this experience influence your thinking of..

    B. In what way do you believe this course….. helped you to…..

12. In what way do you believe the program influences your belief regarding students with ASD?

    A. Can you give an example to clear this point…

13. Have you taken course related to including students with disabilities in general education classroom or teacher collaboration?

    A. In which way do you think this is important…

    B. Can you talk more about this…

14. How do you rate your experience and the program courses?

    A. what are you referring to …

    B. Can you explain this…

    C. Why do you believe this would help?

15. In what way have the program influence your overall educational experience?

    A. Why is that…

    B. How did that make you feel…

16. In what way do you think your school support and meet the needs of student with ASD?

    A. Can you give an example?

    B. What are your suggestions.

17. What do you think of including student with mild ASD in general education classroom?

    A. This is important point can you explain it more.

14. How do you rate your experience and the program courses?

    A. what are you referring to …

    B. Can you explain this…

    C. Why do you believe this would help.

15. In what way have the program influence your overall educational experience?

    A. Why is that…

    B. How did that make you feel…

16. In what way do you think your school support student with low academic Achievement?

    A. Can you give an example?

    B. What are your suggestions.

17. What do you think of including student with mild ASD in general education classroom?

    A. Can you explain more.

    B. Why do you this would happen.

18. Is there anything that we have not talk about, you would like to add or talk regarding our topic?

18. Is there anything that we have not talk about, you would like to add or talk regarding inclusion or your experience with student with ASD?	

Appendix B: Interview Protocol Question (Interview Two)

Special Education Teacher	General Education Teacher

1. What do you think of the courses that you take in the special education program?
   A. Can you give an example..
   B. Can you be specific about this…
 	
2. How do you describe your experience in the programs in terms of skills and opportunities?
   A. Can you talk more about…
 	
3. What do you think of the resources, books and modules that were provided to you in the special education program?
   A. Could you give an example..
 	
4. What courses do you believe that influenced or changed belief, or idea related to student with ASD?
   A. Can you provide more information about…
	1. What do you think of the courses that you take in the general education program?
	   A. Can you give an example..
	   B. Can you be specific about this..
	
	2. How do you describe your experience in the programs in terms of skills and opportunities?
	A. Can you talk more about…
	
	3. What do you think of the resources, books and modules that were provided to you in the special education program?
	   A. Could you give an example..
	
	4. What courses do you believe that influenced or changed belief, or idea related to student ability to learn?
	   A. Can you provide more information about..

5. In what way do you believe you can share or work collaboratively with general education teacher?

   A. Why do you think this would happen?

   B. Can you give an example..

6. What amount of support do you believe is necessary to successfully inclusion students with autism in general education classrooms?

   A. Why..

7. Can you describe preservice training you think you would have needed to prepare you to teach students with autism?

   A. Do you suggests this..

   B. How can connect this …… with your point…..

8. Can you describe in-service training, if any, you had that prepared you to teach students with autism?

   A. Can you explain your point.

5. In what way do you believe you can share or work collaboratively with special education teacher?

   A. Why do you think this would happen.

   B. Can you give an example.

6. What amount of support do you believe is necessary to successfully inclusion students with autism in general education classrooms?

   A. Why..

7. Can you describe preservice training you think you would have needed to prepare you to teach students with autism?

   A. Do you suggests this..

   B. How can you connect this….with your point…

8. Can you describe in-service training, if any, you had that prepared you to teach students with disabilities?

   A. Can you talk more about..

9. What in-service training do you think you would have needed to prepare you to teach students with autism?

10. What kind of resources or support do you think teachers need to help all students succeed in an inclusion classroom?

    A. What do suggest..

    B. Can you give an example..

11. What kind of suggestions can you provide for professional development opportunities to assist teachers in meeting the needs of an inclusive classroom?

9. What in-service training do you think you would have needed to prepare you to teach students with autism?

10. kind of resources or support do you think teachers need to help all students succeed in an inclusion classroom?

    A. What do you suggest..

    B. Can you give an example..

11. What kind of suggestions can you provide for professional development opportunities to assist teachers in meeting the needs of an inclusive classroom?

Appendix C: Interview Protocol Question (Interview Three)

Special Education Teacher	General Education Teacher

1. In what way did you believe that you had sufficient training to meet the needs of the students with ASD in your class?
 	
  A. Can you give an example.
 	
2. In what way did your practice as a teacher change based on your experiences working with students with autism?
 	
  A. Explain how these changes came about?
 	
  B. Would you connect these changes related to knowledge and skills improvement?
 	
3. Describe how you were able to provide alternative strategies for the student with autism?
 	
  A. How does the student response to the new strategy?
	1. In what way did you believe that you had sufficient training to meet the needs of the students with special need in your class?
	
	7. Can you give an example.
	
	2. In what way did your practice as a teacher change based on your experiences working with students with autism?
	
	  A. Explain how these changes came about?
	
	  B. Would you connect these changes related to knowledge and skills improvement?
	
	3. Describe how you were able to provide alternative strategies for the student with autism?
	
	  A. How does the student response to the new strategy?

B. How did you feel after using new strategy?	B. How did you feel after using new strategy
4. How much were you able to control the disruptive behavior of students with autism?	4. How much were you able to control the disruptive behavior of students with autism?
A. Can you provide an example of how you did this?	A. Can you provide an example of how you did this?
5. In what way do you think your knowledge and experience help you to create a good relationship with students and their parents?	5. In what way do you think your knowledge and experience help you to create a good relationship with students and their parents?
6. In what way do you think your knowledge and experience help you to create positive learning environment?	6. In what way do you think your knowledge and experience help you to create positive learning environment?

Appendix D: IRB Exemption

UNIVERSITY of SOUTH FLORIDA

EXEMPT DETERMINATION

May 22, 2023

Sultan Alanazi

████████████

Dear Sultan Alanazi:

On 5/20/2023, the IRB reviewed and approved the following protocol:

Application Type:	Initial Study
IRB ID:	STUDY005571
Review Type:	Exempt 2
Title:	Beliefs of Male Elementary School Special Education and General Education Teachers Regarding Full Inclusion for Students with Autism Spectrum Disorder in Saudi Arabia
Funding:	None
Protocol:	•Study Protocol-Alanazi;

The IRB determined that this protocol meets the criteria for exemption from IRB review.

In conducting this protocol, you are required to follow the requirements listed in the INVESTIGATOR MANUAL (HRP-103).

Please note, as per USF policy, once the exempt determination is made, the application is closed in BullsIRB. This does not limit your ability to conduct the research. Any proposed or anticipated change to the study design that was previously declared exempt from IRB oversight must be submitted to the IRB as a new study prior to initiation of the change. However, administrative changes, including changes in research personnel, do not warrant a modification or new application.

Ongoing IRB review and approval by this organization is not required. This determination applies only to the activities described in the IRB submission and does not apply should any changes be made. If changes are made and there are questions about

Institutional*Review*Boards* /Research*Integrity*&*Compliance***
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