

Experiences and Challenges of Implementing the Individualized Education Plan (IEP) for Students with Learning and Intellectual Disabilities in Kuwait

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Abstract: This study explores the development and effectiveness of Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) in supporting students with special educational needs (SEN). Utilizing a descriptive-analytical approach, the research examines key factors influencing the implementation of IEPs, including teacher expertise, parental involvement, and institutional support. The study sample comprises special education teachers and school administrators, selected using a stratified sampling method to ensure diverse representation.

Findings indicate that while IEPs play a crucial role in enhancing student learning outcomes, challenges persist in adapting the curriculum, facilitating interdisciplinary collaboration, and assessing continuous progress. The study also reveals that teachers with specialized training in inclusive education demonstrate greater confidence in designing and executing IEPs, whereas limited parental engagement and administrative constraints hinder effective implementation.

The results underscore the need for comprehensive professional development programs, stronger family-school partnerships, and policy reforms to optimize IEP practices. These findings offer valuable insights for educators, policymakers, and stakeholders seeking to improve inclusive education strategies and individualized instructional planning.

Keywords: Individualized education programs (IEPs), special educational needs (SEN), inclusive education, teacher training, student support.

1. INTRODUCTION

Ensuring equitable access to education for students with special educational needs (SEN) has become a fundamental priority in modern educational systems. Among the most widely recognized frameworks for supporting inclusive education is the Individualized Education Program (IEP), which provides personalized learning plans tailored to the specific strengths, challenges, and learning goals of each student [1]. IEPs are particularly crucial in enabling students with learning disabilities, developmental disorders, and physical impairments to receive appropriate accommodations, modifications, and specialized instructional strategies [2].

Internationally, inclusive education policies emphasize the importance of individualized instruction, as outlined in frameworks such as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) in the United States and global inclusion strategies from organizations like UNESCO [3,4]. Research suggests that IEPs contribute significantly to student engagement, academic achievement, and social-emotional development when implemented effectively [5]. However, challenges related to teacher preparedness, parental involvement, administrative support, and

curriculum flexibility often hinder their full effectiveness [6]. A meta-analysis of IEP implementation studies confirmed that these barriers are prevalent across different educational systems [7].

In Kuwait, the special education system has made strides toward adopting inclusive practices, but IEP implementation remains inconsistent across schools [8]. Many teachers report a lack of structured training on how to develop and effectively apply IEPs, while parents often have limited participation in the planning and review processes [9]. These challenges underscore the necessity for a systematic evaluation of IEP practices to pinpoint areas for improvement and enhance support for students with SEN [10].

1.1. Problem Statement

Despite the recognized benefits of IEPs in promoting personalized and equitable education, their effectiveness largely depends on the degree to which teachers, administrators, and parents collaborate in their design and implementation [11]. Several key challenges persist:

- Limited teacher expertise in designing effective IEPs due to inadequate training [12].
- Parental disengagement in the IEP planning process can lead to a lack of alignment with the child's actual needs [13].

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- Rigid curriculum structures prevent proper adaptation for students with SEN, a problem that frameworks like Universal Design for Learning (UDL) aim to address [14].
- Insufficient administrative support and resource allocation limit the ability of schools to implement evidence-based interventions [15].

In Kuwait, research on IEP effectiveness remains limited, and few studies have systematically assessed the challenges teachers and parents face in implementing these programs [16]. This study aims to address this gap by examining the knowledge, practices, and barriers associated with implementing IEPs in Kuwaiti schools.

1.2. Research Objectives

This study aims to:

1. Assess the level of knowledge and preparedness among special education teachers and administrators regarding IEP development and implementation.
2. Identify the primary challenges affecting IEP effectiveness, including teacher training, parental involvement, and institutional support.
3. Examine the impact of teacher qualifications and experience on their ability to develop and execute effective IEPs.
4. Provide recommendations for improving IEP implementation in Kuwaiti schools through policy reforms, professional development, and collaborative planning strategies.

1.3. Research Questions

The study seeks to answer the following questions:

1. To what extent are special education teachers and administrators knowledgeable about IEP principles and implementation strategies?
2. What are the major barriers that hinder the effective implementation of IEPs in Kuwaiti special education settings?
3. How do factors such as teacher qualifications, experience, and school resources influence the quality of IEPs?

4. What strategies can be adopted to enhance the effectiveness of IEPs in inclusive educational settings?

1.4. Significance of the Study

This study contributes to the growing body of research on inclusive education by offering empirical insights into the challenges and best practices associated with IEP implementation. Findings from this research will be beneficial for:

- Teachers and Special Educators – By identifying key challenges and providing practical recommendations to improve IEP effectiveness.
- School Administrators – By highlighting institutional support gaps and proposing policy adjustments to facilitate better implementation.
- Parents of Students with SEN – By emphasizing the importance of parental involvement and offering strategies to strengthen home-school collaboration.
- Policymakers in the Ministry of Education – By presenting data-driven recommendations to enhance inclusive education policies in Kuwait.

