

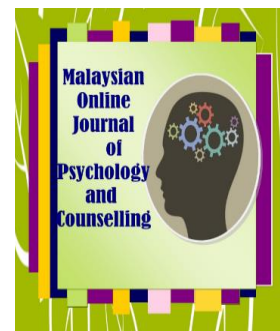
RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN GENERAL EDUCATORS' SKILLS AND TEACHING PERFORMANCE OF TEACHING STUDENTS WITH LEARNING DIFFICULTIES, INCLUDED IN INTERMEDIATE SCHOOLS IN RIYAD, SAUDI ARABIA

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ABSTRACT

The success of inclusion initiatives for students with learning difficulties (LD) in regular classrooms depends on the teaching skills of general educators and to what extent these skills affect their teaching performance. Hence, this investigation examines the relationship between teaching skills and teaching performance among general educators (GEds) who teach students in intermediate schools in Riyadh, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA). A questionnaire survey was used to collect data from 401 GEds in regular intermediate schools in Riyadh. GEds completed the questionnaire containing items related to teaching skills, and they also completed a teaching performance questionnaire. The data collected in this study were analysed using a structural equation modelling approach (SEM) via analysis of moment structures (AMOS). The findings from the structural analysis indicated that GEds' skills were significantly correlated with their performance. Moderation analysis confirmed the significant effect of years of teaching experience on the relationship between GEds' skills and their teaching performance. Specifically, the influence of GEds' skills on their teaching performance was greater among those with either very little or a lot of teaching experience. Hence, the findings of the present study will contribute to the growing body of literature in the KSA regarding the teaching skills of GEds and their teaching performance in inclusive practice. Moreover, the findings will be beneficial to policymakers in the Ministry of Education (MOE), as well as the educators in the field of LD. This study also has the possible positive reflection on the GEds' teaching performance, thus enhancing their teaching of student with learning difficulties (SLD). Finally, the recommendations from the study and the suggestions for further researches are discussed.

Keywords: *General Educators, Learning Difficulties Teaching Skills, Teaching Performance*



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INTRODUCTION

Educating students with learning difficulties (LD) in general education classrooms is not always considered to be the least restrictive environment (LRE), except in cases where the general educators (GEds) are qualified to educate those students with LD (King-Sears et al., 2012). Smith and Tyler (2011) have indicated that placing students with LD in inclusive classrooms is not enough to ensure that they can achieve their individual educational goals; in fact, effective inclusion requires that GEds possess the teaching skills needed to employ an effective inclusive practice. Similarly, Alsudairy and Baothman (2018), and Alharthi and Evans (2017) have confirmed that it is important for GEds to be prepared with the required teaching skills, and necessary knowledge before attending the inclusive classrooms. It has equally been emphasised that it is essential for GEds to realise that they are crucial players in inclusive practices to achieve successful learning (Loh & Marimuthu, 2016; Alfaro et al., 2015). Accordingly, Gable et al. (2012) have stated that GEds working with disabled students should have adequate skills in teaching those students to meet all of the different requirements and to ensure that the students receive a high-quality education. Al-ttubasi (2019) has stated that GEds have a full responsibility to help SLD adapt to the classroom environment by providing alternative teaching strategies, as well as supportive learning materials so that the students can enjoy their educational experience. Thus, there is a need to confirm that all GEds are using effective skills when teaching students with LD.

In the context of this study, teaching skills refer to the necessary skills possessed by GEds who work in inclusive classrooms; more specifically, such GEds should use several effective teaching skills to meet the academic challenges of LD students given their diverse needs and weaknesses. Sideridis and Chandler (1997) have defined teaching skills as 'teacher's perceived skills and competencies in effectively teaching and managing probable challenging behaviours of students with disabilities who were included in their regular classrooms' (p. 55). Considering this definition, McGhie-Richmond et al. (2007) reported that since we all know that LD students can benefit from some special educational instruction (such as direct instruction), GEds should work to transfer their knowledge to these students through professional skills in a structured system designed specifically to achieve mastery in facilitating those students' learning.

In the Saudi context, although the Ministry of Education (MOE) has paid attention to the inclusion of LD students in regular classrooms, these students unfortunately do not attend these classes full-time. The MOE (2002) has indicated in Article 7 of the Regulations of Special Education Programmes and Institutes of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (RSEPI) that educational services for students with LD are to be provided based on their needs in all essential levels of study, and they are not to be separated from other students except to the extent necessary to provide those service in a resource room for a specific and short time. This is the latest version of the regulation in the KSA. Nevertheless, as indicated in previous Saudi studies discussing the current situation regarding the implementation of inclusion initiatives (e.g., Al-Mousa, 2010), special needs educators still must move LD students from regular classrooms into resource rooms to receive extra teaching, support, and special educational services.

Unfortunately, this situation is contradiction with the regulation above. However, students with LD need to attend sessions in resource rooms when GEds are unable to educate them, or when educators fail to solve their academic problems (Al-Zoubi & Rahman, 2016). Note that there is a gap between what is expected and what actually happens in reality when applying the educational services in LD

programmes in KSA. As stated by Almedij and Rubinstein-Avila (2018), in general, there is still a need to improve the special education programmes in KSA.

