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Article

## An Analysis of Special Educators' Perceptions of Individualized Education Plans (IEPs)

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### Abstract

Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) are extensively implemented to ensure that appropriate public education is accessible to students with disabilities in both private and public schools. The IEP serves as a crucial legal document that outlines the essential components and tailored educational strategies for each student. This study aimed to evaluate the quality of the IEP process from the perspectives of special education (SPED) educators in the United Arab Emirates (UAE). Specifically, it investigated teachers' comprehension, interactions, practices, experiences, and assessments of IEPs within their educational institutions. Employing a purposive sampling technique, 87 SPED educators participated in the survey, comprising 67.4% special education teachers, 14% special education specialists, 5.8% special education supervisors, and approximately 13% from other professional roles. The findings indicated that student involvement in the IEP process and transitional statements were perceived as less significant. Additionally, learning objectives and documentation demonstrated a weak correlation with the SPED educators' awareness and utilization of IEPs. Notably, a statistically significant difference was identified among various age groups and types of schools. This study concludes with recommendations and considerations for further implications.

### Keywords

Individualized Education Plans, Special Education, Special Students, Quality, Practice.

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IEPs are extensively utilized to ensure that appropriate public education is accessible to students with disabilities in both private and public schools (Lindner & Schwab, 2020). The IEP serves as a critical legal document that outlines the essential components and provides a tailored educational strategy for each student with a disability (Becker et al., 2020). Researchers further characterize the IEP as a collaborative process involving the student's parents and educators in the development of a personalized education program for the child (Hester, Bridges, & Rollins, 2020). According to Jeong and So (2020), the IEP functions as a roadmap for parents and teachers. Furthermore, the effective implementation of the IEP necessitates cooperation among administrators, educators, parents, and the entire multidisciplinary team (Hester et al., 2020; Jeong & So, 2020; Lindner & Schwab, 2020).

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) ensures that all students aged 3 to 21 years diagnosed with qualifying disabilities receive a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) in an inclusive learning environment. Central to the IDEA is the IEP, which serves as a critical framework for enhancing compliance and effectiveness in the formulation, implementation, evaluation, and enforcement of educational programs (Shemshack & Spector, 2020). Byrd and Alexander (2020) noted that federal regulations require that school-based services align with special education practices and that these services are integrated into a student's needs-based IEP. According to Rawas (2024), students with eligible intellectual disabilities receive educational provisions that exceed those available in mainstream classrooms. Consequently, special education (SPED) educators increasingly regard the IEP as a process that explicitly emphasizes and fosters the participation and self-determination of students with disabilities during IEP meetings.

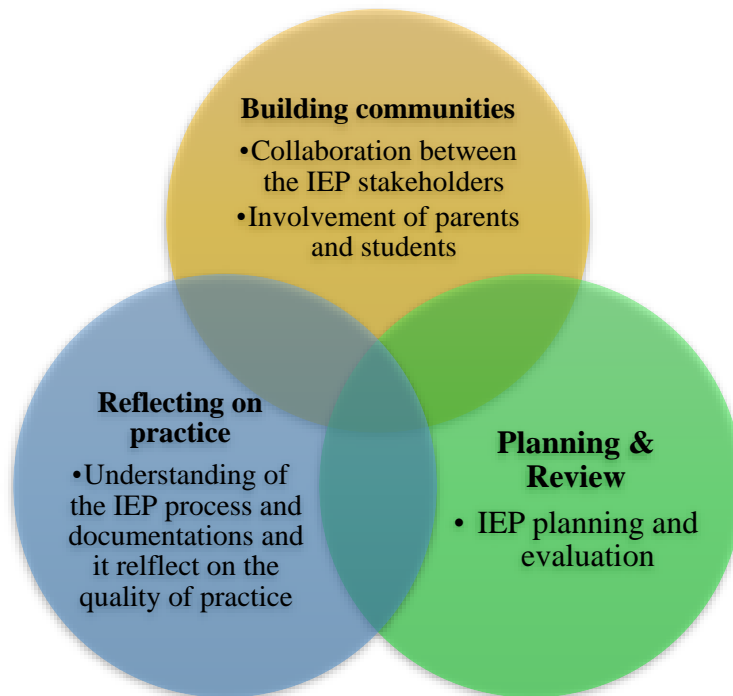
The Ministry of Education (MOE) in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) aims to create a positive learning environment that ensures all students, including those with disabilities, have access to quality education that fosters independence and competency (Aldridge & Rowntree, 2022). According to Federal UAE Law No. 29, students eligible for special education programs must have an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) to protect their rights within mainstream education (Wong et al., 2020). However, there is currently no standardized process for public and private schools to follow in developing high-quality IEPs. There are no specific guidelines regarding the content of IEPs, leading to inconsistent practices among SPED educators and stakeholders. Additionally, literature on the quality of IEP practices in the UAE is limited, prompting this research. The study aimed to assess the quality of the IEP process from the perspectives of SPED educators, focusing on their understanding, interactions, practices, experiences, and evaluations of IEPs. It also explored educators' views on the involvement and participation of special education students and parents in the development of IEPs.

