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# Challenges of Qualitative Research in Special Education: Views of Saudi University Faculty Members

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**Abstract:** The prevalence of people living with disabilities has called for continued prominence in research related to Special Education by faculty members in Saudi universities. Research in Special Education has been spearheaded by the diverse challenges the population faces while accessing education and the opportunities presented in their learning process for equality with their able-bodied counterparts. This study seeks to identify the challenges that Special Education faculty members in Saudi universities have encountered when trying to implement qualitative research methodology. The study used a descriptive approach due to the relevance and the purpose of studies related to the obstacles of using qualitative research methods in Special Education. Data were collected from 200 members of the Saudi Universities Special Education faculty. The questionnaires were filled with 197 respondents, but the final response was from 157 respondents. The study results highlighted that most researchers in the field use quantitative methodology due to the difficulties associated with collecting and analyzing data in a qualitative approach. The research also contrasted the ability of academicians at different levels to integrate qualitative research methods. The study has highlighted that the faculty members should be trained on the importance of qualitative research and the methods of applying it precisely to enrich Arabic content with information that cannot be obtained when relying on the approach.

**Keywords:** Qualitative research, Special Education, Saudi universities, Disabilities, Faculty members.

## 1 Introduction

Nearly 240 million children live with various disabilities worldwide [25]. The high prevalence of children living with disabilities implies that Special Education will continue to gain prominence to cater to the growing educational needs of young learners. Children with disabilities face more challenges than their able-bodied counterparts; hence, strategies must be identified to ensure that all learners are presented with equal opportunities to succeed. The Special Education field's importance makes it a scientific research subject. Data from this field is helpful in the formulation of better education methods, and consequently, learners living with a disability can attain their potential. Considerable emphasis has been placed on the suitability of various research methods used in Special Education. Qualitative research is one such approach, making up the majority of scientific design in Special Education. A qualitative research method is essential to be used in the field of Special Education because it offers researchers flexibility, open-ended, and the capacity to investigate intricate realities in depth. Qualitative research aims, in general, to reach a deep understanding that leads to the formation of meaning for the phenomenon under study [1]. However, qualitative researchers in the field of Special Education continue to face various obstacles, which limit their ability to gain insight into some of the challenges faced by learners living with a disability.

### **Purpose of Study:**

This study investigates the challenges of applying qualitative research in Special Education from the perspective of academic staff in Saudi universities.

### **Study problem:**

Despite the importance of using qualitative research in Special Education, Saudi institutions are still far from applying this type of research in the Special Educational field, especially in light of the dominance of quantitative research on the overall educational research activities [16]. In addition, qualitative research teaching is very limited in Saudi universities, and its application is weak in Special Education [15]. The quantitative tendency in educational research must not be at the expense of quality. Therefore, by posing the following inquiries, the significance of this work is highlighted.

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## Questions of the Study:

This study attempts to answer the following questions:

What are the challenges of applying qualitative research in Special from the perspective of academic staff in Saudi universities?

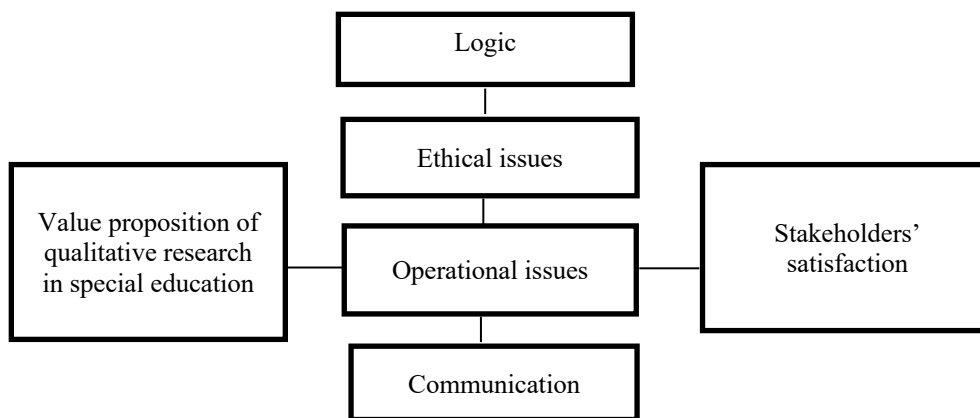
Are there statistically significant differences related to the obstacles of applying qualitative research in the field of Special Education from the viewpoint of faculty members in Saudi universities based on two variables (The academic ranks and the place of study)?

