

Psychological Empowerment of Mothers of Children with Learning Disabilities in the Governorate of Muscat at Sultanate of Oman

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Abstract. This study aimed to find out the level of psychological empowerment among mothers of children with learning disabilities in the Governorate of Muscat at Oman. The study was conducted on a random sample of (10.2%) from the study population (142 out of 1397). The researchers adopted the descriptive design by using the psychological empowerment scale prepared by (Spreitzer, 1995). The scale consists of (12) items distributed into four cognitions (dimensions): self-determination, competence, impact, and meaning. The results showed that the level of psychological empowerment among the mothers of students with learning disabilities in the Governorate of Muscat was high ($M=3.97$; $SD=0.54$). The competence domain was the highest ($M=4.24$), followed by meaning ($M=4.12$), then self-determination ($M=4.00$), respectively. Whilst the impact domain was the lowest ($M=3.65$). According to variables, the results showed that there are no significant differences in the level of psychological empowerment and all domains among the mothers of students with learning disabilities due to the student's gender and mother's age variables. In addition, the results showed that there are significant differences in the level of psychological empowerment as a whole, as well as self-determination, and competence domains due to type of mothers work variable, whilst there are no significant differences in the competence and impact domains among the mothers of students with learning disabilities due to the type of mothers work variable.

Keywords: psychological empowerment, mothers, learning disabilities, Sultanate of Oman.

Introduction

Self-empowerment represents the extent of mothers' ability to utilize and develop their capabilities and psychological readiness, enabling them to make appropriate decisions, both behaviorally, emotionally, and cognitively (Khalayleh, 2019).

Empowered mothers have a high self-esteem, higher effectiveness compared to others, and the ability to control their lives and increase self-awareness (Al-Sahma, 2020). Al-Nimr (2020) indicates a link between the self-empowerment of mothers and the behavior of their children. Natural human beings need someone to help them shape their adaptive behavior and perform their daily tasks and roles effectively, whether personal or social. This need increases for students with learning disabilities who struggle with perception, understanding, memory, and attention (Kafafi & Salem, 2008).

From the above, it can be concluded that mothers' utilization of their skills and abilities in facing various pressures reflects on their children's behavior. This underscores the importance and role of mothers of children with learning disabilities and their positive and effective

role for these students. In light of researchers' conviction of the necessity and importance of studies that shed light on the level of self-empowerment among mothers of children with learning disabilities, the idea for this study emerged.

Study Problem

Mothers of students with learning disabilities face additional challenges and pressures compared to other mothers. The presence of a child with learning disabilities places an extra burden on mothers, leading to feelings of anxiety, sadness, disappointment, guilt, and self-blame. These emotions can impact the performance of their children who have learning disabilities (Salem et al., 2014).

Another study conducted by (Jenaabadi & Abaasi, 2020) indicated a direct correlation between the behavior of students with learning disabilities and their mothers' feelings, self-perception, and their ability to cope with negative experiences. This importance becomes more significant when the child has learning disabilities.

Several studies (Salem & Al-Nimr, 2008; Asran, 2018; Al-Nimr, 2020) have confirmed a relationship between mothers' psychological empowerment and their children's adaptive behavior. Therefore, this study aims to determine the level of psychological empowerment among mothers of students with learning disabilities.

The research problem can be defined by addressing the following questions:

1. What is the level of psychological empowerment among mothers of students with learning disabilities in the Muscat Governorate?
2. Are there statistically significant differences in the level of psychological empowerment among mothers of students with learning disabilities in the Muscat Governorate attributed to the following variables (student's gender, mother's employment, mother's age)?

Study Objectives

The study aims to:

1. Determine the level of psychological empowerment among mothers of students with learning disabilities in the Muscat Governorate.
2. Identify statistically significant differences in the level of psychological empowerment among mothers of students with learning disabilities in the Muscat Governorate, attributed to the following variables (student's gender, mother's employment, mother's age).

Study Importance

The theoretical significance of this study lies in the importance of the studied topic and the selected sample. The concept of psychological empowerment is relatively new in the field of psychology and has not been extensively studied in Arab countries in general and in Oman specifically. Although some studies have addressed psychological empowerment, there has been limited research on mothers of students with learning disabilities, to the best of the researchers' knowledge. Therefore, the current study aims to provide a clear analytical view of the concept of psychological empowerment among mothers of students with learning disabilities.