Although IEPs are crucial in special education, limited research has examined how special educators comprehend, interact with, and implement IEPs (Bhutoria, 2022). Most existing studies concentrate on the content of IEPs and student involvement in their development (Chan, 2023). This study aims to address this literature gap by investigating educators' perceptions of the quality of the IEP process in fulfilling the distinct learning needs of students with disabilities in both public and private schools. While various studies on the IEP process exist in different countries (Schmid, Brianza, & Petko, 2021), research specifically addressing this issue within the UAE context remains scarce. Consequently, this study seeks to contribute diverse contextual insights to the literature. Furthermore, it will assess whether the IEP processes effectively meet the unique needs of students, as intended by the program developers.

## Literature Review

### *Conceptual Framework*

The Index for Inclusion was utilized to elucidate the process of developing IEPs within schools. Originally designed as a guiding framework to support inclusive programs, the Index for Inclusion serves as a valuable tool (Booth & Ainscow, 2002). This study adopts and adapts this model to evaluate the establishment of networks that foster community connections, inform planning and review processes, and reflect on IEP practices (see Figure 1).



**Figure 1:** *The Modified Interconnected Model for the Index for Inclusion.*

### ***Critical Elements of Individualized Education Plans***

Numerous scholars have conducted extensive research in the field of special education, yielding valuable insights regarding IEPs. Pincus et al. (2020) noted that one method by which school administrators ensure access to quality education for students with learning disabilities or unique learning needs is through the implementation of IEPs to inform pedagogical practices. Furthermore, Karalis (2020) indicated that the intervention plan is the most critical document within the framework of special educational needs. The goals and objectives outlined in the IEP reflect the anticipated achievements of students receiving special education services. Recent evaluations suggest that the annual goals in the programme delineate the performance expectations for students with disabilities over the course of one year, based on specific skills and knowledge factors. In contrast, the short-term objectives or benchmarks serve as a structure for attaining these goals, comprising measurable activities that facilitate the achievement of annual aims (Jeong & So, 2020; Liang, Ali, & Rosli, 2023). Scholars argue that both annual aims and benchmarks share common elements, including timeframe, conditions, behaviour, and criteria, which are essential for guiding the development and implementation of the IEP components (El Said, 2021). Thus, the formulation of aims and objectives in IEPs is contingent upon the current achievement levels of students with disabilities (Jeong & Kim, 2020; Karalis, 2020).

Studies indicate that the Admission, Review, and Dismissal (ARD) committee plays a vital role in developing measurement standards and procedures for assessing student performance related to the achievement of annual goals and benchmarks outlined in their IEPs (Rahman & Watanobe, 2023). These assessments involve ongoing reports from educators on the progress of students with disabilities in educational settings, with varying systems tailored to meet individual needs. Transition plans within the IEP framework are essential for guiding students with disabilities toward their postsecondary goals (Chan, 2023; Yazicioglu & Kanoglu, 2022). These plans provide high school students with guidance on the objectives necessary for achieving post-high-school aspirations, such as college admission or employment (Chiu & Chai, 2020). Thus, transition plans are a significant component of IEPs for high school students with disabilities (Chiu & Chai, 2020; Froment, García-González, & Cabero-Almenara, 2022).

### ***Parents and Students Involvement***

Ribeiro et al. (2021) define stakeholders in IEPs as individuals who engage in activities and bear responsibility for the educational process of students with special needs. The core team typically includes the

student, their parents, and a skilled support team. Kirksey, Gottfried and Freeman (2024) emphasise the significance of family involvement during the development phase of IEPs, which is a critical requirement of the Individuals with IDEA. Effective information sharing among stakeholders—including SPED educators, parents of SPED students, general educators, and the students themselves—during initial meetings is essential for establishing the current level of performance and setting appropriate annual goals (Lee, 2024).