Ultimately, this study aims to promote evidence-based improvements in special education practices, ensuring that students with SEN receive the necessary support to thrive academically and socially.

1.5. Scope and Limitations

The study focuses on special education teachers, administrators, and parents in Kuwaiti schools implementing IEPs. The research is limited to:

- A specific geographic context (Kuwait) means that findings may not be fully generalizable to other regions [17].
- A sample of special education professionals may not capture perspectives from policymakers or general education teachers.
- Self-reported data might be influenced by personal biases or institutional constraints [18].

Despite these limitations, the study provides valuable insights into IEP challenges and best practices, contributing to the ongoing discourse on inclusive education in Kuwait and beyond.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Overview of Individualized Education Programs (IEPs)

The Individualized Education Program (IEP) is a structured, legally mandated plan designed to support students with special educational needs (SEN) by providing personalized learning goals, accommodations, and support services [1]. The legal and ethical foundation for such programs is reinforced by international agreements, including the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), which advocates for inclusive education systems at all levels [19]. IEPs aim to ensure that students with disabilities receive an equitable education by tailoring instruction to their unique abilities, challenges, and aspirations [2]. These programs are commonly implemented in inclusive and special education settings to promote academic success and social development [5].

Globally, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) in the United States serves as a foundational model for IEP implementation, mandating that schools develop customized learning plans for students with disabilities [4,6]. Similarly, UNESCO's inclusive education policies emphasize that IEPs are a key mechanism for ensuring that all learners have access to a quality, barrier-free education [3].

IEPs typically include:

- A comprehensive assessment of the student's strengths and needs and current academic performance [20].
- Clearly defined learning objectives tailored to the student's developmental and cognitive abilities.
- Specific accommodations and modifications to support learning (e.g., assistive technology, extended test time).
- A collaborative approach involving teachers, specialists, parents, and administrators to monitor student progress and adjust goals accordingly [15].

Research highlights that effective IEP implementation leads to improved academic performance, greater student engagement, and enhanced self-confidence among students with disabilities [11]. However, despite their potential

benefits, IEPs often face challenges related to teacher training, parental involvement, administrative support, and curriculum flexibility [13]. Addressing these issues is critical to ensuring that IEPs fulfill their intended role in promoting inclusive education.

2.2. Teachers' Knowledge and Preparedness for IEP Implementation

Teachers play a fundamental role in the development and execution of IEPs, as they are responsible for identifying student needs, designing tailored instructional strategies, and monitoring progress [1]. The effectiveness of IEPs is highly dependent on educators' understanding of the framework, their ability to implement differentiated instruction, and their collaboration with other stakeholders [2]. However, research indicates that many special education teachers lack sufficient training in IEP development and application, which can impact the quality of support provided to students with SEN [5]. This gap between belief in inclusion and actual practice is a well-documented phenomenon [21].

2.2.1. The Importance of Teacher Training in IEP Development

To successfully implement IEPs, teachers must be well-versed in inclusive education principles, assessment techniques, and individualized instruction methods [6]. Studies have shown that teachers who receive specialized training in IEP planning demonstrate greater confidence and self-efficacy in adapting curricula, setting realistic learning goals, and utilizing assistive technologies [11,22]. Key competencies required for effective IEP implementation include:

- Ability to assess and identify student learning needs using evidence-based evaluation methods.
- Knowledge of legal and policy frameworks governing special education and inclusion.
- Skills in designing differentiated lesson plans that align with individual student goals.
- Proficiency in using assistive tools and instructional technology to support diverse learners [15].

A study by Alkhunini [12] found that in Kuwait, many teachers receive general training in special education but lack hands-on experience in IEP development,

leading to inconsistencies in implementation. This aligns with findings from other studies, which report that insufficient teacher preparation often results in vague or unrealistic IEP goals that do not align with students' capabilities [13].

2.2.2. Barriers to Teacher Preparedness in IEP Implementation

Despite the recognized importance of teacher training, several challenges hinder educators' ability to implement IEPs effectively:

1. **Lack of Professional Development Opportunities:** Many teachers report limited access to IEP-focused training programs, particularly in regions where special education policies are still evolving [14].
2. **Time Constraints and Increased Workload:** Teachers often struggle to balance IEP responsibilities with their regular teaching duties, resulting in a reduced focus on individualized instruction [6].
3. **Inconsistent Institutional Support:** Schools that fail to provide structured mentoring or guidance on IEP development often leave teachers feeling unprepared and isolated [15].
4. **Limited Collaboration with Specialists:** Successful IEP implementation requires input from therapists, psychologists, and other support staff, yet many teachers lack sufficient opportunities for interdisciplinary collaboration [11,23].