Hence, this challenge may be due to the absence of skilled and qualified GEds who are ready to educate students with LD. Aqeal (2014) has expressed that because of the lack of GEds' teaching skills, LD students cannot overcome their difficulties. However, this problem was found to be one of employment preparation in many countries. To illustrate that, international literature on this topic has indicated that GEds generally feel that they lack preparation to teach and support students with special needs (Fayez et al., 2011; King-Sears et al., 2012; Chiner and Cardona, 2013; Stefanski, 2014). It is thus clear that the lack of GEds' skills in teaching LD students has become a real obstacle for educators (Musyoka et al., 2017). For this reason, many studies have indicated the importance of preparing GEds with adequate skills to be effective with their teaching. For example, King-Sears et al. (2012) have emphasised that GEds with adequate teaching skills believed that they had the ability to perform those actions that would help them to reach the desired teaching outcome.

Moreover, Figueroa (2013) has asserted that improved teaching skills help students to learn and enhance their basic writing, computation, and reading skills, and so some SLD can become more successful. Generally, effective educators require competencies such as professional teaching skills, possession of the necessary knowledge, the ability to promote a positive learning environment, the effective use of teaching strategies, discipline management, time management, and the provision of useful homework (Cohen et al., 2004). The proposed study aims to investigate the relationship between GEds' skills in teaching SLD and their teaching performance in inclusive classrooms in intermediate schools in Saudi Arabia. This present research is based on the following objectives:

1. To determine if there is a significant relationship between teaching skills and teaching performance among GEds teaching LD students in intermediate schools in Riyadh.
2. To determine if there is a significant moderating effect of teaching experience on the relationship between teaching skills and teaching performance among teaching LD students in intermediate schools in Riyadh.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In Graziano (2016) study, most of educators believed that Marzano' model help them to improve their teaching skills. Marzano's model has been used to improve educators' performance in the classroom (Frontier & Livingston, 2011). Graziano (2016) has stated that educators need to use Marzano's model for monitor, support and to reward their growth in teaching. Furthermore, in order to remain informed about the details of the evaluation system, the required skills that all educators should have must be known. Marzano et al. (2011) have stated that the aims of the model are to build the skills of educators over time and to increase their expertise to improve their practices in classrooms. Furthermore, Marzano's model not only helps educators define educational strategies and describes what educators need to know to be qualified to perform in the classroom; it also provides a means for educators to transport and translate such standards into their own classroom practices (Marzano et al., 2012).

Marzano (2013) divided educators' performance into three main levels: beginning level, developing level, and innovating level. The educators in the beginning level use traditional strategies in teaching due to the limited teaching skills they have. They often make errors, although by using these

strategies, their teaching has little impact on students' learning. The educators in the second level use certain strategies without making a massive number of errors, but these educators still need guidelines and must be monitored for how and when they need to use such strategies; they must also work harder to motivate students to participate in classroom activities. Those in the last level are innovating educators who are familiar with the strategies that they apply to develop students' learning. These educators can also meet all students' needs. It can be said that dividing the educators' performance into these levels helps them to put forth their best effort in order to improve their skills and thus their performance.

Specific teaching skills can be discerned by reviewing the domains of Marzano's model related to classroom strategies and educators' performance. Because of the importance of the achievement of LD students, educationists believe that teaching performance is the most direct causal link to the achievements of students. Marzano's model can be employed not only to evaluate educators but also to determine effective skills in teaching and teaching performances in the classroom. Therefore, the model's framework might help to predict the teaching performance of educators.

Figure 1 below shows the conceptual framework clarified the relationship between this study's variables.

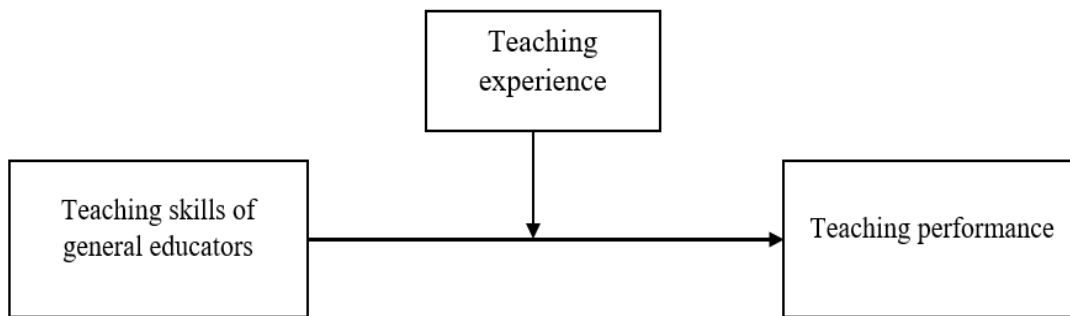


Figure 1. The conceptual framework of the study

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Educators should be prepared with the required skills for improving LD students' achievement and successfully accommodating the teaching needs of all pupils. Alharthi and Evans (2017) have argued that teachers should be provided with the necessary skills as well as the relevant knowledge before the achievement of inclusive education practices is possible. Al-Ahmadi (2009) has provided an account of experience in the Saudi context, arguing that GEDs are not satisfied that they possess the required teaching skills to educate LD students in regular classrooms. Accordingly, both general and special needs educators in KSA have revealed that they do not have adequate teaching skills and knowledge for teaching disabled students in inclusive classrooms and achieve the required practices (Al-Ahmadi, 2009).