It is expected that this study will contribute to enriching the theoretical aspect and provide scientific value by adding new insights to the existing theoretical knowledge and conclusions related to psychological empowerment.

Additionally, the study provides valuable data and information for relevant authorities in guidance and counseling within the Ministry of Education. This

information can help them understand the level of psychological empowerment among mothers of students with learning disabilities and develop necessary plans and counseling programs for both mothers and their children.

Furthermore, the current study offers researchers in general and in Oman specifically a measurement tool for assessing psychological empowerment. This tool possesses suitable psychometric properties that researchers can rely on in their applied studies within the Omani context.

Study Limitations

The study's limitations include:

Temporal limitations: The current study was conducted in the academic year 2021-2022, and therefore, the data and results are relevant to that specific time frame.

Spatial limitations: The study was restricted to public schools in the Muscat Governorate that have integration programs for students with learning disabilities.

Human limitations: The study was applied to a sample of mothers of students with learning disabilities only. Consequently, the results may be limited to this specific population.

Study Terminology

Psychological Empowerment: The American Psychological Association (APA) defines psychological empowerment as an individual's belief in their level of skills and knowledge, self-confidence, and their ability to exert greater control over their life. It involves their efforts to change and adjust their behavior in response to the environmental conditions they encounter (APA, 2022).

The current researchers operationally define psychological empowerment as the ability of a mother of a student with learning difficulties to utilize her capabilities in facing the surrounding circumstances, measured through her responses on the psychological empowerment scale used in the current study.

Learning Disabilities: The American Association for Learning Disabilities (LDA) defines this category as a neurological condition characterized by difficulties in acquiring some basic academic skills related to written or expressive language. It includes learning problems resulting from disorders in basic processes like perception, attention, memory, and thinking. It excludes learning problems caused by sensory impairments (visual or

auditory), environmental, cultural, or economic factors (LDA, 2022).

The current researchers operationally define learning disabilities as a condition where a student's actual performance on achievement tests is lower than expected considering their intelligence, age, and educational stage. Theoretical Framework: It refers to the theoretical approach or perspective used by researchers to guide their study and analysis.

Background

Mothers, in general, face psychological and social pressures due to the nature of motherhood to their children. This responsibility compels families in general and mothers in particular to stand by their children. This challenge becomes even more demanding when the child has learning disabilities, as it requires them to adapt and cope with their environment, whether it be in the school or social environment.

Furthermore, the presence of such learning disabilities in a family affects the mothers' mental well-being. They may experience depression, psychological stress, and feelings of guilt and self-blame. This makes them think about how to confront these difficulties and support their children in overcoming these challenges. Mothers carry the majority of the responsibility for their children and the burdens associated with it, as confirmed by numerous studies emphasizing the importance of the roles played by mothers, especially for children with special needs (Salem & Al-Nimr, 2008).

Psychological empowerment is a relatively modern concept in psychology and psychological counseling. It is considered a contemporary concept and emerged in the latter part of the 20th century. Psychological empowerment is important at both individual and societal levels. It has been used in various social science disciplines such as management, sociology, education, and psychology.

Psychological empowerment involves an individual's belief in their level of skills and knowledge, self-confidence, and their ability to exert greater control over their life. It also includes their efforts to change and adjust their behavior in response to the environmental conditions they encounter (APA Dictionary of Psychology, 2022).

Empowered individuals are often described as having a high self-esteem, the ability to control various aspects of their lives, increased self-awareness, and active participation in society (Zimmerman, 2000).

