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Will defend the dissertation

Date: November 16, 2020

Time: 10:00 A.M.

Location: Zoom by request

Faculty, students and the general public are encouraged to attend

**EDUCATORS' PERCEPTIONS OF STUDENTS WITH INTELLECTUAL DISABILITIES
REGARDING SELF-DETERMINATION SKILLS AND INSTRUCTION IN SAUDI ARABIA**

Chair: Michael Dunn

The emergence self-determination has received great attention and momentum amongst disability researchers and practitioners. People who have the capability to make decisions and choices, solve problems, achieve their goals, advocate for themselves, and experience positive school and adult outcomes are recognized as self-determined and have control over their lives (Wehmeyer, 2005). Unfortunately, research has frequently identified individuals with intellectual disabilities as having a lack of self-determination skills. The enhancement of self-determination skills may enable students with intellectual disabilities to succeed in different environment such as school, employment and society if they receive the required support.

Teachers' perceptions can impact their behaviors and attitudes in relation to how instruction and support are provided to students. These practices not only impact academic skills but also to other non-academic areas such as self-advocacy and self-regulation skills, independence and daily routines, social and emotional skills, communication, goal setting, decision making, interpersonal and intrapersonal skills. Understanding the views of educators plays a major role in addressing the challenges linked to self-determination instruction. The purpose of the current study is to examine Saudi special educators' perceptions regarding self-determination, its component elements, teaching strategies and barriers, as well as to what extent they help their

students develop and practice important self-determination skills. This research employed a mixed method design including a cross-sectional survey approach and semi-structured qualitative interviews to investigate Saudi special education teachers' knowledge perceptions and attitudes about self-determination skills.

The participants of the study were Saudi teachers of students with intellectual disabilities. The findings of the mixed methods study indicated Saudi Special educators' limited or superficial understanding of self-determination skills and inadequate instruction delivery associated with self-determination domains. The results indicated that students with intellectual disabilities received fewer opportunities to practice self-determination skills. In addition, six themes of the semi-instructional interviews emerged. These themes included (a) familiarity with the term self-determination, (b) perceptions of teachers about teaching self-determination components, (c) self-determination skills and the curriculum, (d) challenges and considerations for teaching self-determination skills, (e) teachers' opinions about students' participation in the IEPs or transition plans, (g) and educators needs for teaching self-determination to students with intellectual disability. Implications for improving self-determination skills were provided as well as discussing limitations, recommendations, and suggestions for future research.