A few studies have focused on the relationship between the teaching skills of GEDs and their teaching performance in inclusive classrooms. For example, Alothaim (2017) has reported that the teaching

skills of Saudi Arabian educators were linked with their teaching performance. He also found that educators who had prior experience suited to working with students with special needs reported that they felt unprepared to do what they were expected to due to a lack of preparation and training programmes. In this regard, Alrubaian and Alkhateeb (2017) reported that there was no in-service educator training programme in KSA offered to date. Similarly, Ergün and Sönmez (2019) found that there was a moderate positive relationship between Turkish educators' skills and their performance, and this relationship differed significantly according to the number of years of teaching experience.

McGhie-Richmond et al. (2007) investigated elementary educators teaching in an inclusive classroom to determine if the appearance of 'constructivist' skills was independent of teaching behaviours, or whether they followed from the mastery of teaching behaviours. One of the most relevant parts to the present study was the investigation of the educators' skills for effective teaching and measured their behaviours by using a Classroom Observation Scale (COS), which was developed to discern a combination of effective teaching skills. McGhie-Richmond et al. (2007) found that there was a relationship between educators' skills and some teaching behaviours. Accordingly, they also reported that the highest scoring educators used a skilful combination of instruction types, which increased the students' level of engagement. Additionally, some elements of teaching behaviour contributed to increasing students' participation, such as the effective use of time management, engaging lesson presentation, and the provision of a practical organisational framework for lesson delivery.

Some studies have investigated educators' skills specifically in teaching disabled students. For instance, Alfaro et al. (2015) revealed that GEds felt uncomfortable with their participation in the Individual Educational Plan (IEP). Based on their results, it was suggested that educators should overcome this issue by developing their skills in planning and employing the IEP. The results of the correlation analysis for their study indicated that there was a positive correlation between educators' skills, knowledge, and attitudes. Chiner and Cardona (2013) indicated that a large percentage of educators reported that they did not have enough teaching skills, material resources, and time to meet the educational needs of disabled students. Moreover, these GEds reported that they felt unprepared to teach these students. Thus, Chiner and Cardona's (2013) study pointed to the lack of adequate skills as an obstacle that might contribute to preventing educators' acceptance of inclusion.

Al-ttubasi (2019) stated that the level of GEds' knowledge of the classrooms' adjustments and adaptations for SLD was one of the most important teaching skills required by those educators. These skills could help the GEds to provide an effective teaching. He added that the lack of providing instructions to the SLD, for example on the academic subjects and examinations, has directly affected their outcomes. Another finding recorded in this study was that the GEds' incapability to determine the level of SLD was due to the weak teaching skills. Therefore, the lack of ability to organise the main ideas of the lessons and lesson presentations led to the failure of the educators to determine the academic status of SLD. Furthermore, the absence and lack of using the means, drawings and clear presentations reflected the low level of using the teaching methods and presenting the lessons.

Markelz, Riden and Scheeler (2017) reported that although educators acquired teaching skills during pre-service programmes, there was a concern about the extent to which these skills may have been generalising their teaching in the future and how those educators' skills would be linked with their performance. Hence, in the absence of training programmes in the Saudi context, educators should be concerned about the effectiveness of teaching without the skilful preparation that GEds need before teaching in inclusive classrooms, however, this gap may lead to random practices specifically

with LD students. That is, it is crucial to explore the relationship between educators' teaching skills and teaching performance. With this in mind, Jordan et al. (2009) reported that GEds with effective teaching skills could make significant contributions to inclusive practices. Their study results confirmed that there was a relationship between educators' beliefs, their behaviour, and the quality of teaching practices.

The study conducted by Baguisa and Ang-Manaig (2019) reported a significant relationship between educators' skills and students' formative performance, but there was a negligible relationship between educators' skills and students' periodical performance. Along similar lines, Wenglinsky (2002) investigated the link between the academic achievement of students and educators' practices. He reported that if educators' skills reached the level required by standards such as the teachers' education level, then students' performance would be improved. The studies conducted by Baguisa and Ang-Manaig (2019) and Wenglinsky (2002) focused on students' performance rather than on educators' performance. However, if the educators' teaching skills are correlated with students' performance, this could also be evidence that the educators transfer their skills via their teaching performance to improve students' performance. McGhie-Richmond et al. (2007) confirmed that GEds skills play a massive role in their ability to maximise time spent in individual instructional interactions with students. In addition, Marzano et al. (2011) believed that the supervision of educators should be instituted to ensure the development of educators' teaching skills, with the final goal of promoting the achievement of students.