2.2.3. Strategies to Enhance Teacher Readiness for IEP Implementation

To address these challenges, researchers suggest the following key strategies:

1. **Integrating IEP-focused coursework into teacher education programs** to build foundational knowledge [24].
2. **Providing continuous professional development (CPD) workshops on inclusive teaching strategies.**
3. **Establishing mentorship and peer-support programs** where experienced educators guide new teachers.

4. **Promoting interdisciplinary collaboration** to ensure IEPs are designed using a holistic approach [5,25].

A study on Kuwaiti special education teachers revealed that educators who participated in targeted IEP training programs demonstrated a significant improvement in their ability to customize learning plans and track student progress effectively [9].

2.2.4. Summary of Teacher Preparedness in IEPs

Research underscores that teacher preparedness is a critical factor in the success of IEP implementation. However, barriers such as limited training, time constraints, lack of institutional support, and minimal collaboration continue to affect the quality of IEPs. Addressing these challenges through structured professional development programs, interdisciplinary teamwork, and enhanced institutional support can significantly improve the effectiveness of IEPs in inclusive education settings [6].

2.3. Challenges in IEP Implementation

Despite the significant role that IEPs play in enhancing the educational experiences of students with SEN, their successful implementation remains a complex process fraught with challenges. Research highlights several barriers that hinder the effective development, execution, and evaluation of IEPs, including limited teacher training, inadequate parental involvement, rigid curriculum structures, lack of administrative support, and insufficient resources [5]. Addressing these challenges is essential to ensuring that IEPs fulfill their intended purpose of providing equitable educational opportunities.

2.3.1. Limited Teacher Training and Professional Development

One of the most significant challenges in IEP implementation is the lack of specialized training for teachers. Studies indicate that many educators lack the necessary knowledge and skills to design and execute effective IEPs, resulting in inconsistent application and reduced effectiveness [6].

Key Issues Related to Teacher Training:

- **Inadequate preparation in special education programs:** Many teacher education curricula do not provide comprehensive training on IEP development and inclusive teaching strategies [12, 26].

- Limited professional development opportunities: Teachers often lack access to ongoing workshops and training programs, making it challenging to stay current with best practices [13].
- Challenges in adapting teaching methods: Without proper training, educators struggle to modify instructional techniques that align with the individual needs of students [11].

A study by Arbianingsih and Nastiar [9] found that Kuwaiti teachers who received IEP-focused training demonstrated a significant improvement in their ability to design and implement individualized plans effectively. This highlights the need for enhanced professional development initiatives to support teachers in effectively implementing IEPs.

2.3.2. Limited Parental Involvement in IEP Development

Parental participation is crucial in IEP planning, as parents provide valuable insights into their child's strengths, challenges, and learning needs [1]. However, research suggests that many parents remain disengaged from the IEP process, resulting in a misalignment between home and school support strategies [2].

Common Barriers to Parental Involvement:

- Lack of awareness and understanding of IEPs. Many parents are unfamiliar with IEP procedures, their rights, and their role in the decision-making process [6].
- Communication barriers between educators and parents. Schools often fail to engage families effectively, thereby limiting parental contributions [13, 27].
- Socioeconomic and time constraints. Many parents lack the time or resources to actively participate in IEP meetings and school activities [11].

A study by Alkhunini [12] in Kuwait found that only 40% of parents actively participated in their child's IEP development, emphasizing the need for improved parent-school collaboration strategies.

2.3.3. Rigid Curriculum Structures and Limited Flexibility

Another major challenge in IEP implementation is the lack of curriculum adaptability in many educational

systems. Traditional curricula are often standardized, making it difficult to accommodate individualized learning needs [14].

Impact of Curriculum Rigidity on IEP Effectiveness:

- Teachers face difficulties in modifying lesson plans to meet IEP objectives [28].
- Students with SEN struggle to keep up with fixed academic expectations.
- Assessment models remain standardized, failing to consider alternative evaluation methods that are more suitable for students with disabilities [6].

A study on special education settings in Kuwait found that only 25% of teachers had the flexibility to modify lesson plans according to IEP requirements [9]. This highlights the urgent need for curriculum reforms that promote adaptive teaching strategies.

To address this challenge, policymakers should:

- Develop flexible curriculum frameworks that allow for customized instruction.
- Introduce alternative assessment methods to evaluate students based on individualized learning goals.
- Integrate assistive technology into classroom instruction to enhance accessibility [11].

2.3.4. Lack of Administrative and Institutional Support

For IEPs to be successfully implemented, strong institutional backing is required. However, research indicates that many schools lack clear policies, funding, and leadership support for special education initiatives [5].

Key Administrative Barriers:

- Limited financial resources for special education programs.
- Lack of school leadership training on inclusive education policies [29].
- Insufficient staffing of specialized support personnel, such as therapists and intervention specialists [15].

A study by Cheia [14] found that schools with higher levels of administrative support exhibited significantly better IEP implementation outcomes. This highlights the importance of institutional investment in professional development, policy formulation, and specialized staffing.