From the definitions mentioned earlier, it can be concluded that the concept of psychological empowerment encompasses the idea of control or mastery over internal sources of strength. It also includes internal psychological

factors, such as competence, self-regulation, responsibility, participation, and future orientation, as well as external factors related to social aspects, such as control over personal sources of power, work, organizational skills, and the ability to adapt to the local social environment (Kosciulek & Wheaton, 2003). The current researchers operationally define psychological empowerment in this study as the ability of mothers of students with learning disabilities to utilize their capabilities in facing the surrounding circumstances. This ability is measured through the mothers' responses on the psychological empowerment scale used in the current study,

Levels of Psychological Empowerment

The key levels of psychological empowerment for mothers of students with learning disabilities, as described by Kafafi and Salem (2008), can be summarized as follows:

Cognitive Empowerment: This level involves the mother's understanding of the comprehensive care for her child with learning disabilities. It encompasses her awareness and knowledge of the child's specific disability, the purpose of the care she provides, and her perception of how this care impacts the child. It also includes her complete belief in the child's right to care and the alignment of this care with her beliefs and principles. An example of cognitive empowerment is recognizing that a child with intellectual disabilities is capable of appropriate behavior in many situations. One of my primary life goals is to provide the best possible care for my child with learning disabilities.

Emotional Empowerment: Emotional empowerment relates to the mother's acceptance of the challenges her child faces, her understanding of the child's desires and needs, her satisfaction with the child's interactions with others without encountering problems, her confidence in her ability to handle the child compared to other mothers, and her determination, enthusiasm, acceptance, and determination to support and care for the child alongside their typically developing siblings. An example of emotional empowerment is the acceptance of my child with learning disabilities, which gives me strength and determination to care for him. I can also feel his desires and needs.

Behavioral Empowerment: This level involves the mother's ability to develop and utilize skills that aid in caring for her child with learning disabilities. She should be capable of influencing those around her to benefit the child, solving problems related to the child's difficulties at both the individual and group levels, and demonstrating determination and perseverance in developing the child's skills. Additionally, she should be able to handle the

pressure resulting from caring for the child, adapt confidently to the situation, and have hope. An example of behavioral empowerment is my ability to influence mothers of students with learning disabilities to help their children be accepted. I can also manage problems arising from my child's interactions with the external community

Dimensions of Psychological Empowerment

Psychological empowerment consists of four dimensions, as outlined by Spreitzer (1995), which will be discussed in the following paragraphs:

Meaning: This dimension relates to the value an individual derives from achieving their goals through tasks they perform perfectly. It also includes the alignment between job requirements, the individual's role, beliefs, values, and behaviors. For mothers, this dimension serves as an internal motivation that activates and encourages them to fulfill their role towards their child.

Competence: Competence refers to an individual's self-efficacy and their ability to perform tasks with skill and mastery. A mother's ability to learn and perform skills that assist her child, as well as executing them effectively, falls under this dimension.

Impact: Impact or influence is the feeling an individual has about their ability to influence, make, monitor, and execute decisions that affect their destiny. For example, a mother might feel that she can influence the decision-making and implementation of decisions that significantly impact her child's education.

Self-determination: This dimension involves an individual's ability to choose from among alternatives and the determination to accomplish tasks. It also includes the ability to make decisions and take actions that affect one's destiny.

These dimensions collectively encompass the concept of psychological empowerment, which plays a crucial role in an individual's sense of self-efficacy, confidence, and motivation to take action and make positive changes in their life and the lives of those they care for, such as their children with learning disabilities.

Empowerment Theory

Empowerment theory is a theoretical framework that focuses on understanding how individuals, groups, and organizations can be empowered to increase their control and ability to achieve their goals. This theory emphasizes several aspects that contribute to enhancing the ability to make decisions and achieve positive impact. Given the importance of self-empowerment in the context of educating children with learning difficulties and

developing their abilities, empowerment theory can be interpreted in this context (Zimmerman, 2000) as follows:

Empowerment Values

This aspect deals with the beliefs and values that can encourage individuals with learning difficulties to maximize their potential. It emphasizes that empowerment is closely related to individuals' beliefs, interests, and attitudes towards various issues in different domains. The empowerment framework considers health versus illness, competence versus incompetence, and ability versus disability. It implies that specialists should assist individuals with learning difficulties and disabilities in becoming as independent as possible by developing their skills to overcome obstacles in their lives.

The process of empowerment involves collaboration and cooperation between specialists and individuals with disabilities and learning difficulties. Empowerment is seen as a fundamental human, social, and political right that individuals with disabilities should obtain to achieve a reasonable level of integration and harmony within their communities. This should align with principles of self-control and independence, reflecting their capabilities rather than focusing on their limitations (Salem & Al-Nimr, 2008).