However, numerous studies have reported a lack of comprehensive involvement of parents and students in the IEP development process (Rahman & Watanobe, 2023). Anastasiou and Papagianni (2020) found that many parents were unaware of their children's IEPs due to their absence from the development process. Similarly, Otani (2020) reported that only four percent of participants indicated full parental involvement in the IEP development process. Previous research has underscored the importance of IEP meetings in special education; however, it also revealed that few students participated actively in these meetings. Wanders et al. (2020) investigated the barriers to parental involvement in the education of children with disabilities and proposed strategies to enhance their engagement (Kirksey et al., 2024; Lee, 2024; Zhou, Ng, & Ho, 2023).

Thematic analysis indicated that parental involvement is impeded by factors such as low education and income, negative attitudes, and a lack of invitations and a welcoming atmosphere. Šimunović and Babarović (2020) emphasised the importance of involving both students and parents, particularly in transition plans. Furthermore, Berkowitz et al. (2021) found that without proper training and support, teachers and students may lack confidence in engaging with the IEP process. Alnahdi, Alwadei and Alharbi (2024) highlighted a persistent gap between the intended policy and actual practices concerning parental and student involvement in the development of IEPs.

### ***Special Education Educators' Awareness and Practices***

Aldabas (2020) noted that the effective implementation of an IEP necessitates a coordinated approach that encompasses the assessment of a student with special educational needs, the development of appropriate accommodations and modifications, and the ongoing monitoring of the plan's execution. Numerous studies have acknowledged the challenges encountered by novice SPED educators in the development of IEPs (Almalki, Alqabbani, & Alnahdi, 2021). These challenges include a lack of self-efficacy in establishing constructive relationships with other stakeholders involved in the IEP process, difficulties in scheduling IEP meetings, insufficient confidence in leading and directing these meetings, limited proficiency in utilising IEP software, and securing support from colleagues and school administrators (Alnahdi & Schwab, 2021). Furthermore, there is a paucity of research focusing on teachers' understanding, interactions, and evaluations of IEPs within their respective educational settings (Almalki et al., 2021; Guo, 2023; Hernández-Ascencio & Angel-Alvarado, 2022).

A substantial body of research has examined teachers' knowledge, attitudes, and perceptions regarding the instruction of students with special educational needs, as these factors are pivotal in fostering inclusivity in both private and public schools (Abu-Alghayth, Lane, & Semon, 2024). Yulianti et al. (2022) indicate that the effective placement and inclusion of students with disabilities in mainstream classrooms significantly rely on educators' attitudes towards special educational needs and their understanding of IEPs. Haderer and Ciolacu (2022) conducted a study investigating the application of the IEP process among special educators in suburban schools, revealing a dearth of information on teachers' attitudes and perceptions regarding IEPs and their implementation in educational practices. Alarming, existing research suggests that a majority of special educators perceive IEPs as lacking in providing adequate daily support for teaching students with special educational needs (Moustafa, 2022; Pambudi & Harjanto, 2020; Yulianti et al., 2022).

Berkowitz et al. (2021) identified that teachers perceived IEPs as inadequately integrated into their regular education curricula, providing little assistance in their instructional planning. IEPs were seen as inconsistent and overly generalized, primarily addressing the objectives of teaching staff rather than focusing on the unique needs of individual students (Wanders et al., 2020). Anastasiou and Papagianni (2020) suggested that for effective IEP implementation, the plans should be concise, targeted, and sufficiently tailored to each special education learner. A study conducted following the reauthorization of the Individuals with IDEA in 2004 revealed that approximately 66% of general educators viewed the incorporation of IEP objectives into lesson planning and teaching within inclusive environments as beneficial (Kirksey et al., 2024).

Previous research in the Saudi Arabian context indicates that teachers are dissatisfied with their skills in implementing IEPs for students with special educational needs in mainstream classrooms (Alnahdi et al., 2024).

Both special and general education teachers have acknowledged their insufficient knowledge and qualifications for effectively applying IEPs (Aldabas, 2020). To enhance collaboration and productivity, special educators require additional support from general education teachers, which can be achieved by integrating IEP objectives into general educators' lesson plans (Thomas et al., 2020). In this collaborative school environment, teachers are seen as change agents and leaders, fostering a culture that supports the successful implementation and sustainability of IEPs (Almalki et al., 2021).