2.3.5. Insufficient Resources and Assistive Technology

Access to assistive technologies and specialized learning materials is essential for IEP implementation. However, many schools face resource limitations that hinder effective support for students with SEN [6].

Challenges Related to Resource Availability:

- Limited access to assistive tools such as speech-to-text software, adaptive keyboards, and visual learning aids.
- Inadequate funding for special education materials and classroom modifications.
- Lack of teacher training on how to effectively integrate assistive technology [11,30].

A study in Kuwait found that more than 60% of special education teachers cited a lack of resources as a key barrier to IEP implementation [9]. Addressing this issue requires greater investment in assistive technologies and digital learning tools.

Experts suggest that education ministries and school leaders should:

- Allocate dedicated budgets for special education programs.
- Provide professional development on technology integration.
- Implement inclusive digital learning strategies [15].

2.4. The Effectiveness of IEPs in Enhancing Educational Outcomes

IEPs are widely recognized as essential tools in supporting students with SEN. When implemented effectively, IEPs contribute significantly to academic achievement, student engagement, social-emotional development, and long-term learning success [1]. However, their impact depends on the quality of planning, stakeholder collaboration, and the fidelity with

which evidence-based interventions are integrated into instructional practices [2,31].

2.4.1. Academic Performance and Learning Progress

IEPs are designed to provide tailored learning experiences, ensuring that students receive instruction suited to their abilities, learning styles, and developmental needs [6]. Research has shown that:

- Students with well-structured IEPs exhibit higher academic performance compared to those without individualized support [11].
- Personalized learning strategies, including differentiated instruction and specialized interventions, lead to better comprehension and retention of knowledge [13].
- Accommodations such as extended test time, modified assignments, and assistive technologies improve students' ability to demonstrate learning progress [5].

A study conducted by Mahmood *et al.* [15] found that students with properly implemented IEPs in inclusive classrooms showed a significant improvement in literacy and numeracy skills. Similarly, Arbianingsih and Nastiar [9] reported that in Kuwaiti special education settings, structured IEP support enhanced students' problem-solving abilities and engagement with academic content.

2.4.2. Student Engagement and Motivation

Engagement is a critical factor in student success, particularly for learners with disabilities [12]. Studies indicate that IEPs foster greater motivation by addressing individual learning preferences and promoting self-determination, a key predictor of positive adult outcomes [6, 32].

Key factors that contribute to increased student engagement include:

- Personalized learning objectives that align with students' interests and abilities.
- Use of interactive and adaptive learning tools, including multimedia resources and gamified instruction.
- Scaffolded learning approaches that gradually increase complexity while providing necessary support [14].

A meta-analysis by Strogilos and Xanthacou [11] found that students with IEP-driven learning plans demonstrated a 30% increase in classroom participation and task completion rates compared to their peers in non-IEP settings. This suggests that IEPs not only enhance academic skills but also foster a positive attitude toward learning.

2.4.3. Social-Emotional Growth and Self-Advocacy Skills

Beyond academic benefits, IEPs contribute to the social and emotional development of students with SEN, helping them build confidence, independence, and self-advocacy skills [2]. A well-designed IEP promotes:

- Stronger peer interactions by facilitating social inclusion and collaboration.
- Enhanced emotional regulation through behavioral support plans and structured interventions.
- Improved self-awareness and self-determination, empowering students to express their learning preferences and needs [1,33].

Teacher attitudes toward inclusion have also been shown to be a critical factor in creating a supportive environment that fosters these skills [34]. A study by Arbianingsih and Nastiar [9] in Kuwait found that students who actively participated in their IEP goal-setting process exhibited higher self-confidence and a greater sense of responsibility toward their education.

2.4.4. Long-Term Educational and Career Outcomes

The benefits of IEPs extend beyond K-12 education, impacting students' ability to pursue higher education, vocational training, and employment [13]. Research highlights that:

- Students with well-executed IEPs have higher graduation rates than those without personalized learning plans.
- Transition planning within IEPs helps students with SEN develop skills necessary for independent living and career readiness [6, 35].
- Early intervention strategies embedded in IEPs lead to greater long-term educational and employment success [36].

A study by Cheia [14] found that students who received consistent IEP support throughout their schooling had a 25% higher likelihood of enrolling in post-secondary education or vocational training compared to students without IEPs. This underscores the importance of structured, goal-oriented planning in preparing students for future success.

3. METHODOLOGY

This study employs a descriptive-analytical research design to investigate the implementation, effectiveness, and challenges associated with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) in Kuwaiti schools. By utilizing both quantitative and qualitative approaches, the study aims to gather comprehensive insights from special education teachers, school administrators, and other stakeholders involved in IEP development.