On the relevance of years of experience, Alqahtani (2017) conducted a study in high schools in the KSA. One of his findings was that GEds with less experience (1–5 years) had more positive attitudes towards the inclusion of LD students, and were more positive about employing integrated classroom management than the educators with more experience. A study conducted by Alrubaian (2014) investigated the factors that affect male GEds' attitudes, knowledge, and skills in primary schools in the KSA from perspectives of principals' schools and GEds. The results of this study found that there was a relationship between the GEds' years of experience and their effectiveness in teaching LD students. Another finding of Alqahtani (2017) indicated that more than half of principals reported that they believed that classroom management skills were critical for effective teaching in inclusive classrooms. Nevertheless, Alqahtani (2017) found that most GEds reported that their performance declined because their classroom included LD students; they reasoned that this was due to their lack of teaching skills.

Marzano's model offers a good explanation of the instructional strategies that educators must enact. In the study conducted by Graziano (2016), 14 educators were selected from one school in New Jersey; two of these educators were certified in special education. The findings indicated that educators' evaluation practices were very likely to improve educators' practices, and thus students' achievement. Perhaps most importantly, the educators in Graziano's study (2016) reported that Marzano's model helped them to integrate a diversity of research-based instructional strategies. Although the educators believed that they had previously used and practised good strategies, such as those outlined in Marzano's model, most of them did not believe that planning and preparing a new lesson was one of the most significant requirements to improve their practices in the classroom. Thus, almost accidentally, they accepted that Marzano's model might help them to develop some essential teaching skills. In fact, half of the participants showed that Marzano's model highlighted individualised and differentiated types of instruction. They also reported that Marzano's model categorised special needs students and their varying abilities within its framework. Therefore, the educators in Graziano's (2016) believed that the model helped them to focus on students with special

needs and to think about the teaching strategies that could help them to effectively educate those students.

To conclude, the significant of this study is based on its effective contributions and benefits to GEds, LD's students, and Ministry of Education (MOE) in KSA. Therefore, the finding of current study may add to the body of literature in KSA in this field by exploring GEds teaching skills who have played a core role leading to success in inclusion.

After reviewing the literature and based on the conceptual framework, this study aims to examine the following questions:

1. Is there any significant relationship between skills and teaching performance among GEds teaching LD students included in intermediate schools in Riyadh?
2. Is there any significant moderating effect on the relationship between skills and teaching performance according to teaching experience among GEds teaching LD students included in intermediate schools in Riyadh?

Accordingly, two hypotheses were formulated to answer the questions of this study as following:

H₁: There is a significant relationship between skills and teaching performance among GEds teaching LD students included in intermediate schools in Riyadh.

H₂: There is a significant moderating effect on the relationship between skills and teaching performance according to teaching experience among GEds teaching LD students included in intermediate schools in Riyadh.

METHODOLOGY

The current study has adopted a quantitative method to address the research hypotheses. The following sections provide more details about the research designs, sampling, and instruments of this study.

Research Design

This study applied a survey design consisting of a correlation study, and collected data from a targeted population through the distribution of questionnaires. According to Creswell (2008), the survey design might be helpful to provide a quantitative description of the participants' opinions and attitudes by using a questionnaire. Moreover, for the correlational research design, Creswell (2012) has stated that a researcher applies the correlation statistical test to measure the degree of relationship between two variables or more.

Population and Sampling Method

The target respondents in this study were GEds who held at least a bachelor's degree or above in any general subject (e.g., religious studies, Arabic language, sciences, mathematics, etc). They must have worked in public intermediate schools with inclusive classrooms in Riyadh in the KSA. A total of 401 questionnaires were distributed to the educators. The sample size was determined by using Krejcie and Morgan's table (1970) and the Raosoft calculator. Additionally, the large sample size was considered adequate as suggested by Hair et al. (2013) and Weston; Gore (2006) and Blunch (2013),

who suggested that larger sample size was needed for statistical testing by structural equation modelling (SEM). A cluster sampling technique was employed to collect data from the respondents. To detail out this technique, as the first step, we applied a simple random sampling to select an equal number of schools from each district in Riyadh city, approximately four schools from each district. Thus, the total number of schools was twenty intermediate schools in Riyadh. Second, almost eighty educators were selected randomly from each district in order to reach the targeted number of samples for this study.

The Instrument

The two questionnaires developed for this study were adapted to measure the variables tested in the research model. The teaching skills of GEds questionnaire were measured by two adapted and modified surveys: The Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS) (2009) and the Robinson survey (1996). The teaching skills of GEds questionnaire also involved items that were developed by the researcher based on Marzano's model (2011) and that was related to the educators' teaching skills and teaching performance.