## Theoretical Framework & Literature Review:

Researchers can implement qualitative methods in the field of Special Education with the aim of enhancing quality of learning. However, the implementation of these methods in Special Education is more difficult than in other fields in which researchers do not have to contend with ethical, logical, and operational issues. Researchers in Special Education face the challenge of circumventing ethical issues pertaining to the methods of selecting and collecting data from respondents. Perceived discrimination during classification of participants on the basis of severity of disability may give rise to serious ethical issues. Communication challenges with participants may result in gaps in the survey due to inconclusive data. Because of the contrasting situations of respondents in the field of Special Education, qualitative researchers are unable to establish standards that can be used to address the need of all learners. In most cases, qualitative researchers may have little or no time to establish a relationship with respondents, leading to low participation and inconclusive feedback [6].

The research study on the obstacles of applying qualitative methods in Special Education is based on the notion that this field is different. It is clear from scholarly literature that researchers in Special Education face numerous challenges that affect their ability to develop balanced and objective findings. Unlike other fields, Special Education requires qualitative researchers to ensure that they implement strategies that allow them to overcome ethical, operational, logical, and communication issues. While critical theorists call for research validation, researchers in Special Education must consider the frameworks of educational practices to ensure that they formulate findings on their terms.

This research study has conceptualized an educational theory that relies on standards of judgment devised for educational researchers in Special Education. The logic for any scientific inquiry is to promote trustworthiness, theoretical validity, and critical thinking. The three attributes inform the formulation of the current research to determine the obstacles faced by qualitative researchers in Special Education. The identified obstacles provide a conceptual framework for a theoretically informed account of educators grounded on experience and scholarly evidence.



**Fig. 1:** Research framework

Numerous studies have focused on the challenges faced by qualitative researchers in Special Education. Unlike in other fields, researchers in this field have been unable to fully utilize qualitative research to identify gaps that limit learning. Studies show that logical, operational, and ethical issues have presented significant obstacles for researchers in this field [7] [23]. Logical challenges relate to the problems that qualitative researchers may encounter when navigating the respondents' belief systems and worldviews. Researchers may require formulating a systematic procedure to analyze respondents' belief systems to accurately identify logically connected statements. In the context of Special Education, researchers may be unable to integrate the subjects' worldviews with findings.

Similarly, qualitative researchers in Special Education have to grapple with operational challenges. A study by Maulik, Kallakuri, & Devarapalli (2018) showed that gaps in the delivery of resources to learners living with disabilities are high. Some of the operational problems facing qualitative researchers in Special Education include a lack of resources, remoteness, and poor infrastructure. Operational challenges may hinder data collection in the Special Education fields because of the lack of equipment necessary to record and store data. Besides, poor infrastructure, such as a shortage of venues, may make it impossible for qualitative researchers to collect data in a safe and secure environment. Many times, researchers conducting interviews may need to be physically present in order to observe the non-verbal language of the respondents. However, a lack of equipment may compel the researcher to use alternative but nonoptimal methods, such as video conferencing and Skype.

Ethical considerations represent a significant hindrance for qualitative researchers in Special Education. According to Odom et al. (2005) and McDuffie and Scruggs (2008), qualitative researchers must choose between upholding the safety and well-being of participants who have disabilities on the one hand and gathering data that can be used to improve learning on the other. While ethical consideration in research applies across all fields, Special Education has continued to receive greater focus due to the vulnerable nature of participants with learning disabilities. Similar sentiments relating to ethics have been presented by Woodgate, Tennent, and Zurba (2017) and Oswaldo (2021), who argued that qualitative researchers often find it problematic to formulate questions that may be deemed “acceptable” to the target participants. The lack of standards in formulating interview questions makes it difficult for researchers to develop questions that would provoke the desired response from participants. Consequently, findings from such research are patchy since researchers tend to trend on the side of caution to avoid retributions.