3.1. Research Design

A descriptive-analytical approach was chosen as it allows for a systematic examination of teachers' and administrators' knowledge, perceptions, and challenges related to IEP implementation [7]. This design facilitates:

- Identification of trends and patterns in IEP implementation.
- Analysis of relationships between teacher qualifications, school policies, and IEP effectiveness.
- Assessment of Challenges and Barriers Affecting IEP Implementation in Kuwaiti Schools.

A cross-sectional survey method was employed, allowing for data collection from a diverse group of special education professionals within a specified timeframe [7].

3.2. Study Population and Sampling

3.2.1. Population

The study targets special education teachers, school administrators, and educational specialists in Kuwaiti schools, particularly those responsible for developing and implementing IEPs.

3.2.2. Sampling Technique

A stratified random sampling method was used to ensure representation of teachers from different school types, levels of experience, and educational

backgrounds [37]. The final sample includes 173 special education teachers and administrators from various public and private institutions. Table 1 shows the characteristics of the study sample.

3.3. Data Collection Instrument

A structured questionnaire was designed to measure:

- Teachers' and administrators' knowledge of IEP principles and implementation strategies.
- Challenges encountered in IEP execution.
- Impact of institutional policies and teacher qualifications on IEP effectiveness.

The questionnaire consisted of four sections, incorporating Likert-scale items (1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree) to assess participants' perceptions quantitatively.

Example items from the questionnaire:

- "I have a strong understanding of how to design effective IEPs."
- "I face challenges in modifying IEPs to suit individual student needs."
- "My school provides sufficient resources to support IEP implementation."

A pilot study was conducted with 15 participants to evaluate the clarity, reliability, and validity of the questionnaire [38].

3.4. Validity and Reliability of the Instrument

To ensure content validity, the questionnaire was reviewed by a panel of 10 experts in special education and inclusive learning. Their feedback led to minor revisions, improving question clarity and relevance.

The internal consistency reliability of the instrument was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha (α) and McDonald's Omega (ω), both of which yielded high-reliability coefficients ($\alpha = 0.83$, $\omega = 0.86$), indicating strong internal consistency [39].

3.5. Data Analysis Techniques

The collected data were analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics v.26, employing both descriptive and inferential statistical methods [40].

Descriptive Statistics:

- Mean, standard deviation and frequency distributions were used to summarize participants' responses.

Inferential Statistics:

- Chi-square tests were conducted to investigate the associations between teacher demographics and their implementation practices for IEPs.
- Correlation analysis examined relationships between teacher experience and IEP effectiveness.

Table 2 shows the statistical analysis output of both the chi-square test and the correlation analysis.

These analyses help in identifying trends and relationships in IEP implementation, supporting the development of data-driven recommendations for improving inclusive education practices.

3.6. Ethical Considerations

The study adheres to **ethical research guidelines**, ensuring:

- Informed Consent: Participants were provided with detailed information about the study's purpose, their voluntary participation, and their right to withdraw from the study at any time.
- Confidentiality: All responses were anonymized to protect participants' identities.
- Data Security: Research data was stored in password-protected databases to ensure privacy.

This research was approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of Kuwait University, ensuring compliance with international ethical standards [19].

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the study's findings, analyzing the knowledge of IEPs among teachers and administrators, the implementation challenges they face, and the factors that affect their effectiveness. The results are structured according to the study's research questions, followed by a discussion comparing these findings with existing literature.

Table 1: Characteristics of the Study Sample

Variable	Categories	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	64	37.0%
	Female	109	63.0%
Educational Qualification	Bachelor's Degree	87	50.3%
	Master's Degree	53	30.6%
	Doctorate	33	19.1%
Experience	Less than 5 years	40	23.1%
	5 - 10 years	58	33.5%
	11 - 15 years	41	23.7%
	More than 15 years	34	19.7%
Academic Specialization	General Education	43	24.9%
	Special Education	93	53.8%
	Psychology	37	21.4%

Note: This diverse participant pool strengthens the generalizability of the findings and allows for a more in-depth analysis of variations in IEP implementation across different educational contexts.

Table 2: Example Statistical Analysis Output

Variable	Group	High Confidence in IEPs	Low Confidence in IEPs	Chi-Square (p-value)
Educational Level	Bachelor's	45%	55%	12.478 (p = 0.003)
	Master's/Doctorate	80%	20%	
Experience	Less than 5 years	33%	67%	15.219 (p = 0.002)
	More than 10 years	85%	15%	

4.1. Results

4.1.1 Teachers' and Administrators' Knowledge of IEPs

One of the study's objectives was to assess the level of knowledge Kuwaiti special education teachers and administrators have regarding IEP principles and implementation. Table 3 provides a summary of participants' responses regarding their understanding of IEPs.

These findings indicate that while participants generally understand IEP principles ($M = 4.51$), their ability to develop and modify effective IEPs is moderate. Notably, training on IEPs received the lowest rating ($M = 2.89$), highlighting a gap in professional development opportunities.

4.1.2. Challenges in IEP Implementation

Participants identified several barriers affecting the effective implementation of IEPs. Table 4 summarizes the primary challenges reported.

