Self-Determination and The Lived Experience of Employed Adults with Intellectual Disabilities:

An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis

by

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DEDICATION

To my beloved parents, Mohammad and Alyah; to my grandfather, Abdelrahman, and grandmothers, Fazzah and Subhiah (may Allah rest their souls in eternal peace); to my first teacher, Abu Khaled; to my beloved wife, Albandari; to my supportive brothers and sisters, Ahmad, Somaia, Khaled (may Allah rest his soul in eternal peace), Abdulaziz, Mhanna, and Hind; to my dear son, Mohammad, I dedicate this dissertation to you with deep love, heartfelt appreciation and a strong desire to make you proud.

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ABSTRACT

Literature reveals that self-determination is a critical predictor of employment at the post-secondary level for individuals with Intellectual Disabilities (ID). However, current research concerning self-determination in the post-secondary work of individuals with ID is scarce and primarily focused on the perspectives of parents or educators or has been driven by evaluating learning models of self-determination. Furthermore, individuals with ID were not adequately represented as participants in the current research, and their voices were not given the opportunity to be heard. Therefore, this qualitative phenomenological study aimed to explore the lived experience of six Saudi employed adults with mild ID who received interventions toward self-determination during the transition planning in high school by using an interpretative phenomenological analysis approach. To better answer the research questions, data were collected using semi-structured interviews and analyzed based on the principles of the interpretative phenomenological analysis approach. Five significant findings emerged from the explored accounts: (a) Individuals with ID understand self-determination through their cultural contexts, (b) the applicability of self-determination is related to the implementation period and environmental factors, (c) problem-solving skill is more relevant to work settings, (d) self-determination is subject to adjustment and development through practice, and (e) directed self-determination training toward work produces better results.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

In the words of the legendary novelist and poet, Charlotte Bronte (2006) in Jane Eyre: “I am no bird; and no net ensnares me: I am a free human being with an independent will” (p. 293). This statement not only represents my own purpose and that of my research; it also indicates a serious attempt to learn how adults with intellectual disabilities (ID) become independent and successful in their lives. Engagement in post-school life can be challenging for every individual who has ID. However, this challenge can be different when individuals with ID develop self-determination skills. For employed adults with ID, the lived experience of social success in post-school life is critical to identifying the best approaches that could support the employment of adults with ID. We may have theories of what self-determination means, but what is it like to live that experience? What is the essence of being self-determined at work for high school students with ID? This phenomenological study aims to explore the essence of the experience of self-determination among individuals with ID, situated within their work experiences by using an interpretive method of analyzing texts by making interpretations based on both the details of the material itself and on contextual knowledge of the discourse.

The World Health Organization (2019) reported that, with proper support, individuals with ID could achieve nearly independent living and employment. Garrels & Sigstad (2019) asserted that a primary obstacle to employment for individuals with ID is a lack of sufficient training in the required skills during the school years. Notwithstanding the foregoing, The American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (AAIDD) & The Arc stated that Many people with ID have been denied self-determination and have not had the opportunity to make critical life

decisions. (Friedman & Crabb, 2018). However, even with the existence of the process known as self-determination, we do not understand what self-determination means to individuals with ID at work. For example, Garrels & Sigstad (2019) argued that although they received self-determination interventions during transition planning, employees with ID lacked sufficient independence and self-determination in their work settings.

Thus, while self-determination could be applied in transition services to support employability for individuals with ID (Shogren et al., 2018), little has been done to understand self-determination among people with ID in their work settings (Shogren et al., 2019; Vicente et al., 2020). Additionally, Shogren et al. (2016) asserted that future research must consider the work experiences of individuals with ID to elicit factors that influence career development and employment outcomes. Given that, exploring self-determination among adults has the potential to illustrate the influence of self-determination at the school and post-school levels (Shogren et al., 2017).

While employees with ID value their work due to a sense of self-efficacy, they did not express significant independence and self-determination in their work contexts (Garrels & Sigstad, 2019). In other words, we need to find out how people with ID experience self-determination. Thus, exploring the perceptions of educators and parents of self-determination and adults with ID in social life is no longer valuable as exploring lived experiences of people with ID. While mainstream self-determination studies are still strongly committed to quantitative and experimental methodology, this study will employ an interpretive phenomenological analysis in order to get the essence of self-determination among employed adults with ID. For this purpose, I will analyze the data using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA).

Therefore, this study is uniquely placed to phenomenologically explore the essence of self-determination based on lived experiences of employed adults with ID who received interventions toward self-determination in their transition planning during high school. Additionally, this study aims to collect data from the participants' actual environments to develop the current self-determination theory or frame new theories. Consequently, besides exploring the essence of self-determination, this phenomenological study will be of use to policymakers in educational institutions as well as other groups such as administrators in the labor market to explore the effectiveness of self-determination in enhancing the career paths and overcoming barriers to employment for employed adults with ID populations. Moreover, this study's result will be valuable to school personnel that may be providing self-determination training and college/university personnel that serve students with ID in postsecondary settings. Additionally, this study's results will assist vocational rehabilitation personnel working directly with people with ID to prepare them for employment after no longer being in school surroundings.

Statement of Problem

Given that self-determination is an essential psychological concept found in the framework of human agency's theories that can be a best practice in secondary education and transition services for individuals with ID (Shogren et al., 2017), there is not enough qualitative exploration of the essence of self-determination, especially in the Saudi Field, which limits what can be learned about self-determination on the lives of employed adults with ID. Considering this, some issues have emerged that are not sufficiently addressed yet. Despite much research attempts to frame self-determination regarding the lives of individuals with ID at the post-secondary level, especially at work, these attempts have been limited to the perceptions and stances of people surrounding individuals with ID. In other words, many studies reflected concepts framed on behalf of

individuals with ID. Therefore, the real opportunity to make the voices of this population heard has not yet been given.

Thus, away from the existing research body on educators' and parents' perceptions of self-determination in post-secondary work, this interpretative phenomenological study focuses on the essence of self-determination in the lived experiences of adults with disabilities. This study attempts to do this by understanding the interpersonal metafunctions of adults with ID, how they position themselves interactionally at work, and how they perform self-determination principles and evaluate others in their work settings. Self-determination, at its core, is when one acts as a causal agent based on free will without external interference (Wehmeyer, 2001). While self-determination, in its essence, is a crucial aspect of human dignity and rights, the notion of human dignity lies in the pursuit of values, and there is no doubt that labor represents one of those fundamental values in human life (Chen, 1990; Wehmeyer, 2004). To this end, this study will explore how adults with ID describe their job experiences, interpret themselves as self-determined people, and how their perspectives can inform the field about their lived experiences on self-determination.

The fundamental need to explore the essence of self-determination in the lived experience of adults with ID by using such a research methodology has been asserted in the literature from multiple aspects. The literature indicates that the experiences of employed adults with ID will highlight many pressing challenges related to the employment life of this population (Kocman et al., 2018), which might be a part of the preparation programs in high schools or transition planning. In a phenomenological study that explored the transition from secondary grades into adult life for Navajo students with ID and their families, Ingram (2018) suggests that work experiences were a necessary element of transition services at the post-secondary stages for study participants,

suggesting that employment and workplace experiences should be included as part of the provided services. As Borisov & Reid (2010) points out, the idiographic analysis of an Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) permits an in-depth understanding of each participant. In light of this, asking individuals with ID to share their experiences may provide valuable insights about their perceived benefits that would otherwise be overlooked.

Unfortunately, existing literature in the Saudi field does not address the adult with ID's personal perceptions and personal experiences of being a self-determined employee. As opposed to this, previous work has attempted to construct an accurate description of self-determination on behalf of individuals with ID. Thus, there is a need to explore in detail how employed individuals with ID are making sense of their personal experience of self-determination and how they represent the meanings of their experiences using a methodology capable of doing so, such as IPA. Eatough & Smith (2017) stated that IPA focuses on and strives to understand the meanings of experience in the contexts most important to the world of people. Considering that the Saudi field lacks similar knowledge and research that adopts this methodology, I believe that understanding the essence of self-determination in the lived experiences of individuals with ID can best be accomplished through a phenomenological lens. Phenomenology is akin to letting things show themselves; it means "the practical activities and relationships which we are caught up in, and through which the world appears to us, and is made meaningful" (Smith et al., 2021, p.12). Given that, the current research base is insufficient in addressing the optimal approaches for training high school students with ID for employment in Saudi Arabia. Furthermore, there is a lack of understanding about how individuals with ID interpret their employment experiences and identify themselves as self-determined employees. Studies also indicate that some individuals with ID who receive self-determination interventions do not adequately practice independence at work (Garrels & Sigstad,

2019). Indeed, Husserl (1970) went so far as to suggest that the scientific, empirical approach should not be applied to human subjects in psychology; on the contrary, individuals' phenomena and lived experiences should be reflected instead. While it is not implied here that empirical study with human subjects is not crucial, Husserl's approach emphasizes the need to comprehend human phenomena, in whatever shape they take, via understanding their lived experiences when concluding those phenomena.

Theoretical Framework

A phenomenological study of self-determination and employed adults with ID allows for interactions with these individuals in their field of work. While the use of phenomena is more a philosophical art than just a research methodology, "phenomenology is a philosophical way of attending to the way our experiencing bodies participate in the constitution of meaning" (Freeman, 2021, p. 1). Thus, the essence of self-determination in lived experiences will be framed throughout this interaction. Given that, this study is supported by a theoretical framework that integrates the self-determination theory (SDT) and phenomenological theory. These theories provide a starting point for understanding the essence of self-determination as a lived experience among employed adults with ID. Furthermore, from the essence of such lived experiences, new insights of self-determination—strategies or a theory—about the employability of adults with ID might arise that may be inconsistent with current self-determination strategies applied in transition planning that have not considered lived experiences of this population.

Phenomenological Theory: Phenomenological and Hermeneutic Insights

The theoretical framework of this phenomenological research study is based on the assumption that the enduring principle of any phenomenological investigation is that experiences should be investigated as they appear in their natural settings (Smith & Fieldsend, 2021; Valle et

al., 1989). Various philosophers have formulated the features of phenomenological inquiry by adopting different ranges of philosophical lenses (Smith et al., 2021; Laverty, 2003; Vagle, 2018). Husserl describes phenomenology as its focus on the in-depth examination of all components of lived experience in terms of characterizing and describing that experience. In addition, Husserl points out that it is crucial to return to the original character of the experiences themselves to apprehend people's experiences (Husserl, 1927). While Husserl's work forms the mainstay of IPA, Husserl's work is adopted and developed by Heidegger for a more profound and interpretative stance, emphasizing an understanding of lived experience (Smith et al., 2021). Indeed, this philosophical fusion made this phenomenological approach hermeneutic as much as it is interpretive. Thus, these philosophies are critical to closely comprehending participants' personal experiences, as "IPA requires a combination of phenomenological and hermeneutic insights" (Smith et al., 2021, p. 31). In light of this, in the theoretical framework of this study, I drew on an essential set of phenomenological and hermeneutic insights, trying to get close to the participants' accounts.

Therefore, in this study, I will use phenomenology as a research methodology and part of the theoretical framework to better understand the essence of self-determination through exploring lived experiences. Also, this study will guide the application of this theory in special education for future research directions in Saudi Arabia. It is anticipated that the use of phenomenological theory will raise questions about individuals' contemporary lived experiences concerning themselves and their field of work, providing a better understanding of self-determination and of employed adults with ID. The other qualitative approaches are as useful as they could be with their analysis. However, a phenomenological approach can provide an enhanced lens, allowing us to understand the "underlying dynamics of the experience" of the participant (Moustakas, 1994, p.135).

Phenomenology is a philosophical approach to deep interaction with the essence of human experiences. VanManen (2017) asserted that phenomenology is the proper antidote to the technical ways of modern life. In this light, phenomenology is essential for understanding the relationships that arise between the experience and behavior of employees with ID, taking into account all internal and external factors. As in prior research on the postsecondary life of individuals with ID (e.g., Borisov & Reid, 2010; Gjermestad et al., 2017; Ingram, 2018; Kåhlin et al., 2015), it was clear that relying on the phenomenological theory would lead to a better understanding of the lives of these populations.

For this purpose, IPA will be used to understand how participants construct and give significance to their experiences and personal and social world. While phenomenology involves a detailed analysis of the participant's lifeworld to explore personal experience and is concerned with an individual's perceptions or accounts of an object or event, IPA also emphasizes that research is a dynamic process with an active role for me in that process (Eatough & Smith, 2017; Smith & Shinebourne, 2012). Thus, to better understand the essence of self-determination in the field of work for individuals with ID, my study offers an in-depth understanding of each participant and a multifaceted portrait of the meaning a particular experience holds for the participants. Indeed, "without the phenomenology, there would be nothing to interpret; without the hermeneutics, the phenomenon would not be seen" (Smith et al., 2021, p. 31).

Self-Determination Theory (SDT)

While it considers behavior as being driven by the human tendency of development (Deci & Ryan, 2012), SDT provides a precise and complete framework for the reasons behind human agentic behavior (Vansteenkiste et al., 2012). As SDT identifies what is known as the innate tendency to behaviors required to function optimally in social environments, it postulates that

human beings have three fundamental emotional and psychological needs: the need for autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Self-determination as strategies/models are a logical application of SDT's principles, as SDT is rooted in the learning models of self-determination (Shogren et al., 2015). Self-determination, defined as voluntary actions, enables individuals to improve their lives by being active contributors and causal agents in their own behaviors (Wehmeyer, 2005, 2020). At the same time, although SDT is a theory that may not specifically target individuals with disabilities, much research has indicated that framing this theory is vital in studying individuals with ID. For instance, Frielink et al. (2018) stated that "SDT provides insights relevant to improving support for people with intellectual disabilities" (p. 33).

Beyond that, Anderson & Chirkov (2016) reported that discovering the lives of individuals with ID through SDT framework mechanisms is an important area that needs more qualitative exploration. Concerning how the contexts of human cultures relate to mental health and quality of life, SDT indicates that cultural contexts are crucial in terms of their ability to translate the basic needs of human beings, so we see that some basic needs may be addressed in some cultures and missed in others (Sheldon, 2012). At the same time, The Center for Self-Determination Theory (2023) insisted that SDT has proven to be an effective theoretical strategy for comprehending how a culture's principles and expectations influence people's internalization.

Hence, this theory is valuable for this study's theoretical framework as it "offers an excellent backdrop from which to understand how teenagers develop their sense of being" (Wehmeyer et al., 2017, p. 195). Extensively, this will allow me to define the external sources of motivation and describe the respective roles of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2000) behind the participants' natural growth (e.g., from secondary to post-secondary settings) freely and creatively. To this end, by inviting the voices of employed adults with ID through

adapting SDT and phenomenological theoretical frameworks, my study will offer a broad framework of the essence of self-determination in those populations' lived experiences.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this phenomenological study is to explore the lived experiences of employed adults with ID who received interventions toward self-determination in their transition planning during high school.

Research Questions

In order to let the essence of self-determination in the lived experiences of employed adults with ID be understood, the study, and especially the data gathering process, will be guided by the following five questions:

Research Question 1

How do employed adults with ID generally describe their understandings of self-determination?

Research Question 2

How do employed adults with ID describe the experience of receiving self-determination interventions during high school/transition planning and how it affected their success in post-secondary work?

Research Question 3

How do employed adults with ID describe their own self-advocacy, goal setting, self-awareness, problem-solving, and decision-making skills while in post-secondary work?

Research Question 4

How do employed adults with ID describe the essence of their lived experiences of self-determination during post-secondary work?

Research Question 5

What do employed adults with ID describe as essential to what they need to improve their self-determination skills related to their pursuit of and during post-secondary work?

As research questions are drawn from a philosophical approach to examining the shape of the self-determination experience of individuals with ID in post-secondary work in all its various aspects, these questions will help me understand what these experiences are like (Larkin et al., 2021; Smith & Fieldsend, 2021). Thus, self-determination strategies currently used in transition planning programs in Saudi Arabia will be critiqued. Furthermore, because self-determination strategies are based on SDT (Shogren et al., 2015), self-determination as a theory will be investigated and evaluated. On the other hand, the emphasis will be on the legislation recommended for the Saudi setting for the employment of individuals with ID. Furthermore, the most successful self-determination training/practices in Saudi work settings will be recommended for implementation.

Significance of the Study

Exploring this topic in such a way is significant for three main reasons. First, IPA is a qualitative research methodology committed to studying and analyzing how people make sense of their meaningful life experiences (Smith et al., 2021), which provides an in-depth interpretation of the essence of self-determination in the lived experiences of employed adults with ID. The use of IPA based on this purpose of the study is essential to explore in detail how employed adults with ID perceive self-determination in their lived experiences and discover accounts that constitute attitudes or values during the interviews. Given that, as a part of this study results, recommendations will be provided about best training and practices in self-determination in preparation for applying self-determination skills in employment and adult life settings for

individuals with ID. The results of this study will also guide school educators working with individuals with ID who may provide training in self-determination. Along the same lines, this study will provide recommendations for college/university personnel serving students with ID in post-secondary settings, including vocational rehabilitation teams working directly with individuals with ID to prepare them for employment after they are no longer in Secondary school settings.

Second, the voices of adults with ID have not been recognized to any significant extent, as there is currently a shortage of phenomenological studies on employed adults with ID. Although research has documented some essential characteristics of self-determination which play an indispensable role in social relationships and employment (Shogren et al., 2017), previous studies have not confirmed the meanings of the experiences of self-determination and work for individuals with ID. Consequently, the essence of self-determination from the lived experiences of adults with ID and specifically employed adults with ID remains a matter of question and requires further investigation. Thus, this study will generate the central meanings and values of the work experiences of this population drawn from real-world settings. Hence, IPA will ensure the meanings are not pre-determined before the study but constructed within it (VanManen, 2017) and allow for the voice of employed adults with ID to be heard.

Third, some transition planning programs in Saudi Arabia have successfully prepared students to engage in post-secondary work. In this context, promoting self-determination interventions in these programs has been successful, and some adapted self-determination measures' construct validity has been proven in a Saudi environment (Alsuhaibani, 2018). However, many transition programs in Saudi Arabia have not succeeded in preparing individuals with ID for post-secondary work due to unknown reasons (Almalki et al., 2021; Alshuayl, 2021).

Since the models of self-determination applied in Saudi environments are translated and drawn from other backgrounds/languages, this study hopes to frame steps to make self-determination interventions more appropriate to Saudi contexts, which will enhance the success of transition programs in preparing individuals with ID for post-secondary work in Saudi Arabia.

Definition of Terms

While Saudi Arabia has largely adopted the U.S. with regard to the strategies and legislation used in the education of individuals with disabilities Alquraini (2011), the following definitions are recognized as such in Saudi Arabia.

Intellectual Disabilities (ID)

Schalock et al. (2021) defined intellectual disability as:

> Intellectual disability is characterized by significant limitations both in intellectual functioning and adaptive behavior as expressed in conceptual, social, and practical adaptive skills. This disability originates during the developmental period, which is defined operationally as before the individual attains age 22. (pp. 2-3)

Self-Determination (SD)

"Acting as the primary causal agent in one's life and making choices and decisions regarding one's quality of life free from undue external influence or interference" (Wehmeyer, 2001, p. 30).

Causal Agency

"To be responsible for the things that happen, to be involved in one's life" (Vicente Sánchez et al., 2022, p. 829)

Decision-making

A decision is "a process involving a broad set of skills that incorporate problem solving and choice making to select one of several already identified options" (Wehmeyer, 2007, p. 34). "The decision-making process is, simply, a taxonomy of how decisions are typically made" (Wehmeyer & Shogren, 2017, p. 263). "The decision-making process begins with a problem-solving process (identifying the action alternatives from which a decision is to be made) and ends with making a choice; selecting the alternative that best meets the individual's goal" (Wehmeyer & Shogren, 2017, p. 262).

Problem-solving

"A problem is a task, activity, or situation for which a solution is not immediately identified, known, or obtainable" (Wehmeyer, 2007, p. 34). "Problem-solving skills are those skills which enable a person to identify one or more solutions to a problem" (Wehmeyer et al., 2017, p. 79).

Goal Setting

Goal setting means specifying what a person wants to achieve, which acts as a regulator of human behavior (Shogren & Wehmeyer, 2017). "Steps of goal setting begin with goal identification, looking at options, choosing and acting, and evaluating to either finalize completion or revise goals" (Wehmeyer et al., 2017, p. 76).

Self-advocacy

"Self-advocacy and leadership skills involve having the ability and confidence to stand up for oneself, as well as having the knowledge of what to advocate for in achieving one's goals" (Cabeza, 2013, p. 7).

Self-awareness

"Students who possess self-awareness and self-knowledge recognize their own strengths, limitations, and abilities" (Cabeza, 2013, p. 9).

Quality of Life

"Quality of life is a framework for a service delivery system that is based on the values of dignity, equality, empowerment, self-determination, non-discrimination, and inclusion" (Schalock & Alonso, 2013, p. 46).

Transition Service

Talapatra et al. (2019) defined transition services as:

> Transition services which are legislatively mandated for all youth receiving specialized education programming, are defined as a coordinated set of activities that (a) are results-oriented, (b) focus on improving achievement, (c) are based on individual needs, strengths, preferences, and interests, and (c) include instruction, related services, community experiences, and the development of postschool adult living objectives. (p. 85)

Post-secondary Setting

"Postsecondary settings can include just about any setting adults have access to after high school, including 4-year colleges or universities, community colleges, and various locations in the community (e.g., businesses, apartments, and community rehabilitation programs)" (Grigal et al., 2002, p. 69).

Phenomenology as Method of Inquiry

"Phenomenology is an approach to educate our own vision, to define our position, to broaden how we see the world around, and to study the lived experience at deeper level" (Qutoshi, 2018, p. 216).

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA)

"IPA is a qualitative research approach committed to the examination of how people make sense of their major life experiences. IPA is phenomenological in that it is concerned with exploring experience in its own terms" (Smith et al., 2009, p. 1).

Cultural Context

Cultural context refers to the framework in which humans learn to regulate their thoughts, emotions, and behaviors (Neuliep, 2020). Moreover, Chirkov et al. (2005) stated that "humans are viewed as being relatively blank slates upon which cultural contexts write themselves" (p. 427).

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

While research has shown that individuals with high self-determination are twice as likely to be employed as those with low levels of self-determination (Wehmeyer & Schwartz, 1997), little is known about how adults with ID experience employment within their work settings. Howard et al. (2020) indicated that a high level of self-determination is always linked to independent motivations, not subject to any type of control. According to Smith et al. (2021), while quantitative research mainly focuses on illustrating relationships between events, it cannot frame an understanding of ideas and feelings in human experiences or how participants interpret what is going on, as qualitative research does. Moreover, Renjith et al. (2021) asserted that quantitative approaches could not explain phenomena. Thus, framing these interventions' essence using quantitative measurement tools is challenging. Therefore, knowledge of self-determination remains limited as some studies suggest the existence of relevant factors that may limit or enhance interventions promoting self-determination. For instance, the literature has indicated that personal, family, and school factors influence self-determination and post-school outcomes. (Shogren et al., 2017).

Focusing on the Saudi research base and considering the experience of the United States and other countries around the world, this literature review takes into account the following factors: (a) an explanation of self-determination skills and its theoretical framework, (b) self-determination and the social success of individuals with ID in post-secondary work, (c) the role of self-determination related skills in limiting or supporting self-determination in post-secondary work, and, (d) expected barriers to employment faced by employed adults with ID. Additionally, this

review discusses the literature that addresses lived experiences and the transition to post-secondary work for individuals with ID. Finally, to understand the lived experiences of this study's participants, this review considers the literature regarding researchers and scientists who conduct phenomenological studies about the employment of adults with ID.

Intellectual Disabilities

The literature indicated that the process of shaping the term ID to what it is now has gone through many steps over the decades, which can be summarized in three main points: (1) Mental illness/retardation has been recognized and mentioned since ancient times (Cheeseman, 2015; Landesman & Butterfield, 1987; Sacks, 2009). (2) Until the late twentieth century, no actual initiatives attempted to treat individuals with ID away from the institutionalization model (Winzer, 2009; Cheeseman, 2015). (3) Eliminating the institutionalization—or what is known as deinstitutionalization—was a process that included finding social and educational alternative environments, rehabilitating individuals with ID who can work and are socially integrated, and creating a legislative and applicable environment that supports the right of individuals with ID. (Beall, 2018; Landesman & Butterfield, 1987; Roth et al., 2019; Soffer et al., 2017).

Because of cultural differences between countries, the notion and definition of ID remain relatively ambiguous, but the DSM-V criteria are most prominent in defining this type of disability (Beall, 2018). While the definitions used to describe intellectual/mental disabilities are broad and subject to lots of changes over the decades, at the beginning of this chapter, it was necessary to define what we mean by Mental Retardation (MR), Intellectual Disabilities (ID), and Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (IDD) and how these terms would be expressed. However, while the targeted category is ID, I will use the term ID —as it's the most updated term—to describe this category in all its historical eras, despite what has been used in each era.

Intellectual Disabilities Definition of Terms

Definition of Intellectual Disability (ID): According to Schalock et al. (2021), "intellectual disability is characterized by significant limitations both in intellectual functioning and adaptive behavior as expressed in conceptual, social, and practical adaptive skills. This disability originates during the developmental period, which is defined operationally as before the individual attains age 22" (pp. 2-3). Intellectual functioning is one of the terms that express intelligence, which is the ability to understand, deduce and solve problems, which is usually measured by IQ tests (AAIDD, 2023). Adaptive behavior is the set of intellectual and social abilities that people comprehend and practice in their daily lives (Schalock et al., 2021).

Intellectual disability (ID) & Developmental Disabilities (DD): While the term *developmental* refers to the period during which brain development associated with disabilities occurs, the proposed new term of "IDD" used in the DSM-5 is IDD (American Psychiatric Association, 2021; Edition, 2013; Harris, 2013). Also, "DSM-IV included alterations in general mental abilities that affect the individual's functioning in areas of conceptual, social, and daily life" (Frolli et al., 2020, p. 82). So, the new term is synonymous with the proposed ICD-11 diagnosis of IDD and is used by AAIDD (Carulla et al., 2011).

Developmental Disabilities (DD): Developmental Disabilities (DD) "are a group of lifelong conditions that emerge during the developmental period and result in some level of functional limitation in learning, language, communication, cognition, behavior, socialization, or mobility. The most common DD conditions are intellectual disability, Down syndrome, autism, cerebral palsy, spina bifida, fetal alcohol syndrome, and fragile X syndrome" (AAIDD, 2021).

Intellectual & Developmental Disabilities (IDD): According to AAIDD (2023), the acronym (IDD) describes ID, DD, or both.

Terminology Timeline

The term mental retardation has been used in many international classifications and legislation to avoid some labels that at the time became socially unacceptable, such as cretin, idiots, and mental abnormality. (AAIDD 2021; Switzky & Greenspan, 2006). The term was adopted by the American Association on IDD (AAIDD) (formerly AAMR -- American Association on Mental Retardation) in 1961. Thus, by 1961, the American Association on Mental Retardation (AAMR) introduced the term mental retardation to replace earlier terms that had become pejorative in the sterilization years" (Siegel et al., 2020, p. 496). While persons with ID are a diverse population with a broad range of limitations and capabilities, support should be tailored based on each individual's demands (Harris, 2013; Siegel et al., 2020). Later, in 2009, a federal law was enacted (Public Law 111-256, Rosa's law) that used intellectual disability instead of mental retardation (American Psychiatric Association & American Psychiatric Association, 2021; Guha, 2014).

Causes, Diagnosis, and Classifications

Historically, the classification of individuals with ID was based on physical appearance (e.g., mongoloid) (Harris, 2006). While mental capacity has been recognized as a sign of cognitive impairment since the nineteenth century, a new procedure based on mental ability was adopted to categorize people with ID (Field, 2009). Subsequently, during the twentieth century, the United States developed standardized/IQ tests to measure mental and chronological age. The Simon-Binet IQ Scale was the first Scale by the 20th century and was adjusted and developed to produce other scales, such as the Stanford-Binet Scale (Harris, 2006). Thus, according to Patel et al. (2020), based on the IQ score, ID is classified as:

- Mild ID “falls between 50–55 and 70, 85% of cases” (p. 27)
- Moderate ID “falls between 35–49 and 50–55, 10% of cases” (p. 28)
- Severe ID “falls between 20–25 and 35–40, 4% of cases” (p. 28)
- Profound ID is “less than 20, approximately 1% of cases” (p. 29)

Although there are still undiscovered reasons for ID, most people with ID have organic or biological disability's reasons (McLaren & Bryson, 1987; Smith et al., 2006).

Historical Overview

The history of individuals with ID in the United States, Saudi Arabia, and the world has gone through many negative/positive turns and drastic/superficial changes from the early years until these days. In light of this, through a historical framework, some fundamental factors will be reviewed, such as how some critical turning points in the history of ID emerged and were overcome, the most relevant legislation that effectively contributed to shaping the field, and how all these features shaped the world today/future of those populations.

Individuals with ID lived through a painful era marked by isolation and social exclusion movements, often driven by eugenic principles. (Sauer & Jorgensen, 2021). The oldest signs of ID may be found in the Egyptian, Roman, and Greek nations, where these disabilities were diagnosed by their notions and traditions (Matson, 2019). For centuries, there have been differences between ID and mental impairment. As a result, criminals, low-income people, and those with serious medical illnesses (e.g., epilepsy) are placed into the same group as people with ID, leading to the creation of organizations that strive to secure the public from them (Gopalan, 2022). Moreover, people with ID were seen as a burden on society (Knight, 1860). Social classifications used to stigmatize people with ID emerged between the thirteenth and fifteenth centuries. However, there was no distinction between mental retardation and mental illness at that time (Lewis & Zeichner,

1960). Thus, many traditional classifications appeared in that period, representing the first steps in classifying individuals with ID, as the beginning was with basic terms such as normal or abnormal. Artiles et al. (2016) reported that "the earliest form of mental disorders was found in the 1840 census under the category of (idiocy/insanity)" (p 788).

Later, the nineteenth century witnessed a dramatic shift in the history of people with ID across the world. Winzer (2009) noted that this is mainly attributed to worldwide immigration movements, which brought new and diverse cultures, expanding the institutional scope of education to accommodate such cultural immigration movements. As a result, in the U.S. and around the world, "providing people with ID to receive an education reveals a significant cultural shift in the way (idiocy) was understood" (Conrad, 2020, p. 87). These different stances towards individuals with ID have primarily influenced the terms used to describe individuals with ID. Thus, for example, Wickham (2006) stated that some of the inappropriate terminology used to classify individuals with ID gradually faded away.