For the approach to be effective, educators require a robust and practical curriculum that facilitates the instruction of students through IEPs (Šimunović & Babarović, 2020). The willingness of special educators to engage with IEPs, coupled with their ability to navigate challenges in ways that address both professional and personal needs, is crucial for the stability and effectiveness of these programmes. Tan, Lyu and Peng (2020) conducted a literature review that examined prior studies on teacher participation in IEPs, including an analysis of 159 IEPs from 36 public and private schools. Their findings indicated that all teachers believed IEPs were beneficial for instructing students with special needs, with over 75% expressing a desire to continue this process even if it were not mandatory. Nonetheless, the authors raised concerns that a significant majority of teachers regarded IEPs as an administrative task rather than as a pedagogical tool designed to enhance instruction and learning for students with special educational needs (Otani, 2020). Additionally, a notable percentage of participants acknowledged that IEPs provided essential structure and direction for classroom activities (Yulianti et al., 2022). Consequently, this study aimed to verify and test the following hypotheses (Sabrina, 2023; Yulianti et al., 2022).

**H1:** There is a significant difference in SPED educators' perceptions among the different age groups towards students' involvement in the IEP Process.

**H2:** There is a significant difference in SPED educators' perceptions between the different school types towards Students' involvement in the IEP Process.

**H3:** There is a significant difference in SPED educators' perceptions between the different school types towards stakeholders and parents' involvement in the IEP Process.

**H4:** There is a linear correlation between the learning objectives and documentation and the stakeholder and SPED educators' awareness and experience in IEP.

**H5:** There is a linear correlation between the stakeholder and parents' involvement and the SPED educator's awareness and experience of IEP.

## Methodology

### *Instrument*

This study aimed to examine SPED educators' perceptions of the quality of the IEP process in the Emirate of Abu Dhabi, based on data collected from both private and public schools. An exploratory approach was employed, utilizing an online survey comprising 33 questions to assess educators' perspectives on IEP practices and applications. The survey instrument was divided into two sections: the first contained eight demographic questions to gather participant characteristics, while the second included 33 statements to evaluate SPED educators' awareness and experiences regarding the IEP process. A five-point Likert scale was used (1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = agree to some extent, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly agree) to gauge participants' levels of agreement with the survey statements. According to Jaakkola, Helkkula and Aarikka-Stenroos (2015), data is deemed reliable and valid when responses are consistent among respondents. To ensure face validity, three experts reviewed the instrument, followed by a pilot study involving six educators from Abu Dhabi. The reliability of the study was assessed using Cronbach's alpha, yielding a high overall reliability score of 0.925.

### *Participants*

The participants in this study comprised special educators, specialists, and supervisors within the realm of special education in Abu Dhabi. The researcher employed a purposive sampling technique, selecting population elements for inclusion in the sample based on accessibility considerations. A survey was administered to 87 respondents to gather quantitative data concerning the quality of the IEP process. Table 1 presents a summary of the demographic characteristics of the survey respondents.

**Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of the Sample.**

“Criterion	Category	Number	Percent
Gender	Male	27	31.4
	Female	60	68.6
Age	30 or less	20	23
	31-40	37	42.5
	41 or More	30	34.5
Nationality	UAE	47	54
	Nonlocal	39	46
Profession	Special Education Teacher	59	67.8
	Special Education Specialist	12	13.8
	Special Education Supervisor	5	5.8
	Other	11	12.6
	Ph.D.		8.1
School Level	Kindergarten	10	11.5
	Cycle 1 (Primary)	22	25.3
	Cycle 2	14	16.1
	Cycle 3 (Secondary)	9	10.3
	Multi-Cycle	9	10.3
School Type	Government Institution for Disabilities	15	17.2
	Private Institution for Disabilities	8	9.1
	Public	67	77
	Private	20	23
	Less than One Year	10	11.6
Experience	1 to Less than 6 Years	2	2.3
	6 to Less than 11 Years	34	38.4
	11 to Less than 16 Years	12	14
	16 to Less than 21 Years	18	20.9
	21 or More	11	12.8
Education	Diploma	4	4.6
	BA/BS Degree	67	77
	Master’s Degree	12	13.8
	Doctoral Degree	4	6.6
	Total	87	100”

**Statistical Analysis**

Descriptive statistical tools, including percentages, means, and standard deviations, were employed to assess IEP practices. T-tests and ANOVA were utilized for data analysis and hypothesis validation. Multiple regression analysis investigated the linear relationship between SPED educators' awareness and experiences in the IEP process and the independent variables. Data were tabulated and analysed using SPSS (Version 25).