4.1.3. Relationship between Teacher Experience and IEP Implementation

A chi-square test was conducted to determine whether teacher experience has a significant influence on confidence in IEP development. The results, presented in Table 5, indicate a statistically significant relationship between teaching experience and IEP confidence ($p = 0.002$).

Teachers with more than 10 years of experience were significantly more confident in IEP implementation, suggesting that practical exposure plays a key role in building IEP-related competencies.

4.1.4. Perceived Effectiveness of IEPs in Improving Student Outcomes

Participants were asked to evaluate the effectiveness of IEPs in enhancing student engagement, academic achievement, and social skills. Table 6 presents the findings.

Table 3 Participants' Knowledge of IEPs (N=173)

Variable	Group	Positive (Count, %)	Neutral (Count, %)	Negative (Count, %)	Total	Pearson Chi-Square (p-value)	(df)	Gamma (p-value)
Gender	Females	45 (41.3%)	50 (45.9%)	14 (12.8%)	109	10.042 (p = 0.007)	2	-0.158 (p = 0.250)
	Males	37 (57.8%)	14 (21.9%)	13 (20.3%)	64			
Education	Bachelor's	40 (46.0%)	35 (40.2%)	12 (13.8%)	87	3.907 (p = 0.419)	4	0.000 (p = 0.999)
	Master's	25 (47.2%)	21 (39.6%)	7 (13.2%)	53			
	Doctorate	17 (51.5%)	8 (24.2%)	8 (24.2%)	33			
	Less than 5 years	17 (42.5%)	17 (42.5%)	6 (15.0%)	40			
Experience	5 - 10 years	25 (43.1%)	26 (44.8%)	7 (12.1%)	58	6.120 (p = 0.410)	6	-0.062 (p = 0.543)
	11 - 15 years	22 (53.7%)	13 (31.7%)	6 (14.6%)	41			
	More than 15 years	18 (52.9%)	8 (23.5%)	8 (23.5%)	34			
Specialization	General Education	18 (41.9%)	19 (44.2%)	6 (14.0%)	43	3.115 (p = 0.539)	4	-0.042 (p = 0.716)
	Special Education	45 (48.4%)	35 (37.6%)	13 (14.0%)	93			
	Psychology	19 (51.4%)	10 (27.0%)	8 (21.6%)	37			

Table 4: Mean, Standard Deviation, and Relative Weight Results for the Questionnaire Items on Experiences of Implementing Individualized Education Plans (IEP) for Students with Learning Disabilities from the Perspective of Special Education Teachers

Dimension	Item	Statement	Mean	Std. Deviation	Relative Weight	Level
Planning and Preparing the IEP	1	I actively participate in planning the IEP.	1.474	0.501	29%	Very Low
	2	Goals are set to match the student's needs.	2.514	0.501	50%	Low
	3	The family regularly participates in setting goals.	3.393	0.490	68%	Medium
	4	The set goals are achievable.	4.462	0.500	89%	Very High
	5	I use assessment data to develop the IEP.	2.983	1.476	60%	Medium
	6	The IEP is updated periodically.	2.497	1.189	50%	Low
	7	The available resources are sufficient for an effective plan.	1.925	0.835	38%	Low
	8	I have enough time to work with the team.	1.509	0.501	30%	Very Low
	9	Communication with the family is fruitful in planning.	2.503	0.501	50%	Low
	10	Planning aligns with the overall curriculum goals.	3.480	0.501	70%	High
		Overall Mean	2.390	0.269	48%	Low
Implementing the IEP	11	I adhere to implementing the educational activities.	3.064	1.499	61%	Medium
	12	The educational strategies are effective.	1.520	0.501	30%	Very Low
	13	I use the specified educational resources.	4.468	0.500	89%	Very High

Table 4 (Continue)