Public Law (PL) 94–142. Dunn (2021) stated that "Public Law 94-142, also known as the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (EAHCA) of 1975, is the landmark federal legislation about schooling students with disabilities" (p. 3254). Thus, in 1975, President Ford signed Public Law 94-142 which contributed to significant progress toward developing and implementing programs and services for early intervention, special education, and related services for individuals with disabilities. Although it was just the beginning of the journey of legislation that served the field of disability, this law ensured fair educational opportunities for people with disabilities and dismissed many inappropriate practices (Murawski & Spencer, 2011). Furthermore, "before enacting the Public Law (PL) 94–142 in the U.S., the fate of many individuals with disabilities was likely dim" (Obiakor & Bakken, 2019, p. 2).

PL 94-142 ended the so-called quarantine of individuals with ID (Biklen et al., 1989), and cognitive ability was no longer a cause for segregation and social exclusion (Itkonen, 2007). Moreover, "demand for special education teachers grew continuously from the passage of Public Law 94-142 in 1975" (Dewey, 2017, p.1). Eventually, by 1975, the basis for eligibility for special education in the United States was built. Thus, children with ID were considered one of the categories eligible for education (Triano, 2000).

The Era of inclusion

The most permanent factor the research base has expressed about the inclusion of people with ID is that inclusion makes the transition process more effective for this population (Cook & Semmel, 2000). Therefore, when it comes to transition, the inclusion approach- full/partial - has historically been shaped according to the needs of each individual. Thus, the inclusion approach for students with ID is critical in framing their transition to the post-secondary/work phase. Although inclusion is a more profound concept than physical inclusion in school classrooms (Nes et al., 2018), Unicef (n.d) indicated that inclusion/inclusive is providing educational services in meaningful ways to students from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds, excluded minorities, and students with disabilities in the same classroom.

Claiborne & Balakrishnan (2020) argued that after the human rights infringements during World War II, by 1948, the United Nations stated that inclusion is an accurate representation of human rights and dignity. However, with all the attempts that appeared, integration in its known form was not achieved until the year 2000. Thus, by 2000, UNESCO sought to emphasize inclusivity as a concept that provides educational opportunities in the same classroom for all people of different cultures and abilities (Peters, 2007).

In the same context, Hornby (2016) argued that "inclusive education is a multidimensional concept that includes the participation and valuing of difference and diversity and consideration of human rights, social justice, and equity issues, as well as the social model of disability and a sociopolitical model of education" (p. 1). Although there is a debate on the difference between inclusion and inclusive education, Fuchs & Fuchs (1994) indicated that the "inclusive school denotes a place rid of special educators, where full inclusion reigns" (p. 16). Despite this consensus on the significance of inclusion and inclusive practices at that time, by 1997, less than 10% of students with ID were enrolled in regular education classrooms.

Inclusion and the Conflict of Opinions

The debate over full inclusion has taken a more profound turn in the literature and has become one of the most important historical and "global issues" in this field of special education (Lipsky & Gartner, 1996, p. 726). While some have asserted that the inclusion of individuals with disabilities is an ethical issue, others believe that inclusion needs to be proven only through scientific research. For instance, Krajewski & Hyde (2000) claimed that inclusion led to more positive societal attitudes toward individuals with ID (Krajewski & Hyde, 2000). Also, many advocates of full inclusion have raised issues of over-representation of students with disabilities in special education classes because what was supposed to represent inclusion became just self-contained classrooms full of students with disabilities. Dunn (1968) asserted that placing students with disabilities in special education classrooms is no longer an acceptable way for their education.

In contrast, Chesley & Calaluce (1997) argued that It is critical to look realistically at inclusion because the goal is not to place students with ID in general classes but to provide them with educational opportunities in environments more appropriate to their cognitive and physical

conditions. In other words, more restrictive environments can be more appropriate for some students with ID. Besides, others have claimed that regular classrooms are inappropriate environments for providing educational opportunities for individuals with ID, as their behaviors can be unpredictable (Schloss et al., 1993).

Additionally, Jim Kaufman points out that the effectiveness of the idea of putting all students with different disabilities in one place is often determined by the school's willingness to implement such a philosophy. Indeed, Kaufman emphasized the importance of selecting the most helpful environment for students with disabilities, which of course, may not always be the regular classrooms (Villa et al., 1994). In the same context, Cook & Semmel (2000) noted that full inclusion is not the least dangerous assumption regarding schooling students with ID, as full inclusion may not always lead to positive outcomes. Thus, it can be said that the history of including individuals with ID has gone through positive and negative turns due to several factors, including conflicting opinions about the philosophy of inclusion, negative attitudes of general education teachers, and a lack of experience with special education teachers (Diken, 2006; Gallagher, 2001; Kavale & Forness, 2000; Paul, & Cartledge,1996; Villa et al.,1996).

Transition Planning

Transition planning programs are underlined as evidence-based plans and programs that promote post-secondary success for individuals with disabilities (Mazzotti et al., 2016). By the 1990s, based on the ADA, initial features for planning the transition from school to post-secondary education were shaped. Under this law, discrimination based on disability is forbidden in all educational institutions. (United States Department of Education, 2020). Changes in the 1990s ensured that every student with a disability received Individual Transition Plan (ITP) along with

their Individualized Education Program (IEP) from age 14. (Cortella, 2005; Lipkin & Okamoto, 2015).

By 2004, transition services had been described as a range of plans and programs designed to enhance the post-secondary life of individuals with disabilities. (Hudson, 2011). Field et al. (1998) indicated that prompting transition services for individuals with ID encourages them to practice self-determination at the post-secondary level. In line with such understanding of the related services of students with disabilities, in 2004, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) was again reauthorized and signed into law by President George W. Bush (Bicehouse & Faieta, 2017). In light of IDEA, transition services are defined as:

> A results-oriented process, that is focused on improving the academic and functional achievement of the child with a disability to facilitate the child's movement from school to post-school activities, including postsecondary education, vocational education, integrated employment (including supported employment), continuing and adult education, adult services, independent living, or community participation. (United States Department of Education, 2020, p. 62)

Later, based on the emergence of legislative movements related to transition services, some programs emerged that contributed to enhancing the transition process for individuals with ID. For instance, under the Higher Education Opportunities Act (HEOA), some programs that support the transition to post-secondary education, such as Transition and Post-secondary Programs for Students with Intellectual Disabilities (TPSID), were endorsed (Grigal et al., 2019). However, while transition planning programs aim to improve the post-secondary lives of individuals with disabilities (Mazzotti et al., 2016), many individuals with ID who passed thorough transition planning experiences could not effectively face many obstacles in real-world settings at the post-

secondary level (Brendli & Kozachuk, 2022). Beyond that, Lauer & Houtenville (2018) noted that even after they passed transition planning programs, less than 36% of individuals with ID got jobs. Given that, the services provided during transition planning programs were inadequate to support individuals with ID in the post-secondary workplace due to many unexplored aspects, which still need to be explored as factors that increase or limit employability for this population.

Effective Practices for Transition Planning

According to the National Technical Assistance Center on Transition (n.d.), effective practices refer to a specific method of teaching a particular skill proven effective by high-quality research (e.g., evidence/research-based practice). Effective practices are a commonly adopted approach to inclusive education for individuals with ID. In light of this, the concept of effective practice in transition planning has been framed so that these services must be based on one of three main dimensions: evidence-based, research-based, and promising (Mazzotti et al., 2013; National Technical Assistance Center on Transition, n.d.). To do this, practitioners need to apply effective practices that are reflected in specific skills teaching interventions, which can be assessed through specific tools, such as (a) innovation configuration for transition services (Morningstar & Mazzotti, 2014), (b) School and district self-assessment, and (c) quality Indicators of transition programs (Morningstar et al., 2012; Rowe et al., 2013; Morningstar et al., 2018). The literature has revealed many strategies shown to be effective practices in relation to enhancing the employability of Individuals With ID, including taxonomy, vocational training, self-determination strategies, Self-determination Learning Models, Supplemental Security Income (SSI)(Anderson et al., 2018; Chambless et al., 2019; Ipsen et al., 2019; Kohler, 1996; Plotner & Dymond, 2017; Wehmeyer, 2004; Wehman et al., 2020); however, based on the literature, I summarized several practices associated with the employability of individuals with ID. (See Table 1.).

Table 1. Summary of Practices Associated with the Employability of Individuals With ID

Effective Practices	Definition & Application	References
Self-Determination	As an essential indicator of the quality of post-secondary life, self-determination enables individuals with ID to act as causal agents in their lives. Additionally, self-determination enhances the ability to solve problems, set goals, advocate one's self, make a decision, and be aware and focus on one's self and actions. Regarding post-secondary success, self-determination is directly related to the post-secondary academic progress and employment success of adults with ID.	(Dirette, 2019; Shogren, 2019; Shogren & Ward, 2018; Wehmeyer et al., 2012, 2013; White et al., 2017)
Self- Determination Learning Model of Instruction (SDLMI)	Through SDLM, students can learn to self-regulate problem-solving in service of a goal using an evidence-based style of instruction performed by a facilitator.	(Burke 2019; Hagiwara, 2020; Shogren, 2019; Shogren et al., 2018; Wehmeyer et al., 2012, 2013)
Taxonomy for Transition Programming 2.0	A framework contains five crucial categories to ensure a successful transition in college and careers, including student-focused planning, student development, interagency collaboration, Family Engagement, and Program Structure. Taxonomy for Transition Programming provides possible best practices to guide the transition process in various settings, such as post-secondary work.	(Cumming et al., 202; Fowler, 2007; Kohler, 2016; Kohler et al., 2016;)
Career and technical education or formerly known as (vocational and occupational education)	Provide persons with disabilities with the vocational knowledge, as well as the other skills required to earn an industry-recognized degree or a specific field or position. Training programs may be designed for specific roles (e.g., commercial, industrial, technological, etc.)	(Daviso et al., 2016; Mazzotti et al., 2013; Rowe et al., 2021; Traina et al., 2022; Wehman et al., 2020)

Table 1. (Continued).

Effective Practices	Definition & Application	References
Social skills	Specific behaviors performed in specific situations that are judged by others as competent or not (e.g., social, and self-efficacy).	(Agran et al., 2016; Laskaraki et al., 2022; Mazzotti et al., 2013; Monahan, 2003; Walker & Barry, 2018; Voorhees, 2021)
Supplemental Security Income (SSI)	Self-determination training was an essential intervention prompted within transition planning for youth with ID who received Supplemental Security Income (SSI). SSI is an evidence-based intervention to improve employment and post-secondary outcomes.	(Anderson et al., 2018; Chambless et al., 2019; Ipsen et al., 2019)

Although these transition practices are shown to be effective in one of the three ways mentioned above, — (evidence-based, research-based, and promising) —the literature indicates that many transition programs have not promoted post-secondary employment for individuals with ID as anticipated (Snell-Rood, 2020). Furthermore, there is a lack of research on best practices that can be implemented during transition planning at the secondary level to promote success after high school (Mazzotti et al., 2013).

Self-Determination

While engaging in post-secondary life can be challenging for individuals with an ID, self-determination skills presumably encourage this population to overcome such challenges, achieve success, and thus improve their quality of life. The research base indicated that self-determination is a critical factor for success in post-secondary education for students with ID, as it is a crucial indicator of the nature of life at the post-secondary level (Shogren & Shaw, 2016; Shogren et al., 2018; Wehmeyer et al., 2018). Self-determination was defined by Wehmeyer (2005) as "volitional actions that enable one to act as the primary causal agent in one's life and to maintain or improve

one's quality of life" (p. 117). Although this definition includes the essence of self-determination, this definition has been updated to be more specific. Wehmeyer (2020) asserted that "Self-determination is a psychological construct situated within theories of human agency, which view people as active contributors to their own behavior through self-initiated, self-regulated, and goal-directed actions. Thus, self-determination refers to self-versus other-caused action" (p. 81).

By promoting self-determination skills, individuals with ID can engage successfully in work settings (The National Academies of Sciences, 2015; Land & Duquette, 2017). In this context, Deci & Ryan (2012) argued that the philosophy behind self-determination was crafted to correspond to the core of an individual's independent personality in real-world settings. Thus, as a concept, self-determination is directly related to post-secondary academic achievement and employment success for individuals with ID (Shogren & Ward, 2018). Also, Chao (2018) indicated that the self-determination strategies positively impacted improving the quality of life at the post-secondary level for adults with ID and other disabilities. Furthermore, self-determination has a positive effect longer than expected on the post-secondary lives of individuals with disabilities (Wehmeyer et al., 2018). In that regard, it is essential to highlight that self-determination skills can be taught through educational curricula (Shogren et al., 2008).

Causal Agency and Self-Determination's Related Components

The philosophy of self-determination is primarily based on causal agency, which frames individuals' responses to opportunities or threats in their environments (Wehmeyer et al., 2017). In light of this, post-secondary work is an environment where a causal agency factor emerges through the interaction of individuals with ID with self-determination components. It should be noted that during the past decades, causal agency and self-determination of individuals with disabilities have been addressed using different terms in the literature. One of the most prominent

terms in the literature is empowerment, referring to people's ability to control their lives (Kennedy, 1996; Rappaport, 2002). In light of this, as it is associated with self-determination, the causal agency concept lays out a framework for interventions that would promote self-determination for individuals with ID, particularly regarding the support required to enable these individuals to participate effectively in agentic action within social contexts, such as work (Shogren et al., 2017; Wehmeyer & Shogren, 2016).

Therefore, it can be said that the causal agency concept in the work environment is expressed in how individuals with ID practice the components of self-determination at work. Indeed, self-determination's related components/skills are considered in training individuals with disabilities in the transition stage and assessing their level of self-determination in post-secondary settings. The literature has primarily referred to a wide range of observable and measurable skills related to self-determination (Cabeza et al., 2013; Chou et al., 2017; Vicente Sánchez et al., 2022); however, problem-solving, goal setting, self-advocacy, decision-making, and self-awareness appears to be the most critical skills of self-determination (Ju et al., 2017; Wehmeyer et al., 2013; Wehmeyer et al., 2017).

The Self-Determined Learning Model of Instruction (SDLMI)

Whereas self-determination entitles the students with ID to be a causal agent in their lives and act independently (Shogren et al., 2015; Wehmeyer, 2020), some models can make self-determination skills more learnable. However, even if students with ID acquire these skills, they still need support to learn and implement these skills in an integrated way (Shogren, 2019; Burke, 2019). Given that, the importance of the Self-Determined Learning Model of Instruction (SDLMI) came as an effective strategy in facilitating the process of accessing the general curriculum and the transition to the post-secondary work level. SDLMI is “an evidence-based model of instruction

implemented by a facilitator (e.g., general or special education teacher, family member, related service professional, transition professional) to enable students to learn to self-regulate problem-solving in service to a goal" (Hagiwara, 2020, p.1).

In examining the effects of models driven by self-determination on access to general curricula for individuals with ID by involving four students, a study by La'Shawndra (2013) explored the impact of the SDLMI on the reading comprehension goals chosen by the students with ID. On the self-determination scale, there was a significant increase in the level of self-determination for three students. Moreover, a study by Fowler (2007) measured the effect of SDLMI on academic skills only and reported that SDLMI positively influenced performing goal-achieving strategies for students with ID.

Self-Determination and Relevant Schooling Practices

Based on The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), No Child Left Behind (NCLB), and Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), several schooling practices have promoted the access of individuals with ID to public school curricula and thus to more significant opportunities to engage in academic and social environments and ensure higher levels of self-determination (Rogers & Johnson, 2018; Wehmeyer, 2020). Besides, the research base indicated that some schooling practices were necessary to improve the lifestyle of individuals with ID from social, cognitive, and health aspects (Walsh & McConkey, 2009; Wehmeyer et al., 2021). In light of this, some relevant schooling practices have emerged as crucial in the cognitive and social development as well as the transition to the post-secondary stage for individuals with ID.

Universal Design for Learning (UDL). Access to the general education curriculum and effective transition planning for individuals with ID is directly related to the implemented strategies and the environment in which these strategies are implemented. Posey (2020) indicated

that by framing three main principles, engagement, representation, and action and expression, as a framework, Universal Design for Learning (UDL) guides the procedure of shaping educational practices to be better able to meet the diverse needs of all parts of the educational process. While ID is defined as a deficiency in intellectual ability (e.g., planning, decision-making, problem-solving, and learning) and deficits in adaptive functioning (e.g., lack of personal independence) (Robert et al., 2021; Vannest, 2013), this deficiency will affect this population's conceptual, social, and practical aspects of life. (Boat & Wu, 2015). Given this, the role of UDL emerges as a practical framework for making the learning process more effective for this population, and thus making the knowledge gained in the classroom more beneficial in different world settings (Flis Jr, 2020; Frolli et al., 2020; Posey, 2020).

Consequently, such a framework will enhance the success of interventions this population receives to better participate at the post-secondary/work level. In a qualitative descriptive study, Flis Jr et al. (2020) discovered how teachers describe the implementation of specific components of the UDL for students with ID in inclusive classrooms in the U.S. By recruiting 90 participants; the data showed that students with ID could use UDL components successfully and benefit from such strategies in promoting their self-determination level. Also, UDL principles encouraged educators to alter their teaching strategies to match the participants' assumed needs at the post-secondary level.

The Least Restrictive Environment (LRE). According to IDEA (2004), providing special education services to individuals with ID under The Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) requires the following: (a) Students with ID should be taught in regular classrooms. (b) Educational services should not be provided for individuals with ID in isolation from their normal peers in self-contained classrooms unless the need arises. Therefore, the impact of such practices on individuals

with ID was remarkable in making integration-inclusive settings more effective. For instance, Wehmeyer et al. (2021) reported that "the improvement in educating students with ID in inclusive settings improved by only slightly more than 9%, while it was 7% for separate classrooms and reduced 2%" (p.38). The research base indicates that LRE promotes student participation in academic activities and significant improvement in their social skills, facilitating the transition beyond the secondary stage (Sauer & Jorgensen, 2021; Wehmeyer et al., 2021). In addition, families of students with ID prefer their children to be educated in the least restrictive environments (Nielson-Smith, 2020).

Evidence-Based Practices (EBP). While implementing educational interventions is the most important means to improve the post-secondary lives of individuals with ID, it is crucial to identify the most effective or Evidence-Based Practices (EBPs) and interventions (Browder et al., 2020). Schalock et al. (2011) defined EBPs as "practices that are based on the current best evidence that is obtained from credible sources that used reliable and valid methods and based on a clearly articulated and empirically supported theory or rationale" (p. 274), and EBPs only recently has been identified in the field of ID (Browder et al., 2020; Cook & Odom, 2013; Sackett et al.,1996; Schalock et al., 2011). Horner et al. (2005) stated that EBPs are those whose positive impact has been demonstrated in five or more research studies involving at least 20 participants. The literature has indicated that EBPs have been adopted in many countries, including the U.S., the United Kingdom, Canada, and Australia (Singh, 2016). Given this, EBPs and research-based practice seemed promising in promoting self-determination interventions for individuals with intellectual disabilities.

Using alternative assessments. While behavior is one of the most important factors considered when classifying individuals with ID and designing relevant strategies (Robert et al.,

2021), functional assessment is one of the most valuable practices used as an alternative assessment for individuals with ID. Functional assessment arises as a model for dealing with behavioral issues of students with ID and an instrument for analyzing new behaviors (Singh, 2016). Studies show that alternative assessments are effective in directing the behavior of individuals with ID toward predetermined goals through positive/negative reinforcement (Patel et al., 2018; Miltenberger et al., 2016). At the other end of the spectrum, numerous studies highlighted the value of this assessment in improving the notions of self-management for people with ID, including self-monitoring and self-awareness (Brooks et al., 2003), which are essential interventions in promoting transition and self-determination to support this population in their post-secondary work.

Employment specialists support program. Butterworth et al. (2012) stated that by identifying the individual preferences and needs of individuals with ID, this program seeks to train job developers to enhance transition by modifying the nature and description of the job and identifying the support required. This program successfully prepared employers to design techniques that can be used to construct social relationships and partnerships to facilitate the transition to post-secondary work for individuals with ID (Qian et al., 2018). With this factor in mind, job developers will be better able to support employment for individuals with ID in line with transition programs and self-determination interventions and overcome many potential barriers. Therefore, considering this program will be important in evaluating the work settings of the participants in this study and will guide the interpretation of the results.

Self-Determination and Employability of Individuals with ID

The relationship between self-determination and employability for individuals with ID has been emphasized in the literature. For example, Dean et al. (2017) indicated that self-determination

is critical in preparing individuals with ID for employment. Furthermore, self-determination leads to positive employment outcomes for individuals with ID (Wehmeyer et al., 2012). In addition, higher levels of self-determination were associated with higher job opportunities for individuals with ID as they acquire life skills that enable them to engage in work environments effectively (Land & Duquette, 2017; Shogren et al., 2015; Wehmeyer & Palmer, 2003). However, the literature has not indicated the manner and degree of impact of self-determination and how it manifests in the real work settings of individuals with ID.

In other words, self-determination has been tested as strategies leading to employment; still, the efficacy of these strategies has not been demonstrated from work lived experiences of this population. Thus, much research has indicated the importance of exploring the essence of self-determination in the lived experiences of employed adults with ID. For instance, Garrels & Sigstad (2019) stated that despite receiving self-determination interventions during transitional planning, independence skills did not emerge as hoped among persons with disabilities in post-secondary work. Beyond that, Wehmeyer et al. (2012) asserted that while the research exemplifies an understanding of self-determination in a school context, there is an urgent need for more research on self-determination in an employment context to understand how to promote self-determination in such contexts. Moreover, Shogren et al. (2015) noted that in order to frame practical self-determination skills concerning prompt employment and social engagement of individuals with ID, we need to explore the degree of influence of these skills within work settings.

Concerning self-determination legislation and the employability of individuals with ID, Callahan et al. (2011) stated that self-determination and employment of individuals with ID have received national attention since 1993. In the same context, legislative initiatives have helped promote employability for individuals with ID. For instance, based on the Fair Labor Standards

Act of 1937, training and employment services are funded for individuals with ID, and on-the-job support services are provided through governmental rehabilitation programs (Gidugu et al., 2012). At the same time, ADA led to adapt critical protection standards that positively reflected on self-determination and employment for individuals with ID, as it ensured barrier-free environments and supported access to all available opportunities (Blanck, 2016).

It should be noted that policies have greatly supported the self-determination and employment of individuals with intellectual disabilities. Indeed, the Workforce Innovation and Opportunities Act (WIOA) of 2014 has emerged as the most prominent feature of these policies supporting the transition to integrated employment (Shogren et al., 2018). Lastly, according to (The US Department of Education (2018), the Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) program has emerged as one of the most crucial US federal programs in supporting the self-determination and employment of individuals with ID by providing services that enhance their achievement and well-being. According to Florida Department of Education (2022), with the support provided through VR, people with disabilities will be able to access essential services, not only to get jobs but also to help them keep those jobs. Ultimately, Iwanaga et al. (2021) reported that "adding outcome expectancy in SDT can potentially increase its ability to predict motivation to engage in different socially endorsed activities, including VR engagement and employment participation" (p. 103).

Gaps in the Literature

While a good quality of life is associated with having opportunities to have an active, inclusive role in society, quality of life instruments in the field of ID are no longer suitable (Verdugo et al., 2014). At the same time, while self-determination has been linked to a more positive quality of life and lifestyle satisfaction in post-school life (Wehmeyer & Shogren, 2016), the essence of self-determination has not been the focus of the research base, which has examined

the employment of individuals with ID. However, in a phenomenological study exploring the lived experiences of aging and later life in older people with ID, Kåhlin et al. (2015) revealed the existence of a collective lifeworld, which involves the unique experiences the informants share because of their ID and its consequences for their life-course. So, the findings of such studies are important in exploring living conditions for people with ID in general.

Employability and Lived Experiences of Individuals with ID

Although the changes that individuals with ID go through will affect their career paths (Cimera, 2012; Cimera et al., 2018; Wehman et al., 2020) in their transition planning programs, many school districts do not consider the everyday challenges that individuals with ID might face at post-secondary work level (Plotner & Dymond, 2017). The literature indicates that the experiences of employed people with ID are relevant to purposes beyond just exploration, as the findings of this exploration can inform transition planning programs in high schools and stimulate the development of work settings for this population. Kocman et al. (2018) asserted that the journey towards employing individuals with ID is an arduous path, and it may be full of obstacles and challenges related to their preparations and work environments, such as cultural challenges, negative impressions challenges, and incremental obligations. Furthermore, in a phenomenological study that explored the transition from secondary grades into adult life for Navajo students with ID and their families, Ingram (2018) indicated that employment experiences emerged as critical factors for successful transition planning, suggesting that workplace experiences should be included in designing and providing transition planning services.

SDLMI

However, one notable gap is that despite the use of SDLMI, less than 10% of employees with ID benefit from these interventions in the workplace (Shogren et al., 2018; Bradford, 2019).

Moreover, Hagiwara (2020) stated that for honest and professional implementations of SDLMI, there is an urgent need for a comprehensive "systematic coaching model" (p.25) that facilitators can rely on. In addition, in one study that examined the impact of teachers' professional training on SDLMI, Bojanek et al. (2021) found that although teachers reported positive perceptions of this type of training, they did not report any significant improvement in students' cognitive levels. Gaps related to "the degree to which interventions are implemented as intended/fidelity of implementation" (Shogren, 2021, p. 24) have also been reported. Therefore, considering all the influencing factors, more research was needed on the core of using such models in relation to work settings of employed people with ID.

A Lack of Coordinated Planning in the Preparing Stage for Transition

A successful transition to post-secondary work results from good preparation in the transition planning phase. The need for an infrastructure reinforced by relevant legislation and practices that formed in the collaboration between educational entities and the labor market has been emphasized in the literature. For instance, in South Korea, Jung et al. (2004) indicated that there had been insufficient preparation for integrating strategies and standards between vocational education for individuals with disabilities and the needs of the labor market. Moreover, according to Chun et al. (2016), "at the national level, South Korea needed to produce a more well-organized and inclusive transition infrastructure, build clear guidelines for service delivery, and increase funding for transitional services" (p.70). By the same token, in Australia, the transition to post-schooling was not evident enough, and along with the need to align services between providers and other sectors, there was a strong need for further consideration of the voices and perspectives of individuals with ID regarding their transition path (Redgrove et al., 2016).

Given that, designing self-determination strategies during transition planning based on the preferences, abilities, and needs of individuals with ID would ensure the maintenance and success of such preparation. Hoover (2016) stated that the ultimate goal of transition planning programs for students with ID lies in being independent and successful in their post-secondary lives, such as finding and keeping a job. Unfortunately, many transition planning programs are no longer valid for students with ID in their post-secondary life as these programs do not meet the criteria that align with post-secondary needs (Chun et al., 2016; Redgrove et al., 2016; Scrimgeour, 2020). In addition, Kohler & Field (2003) asserted that "an important aspect of student-focused planning is that educational decisions are based on students' goals, visions, and interests and using this information to set short-and long-term goals" (p.176). Finally, Hart et al. (2014) asserted that a high-quality transition to the post-secondary level for individuals with ID should simultaneously include relevant vocational practice from real-world settings and cognitive skills training.

Conclusion

As Borisov & Reid (2010) points out, the idiographic analysis of IPA permits an in-depth understanding of each participant. Asking individuals with ID to share their experiences may provide valuable insights about their perceived benefits that would otherwise be overlooked. Gjermestad et al. (2017) argued that the life that people with ID may desire is to live a normal, everyday life like other people, including involvement in employment. Also, they asserted that these involvements could be seen as life situations where people experience engagement that gives meaning to their everyday life. As an attempt to get to know this participation, there seems to be a consensus that participation will appear in an interactive human phenomenon context (Shogren et al., 2014).

Intellectual Disabilities and Self-Determination in the Context of Saudi Arabia

Historical Overview of ID

In Saudi Arabia, the history of ID is entirely devoid of any sterilization or violent movements as happened in Europe in the dark ages; on the contrary, the education of those populations started directly from special education schools (Al-Mousa, 2010). However, while the education of individuals with special education/ID is a relatively new issue in the Middle East in general, the strategies used with those individuals only existed in Saudi Arabia after 1958 (Aldousari & Dunn, 2022). Hence, while parents were responsible for supporting and assisting their children, individuals with ID/other disabilities in Saudi Arabia did not receive special education services until 1958 (Al-Assaf, 2017; Alshehri, 2021; Binmahfooz, 2022).

On the other hand, in terms of institutionalization, legislation, definition, and application, special education did not officially exist in Saudi Arabia until 1962 (Al-Ajmi, 2006; Aldabas, 2015; Alquraini, 2011; Altamimi, 2011). Therefore, the U.S. approach was one of the most prominent educational systems/approaches adopted by Saudi Arabia regarding the strategies used in schooling individuals with disabilities. According to Alquraini (2011), “the school system in Saudi Arabia is usually modeled on the U.S. system” (p.139).

Education for Individuals with ID

Al-Mousa (2010) stated that teaching individuals with ID started with establishing special programs for them in the form of separate classes in institutes called mental retardation institutes in many cities in the Kingdom. Accordingly, special institutions were established to serve individuals with ID, framing the educational system for this category. Aldabas (2015) reported that “in 1971, the Ministry of Education opened the first special school, the Intellectual Education Institute, to educate students with ID” (p.1160).

While the historical development of providing educational services for all categories of disabilities was almost parallel and arose in the same era in the Saudi context, I summarized the most critical historical stages in the development of schooling students with ID in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. (See Table 2.).

Table 2. Timeline of The Historical Development of Education for Students with ID in Saudi Arabia

Year	Sitting	Provider
1971	Special Day School/ Residential School	Ministry of Education/Ministry of Social Affairs
1987	7 Institutes special day schools and residential schools. (4 males/3 females)	Ministry of Education
1990	54 special day schools and some residential schools.	Ministry of Education/Department of Special Education
2000	Full-time special education classrooms in public schools for mild and moderate IDD.	Ministry of Education/Department of Special Education
2000-2015	Special day schools for moderate, profound, and severe ID	Ministry of Education/ Department Education/ Ministry of Social Affairs

Note. Adapted from Special education in Saudi Arabia: History and areas for reform, by R. A. Aldabas, 2015, Creative Education, 6(11), 1158.