**Data Analysis and Results**

Before the data analysis phase, nine domains were established, as detailed in [Table 2](#). The findings revealed that the highest average score among educators ( $M = 4.29$ ) indicated a strong belief in the significance of stakeholder and parent involvement in the IEP process. This was closely followed by the necessity of annual goals and objectives benchmarks, with an average score of ( $M = 4.28$ ). The third highest average pertained to special educators' awareness and experience in the IEP process, underscoring its importance for developing high-quality IEPs. In contrast, the domain related to learning objectives and documentation received the lowest average score ( $M = 3.65$ ), suggesting it is not viewed as a critical component in IEP development from the educators' perspective. Additionally, student involvement in the IEP process and transition statements were also regarded as less important domains.

**Table 2: Domains of Developing High-Quality IEPs.**

“Domains	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Special Educator Awareness and Experience in IEP	87	4.23	.58
Students Involvement in the IEP Process	87	3.82	.68
Learning Objectives and Documentation	87	3.65	.46
Stakeholder and Parents' Involvement	87	4.29	.48
Annual Goals and Objectives Benchmarks	86	4.28	.44
Teachers Satisfaction and Opinion	86	4.13	.53
Student Preparation for Post-School Life	87	4.10	.50
Personalized Related Services	87	4.11	.65
Transition Statement	87	3.97	.59
Valid N (listwise)	86”		

To test the first hypothesis, an independent samples t-test was conducted. This hypothesis posited a statistically significant difference in the perceptions of SPED educators regarding student involvement in the IEP process across different age groups. The results supported the hypothesis at a 10% significance level, indicating a significant difference in perceptions among the various age groups regarding student involvement in the IEP process ( $p < 0.10$ ) for the three age cohorts [ $F(2.36, 38.14) = 2.60, p = .08$ ] (see Tables 3 and 4). Specifically, younger SPED educators reported greater satisfaction with student involvement in the IEP process ( $M = 4.07, SD = .47$ ) compared to their middle-aged ( $M = 3.84, SD = .61$ ) and older counterparts ( $M = 3.63, SD = .84$ ).

**Table 3: ANOVA Table for Students Age Group Involvement in the IEP Process.**

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
“Between Groups	2.366	2	1.183	2.605	.080
Within Groups	38.148	84	.454		
Total	40.514	86”			

**Table 4: Descriptive Statistics of Students Age Group Involvement in the IEP Process.**

	“N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	Minimum	Maximum
21-30	20	4.0750	.47365	.10591	3.50	5.00
31-40	37	3.8446	.61053	.10037	2.50	5.00
41-50	30	3.6333	.84009	.15338	1.25	5.00
Total	87	3.8247	.68637	.07359	1.25	5.00”

**Table 5: Independent Samples Test of SPED Educators' Perception Stratified by School Types.**

“t-test for Equality of Means							
	t	df	Sig.(2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
						Lower	Upper
Students' Involvement in the IEP Process	-2.083	85	.040	-.35746	.17159	-.6986	-.01630
	2.328	37.768	.025	-.35746	.15353	-.6683	-.04660
Stakeholder and Parents' Involvement	-1.057	85	.293	-.13134	.12426	-.3784	.11572
	1.174	37.338	.248	-.13134	.11184	-.3578	.09521”

To test the second and third hypotheses, an independent t-test was conducted to examine whether there is a statistically significant difference in SPED educators' perceptions of student involvement in the IEP process across different school types. The results indicated a  $t(85) = -2.083, p < .04$ , revealing a statistically significant difference between public and private schools, with mean scores of  $M = 3.74 (SD = 0.70)$  for public schools and

M = 4.10 (SD = 0.57) for private schools. These findings, supported at a 5% significance level, demonstrate a significant difference in perceptions regarding student involvement in the IEP process based on school type (see Tables 5 and 6). Notably, SPED educators in private schools expressed greater satisfaction with student involvement in the IEP process.