Many researchers conducting qualitative studies in Special Education need to prepare to deal with the varying situations participants face. Learners living with disability face different situations [17]; hence, qualitative researchers in the field of Special Education will need to address the challenge of each participant in order to obtain optimal results. However, researchers may sometimes have time to bond with each participant during interviews. This may create a disconnect and need for more understanding, leading to suboptimal findings. For instance, some learners with learning disabilities may dislike being talked to or may not like a mode of questioning they deem invasive. Failure by researchers to understand the unique preferences of respondents may lead to misunderstanding and poor communication.

The decision on whom to include in the qualitative study is a serious challenge faced by researchers in Special Education. Often, deciding on the participants to include in a survey from the target population is a challenge in qualitative research because of the implications of discrimination. A study by Friedensen, McCrae, and Kimball (2017) showed that the classification of people with a disability is always viewed with greater focus because of the subjects' vulnerability, unlike in other studies. Qualitative researchers in the field of Special Education must be cognizant of the notion that any classification must entail dividing prospective participants deemed to have between those deemed to have severe conditions compared to the rest. Such classification has serious ethical implications because of the exclusion of participants who may be deemed to have severe disabilities [8] [27]. Equally, including certain participants in the research may deny the researcher the opportunity to obtain balanced feedback on challenges affecting the entire population of learners with various disabilities. Each participant's experience is crucial in formulating future actions [10]. Therefore, researchers must establish a strategy to ensure the full inclusion of all participants when conducting research in Special Education.

A mismatch between expectations and realities in social science creates the challenges of integrating qualitative research in Special Education. According to Ahmadi (2022), research in special education is an investigation activity that requires a balance between empirical and expected realities. However, the complexity of communicating with the parties in special education requires a rigid structure that can affect the authenticity and reliability of the research [21]. Additionally, the researcher should help the participants be flexible in balancing reality and expectations. The unique requirements for researchers dealing with the participants in the field of Special Education have unspecified particulars that prove strenuous; hence it is challenging to conduct a qualitative study [26]. Relying on the participants' reconstruction of events and social relations in a standard context escalates the risks of obtaining results that need more quality, reliability, and accuracy.

Implementing qualitative research in Special Education is a complex activity requiring more attention and derivation of a social scientific management theory to improve the efficiency of the study. According to Allam and Martin (2021), a researcher must develop a paradigm that reflects the study's objectives and provide an action plan that protects the rights of people living with a disability. However, it is difficult to adjust the existing social scientific theories due to behavioral difficulties exhibited by the learners in a Special Education context [9]. Implementing the research method with an inclusive practice of social justice to ensure learners with severe disabilities and behavioral difficulties have the opportunity to express their views undermines the selection of a qualitative approach. Further, the inclusive educational challenges and immediate pedagogies that escalate the difficulties of bridging the researchers' ideas when initiating the data collection activity is a challenge to implementing qualitative research in Special Education [20]. The inclusive

education challenges presented by the field of Special Education and researchers' need to skew social scientific management theories to fit diverse contexts of students with disability has undermined the selection of qualitative research method.

In addition to that, the study of Alhano (2016) investigated the obstacles to using qualitative research methodologies from the point of view of faculty members in the Departments of Special Education in Saudi groups, and the study followed mixed method research. The outcome of the study showed that the biggest obstacles were Arab journal editors' preference for quantitative research and the weakness of teaching qualitative research skills at the postgraduate level in Saudi universities.

## 2 Methodology

The descriptive approach was utilized in this study because it was pertinent to the topic of difficulties encountered by Saudi university professors while attempting to use qualitative research methods in the area of special education.

### Sample of the study:

The study sample was selected from the faculty in Saudi universities by using the simple random method, which is estimated at (200) as a minimum and at an error level of (0.05) according to the selection of samples [11]. It has been published (200) questionnaires for the study sample members by using QuestionPro through the electronic link <https://ud.questionpro.com/a/TakeSurvey?tt=gSXQsHAuouY%3D>

The researcher had received (197) responses, (40) were disregarded since the incompleteness of the questionnaire responses rendered them invalid for statistical analysis. Approximately (79%) of the main sample, or 157 respondents, were included in the final sample. The study sample members were distributed based on the original data, as shown in Table (1).