Special Education Legislation in Saudi Arabia

The Disability Law. According to Alquraini (2010), by 1987, the Disability Law was passed as the first legislation for individuals with disabilities in Saudi Arabia. This legislation included principles of equality and equity between individuals with ID/other disabilities and others. Besides, this law determined disability evaluations, intervention, and eligibility.

Disability Code. "The Saudi government passed this code in 2000 to guarantee that people with disabilities have access to free and appropriate medical, psychological, social, educational,

and rehabilitation services through public agencies" (Alquraini, 2010, p. 140). This law frames many of the pillars on which the education of individuals with ID depends in the U.S. and Europe (e.g., early intervention, general education curriculum access, vocational education, and post-secondary education) (King Salman Center for Disability Research, 2004).

Regulations of Special Education Programs and Institutes (RSEPI). Saudi Arabia instituted Rules and Regulations of Special Education Programs (RSEPI) launched after those U.S. policies and was introduced in 2001 (Aldabas, 2015; Alquraini, 2011; Alquraini, 2013). RSEPI has defined (mental retardation) as a separate category for groups serving under this Act and guarantees their right to an IEP. In addition, the RSEPI includes assessment procedures for individuals with ID to determine their eligibility for admission to special education programs to ensure their right to receive free and appropriate education, IEP, early intervention, related services, and transition services (Aldabas, 2015, Alquraini, 2011).

Self-Determination in the Saudi Context

According to the Ministry of Health Care in Saudi Arabia (2010), the Saudi disability legislation requires that public agencies provide rehabilitation services and training plans that promote independent living. The primary purpose of such services is to "facilitate the child's movement from school to post-school activities, including post-secondary education, vocational education, integrated employment (including supported employment), continuing and adult education, adult services, independent living, or community participation" (Almutairi, 2018, p. 163). However, the legislation related to transition services, post-secondary work, and post-secondary education for individuals with ID has grown significantly in Saudi Arabia by 2016 (Almalki, 2021).

Employment rights. Regarding employment rights in Saudi Arabia, according to The Unified National Platform (GOV.SA) (2021), the civil service legislation in the Kingdom is general since no legislation excludes persons with disabilities from their employment rights and receiving equal salaries. Furthermore, Almalki (2021) stated that "the Disabled Care System states that all individuals with disabilities must receive training and rehabilitation services and provision of appropriate training courses" (p.3). In addition, according to GOV.SA (2021), the Saudi government has recently supported several national initiatives that would contribute to the employment of individuals with ID (e.g., Compatibility System, Mowaamah, and Qaderoon).

Educational state of transition and self-determination. The Saudi Ministry of Education determines the educational and transition services eligibility of students with ID based on their intellectual functioning in the IQ tests, conducted through two main approaches: (a) institutional education/rehabilitation centers and (b) intellectual education programs in self-contained classrooms (Al-Mosa, 2010). Thus, rehabilitation centers are common for students with severe ID where they are taught separately from their regular or disabled peers, and those centers are supervised by the supervision of the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development (Sabbagh et al., 2021). In the second approach, intellectual education programs in public schools are the most common option for students with mild to moderate ID. Therefore, individuals with ID under this option are taught in self-contained classes integrated into public schools (Al-Mousa, 2010; Almutairi, 2018; Alnahdi, 2019).

Almalki (2021) indicated that by 2016, the Ministry of Education in Saudi Arabia announced a new vision for the special education system entitled Regulatory Guide for Special Education (RGSE), stating that transition services must be implemented for individuals with ID in the secondary stage. Students with ID are provided with transition plans before age 16 through

qualified teachers who are able to work with these individuals in their transition stage (Almalky & Alqahtani, 2021). Furthermore, the Ministry of Education provides the necessary special arrangements and facilities for university students with disabilities, as well as a qualifying year program, which includes an adaptive environment, assessed adaptation, comprehensive access programs, and a center of support for female students with disabilities (GOV.SA, 2021).

Self-determination strategies application gaps. According to accounts from Saudi teachers, numerous studies have suggested that transition services in Saudi Arabia have effectively taught pupils essential post-school skills, such as self-determination skills (Almalky & Alqahtani, 2021). Indeed, this highlights that even if the self-determination skills that prepare them for post-secondary work are included in transition planning for students with ID, these skills are presented as part of the other skills models. In contrast, the literature asserts that self-determination skills are substantial to ensure a successful transition to post-secondary education and work (Loman et al., 2010; Wehmeyer, 2020; Wehman et al., 2020), indicating that these skills are more critical than being sub-skills within the personal skills framework.

Concerning teachers' readiness to deal with self-determination strategies during transition planning, the literature has shown weakness in preparing qualified teachers to implement these skills. Greene & Kochhar-Bryant (2003) pointed out that the lack of qualified teachers hampers transition planning at all stages. Although the Saudi government contributes to improving transition services for individuals with ID by all possible means, applying self-determination during transition planning in Saudi Arabia lacks qualified teachers. (Almalki, 2021; Alnahdi, 2013; Alnahdi et al., 2019; Alrabiah, 2021; Alrusaiyes, 2014). In light of this, the Saudi field needs to develop broad, relevant, and applicable knowledge about the employability of individuals with ID at the post-secondary level in Saudi environments.

The literature considers vocational training a fundamental pillar in teaching self-determination skills, transition planning, and post-secondary work for individuals with ID. Kohler (1996) emphasized that vocational training is the first and most important practice when providing and designing transition services. Besides, Wehman et al. (2020) indicated that one of the quality indicators of transition planning is that vocational training begins at the elementary level and develops gradually through school grades. In light of this, compared to the situation in Saudi Arabia, it appears that vocational training has not been adequately addressed. Vocational training occurs in Saudi Arabia during the second semester of the 12th grade (Almalki, 2018; Almalki et al., 2021; Almugren, 2020; The Saudi Ministry of Education, 2019). Furthermore, unprofessional teacher preparation seems to have reduced the quality of vocational training programs (Almalki, 2021; Alnahdi, 2013; Alnahdi, 2016; Alrabiah, 2021), which impacted preparing individuals with ID for post-secondary work. Given what the literature stated, transition programs for students with ID in Saudi Arabia are not expected to work as efficiently as required due to the lack of information related to the post-secondary level for this population.

The Saudi Research Base

The concept of self-determination is relatively new in Saudi Arabia, creating a need for research highlighting the importance of this factor in Saudi environments. Furthermore, in the Saudi context, academic/vocational interventions that promote self-determination during the transition phase are not clearly defined, leaving uncertainty in judging the outcomes of these programs without extensive explorations research and limiting the successful transition of these individuals to post-secondary work (Almalky, 2018; Alnahdi, 2014).

To sum up, the research base includes a limited set of studies that address the transition and self-determination of individuals with ID in Saudi Arabia. Most of the research used

quantitative designs targeting the perceptions/perspectives of parents, teachers, principals, faculty members, stakeholders, and employers. The research questions discover participants' perspectives on four common factors: (a) services offered, (b) schools/social partnerships, (c) best strategies used, and (d) statistically significant differences related to gender and years of experience. The research base indicated a noticeable lack of qualitative research designs and intervention research in transition and self-determination for students with ID in Saudi Arabia. Also, the Saudi research base reveals a noticeable lack of studies that recruited individuals with ID as participants. The research base reported only one study that used a phenomenological research design.

Although the research base has shown many studies of perspectives/participants that targeted the same subject, some similar studies yielded inconsistent results. For example, in a study that examined special education teachers' perceptions of school transition practices, Almalky & Alqahtani (2021 noted that the results of their study were inconsistent with two studies conducted in the same area, used the same type of participants and similar methods (Al-Fawzan & Al-Rawi, 2019; Alrusaiyes, 2014). Thus, research on self-determination in Saudi Arabia needs to explore new knowledge, or at least expand existing knowledge, through novel research.

Conclusion

To this end, exploring the lived experience of self-determination of employed adults with ID in Saudi Arabia is needed to identify critical areas of training needed of SD and the current state of employment programs. To frame a clear and robust base, studies of this type will be especially helpful in countries still in the process of developing services in the post-school stage for individuals with ID. As such, I will conduct IPA to explore the lived experiences of employed adults with ID who received intervention toward self-determination in Saudi Arabia for the earlier-mentioned research purposes. The following five questions will guide the study:

1: How do employed adults with ID generally describe their understanding of self-determination?

2: How do employed adults with ID describe the experience of receiving self-determination interventions during high school/transition planning and how it affected their success in post-secondary work?

3: How do employed adults with ID describe their own self-advocacy, goal setting, self-awareness, problem-solving, and decision-making skills while in post-secondary work?

4: How do employed adults with ID describe the essence of their lived experiences of self-determination during post-secondary work?

5: What do employed adults with ID describe as essential to what they need to improve their self-determination skills related to their pursuit of and during post-secondary work?

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

Research Design

While this study sought to respond to a gap in the literature by providing information regarding the experience of self-determination of employed adults with ID, I used a phenomenological research design to deeply understand these populations' lived experiences. To this end, I explored the essence of self-determination of employed adults with ID in this study through an interpretive framework. Moran (2002) asserted that Phenomenology is best understood as a philosophical approach that underlines the attempt to get to the truth of things, to explore phenomena in the most extensive context as what emerges in the way that it manifests. Therefore, as a phenomenological study, the purpose of this study was to better understand the meaning and essence of specific individuals' lived experiences around a particular phenomenon. By (essence) I mean acting based on one's own mind or free will without external compulsion. The essence of self-determination is human dignity and rights, which is the individual's insistent demand to maximize the pursuit of values (Chen, 1990; Wehmeyer, 2004). Thus, I used Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) to analyze and collect this study data. As a methodology, IPA allowed me to explore these experiences' essence, which offers insights into such populations' lived experiences in a given context to make sense of this phenomenon (Van Manen, 2017).

Although I described participants' experiences through textural language in IPA, phenomenological studies of educational environments are a relatively new approach in special

education, especially concerning individuals with ID. Even so, Rose et al. (2019) concluded that IPA could be an appropriate methodology to be used with individuals with ID.

Population and Sample Description

I conducted this research study in Saudi Arabia, Riyadh region. Several inclusion and exclusion criteria were used for this study's participants selection process, which is described in detail in the Participant Selection and Sample Size section. Therefore, each participant was diagnosed with mild ID, and all participants received special education services throughout their school years. In addition, all participants received relevant services, including transition planning and self-determination services. All participants graduated from high school, successfully transferred to post-secondary work, and spent at least six months at work. I reached potential participants through existing contacts as I served as a previous teacher for this population.

Site Selection

The interviews were conducted virtually. The Zoom platform was used to conduct the meetings. Smith et al. (2021) stated that "interviewing using a digital platform can be useful to expand the reach of who can participate in IPA research" (p. 126). Hence, an appointment with each participant was arranged. Participants were encouraged to participate in the interviews in a quiet, distraction-free space. The center where the participants worked also provided a private, distraction-free space that was more comfortable and convenient for some participants. Smith et al. (2009) suggested that "It is also a good idea to ask your participant where they would like the interview to take place" (p. 62). Thus, I did ask the participants to choose where they would like to be during their virtual interviews. The aim is to give the required comfort to the interviewees in order to conduct the interviews in standard settings to ensure the reliability and credibility of the data. The interviews were conducted in Arabic. Each interview took between 45 and 60 minutes.

Because I expected the discussion to be in-depth and open-ended questions would be asked, the interviews were recorded using a recording device, all non-verbal behaviors were recorded as they occurred, and interviews were transcribed and then translated.

Participants Selection and Sample Size

This study aimed to write in detail about the perceptions and understandings of the participants. Thus, while I selected the participants on the assumption that they can confer a path to a selective perspective on the essence of self-determination under this study, Smith et al. (2021) stated that "because IPA is an idiographic approach, concerned with understanding particular phenomena in particular contexts, IPA studies are conducted on small sample sizes" (p. 43). Studies suggest that the sample size for IPA studies can range from one to thirty or from three to six participants, considering that a smaller sample size would provide greater homogeneity with multiple interviews for the same participants (Eatough & Smith, 2017; Larkin et al., 2021; Rodriguez & Smith, 2014; Smith & Fieldsend, 2021; Smith et al., 2021). Also, while this study adopts an interpretive phenomenological approach, sampling should theoretically fit this qualitative model (Larkin et al., 2021; Smith & Fieldsend, 2021; Smith et al., 2021).

Moser & Korstjens (2018) claimed that in qualitative research, participants who provide detailed information on the topic being studied would be selected on purpose rather than at random. Also, through purposive sampling, the IPA approach will be better able to recruit an intimately defined group that fits the study's purpose and research questions (Smith & Shinebourne, 2012; Smith et al., 2021). Additionally, while IPA is shown to be successful in conducting research with individuals with ID (Rose et al.., 2019), individuals with ID who possess expressive language can engage successfully in qualitative interviews (Hollomotz, 2018). Given this, I selected a purposeful homogeneous sample based on specific inclusion and exclusion criteria in terms of age, type of

disability, communication skills, time spent in transition planning programs, time spent in post-secondary work, and whether they received self-determination interventions during high schools/transition planning period.

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

For this study purpose, the following inclusion criteria were used: (1) six participants with a mild ID were included (the participants' mild ID diagnosis is confirmed based on a self-reported formal diagnosis), (2) 18 years of age or older, (3) who have sufficient communication abilities and possess expressive language—through traditional verbal speech—, (4) received interventions prompted self-determination during transition planning (determined based on self-reported confirmation), (5) have post-secondary work experience, (6) spent at least six months at work, and (7) have a personal guardianship.

Besides the absence of the criteria above, participants were excluded if any part of this study was deemed harmful to them. For example, if the participants are uncomfortable, feel sad, or are afraid to talk about their experiences. Also, a participant who failed to give informed verbal consent to participate in the research were excluded. It should be noted here that my previous work as a teacher for individuals with ID strengthened my relationship with the potential participants and made the participants' selection process more effective based on full knowledge of the nature of participants' disability, their communication skills, and their ability to participate in such a study. D'Eath & National Federation Research Sub-Committee (2005) indicated that “a person known to an individual with an intellectual disability may be the best interviewer as a greater level of communication and trust may already exist between them” (p. 3). To this end, I contacted the potential participants as a result of my own contacts. No demographic limitations were considered

in selecting the participants, which enabled various data sets to consolidate the phenomena and common traits of the lived experience.

Participants with ID and the Study Homogeneity

Smith & Shinebourne (2012) noted that how homogeneity will be defined in IPA's studies can be challenging. Notwithstanding this, my experience working in transition programs promoting self-determination interventions will facilitate this decision-making process by embracing a more selective scope around the most critical factors to consider for homogeneity. While all selected participants will be individuals with mild ID, individuals with mild ID can learn practical life skills, which allows them to function in ordinary life with minimal levels of support (The National Academies of Sciences, 2015). While individuals with mild ID are defined by an IQ in the range of 50–70, these individuals can value relationships with staff highly or express discomfort with these relationships (American Psychiatric Association, 2021; Giesbers et al., 2020). According to Boat & Wu (2015), individuals with mild ID can learn practical life skills, which allows them to function in ordinary life. They can also travel to familiar places in their community and learn basic safety and health skills. Thus, I have chosen to focus on participants with mild ID because they represent individuals with ID and the best population that can be selected for this research in terms of involvement in post-secondary life.

Participant Recruitment

I submitted a request to conduct the research project to the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of the University of South Florida, Tampa, The United States, and Sa'i Center for Employment and Rehabilitation for Disabilities, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. After getting the authorization to conduct the study from the USF's IRB and Sa'i Center, the consent form was emailed one week before the interviews to Sa'i center's principal to be delivered to the participants.

Participants were given sufficient time to understand the consent form. Participants also had time to get answers to any questions they may have before deciding whether to participate in the research. The recruitment process started with an introductory conversation with potential participants identified from a list of individuals that meet participant criteria provided by Sa'i Center.

At this point, whether all participants retained personal guardianship upon turning 18 years of age was considered by their self-reported that they are of the legal age for consent and have legal guardianship of themselves to participate in the research. Hence, it was determined that all potential participants were involved in programs that prompted and implemented interventions toward self-determination at high school or transition planning levels. Finally, participants were provided a verbal description of the study during a conversation with me.

At the beginning of the interviews, I verbally read the consent form to the participants. After reading the consent form, participants were asked if they wanted any clarification regarding the consent form, and their answers were recorded. While participants with ID can clearly understand the purposes and nature of the research, they may have a limited understanding of their rights to refuse participation or withdraw from the study (Arscott et al., 1998). Thus, in order to minimize the possibility of coercion or undue influence, Emerson et al. (2004) indicated that it is necessary to inform the participants that not participating/withdrawing at any time from the research will not have any negative consequences for them. It is also essential to give them time to consult with anyone to consider whether they would like to participate in the research. While theoretical transferability rather than empirical generalizability is possible in IPA (Smith et al., 2021), the participants were informed that I would make connections between their own

experiences and the claims in the existing literature. Finally, each was asked to accept the opportunity to participate in this study, and their answers were recorded.

Data Sources and Data Collection

IPA approach provides a detailed analysis of how participants perceive and make sense of things happening to them (Eatough & Smith, 2017; Larkin et al., 2021; Smith & Fieldsend, 2021). While it is possible to collect data for an IPA analysis through multiple ways – such as personal accounts and diaries – probably the best way to collect data for an IPA study and the most common way of collecting data in IPA is through the semi-structured interview (Eatough & Smith, 2017; Larkin et al., 2021; Rodriguez & Smith, 2014; Smith et al., 2021). This interview style facilitated the process of constituting the meanings by allowing for flexible and uninhibited dialogues with the participants and enabled me to amend the initial questions based on the participants' answers to investigate the critical areas that arose (Ahlin, 2019; Smith, 2003). Thus, using IPA enabled the participants' experiences to be documented in their own words and further interpreted by the researcher by adding creative narratives to the descriptions, emphasizing the researcher's reflexivity (Larkin et al., 2021; MacLeod, 2019; Smith & Fieldsend, 2021). While we can engage respondents with ID so that they become more than just research subjects, individuals with ID can participate successfully in qualitative interviews (Hollomotz, 2018). Also, Brown & Beail (2009) used IPA to analyze the data obtained from interviews with individuals with ID. In the limitations of their study, they reported that while concerns have been raised about the use of IPA with individuals with ID, participants talked openly and added insight into the common understanding of their reality.

IPA interviews attempted to answer the research question “sideways” (Smith et al., 2021, p.45); thus, research questions were asked at the conceptual level, not directly. Consequently,

relevant topics were discussed with the participants and analyzed in the analysis process. A schedule was designed to set topics arranged, and the potentially sensitive points were discussed with the participants. The participants were informed in advance to avoid any possible disagreement points. Each interview lasted approximately 60 minutes and was audiotaped, and non-verbal behaviors were recorded in real-time as they occurred, either through note-taking or through the use of audio recording equipment. The recordings were transcribed to enable a detailed analysis of the data.

In this research study, by conducting in-depth one-to-one semi-structured interviews, using IPA produced knowledge about the assumptions that frame the possible essence of self-determination, what issues were defined as essential aims, and what traits were considered crucial in the participants' lived experiences. Smith et al. (2021) argued that "in terms of devising a data collection method, IPA is best suited to one that will invite participants to offer a rich, detailed, first-person account of their experiences" (p. 53). Therefore, in-depth one-to-one interviews might be the best means of accessing such accounts. Thus, While the purpose of this study was to obtain extensive data on participants' habits, attitudes, and feelings, conducting in-depth, one-on-one, semi-structured interviews style was required to achieve this goal. Given that, verbal conversation was deemed the most efficient data collection approach because people with ID sometimes have trouble expressing themselves in writing.

This study's data was collected and analyzed using the IPA guidelines to explore accounts constituting the meanings of self-determination in the lived experiences by interviewing employed adults with ID. The interviews were conducted in Arabic and then translated into English. In-depth semi-structured interviews were used to generate the data. Such interviews aimed to obtain personal and emotional information and experiences; thus, the interpretive model was used as an

orientation. Using this interpretive interview approach in the semi-structured interviews allowed me to go deep into the participants' personal lived experiences. During the interviews, participants told their own stories in their own words. Indeed, because of its simplicity of organization and capacity to create rapport with participants, semi-structured interviews have become widely used for collecting such data. This approach allowed participants to freely express their views and feelings while ensuring their voices were heard and their standpoints represented (Reid et al., 2005).

Data Collection Process

For data collection purposes, a semi-structured interview guide was developed by me. The choice of interviews is based on the belief that it will allow the sharing of personal perspectives of these individuals as well as detailed information about their experiences. Besides, participants' answers to the interviews provided an in-depth understanding of their experiences, perceptions, and reactions without the limitations of other methods like a survey. Considering this, Smith et al. (2021) indicated that this type of interview usually takes a longer duration, lasting more than an hour, as it is a unique and in-depth approach to collecting the data.

Thus, it is, therefore, crucial to ensure good time management with a predetermined timeline and interview guide. Accordingly, interview questions were developed for use as a guide for these semi-structured interviews. The interview guide was a structure to move from general points to more particular ones, and it is not a rigid guide. Thus, during the interview, I suggested times when it is better to leave the guide and follow the participants' interests. The participants were familiarized in advance with the interview's style, and a copy of the proposed interview guide was given to them as part of the recruitment and informed approval procedures. Open-ended questions were asked to enhance the opportunity to recognize new horizons of a comprehensive

understanding. Since the participants are individuals with ID, in some cases, it was necessary to conduct more than one interview to allow their lived experiences to appear accurately.

Interview Guide

Research question 1: How do employed adults with ID generally describe their understandings of self-determination?

1. Please tell me, does the term “self” sound familiar to you? Have you ever heard of the term “self”?
    - What does the term “self” mean to you?
    - How do you define it?
    - Using your own words, could you please restate what the term “self” means to you?
    - When was the first time you heard about the term “self”? Possible prompts: At home, high school, transition planning, at work.
2. Please tell me, does the term “determination” sound familiar to you? Have you ever heard of the term “determination”?
    - What does the term “determination” mean to you?
    - How do you define it?
    - Using your own words, could you please restate what the term “ determination “ means to you?
    - When was the first time you heard about the term “determination “? Possible prompts: At home, high school, transition planning, at work.
3. Please tell me, does the term “self-determination” sound familiar to you? Have you ever heard of self-determination?
    - What does the term “self-determination” mean to you?

- How do you define it?
- Using your own words, could you please restate what self-determination means to you?
- When was the first time you heard about self-determination? Possible prompts: High schools, transition planning, at work.

4. Please tell me, did you learn and use self-determination skills?
    - Do you possess self-determination skills?
    - Do you decide what you want on your own or do you need someone's help?
    - Do the people around you (i.e., your parents, your sisters/brothers, your friends, your boss) decide what you want (on your behalf)? Potential prompt: Always, sometimes, never?
5. Please tell me on a day-to-day basis; how do you deal with your issues? Possible prompts: Do you have particular strategies for helping you? Ways of coping?
    - Does anyone else deal with your own business on your behalf? Possible prompts: Your parents, your sisters/brothers, your friends, your boss?
6. Please tell me about self-determination and your relations with other people.
    - Do self-determination skills make a difference?
    - Do you think self-determination skills are helpful?
    - Do you rely on self-determination skills in dealing with others? Possible prompts: Your parents, your sisters/brothers, your friends, your boss?

Research question 2: How do employed adults with ID describe the experience of receiving self-determination interventions during high school/transition planning and how it affected their success in post-secondary work?

1. Please tell me, what do self-determination strategies consist of?
    - What do you know about the self-determination strategies you received in high school/transition planning? Possible prompts: Do you know self-advocacy, goal setting, self-awareness, problem-solving, and decision-making skills?
2. Please tell me about the first time you learned self-determination strategies in high school/transition planning: Possible prompts: Do you remember that? What did you learn? Did you like it/dislike it? Was it something new?
    - Was the impact of self-determination strategies clear? If yes, then how?
    - Was there anything else helped you in high school to get a job? Possible prompts: If yes, helped you with what? How?
3. Please tell me about a time when you were in high school/transition planning, did the interventions you received towards self-determination change the way you think or feel about yourself at work? Possible prompts: do you see yourself differently now than before high school? In what ways?
4. Please tell me, were the self-determination interventions taught by the same teachers? Possible prompts: Did you feel there was something different compared to the regular curriculum? How is that? Do you like it? Did you feel you needed it? Why/Why not?
5. Please tell me, do you think the teaching ways of self-determination skills helped you to get a job? Did you understand? Possible prompts: Do you think more explanation is important? More practical ways or vocational training were important?
6. Please tell me, what can be described as essential during your transition planning stage (in high school) regarding getting a job? Possible prompts: How did you feel during that time? What would you add/change/adjust? What did you want exactly?

7. Please tell me, what learning activities didn't really help during your transition planning stage (in high school) regarding getting a job? Possible prompts: How did you feel during that time? What would you add/change/adjust? What did you want exactly?
8. Please tell me, what helped you a lot in your transition planning stage (in high school) to get a job? Possible prompts: Did you use what you learned? Are there things you learned on your own? What did you learn on the job?

Research question 3: How do employed adults with ID describe their own self-advocacy, goal setting, self-awareness, problem-solving, and decision-making skills while in post-secondary work?

1. Please tell me, does the term self-advocacy sound familiar to you?
    - Have you ever heard of self-advocacy?
    - What does the term self-advocacy mean to you?
    - How do you define it?
    - Using your words, could you please restate what self-advocacy means to you?
2. Please tell me about the first time when you used self-advocacy (i.e., your ability to explain your needs, speak up and stand up for yourself).
    - Have you used this way before? Possible prompts: How long ago? After what? What helped?
    - Have you changed the ways you used self-advocacy skills at work compared to before you started work? Possible prompts: in what ways? Does anything make it better? Does anything make it worse? How do you feel about these changes?
3. Please tell me, does the term " goal " sound familiar to you? Have you ever heard of the term " goal "?

- What does the term “goal” mean to you?
- How do you define it?
- Using your own words, could you please restate what the term “ goal “ means to you?
- When was the first time you heard about the term “ goal “? Possible prompts: At home, high school, transition planning, at work.

4. Please tell me, does the term goal-setting sound familiar to you?
    - Have you ever heard of goal-setting?
    - What does the term goal-setting mean to you?
    - How do you define it?
    - Using your words, could you please restate what goal-setting means to you?
5. Please tell me about the first time when you set a goal for yourself (i.e., to select something you want to do, then look at the options that help you do what you want to do, then you do it, and finally, you see the result. For example, if you set a goal to buy a new car or get a higher salary, award, or promotion at work).
    - Have you used this way before? Possible prompts: How long ago? After what? What helped?
    - Have you changed how you used goal-setting skills (set a goal for yourself) at work? Possible prompts: in what ways? Does anything make it better? Does anything make it worse? How do you feel about these changes?
6. Please tell me, does the term “ problem “ sound familiar to you? Have you ever heard of the term “ problem “?
    - What does the term “problem” mean to you? Is the word “problem” a good thing or a bad thing? And why?

- How do you define it?
- Using your own words, could you please restate what the term " goal " means to you?
- When was the first time you heard about the term " goal "? Possible prompts: At home, high school, transition planning, at work.

7. Please tell me, does the term problem-solving sound familiar to you?
   - Have you ever heard of problem-solving?
   - What does the term problem-solving mean to you?
   - How do you define it?
   - Using your words, could you please restate what problem-solving means to you?
8. Please tell me about the first time when you solved a problem for yourself (i.e., when you have a problem, did you first ask yourself what the problem is? What do you need to find out?" Second, did you ask yourself, what do you already know? How will you solve this problem? Third, did you look at what happened? For example: If you have problems with being on time, planning which job to do first, completing assignments on time, and talking with your boss, what should you do? Or, a child walks up to you at the fair and says she is lost, what should you do?).
   - Have you used this way before? Possible prompts: How long ago? After what? What helped?
   - Have you changed how you used problem-solving skills (solve a problem by yourself) at work? Possible prompts: in what ways? Does anything make it better? Does anything make it worse? How do you feel about these changes?
9. Please tell me, does the term " decision" sound familiar to you? Have you ever heard of the term " decision"?

- What does the term “decision” mean to you?
- How do you define it?
- Using your own words, could you please restate what the term “ decision” means to you?
- When was the first time you heard about the term “ decision”? Possible prompts: At home, high school, transition planning, at work.

10. Please tell me, does the term decision-making sound familiar to you?
    - Have you ever heard of decision-making?
    - What does the term decision-making to you?
    - How do you define it?
    - Using your words, could you please restate what decision-making means to you?
11. Please tell me about the first time you made a decision on your own (i.e., when you had to select one of several options. For example, decide what comes first, getting a job or getting married).
    - Have you used this way before? Possible prompts: How long ago? After what? What helped?
    - Have you changed the ways you used decision-making skills (decided for yourself) at work compared to before you began work? Possible prompts: In what ways? Does anything make it better? Does anything make it worse? How do you feel about these changes?

Research question 4: How do employed adults with ID describe the essence of their lived experiences of self-determination during post-secondary work?

1. Please tell me, when self-determination is important to you in your life? Possible prompts: At work? At home? In another place? Not important?
2. Please tell me how you started using self-determination at work? Possible prompts: How long ago? After what? What helped?
3. Please tell me, do you think self-determination skills helped you to be independent (i.e., you don't need others/reliance on yourself)?
    - If yes, when did you first feel it and how? Possible prompts: Did self-determination skills help you get a job?
4. Please tell me, did the job make you feel independent (i.e., you don't need others/depend on yourself)?
    - If yes, when did you first feel it?
    - How do you think other people see you after getting the job? Possible prompts: Your family, friends at work, and friends outside of work.
5. Please tell me, what are your self-determination skills like now compared to what they were like before work? What about the way other people see you now with respect to self-determination? Same? /changed? Possible claims: Your parents, your sisters/brothers, your friends, your boss.
6. Please tell me, how would you describe self-determination in your daily work?
    - Do you know how to use self-determination skills in your daily work?
    - When do you think you need to use self-determination skills? Possible prompts: in certain situations? Every time? No need?
7. Please tell me, do you think there are certain situations at work where you need to use self-determination skills?

- If yes, what are those situations? Possible prompts: Every time, if there is a problem, if I am alone, there are no particular situations.

Research question 5: What do employed adults with ID describe as essential to what they need to improve their self-determination skills related to their pursuit of and during post-secondary work?