**Table 6: Group Statistics.**

	School type	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
“Students' Involvement in the IEP Process	Public	67	3.7425	.70034	.08556
	Private	20	4.1000	.57009	.12748
Stakeholder and Parents' Involvement	Public	67	4.2687	.50624	.06185
	Private	20	4.4000	.41675	.09319”

In contrast, the third hypothesis, which posits a statistically significant difference in SPED educators' perceptions regarding stakeholder and parent involvement in the IEP process across different school types, was rejected ( $p > 0.05$ ). This suggests that satisfaction levels among SPED educators in private and public schools do not differ concerning stakeholder and parent involvement in the IEP process. The fourth hypothesis of the study proposes a linear relationship between learning objectives and documentation and SPED educators' awareness and experience in the IEP process. To test this hypothesis, a correlation matrix was utilized, as presented in Table 7. The findings indicate a weak relationship between learning objectives and documentation and SPED educators' awareness and experience in the IEP process, with Pearson's correlation coefficient not exceeding 0.209. Furthermore, the correlation matrix in Table 7 reveals a significant relationship at the 0.01 level between stakeholder and parent involvement and SPED educators' awareness and experience in the IEP process, as outlined in the fifth hypothesis. The result yielded a Pearson's correlation coefficient of  $r = 0.619$  between these two domains.

**Table 7: Correlations Matrix of SPED Educators' Awareness and Experience in IEP.**

		Special Educator Awareness and Experience in IEP	Learning Objectives and Documentation	Stakeholder and parents' involvement	Annual Goals and Objectives Benchmarks
“Special Educator Awareness and Experience in IEP	Pearson Correlation	1	.209	.619**	.632**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.052	.000	.000
	N	87	87	87	86
Learning Objectives and Documentation	Pearson Correlation	.209	1	.164	.398**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.052		.129	.000
	N	87	87	87	86
Stakeholder and Parents' Involvement	Pearson Correlation	.619**	.164	1	.622**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.129		.000
	N	87	87	87	86
Annual Goals and Objectives Benchmarks	Pearson Correlation	.632**	.398**	.622**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	
	N	86	86	86	86”

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).



The ANOVA results presented in Table 8 indicate that the dependent variable can be significantly predicted by the regression model, as the significance value is 0.000, which is below the 0.05 threshold. In contrast, the significant values for stakeholder and parent involvement, teacher satisfaction and opinions, student preparation for post-school life, transition statements, and personalized related services, evaluated through regression analysis, yielded large p-values (Sig. > 0.05). This finding implies that there is no significant relationship between these domains and special educator awareness and practices in the IEP process, as the significance values in the regression coefficients table (Table 9) are substantially greater than 0.05. Conversely, students' involvement in the IEP process, learning objectives and documentation, and annual goals and objectives benchmarks are statistically significantly related to special educator awareness and experience in the IEP process, with significance values for each of these variables being less than 0.05.

**Table 8:** ANOVA Results of Special Educator Awareness and practices in IEP.

“Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	18.670	8	2.334	17.750	.000 <sup>b</sup>
Residual	10.124	77	.131		
Total	28.794	85”			

a. Dependent Variable: Special Educator Awareness and Experience in IEP

**Table 9:** Regression Coefficients of Special Educator Awareness and Practices in IEP.

“Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	.276	.452		.611	.543
Students' Involvement in the IEP Process	.326	.075	.387	4.362	.000
Learning Objectives and Documentation	-.210	.104	-.167	-2.027	.046
Stakeholder and Parents' Involvement	.172	.122	.145	1.414	.161
Annual Goals and Objectives Benchmarks	.333	.134	.256	2.480	.015
Teachers Satisfaction and Opinion	.147	.118	.135	1.250	.215
Student Preparation for Post School Life	.158	.129	.139	1.225	.224
Transition Statement	.136	.100	.135	1.355	.179
Personalized Related Services	-.119	.092	-.134	-1.289	.201”

a. Dependent Variable: Special Educator Awareness and Experience in IEP

## Discussion

The study revealed a reluctance among SPED educators to involve students in IEP meetings, a finding that aligns with the conclusions of Pincus et al. (2020). Additionally, an examination of differences in SPED educators' perceptions across various age groups highlighted a significant distinction, indicating greater satisfaction among younger educators regarding student involvement in the IEP process. The importance of student participation in the development of IEP goals has been emphasized in previous research (El Said, 2021). Pambudi and Harjanto (2020) proposed a mini-conferencing program designed to train novice SPED educators in team collaboration that includes all IEP stakeholders, particularly students with disabilities. Such simulation programs could effectively address the gap in student involvement within the IEP process. Furthermore, the study indicated a reasonable level of awareness among educators regarding the necessity of incorporating measurable annual goals and objectives to develop high-quality IEPs. Rahman and Watanobe (2023) discussed the significance of these goals and identified the most frequently utilized ones from the perspective of SPED educators.