For further details, firstly, Robinson (1996) developed a survey to examine the educators' preparation to work with SLD. This survey also aimed to measure the educators' skills, knowledge, and attitude. This survey used a five-point Likert scale. The current research adapted the seven statements in the skills section with modifications. Following the experts' review, the number of statements was reduced to six. Secondly, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development Staff (OECD) has offered the TALIS to allow educators to provide information regarding the challenges and issues, such as the professional development challenges in their teaching and practices. Moreover, according to the OECD (2009), the TALIS has been applied in 23 countries with the purpose of finding the gap in the international data, and helping countries review the developed educational policies and regulations in order to improve the effectiveness of teaching (Klieme & Vieluf, 2009). However, after the expert's review, we decided to use five statements with some modifications in the survey. The rest of the statements in the skills section of the questionnaire was created from the Marzano model.

Teaching performance questionnaire was measured using the COS created by Jordan and Stanovich (1998) and Jordan (2018). The latest version of this scale published in 2018 developed a combination of effective teaching skills and was adapted with some modifications in this study. The modified questionnaire included twenty statements. These statements covered three elements of teaching performance: classroom management, time management, and lesson presentation. Finally, all items in the current study were measured using a five-point Likert scale, from 1 = 'extremely unlikely' to 5 = 'extremely likely'.

DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULT

Initially, data collected were statistically analysed using AMOS 24.0. SPSS version 24. was used to prepare the data before analysis. Descriptive statistics were used to describe the educators' demographic information. Then, the data were checked for validity and reliability. Finally, the fit of the study model was determined with the use of AMOS. The results are presented in the following section.

Demographic Information

As shown in Table 1, the majority of respondents were female educators;(n=238, 59.4%) while (n=163, 40.6 %) were male. The majority (n = 324; 80.8%) of the respondents held a bachelor's degree, while (n=71, 17.7%) hold a master's in education, while only (n=6, 1.5%) held a doctoral degree in education. Regarding to the teaching experience, the majority (n =181; 45.1%) of educators had over 15 years of teaching experience, (n=90, 22.4%) had experience between 6 to 10 years, while 69 educators (17.2%) had less than 5 years of teaching experience, finally 61 of the participants (15.2%) had between 11 to 15 years of teaching experience.

Table 1
Summary of Demographic Information of Questionnaires Participants

Variable	Group	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Female	238	59.4
	Male	163	40.6
Qualification	Bachelor	324	80.8
	Master	71	17.7
	PhD	6	1.5
Experience	Less than 5 years	69	17.2
	From 6 to 10 years	90	22.4
	From 11 to 15 years	61	15.2
	Over 15 years	181	45.1

Note: n 401

Results of This Study

To perform the data analysis, the study applied SEM using AMOS 24.0. Specifically, the model-fitting approach was used to validate the measurement of the relationship between skills and teaching performance among GEds/teachers who teach LD students in intermediate schools in Riyadh. In addition, the study used both a measurement model and a structural model to examine the adequacy of this study model. Next, the hypothesised models were estimated using the covariance matrix derived from the data. The estimation procedures satisfied the underlying statistical distribution theory, yielding estimates of defensible properties. Finally, the second objective was addressed through multigroup analysis that examined the moderating role of teachers' experiences.

Construct Validity

The construct validity of the measurement model of the current study was evaluated using AMOS 24.0. Three validity tests were conducted to establish the construct validity of the measurement model: overall model fit, convergent validity, and divergent validity.

The overall fit between the characteristics of the measurement items and the data was tested to validate the measurement model. The overall fit was determined by the following commonly used indices: chi-square (χ^2) = 1096.884, degree of freedom (df) = 392, RMSEA = 0.067, comparative fit

indicator (CFI) = 0.932, and Tucker Lewis index (TLI) = 0.924. However, eight items (six items from the skills dimension and two items from the teaching performance dimension) were removed due to not meeting the specifications.