1. Please tell me, how do you describe taking advantage of self-determination to get a job? Possible prompts: What can be essential? Specific skill? Set of skills? Something else?
2. Please tell me what would be a good work environment for you? Why? Possible prompts: how can you improve your workplace? Did you try? What do you miss at work?
3. Please tell me, can a (not good) work environment be described? If yes, then why and how? Possible prompts: What about your work environment? Do you want to change it? How?
4. Please tell me, can your self-determination skills help change the work environment from bad to good? Possible prompts: Why? Why not? How is that? Did you try? If yes, talk about your experience. How to improve your skills?
5. Please tell me, do you need to be employed?
    - Why?
    - What helped you?
    - Was getting a job your decision? Possible prompts: If yes, then why?
    - Why do you need a job? Possible prompts: What helped you? Did anyone help you in make the decision? Why did you choose this job specifically?
6. Please tell me, do you follow your boss's instructions regarding your life and work?
    - Why/Why not?

- At work, do you follow your desires?
- Did you need to consult someone? Possible prompts: Always, sometimes, never?

7. Please tell me about a time when you have to quit/changed your job? Possible prompts: Have you been in a similar situation?
    - If yes, how did you feel about it?
    - If not, can you think of reasons that might make you quit your job?
    - How do you see yourself in the future?

Data Analysis

Although data analysis approaches in qualitative research are numerous (e.g., qualitative content analysis and thematic analysis) (Vaismoradi & Snelgrove, 2019), the essence of the IPA lies in following its specific analytical approach (Smith et al., 2021). IPA provides a deep understanding of the phenomena under investigation and documents how this understanding was conceptualized (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014). Thus, while IPA draws upon the hermeneutic and phenomenological traditions to focus on how I make sense of how participants make sense of a salient experience (Smith et al., 2021), transcripts were analyzed using IPA procedures specified by Smith et al. (2021) for IPA studies, including: (1) "starting with the first case: reading and re-reading" (p. 78); (2) "exploratory noting" (p. 79); (3) "constructing Experiential Statements" (p. 86); (4) "searching for connections across experiential statements" (p. 90); (5) "naming the Personal Experiential Themes" (PETs) and consolidating and organizing them in a table" (p. 94); (6) "continuing the individual analysis of other cases" (p. 99); and finally (7) "working with Personal Experiential Themes to develop Group Experiential Themes across cases" (p. 100). In addition, discourse analysis approaches were considered when interpreting the findings in terms

of structuring sections of this qualitative exploration, including “the three INs heuristics: INtroduction, INsertion, and INterpretation” (Lawrence, 2014, p. 110).

Step 1: Starting with The First Case: Reading and Re-Reading

Immersing oneself in some of the original data is the first step in an IPA analysis through the in-depth reading of the original data. This part of the procedure involved reading and rereading the data, and in most IPA investigations, it would take the form of the initial interview transcript. During further readings of the text, it was beneficial to first listen to the audio tape again. At this point, the participants' voices were imagined for a more thorough analysis. This stage is relatively slow as it focuses on conceptualizing all the interviews' dimensions, whether recorded or mentioned in the notes about some crucial moments in the participants' voices or any first noticeable notes or the most interesting notes. This stage served as a general review of the interviews (Smith & Shinebourne, 2012; Smith et al., 2009; 2021).

Step 2: Exploratory Noting

This step is the first analytical step in the analysis process. Therefore, in this step, the focus was on the semantic content. The dialogue levels and constitution of meanings to the participants were considered at this stage. Therefore, notes were written directly on the text using Microsoft Word tables, and the text was re-read several times (Miller et al., 2018; Rodriguez & Smith, 2014; Smith & Shinebourne, 2012). To this end, comments were made on draft texts. The process of taking notes was open, as there were no restrictions. For this purpose, as an analyst, I was open to any meanings that could be constituted, and I considered anything that might be important (Smith et al., 2009; 2021).

Khandkar (2009) stated that concepts could be classified; differently; it depends on the different properties of data I am focusing on and how they translate them. Thus, as mentioned, this

process was not superficial. Instead, it was at the semantic level of the expressive language used by the participants. While there is likely to be a core of comments that have a noticeable phenomenological frame in the account's exploratory notes, Smith et al. (2021) indicated that it is crucial to identify the most pressing interests of the participant in this step. This was framed by identifying some interests described as essential by the participant, which included contexts, events, values, and guiding principles regarding the meaning of such interests and the interpretation of the relationships between them.

To this end, data in the transcript was broken down into sections to scrutinize and compare relations, similarities, and dissimilarities. Thus, this step touched three significant levels of the noting process: descriptive, linguistic, and conceptual. In the descriptive comments level, the transcript was analyzed in order to draw a clear explanation of the content. Keywords, expressions, or descriptions that the participants used were considered. For instance, “this level of initial notes is very much about taking things at face value, about highlighting the objects which structure the participant's thoughts and experiences” (Smith & Shinebourne, 2012, p. 87). At the linguistic comments level, the focus was on how the participants indicated the content and meaning. “Among things the analyst can attend to are pronoun use, pauses, laughter, functional aspects of language, repetition, tone, degree of fluency (articulate or hesitant)” (Smith et al., 2021, p. 83).

Lastly, the conceptual comments level focused on interaction at a more questionable and understandable level which is more interpretative. At this point, the transcript was reviewed at a conceptual level, and interpretations inevitably depended on my empirical knowledge. “Conceptual noting may often take an interrogative form, particularly during the earlier stages of analysis when one does not yet have a detailed overview of the data” (Smith & Shinebourne, 2012, p. 88). These three significant levels of notetaking and line-by-line noting helped to build a detailed

structured conceptual data model. While it is customary to print a hard copy of the transcript and then manually write exploratory notes on that printout, other researchers may prefer to work on the screen, writing notes in a column that runs alongside the text. Using the screen does not mean using specialized software, as general word-processing applications are adequate. Indeed, the way specialized software handles cods may be inconvenient at certain stages of an IPA's work (Smith et al., 2021).

Step 3: Constructing Experiential Statements

In this step, based on the previous steps, I have a transcript and interview model, as well as the exploratory notes. Hence, this was a critical stage as a clear interview model was framed, and critical dimensions were yielded from the exploratory notes. For this reason, as the data increased, previous ideas were consolidated and reformulated if necessary. However, if exploratory nothing is done thoroughly, it will be inextricably linked to the initial transcript (Smith & Shinebourne, 2012; Smith et al., 2009; 2021).

Smith et al. (2021) asserted that experimental data is generated by rearranging the narrative flow so that events in the participant's account are rearranged and interpreted more logically. While it may be a complicated and inconvenient step, this process is one of the most critical traits of the IPA process (Smith et al., 2021). Also, “analyzing exploratory comments involves a focus on discrete chunks of the transcript and recall of what was learned through the whole process of initial noting” (Smith & Shinebourne, 2012, pp. 91–92). Therefore, while data collection and exploratory observation were largely participant-led steps, the core of the IPA in this step highlights the researcher's interpretive role. However, the final analytic frame, on the other hand, was a product of joint work between the participant and me. Therefore, by focusing on exploratory noting, experiential statements were produced by writing “a concise and pithy summary of what was

important in the various notes attached to a piece of the transcript as phrases which speak to the experiential core of the piece" (Smith et al., 2021, p. 87). In other words, the emphasis was on conceptualizing what is critical at this point in the transcript, and undoubtedly, the entire text influenced this step.

Step 4: Searching for Connections Across Experiential Statements

Previously, a set of experiential statements was generated within the transcript in the order in which they were mentioned during the interview. In this step, tables/charts were created to rearrange experiential statements by making them more convenient and appropriate to each other. The reordering of the experiential statements was based on the research questions domain. Also, there was a need to re-evaluate the significance and relevance of some experiential statements. Eventually, all experiential statements were reinvolved in tables with the relevant experiential statements that appeared in the participant's account. Smith et al. (2021) stated that this step is essential in the data analysis process because the events that appeared in the interviews do not necessarily reflect that they occurred in the same order in the participant's lived experience or reflect the same priority and understanding. Accordingly, a different and more conceptual order was highlighted by reordering the experiential statements. Thus, this step effectively reordered and brought experiential statements together to indicate the most critical dimensions of the lived experience in the participant's life by identifying common patterns and connections between the experimental statements in line with the research questions domains.

Step 5: Naming the Personal Experiential Themes (PETs) and Consolidating and Organizing Them in A Table

Personal Experiential Themes (PETs) were named and organized in a table in this step. Whereas in the previous step, the experimental statements were rearranged to be more suitable

for each other, each of these groups was named in this step. Each cluster's name was an emerging PETs, and each name described the cluster's characteristics. Thus, “these clusters hereby become that participant's Personal Experiential Themes” (Smith et al., 2021, p. 94). These PETs were presented in the table with BOLD UPPER CASE. Hence, experimental statements under each PETs were divided into sub-themes.

Therefore, each sub-theme contained a set of experimental statements brought together. “Each experiential statement was identified with the page number in the transcript on which it can be found and is followed by the key phrase or keywords in the transcript which prompted it” (Smith et al., 2021, p. 95). The importance of adding this information (e.g., page number) was to allow me to identify the points that generated this statement in the transcript. Smith et al. (2021) argued that the reason for using the term PETs is that although the emerging data may be social, it reflects the experience of a particular participant interviewed. Finally, they were expressed as themes because they were no longer directly related to the interview transcript as much as they were to the analytical data that arose from the transcript.

Step 6: Continuing the Individual Analysis of Other Cases

Since there was more than one participant, the next step was to repeat the same previous steps on the next participant's account, and thus the exact steps of the analysis process were repeated for all participants. In light of this, when repeating any step, the details of each case were taken into account. Smith et al. (2021) asserted that “it is important to treat the next case on its own terms, to do justice to its own individuality, to treat each case as a complete universe of inquiry” (p.99). However, while similar themes may emerge, the rigor of IPA ensured that all emerging themes were the results of a careful analysis process. Thus, in each case, I went through

all five steps: initial reading, exploratory noting, constructing experiential statements, searching for connections across experiential statements, and naming the PETs and sub-themes.

Step 7: Working with PETs to Develop Group Experiential Themes Across Cases

While this step aimed to look for patterns of parallel and contrast across the PETs yielded in the previous step, a set of Group Experiential Themes (GETs) has been created. Based on IPA's guidelines, “we are not trying to present a kind of 'group norm' or 'average' of the experience we are investigating” (Smith et al., 2021, p. 100); instead, within the analysis of all cases, the focus was on the traits that characterize each participant's experience. To this end, I developed the GETs after identifying parallels between PETs from different countries. Then, each experiential theme was annotated with a set of PETs that showed similarities across cases. However, any common patterns can be reclassified if necessary (Miller et al., 2018). The ultimate result of this process is presented in a table showing the emerged GETs and their relationships to each PET.

Strategies for Data Quality

Trustworthiness

In order to increase the trustworthiness level of the collected data, the participants were informed that their data would be used for study purposes to develop the Saudi field. Therefore, the identities and data of the participants will not be disclosed in any discussion related to this study. Also, the validity and quality of the research were ensured as follows.

Credibility

Shenton (2004) indicated that “in addressing credibility, investigators attempt to demonstrate that a true picture of the phenomenon under scrutiny is being presented” (p.63). Thus,

to increase the level of credibility of the study, a member-checking strategy was used (Patton, 2002); this strategy will ensure that the transcripts contain the stories expressed by the participants (Creswell & Miller, 2000; Shenton, 2004; Rodriguez & Smith, 2014). Therefore, after each interview, transcripts were provided to the participants, and they were asked to review and check them. Subsequently, all transcripts were reviewed according to the participants' comments.

Transferability

Since the small sample size, theoretical transferability was considered rather than empirical generalizability. To this end, through direct quotations from the participants, links were established between analysis results, literature, and my professional and personal experience. Smith & Shinebourne (2012) asserted that in IPA, these links are created through a rich analysis of the participants' accounts, allowing the findings of this study to be transferred to similar contexts.

Validity and Quality

The validity of this study was strengthened through peer review before the final transcripts were obtained. Peer review is a crucial practice that enhances the validity of any qualitative research and provides more accurate results (Hammarberg et al., 2016). To this end, the work was thoroughly evaluated by two qualified and experienced researchers in the field of qualitative and phenomenological research. Furthermore, to separate my personal biases, I maintained a journal of my thoughts, beliefs, and stances before, during, and after the interviews to ensure that my ideas were out of the analytic process. Nevertheless, the literature has indicated many tools that can assess the validity and quality of qualitative research, but few have been mentioned as suitable tools for assessing the validity and quality of IPA, perhaps the most important of which is the IPA Quality Evaluation Guide by Smith (2011), the criteria of Lucy Yardley (2000), which were implemented in this study for trustworthiness purposes.

IPA quality evaluation guide. Smith (2011) developed the IPA quality evaluation guide by examining several studies that used IPA as a research methodology. Smith pointed out seven critical criteria that must be clearly implemented in any IPA study to achieve trustworthiness.

a. The study will have a clear focus: The focus was on providing specific detail through small samples of a particular phenomenon rather than examining a general domain.
b. The study will have strong data: Examples of high-quality data were presented through semi-structured interviews that enabled the participants' experiences to be documented in their own words and further interpreted by me by adding creative narratives to the descriptions.
c. The study will be rigorous. The rigor was ensured by an in-depth data analysis, which provided extracts from each participant "to give some indication of convergence and divergence, representativeness and variability" (Smith, 2011, p. 24).
d. The study will provide enough space for elaborating on each theme: Rather than presenting the themes resulting from the analysis superficially, each central theme consisted of sub/emergent themes.
e. The study will provide interpretive and descriptive analysis: Any descriptive analysis of any theme was constructed by an interpretative analysis through what was known as double hermeneutic, which allowed for a deeper understanding of the participants' lived experiences.
f. The study will provide convergence and divergence analysis: Common patterns among participants were presented in conjunction with the uniqueness of each participant's experience.
g. The study will be carefully written: The writing style quality of the data analysis and interpretation was considered through a "well-wrought sustained narrative" (Smith, 2011, p. 24).

Yardley's criteria of good qualitative research. Yardley (2000) argues that four principles must be present in any qualitative research to ensure quality and validity, which are: sensitivity to context, commitment and rigor, transparency and coherence, and impact and

importance. Smith & Shinebourne (2012) stated that Yardley's Principles are one of the few indicators that can be used to present the quality and validity of studies conducted IPA.

a. Context-sensitivity: Under this criterion, the relevant literature was shown in terms of the interpretations. The participants' voices were discussed, and relevant ethical factors were considered. Smith & Shinebourne (2012) stated that IPA frames the context-sensitivity by including many verbatim excerpts of the participants, conveying the participants' voices directly and making the investigation of the resulting explanations more valid.
b. Commitment and rigor: The methodology used was the best in detecting live experiences and their relevance to the research topic while ensuring a thorough analysis. In-depth interviews through the IPA provided evidence of Yardley's second principle, commitment, and rigor (Smith et al., 2021).
c. Transparency and coherence: The study stages were described, a clear framework for interviews was provided, and examples of the analysis stages were provided. In addition, the theoretical framework significantly supported the aims and objectives of this study methodologically, theoretically, and philosophically. IPA promoted transparency by describing the criteria for selecting participants, interviews, factors, methods, and methods of analysis used. Also, providing a clear framework for interviews improved transparency to explore whether the interview has been adapted in any way to meet the needs of individuals with ID (Rose et al., 2019; Smith & Shinebourne, 2012).
d. Impact and importance: The findings of this study enriched the field in Saudi Arabia in terms of presenting novel information and will undoubtedly lead to framing new legislation or theories that are applicable and fit the Saudi context in a unique and unprecedented way.

Smith et al. (2021) noted that the principle of impact and importance coincides with the IPA because this methodology will interpret phenomena in an unprecedented way.

Ethical Considerations

After deciding to be a part of the study, participants verbally clarified their informed consent. I informed the participants about the topics to be covered, and the purpose, benefits, risks, and funding were explained to them before giving consent to participate. While participants with ID can clearly understand the purposes and nature of the research, they may have a limited understanding of their rights to refuse participation or withdraw from the study (Arscott et al., 1998). Thus, in order to avoid any potential misunderstanding, Emerson et al. (2004) indicated that it is necessary to inform the participants that not participating/withdrawing at any time from the research will not have any negative consequences for them, so they informed. It was also essential to give them time to consult with anyone to consider whether they would like to participate in the research. No personal data was collected from the participants. The participants' identities will not be disclosed in any discussion related to this study. Pseudonyms instead of the real names of the participants were used. It ensured that all data was kept secure, and no one was or will be allowed to access them except for participants who can review their interview transcripts for accuracy and validity. The interviews were recorded using a recording device, and the recorded voices were not/will not be shared with anyone else.

While interviews were conducted in Arabic, cultural considerations specific to the Saudi environment were considered when conducting interviews and translating terms. Hollomotz (2018) asserted that ethical and successful dialogue with individuals with ID could be achieved by adapting the interviews' style and content in line with each individual's communication abilities. Therefore, getting to know each participant before starting the interview was worthwhile. Lastly,

the Institutional Review Board (IRB) has the authority to approve, require modifications (to secure approval), or disapprove research. Thus, before taking any step in this study, I first obtained the IRB approval of the University of South Florida. The IRB's primary responsibility is to ensure that appropriate steps are taken to protect the rights and welfare of humans participating as subjects in the research in accordance with ethical standards and U.S. federal regulations. To this end, as per USF IRB guidelines, the de-identified electronic study data and original consent forms will be stored for a minimum of five years after the completion of the study. Five years after study completion, the data will be deleted.

Involvement of People with ID in Qualitative Research

Qualitative research is more able to highlight issues related to individuals with disabilities by allowing their voices to appear more than just survey-based research, making it the most appropriate research approach for making changes in this population's lives (Creswell, 2007; McCarthy, 2003). Furthermore, Rose et al. (2019) asserted that using IPA was one of the most appropriate and relevant qualitative methodologies that recruited individuals with ID. In addition, while significant discoveries emerged that would not have been discovered using other methodologies, the use of IPA as a research methodology has been very successful with individuals with autism, as they have been able to represent themselves in disability research (MacLeod, 2019). It should be noted here that individuals with mild ID are more capable of verbal communication than individuals with autism, as autism is considered a disorder that primarily affects social communication (American Psychiatric Association, 2021). However, all participants had sufficient communication skills to participate in the study, as described in the inclusion and exclusion criteria for participants.

When such a methodology is used, the researcher's involvement in the study by interpreting the results is more remarkable. For instance, in a study that used IPA on participants with personal ID, Tomlinson & Hewitt (2018) reported that while some methodologies did not allow the researcher role to appear, the use of IPA contributed to activating this role within the study. In another study that used IPA with individuals with ID, Drozd et al. (2021) indicated that recruiting adults with ID as participants added a unique advantage to the study. In addition, while the study revealed barriers in representing a homogeneous sample, the study did not reveal any limitations in conducting semi-structured interviews with individuals with ID.the other hand, issues related to organizational permission from some organizations can be encountered at the university or state level. Moreover, the Victorian Guardianship and Administration Act of 1986 stated that persons who cannot give verbal or written consent might be included in research that contributes to their well-being (Victorian State Government, 1986). Therefore, these organizations must have adequate requirements to measure such ethical issues. Iacono (2006) argued that researchers might be subjected to unfair decisions by some entities with insufficient knowledge to determine the ethical procedures used to recruit individuals with ID into research. However, this research was committed to meeting all ethical requirements.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

As mentioned in previous chapters, this phenomenological study aimed to explore the lived experiences of employed adults with ID who received interventions toward self-determination in their transition plan during high school. To ensure that the essence of self-determination in the lived experiences of employed adults with ID is understood, an IPA analysis approach was used to answer the following research questions:

Research question 1: How do employed adults with ID generally describe their understanding of self-determination?

Research question 2: How do employed adults with ID describe the experience of receiving self-determination interventions during high school/transition planning and how it affected their success in post-secondary work?

Research question 3: How do employed adults with ID describe their own self-advocacy, goal setting, self-awareness, problem-solving, and decision-making skills while in post-secondary work?

Research question 4: How do employed adults with ID describe the essence of their lived experiences of self-determination during post-secondary work?

Research question 5: What do employed adults with ID describe as essential to what they need to improve their self-determination skills related to their pursuit of and during post-secondary work?

The research questions shaped the interview protocol, and IPA was used as the analytic focus of this research study's data. “As with many other approaches in qualitative research, the

essence of IPA lies in its analytic focus" (Smith et al., 2021, p.75). Thus, the seven primary analytic levels of IPA suggested by Smith et al. (2021) were adopted, namely: (1) "starting with the first case: reading and re-reading" (p. 78); (2) "exploratory noting" (p. 79); (3) "constructing Experiential Statements" (p. 86); (4) "searching for connections across experiential statements" (p. 90); (5) "naming the Personal Experiential Themes" (PETs) and consolidating and organizing them in a table" (p. 94); (6) "continuing the individual analysis of other cases" (p. 99); and finally (7) "working with Personal Experiential Themes to develop Group Experiential Themes across cases" (p. 100). Examples were extracted from the analysis process for steps 2,3,4,5 and 7, where the first step was related to reading and reading, and step 6 was related to continuing the individual analysis of other cases, as shown in Figure 1, Figure 2, Figure 3, and Figure 4.

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

- **الاسم: *****
- **** سنة**
- **خبرات العمل : سكيورتي– مطعم وجبات سريعة سنتين - مطعم اخر - سكيورتي في مركز****
- **تدرب في مركز سعى بعد المرحلة الثانوية**

N	النص Transcript	ملاحظات استكشافيه Exploratory Notes	صياغة البيانات التجريبية Constructing Experiential Statements	العوامل المشتركة بين البيانات الأولية Connections Across Experiential statements #1
2	انا: وش رايك بكملة مشكله، مرت عليك؟ (****): ايه يعني مشكله انا: ممتاز... طيب تقدر تفسرها؟ مثل وش؟ (****):.....والله يعني شي صعب...!!!! شي انت تحاول تحله انا، اكيد ... طيب عندك مثال ، او مشكله حليتها من قبل ؟ (****): ايه .. كثيير .. أصلا انا مستغرب انه عيو يقبلون يجددوني عقدي وانا مافيه شي صعب او شي ... يعني صعب علي يعني قصدي أي مشكله صارت كنت اضبط الأمور.. انا: كفو ، هذا شي انت تعتبره يعني مهم؟ انك كنت تضبط الأمور؟ وتحل المشاكل؟ (****): طبعا... يعني اذا ماتقدر تسنع الامور والمشاكل ماتقدر تشتغل صح؟ انا:صح ☺ ليش طيب تحل المشكلة ليش ماتخلي عيرك يحلها؟ (****): عشان مايفصلوني .... بعدين وش اسوي رجع زي ول....	يعتقد انه يجب ان لا يتم فصله من العمل لأنه يستطيع حل المشكلات (مهم) هل هناك دافع اتي للعمل في بيئه (****)، مثل الحاجة الماديه؟ الخوف من فقدان الوظيف دافع اخر؟ قد يحاول اكثر من مره لحل المشكلة	**الدافع المادي والحاجه دفعت (****) للتعلم والتاقلم، هناك معززات طبيعيه قد تجعل من مهارات تقرير المصير اكثر واقعيه وتطبيقا لاعتبار تجربه كل فرد ص2- ب** **ان المهارات المكتسبه في التدريب الانتقالي تظهر بصوره مختلفه عند كل فرد. بدت لغه (****) تأخذ مجرى اكثر حزنا عند الحديث عن تجربته اللتي فصل فيها من العمل على الرغم من انه يعتقد ان لديه الإمكانات المناسبه. ذكر (****) حل المشكله كثيرا باعتباره الميزه الأهم لديه.**	**بعض مهارات تقرير المصير ساهم بشكل كبير في حث الافراد على السعي للنجاح** **يتضح بان حل المشكلة يهم ارباب العمل والعاملين بنفس الوقت** **بعد أي محاوله فاشله، ظهرت مجموعة أنماط مشتركة، مثل:** - **السعي للحصول علي تدريب إضافي** - **السعي للحصول علي شهاده اعلى** - **السعي للحصول علي عمل اخر** - **اعاده تشكيل المبادئ اللتي قد تحول بين**

Figure 1. Analytic Process: Steps 1, 2, and 3.

Searching for Connections Across Experiential statements #2 ترتيب وتنظيم البحث عن العوامل المشتركة بين البيانات الأولية			
(****) يميل لان يكون مصمم بطبيعه ص١	ان المهارات المكتسبه في التدريب الانتقالي تظهر بصوره مختلفه عند كل مرحلة في حياة (****) العملية ص١-ج	تجربه الانتقال من عمل الى اخر طورت في (****) كثير ص١-د	ايمان (****) بأهمية القيمة العلمية جعلته يبحث عن تدريب إضافي ليصقل أي مهاره مفقوده قد تكون عائق في سبيل الحصول على عمل ص٢
الدافع المادي والحاجه للاستقلال دفعت (****) للتعلم والتاقلم ص١-ب	اكدت التجارب المتفاوتة أهمية القيمه العلميه التي يجب ان يتمتع بها (****) لدى (****) نفسه ص٢	مهارات تقرير المصير لم تكن العامل الوحيد في زياده المسئوليه الاجتماعيه ص١	
	السعي لتوفير مبلغ إضافي للطوارى ص١-د	تقرير المصير عمليه مستدام بشرط الممارسه ص ٣	
يبدو ان التدريب الانتقالي يتمركز حول تعاطي (****) مع المشاكل اللتي قد تواجهه في العمل ص١-ج	يحتاج الى تعزيز في أوقات مختلفه ص١	هناك معززات طبيعيه قد تجعل من مهارات تقرير المصير اكثر واقعيه وقابلية للتطبيق ص١-ب	ذكر (****) حل المشكله كثيرا باعتباره الميزه الأهم لديه ص١-ج
الحاجة للعمل جعلته يطور من نفسه ص١-د	المسئوليه الاجتماعيه يتم تعزيزيها لدى (****) من خلال الخبرات اللتي عاشها ص ١	الحديث عن تجارب العمل الفاشله يمثل ذكريات حزينة ص١-ج	العمل على تطوير ذاتي جاء من تجربه (****) الفاشله في العمل وعزز تقرير المصير لديه ص١-د
	البحث عن عمل على الرغم من الانخراط في عمل حالي ص١-د	. التأكيد على بعض المهارات المكتسبة (حل المشكلة) لاثبات الجاهزية للعمل ص١-ج	
		يظهر من تجربه (****) ان الممارسه الأكثر تجعل هناك قدر اكبر من العمق في كيفيه ممارسة	من تجربة عمل لاخري (****) يكون اكثر مسؤوليه ص١

Figure 2. Analytic Process: Step 4.

مجموعة ١ Group 1	مجموعة ٢ Group 1	مجموعة ٣ Group 1	مجموعة ٤ Group 1	مجموعة ٥ Group 1
الدافع المادي والحاجه للاستقلال دفعت (****) للتعلم والتاقلم ص١-ب	(****) يميل لان يكون مصمم بطبيعه ص١	تقرير المصير عمليه مستدام بشرط الممارسه ص ٣	ان المهارات المكتسبه في التدريب الانتقالي تظهر بصوره مختلفه عند كل مرحلة في حياة (****) العملية ص١-ج	يبدو ان التدريب الانتقالي يتمركز حول تعاطي (****) مع المشاكل اللتي قد تواجهه في العمل ص١-ج
الحاجة للعمل جعلته يدور من نفسه ص١-	المسئوليه الاجتماعيه يتم تعزيزيها لدى (****) من خلال الخبرات اللتي عاشها ص ١	يظهر من تجربه (****) ان الممارسه الأكثر تجعل هناك قدر اكبر من العمق في كيفيه ممارسة مهارات تقرير المصير في العمل ص ١	تجربه الانتقال من عمل الى اخر طورت في (****) كثير ص١-د	ذكر (****) حل المشكله كثيرا باعتباره الميزه الأهم لديه ص١-ج
البحث عن عمل على الرغم من الانخراط في عمل حالي ص١-د	هناك معززات طبيعيه قد تجعل من مهارات تقرير المصير اكثر واقعيه وقابلية للتطبيق ص١-ب	يحتاج الى تعزيز في أوقات مختلفه ص١	الحديث عن تجارب العمل الفاشله يمثل ذكريات حزينة ص١-ج	. التأكيد على بعض المهارات المكتسبة (حل المشكلة) لاثبات الجاهزية للعمل ص١-ج
العمل على تطوير ذاتي جاء من تجربه (****) الفاشله في العمل وعزز تقرير المصير لديه ص١-د	مهارات تقرير المصير لم تكن العامل الوحيد في زياده المسئوليه الاجتماعيه ص١		من تجربة عمل لاخري (****) يكون اكثر مسؤوليه ص١	
السعي لتوفير مبلغ إضافي للطوارى ص١-د	ايمان (****) بأهمية القيمة العلمية جعلته يبحث عن تدريب إضافي ليصقل أي مهاره مفقوده قد تكون عائق في سبيل الحصول على عمل ص٢		اكدت التجارب المتفاوتة أهمية القيمه العلميه التي يجب ان يتمتع بها (****) لدى (****) نفسه ص٢	

Figure 3. Analytic Process: Naming the PETs

الاحتياجات الشخصية عززت تقرير المصير في العمل

- **الحاجة للآمن المالي كونت بيئة خصبة لتقرير المصير**
  - ✓ *الدافع المادي والحاجة للاستقلال دفعت (****) للتعلم والتأقلم ص١-ب*
    - ❖ " كنت بعطي أمي فلوس، كانت بشتري مجلس"
    - ❖ " اصرف على نفسي..... بعدين انا اعتمدت على نفسي.... واشتريت جوال"
    - ❖ " الفايده الوظيفة"
  - ✓ *البحث عن عمل على الرغم من الانخراط في عمل حالي ص١-د*
    - ❖ "قالو لي فيه وظيفة ثانيه براتب أحسن بروح طبعا"
- **الحاجة للاستقلال تحث على تطوير الذات**
  - ✓ *الحاجة للعمل جعلته يطور من نفسه ص١-*
    - ❖ "الاعتماد عى النفس يعني البحث عن وظيفة"
    - ❖ "انا تدربت مره ثانيه واخذت دبلوم عشان اتوظف وظيفة براتب يكون أحسن من الأولى"
  - ✓ *العمل على تطوير ذاتي جاء من تجربه (****) الفاشلة في العمل وعزز تقرير المصير لديه ص١-د*
    - ❖ "انفصلت المطعم وقررت أكمل تدريب ودراسة"
    - ❖ "دخلت تدريب مهني لوظيفة ثانيه وتدربت وتوظفت "
- **الرغبه في تحقيق التطلعات مطلب ملح لتكون مقرراً لمصيرك**
  - ✓ السعي لتوفير مبلغ إضافي للطوارى ص١-د
    - ❖ "ودي اعتمر وبجمع فلوس التذكرة والفندق من الراتب هذا والراتب القادم"

تقرير المصير يتم تشكيله من خلال القيم الشخصية الثقافية وتجارب عمل

- **تقرير المصير جزء من كل**
  - ✓ *(****) يميل لأن يكون مصمماً بطبيعته ص١*
    - ❖ "كنت ابحث عن وظيفة وانا في المرحلة المتوسطة"
  - ✓ *أهمية القيمة العلميه للاشياء برزت كجزء من تجربة (****) في تقرير المصير. ص٢*
    - ❖ "يوم الغوا في كوفيد، دورت تدريب عشان اقدر اجيب لي وظيفة ما يفصلوني منها "
- **خبرات ماقبل تقرير المصير جزء من تقرير المصير**
  - ✓ *المسئولية الاجتماعية التي يضطر البعض لحملها تشكل قاعدة مهمة في كيف يتعاطى الفرد مع تقرير المصير ص١*
    - ❖ "انا لا ارغب في شراء جديد، ارغب في ان اجعل امي تحقق رغبتها في السفر لمكة"
  - ✓ *الحاجة لشيئ ما قد تصنع معزز طبيعي يجعل هناك استعداد لممارسه تقرير المصير ويظهرها بشكل افضل في مجال العمل ص١*

Figure 4. Analytic Process: Step 5.