In contrast, the study indicated that SPED educators perceive proper documentation and review of learning objectives as less important. This finding underscores the necessity for ongoing professional training and simulation programs focused on best practices for IEP implementation (Lee, 2024). Although the study found no significant difference in satisfaction levels regarding parent involvement between public and private schools, it suggested that SPED educators in private schools express greater satisfaction with student involvement in the

IEP process compared to their counterparts in public schools. The observed differences in satisfaction may be attributed to insufficient knowledge and skills, as well as varying workloads (Chiu & Chai, 2020). Nevertheless, further investigation is warranted to explore the underlying reasons for the low satisfaction levels among SPED educators in public schools. The objectives and documentation of IEP content are critical components that can assess the quality of the IEP. Several studies have contended that IEP documentation fails to meet optimal or practical standards (Chan, 2023; Chiu & Chai, 2020; Lee, 2024).

Inadequate quality in IEP documentation can adversely affect the comprehensive representation of students' needs, goals, and interventions. However, the study revealed that SPED educators possess low levels of awareness and experience regarding the usability of IEPs, falling short of the acceptable awareness threshold. The transition roadmap for IEP planning encompasses various activities essential for developing the skills of exceptional students (Rahman & Watanobe, 2023). It was noted that participants did not consider the transition statements in the IEP to be necessary. Therefore, SPED educators require increased awareness of the importance of transition planning, as well as guidance on how to effectively implement this aspect of IEP development.

### **Conclusion**

The study aims to assess the quality of the IEP process from the perspectives of SPED educators. The effectiveness of IEP practices and applications by special educators is contingent upon student involvement in the IEP process, as well as the clarity of learning objectives and documentation, and the establishment of annual goals and objectives benchmarks. The research concludes that IEPs play a crucial role in addressing the needs of exceptional students. However, the findings indicate that student involvement and transition statements were regarded as less significant in comparison to IEP goals. Additionally, a low level of agreement regarding student involvement was observed across different age groups and school types, with younger SPED educators and those in private schools expressing greater satisfaction with student participation. School policymakers are tasked with establishing procedural practices for IEPs and overseeing the activities and practices across various schools. The study emphasizes the necessity of appropriate guidance for IEP teams in setting goals and addressing the needs of exceptional students, highlighting a significant relationship between these goals and team dynamics, as identified through regression analysis.

### **Implications**

This study offers valuable insights for future researchers regarding the applications and practices of IEPs. The findings contribute significantly to the existing literature by exploring the relationships related to IEPs, an area that has been previously acknowledged but not comprehensively researched. Furthermore, this research is particularly relevant as it examines these relationships within the context of the UAE, providing significant insights into IEPs from the perspective of SPED educators. In addition to its theoretical contributions, the study holds practical implications. It underscores the need to enhance student involvement in the IEP process, which can facilitate their learning and promote educational advancement for exceptional students, ultimately improving their overall behaviour. Increased motivation among students is likely to foster active engagement in the learning process. Moreover, teacher training emerges as a crucial factor for consideration. When teachers are motivated and adequately trained, it positively influences their effectiveness in supporting special students. Therefore, it is strongly recommended that policymakers adopt a proactive approach to address critical issues surrounding IEPs, as these measures can have a lasting impact on public education outcomes.

### **Future Directions**

While this research significantly contributes to the understanding of IEP practices, it has some limitations. First, the study is geographically constrained, which limits the generalizability of its findings; future research should include data from diverse locations to enhance the literature. Second, although quantitative data were used to measure relationships between variables, there is a lack of a comprehensive literature review. Future studies are encouraged to conduct bibliometric analyses of IEP practices, which would be a valuable addition to the field. Additionally, research should explore the correlations among gender, qualifications, school type, readiness, and the quality of IEP practices. Employing more advanced data analysis techniques, such as factor analysis, could also provide deeper insights into the relationships between various factors.

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### **Data Availability Statement**

Data will be made available on request.

### **Declaration of Interests' Statement**

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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