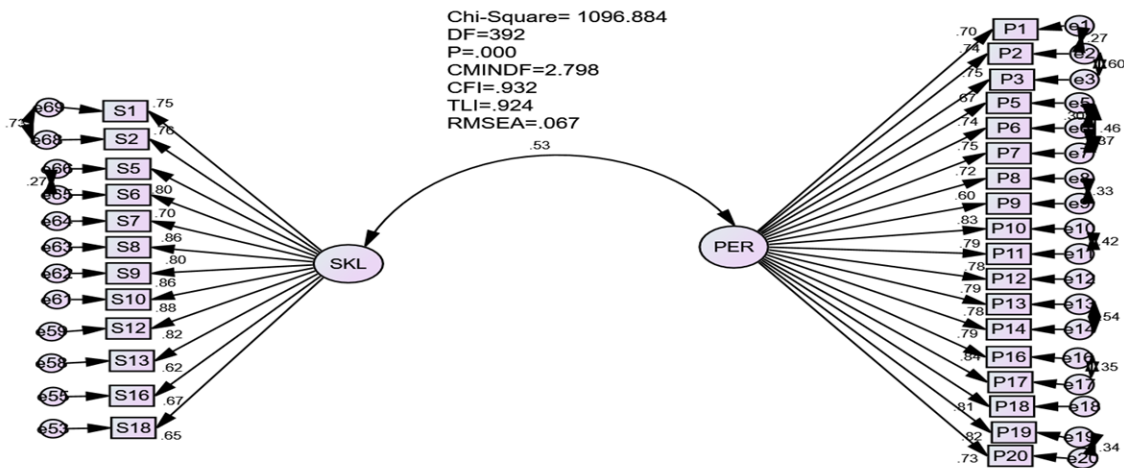


Figure 2. CFA Results of Study Model

Further evidence vis-à-vis the hypothesised model's validity and adequacy of the measurement model for determining the relationship between GEds' skills and teaching performance are detailed here, with a focus on the measurement model in terms of its two types of construct validity, which are convergent construct validity and divergent construct validity. The first indicator of this step can be checked by looking at all items that have shown all loadings of more than 0.60. In the present case, the factor loadings for the items were acceptable with an adequate sample size of participants (Hair et al., 2014). Accordingly, all indicators in this study were related to their variable, and hence there is enough evidence of the convergent construct validity of the measurement model. The composite reliabilities of all factors also exceeded the recommended 0.70 level. As shown in Table 2, the AVE values surpassed the threshold value of 0.50 (Kline, 2016; Hair et al., 2014; Byrne, 2013). Consequently, both of these constructs in the model had adequate convergent validity. Regarding the divergent construct validity, Figure 2 shows that the correlation between the two variables was 0.53, which was far less than 0.85. Thus, discriminant validity was supported. As a result, both variables of this study complied with discriminant validity standards (Hair et al., 2014). Overall, the results indicate that the study model was psychometrically sound.

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Table 2
Mean, Standard Deviation and Convergent Validity Analysis (n = 401)

Constructs	Indicators	Mean	Standard Deviation	Loading	AVE	C.R
Teaching Performance	P1	4.170	.9253	.698	0.532	0.918
	P2	4.165	.9710	.735		
	P3	4.110	.9370	.748		
	P5	4.399	.7552	.672		
	P6	4.222	.8764	.734		
	P7	4.439	.7726	.749		
	P8	4.097	.8474	.718		
	P9	4.027	.9229	.597		
	P10	4.262	.8116	.827		
	P11	4.302	.8162	.788		
	P12	4.297	.8241	.783		
	P13	4.364	.7597	.787		
	P14	4.369	.7990	.777		
	P16	4.279	.8257	.793		
	P17	4.207	.8772	.841		
	P18	4.242	.8596	.807		
	P19	4.165	.8988	.824		
	P20	4.150	.9368	.730		
	Teachers' Skills	S1	3.394	1.1177		
S2		3.324	1.1268	.764		
S5		3.581	1.1018	.798		
S6		3.950	1.0062	.702		
S7		3.599	1.0959	.859		
S8		3.825	1.0533	.803		
S9		3.469	1.1422	.859		
S10		3.554	1.1125	.880		
S12		3.800	1.0223	.816		
S13		3.658	1.2311	.616		
S16	3.678	1.0926	.666			
S18	3.973	1.0157	.653			

Adequacy of the Hypothesized Structural Model

After evaluating the psychometric properties of the study model, the structural modelling was conducted to examine the influence of the GEds' teaching skills on their teaching performance (Hypothesis 1). The hypothesised model exhibited consistency with respect to the hypothesised causal relationships within the data (normed chi-square = 1096.884; RMSEA = .067; CFI = .932; TLI = .924) (see figure 3). All of these fit indices for the teachers' skills on their teaching performance model satisfied their recommended values, which indicated a skill structural model. The parameter estimates of the hypothesised model were free from offending values with uncorrelated errors. The path coefficients of the causal structure were statistically significant at the .01 level and were

determined to be of practical importance. The standardised path coefficient of GEds' skills → teaching performance was important and statistically significant ($\beta = 0.53$). Consequently, this result shows that there is a significant relationship between skills and teaching performance of GEds who teaching LD students in intermediate schools in KSA. Thus, the first hypothesis (H_1) accepted.