The analytic process was in-depth in its seven steps and correlated across all six cases (the participants). Smith et al. (2021) asserted that "in IPA, we are not trying to present a kind of group norm or the average of the experience we are investigating" (p.100). On the contrary, by highlighting the clear divergence and convergence across cases and capturing the structure and consistency of each individually studied case (Smith et al., 2021), the analytic process ended up with unique traits and distinctive aspects of the participants' lived experiences. As a result, the analytic process yielded eleven subordinate themes across cases. All themes that arose in each case will be discussed individually and across cases in this chapter. Superordinate themes were related to Subordinate themes. The analytic process remarkably answered the research questions and

reflected a detailed and in-depth understanding of the lived experience of self-determination of employed adults with ID. As a personal investigator, I performed all parts of the data analysis, including the transcription of interviews.

The Participants

For this study's purpose, I selected a purposeful homogeneous sample based on the following inclusion criteria: (1) six participants with a mild ID were included (the participants' mild ID diagnosis is confirmed based on a self-reported formal diagnosis), (2) 18 years of age or older, (3) who have sufficient communication abilities and possess expressive language—through traditional verbal speech—, (4) received interventions prompted self-determination during transition planning (determined based on self-reported confirmation), (5) have post-secondary work experience, (6) spent at least six months at work, and (7) have a personal guardianship.

Table 3. Participant Demographic Information

Name	Age	Gender	Current job type	Number of previous jobs	Duration in the last job
Haya	35	F	Receptionist	2	1-Year
Falah	29	M	Security	5	8-Months
Sultan	27	M	Security	3	2-Years
Sara	25	F	Post department	1	1-Year
Majed	25	M	Office work	2	3-Years
Abdullah	23	M	Waiter	1	1.5-Year

Themes

The analysis process yielded several themes related to self-determination and the lived experiences of employed adults with ID. Among all the subordinate themes that arose in the

analysis process, sixteen themes were developed from the data and organized into five superordinate and eleven subordinate themes, as shown in Figure 5. The five superordinate themes were developed as the most expressive of the participant's experiences and the most consistent across the five cases. Additionally, contextual factors are highlighted for each theme, including quotes from the participants' interviews.

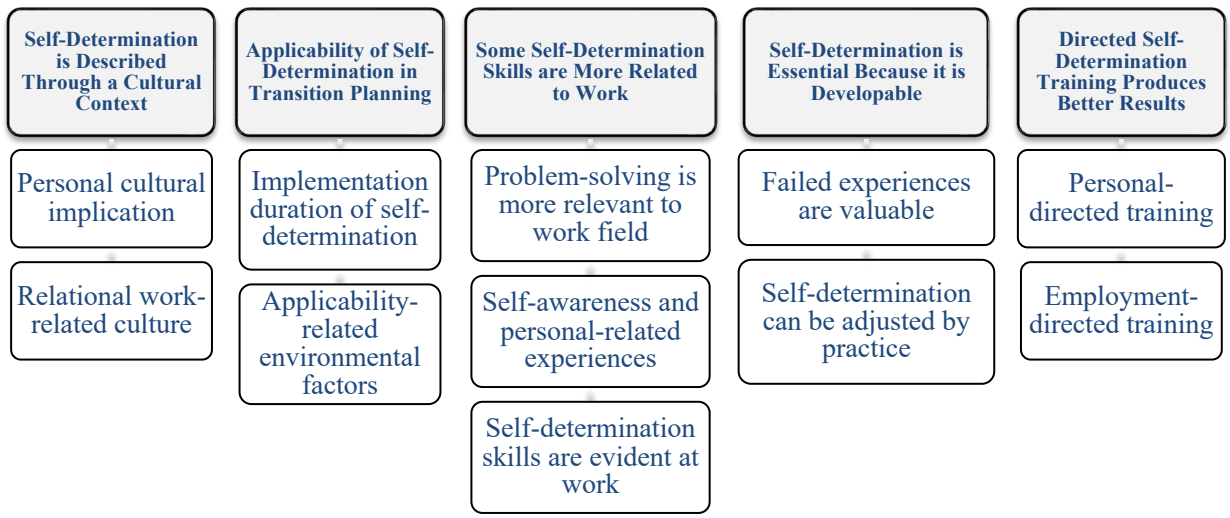

Figure 5. The Emerged Themes.

Theme One: Self-Determination is Described Through a Cultural Context

When the participants were asked about their general understanding of what self-determination might mean and how they could express it in their own way, the theme *Self-Determination is Described Through a Cultural Context* emerged. Cultural context refers to the framework in which humans learn to regulate their thoughts, emotions, and behaviors (Neuliep, 2020) in terms of its association with the society where they grew up and lived (De Moraes & Teixeira, 2020). Moreover, Chirkov et al. (2005) stated that “humans are viewed as being relatively blank slates

upon which cultural contexts write themselves" (p. 427). This cultural context appears clearly within the participants' frequent expressions of cultural implications and work-related culture when describing their understanding of what self-determination might mean at work. At the personal level, most participants spoke at length about some cultural implications of the form in which self-determination appears at work. In addition, they described strong relations to some concepts emphasized early in their lives and work environments. As a result, two subordinate themes emerged related to the superordinate theme: *Self-Determination is Described Through a Cultural Context*, namely:

1. Personal cultural implication
2. Relational work-related culture

Personal cultural implication. In their descriptions of their understanding of self-determination, self-determination at work is often expressed implicitly within a particular culture related to the participants' personal experiences. In other words, their descriptions led to conclude that without such personal cultural implications, it was difficult for self-determination to be understandable for the participants or even emerge as a practice in their work environments. For instance, when Haya spoke of her understanding of self-determination, she said, "I can decide what I want and what is right for me on my own, without help." In order to let her explain more of what it means to be self-determined, she was asked to give an example from her lived experience. Haya described how some of her personal cultural traits interact with her understanding of self-determination and how it manifests in work, she said:

> I can't work with men, even if I do not find another job, honestly, I have been looking for a job for three years, and I found many jobs, many many jobs like in cafes and beauty shops, but

they were hiring women and men at the same place, so, I decided to be in a job fits myself, I mean, I don't want to do anything wrong. (Haya)

When asked if she decided this herself and what she meant by "wrong," she said, "I love my mother; I don't want her to be angry." As a concept, self-determination was not straightforward to be recognized and explained by such a population; however, participants provided an unprecedented understanding of this concept that emerged through specific cultural contexts. For instance, the use of words such as "I decided," "wrong," and "I love my mother" when describing self-determination was an interesting dimension, as participants focused their understanding of being self-determined about the significance of those critical meanings in their lived cultural contexts. As a real paradigm from their real lives, these contexts may have helped this population to understand and interpret what self-determination could mean.

Along the same vein, when Sarah was asked to describe situations in which self-determination appeared at work, she expressed an experience similar to what Haya revealed, where personal cultural implications appeared in Sarah's understanding of self-determination at work. For example, Sarah said, I was an employee of the postal department at the center, distributing mail to everyone who asked for it, but I decided to put the men's mail on a special table for them to take themselves. When Sarah was asked why she chose to do so, she replied, "I'm not used to talking to men or dealing with them directly, and I can decide what I want."

When Falah was asked about his general understanding of what self-determination could mean and how he could express it in his own way, he responded, "to be independent, you don't need anyone; you have your own salary." When he was asked to give an example from his daily work of what he said, he said:

> At first it was hard for me to understand how to be independent or self-determined, but when I come back to my home from work and talk to my family, they keep telling me that I will be like my dad, and I would get a promotion, it was exciting, and when I go back to work the next morning, I was excited to be successful and independent, to be like my dad. (Falah)

Sultan referred to a parallel reality and said, “to do whatever I need by myself, that means I am independent.” Then, in another spot in his lived experience about being self-determined at work, Sultan answered through a personal cultural implication that reflects some personal traditions, where he said, “I feel it's a shame to ask someone for help, I think that” Both Sultan's and Falah's experiences highlight the importance of cultural context, where they were able to describe what self-determination means interestingly. The use of phrases like “I will be like my dad” and “it is a shame to ask someone for help” refers to meanings that stand out clearly in the dialogue, which can never be formed without a deep relationship between the participant and a particular cultural context. This depth, in fact, contributed in one way or another to shaping the structure of the meaning of self-determination in the descriptions of the participants. Interestingly, the participants hold on to these cultures' contexts as standards and templates by which they make the meanings of influential things in their lives.

Furthermore, through their reflections and accounts of their experiences, some participants described self-determination as part of their personal cultural context—particularly in work environments—and without this context, it would have been impossible for self-determination to appear in the work experiences of this population. For instance, Majid said, “I've been working since high school; I think my work in the past helped me understand the skills I learned before I even got this job. I mean problem-solving and decision making.” When he asked to explain more, he said:

> I was at my previous job when I was a high school student; I worked in a real estate office, it was for my father (when he was alive); I helped him in arranging the office, bringing some building floorplans, etc. I dealt with a lot of things. This, for me, was important, I mean that work is beneficial, I'm talking about myself, I mean, I made some decisions without anyone telling me how to do it. (Majid)

Abdullah also provided an example highlighting that self-determination is an integral part of a larger social domain and losing that social domain may result in a loss of self-determination skills at work. Abdullah said,

> The day my father died; I suffered a lot. I did not know how to go to school; my mom does not drive. We are a family of three brothers with disabilities, and I am better off than my other two brothers, who are still in the comprehensive rehabilitation center. My mother used to go with me to school every morning, I cried a lot, I remember at that time that I got a job, yes, my cousin helped me, and I got a job. My cousin once told me you must rely on yourself, be a man, and help your mother. (Abdullah)

Through these captured moments of this lived experience and looking at this example, participants' concept of self-determination is shaped by their ideas about gender and family roles specific to personal cultural contexts. Such factors in their ideas were formed in a context of a culture that prompted this understanding to emerge in the participants' accounts, as the cultural context was the framework in which they learned to regulate their thoughts, emotions, and behaviors (Neuliep, 2020). Furthermore, some personal cultural contexts associated with specific events in the participants' lived experiences were definitive moments in reaching such an understanding (e.g., my father died, better than my brothers, I cried a lot, and be a man) in the previous example.

Relational work-related culture. In addition to personal cultural implications, participants also discussed self-determination through their relational work-related culture experiences. Several relational cultures related to work environments appeared in participants' lived experiences, such as a respectful treatment culture related to work environments and a financial security culture related to work environments. This understanding can be seen more deeply in the descriptions of both Majid and Sultan about their experiences related to respectful culture in work environments and financial security culture in work environments. Majid said:

> In my previous job, the manager did not respect me or treat me well, he was always yelling, and he made me think I did not understand anything, so I quit; there was no other reason, but I was fed up with this person, and I had no desire in doing anything at work or even think about the future or being independent. (Majid)

On the other hand, within the subordinate theme, relational work-related culture, participants demonstrated a particular understanding of work-related financial security culture and how it shaped their understanding of self-determination at work.

For example, Sultan spoke about how self-determination is manifested in his experiences as an employee; based on the dialogue that took place between us, Sultan expressed why he did not feel independent and self-determined in his first job, by saying:

> When you asked me why I was not independent in my first job, I did not even try to be that, as my contract was only three months, they told me I could be fired at any time. In my second job, too, there were problems due to the income; I did not do anything; I was afraid that if I did anything, they would not renew my contract, so I was scared to deal with any problem or make any decision, all these things were on my mind. (Sultan)

Both Majid and Sultan felt they could not “do anything” at work because of threats from others that related to their ability to keep a job, and thus to their financial security. But whereas Majid preferred to quit rather than remain in this paralyzing relational work culture, Sultan was unable even to participate. Although these “relational” relationships at work arose differently in each participant's accounts, all represent relational relationships within definitive moments in the work culture.

In the context of financial security, participants' understanding of self-determination at work highlighted another tacit culture that emerged through two main features, namely, (a) that self-determination allows participants to be financially equal to their peers at work, and (b) that the constant search for better income is a part of their financial security and their understanding of self-determination. For example, in Falah's experience, the financial security and financial equality culture, as he understands it, was a means of describing self-determination. Falah's said, “self-determination and the skills we learned is a way to get a job and support myself, get money and, of course, support my mother”. Thus, the personal and work-related cultural influences on self-determination sometimes intersect. When Falah was asked what he meant by “supporting himself and his mother,” he said, “I buy with my own money what I need and what my mother needs; I rely on myself, so, I bought this new iPhone.” Falah added, “like other people who have a money and cars.” At the same level, Sultan was asked to give an example of acting as a self-determined person; He said, “If I had been offered another job with a better salary, I would like to get it.” At the same level of understanding, when Haya was asked what self-determination meant for her, she stated, “it means the job. It means the salary”. Also, she said, “to be safe and have enough money.” One trait of relational work-related culture, which participants asserted when describing what self-determination means to them, is a culture of financial security. As in the previous examples, using

some descriptions that convey significant depth in definitive moments in the participants' experiences gave rise to such meanings. For example, when a Falah says, “I buy with my own money” it is not an ordinary thing that can pass without meaning behind it. In Falah’s experience, the use of “my own money” marks other critical meanings, such as autonomy, self-confidence, and being involved in making decisions as a causal agent in his life and thus self-determination. Thus, this impressive pattern in Falah's account was seen as a relational work-related culture. Likewise, Haya used the phrase “to be safe” as a personal need related to work, as self-determination and autonomy were of great importance to Haya at the time. Thus, they understand and interpretation of self-determination through these distinctive and remarkable relational work-related cultural contexts.

Theme Two: Applicability of Self-Determination in Transition Planning

The theme *Applicability of Self-determination in Transition Planning* was a central theme for all participants. They spoke at length about their experiences receiving self-determination interventions during the transition period and how this affected their success at work. As it depends entirely on each individual's experience during the transition and work, participants' understanding of how self-determination during the transition period was implemented varies from participant to participant. However, they all pointed out some crucial factors in the implementation phase of self-determination during transition planning, including implementation duration and environmental factors. As a result, a set of secondary themes related to this super-theme emerged, centered around two main areas:

1. Implementation duration of self-determination
2. Applicability-related environmental factors

Implementation period of self-determination. Several participants revealed the nature of the self-determination skills they received, with similar descriptions of the transition period. For

example, Majid confirmed that “the training I received during high school was useful, I like it, but it was fast as I remember, we enjoyed applying some skills, but it was in the third semester of high school, and it was fast.” In the same context, Abdullah said, “yes, we had a training for self-determination skills in high school, there was almost weekly training, just in high school. In the middle school, there was no training”.

Sarah said, “there was a weekly training, but it was just in the last semester,” Sarah added, “the training I had after I graduated from high school and before getting the job was much better.” When Sarah asked how the training before getting a job was different, she said, “Almost the same thing, but it was longer, and I had more vocational training.” Abdullah was asked about the training period at high school, he said, “We trained at first in high school, and that was during the last semester of high school.” Abdullah added, “the training was good because the teacher taught us how to solve the problem or make a decision. The teacher used to give us examples, but it was in the last semester of high school, that is, before graduation.” Haya referred to a more in-depth experience and provided a detailed description of the services she received with respect to promoting her self-determination in the transition period. Haya said:

> I remember the first time I got to know how to make a decision, solve a problem, and set a goal when they added a new course that my friend Amal didn't take. At first, the math teacher taught us how to decide what we wanted and so on, then a new teacher came to us and made us draw three things we want to achieve and then arrange them according to what we want to do first and then second and so on, but I remember this was fast sessions, I loved this new course. (Haya)

The participants used the word “fast,” which seemed to be negative “but this was fast”, perhaps because it meant they had less time to take in and learn to apply the lessons regarding problem-

solving and prioritizing. In any case, this language use of dialogue by the participants cannot reflect a positive meaning or indicate a positive environment; on the contrary, they associated the limited time they had to take in to learn or reach the expected results with the fact that “but this was fast.”.

Applicability-related environmental factors. From the many stances and experiences the participants spoke about, significant subordinate themes emerged regarding how self-determination training was applicable at the transition stage from the participants' point of view, especially at the secondary stage. Many participants indicated that some skills were incompatible with their surroundings or did not match their reality and thus were difficult to understand. Sultan talked a lot about his difficulties in understanding some of the terms or guidelines related to self-determination training. Sultan said:

Yes, I remember being trained on how to choose the best option, I mean for example, I chose the job before getting married because the job brings money, and the money would help me get married, but I did not understand some of the words they were using. (Sultan)

Haya and Sarah refer to in-depth experiences that reflected some traits that do not appear in other participants' experiences. For instance, Haya said, “The teacher kept telling us what the best dress is if we want to go to a mall, is it a miniskirt or shorts, and she did not mention the abaya. (The abaya “cloak,” also known as an aba, is a simple, loose over-garment, essentially a robe-like dress, worn by some women in Muslim countries such as North Africa, the Arabian Peninsula, and the majority of the Middle East.) In the same context, Sara's lived experiences largely paralleled Haya's concerning the applicability of self-determination skills related to environmental factors. Sarah mentioned some concepts that conflict with her own environmental factors concerning the way self-determination was presented during transition planning, saying, “When the teacher asked me what my decision would be if I were in a similar situation to the girl in the picture, I felt

embarrassed at the time and I did not know what to say." When Sarah asked what was in the picture and if she could reveal it, she said, "There was a girl, and in front of her, a young man was giving her a wedding ring." In the same context, Sarah added more details about her discomfort with this picture, saying, "I think it is shameful for the young man to talk to a girl and give her a ring like this." She added, "a girl should be more respectful and not wear such a short dress, I do not do that, and my family does not wear such clothes; this picture will not be comfortable for my parents." In one way or another, this reflected some approaches in which self-determination skills are taught during transition planning and how such approaches can be congruent or incompatible with students' environments. Environmental factors were associated with material differences in presenting self-determination skills, as they were associated with more profound factors in participants' accounts, such as attitudes toward gender and clothing that shaped that participant's reaction to lesson materials during transition planning.

Falah also had similar experience with respect to the applicability of self-determination skills provided within transition planning. For instance, when Falah described that stage of his life, he said:

> The skills I learned were useful, they helped me get a job, but they were not the same skills I used in my daily life at work. I mean, I solve the problem my way; I do not have to bring a pen and paper. (Falah)

In Majid's experience, similar indicators appeared to what was narrated by Falah, Sultan, Haya, and Sara, where he said:

> We received practical and professional training in secondary school, but for example, decision-making, how I make decisions on my own, or how to be independent or how to solve problems,

these skills were not included in vocational training in the way we used them at work, even though the vocational training was enjoyable. (Falah)

Theme Three: Some Self-Determination Skills are More Related to Work

In their descriptions, participants spoke about self-determination skills relatively in terms of the skills most relative to their work experiences. Even though during transition planning, "self-determination skills should be taught in combination rather than in isolation to best prepare students for postsecondary environments" (Morningstar & Clavenna-Deane, 2018, p.61), participants expressed different experiences. Thus, while participants' experiences described self-determination skills, including self-advocacy, goal setting, self-awareness, problem-solving, and decision-making skills, they described problem-solving as the most relevant skill from their point of view concerning transition planning and employability. On the other hand, when it came to prioritizing self-determination skills, work experiences were meaningful in recognizing the most permanent skills at work. In addition, many participants saw self-awareness as an environmental factor developed through personal-related experiences. And so on, this overlap of *related* and *more related* self-determination skills concerning work experiences was one of the most common themes across the six cases, arising through three subordinate themes, namely:

1. Problem-solving is more relevant to work field.
2. Self-awareness and personal-related experiences.
3. Self-determination skills are evident at work.

Problem-solving is more relevant to work. While Falah experienced four types of jobs, in one of the experiences, the company refused to renew his contract. When commenting on this topic, Falah responded, "I do not know the reason for canceling my contract while I can easily solve problems at work. I used to do that". Furthermore, in a detailed description of such skills at work, Haya referred to a similar experience, saying:

> I work now in the reception; I love my job, and I love working at the front desk; what makes me more excited to work is when I can solve any work problem on my own. Of course, I need to ask the manager often, but I feel more comfortable if I solve work problems myself. This job, as I told you, was good for me because I am at the front desk. I mean, many people ask me, and I help many people, and they all love me for assisting them in solving some problems. (Haya)

Falah and Haya indicated that problem-solving is the most relevant skill to be self-determined in post-secondary work. For instance, in responding to canceling his job contract, the interrogative sentence type that appeared in Falah's dialog (e.g., “while I can solve the problem”) indicates what problem-solving means to him, compared to other self-determination skills. In the same context, Haya indicated that the factor that makes her more “excited” at work is that she can “solve any work problem” Of course, problem-solving skills were not assessed in the same way that other self-determination skills, as this particular skill arose significantly in the participants' accounts.

In a similar vein, Abdullah said, “I got the job because I can deal with problems, and many of my friends are not employed.” Sultan had a similar thought when he said, “The manager gave me a special promotion at work when I dealt with someone who refused to wait in line.” When Sultan asked what he thought was special about this experience, he said, “I mean, I was able to handle it myself, meaning that I solved the problem without anyone's help.” Sarah also mentioned problem-solving as the most critical skill among the self-determination skills from her point of view. When Sara asked why she thought she was able to get a job, she said, “I can deal with any problem.” Abdullah, Sultan, and Sarah felt that their ability to solve problems made them more valuable at work and, thus, more self-determined. Some profound moments emerge in their dialogues, where they refer to their successes as self-determined employees, such as “I got the job because I can

deal with problems," "many of my friends are not an employee," "promotion," "handle it myself," and "deal with any problem" clearly refer to the same context that emerged in the experiences of Falah and Haya, in which they attribute their success in post-secondary work as self-determined to their ability to solve problems at work.

Self-awareness and personal-related experiences. Most participants described self-awareness with distinct descriptions focusing on how self-awareness is gained from these individuals' personal environments rather than as a skill acquired among other self-determination skills in transition planning. So, in the participants' descriptions and stories, self-awareness often emerges before they get involved in transition planning programs that promote self-determination. Haya and Falah had a lot in common when talking about this domain. Both spoke of an innate self-awareness that drove them to learn self-determination skills and get a job. Haya said:

> Yes, I learned it from home, from my father specifically, I mean, not in the school. If someone humiliated me at work, I would stand up for myself, file a complaint with the department of labor, and all those things I learned when I was young. (Haya)

Falah had an interesting experience in this field as he said:

> Awareness, I know it means being aware of yourself; I mean, I know how to deal with my father's guests if they come to my house, and I know how to pour coffee for them, I mean, give them what they need without letting them ask for it. (Falah)

Falah added, "I know the things I have to do at work without anyone telling me. I also know when to ask permission from the manager. I mean to treat my manager like my father's guests." When Falah was asked, would you defend yourself if someone offended you at work, and you had a similar experience, he said, "Yes, my father and mother taught me that."

Although Sarah was speaking from a different, perhaps more profound perspective, her description of self-awareness was parallel to the rest of the participants. For example, Sarah said, “I know I have a lot of negative things, but I can be a good employee.” When Sara asked how she came up with such an understanding, was it from school or after getting a job, she answered, “since I was young, I noticed that I was different from others, they used to call me names that I do not like, but I think I am good.” Indeed, this indicates a tremendous and distinct self-awareness. These participants' “self-awareness” emerged as a motivation shaped by personal experiences. Moments of triumph that participants experienced in the past shaped an essential part of their self-awareness, finding that they could overcome/move forward in their lives because they did something similar before (e.g., “since I was young, I noticed that I was different”).

Self-determination skills are evident at work. When Haya was asked to describe self-advocacy, goal setting, self-awareness, problem-solving, and decision-making skills concerning her work experience, she indicated that her job experiences shaped her knowledge of what these skills could mean. Haya said, “At work, everything was obvious to me because I felt like this was a work-related thing, so it was obvious.” Haya added, “last month, I submitted a request to work remotely because my driver traveled.” While Majid said, “of course, work taught me many things; basically, I forgot some of the skills that I learned, and honestly, I did not remember these skills until I worked.” Sultan explained that “learning at high school was a bit difficult because the teacher only gave us things for testing, but at work, I feel that everything is clear, which means all these skills are understandable at work.”

Sara, along with many experiences related to specific skills, described some self-determination skills during employment time as more interconnected, stating, “At work, everything is connected.” When Sarah asked about what she meant by “connected,” she responded:

I mean we do the work without feeling that there is step 1 and step 2; I mean that I sometimes make important decisions without meaning that; I mean, I used to do many things together, for example, in school, I was learning everything separately, alone, not together, but the opposite is happening at work; I mean, at work is better. (Sarah)

Theme Four: Self-Determination is Essential Because it is Developable

Among the superordinate themes, an important one emerged centered around how the participants describe the essence of their lived experiences of self-determination at work. Participants' descriptions centered on many work events and experiences essential to developing their self-determination. In addition, the participants' experiences reflected how important it is to move from a certain level to a higher self-determination level.

From the descriptions given by the participants, two subordinate themes emerged revolving around the failed work experiences of the participants and how self-determination is promoted and adjusted through practice, namely:

1. Failed experiences are valuable.
2. Self-determination can be adjusted by practice.

Failed experiences are valuable. Participants described failed work experiences and referred to them not only as failed experiences but also as a critical factor contributing to the emergence of self-determination in their deeper interactions at work. For example, Falah mentioned that “in my fourth job, they also refused to renew my contract so I decided to look for a job that I will not leave, with a renewable contract.” Falah notes that he tried to find work with a longer contract due to his failure to continue in four different jobs. Falah added, “I studied for the diploma in order to obtain the certificate to get a job with a longer contract.” In the same context, Haya said:

I used to be late when going to work in the morning, and also used to be absent sometimes because the driver did not meet the appointments and was late, and this caused me a lot of

problems at work. After I thought a little, I asked the manager if I could work remotely for this period until I find a suitable driver, and she agreed. (Haya)

In a similar experience, Majed said, “the hardest thing is making friends.” When he was asked why it was so hard, he said, “it is hard because I was ashamed, and I did not know how to do that, all my friends were in the school, and no one was playing with me in my neighborhood, but at work, I mean now, I tried to be like other people.” Majed was asked what it means to be like other people, how he sees this experience and how he deals with this matter now at work. He said:

I mean to have friends who call me, communicate with me on WhatsApp, like Ahmed and Ali, but Ahmed died, and Ali was texting me, then I did not hear from him after he and his family traveled, but at work, it was a little different, I did not want to be like before, I mean without friends. I was trying, and my boss helped me at work, and I failed more than once, but after a while, I made friends and got to know a lot at work; I know it is not good to be without friends, so I always try. (Majed)

Haya said:

After I searched for a long time for a job, I felt that there was no way to find a job that suited my desires, then I no longer wanted to work; I got tired of searching a lot, after that, I decided to do one more thing, the last thing, because I needed to get employed, and I did not know what to do. So, I went to one of the centers and told the manager that I need a job, and I told him everything about my situation, then he agreed and told me that I must be trained first, and I agreed. (Haya)

When Haya was asked about the main reason that prompted her to start looking for a job again, she said, “my mom.” Haya added, “my mom told me that it is impossible that there is no appropriate job for me; even if I do not find it, I will if I try again.” Here, although she searched a

lot and did not find an appropriate job, she did not give up because her mother's words and her unsuccessful experiences in finding a job prompted her to take extra steps that she had not taken before (e.g., “I went to one of the centers and told the manager that I need a job”). Undoubtedly, this reflects a high level of autonomy and an impressive ability to make good decisions that were further enhanced by Haya's failed experiences.

Self-determination can be adjusted by practice. Concerning the essence of their experiences of self-determination at work, participants spoke about using daily work practices as a paramount means to incorporate acquired knowledge of self-determination into work. Participants preferred self-determination skills to be directly related to practice and not only to the academic scope during the transition phase. It should be noted that the participants did not express any concerns about their lack of confidence in the practice of self-determination at work; on the contrary, they emphasized that daily work practice has developed self-determination in line with the environment of each work. However, no specific skills or practices are mentioned; but work practices and environments, in general, are described as essential pillars to enhance self-determination.

Haya referred to a profound experience that led to positive developments in her employment life, where she said:

> I used to be self-determined in everything, but I felt more independent at work, I felt that I could make my own decisions, meaning, decisions such as travel or buy new things, for example, I decided to learn how to drive. (Haya)

In another part of the interview, Haya added, “After getting involved with the job, I started picking out certain clothes for work; I'm also trying to learn new things now.” When asked to give an example, she said, “for example, I can solve problems in a different way now; I mean, after this job, I can also legally defend myself; I mean, I do not need to argue with anyone.” Majid said:

I used to be alone, and I did not have many friends, but my manager told me that this is a problem and I have to solve it; he said it is better to have friends, so, I thought about helping other employees with the aim of making friends. I was a bit shy, but I feel better now. I mean, I have some good friends; although not many of them visit me at home, we hang out sometimes together. (Majid)

When Majid was asked how the work experience helped in this matter, he said, “I would not do something similar if I were not employed.” Sultan had a similar experience, where he felt his self-determination skills develop at work, saying, “I was trying to solve a problem once, but after I got the job, I think I'll keep trying until I solve the problem, that's the best way. You have to try and try. “

Sarah said:

I know that there are things that are more important than other things, I thought it was important to have money to buy anything you want, but at work, the most important thing is to be comfortable in your work, for example, if the salary changed a little or decreased a little and you are comfortable at work, this is better than going to another job with a higher salary. (Sara)

When Sara was asked what is important and most important for her concerning the work, she said, “I see that the important thing is that you are good with all people at work and home. Also, the job gives you money, I thought this was more important than being at home, but if someone in my family needs me to be at home, this is more important than the job.” Sarah was asked if she had such an understanding before getting a job, and she said, “no, not before; this is after I got employed because before I got employed, I did not know what the work looked like.” The idea of adjustable self-determination skills effectively contributed to making them better able to practice self-determination in a way that was more relevant to their work needs. Therefore, the participants

place great importance on the practice as a template that prompted self-determination to emerge relevantly in work settings. The meanings behind “to learn new things now,” “I was a bit shy,” “I was trying to solve a problem once,” or “I decided to learn how to drive” reflect a notable amount of trust in its relevance, resulting in a firmer belief in its adjustability by practice as essential.