**Table 1:** Distribution of study sample members according to demographic variables

variables	Frequency	percentage
<b>Academic Rank</b>		
Professor	33	21.0
Associate Professor	45	28.7
Assistant Professor	79	50.3
Total	157	100.0
<b>place of study of higher education</b>		
Inside KSA	71	45.2
Outside KSA	86	54.8
Total	157	100.0

It is evident from Table (1) that there is good homogeneity among the members of the study sample according to the scientific rank, where the percentage of the study sample members of the faculty members (professor) reached (21%) of the general distribution, and the rank of (associate professor) was (28.7%) from the members of the study sample. The rank of (Assistant Professor) obtained (50.3%) of the distribution of the study sample members. It was found that (45.2%) of the study sample members have completed their higher education inside the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and (54.8%) have completed their higher education outside the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

### Study tool:

From the perspective of faculty members in Saudi institutions, a tool was developed to identify the challenges associated with applying the qualitative research approach in the field of special education. It had two parts: The first section contains demographic data, such as academic standing and location of higher education completion. The second section contains questionnaire questions that, according to Saudi university professors, pertain to challenges in using qualitative research technique in the field of special education. These questions are represented by 18 paragraphs.

### The validity of the study tool:

The validity of the study tool was verified in two ways:

#### *Validity of the content*

After creating the initial image of the scale, it was given to eight arbitrators in the field of education who were asked to comment on the content's validity, the phrases' relationship to the scale, their suitability for measuring what they were intended to measure, and the scale's degree of clarity. Following that, a standard (80%) was adopted to signify the legitimacy of the paragraph, and some paragraphs' wording was changed to improve their clarity based on the arbitrators'

assessments. Due to their resemblance and proximity to other paragraphs or because they were unsuitable for the study, some paragraphs were eliminated. Finally, the scale had 18 items, and the researcher took into account the arbitrators' adjustments and opinions as a sign of the quality of the study tool's content, which shows the validity of the tool.

**Validity of the construction**

The construct validity implications of the scale were calculated by calculating the correlation of the paragraph's degree with the total score of the scale, and Table (2) shows these results:

**Table 2:** Correlation coefficients of the paragraph with the total score of the scale of the challenges of applying qualitative research in Special Education

Paragraph Number	Correlation Coefficient with the total score	Paragraph Number	Correlation Coefficient with the total score
1	.639**	10	.728**
2	.578**	11	.713**
3	.556**	12	.709**
4	.678**	13	.680**
5	.630**	14	.691**
6	.679**	15	.606**
7	.636**	16	.632**
8	.703**	17	.634**
9	.653**	18	.624**

\*\* : a function at the level (0.01).

It is clear from Table (2) that the values of the correlation coefficients between the scale items and the total score were higher than (0.25) and with statistical significance less than (0.01), and this is the minimum and acceptable to distinguish the items (Rest, 1979), which indicates that all items contribute to the score. The overall scale of the scale is effective, and all paragraphs of the scale measure the same characteristic, which confirms the validity of the scale construction, and thus the scale consists of (18) items related to its main subject.

**Stability of the study instrument**

The stability coefficient is an indicator of the stability of the study scale, and stability is one of the most important indicators that lead to generalizing the results. The stability is related to the tool used in the study regarding the scale's ability to measure the thing to be measured and the accuracy of the reading obtained through the scale. As the correlation coefficients were used to calculate the correlation coefficients between each of the items in the scale by using the (Cronbach's alpha) coefficient, the researcher determined the consistency of each paragraph of the scale with the overall score in order to determine the stability of the study tool. The findings showed that the scale's Cronbach's alpha coefficient is composed of (18) Paragraph (0.92), a number that is suitable for the current study [11].

**3 Results & Discussions**

Answering the study questions is an element of this study. To determine how the study sample members responded to "obstacles to using the qualitative research methodology in the field of Special Education from the point of view of faculty members in Saudi universities," descriptive and inferential analysis was used. The following are the results of the study:

**What are the challenges of applying qualitative research in Special from the perspective of academic staff in Saudi universities?**

In order to determine the responses of the study sample members to the challenges associated with applying the qualitative research methodology in the field of special education from the perspective of the faculty members in Saudi universities, the arithmetic averages and standard deviations were extracted. Table (3) demonstrates this.