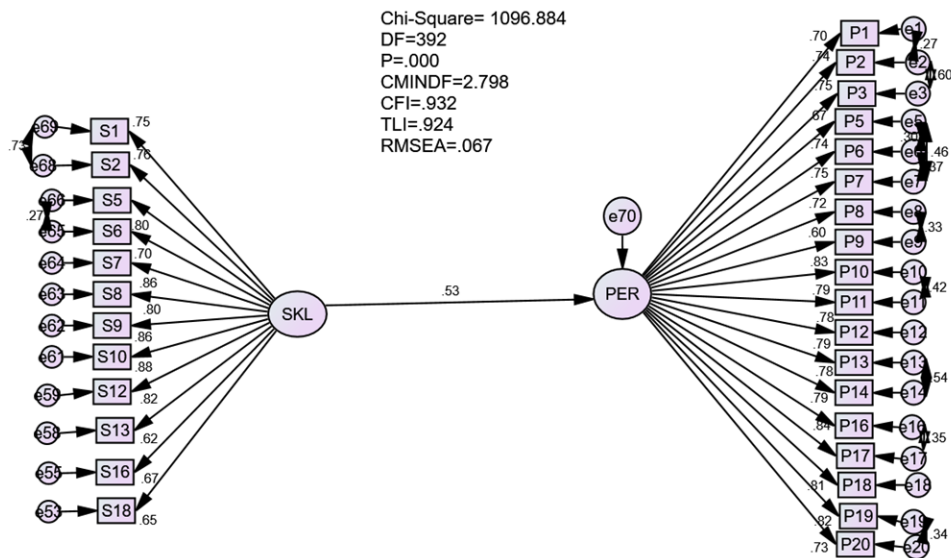


Figure 3. The Structural Model of the Study

According to the results of the measurement model, 12 items that expressed the GEds' skills in teaching LD students were confirmed after checking the model fit. Likewise, the teaching performance assessed by the questionnaire used in this study was adapted with some modification from the COS developed by Jordan and Schwartz (1998) and Jordan (2018). In order to check the model fit of the dependent variable, 18 items were identified, which were later translated into questionnaire measurement items. These two questionnaires were also tested for their reliability, validity, and goodness of fit. The results of these tests showed that the questionnaires were successful in measuring both educators' skills in teaching students with LD and educators' teaching performance and showed strong evidence for validity and reliability.

Moderating Effect

As can be seen from Table 3, the results of the moderation analysis, which were in line with the second hypothesis of this study, examined the impact of GEds' experience on the relationship between the GEds' teaching skills and their teaching performance. The estimation of the constrained measurement model produced another chi-square value, which was then tested against the baseline value for statistically significant differences (Kline, 2016; Byrne, 2013). The variance test for the structural model showed a statistically significant change in the chi-square value across the teachers' teaching experience groups (< 5 yrs, 6–10 yrs, 11–15 yrs, and >15 yrs). This means that the increase

in the chi-square values from the unrestricted model to the constrained model produced a poorer model of the prelateship between the GEds' skills and their teaching performance. Consequently, GEds' teaching experience moderated the relationship between their skills and teaching performance. This happened because the path coefficient of those with either very low or very high experience was greater than those with medium achievement. The path coefficients were 0.66 for teachers who had less than 5 years of experience, 0.62 for teachers with between 6 and 10 years of experience, 0.37 for teachers with 11–15 years of experience, and 0.53 for teachers with over 15 years of experience in the teaching field. Thus, the influence of teachers' skills on their teaching performance was greater among those with either very little or a lot of teaching experience. Thus, the second hypothesis (H_2) was confirmed and accepted.

Table 3
The Results of The Experience-Invariant Analysis

	Unconstrained	Constrained	Change	Decision
Chi-square	3305.94	3312.035	6.095	Teachers' experience moderates the relationship
Degree of freedom	1568	1569	1	

DISCUSSION

The results of the study revealed a positive correlation between GEds' skills in teaching students with LD and their teaching performance in intermediate schools in Riyadh. This finding is consistent with those reported in the study of Ergün and Sönmez (2019) and Baguisa and Ang-Manaig (2019), who revealed that there was a significant positive relationship between educators' skills and their performance. In fact, Baguisa and Ang-Manaig (2019) confirmed that educators' skills are a significant indicator of how educators interact with special needs students. The results were also consistent with those of McGhie-Richmond et al. (2007), who reported that there was a relationship between educators' skills and some teaching behaviours. They also suggested that educators must pay attention to all students in their classrooms by employing effective skills that are appropriate for those particular students. Alothaim (2017) also offered the same view, in that that educators' teaching skills and teaching performance were closely linked. Similarly, Jordan et al. (2009) found that there was a relationship between educators' behaviours and the quality of teaching practices. In contrast, Chiner and Cardona (2013) and Alrubaian (2014) reported that educators in environments with low inclusion felt unskilled in their practices due to a lack of adequate skills. Al-ttubasi (2019) further referenced the fact that GEds considered their lack of skills in teaching SLD as a barrier that led to the lack of practice on determining the students' needs and weaknesses in learning. Consequently, it is maintained that inadequately prepared educators cannot meet the needs of LD students and thus cannot help them reach their individual goals.

Moreover, the results here demonstrate that teaching skills are a significant predictor of educators' performance. More specifically, improving teaching skills means improving teaching performance. This finding is also supported by the idea evident in Marzano's model regarding educators' effectiveness, in that it is important to identify what educators need to do to teach and support students. Al-Husban and Alkhawaldeh (2016) also highlighted that Marzano's model is significant for developing the level of educators' performance and confirming the quality of effective educators based on their teaching skills. Importantly, within this framework, teaching skills can be considered

as a criterion to assess GEds' skills preparation programmes before instructors are placed in inclusive classrooms or in-service training.