Theme Five: Directed Self-Determination Training Produces Better Results

By delving into the participants' experiences, they described some factors as essential to what they might need to guide their self-determination skills related to their pursuit of and during post-secondary work. The term “directed training” was coined to describe this theme because the experiences the participants reported highlighted how self-determination was guided by various types of training within their lived experiences before and during post-secondary work. Participants' descriptions revealed two subordinate themes led to this superordinate theme, which are:

1. Personal-directed training.
2. Employment-directed training.

Personal-directed training. By delving into the participants' experiences, the idea emerged that upbringing focused on work enhanced self-determination skills. For example, talking about the time he was in middle school when he had his first job experience, Falah said, “I was in middle school looking and striving for a job.” When Falah was asked why he was looking for a job and why he saw that the job was necessary at the time, he said:

> My father used to take me to his office after school; I liked the feeling of being at work and have an office, I asked him a lot to allow me to work with him, and in the end, he agreed. (Falah)

Falah was asked to give more details about that experience and that feeling; he added, “I wanted to feel the feeling of being independent, making decisions, being a manager, and being

responsible." Sarah and Haya refer to similar experiences when talking about what they believe is vital in shaping self-determination skills related to their pursuit of and during post-secondary work. For instance, Sara said, "when I was little, my mum used to sell our relatives and neighbors handmade products like natural creams she made herself; I was watching her and helping her sell the products." When she asked how such a thing was important to her at work now, she responded, "my mum used to send me to deliver her products and get the money; at that time, I made many wrong decisions and some right decisions, but I learned." Sara was asked to give an example of the decisions she mentioned, and she said:

> If someone had no money, I would give him the product and then come back later to get the money. Usually, I did not find anyone when I came back. So, my mother taught me to take the money first and then get the product and what I loved the most was that my mother sent me and did not send any of my other brothers and sisters. (Sara)

In the same context, Haya described an experience that matched Sarah's experience. Haya said, "My mother used to teach me when I was young to write a list of things we needed to buy from the supermarket." When Haya was asked about the importance of that experience in shaping her self-determination skills at work, she responded, "I was deciding what things we need to buy and like how much and how many, and that made me rely on myself and be able to make a better job decision." Abdullah's experience was a profound one, which prompted him innately to be self-determined. Perhaps the most prominent motivation was the desire for independence in Abdullah's experience. It is worth noting that Abdullah did not receive any training on self-determination at that time. Abdullah said, "I worked when I was in high school, and that was after my father passed away." Abdullah was asked why he was looking for a job at such a young age. He said, "many things changed in my life after my father's death; I wanted to leave school; I mean, I wanted to

stay with my mother, but she refused; that was the reason." Abdullah added, "my cousin was working in the vegetable market and making money; I used to go with him sometimes and wanted to help my family, specifically my mother." When Abdullah was asked why he felt this experience was necessary for his pursuit of a job or during his current job, he said, "I learned a lot before high school training, and everything seems to be the same in all jobs."

Employment-directed training. Participants' experiences demonstrated different levels of self-determination at work. However, through the experiences of four participants, Majid, Haya, Sara, and Sultan, standard features emerged in their descriptions of self-determination at work due to the type of training they underwent. Instead of general self-determination training at the transition stage, the four participants underwent specific employment-directed training. Therefore, training that promoted self-determination in the four participants' experiences was described as essential in their pursuit of and during jobs.

Speaking about the training he received after high school, which he got as second training after high school and before getting a job, Majid said, "in the training I did after high school, I learned a lot, like how to deal with problems, how to file a complaint if you were abused, and things like that." Indeed, although it was training designed for a specific type of job, participants' experiences reflected that self-determination was more remarkable in such training, whether self-determination appeared directly or implicitly. In her one-of-a-kind experience, Haya said:

> If someone is angry at work, we should not be angry; I mean, I will try to keep the problem as small as possible, I wasn't like that in my previous job, sometimes I was embarrassed, and I didn't know what to do. (Haya)

When I asked Haya where she acquired these skills, she responded, "In pre-work training, the second one." All participants described similar features from the training they received during

the transition period, and as Majid and Haya described (the second training), which included implicit training in self-determination within an employment-directed training, helping them to better be able to handle their jobs. Sultan had a similar and worthwhile experience, as he said, "in the previous job, I used to ask many questions, and sometimes I avoided the question because I was embarrassed, but, in this job, they taught me everything I might need." When Sultan was asked what he meant when he said, "everything I might need," he said:

> Such as, how do I decide-I mean in any situation-if my manager is absent, and how do I defend myself if I need, like the skills we learned in high school, but this training was for this job particularly; it was better. (Sultan)

Haya, Majid, and Sultan felt they "learned a lot," as they had "everything I might need" and passed through a "better" experience after engaging in training directed and designed to simulate their potential work settings, and thus more self-determined at work. While it is a common trait observed in all participants who participated in the self-determination-directed training, this tone was not evident in the account of participants who did not receive such training.

When asked about the most important aspect of what she described as essential to what she needs to improve their self-determination skills related to her pursuit of and during post-secondary work, Sara said, "I need to learn on the job, how to deal with the problems of this job, I mean working in the post section." Sarah added:

> I did not know how to file a complaint; also, I did not know how well I would do well at work because they would give me an evaluation at the end of the year, so I wanted job training for this job, this would be convenient for me, I mean, to know the problems that might happen at this work. (Sarah)

Referring to the same meaning that appeared in the accounts of Majid, Haya, and Sultan, Sarah indicated that the directed self-determination training was crucial for her to learn more about the type of training she needed at work, for example, when she said, “I want to learn while working,” and “I wanted job training for this job.” It is possible that this type of training frames knowledge that helps them apply self-determination as job-related skills and gives them a sense of power and flexibility that they did not experience in their transition planning. Thus, this meaning emerges in many crucial moments through the participants' accounts.

Summary of Findings

This chapter provides detailed excerpts of the conversations of the six study participants in order to allow their lived experiences as employees with ID around self-determination to come to light. This chapter has been developed in such a way as to allow readers to understand traits that characterize participants' lived experiences. In addition, this chapter revealed thematic findings developed as a result of data collection and analysis in line with the IPA's guidelines. The analytic process of the participants' accounts revealed the importance of cultural context and time in relation to self-determination. Cultural attitudes toward gender or family experiences related to self-worth and purpose seem to transcend a particular situation or training. Responses from semi-structured interviews of the six participants yielded the following five subordinate themes: Self-determination is described through a cultural context, Applicability of self-determination in transition planning, Some self-determination skills are more related to work, Self-determination is essential because it is developable, and Directed self-determination training produces better results. Excerpts from participants' data were used to support each theme.

The following chapter, Chapter Five, discusses the findings in light of the research questions, current literature, and theoretical framework. Recommendations were provided about

best training and practices in self-determination in preparation for applying self-determination skills in employment and adult life settings for individuals with ID. The results of this study also provided recommendations to school educators working with individuals with ID who may provide training in self-determination. Along the same lines, recommendations were made to college/university personnel serving students with ID in post-secondary settings, including vocational rehabilitation teams working directly with individuals with ID to prepare them for employment after they are no longer in school settings. Finally, suggested future research directions were also discussed.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION

Based on the findings presented in the previous chapter, this chapter provides a detailed discussion of the conclusions drawn. These conclusions are addressed based on three crucial areas, namely: the research questions of this study, current literature, the study's theoretical framework. While these conclusions came from an in-depth understanding of the lived experience of the six participants, this study, in its unique place, highlighted the lived experiences and voices that did not get the opportunity to appear in this way before. Furthermore, the concept of self-determination for individuals with ID in prior research has been shaped by the perspectives of those who speak on their behalf (i.e., parents and teachers), limiting our knowledge of what it is like to be a self-determined employee with ID (Garrels & Sigstad, 2019; Shogren et al., 2016; Shogren et al., 2017; Shogren et al., 2019; Vicente et al., 2020).

Therefore, while this research aimed to explore the lived experiences of employed adults with ID who received interventions toward self-determination in their transition planning during high school, it framed unique data regarding the lived experiences of employees with ID on self-determination at work. Theoretically, these data were framed based on Self-determination Theory and Phenomenological Theory. IPA was used to analyze the results in order to obtain the deepest possible understanding of this phenomenon.

In this study, I addressed the following five research questions:

1: How do employed adults with ID generally describe their understanding of self-determination?

2: How do employed adults with ID describe the experience of receiving self-determination interventions during high school/transition planning and how it affected their success in post-secondary work?

3: How do employed adults with ID describe their own self-advocacy, goal setting, self-awareness, problem-solving, and decision-making skills while in post-secondary work?

4: How do employed adults with ID describe the essence of their lived experiences of self-determination during post-secondary work?

5: What do employed adults with ID describe as essential to what they need to improve their self-determination skills related to their pursuit of and during post-secondary work?

In this chapter, I discuss five significant findings related to self-determination and the lived experience of employed adults with moderate ID in Saudi Arabia, related to the five research questions, including (a) Individuals with ID understand self-determination through their cultural contexts (i.e., gender roles and family relationships), (b) the applicability of self-determination is related to the implementation period and environmental factors, (c) problem-solving skill is more relevant to work settings, (d) self-determination is subject to adjustment and development through practice, and (e) directed self-determination training toward work is efficient (e.g., personal-directed training and employment-directed training). Furthermore, the implications of the findings were elicited by framing what can be learned and how to benefit from these findings. Hence, the study's limitations were discussed, and recommendations for future research were outlined. While much of the analysis results were unexpected, additional literature research has been done to frame these emerging angles. Smith et al. (2021) claimed that "with a qualitative writeup, it is fine to introduce some literature for the first time in the discussion" (p. 116).

Discussion of Findings

Employed Adults with ID's Understanding of Self-Determination

The first research question explored the understanding of employed adults with ID of self-determination. Participants in this study provided responses that demonstrated the significance of personal and work-related cultural contexts. Gender roles and family relationships shaped their understanding of how and why to be self-determined. Negative pressure or achievement-oriented environments encouraged them to change jobs or make work-related decisions.

Participants described their understandings of self-determination through both personal and work-related cultural contexts, reflected in the emergent superordinate theme, *Self-Determination is Described Through a Cultural Context*. Implications related to participants' personal cultural contexts was most apparent for the two female participants. Gender, and their beliefs that women and men should not work in the same place, was a paramount personal and work-related cultural context. Haya and Sarah's expressed their discomfort as women working in a work environment that included men. However, both Haya and Sarah saw this as a common area of life practice in which they could use self-determination by making their own decisions as women about whether to work with men. Male participants did not speak to self-determination as something connected to their gender.

Although adherence to the cultural norms related to gender expressed in Haya and Sarah's accounts was strict, this strictness does not appear as a stereotype in the Saudi street as described in Haya and Sarah's accounts. I attribute this to the fact that the nature of the participants as individuals with ID made them less involved with broader and modern cultures, and thus they were related to the prevailing cultures of the adults around them, who were often parents. For instance, the way that Haya's "mother" appeared in her account or when she said "wrong," and "I love my

mother," or when Sarah points out that she is "not used to talking to men." From this scope, the importance of cultural contexts emerged in the participants' accounts, not just the women but the male participants as well. Participants' understanding of being self-determined through their personal cultural contexts in their lived experiences was an impressive dimension.

The participants referred to the cultural context as the domain in which they understood self-determination, as personal culture was important in shaping their understanding of self-determination. For example, Falah indicated that he seeks to be like his father and to get a promotion at work, indicating that this personal culture encourages him to be autonomous. This is similar to what Haya and Sarah express in their accounts, where personal culture influenced their understanding of self-determination. Moreover, with another personal cultural dimension, Sultan points out that being independent means not asking anyone for help, as this could be a kind of shame in his culture. Or, as in Majid's experience, independence is to "be a man" in the prevailing traditional cultural sense, where he must face the difficulties and negative pressure of life. Such personal cultural context undoubtedly prompted this population to be more self-determined based on their understanding of self-determination. Interestingly, the participants stick to their cultural contexts as domains and templates through which they understand self-determination.

Regarding work-related culture, for some participants, self-determination was expressed by cultures closely related to their relationships in work environments. Many indicated that their previous work experiences had led them to adopt a specific way of understanding and expressing self-determination, including a culture of respect related to work environments and a work culture that recognizes the importance of financial security among its employees. Participants expressed self-determination as individual's who desired to engage in work environments that respect them and by voicing a direct relationship between self-determination and a culture of respect in work

environments. The concept of self-determination also revolved around a culture of financial security expressed in job security and long-term employment contracts.

For example, Majid and Sultan talked about the importance of a work environment with a certain level of respect between employers and employees. Majed did not feel like a self-determined person while working in a disrespectful work environment, so he quit. On the other hand, Sultan expressed his dissatisfaction with the duration of the work contracts offered, as it was difficult to feel financially secure with three-month work contracts. Hence, Sultan believes that to be a self-determined person, he needed to at least have that sense of financial security at work. Likewise, Falah and Haya felt that a work-related culture of financial security was critical as it shaped their understanding of autonomy and self-determination. For example, using phrases like " to be safe and have enough money," "I buy with my own money," and "job with a better salary." Those stations in their lived experiences were inspiring, as such relational work-related culture clearly shaped their understanding of self-determination.

Participants in this study understood self-determination through specific cultural contexts linked to personal implications and work environments. Personal cultural implications were important for self-determination to be understood and expressed as it relates to the participant's socialization. Also, relational cultural contexts related to work settings in which the participants felt more financially secure were critical to understanding and expressing self-determination. Participants in this study also found that a culture of respect between employers and employees effectively makes them feel more self-determined at work. It was also difficult for participants who worked in work environments that did not give them the expected amount of respect to understand or express self-determination at work.

Regardless of each participant's background, the cultural contexts, whether personal implications or work-related culture, were essential for the participants to understand and express self-determination. Moreover, such contexts were also paramount in defining their professional goals and responsibilities at work. The study discovered that male and female participants expressed their understanding of self-determination differently, which can be attributed to normal cultural differences between genders. Furthermore, the study found that people with ID tended to adhere to family cultural norms and were less receptive to cultures outside of their private domains. This exploration highlights the complicated relationship between culture and self-determination, particularly among people with ID. My study findings affirm that cultural contexts shape participants' understanding of self-determination and how it can be practiced in work settings.

Connection to the literature. Regarding their understanding of self-determination, the participants in this study gave answers that illustrated the importance of personal and work-related cultural contexts. Gender roles and family relationships shaped their understanding of how and why to be independent and financially secure. Negative pressure or achievement-oriented contexts encouraged them to change jobs or make decisions about their work.

Concerning the level of self-determination, perception of quality of life, and self-satisfaction of employees with ID, prior research on self-determination among individuals with ID found that the cultural context was influential in shaping participants understanding of self-determination. For instance, Lysaght & Cobigo (2014) noted that individuals with ID always consider autonomy and employability as a source of pride in daily life. Also, Garrels & Sigstad (2011) indicated that people with ID value their employment but that pre-employment factors could be a barrier to being autonomous or getting employed for this population. Furthermore, Shogren et al. (2019) underline the importance of cultural contexts in the level of self-

determination of a diverse group of adolescents with ID, as their cultures have contributed to the emergence of specific patterns of differences. Regarding the relationship discovered in this study between self-determination and the culture of individuals with ID, a study by Musicka-Williams (2020) noted that adolescents with ID tend to copy others, as they are often closely associated with the cultures and styles of people close to them.

The present study extends this prior research by suggesting that many of the factors that previous research considered as pre-employment factors are, in fact, mostly related to cultural contexts. As such, the factors indicated by the literature emerged in participants' understanding of self-determination through their cultural contexts. Also, while prior research could not shed light on the impact of cultural contexts on how employees with ID understand things in general and self-determination in particular, the cultural contexts appeared clearly in the participants' voices in this study.

Brady et al. (2019) stated that people act based on their cultural contexts, so in order to understand people's experiences, we must understand their cultural contexts. In light of this, this study revealed that the difference between the male and female participants in understanding self-determination emerged as a result of the base cultural norms difference between genders, as the influence of cultural norms was the most critical factor for the emergence of such differences. Although gender did contribute and played a role in this difference, I attribute the most permanent role to cultural norms behind genders, as the norms placed on male participants did not apply to their female counterparts. Thus, their understanding of self-determination is influenced by their cultural contexts, which act as protective factors. Indeed, the lack of such interpretive power negatively affects our ability to draw inferences about psychological processes and thus develop incomplete or incorrect theories. At the same time, as one of the most paramount influences on

human interactions, cultural context refers to the framework in which humans learn to regulate their thoughts, emotions, and behaviors (Neuliep, 2020). Taking the findings of this study into consideration, undoubtedly, culture hides many things waiting to be discovered (Hall, 1959).

With this claim, I do not mean to suggest that all decisions related to self-determination made by individuals with ID will be shaped by personal or work-related cultural contexts. For example, both Majid and Sultan were faced with a paralyzing and negative work culture, but whereas Sultan was unable to participate, Majid decided to quit, a decision that seemed independent of the relational work culture. A study by Shogren et al. (2015) has also suggested that self-determination can be related to the learning models and thus contradict cultural influences. However, my findings indicate that personal cultural contexts, particular participants' prior history, and experiences, can be a powerful influence on their ideas about self-determination.

Relationship to theoretical framework. The premise of this research study was to give a voice that reflects the lived experiences of employed adults with ID by using the interpretive process of IPA. The results of this research study revealed the reality of six employees with ID who participated in the study. Primarily because of the participants' multiple identities as employees and individuals with ID, Phenomenological Theory contributed to providing an enhanced lens, allowing us to understand the "underlying dynamics of the experience" of the participant (Moustakas, 1994). The idea of phenomenology and self-determination for employees with ID was born from the idea that the experiences of employees with ID are distinctly different from those of ordinary employees and should only be shared from the point of view of employees with ID. Phenomenology is a philosophical approach to interacting deeply with the essence of human experiences, and phenomenological research is a way of discovering accounts of one's contemporary life (VanManen, 2017). VanManen (2017) also claimed that phenomenology brings

out all the productive relationships between existence and action, between self and other factors, internal and external, and between who we are and how we act. As in this study, the emergence of the cultural context was a logical result of all the formative relationships of the participants in terms of their existence, action, self, and other internal or external factors. Indeed, that eventually led to a better understanding of the lives of the six participants in the light of their self-determination.

With regard to their understanding of self-determination, this study found that some of the personal cultural contexts in which participants described self-determination were related to tragic events in their families or friends, as family relationships shaped their understanding of how and why to be self-determined. Participants' accounts also yielded that work environments themselves played a role in shaping their understanding of self-determination at work.

SDT found that humans have three basic emotional and psychological needs: autonomy, competence, and connection (Ryan & Deci, 2000). At the same time, SDT asserts people's well-being (Deci & Ryan, 2012), and evidence suggests that financial insecurity reduces people's well-being and raises troublesome financial behaviors (Weinstein & Stone, 2018). In the context of personal cultural implication, SDT suggests that supporting employees' autonomy by employers or peers incentivizes employees to be more creative and comfortable in their work and, thus, more self-determined (Deci et al., 2017).

The present study extends this SDT's claims by suggesting that participants made these arguments spontaneously when they referred to specific events in their cultural contexts. Furthermore, participants' relationships to specific needs, such as autonomy, were evident in their dialogs about their understanding of self-determination. Therefore, the results of the semi-structured interviews with the six participants are consistent with the SDT as the best way for

individuals with ID to improve their lives is by acting as causal agents (Wehmeyer, 2005, 2020). Although this may refer to the same cultural contexts that appeared in the participants' accounts, my finding is more specific about personal and work-related cultures and how that can shape one's self-determination in post-secondary work than the concept of well-being.

While SDT calls for such principles (e.g., autonomy, well-being), these principles only appeared in participants' accounts if they were associated with specific personal or work-related cultural contexts. Impressively, cultural contexts prompted such principles to emerge. For example, Haya and Sultan specifically describe autonomy and well-being through significant events in their personal and work-cultural contexts that have directly contributed to shaping what self-determination means to them and acting as causal agents in their work settings. Additionally, Falah used to say, "to be independent," and "you have your own salary," with a high tone of emotion indicating he is tired of being dependent on others, which appeared as a critical example of a personal culture, which also prompted in other parts/questions during the interview. Similarly, Abdullah said, "my cousin once told me you must rely on yourself, be a man, and help your mother."

With this claim, I do not mean to suggest that SDT can only be effective in personal or work-related cultural contexts. For example, some past experiences may be meaningful in promoting SDT, as Majed indicated that his past work experiences helped him to be independent. However, my findings suggest that SDT's principles were driven by participants' personal and work-related cultural contexts that shaped their understanding of what self-determination meant to them.

Receiving Self-Determination Interventions During High School/Transition Planning and How It Affected the Participants Success in Post-Secondary Work

The second research question explored the participants' experience receiving self-determination interventions during high school/transition planning and how it affected their success in post-secondary work. The participants in this study provided answers that illustrated the significance of the applicability of self-determination in transition planning in terms of the implementation duration of self-determination and environmental factors. The participants in this study found that they had less time to learn self-determination skills in relation to their post-secondary work in transition planning. In addition, the self-determination strategies participants received during transition planning would be more effective in work settings if they were applicable to their diverse environments. It should be mentioned that the participants' understanding of self-determination was determined by asking them to describe their definition of what self-determination may mean and compare it to definitions provided in the self-determination literature. Additionally, because this is a phenomenological approach, the meaning was constituted via the accounts and experiences of the participants, as it was not difficult to discern whether the participants understood the concepts of self-determination and the training process.

Employed adults with ID participating in this study expressed their experiences receiving self-determination interventions during high school/transition planning and how it affected their success in post-secondary work through the thematic finding: *Applicability of Self-Determination in Transition Planning*. Participants provided examples from their lived experiences of the early stages in which they encountered self-determination as strategies taught in the transition planning stages. In this context, participants discussed several areas of importance related to transition planning and self-determination, particularly in the initial stages of receiving self-determination

interventions during transition planning. These factors included the duration for which they received self-determination interventions and certain environmental factors related to implementation.

Participants found the duration of self-determination interventions during transition planning to be "fast," which was evident in the experiences of Majid, Abdullah, Sarah, and Haya. Participants explained how their experiences receiving self-determination interventions occurred during the last semester/year of high school. For example, Abdullah and Sara noted that "there was almost weekly training." However, this training also took place in the "last semester." In light of this, the participants used the word "fast," which seemed to be negative ("but this was fast"), perhaps because it indicated they had less time to take in and learn to apply the lessons regarding self-determination. While some participants received other self-determination training at the post-school level, they found that the training they received during transition planning was not as good as the self-determination post-school training, making the negative impression of using the word "fast" in their dialogues even more noticeable. For example, Sarah said, "the training I had after I graduated from high school and before getting the job was much better." However, even participants who received training only during the transition planning did not find this training was not applicable in terms of duration. As a result, the participants touched on another dimension related to the context: Applicability-related environmental factors.

Regarding the environmental factors related to the applicability of self-determination, the participants in this study found that the self-determination interventions they received were not aligned with their environments regarding the presented content. In addition, participants found that some of the self-determination interventions were initially incomprehensible or difficult while they were supposed to be more comprehensible or more straightforward. Sultan often expressed

his inability to understand some of the terms his teachers used during his self-determination training. Falah found that although the skills he acquired helped him get a job, he did not apply them in the same way he had acquired them. Falah said, “I solve the problem my way; I do not have to bring a pen and paper.” This meaning appears more clearly in Majed's experience, as he felt that he was dealing with different skills when he practiced self-determination in work settings. The findings of this study highlight the importance of considering students' environmental factors when designing the content of self-determination lesson material during transition planning.

Haya and Sarah also found that some images teachers used to teach self-determination skills during the transition planning were “inappropriate.” As females, they both found that some of the methods used were unsuitable for them as women who belong to a specific environment and have a particular culture. It is clear that some considerations were not taken into account when implementing self-determination interventions. Both participants were not pleased with the discrepancy between the environment they lived in, and the models used in the lessons. For example, Haya said, “the teacher kept telling us what the best dress is if we want to go to a mall, is it a miniskirt or shorts, and she did not mention the abaya. It should be noted here that the abaya or cloak is a simple and loose garment worn by some women in various countries such as the Arabian Peninsula, North Africa, and the majority of the Middle East for religious or cultural considerations. Likewise, Sarar said, “a girl should be more respectful and not wear such a short dress. Indeed, environmental factors were associated with more profound factors in participants' accounts, such as attitudes toward gender and clothing, which shaped the participant's reaction to lesson materials during transition planning.

Connection to the literature. Concerning receiving self-determination interventions during high school/transition planning, the participants in this study gave answers that illustrated

the importance of the applicability of self-determination in transition planning. The implementation duration of self-determination and environmental factors roles appeared as critical factors in the applicability level of self-determinant in the participants' post-secondary work. Participants had a negative impression the duration of self-determination interventions during transition planning as they had less time to absorb, apply and prioritize the lessons of self-determination. Furthermore, self-determination strategies that participants received during their transition planning would be more effective in work settings if they were applicable to their diverse environments.

While the literature on the lived experiences of employees with ID is particularly limited, studies of individuals with ID during the transition planning and post-secondary education provided some insights into the importance of the total number of years concerning training on self-determination skills. Prior research on self-determination among individuals with ID has also found that a more extended training period during the school years for individuals with ID was associated with higher odds of obtaining a job at the post-secondary level (Grigal et al., 2019). Moreover, Alhawiti (2017) indicated that preparing individuals with ID to be independent at the post-secondary level requires sufficient time and cooperation among all relevant actors. Moreover, while participants spoke at length about many of the self-determination interventions they received during the transition planning that were not compatible and inapplicable to the environments in which they understood and lived, prior research on self-determination among individuals with ID has also found that self-determination in post-secondary settings is strongly influenced by environmental factors of individuals with ID (Field et al., 2003). Additionally, Shogren et al. (2019) asserted that the implementation of self-determination learning models for adolescents with ID must be in naturally occurring contexts.

The present study extends this prior research in suggesting that although most participants' calculations showed that self-determination interventions received during transition planning effectively prepared them to be successful employees, results would inevitably be better if the self-determination training periods were extended during transition planning. Also, self-determination interventions needed to be designed to be applicable to the participants' natural contexts and environments so that these interventions would be applicable in those environments in order to achieve better outcomes. The six participants dealt with the issue of the applicability of self-determination controversially, as many of negative impressions appeared from time to time when some found themselves in incomprehensible situations and not in harmony with their environments. This study's findings offer new insights concerning the urgent need to employ the ideas and visions of individuals with ID in shaping the approaches through which they are trained on self-determination. For example, Haya shared her experience receiving self-determination interventions during the transition planning, where she was involved in unfamiliar interventions with her environment; Sarah discussed an experience very similar to Haya's. In the experiences of both female participants, common factors emerged related to Saudi women's environments that must be considered when designing self-determination interventions during transition planning.

With this claim, I do not mean to suggest a specific duration/time as a norm or a specific environment that can be the basis for implementing self-determination interventions during transition planning. For instance, the term “fast” was not linked to a specific time period in the participants' accounts; instead, they referred to their last year or last semester of high school. However, my findings indicate that self-determination interventions should take place during adequate training periods rather than short training based on each under-training student's condition during transition planning. Also, prompted self-determination interventions must be

applicable in naturally occurring contexts of individuals with ID during transition planning so that the received interventions can be understandable and applicable in work settings. My findings found that individuals with ID measure all prompted learning interventions in line with their naturally occurring contexts while at the same time rejecting any experiences that might conflict with their natural contexts. In light of this, Wehmeyer (1998) asserted that "questions about the applicability of self-determination to people with significant disabilities will begin to fade as more individuals with significant disabilities take control over their lives" (p.14).

Relationship to theoretical framework. With regard to the *Applicability of Self-Determination in Transition Planning*, the phenomenological consideration in the theoretical framework of this study provided an unprecedented understanding of self-determination in the lived experiences of employed adults with ID by diving into phenomenological and hermeneutic insights. Exploring lived experiences must take place in the natural settings of that experience (Smith & Fieldsend, 2021; Valle et al., 1989). From this insight, it seemed that the participants' lived experiences shed light on crucial factors that led to the shaping deeper understanding of the applicability of self-determination as strategies in transition planning. For instance, when Haya denounced the use of "shorts" as an example in the lesson, this was not a familiar or regular expression. Instead, the deep dive into Haya's experience led to the fact that "shorts" - for example - might be an unrealistic example for Haya and was not applicable to her everyday environment. So Haya considered that a useless skill due to using an inapplicable lesson example. In light of this, Husserl points out that it is always crucial to return to the initial nature of the things themselves to understand experiences (Husserl, 1927). Thus, this depth, which resulted from a dialogue followed by in-depth phenomenological interpretation processes, showed that the self-determination skills must be applicable and compatible with the participants' environments.

However, adapting phenomenological and Hermeneutic Insights to explore the lived experience of the participants was revealed to be crucial to understanding phenomenological reflection, meaning, analysis, and insights (Van Manen, 2017). Therefore, considering such a phenomenological framework was a meaningful way to understand participants' experience of receiving self-determination interventions, living with those interventions, and navigating through different levels of life by applying that intervention. Smith et al. (2021) said that "without the phenomenology, there would be nothing to interpret; without the hermeneutics, the phenomenon would not be seen" (p. 31).