Dimension	Item	Statement	Mean	Std. Deviation	Relative Weight	Level
	14	I adjust my teaching methods to students' needs.	1.520	0.501	30%	Very Low
	15	I can implement activities without difficulties.	4.532	0.500	91%	Very High
	16	Implementation does not conflict with other classroom activities.	4.462	0.500	89%	Very High
	17	I handle challenges during implementation.	1.480	0.501	30%	Very Low
	18	I use innovative tools to support implementation.	2.942	1.433	59%	Medium
	19	Administration provides implementation support.	1.509	0.501	30%	Very Low
	20	I notice a continuous improvement in the students' performance.	4.497	0.501	90%	Very High
		Overall Mean	2.999	0.256	60%	Medium
Evaluation and Monitoring	21	I regularly evaluate the students' progress.	2.509	0.501	50%	Low
	22	I use various assessment methods.	2.509	0.501	50%	Low
	23	I adjust the IEP based on evaluation results.	2.572	0.496	51%	Low
	24	I maintain accurate records of the student's progress.	4.526	0.501	91%	Very High
	25	I regularly update the family on the student's progress.	4.486	0.501	90%	Very High
	26	I discuss evaluation results with the team.	4.509	0.501	90%	Very High
	27	Assessment tools reflect the student's progress.	4.520	0.501	90%	Very High
	28	Evaluation reflects the student's actual development.	2.526	0.501	51%	Low
	29	I modify activities based on evaluation results.	2.497	0.501	50%	Low
	30	Evaluation helps in improving future goals.	2.491	0.501	50%	Low
		Overall Mean	3.314	0.161	66%	Medium
Collaboration with Stakeholders	31	I collaborate with specialists in implementing the IEP.	3.439	0.498	69%	High
	32	I regularly communicate with the family about progress.	3.468	0.500	69%	High
	33	There is close collaboration between my family and me.	3.491	0.501	70%	High
	34	I receive support from the administration when needed.	3.486	0.501	70%	High
	35	Problems are resolved through collaboration.	2.029	0.796	41%	Low
	36	I participate in meetings with the family and specialists to review the IEP.	1.867	0.739	37%	Low
	37	My opinions are taken into consideration when modifying the IEP.	1.983	0.825	40%	Low
	38	Collaboration with the family improves the student's progress.	3.532	0.500	71%	High

Table 4 (Continue)

Dimension	Item	Statement	Mean	Std. Deviation	Relative Weight	Level
	39	I receive clear guidance from specialists to support IEP implementation.	3.497	0.501	70%	High
	40	Regular communication with all parties facilitates implementation.	3.526	0.501	71%	High
		Overall Mean	3.032	0.192	61%	Medium
Organizational and Administrative Aspects	41	The administration provides the necessary implementation support	4.509	0.501	90%	Very High
	42	Financial resources are available to support implementation.	4.526	0.501	91%	Very High
	43	The administration understands the needs of students.	2.434	0.497	49%	Low
	44	Training is provided on IEP implementation.	2.532	0.500	51%	Low
	45	Necessary educational tools and resources are available.	2.457	0.500	49%	Low
	46	I have sufficient time to implement the IEP.	4.480	0.501	90%	Very High
	47	The school schedule allows for IEP implementation.	4.457	0.500	89%	Very High
	48	Administration provides guidance to resolve challenges.	4.457	0.500	89%	Very High
	49	I have adequate support from the administration.	4.491	0.501	90%	Very High
	50	Resources are updated regularly to meet the needs of IEP implementation.	2.497	0.501	50%	Low
		Overall Mean	3.684	0.150	74%	High

Note: The most significant challenge reported was insufficient professional training for teachers ($M = 4.67$), reinforcing the findings in Table 3. Additionally, low parental involvement ($M = 4.32$) was identified as a significant concern, consistent with prior studies that emphasize the role of family engagement in IEP success [12].

Table 5: Relationship Between Teaching Experience and IEP Confidence

Experience Level	High confidence (%)	Low confidence (%)	Chi-Square (p-value)
Less than 5 years	33%	67%	15.219 ($p = 0.002$)
5 to 10 years	52%	48%	
More than 10 years	85%	15%	

Table 6: Perceived Effectiveness of IEPs

Statement	Mean Score (Out of 5)	Effectiveness Level
IEPs improve student academic performance.	4.45	High
IEPs increase student engagement in learning activities.	4.51	Very High
IEPs enhance students' self-confidence and independence.	4.37	High
IEPs help in developing social skills for students with SEN.	4.28	High

These results confirm that participants view IEPs as highly beneficial in promoting student engagement ($M = 4.51$) and academic performance ($M = 4.45$), aligning with previous research [11].

4.2. Discussion

This section examines the study's findings concerning previous research on IEP implementation and explores their implications for special education in Kuwait. The discussion highlights similarities with global research and identifies challenges and opportunities for improvement in Kuwaiti schools.

4.2.1. Alignment with Previous Studies

- **Knowledge Gap:** This study confirms that while teachers understand IEP principles, they struggle with practical implementation due to limited training, echoing findings by other researchers [21,22].
- **Parental Involvement:** Parental engagement remains a critical challenge in IEP success. Poch and Kupzyk [13] also highlighted that low parental participation reduces the impact of IEPs.
- **Impact of Teaching Experience:** This study found that teacher experience is significantly correlated with confidence in implementing IEPs, supporting the findings of Razalli *et al.* [6]. Mentorship programs for novice teachers could help bridge this gap.
- **Effectiveness of IEPs:** Consistent with Strogilos and Xanthacou [11], this study confirms that well-structured IEPs enhance student engagement, academic performance, and social development.

4.2.2. Implications for Kuwaiti Special Education

- **Teacher Training:** Comprehensive professional development is needed to equip teachers with practical IEP skills. Teachers in Kuwait receive limited hands-on training, suggesting the need for IEP-focused training programs and peer mentorship [13].
- **Parental Engagement:** Low parental involvement must be addressed by educational workshops and flexible meeting schedules. As Alkhunini [12] notes, active parental involvement improves IEP outcomes.