The result of the present study related to the moderation effect of experience indicated that teaching experience moderates the relationship between educators' skills and their performance. The result of the moderation analysis confirmed the role of teaching experience in improving teaching skills and teaching performance for GEds in intermediate schools. This finding is of particular interest; it was surprising that educators with fewer years of experience (less than five years) had a more moderate effect of their teaching skills on their teaching performance than other groups of educators with more years of experience. Educators with 6–10 years were next with respect to the moderation of their skills on performance, while GEds with 11–15 years of experience had the least significant moderation effect in this study relationship. However, this finding was somewhat surprising because it was supposed that, in general, educators with more experience tended to be more skilled and would show more positive performance in their teaching than other groups of educators with fewer years of experience. On this issue, Rice (2010) pointed to the fact that although years of experience matter, more is not always better.

However, one potential explanation for this result is that all the GEds were aware of the positive contributions of becoming skilled in their teaching performance regardless of their teaching experience. Another potential explanation is that the GEds developed their skills earlier in their careers and then these skills remained stable since that time. Staiger and Rockoff (2010) argued while that experience was extremely important early on in the educators' occupations, in subsequent years, there were little gains or no additional gains. According to Rice (2010), in the first few years of teaching, the effect of years' experience is the strongest; after that it gradually diminishes. Alqahtani (2017) reasoned that educators with less experience are more excited about teaching more than educators with more experience. In the same vein, Jordan (2018) stressed the importance of years of experience in improving educators' teaching skills and cultivating their ability to adopt more inclusive teaching practices. Jordan (2018) answered the question of how teaching skills evolve by reviewing the results of previous studies, concluding that later career educators could have more inclusive practices in their teaching due to their experience, which inspired them to work harder to ensure the success of all students. Furthermore, such educators may also focus on the academic achievements of students to meet those students' needs.

The findings of the current study with respect to experience were partly consistent with those of Alqahtani (2017), who stated that GEds in high schools in KSA with less experience scored more positively on classroom management and were able to educate LD students more effectively than experienced educators. Avramidis and Norwich (2010) also confirmed that educators with fewer years of experience were more supportive of inclusion practices. However, the view that teaching experience has a positive effect on educators' skills and performance was found to be consistent with a number of the results in the related literature. For instance, Jordan (2018) has highlighted the importance of experience with respect to educators' teaching skills to ensure the effectiveness of their practices. This view resonates with the findings reported by Alrubaian (2014), who stated that there was a relationship between teaching experience and GEds' effectiveness in teaching LD students in KSA. This is also very similar to the findings of Ergün and Sönmez (2019), who reported that educators' skills differed significantly according to their years of teaching experience. A similar finding was reported by Alothaim (2017), who indicated that educators who hold experience were more appropriate for educating students with special needs in KSA. The alternative point of view is that teaching experience does not make a difference in educators' teaching performance; McGhie-

Richmond et al. (2007) reported that the length of teaching experience did not predict educators' teaching behaviours. Likewise, Wenglinsky (2002) who argued that an educator cannot be identified as skilled simply in terms of their experience.

CONCLUSION

The main conclusion of this study is that teaching skills give GEds the opportunity to improve their teaching performance in an inclusive setting. However, this result is a good indicator of where GEds still have space for more development in terms of skills in teaching LD students. Considering this finding, further research is needed to explore how to comprehensively support GEds to achieve effective inclusion. GEds need to apply basic teaching skills for students with disabilities by focusing on pre-teaching and re-teaching; thus, improving educators' teaching skills will help them to more successfully educate students (Casale-Giannola, 2012). The Ministry of Education in the KSA (MOE) needs to realise that GEds' teaching performance will impact the academic achievement of LD students. Thus, the most important factor is that the MOE ensure that all GEds are skilled and prepared to teach these students.

It is also important to highlight the importance of teaching experience to moderate the relationship between skills and performance. Casale-Giannola (2012) considered educators' experience as one of the obstacles to the successful inclusion of students with difficulties, and rightfully so. There is a massive need for a training programme or even short coursework that aims to develop GEds' teaching skills regardless of their years of experience. Accordingly, Wenglinsky (2002) and Chiner and Cardona (2013) suggested that general educators should take coursework that will help them to improve their abilities and skills for teaching disabled students in an inclusive sitting.

Al-Husban and Alkhawaldeh (2016) also highlighted that Marzano's model is significant for developing the level of educators' performance and confirming the quality of effective educators based on their teaching skills. Importantly, within this framework, teaching skills can be considered as a criterion to assess GEds' skills preparation programmes before instructors are placed in inclusive classrooms or in-service training. More recently, Al-ttubasi (2019) also suggested that the required teaching skills to adapt to the teaching methods and classroom management of SLD could be provided through specific courses and trainings for the GEds in order to improve their teaching performance.

In light of this study's findings, there are a number of areas that were not covered. Through the continued investigation efforts in this areas, positive changes could be made in inclusive education in KSA. In fact, there is a lack of studies examining the moderating effect of educators' experience on the relationship between skills and performance in KSA. Hence, further studies are needed in this specific area. Further, a qualitative research project can be conducted to obtain a more in-depth understanding of the current teaching skills of educators and to investigate their needs to improve these skills.

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