**Table 3:** Arithmetic means and standard deviations of the responses of the study sample arranged in descending order according to the arithmetic means

N	Paragraph	Arithmetic Means	Standard Deviations	Arranging	Level
15	The difficulty of using qualitative research methodology, which requires (produce ideas and words) with the disability community.	2.32	0.72	1	Average
16	The presence of some behavioral problems with some students with disabilities that may affect their ability to	2.32	0.71	1	Average



	respond correctly to qualitative research methodological tools.				
13	The difficulty of accepting the use of qualitative research methodology by the community of researchers in Saudi universities.	2.29	0.72	2	Average
17	Some persons with disabilities do not possess the communication skills required to respond to qualitative research tools.	2.29	0.79	2	Average
8	Lack of courses and workshops interested in qualitative research methodology.	2.23	0.68	5	Average
14	Weakness of quality indicators in Arab research that follows the qualitative research methodology.	2.23	0.67	5	Average
9	Weak interest in teaching qualitative research methodology in postgraduate programs.	2.22	0.73	7	Average
10	Weak encouragement by a faculty member to his students to use the qualitative research methodology.	2.18	0.71	8	Average
11	Reluctance of faculty members to use the qualitative research methodology for promotion purposes.	2.18	0.76	8	Average
12	The difficulty of publishing studies that follow the qualitative research methodology in Arab journals.	2.18	0.69	8	Average
18	The difficulty of finding the appropriate sample for qualitative research methodology in the disability community.	2.18	0.69	8	Average
7	The lack of Arabic sources or translated sources into Arabic that deal with the qualitative research methodology.	2.17	0.76	12	Average
1	Poor knowledge of qualitative research methodology.	2.11	0.85	13	Average
5	Difficulty generalizing the results of qualitative research studies.	2.05	0.78	14	Average
6	There are some ethical issues related to qualitative research methodology.	1.96	0.71	15	Average
3	The process of analyzing qualitative data takes a long time.	1.95	0.79	16	Average
4	Difficulty in obtaining specialized programs for qualitative data analysis.	1.92	0.68	17	Average
2	The difficulty of measuring the validity and reliability of qualitative research methodology tools.	1.89	0.68	18	Average
	All obstacles	2.15	0.48		Average

It is clear from Table (4) that the arithmetic means of (obstacles to using the qualitative research methodology in the field of Special Education from the viewpoint of faculty members in Saudi universities), ranged between (2.32 and 1.89), where the obstacles obtained a total arithmetic mean of (2.15), which is of the average level. In addition, all the paragraphs of the questionnaire obtained average level.

This result can be explained by the fact that the community of researchers in Saudi universities sees the difficulty of using the qualitative research methodology, which requires (the production of ideas and words) with the disability community, and that the presence of some behavioral problems with some students with disabilities which may affect their ability to respond correctly to the tools of the qualitative research methodology due to the lack of some communication skills.

Despite the prominent attempts made by researchers specializing in the field of qualitative research in Saudi universities, the community of researchers in Saudi universities still see the culture of using quantitative research as the most acceptable, because they are used to it. The results of this study also indicate that there is an average level of knowledge of the research community in Saudi universities about the qualitative research and qualitative data analysis programs. Therefore, more efforts must be made to raise the awareness of the research community in Saudi universities of the importance of qualitative research and the methods of applying it precisely to enrich Arabic content with information that cannot be obtained when relying on quantitative research only.

The study has revealed that different difficulties affect researchers' perspectives on conducting research in Special Education using a qualitative approach. The first discovery that the researcher will require to introduce a data collection

structure that aligns with the needs of the disabled community has continuously affected the need to choose a qualitative study method. According to Binmahfooz (2022), the research trends in the Saudi Special Education sector reveal that the behavioral problems caused by the disabled population will continue to affect researchers' purpose in choosing a qualitative study method. Similarly, the study identified that the trend has led to difficulties in accepting qualitative research methodology, with an arithmetic mean of 2.29 and a standard deviation of 0.72. The participant's responses in the study reflect the researcher's position regarding choosing a research method that can be efficiently conducted in Special Education.