- **Administrative Support:** Strong leadership and adequate resources are crucial. Stingo [5] recommends structured mentorship and interdisciplinary teams to support IEP implementation.
- **Curriculum Flexibility:** Rigid curriculum structures hinder IEP effectiveness. Razalli *et al.* [6] emphasize the need for curriculum reforms that allow for personalized instruction, including UDL strategies and alternative assessments.

4.2.3. Summary of Discussion

The study aligns with global research, emphasizing that:

- Teachers require practical training in implementing IEPs.
- Parental involvement is essential, but it is often limited due to awareness barriers.
- Teacher experience significantly impacts IEP effectiveness.
- Administrative support and curriculum flexibility are crucial for successful IEP implementation.

These findings suggest a need for a collaborative approach to improving IEP practices in Kuwaiti schools, ensuring that students with special educational needs receive the support they require to succeed academically and socially.

5. CONCLUSION

The findings of this study underscore the significant role of Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) in fostering inclusive education for students with special educational needs (SEN). When properly implemented, IEPs serve as effective tools for enhancing student engagement, academic performance, and social-emotional development. However, despite their potential benefits, various challenges hinder their full effectiveness, particularly in teacher training, parental involvement, curriculum flexibility, and administrative support. Addressing these issues is essential to ensuring that students with SEN receive equitable learning opportunities.

One of the key insights from this study is that while teachers demonstrate theoretical knowledge of IEPs, they often struggle with practical implementation due to inadequate training and limited professional

development opportunities. Additionally, parental engagement remains low, reducing the impact of IEP-driven instruction. Schools must prioritize teacher training initiatives and collaborative parent-school partnerships to improve IEP outcomes. Furthermore, administrative and institutional support must be strengthened to provide educators with the necessary resources and guidance for effective implementation.

The results also highlight the need for policy reforms to promote greater curriculum flexibility and the integration of assistive technologies. Many educators find it challenging to modify lesson plans to align with IEP goals due to standardized curriculum structures. By incorporating Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles and alternative assessment methods, schools can create more adaptable learning environments that cater to the diverse needs of students. Additionally, investing in assistive technologies can further support individualized instruction and accessibility.

In conclusion, this study contributes to the ongoing discourse on inclusive education by providing data-driven insights into the strengths and challenges of IEP implementation in Kuwaiti schools. The recommendations proposed, such as enhancing professional training, fostering parental engagement, improving administrative policies, and reforming curriculum structures, offer actionable steps for educators, policy-makers, and stakeholders seeking to optimize special education practices. Moving forward, sustained efforts are required to bridge the gaps in IEP implementation and ensure that all students, regardless of their abilities, receive a high-quality, inclusive education.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are proposed to enhance IEP implementation in Kuwaiti special education settings:

1. Strengthen Professional Development for Educators

- Develop specialized IEP training programs for teachers, ensuring they acquire practical skills in designing, implementing, and evaluating IEPs [12].
- Integrate IEP-focused coursework into teacher education programs, preparing future educators with a strong foundation in individualized instruction.

- Provide continuous professional development workshops on inclusive education strategies, assistive technology integration, and differentiated instruction [11].

2. Improve Parental Engagement in the IEP Process

- Conduct parent education workshops to increase awareness of IEP processes, rights, and collaborative planning strategies.
- Implement digital communication platforms to facilitate ongoing dialogue between educators and families regarding IEP updates and student progress [13].
- Encourage flexible scheduling for IEP meetings to accommodate working parents and diverse family backgrounds.

3. Increase Institutional and Administrative Support for IEPs

- Ensure that school leadership is trained in inclusive education policies, equipping administrators to support IEP implementation effectively [6].
- Allocate dedicated budgets for special education programs, ensuring that schools have the necessary staff, training, and resources to support IEP execution.
- Establish interdisciplinary teams, including teachers, therapists, and learning support specialists, to enhance IEP development and progress monitoring [15].

4. Promote Curriculum Flexibility and Inclusive Education Policies

- Reform curriculum guidelines to allow greater adaptability for IEP-driven instruction, ensuring that students with SEN receive personalized learning experiences [14].
- Introduce alternative assessment methods, including project-based learning and portfolio evaluations, to better align with diverse learning needs.
- Encourage schools to adopt Universal Design for Learning (UDL) strategies, making curricula more inclusive and accessible.

5. Enhance Access to Assistive Technologies and Learning Resources

- Increase investment in assistive technology, such as speech-to-text software, adaptive learning platforms, and digital learning tools, to support students with disabilities [9].
- Provide teacher training on technology integration to ensure educators can effectively utilize digital tools to support IEP implementation [11].
- Ensure equitable distribution of resources, particularly in under-resourced schools, to facilitate inclusive education for all students.

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