



Self-Determination Skills of Persons with Intellectual disabilities in Arabic Countries: A Mini-Review

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Abstract

Persons with intellectual disabilities suffer different kinds of disorders due to impaired cognitive processes, which hinders their compatibility with life requirements as they are unable to perform their assigned roles and fulfill their needs. This results in an urgent need to develop their skills and to endow them with some compensatory strategies. Self-determination skills are considered one of the major skills needed by persons with intellectual disabilities in order to help them live independently. Self-determination skills are affected by a group of cultural and social variables, as well as other factors like the severity of the disability, the chronological age, gender, and others. Eventually, this mini review aims at shedding light on some important matters in related literature, clarifying some research points that were not tackled in it suggesting future studies that were not referred to in it, and drawing some recommendations related to the topic of the review.

Keywords: Self-Determination; Intellectual disabilities; Arab countries

Introduction

In general, one of the paramount abilities for people is self-determination skills. They are of special importance for persons with intellectual disabilities as a result of their suffering from impaired cognitive processes, linguistic developmental disorders, neurodevelopmental disorders, emotion developmental disorders and other developmental fields. They are crucial to succeed in work and marriage and other life roles that a person has to fulfill throughout his life; they are the major factor to achieve self-independence, social efficiency, quality of life, and psychological well-being, as it helps those persons to transit from one stage to another effectively.

Intellectual disability can be defined as a disability characterized by significant limitations in both intellectual functioning and adaptive behavior as expressed in conceptual, social, and practical skills. This disability originates during the developmental period, which is defined operationally as before the individual attains age 22 [1]. As such, the majority of persons with intellectual disabilities suffer some problems managing their

life affairs [2]. Thus, they should acquire skills in a number of key areas to achieve independency. These are: daily-life skills, self-determination skills, interpersonal skills, and employment skills [3].

Self-determination skills are defined as the procedures and decisions followed by a person to achieve quality life. This can be achieved through avoiding unjustified external impacts and interferences [4]. These comprise a number of sub-skills represented in: choice making, problem solving, decision making, self-awareness, self-independence, self-regulation, self-advocacy, as well as self-efficacy skills [5-7].

Undeniably, self-determination skills are affected to a great extent by cultural and social variables as well as the customs and traditions of the society where persons with intellectual disabilities live. They are also influenced by a group of factors such as: gender (what is available for males differs than females), the socio-economic status, the training and the interference programs provided by the society to these persons, the age group of persons

with intellectual disabilities, and their place of residence (be it in urban or rural areas). Thus, cultural and social considerations play an influential role in developing these skills.

Discussion (Synopsis of Research)

Studies carried out in the Arabic environment tackled self-determination skills of persons with intellectual disabilities from different perspectives; they investigated the level of having these skills, differences between males and females, the impact of age and the severity of disability on acquiring self-determination skills, the effect of the educational type (governmental or private) on their acquisition, the role of training as well as intervention programs to develop them, the needed competencies and skills for teachers to endow his students with intellectual disabilities with them, as well as the reasons that hinder persons with intellectual disabilities from acquiring these skills.

The studies that aimed at recognizing the level of possessing self-determination skills in persons with intellectual disabilities have clarified that that adult persons with intellectual disabilities show a moderate to high degree of self-determination skills, according to the viewpoints of their parents. The severity of disability also plays a crucial role in acquiring self-determination skills; these are better in adults with mild intellectual disabilities compared with younger age groups. It is also proven that females with intellectual disabilities are better than males in terms of self-determination skills [8-10]. It is also shown that students with intellectual disabilities enrolled in governmental institutions are superior in these skills that those in private ones [8].

Training programs provided to persons with intellectual disabilities play a great role in helping students acquire self-determination skills; this means that it is recommended to integrate these skills within the individual educational plans of these students. It is also noted that there are different theoretical frameworks, regarding the severity of disability, age, gender, and cultural and social considerations, on which these programs can rely [11,12]. The programs assigned to develop self-determination skills of persons with intellectual disabilities are affected by teachers' efficacy and the level of their preparation (either pre, post or during their service). Among the skills which have a great impact are the following: the educational degree got by the teacher, the number of years of experience in the field, the number of training courses they got in relation to self-determination skills of persons with intellectual disabilities [13]. The findings of one study clarified that teachers can highly reinforce self-determination skills of students with intellectual disabilities, that they are highly aware of the importance of self-determination skills, and that the educational degree and stage, as well as the number of experience years are of a great help to teachers in developing the self-determination skills of their students [14].

As for the reasons which deter persons with intellectual disabilities from acquiring self-determination skills, they can be

briefed in the following: The insufficiency of available information resources about self-determination skills, the prevailing culture in the society, which might negatively affect the acquisition of these skills, and the maternal role in enhancing these skills and mothers' dedication to reinforce it. The factors related to the person with intellectual disabilities himself can also hinder the ability to get self-determination skills, and among which are: the severity of the disability; the less it is, the more is the chance to get these skills, gender (male/female), and the chronological age; the differences are in favor of elder persons to acquire these skills [15,16].

Conclusion and Recommendation

As it appears, it cannot be denied that self-determination skills are paramount for persons with intellectual disabilities, and that they play a crucial role in achieving an independent living. The results of the studies have shown a positive correlation between the acquisition of these skills and life quality as well as the possibility of its prediction through acquiring these skills [16]. It was also highlighted that intervention programs are effective in developing these skills, and that teachers' good preparation during their study in faculties of qualifying teachers or their work at schools is also mandatory to reach this aim.

Consulting the studies included in this review clarified that research in the area of self-determination skills of persons with intellectual disabilities is very few and that there is an urgent need to carry on more studies on different chronological ages as well as on different types of disabilities, in areas with varying socio-economic status, in order to elucidate different information that help in developing self-determination skills of persons with intellectual disabilities.

The present review recommends the necessity of providing electronic information sources related to developing self-determination skills of persons with intellectual disabilities, provided that these use a simple language and supported by videos suitable to each specific age group. It is also advised to work on modifying social attitudes towards persons with intellectual disabilities and making them aware of these skills and their importance to these people. The study also advocates the importance of training persons with intellectual disabilities, including self-determination skills in individual educational plans, training these persons on the specified skills at an early age, and training their parents on self-determination skills to train their offspring to use them. The current review also recommends the necessity to carry out more studies to learn about self-determination skills of persons with intellectual disabilities, at both inclusion and isolation schools, to specify a suitable educational alternative to develop these skills. More studies related to self-determination of persons with intellectual disabilities, with autism spectrum disorder, with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, and other cases of communicational, movement and learning disorders are also advised to be carried out.

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