The adoption of quantitative research methods in all studies in Special Education has also been caused by a biased education system that only focuses on quantity indicators in the postgraduate programs. The study identified a strong correlation between the methods of teaching research in postgraduate programs and the trend of choosing a quantitative approach among scholars. This aspect has undermined the interest in qualitative research methodology, resulting in a lack of interest by the researchers. The results indicate that the lack of encouragement by the faculty of Special Education has also influenced reluctance to select a qualitative research method. Further, Abed and Shackelford (2023) state that the perspectives on an inclusive education research program that can protect the rights of populations living with disability have influenced the bias trends in the selection research methodologies in Saudi. Overall, the community of researchers has an imbalance in their training programs and negative attitudes that influence their selection of quantitative over qualitative research methodology.

Qualitative research methods have been overshadowed due to the intellectual disability and challenges of participants' comprehension. According to Van der Weele and Bredewold (2021), most researchers in Saudi universities have exhibited biased decision-making when selecting the choice of their research methodology in Special Education due to the low comprehension capacity of populations living with a disability. Similarly, this study has identified a strong correlation between the choice of research methods among scholars in Special Education and the perspectives that it is difficult to find an appropriate sample for qualitative research in the community living with a disability. The trend has created reluctance among researchers to adopt a qualitative approach, which can provide a comprehensive criterion to enhance their findings' quality, accuracy, and reliability. The difficulty of deriving an appropriate research framework and sourcing information from the community living with a disability is also linked to the long periods of analyzing qualitative data. Overall, Saudi university researchers have challenges collecting and analyzing qualitative data in Special Education.

The Saudi research community has immense challenges that influence their choice of research methodology. This study identified that the researchers need help with obtaining specialized programs that can be used to analyze qualitative data. Additionally, the researchers need to gain skills in measuring the validity and reliability of qualitative research method tools for definite conclusions and recommendations. The situation has caused uncertainties in whether a qualitative methodology fits the study area. Palla and Vallberg Roth (2022) state that the perspectives that inclusive ideas and Special Education research tools will create complexities have detached the interest of researchers from qualitative methodologies. Similarly, the study identified that poor knowledge in qualitative research, uncertainties on the best participant's engagement strategies, and the ethical issues associated with the disabled community in this type of investigation are all of the leading causes of difficulties the researchers face. Further, the behavioral challenges of the population living with a disability contribute to selecting a quantitative research methodology in Saudi's Special Education sector. Generally, the selection of qualitative research methodology has been affected by uncertainties in developing an appropriate procedure that will enhance the accuracy and reliability of a study.

**Are there statistically significant differences related to the obstacles of applying qualitative research in the field of Special Education from the viewpoint of faculty members in Saudi universities based on two variables (The academic ranks and the place of study)?**

The arithmetic means and standard deviations were retrieved to address the second query. From the perspective of faculty members in universities in Saudi Arabia, the One Way ANOVA test and the Independent Sample T-test were used to determine the differences in the degree of barriers to using the qualitative research methodology in the field of special education that are associated with the variable of scientific rank and place of completion of higher education. The findings are as follows:

**Academic Rank**

Standard deviations and arithmetic means were extracted. According to table (5), the One-Way ANOVA test was performed to determine the variations in the barriers to applying the qualitative research approach in the field of special education from the perspective of faculty members in Saudi universities.

**Table 4:** The differences between the values of the arithmetic means of the obstacles to the use of the qualitative research in Special Education due to the variable of academic rank

Academic rank	Numbers of the sample	Arithmetic means	Standard deviations
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Professor	33	2.22	0.45
Associate Professor	45	2.12	0.51
Assistant Professor	79	2.13	0.47
Total	157	2.15	0.48

Because academic rank is a variable, it is clear from Table (5) that there are apparent differences between the values of the arithmetic means for the barriers to using the qualitative research methodology in the field of special education from the perspective of the faculty members in Saudi universities. To determine the significance of the differences, the One-Way ANOVA was used. The following Table (6) displays the findings of said study:

**Table 5:** One Way ANOVA to identify the significance of the differences in the obstacles to using the qualitative research methodology due to the variable of academic rank

Contrast source		Sum of squares	Degrees of freedom	Mean of squares	(F) Value	Statistical significance
The obstacles to using the qualitative research methodology in the field of Special Education from the point of view of the faculty members in Saudi universities due to the variable of academic rank	Between groups	.220	2	.110	.484	.617
	Inside groups	35.060	154	.228		
	Total	35.281	156			

As shown in Table 6, there are no statistically significant differences in the barriers to using the qualitative research methodology in the field of special education from the perspective of the faculty members in Saudi universities due to the variable of academic rank, where the statistic (F) reached (0.484), a non-significant value. It did not achieve statistical significance when looking at the differences between the arithmetic averages and the significance threshold (0.05).