In the context of the *Applicability of Self-Determination in Transition Planning*, SDT offers insight into the relationships of environments and social contexts to prompt individuals' self-determination in any environment. Ryan & Deci (2000) stated that by identifying social contexts based on SDT, self-determination programs must be designed in line with the environments of the individuals to be directed, as taking those environments into account will guide their development and performance. This accords with our earlier observations, which showed that the applicability of self-determination arose in participants' accounts within several domains, including the implementation duration of self-determination and environmental factors related to the application.

With that in mind, SDT advocates the basics of supporting psychological needs for any individual, including self-motivation and self-regulation in social contexts (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Thus, as arose in the participants' accounts, it was critical to generalize the learning environment and duration to participants' environmental contexts by providing numerous authentic opportunities to engage in a natural social setting. Fisher et al. (2020) indicated that "one of the main tenets of the SDT for peer mentoring programs is participating in activities within socially

valid, integrated environments and how these choices, people, and settings affect one another" (p. 303). There are similarities between the attitudes expressed by the participants' accounts in this study and those described by SDT. In the study, when expressing their experiences receiving self-determination interventions during transition planning, participants described the applicability of self-determination interventions (including implementation duration and environmental factors) as paramount regarding their post-secondary work success.

However, while SDT considers factors that enhance human potential derived from social environments as it can add value to designing interventions that improve people's development, work, and well-being (Ryan & Deci, 2000), SDT did not address the time factor in applying the theory. My findings indicate that inadequate implementation duration of self-determination negatively affected participants' development, work, and well-being. For example, Abdullah and Majed explained that self-determination interventions were limited to the last year/semester of high school, as the period was insufficient to enhance their self-determination and well-being at work. This study's findings offer new insights concerning the time factor in implementing SDT to promote the well-being and independence of employed adults with ID in work settings.

Self-Advocacy, Goal Setting, Self-Awareness, Problem-Solving, And Decision-Making Skills of Employed Adults with ID While in Post-Secondary Work

The third research question sought to investigate self-advocacy, goal setting, self-awareness, problem-solving, and decision-making skills of employed adults with ID while in post-secondary work. This study's participants provided responses demonstrating that some self-determination skills are more related to work. One unanticipated finding was that most participants felt that problem-solving was most relevant to their work environments. For some, critical moments in their experiences highlighted how problem-solving skills emerge as an important

factor, both in their exercise of self-determination at work and as an indicator by which they assess themselves as self-determining employees. Participants' self-awareness was associated with their past experiences. Participants in this study found self-determination skills to be more evident at work.

Employed adults with ID who participated in this study described their own self-advocacy, goal setting, self-awareness, problem-solving, and decision-making skills while in post-secondary work through the thematic finding, *Some Self-Determination Skills are More Related to Work*. Most of their experiences practicing self-determination skills at work focused on a particular skill more than others, which was most relevant to them based on their individual context, such as problem-solving. Five participants (Falah, Haya, Abdullah, Sultan, and Sara) described problem-solving skills as the most critical and enduring trait of being a self-determined person, and they found it directly valuable for their careers. While other skills were also described as useful, problem-solving occurred more significantly when discussing self-determination as a concept or when describing self-determination as multiple skills. For instance, Falah blamed his former employers for not extending his job contract while he could "solve the problems." The finding further supports this idea that some participants described problem-solving skills as employers' most crucial consideration when evaluating their employees. For example, Abdullah said, "I got the job because I can deal with problems. None of the study participants mentioned another skill with the same momentum as problem-solving. Sultan also believes that his ability to solve a problem was the reason for his last promotion. The findings strongly imply the participants' dialogues behind their achievements as self-determined employees (e.g., "promotion," "I got the job because I can deal with problems," "handle it myself," and "deal with any problem") were exceedingly connected to their success in post-secondary work, as they were able to solve their

problem to shine in their roles. These deep meanings strongly indicate the importance of self-determination and problem-solving skills in the workplace. Problem-solving skills were better suited to the practical application than other self-determination abilities that are more conceptual and abstract in nature. In addition, problem-solving skills were particularly critical in participants' accounts as they required participants to implicitly practice some self-determination skills, such as goal setting, decision making, and self-awareness. Thus, developing problem-solving abilities may be a good place to start to increase the self-determination level of this population.

My findings support the notion that self-awareness as a skill is closely related to the participants' prior experiences, which occurred outside the scope of school and transition planning. This idea is supported further by the many similarities in the participants' accounts. Most participants described self-awareness as a skill acquired alongside other self-determination skills in transition planning, with distinct descriptions focusing on how self-awareness is gained from these individuals' personal environments. Falah and Haya, for example, stated that their prior experiences primarily shaped their self-awareness before enrolling in transition planning programs. Both participants' experiences confirmed a remarkable level of self-awareness at work and how their self-awareness shaped their approach to success in work environments as self-determined individuals. The participants believed that their early awareness of themselves and the world facts allowed them to succeed in any scenario and become successful employees. For instance, Sarah stated that she could be a good employee and attributed this ability to her self-awareness, which she developed from a young age. This dimension reflects an early stage in participants' lives that significantly influenced their self-awareness in work settings. While the participants did not underscore other critical self-determination skills (e.g., decision-making and

goal-setting), these skills were not discussed extensively in their accounts, even when prompted to discuss them.

When asked to describe their self-advocacy, goal setting, self-awareness, problem-solving, and decision-making skills, participants first mentioned their jobs. Therefore, Haya believes that when it comes to practicing self-determination skills, this manifests in her job. According to Majed, these skills are developed after being employed by having the opportunity to gain more practice. Because appropriate environments for practicing self-advocacy, goal-setting, self-awareness, problem-solving, and decision-making skills were not readily available to some participants, Majid used the workplace to hone his skills. Similarly, Sultan believes that his employment experience has helped him make better decisions, advocate for himself, set goals, and solve problems. Given the scarcity of opportunities to hone these skills outside of the workplace, it served as a supportive scope for highlighting the participants' self-determination skills.

Connection to the literature. With regard to their self-advocacy, goal setting, self-awareness, problem-solving, and decision-making skills while in post-secondary work, the participants in this study gave answers that some self-determination skills are more related to work. Critical moments in their accounts underscored problem-solving skills as fundamental for employed adults with ID in practicing self-determination at work and as an indicator by which they assess themselves as self-determined employees. Moments of victory participants experienced in the past encouraged their self-awareness at work. The participants found that the self-determination skills are more connected and evident at work, where they said (e.g., " understandable at work," "at work is better," and "connected").

Although the in-depth review of the literature on self-determination in work settings for people with ID yielded few findings, prior research on self-determination among individuals with

ID indicates that problem-solving training, mainly, is critical for individuals with ID. For instance, literature argued that social problem-solving training was specifically practical for reducing anxiety, as it also increases self-efficacy and self-esteem for individuals with ID (D'Zurilla et al., 2003; Ladouceur et al., 1998; Szabo & Lovibond, 2002). A study by Carter et al. (2015) explored providing self-determination instruction in elementary and secondary schools has also suggested that problem-solving was remarkably higher than all other skills in terms of the importance educators placed on teaching self-determination.

Even though there has been little research into the social skills of people with ID, Tsikinas & Xinogalos (2019) noted that problem-solving is a crucial attribute that is used to assess the cognitive abilities of individuals with ID. Concerning the self-awareness of individuals with ID in work settings, a study by Wehmeyer (2020) noted that the belief and notions of people with ID towards a particular thing shape a large part of their self-awareness of it. While much literature has demonstrated the importance of self-determination as effective strategies in a variety of contexts (Shogren & Shaw, 2016; Shogren et al., 2018; Wehmeyer et al., 2018; Wehmeyer; 2020), the literature does not reveal that self-determination is particularly important and appears to be more effective in work settings than in other social and life settings.

While self-determination is a crucial factor that can impact the success and well-being of individuals with ID in work settings, the present study affirms that some self-determination skills are more relevant to the work settings of this population. The present study extends this prior research in suggesting that problem-solving skill was a paramount factor for employed adults with ID, both in being self-determined at work and as an indicator of how they consider themselves as self-determined employees. Additionally, this study also affirms that self-awareness skills are more closely related to past experiences than the learning models provided in transition planning.

Finally, this study confirms that self-determination skills only gain significant importance in the workplaces of individuals with ID. While self-determination appears to be more effective in work settings than other social and life settings, the cultural relevance of self-determination in participants' accounts contributed to constructing this particular significance of self-determination at work. Therefore, the effectiveness of self-determination in work settings may be specifically attributed to its cultural relevance in work, as the work environment model provides more meaningful opportunities for social cohesion, as some collective decisions are taken, and the focus is on teamwork. Hence, work settings were suitable for self-determination to emerge more effectively.

With this claim, I do not mean to suggest that problem-solving skills are generally the most critical skills associated with self-determination or that self-awareness cannot be developed through new experiences because it is only related to past experiences. For example, self-awareness also emerged in the context of work as another crucial skill, as both Haya and Falah expressed an innate self-awareness that prompted them to learn the skills of self-determination and get a job. Also, a study by Morningstar & Clavenna-Deane (2018) suggests that self-determination skills should be taught in an integrated manner rather than focusing on a specific part, as all these skills should be presented as one model in order to ensure better performance of individuals with ID in post-secondary settings. Nevertheless, participants' experiences seemed to reflect a different way regarding how they received these skills in their transition planning, as my findings indicate that problem-solving skills were critically more related to work than other self-determination skills. It also seems that self-awareness was not shaped by the interventions provided during transitional planning programs more than by previous experiences. Ultimately, self-determination skills were unrelated to autonomy and success as a concept before career engagement.

Substantially, according to these data, we can infer that not all self-determination skills appear at the same level in the work settings of employed adults with ID. As such, these findings raise intriguing questions regarding the nature of quality indicators applied in the self-determination interventions promoted in transition planning. Undoubtedly, these findings may help the field to understand how self-determination skills are distinguished in terms of the most related skills to post-secondary work, education, and so on.

Relationship to theoretical framework. Participants found that problem-solving skills prompted a large part of their psychological needs when describing self-advocacy, goal setting, self-awareness, problem-solving, and decision-making skills while in post-secondary work. Their accounts showed that this particular skill raised their competencies as self-determined employees. Previous experiences were paramount to their self-awareness, and self-determination skills were more critical within work settings.

The notion that some self-determination skills are more relevant to the work environments of individuals with ID is consistent with the concept that experiences should be investigated as they appear in their natural settings (Smith & Fieldsend, 2021; Valle et al., 1989). It was critical to understand self-determination through a perspective that considers the lived experience, its associated objects, and relationships that emerge through that experience, in Fielding's (2014) words, “how things, people and relations appear” (p. 519). However, my finding is more specific about employed adults with ID lived experience, its associated objects, and the relationships formed as a result of that experience. Indeed, a prominent relationship between the participants and their environment emerged in their lived experiences and arose in their pursuit of satisfying their psychological desires at work through specific self-determination skills. Participants'

associations with some of the self-determination skills they received during transition planning seemed more robust than their association with other skills, for instance, problem-solving skills.

SDT mainly focuses on the role of people's behaviors within their environments in satisfying basic psychological needs, as the environment itself is not the focus of attention but rather what it means functionally to support the people's psychological needs (Vallerand et al., 2008). At the same time, SDT contains a second sub-theory called organismic integration theory (OIT) that considers emergent contextual factors as they could be a potential motivation to enhance or restrict one's behavior (Deci & Ryan, 1985). The emerged contextual factors play an essential role in the application of OIT. According to Ryan (1993), based on OIT, people rely on their norms and traditions to form the personal values that direct the participants' behaviors. Thus, the discovered contextual factors influenced the type and nature of the motivations that guided the participants' behaviors. For example, involvement in work settings was a crucial contextual factor contributing to prompt problem-solving skills as essential in the participants' accounts. Therefore, with OIT in mind, understanding the influence of such contextual factors is beneficial at the individual and organizational levels to develop environments that support self-determination for these populations.

My findings affirm the behaviors' role of employed adults with ID within their environments in satisfying basic psychological needs. The participants were more independent when they practiced autonomy in a way that reflected their competence and needs as employees, whether focusing on problem-solving as an essential skill that appeared remarkably in their accounts or in light of their past experiences that shaped their self-awareness. With this claim, I am not suggesting that contexts arising in participants' experiences will always lead to the

conclusion that problem-solving skills are most important among other self-determination skills and that self-awareness cannot be shaped without prior experiences.

However, my findings indicate that self-awareness was shaped independently by participants' previous experiences. More importantly, problem-solving as a skill clearly emerges as a crucial trait of self-determination, autonomy, and career success and can strongly influence future employability opportunities for this population. While SDT is presumed to shape our sense of what might enhance individuals' quality of life as employees in terms of providing insights into work contexts based on their basic needs (Deci & Ryan, 2012; Gagné et al., 2022), SDT does not suggest how some of its own elements can be more influential than others. This is an important issue for future research. Also, there are still many unanswered questions about how self-determination theory can help improve the attitudes and performance of candidates when such theoretical paradoxes.

The Essence of Employed Adults with ID's Lived Experiences of Self-Determination During Post-Secondary Work

The fourth research question sought to investigate the essence of employed adults with ID's lived experiences of self-determination during post-secondary work. Employed adults with ID who participated in this study described the essence of their lived experiences of self-determination during post-secondary work through the thematic finding, *Self-Determination is Essential Because it is Developable.* The response to the questions revealed that the essence of their experiences of self-determination during post-secondary work lies in the possibility of developing self-determination through failed experiences that brought negative pressure or practice.

As employees with ID, when they talked about the most critical traits central to their experiences, they described self-determination as something they developed during different

periods of their post-secondary work life, which also prompted their development on a personal level as employees. Participants in the study describe the essence of their lived experiences of self-determination during post-secondary work by referring to several field experiences and practices. The findings strongly imply that participants' failed work experiences and negative pressure significantly developed their self-determination within work practice.

Falah explained that when he faced difficulties finding work with a long contract, he concluded that developing his educational level was the best solution to obtain a suitable job, so he began completing his post-secondary education. Haya also said that she initially had difficulties with discipline in her work but tried to find a solution by requesting to work remotely, even for a certain period. Haya's failure in discipline contributed to finding other solutions, such as remote work. Two other results from this study merit comment. While Majid lost one of his friends, his repeated failure to develop his relationships was a strong reason for him to see that his self-determination was insufficient. Thus, some circumstances -such as the lack of friends in Majid's work environment- prompted a suitable environment where self-determination skills, such as problem-solving and decision-making, emerged at a more developed level. Thus, Majid felt that the need for a friend in his life prompted him to develop himself into becoming more self-assertive and developing strategies to find other friends at work. This idea is further supported by the finding that the negative pressure inspired Haya to become more determined to get the job that suited her desires. However, this pressure did not make Haya give up; on the contrary, it clearly contributed to making her take an extra step to get a job, which was evident through her request to meet one of the chief executive officers and explain her situation and circumstances, then she got the job. Interestingly, the essence of those individuals' lived experiences was often expressed through their

awareness of their successes after unsuccessful work experiences and that they were able to develop and adjust their self-determination levels and become more autonomous at work.

Another important finding was that self-determination could be developed as it is adjustable in line with the different work settings in which the participants engage. The participants described self-determination as strategies that can be adjusted and developed to be more consistent with their post-secondary work and are not necessarily practiced in the same form received in transition planning. Thus, my findings highlight that self-determination can be developed due to and within field experiences and practices. The participants described the essence of their experiences as employees by emphasizing some practices that helped them develop their self-determination at work. Participants highlighted the importance of practicing self-determination in line with their work contexts.

The ability to travel independently and the decision to learn to drive were very significant when Haya described the essence of her experiences as employees with ID. Haya felt more independent at work as she could make new decisions, such as learning "how to drive." she "does not need to argue with anyone" about her decisions anymore because she got employed. As if the job and work practice gave her the level of confidence desired, in front of herself or her community, to be the one who makes the decision and acts as the causal agent in her life. Sultan highlighted how his way of practicing self-determination at work has developed over time. He believes his job allowed him to develop critical self-determination skills, such as problem-solving and decision-making. Through his work, Sultan realized that sometimes, problems could not be solved right away, and it takes persistence to try again and again. Majid found that at work, he started helping other employees with the aim of making friendships, as he said, "I would not do something similar if I were not employed." Also, Sarah used to think that having a job was the

most crucial component of her life. However, after getting a job, she understood how to prioritize her responsibilities better. At work, she learned that if her work position conflicted with her family's needs, she was willing to leave to secure their well-being.

It is interesting to note that participants' accounts yielded these decisions within their field practices as examples of their experiences' essence because such decisions would not have been made without receiving self-determination interventions, passing through failed work experiences, and their deep belief that they could develop their skills as self-determined employees. When considering these aspects of the lived experiences of the six participants and then pairing them with the prevailing situation of adults with ID who did not have opportunities to engage in training that promotes interventions towards self-determination and then employment, these findings demonstrate why the participants described some of the events in their accounts to be the essence of their experiences. Indeed, it is not always easy to articulate or understand such an essence by those who have not had opportunities to engage in programs that promote self-determination and post-secondary work. Taken together, my findings indicate that the importance of self-determination for working adults with ID lies in its developability through practice. Participants' accounts yielded a higher level of autonomy, and thus a higher level of self-determination, in their post-secondary work because of field practices that made them better able to practice self-determination in a developed manner compared to how they were practicing self-determination in their transition planning or first jobs. For instance, the way decisions are made, the types of decisions made, the way problems are solved, and the type of problems being solved.

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Connection to the literature. With respect to their understanding of the essence of their lived experiences of self-determination during post-secondary work, participants in this study provided descriptions that demonstrated that negative pressure significantly developed their self-determination at work. In addition, their self-determination level developed because their determination skills seemed to be adjustable to the various work settings in which the participants participated.

Prior research on the developability of self-determination among individuals with ID has also found that self-determination skills can be developed through certain factors, such as experience and practice. For instance, Altena et al. (2018) claimed that self-determination is developed by several means, including cognitive coping, experience, and quality of life. Additionally, National Parent Center on Transition and Employment (n.d) noted that developing self-determination skills is a lifelong process and is often most effectively developed through practice. A study by Dean et al. (2021) noted that the use of the self-determined career development

model helped develop self-determination skills and career levels of employees with ID. Additionally, Wehmeyer & Garner (2003) claimed that less restrictive environments such as work contribute to the development of intelligence in individuals with ID and thus to the development of their self-determination level.

This present study extends this prior research by suggesting two critical factors that framed the core of self-determination. First, the employees with ID's pursuit to develop themselves as independent and self-determined in their career lives was prompted by undesirable experiences and conflicts they lived, such as failed experiences and negative pressure. Second, they experienced higher levels of self-determination when they could adjust the self-determination skills they learned in transition planning to align with their work settings. With this claim, I do not mean to suggest that failed experiences and how to apply self-determination skills are exclusive and the only factors that make self-determination intrinsic to the lives of employees with ID. For example, although her decision was supported by several failed experiences finding a job, Haya attributes a large part of this decision, which formed the essence of her independence and self-determination, to her mother, “my mom.” A study by Dean (2021) has also suggested that self-determination is primarily supported and developed by families of individuals with ID.

However, my findings suggest that more work experiences generate events that may put this population in undesirable situations (e.g., failed experiences), which was intrinsic in terms of enhancing their autonomy to be more self-determined at work. My findings also suggest that it is necessary to offer a certain level of flexibility at which employees with ID can adjust self-determination skills in line with their work settings, as receiving such skills in transition planning can be very different from practicing them in work settings.

Relationship to theoretical framework. Adapting the phenomenological theory in the theoretical framework of this study raised critical conclusions about the underlying meaning of the lived experiences of the six participants. Moreover, this deep philosophical understanding of the participants' experiences revealed previously unfathomable depths, rich details, and fascinating intricacies (Van Manen, 2017). This philosophical and methodological framework highlights how the participants describe the essence of their experiences of self-determination during post-secondary work. While self-determination can be developed, the participants' work practice led to a higher level of self-determination when going through failed experiments followed by successful ones. Moreover, delving into their experiences, the participants also described the essence of their lived experience in post-secondary work by mentioning moments of success after going through failed stations. Those stations were sometimes marked by sad moments in the participants' accounts and overcoming them was a great victory that reflected positively on their post-secondary work. In light of this, participants' accounts yielded those specific meanings that participants considered the essence of their experiences as employees with ID.

Concerning SDT, Cherry (2016) reported that SDT indicates that the need for growth drives and reinforces people's behaviors so that new experiences are necessary for development. Also, the need for autonomy is a permanent motivation that prompts people to be self-determined. Indeed, this theoretical dimension of SDT is consistent with what the participants' accounts yielded, as they had an urgent need for growth and autonomy, which led them to make some decisions that constituted decisive transformations in their post-secondary work. Hence, they described these specific experiences within these contexts as the essence. For example, Falah mentioned, "in my fourth job, they also refused to renew my contract so I decided to look for a job that I will not leave, with a renewable contract." Also, when Haya said: "the manager told me that

I must be trained first, and I agreed." Certainly, this need for growth and autonomy reinforced their behaviors and pushed them to be more self-determined in their work settings. Therefore, they described these turns and events as the essence of their lived experiences in post-secondary work.

However, SDT have not treated its evolvability, how it is applied in work contexts or is used by practitioners in actual work settings in much detail. Forner et al. (2020) asserted that "very little empirical attention has been paid to examining how the theory is applied, interpreted, and/or used by practitioners in real-world settings" (p. 79). Current published studies are limited to local surveys, so such studies are unsatisfactory because they do not capture the essence of practitioners' experiences in real-world contexts. This study's findings concluded that self-determination, theoretically, is developable through practice, which means several taxonomies for SDT might be developed to contain previously non-existent dimensions.

Improving Self-Determination Skills Related to The Pursuit of and During Post-Secondary Work of Employed Adults with ID

The fifth research question explored what employed adults with ID describe as essential to what they need to improve their self-determination skills related to their pursuit of and during post-secondary work. Employed adults with ID who participated in this study expressed what they consider essential to improving their self-determination skills related to their pursuit of and during post-secondary work in one emergent theme: *Directed Self-Determination Training Produces Better Results.* Participants in this study described certain factors as essential to what they need to direct their self-determination skills regarding their pursuit of and during post-secondary work. These factors were found to be indispensable in enhancing their sense of self-determination at work. Rather than speaking broadly about self-determination training during transition planning,

the participants underlined the significance of self-determination job-directed training they received, regardless of whether schools, institutes, or families provided it.

While the six participants were employees with ID, diving into their accounts reflects a unique experience formed from this combination of their characteristics (as employees and as individuals with ID). This combination has yielded unprecedented data on what is considered essential to what the participants need to improve their self-determination skills in relation to their pursuit of and during post-secondary work. Five participants reported the effectiveness of interventions that promoted self-determination during or before employment which closely simulated work environments. For example, Falah talked about his experience with his father and how it strengthened his self-determination in his current work, as he was receiving much guidance and directed training. It was, he says, a way for him to feel independent. Sarah also went through a directed training phase by her mother, as this directed training contributed to a more self-determined personality in post-secondary work. Haya expressed experiences similar to Sarah's, in which the mother played an essential role in Haya's life, contributing to the framing of what Haya considered essential to what she needed to improve her self-determination skills in her pursuit of and during post-secondary work.

Through the participants' personal directed training, some of which were before or during high school, they expressed an impressive level of self-determination prompted by their personal experiences. In the participants' voices, the concept of independence emerged, like Abdullah's experience, as an essential factor that strengthened and maintained self-determination in the participants' pursuit of and during post-secondary work. Abdullah revealed his deep experience, as he had to work when he was a high school student with his cousin in the vegetable market. This experience brought Abdullah through the essential traits of what self-determination can be like at

work, as he notes that he learned a lot through that experience, particularly about being a self-determined person. Interestingly, besides their contribution to making them more self-determined at work, the importance of such training arose in the participants' lived experiences as a way to overcome undesirable thoughts about themselves.

In addition to the personal-directed training that participants described, more profound experiences of self-determination were also demonstrated when participants were exposed to employment-directed training. Participants underwent different experiences in terms of preparing them for being self-determined at work. Participants who received employment-directed training (i.e., job-specific training) considered such training essential for what they needed to improve their self-determination skills regarding their pursuit of and during post-secondary work. Majed and Haya found that their training at the post-secondary level school positively influenced their self-determination in work settings, leading to a greater sense of autonomy. As a result of training, they can finish tasks independently without relying on anyone else. For instance, they could independently file complaints and manage troubles more effectively. Notably, they faced more difficulties in their previous jobs before this training, which made them feel less qualified than their peers or embarrassed, as this training enabled them to overcome some undesirable ideas about themselves as employees with ID.

While Sultan said that in his previous job, which preceded this directed training, he used to ask many questions, which caused him much embarrassment, he found that this training was “all he needed” to be independent and successful in his work. Referring to the same meaning shown in the accounts of Majid, Haya, and Sultan, Sarah found this targeted training crucial in enhancing her autonomy and success in the work setting. Although she referred to her current job, she found that this directed training effectively contributes to making her more independent and

thus improving her work performance. Noteworthy, the participants, remarkably, exhibit a greater sense of confidence and motivation when describing their experiences in this domain, which I did not find at this level in many parts of their interviews. Therefore, whether the work-directed-self-determination training they received was indirectly (through parents) or directly (through the centers), these experiences and training had an essential dimension in the participants' lived experiences as employees. My findings highlight that participants' directed experiences and training that prompted self-determination in line with actual work settings made them more self-determined at work and ultimately qualified them for better job opportunities.

Connection to the literature. Regarding what they describe as essential to improve their self-determination skills related to their pursuit of and during post-secondary work, the participants in this study gave answers that illustrated the significance of self-determination-directed training designed to shape and prompt their abilities in line with potential job requirements. This training was provided through personal experiences often offered by their parents or institutional training provided through the centers where they worked. Directed self-determination training encouraged them to change disliked thoughts about themselves and qualified them to get better employment opportunities and act independently in work settings.

Although the literature that explored the effectiveness of workplace-directed self-determination training through center training or experiences enhanced by parents or specialized centers is limited, the prior research on self-determination among individuals with ID has also found that community and parental participation in designing self-determination strategies are essential for post-secondary success. For instance, some literature generally indicated that although self-determination is a permanent indicator of autonomy, post-secondary work success and independence positively correlate with programs designed based on community, parental

involvement, and work-study (Mazzotti et al., 2021; Shogren et al., 2017). Moreover, Wehmeyer & Bolding (2001) stated that individuals with ID who received self-determination interventions based on where they lived or worked had higher levels of self-determination and autonomy than peers who received self-determination interventions in programs not designed based on social settings. While the intellectual performance of individuals with ID is related to the support provided, their level of self-determination and the degree of their involvement in work depends mainly on the learning environment and its relationship to work environments (Wehmeyer et al., 2011). In addition, Shogren & Shaw (2017) asserted that reevaluating the implementation of interventions that promote self-determination is fundamental to make them more appropriate to the diverse contexts in which individuals with ID interact.

The current study extends this prior research in proposing that the self-determination work-related experiences these individuals acquire from their parents are essential in their pursuit of and during post-secondary work. Also, the institutional self-determination-directed training provided by the specialized centers, designed to qualify individuals with ID to be self-determined in specific work environments compatible with the needs of each individual, was of great importance in pushing them to be self-determined in post-secondary work.

With this claim, I do not mean to suggest that self-determination as an approach would only be valid with designing its learning models in a way that aligns with work settings. A study by Vicente et al. (2020) has also suggested that promoting self-determination interventions through the contexts in which individuals with ID live and develop, such as homes and workplaces, is critical but not enough, as we need to ensure that these individuals are not restricted in their learning environments. However, my findings indicate that this type of training frames skills that

help employees with ID apply self-determination as job-related skills and gives them a sense of power and proficiency they need at work.

Relationship to theoretical framework. Again, the assumption of this study was to give voice to the actual lived experiences of employed adults with ID using the analytic approach of IPA. Thus, within the context of "the constitution of meaning" in the phenomenological theory, Freeman (2021) claimed that "phenomenology is a philosophical way of attending to the way our experiencing bodies participate in the constitution of meaning" (p. 2). The phenomenological theory has provided insights into how these relationships in the participants' lived experiences shape the meanings that lead to extracting the essence from those experiences. In the study, participants described their individual lives in the context of their work settings based on what they need to improve their self-determination skills related to their pursuit of and during post-secondary work. Accordingly, the meanings formed through the participants' lived experiences led to unprecedented results, such as the importance of *Directed Self-determination Training*. The phenomenological theory supports this theme by explaining that any experience should be investigated as it appears in its natural setting (Smith & Fieldsend, 2021; Valle et al., 1989).

With respect to the SDT, the idea that some external sources of motivation actively contribute to the development of self-determination in human behavior (Ryan & Deci, 2000; Vansteenkiste et al., 2012) aligns with this theme. However, my finding is more specific about the role of external sources in developing self-determination in individuals with ID behavior. While the external resource that will motivate self-determination may appear in multiple forms, participants' accounts yielded Directed Self-determination Training as an external resource of motivation they considered essential to what they need to improve their self-determination skills related to their pursuit of and during post-secondary work. This directed self-determination

training made the participants active contributors and causal agents in their actions and behaviors through those experiences and made them more aware of their future and potential work environments and hence, more self-determined.

Limitations

The study's major limitation was the generalizability of its findings. The findings of such a qualitative phenomenological research approach remain limited in one way or another to the participants who participated in the study. Therefore, due to the essence of this qualitative approach and its small sample size, the generalizability of this study's findings cannot be assured. However, Smith et al. (2021) stated that "it is also possible to think in terms of theoretical transferability rather than empirical generalizability" (p. 45). This can be addressed by correlating the study findings, my professional experience, and the assertions made in the current theories and literature, which are already addressed in this study. In this sense, the findings of a study can be theoretically transferable to similar contexts.

To a great extent, member checking is an identified strategy to increase qualitative research's credibility (Patton, 2002). One limitation of this study is that this strategy was not implemented in its intended form by returning the results as documents due to the type of disability of the participants. Birt et al. (2016) noted that audio recordings or brief meetings might be practical alternatives to the standard written way to address challenges when recruiting participants with disabilities. Therefore, I held brief meetings with the participants to confirm the credibility of the results. However, member checking no longer represents an absolute standard for the credibility of phenomenological research in general and IPA in particular, as this research relies heavily on interpretivism's principles. (McGaha & D'Urso, 2019; McConnell-Henry, 2011).