This result can be explained by the fact that the difficulties faced by the community of researchers in applying qualitative research in special education are the same regardless of academic rank. This may be because there is a lack of interest in qualitative research among researchers and a concentration on quantitative research at Saudi universities, whether at the position of (professor, associate professor, or assistant professor). Therefore, everyone needs specialized training in the field of qualitative research to be applied in the field of special education in the hoped way.

#### *Place of completion of higher studies*

Standard deviations and arithmetic means were extracted. The differences in the barriers to using the qualitative research approach in Special Education from the point of view of faculty members in Saudi universities were determined using an Independent Sample T-test, as shown in Table (7).

**Table 6:** An Independent Sample T-test to identify the differences between the obstacles to using the qualitative research methodology due to the variable of the place of completion of higher studies

Contrast source	Place	Number	Arithmetic means	Standard deviations	(T) Value	Degrees of freedom	Statistical significance
The obstacles to using the qualitative research methodology in the field of Special Education from the point of view of the faculty members in Saudi universities due to the variable of the place of completion of higher studies.	Inside KSA	71	2.19	0.50	0.903	155	0.368
	Outside KSA	86	2.12	0.45			

According to the findings in Table (7), the faculty members who were enrolled in academic programs inside the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia had an arithmetic mean of (2.19) and a standard deviation of (0.50). The faculty members enrolled in study abroad programs had an average math score of (2.12) and a standard deviation of (0.45). Due to the variable place of completion of higher education, it was discovered that there were no statistically significant differences at the significance level (0.05) in the barriers to using the qualitative research methodology in the field of special education from the perspective of the faculty members in Saudi universities. The statistic value (t) reached (0.903), which is less

than its value equal to (1.96), which is considered non-functional at the significance level.

This result may have been obtained because the number of participants studying inside and outside Saudi Arabia is close. This result can also be explained by the fact that Saudi researchers, even if they have completed their postgraduate studies outside Saudi Arabia, may focus on quantitative research because they follow the culture prevailing in Saudi universities and believe in quantitative research more than qualitative research.

The level of education of the research is a critical factor in determining whether they will use qualitative or quantitative methodologies in their studies. From the values of arithmetic mean and standard deviation from the research, assistant professors, associate professors, and professors in Saudi universities are likely to use qualitative research due to their academic ranks. Despite the challenges of using the methodology, the highly ranked academicians in Saudi universities have adopted the option to enhance the findings of their studies in Special Education. Nevertheless, the difficulties associated with selecting the method call for specialized training to ensure the faculty members have skills, knowledge, and proficiency in conducting qualitative research.

## Conclusion

The education sector has attracted researchers due to the prevalence of challenges for students with disability. The creation of a Special Education faculty in Saudi universities has spearheaded research that seeks to identify the challenges of the population and help deduce effective interventions. However, the researchers have yet to use a qualitative research methodology to study the elements in the field. Saudi Universities Special Education faculty has escalated the situation by allowing their members to conduct their study using an approach they find more straightforward when collecting data and analyzing the findings. The faculty members must be more open in selecting research methods due to difficulties in developing a study procedure that reflects equality and social justice.

Further, difficulties associated with deriving an appropriate research framework and sourcing information from the community living with a disability are also linked with the long periods of analyzing qualitative data has prompted the challenges. The results of this study showed that the obstacles to using the qualitative research methodology in the field of Special Education from the point of view of the faculty members in Saudi universities were of an average level. In addition, there are no significant differences related to the obstacles of applying qualitative research in the field of Special Education from the viewpoint of faculty members in Saudi universities based on the academic ranks and the place of studying higher education. This study recommends helping the researcher's community to believe in the importance of qualitative research, to go through the experience of conducting qualitative research, and raise the level of awareness of graduate students in the way to apply qualitative research correctly by providing courses and workshops by specialists in the field of qualitative research.

## Conflict of interest

The author declares that there is no conflict regarding the publication of this paper.

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