While the participants are individuals with ID, another limitation of this study is that the semi-structured interviews were conducted with difficulty because the constitution of the meanings did not proceed as expected. Participants did not use lengthy and detailed statements in their answers and descriptions. Indeed, using lengthy statements would make the analysis process more manageable. On the contrary, participants often engaged in the interviews' dialogues using short statements (phrases from a few words), which demanded me as a researcher to ask the questions in many ways and at many different times to get to the bottom and the core of the participants' answers. Also, while the in-depth dialogues of the semi-structured interviews among the participants demonstrated their understanding of the meaning of terms used in this study, their comprehension of some of the terms may still pose a limitation to the study.

One limitation of this study is that the age range of the participants was restricted to individuals with ID aged 23 to 35. This age span was chosen purposefully to focus on a specific post-school period, although it may restrict my findings' transferability to older and younger groups. Another limitation of this study is that the semi-structured interviews were the only source of its data. Therefore, it was not possible to triangulate the data regarding its sources. Such a limitation might be addressed in future research by conducting phenomenological research with multiple data sources.

Conclusion

Being a self-determined employed adult with ID is a critical challenge. Therefore, this population's lived experiences reflected various challenges and demands. These individuals strove to be self-determined in their work contexts based on what they learned in pre-employment. Self-determination emerges in the lived experiences of these individuals as employees through essential turning points in their career lives. As a result, many of their perceptions and behaviors are shaped.

This study aimed to capture the real and lived experiences of employed adults with ID and to look specifically at how self-determination manifests in those experiences. With this attempt at understanding, I captured the experiences of six employed adults with ID who engaged in multiple jobs and settled in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.

This study's findings strongly imply that employed adults with ID understand self-determination through their cultural contexts, including personal and work related contexts, where gender roles and family relationships played a major role in shaping this understanding. The applicability of self-determination in transition planning was associated with the implementation period and environmental factors related to individuals with ID. Participants' accounts revealed that problem-solving skill was most important in their work settings and that self-determination was, to a large extent, amenable to adjustment and development through practice. Lastly, I obtained evidence that directed self-determination training toward work was valuable, whether personal or employment-directed training.

The present research, therefore, contributes to a growing body of evidence suggesting that exploring lived experiences of individuals with ID is imperative. Their lived experiences added unprecedented results to the scarce literature on this population. Through the semi-structured interviews, the voices of employed adults with ID had the opportunity to be heard. While this study is the first of its kind in this field, particularly in the Saudi context, it is only the beginning of a broad field that still needs more in-depth qualitative explorations. It is my hope that the results of this study will pave the way to construct new opportunities for individuals with ID to be self-determined in their work settings.

Implications for Practice

Despite previous limitations, these results point to several theoretical and practical implications. Indeed, the importance of exploring and understanding the lived experiences of employed adults with ID may be questioned by professionals and practitioners in this field. Moreover, it may come to mind how the results of this study enrich the two main sectors: Education (regular and higher education) and the labor market. From this point of view, these data have some potential implications. For instance, there are significant implications for practices and legislation related to education and the labor market regarding the positive change of self-determination interventions to prepare successful, autonomous, and self-determined employed adults with ID.

Nowadays, McBride et al. (2021) reported that intellectual disability affects about "2% of the overall population, 3.8% of children aged between 0 and 15 years, and 1.5% of citizens aged 16 years or older" (p.1). Additionally, according to the American Psychiatric Association (2021), 85% of people diagnosed with ID are people with mild ID. With that prevalence of intellectual disability in mind, about 35% of adults with ID are involved in post-secondary work (Avellone, 2021). In light of this, although there have been some successes in the pursuit of work of individuals with ID as self-determined employees, their journeys passed through many obstacles and, in fact, are still filled with many unexplored and understood obstacles. To this end, this section provided implications for practice resulting from this study's findings for both fields: Education and the labor market.

Implications for Educational Practice

At the level of school settings, the findings of this study suggest different ways to improve self-determination interventions that are prompted in transition planning. For example, there is a need for urgent professional development in training specialists to work in programs that promote

self-determination interventions for individuals with ID in transition planning programs. The Saudi Ministry of Education may consider creating new workshops and programs that focus on professional and career development for in-service and pre-service special education teachers/ school personnel that may be providing self-determination training in secondary settings. Also, college/university personnel who serve students with ID in postsecondary settings. Moreover, when it comes to promoting self-determination interventions during the secondary level for students with ID, transition planning programs need to be modeled with successful international experiences (e.g., the U.S.).

Quality indicators and national standards for self-determination programs' performance must be designed to ensure the validity of these programs. Indeed, quality indicators and national standards should ideally have a number of attributes developed in collaboration with all stakeholders to include students' social and workplace contexts. Insights from this study showed that the lack of national standards for promoting self-determination interventions means that transition planning programs need a policy and standards framework to promote self-determination interventions professionally. At the other end of the spectrum, self-determination programs should include interventions to introduce students to the essence of self-determination by involving them more in real-world settings. It is noted that individuals with ID may take a long time without knowing what self-determination means, as the participants shaped this understanding of self-determination through cultural contexts that were often outside the framework of general education settings. Therefore, it is crucial to ensure that practitioners with ID must be adeptly familiarized with the nature of the interventions they go through during their transition planning phase.

On their part, the Ministry of Education in Saudi Arabia needs to make self-determination interventions offered to secondary students more relevant to their actual environments. As such, it

is critical to design applicable self-determination interventions in the contexts of students' natural environments by creating strategies for reviewing and evaluating the interventions currently prompted based on the results of this study. Furthermore, this study concluded that some of the skills of implicit self-determination skills are more relevant to work settings. Therefore, in transition planning programs, it may be essential to highlight some of the skills that contribute effectively to making individuals with ID more self-determined in work contexts (e.g., problem-solving skills and self-awareness). Likewise, self-determination training should be directed toward natural /real work settings. This means that self-determination training must be designed to simulate the potential employment position of each student to ensure the best possible outcomes. This can be done in cooperation with comprehensive rehabilitation centers and career rehabilitation centers for people with ID. Lastly, the Ministry of Education must ensure maintenance of self-determination interventions based on an ongoing and updated direct relationship between the work sectors and the self-determination programs prompted during the transition planning.

Implications for Labor Market Practice

Regarding the employability of individuals with ID, the labor market holds a significant part of the accountability for the employment success of employees with ID. Therefore, recommendations are provided to governmental and private agencies, employers, and stakeholders in order to design an equitable and applicable workplace for self-determined employed adults with ID. To create a supportive environment for self-determination for employed adults with ID, governmental and private institutions need to consider their employees' cultural backgrounds and contexts. The study findings suggest that self-determination in the work environments of individuals with ID appears to be a meaningful experience because it is more related to the work

settings than this population's educational settings. Therefore, supporting employed adults with ID to be self-determined at work is critical through post-employment training. Institutions can do this by offering workshops in cooperation with the Ministry of Education or related entities, which provide appropriate training for self-determination aligned with their real-work contexts.

Furthermore, it is critical to consider personal and cultural contexts of employed adults with ID. Institutions can do this by allowing their employees to work within the preferred work contexts, such as providing preferred communication ways, mutual respect in work environments, and contracts that guarantee reasonable financial security for employees. In addition, it is essential to consider the culture and traditions of employees related to their gender. The study indicates that considering these factors promotes higher levels of self-determination for employed adults with ID.

Recommendations for Future Research

This study explored self-determination in the lived experiences of adult employees with ID by adopting an interpretive phenomenological approach. Considering this and given the limited number of qualitative studies that addressed self-determination and employment of individuals with ID, specifically in the Saudi context, the following directions for future research will broaden the horizons of relevant research studies concerning this subject. To expand the scope of research being conducted on this topic, studies that include non-phenomenological approaches and qualitative studies that are built on exploring perspectives of people around individuals with ID will not be valuable for future exploration. Although conducting such approaches may end up with updated data on the topic, they do not recruit individuals with ID as a research sample. Thus, qualitative research on self-determination may consider recruiting individuals with ID as a research sample since there is a need, as the present study suggests, for further qualitative research

that explores the lived experiences of this population in different settings, such as self-determination training and post-secondary education settings.

Notably, the study found that cultural expectations about self-determination varied between male and female participants, underlining the importance of looking at cultural factors when studying gender differences. To this end, using a different sampling method with different criteria (e.g., those with spouses/children belonging to a particular ethnic, Saudi cultural, or social class, etc.) may increase the scope and depth of novel knowledge on this topic. Above, I have noted that, in contrast with previous research, this study found that problem-solving was the most critical skill taught during transition planning. Based on this finding, future research may explore whether and how problem-solving could be taught independently of other self-determination skills. Educators who offer training to individuals with ID may wish to examine whether and how problem-solving is foregrounded and emphasized, even when integrated with other self-determination skills.

As I indicated earlier, the study findings raise intriguing questions regarding the nature of quality indicators applied in the self-determination interventions promoted in transition planning. Based on this finding, future research may explore the current quality indicators by which self-determination programs are evaluated. Stakeholders may wish to develop, assess, or modify existing quality indicators. This study's findings concluded that self-determination, in theory, can be developed through practice. Future research may explore how many principles of SDT can be developed or re-evaluated in the Saudi context concerning individuals with ID.

Lastly, directions for future research may also be recommended based on some of the limitations identified in this study. For instance, future researchers may consider triangulating the data collection and analysis methods to increase the study's internal validity. Moreover, future

research might look at the same research topics in a large age range to better understand how age affects the factors of interest. Concerning the data collection process, in addition to collecting the data using semi-structured interviews, it is possible to conduct field observations and consider taking field notes and reflective journaling to collect comprehensive data about this topic. Similarly, along with IPA analytic approach, discourse analysis is a critical analytic method to consider in future research when analyzing the finding of qualitative studies. Interpretation of triangulated datasets may reveal more detailed information relevant to improving self-determination interventions in transition planning and developing work environments for individuals with ID within the context of Saudi Arabia. Indeed, much work remains to be done before a full and profound understanding of self-determination in the lived experiences of employed adults with ID is demonstrated.

Reflexivity

What self-determination looks like? Yes, I asked this question a lot and did not find a satisfactory answer until the date of analyzing the data of this study. Let's go back to the beginning! For nearly three years, I have worked as a special education teacher for students with ID at various levels (elementary, middle, and high school) in different cities in Saudi Arabia. Perhaps this work was not so much arduous as it was mysterious, at least for me at the time. And so, I had the opportunity to work directly with students with ID as a full-time teacher, and I ended up working with students with ID in high school in transition planning programs. The great chance to work with this population in such an intimate environment has enabled me to establish a new horizon for their needs, particularly with regard to self-determination. Therefore, as a special education teacher, I started implementing various educational programs to reach the needs of students with ID in the classroom. I have developed an Individualized Education Program (IEP) so that I can

create a specific plan for each student to meet their needs and goals. However, with all that in mind, I sought a way to understand self-determination when these students leave my school and program and dive into the post-secondary world. Indeed, it was one of the most critical questions that shaped my entire life.

Although I was aware that self-determination represents one's ability to act as a causal agent in making choices and decisions that affect his/her life, I wanted the essence behind acting as a causal agent. In the classrooms, beautifully, we have been repeating that self-determination enables individuals with ID to create and achieve goals for themselves, to have the power to make choices for themselves regarding their livelihood, to be able to stand up for their rights and needs; and take full responsibility for their choices and the consequences of those choices. But these concepts were not pretty when I visited Abdulelah. Abdulelah is one of my previous students in the program. He graduated and got a job. I had a strong relationship with him, and we were friends. Thus, when he told me that he got employed, I decided to visit him, but I could not find the echo of the tunes that we used to sing about self-determination between the restaurant walls where Abdulelah was an employee. So, I wondered what self-determination in the workplace looks like for my students. Aside from the urgent need to explore such a topic in an educational and legislative context in Saudi Arabia, which is paramount, I have long wanted to understand first. I think they-individuals with intellectual disabilities- deserve to be heard, and I deserve to listen and understand, and my country deserves to be the stage!

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Interview Protocol

Research question 1: How do employed adults with ID generally describe their understandings of self-determination?

1. Please tell me, does the term "self" sound familiar to you? Have you ever heard of the term "self"?
    - What does the term "self" mean to you?
    - How do you define it?
    - Using your own words, could you please restate what the term "self" means to you?
    - When was the first time you heard about the term "self"? Possible prompts: At home, high school, transition planning, at work.
2. Please tell me, does the term "determination" sound familiar to you? Have you ever heard of the term "determination"?
    - What does the term "determination" mean to you?
    - How do you define it?
    - Using your own words, could you please restate what the term "determination" means to you?
    - When was the first time you heard about the term "determination "? Possible prompts: At home, high school, transition planning, at work.
3. Please tell me, does the term "self-determination" sound familiar to you? Have you ever heard of self-determination?
    - What does the term "self-determination" mean to you?
    - How do you define it?

- Using your own words, could you please restate what self-determination means to you?
- When was the first time you heard about self-determination? Possible prompts: High schools, transition planning, at work.

4. Please tell me, did you learn and use self-determination skills?
    - Do you possess self-determination skills?
    - Do you decide what you want on your own or do you need someone's help?
    - Do the people around you (i.e., your parents, your sisters/brothers, your friends, your boss) decide what you want (on your behalf)? Potential prompt: Always, sometimes, never?

e. Please tell me on a day-to-day basis; how do you deal with your issues? Possible prompts: Do you have particular strategies for helping you? Ways of coping?
    - Does anyone else deal with your own business on your behalf? Possible prompts: Your parents, your sisters/brothers, your friends, your boss?

f. Please tell me about self-determination and your relations with other people.
    - Do self-determination skills make a difference?
    - Do you think self-determination skills are helpful?
    - Do you rely on self-determination skills in dealing with others? Possible prompts: Your parents, your sisters/brothers, your friends, your boss?

Research question 2: How do employed adults with ID describe the experience of receiving self-determination interventions during high school/transition planning and how it affected their success in post-secondary work?

1. Please tell me, what do self-determination strategies consist of?

- What do you know about the self-determination strategies you received in high school/transition planning? Possible prompts: Do you know self-advocacy, goal setting, self-awareness, problem-solving, and decision-making skills?

2. Please tell me about the first time you learned self-determination strategies in high school/transition planning: Possible prompts: Do you remember that? What did you learn? Did you like it/dislike it? Was it something new?
    - Was the impact of self-determination strategies clear? If yes, then how?
    - Was there anything else helped you in high school to get a job? Possible prompts: If yes, helped you with what? How?
3. Please tell me about a time when you were in high school/transition planning, did the interventions you received towards self-determination change the way you think or feel about yourself at work? Possible prompts: do you see yourself differently now than before high school? In what ways?
4. Please tell me, were the self-determination interventions taught by the same teachers? Possible prompts: Did you feel there was something different compared to the regular curriculum? How is that? Do you like it? Did you feel you needed it? Why/Why not?
5. Please tell me, do you think the teaching ways of self-determination skills helped you to get a job? Did you understand? Possible prompts: Do you think more explanation is important? More practical ways or vocational training were important?
6. Please tell me, what can be described as essential during your transition planning stage (in high school) regarding getting a job? Possible prompts: How did you feel during that time? What would you add/change/adjust? What did you want exactly?

g. Please tell me, what learning activities didn't really help during your transition planning stage (in high school) regarding getting a job? Possible prompts: How did you feel during that time? What would you add/change/adjust? What did you want exactly?

h. Please tell me, what helped you a lot in your transition planning stage (in high school) to get a job? Possible prompts: Did you use what you learned? Are there things you learned on your own? What did you learn on the job?

Research question 3: How do employed adults with ID describe their own self-advocacy, goal setting, self-awareness, problem-solving, and decision-making skills while in post-secondary work?

1. Please tell me, does the term self-advocacy sound familiar to you?
    - Have you ever heard of self-advocacy?
    - What does the term self-advocacy mean to you?
    - How do you define it?
    - Using your words, could you please restate what self-advocacy means to you?
2. Please tell me about the first time when you used self-advocacy (i.e., your ability to explain your needs, speak up and stand up for yourself).
    - Have you used this way before? Possible prompts: How long ago? After what? What helped?
    - Have you changed the ways you used self-advocacy skills at work compared to before you started work? Possible prompts: in what ways? Does anything make it better? Does anything make it worse?
    - How do you feel about these changes?

3. Please tell me, does the term " goal " sound familiar to you? Have you ever heard of the term " goal "?
    - What does the term "goal" mean to you?
    - How do you define it?
    - Using your own words, could you please restate what the term " goal " means to you?
    - When was the first time you heard about the term " goal "? Possible prompts: At home, high school, transition planning, at work.
4. Please tell me, does the term goal-setting sound familiar to you?
    - Have you ever heard of goal-setting?
    - What does the term goal-setting mean to you?
    - How do you define it?
    - Using your words, could you please restate what goal-setting means to you?
5. Please tell me about the first time when you set a goal for yourself (i.e., to select something you want to do, then look at the options that help you do what you want to do, then you do it, and finally, you see the result. For example, if you set a goal to buy a new car or get a higher salary, award, or promotion at work).
    - Have you used this way before? Possible prompts: How long ago? After what? What helped?
    - Have you changed how you used goal-setting skills (set a goal for yourself) at work? Possible prompts: in what ways? Does anything make it better? Does anything make it worse? How do you feel about these changes?
6. Please tell me, does the term "problem" sound familiar to you? Have you ever heard of the term "problem"?

- What does the term “problem” mean to you? Is the word “problem” a good thing or a bad thing? And why?
- How do you define it?
- Using your own words, could you please restate what the term “goal” means to you?
- When was the first time you heard about the term “goal” ? Possible prompts: At home, high school, transition planning, at work.

7. Please tell me, does the term problem-solving sound familiar to you?
    - Have you ever heard of problem-solving?
    - What does the term problem-solving mean to you?
    - How do you define it?
    - Using your words, could you please restate what problem-solving means to you?
8. Please tell me about the first time when you solved a problem for yourself (i.e., when you have a problem, did you first ask yourself what the problem is? What do you need to find out?” Second, did you ask yourself, what do you already know? How will you solve this problem? Third, did you look at what happened? For example: If you have problems with being on time, planning which job to do first, completing assignments on time, and talking with your boss, what should you do? Or, a child walks up to you at the fair and says she is lost, what should you do?).
    - Have you used this way before? Possible prompts: How long ago? After what? What helped?
    - Have you changed how you used problem-solving skills (solve a problem by yourself) at work? Possible prompts: in what ways? Does anything make it better? Does anything make it worse? How do you feel about these changes?

i. Please tell me, does the term “decision” sound familiar to you? Have you ever heard of the term “decision”?

- What does the term “decision” mean to you?
- How do you define it?
- Using your own words, could you please restate what the term “decision” means to you?
- When was the first time you heard about the term “decision”? Possible prompts: At home, high school, transition planning, at work.

j. Please tell me, does the term decision-making sound familiar to you?

- Have you ever heard of decision-making?
- What does the term decision-making to you?
- How do you define it?
- Using your words, could you please restate what decision-making means to you?

k. Please tell me about the first time you made a decision on your own (i.e., when you had to select one of several options. For example, decide what comes first, getting a job or getting married).

- Have you used this way before? Possible prompts: How long ago? After what? What helped?
- Have you changed the ways you used decision-making skills (decided for yourself) at work compared to before you began work? Possible prompts: In what ways? Does anything make it better? Does anything make it worse? How do you feel about these changes?

Research question 4: How do employed adults with ID describe the essence of their lived experiences of self-determination during post-secondary work?

1. Please tell me, when self-determination is important to you in your life? Possible prompts: At work? At home? In another place? Not important?
2. Please tell me how you started using self-determination at work? Possible prompts: How long ago? After what? What helped?
3. Please tell me, do you think self-determination skills helped you to be independent (i.e., you don't need others/reliance on yourself)?
    - If yes, when did you first feel it and how? Possible prompts: Did self-determination skills help you get a job?
4. Please tell me, did the job make you feel independent (i.e., you don't need others/depend on yourself)?
    - If yes, when did you first feel it?
    - How do you think other people see you after getting the job? Possible prompts: Your family, friends at work, and friends outside of work.
5. Please tell me, what are your self-determination skills like now compared to what they were like before work? What about the way other people see you now with respect to self-determination? Same? /Changed? Possible claims: Your parents, your sisters/brothers, your friends, your boss.
6. Please tell me, how would you describe self-determination in your daily work?
    - Do you know how to use self-determination skills in your daily work?
    - When do you think you need to use self-determination skills? Possible prompts: in certain situations? Every time? No need?

7. Please tell me, do you think there are certain situations at work where you need to use self-determination skills?
    - If yes, what are those situations? Possible prompts: Every time, if there is a problem, if I am alone, there are no particular situations.

Research question 5: What do employed adults with ID describe as essential to what they need to improve their self-determination skills related to their pursuit of and during post-secondary work?

1. Please tell me, how do you describe taking advantage of self-determination to get a job? Possible prompts: What can be essential? Specific skill? Set of skills? Something else?
2. Please tell me what would be a good work environment for you? Why? Possible prompts: how can you improve your workplace? Did you try? What do you miss at work?
3. Please tell me, can a (not good) work environment be described? If yes, then why and how? Possible prompts: What about your work environment? Do you want to change it? How?
4. Please tell me, can your self-determination skills help change the work environment from bad to good? Possible prompts: Why? Why not? How is that? Did you try? If yes, talk about your experience. How to improve your skills?
5. Please tell me, do you need to be employed?
    - Why?
    - What helped you?
    - Was getting a job your decision? Possible prompts: If yes, then why?
    - Why do you need a job? Possible prompts: What helped you? Did anyone help you in make the decision? Why did you choose this job specifically?

6. Please tell me, do you follow your boss's instructions regarding your life and work?
    - Why/Why not?
    - At work, do you follow your desires?
    - Did you need to consult someone? Possible prompts: Always, sometimes, never?
7. Please tell me about a time when you have to quit/changed your job? Possible prompts: Have you been in a similar situation?
    - If yes, how did you feel about it?
    - If not, can you think of reasons that might make you quit your job?
    - How do you see yourself in the future?

Appendix B: Letter of Invitation

Recruitment Email

STUDY004727

Dear principal of Sa'i Centre for Employment and Rehabilitation for Disabilities
Greetings,

My name is Abdelrahman Alzarie, and I am a Ph.D. candidate at The University of South Florida in Tampa, Florida. I am writing to let you know about an opportunity for your employees to participate in a voluntary research study (IRB number: STUDY004727) about Self-determination and The Lived Experience of Employed Adults with Intellectual Disabilities: An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis. I will be the principal investigator of this research study.

This research study aims to explore the lived experiences of employed adults with ID who received interventions toward self-determination in their transition planning during high school. Participation in this research study will be conducted through semi-structured interviews. Interviews will be conducted using virtual meeting software. The platform I will be using is Zoom. I will arrange appointments with the participants, and audio interviews will be recorded and transcribed. Each interview is expected to last between 45 and 60 minutes. Interviews will be conducted using virtual meeting software

I am looking for ten employed with mild intellectual disabilities, 18 years of age or older, who have sufficient communication abilities and possess expressive language—through traditional verbal speech—, received interventions prompted self-determination during transition planning, spent at least six months at work, and have a personal guardianship.

If any of your employees are interested, they can contact me via phone or email listed below. There are no known risks involved in this research study. Participation in this research study is entirely voluntary, there is no cost to participate, and participants will not be compensated for their participation. Therefore, there should be no penalties or loss of benefits or opportunities if the potential participants do not participate or decide to stop once they start. Also, their decision to participate or not to participate should not affect their job status, employment record, employee evaluations, or advancement opportunities.

If you have any questions, feel free to contact me at:
Email: XXXXX
Phone number: XXXXX

Thank you in advance, and your help is always appreciated.

Sincerely,
Abdelrahman

Appendix C: Informed Consent Form

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH FLORIDA

USF RESEARCH & INNOVATION

Script for Obtaining Verbal Informed Consent
Information to Consider Before Taking Part in this Research Study
Title: Self-determination and The Lived Experience of Employed Adults with Intellectual Disabilities: An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis

Study # STUDY004727

Overview: You are being asked to take part in a research study. The information in this document should help you to decide if you would like to participate. The sections in this Overview provide the basic information about the study. More detailed information is provided in the remainder of the document.

Study Staff: This study is being led by Abdelrahman Alzarie, who is a Ph.D. candidate at The University of South Florida. This person is called the Principal Investigator. He is being guided in this research by Dr. David Allsopp. Other approved research staff may act on behalf of the Principal Investigator.

Study Details: This study is being conducted at Sa'i Center for Employment and Rehabilitation for Disabilities in Riyadh City, Saudi Arabia. The purpose of the study is to explore the lived experiences of employed adults with Intellectual Disabilities (ID) who received interventions toward self-determination in their transition planning during high school. I will use a qualitative research design (an Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis). Thus, I will conduct semi-structured interviews; the duration of each interview will be between 45 to 60 minutes, and the interviews will be recorded.

Participants: You are being asked to take part because you are an individual with an intellectual disability who has experienced interventions that promoted self-determination before engaging in the job to see how self-determination appears in your actual lived experience at work.

Voluntary Participation: Your participation is voluntary. You do not have to participate and may stop your participation at any time. There will be no penalties or loss of benefits or opportunities if you do not participate or decide to stop once you start. Your decision to participate or not to participate will not affect your job status, employment record, employee evaluations, or advancement opportunities.

Benefits, Compensation, and Risk: We do not know if you will receive any benefit from your participation. There is no cost to participate. You will not be compensated for your participation. This research is considered minimal risk. Minimal risk means that study risks are the same as the risks you face in daily life.

Confidentiality: Even if we publish the findings from this study, we will keep your study information private and confidential. Anyone with the authority to look at your records must keep them confidential.

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If you have any questions, concerns, or complaints about this study, call Abdelrahman Alzarie at XXXXX. If you have questions about your rights, complaints, or issues as a person taking part in this study, call the USF IRB at (813) 974-5638 or contact the IRB by email at RSCH-IRB@usf.edu.

Would you like to participate in this study?

Appendix D: Institutional Review Board Approval

EXEMPT DETERMINATION

September 12, 2022

Abdelrahman Alzarie

Dear Abdelrahman Alzarie:

On 9/12/2022, the IRB reviewed and approved the following protocol:

Application Type:	Initial Study
IRB ID:	STUDY004727
Review Type:	Exempt 2
Title:	Self-determination and The Lived Experience of Employed Adults with Intellectual Disabilities: An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis
Funding:	None
Protocol:	• Study Protocol Version No.1 No Consents

The IRB determined that this protocol meets the criteria for exemption from IRB review.

In conducting this protocol, you are required to follow the requirements listed in the INVESTIGATOR MANUAL (HRP-103).

Please note, as per USF policy, once the exempt determination is made, the application is closed in BullsIRB. This does not limit your ability to conduct the research. Any proposed or anticipated change to the study design that was previously declared exempt from IRB oversight must be submitted to the IRB as a new study prior to initiation of the change. However, administrative changes, including changes in research personnel, do not warrant a modification or new application.

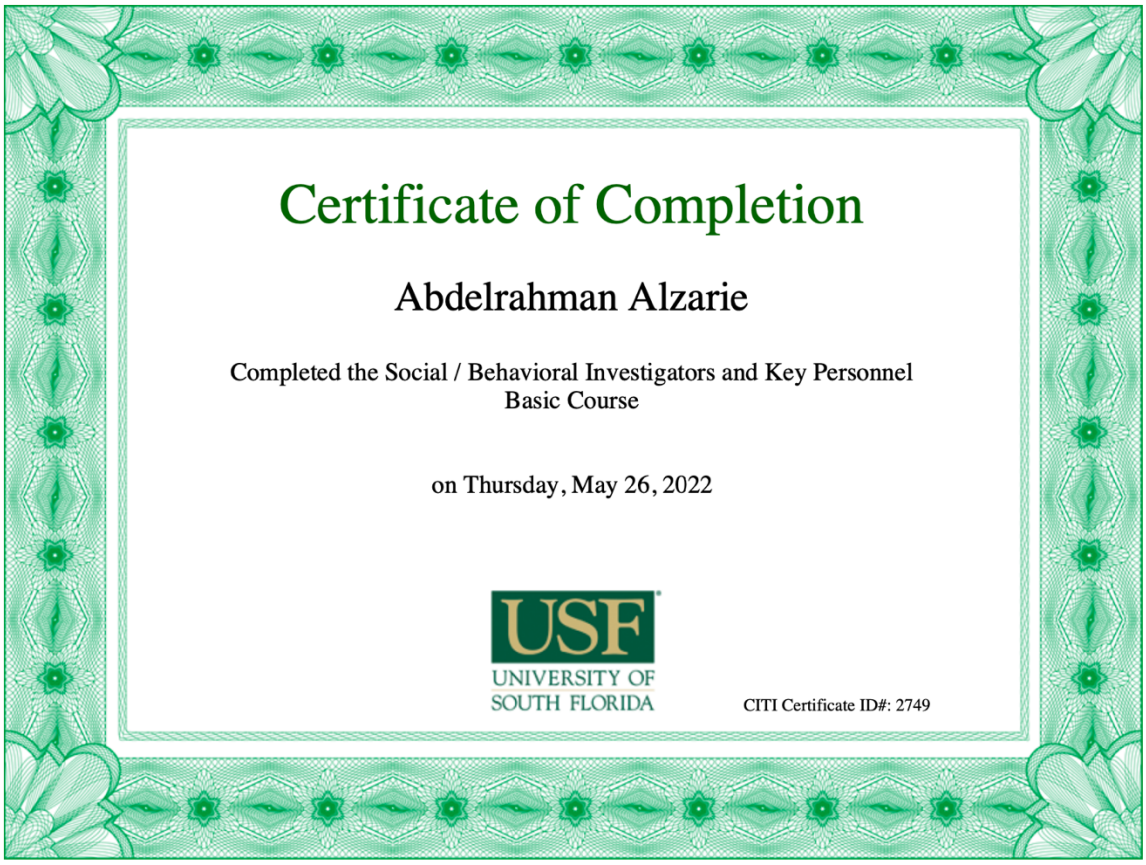
Ongoing IRB review and approval by this organization is not required. This determination applies only to the activities described in the IRB submission and does not apply should any changes be made. If changes are made and there are questions about

whether these activities impact the exempt determination, please submit a new request to the IRB for a determination.

Sincerely,

Myah Luna
IRB Research Compliance Administrator

Appendix E: Institutional Review Board Certificate



Certificate of Completion

Abdelrahman Alzarie

Completed the Social / Behavioral Investigators and Key Personnel Basic Course

on Thursday, May 26, 2022

USF
UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH FLORIDA

CITI Certificate ID#: 2749