Empowerment Processes

Empowerment processes refer to the mechanisms and means through which individuals, organizations, and communities gain control and mastery over the aspects that concern them. Through these processes, they also develop awareness and intelligent critique of their environments and participate in making decisions that affect their lives. Empowerment processes offer individuals opportunities that include:

- Developing and practicing the necessary skills to achieve a reasonable and required level of control and mastery over their political and social environments, such as decision-making skills and resource mobilization.
- Learning how to conduct intelligent critical analysis of their socio-economic surroundings. Intelligent critical analysis, in this context, refers to an individual's understanding of how to acquire sources of power from the environment, mastering the skills needed to manage these resources, and benefiting from them once obtained.
- Empowerment processes also encompass collective learning and favorable opportunities for influencing the socio-economic environment.

These processes involve addressing various fundamental issues, such as:

- Efforts to achieve intelligent and critical understanding of the social environment surrounding the individual.
- Acquiring resources and managing them effectively.
- Collaborating with others to achieve common goals.

Empowerment Outcomes

Empowerment outcomes refer to the effects and new conditions resulting from the application of empowerment programs. These outcomes are important as they provide a strong foundation for studying individuals' efforts to gain greater control over their lives and communities. Empowerment outcomes can vary depending on the level of analysis, whether at the individual, organizational, or societal level.

In the context of educating children with learning difficulties, empowerment theory can guide efforts to enhance their self-confidence, problem-solving abilities, and participation in decision-making processes, ultimately improving their overall well-being and educational outcomes (Salem & Al-Nimr, 2008).

Learning Disabilities (LD)

Learning Disabilities (LD) represent significant challenges that mothers, in general, face due to motherhood and their care for their children. It's worth noting that this challenge becomes more complex when a child has learning disabilities, requiring families, particularly mothers, to provide additional support and assistance to help children adapt and cope with the educational and social environment. Some students are classified as having learning disabilities. They face difficulties in various educational processes, such as reading, writing, and various forms of expression, as well as mathematical processes. These difficulties include cognitive processes, attention issues, memory problems, which hinder the learning process in a typical way (Al-Subhiyah et al., 2016).

Al-Balawi (2018) stated that learning disabilities refer to a disorder in one or more of the basic processes related to speaking, reading, language, mathematics, spelling, and other various aspects. These difficulties arise due to possible functional disorders in the brain, behavioral disorders, or emotional issues. These difficulties are not related to mental retardation, sensory deprivation, environmental factors, or cultural issues. Students with learning disabilities are individuals who show an educational contradiction between their mental

ability and their actual achievement. This is evident through their learning process's disorders, which may or may not be accompanied by an apparent central nervous system defect. These learning disabilities do not result from mental retardation, cultural deprivation, educational factors, or severe emotional disorders.

The American Association for Learning Disabilities defines this category as a neurological condition characterized by deficiencies in acquiring some fundamental academic skills related to written or expressive language. These skills include learning problems resulting from disorders in basic processes such as perception, attention, memory, and thinking, as well as minor brain injuries. Learning problems caused by sensory impairments, such as visual or auditory impairments, environmental, cultural, or economic factors, are excluded (Ildaamerica, 2022).

Researchers define learning disabilities procedurally as the condition that arises when a student's actual performance in achievement tests is lower than expected for their intelligence, age, and educational level. Many studies and research in this field have shown that learning disabilities are often associated with minor brain injuries or simple brain functional disorders. These difficulties can be linked to one or more of the following factors: acquired brain injury, biochemical factors, genetic factors, environmental deprivation, or nutritional deficiencies (Al-Shammari, 2020).

One of the most important characteristics of students with learning disabilities is the discrepancy between their academic achievement and their intellectual abilities. Several studies (Abu Nayan, 2001; Al-Rashidi & Harawi, 2013; Al-Subhiyah et al., 2016; Bin Sulayem & Qurud, 2018) explain that these children exhibit several characteristics, including: Academic characteristics: These include difficulties in reading, spelling, mathematics, and expressive writing. Each difficulty has its distinct features that differentiate it from others. Some students may exhibit multiple difficulties. Cognitive characteristics: These encompass various cognitive disturbances that hinder learning, such as perceptual, attention, memory, oral language, conceptualization, and problem-solving disorders. Social characteristics: Social interaction and social skills may be affected in students with learning disabilities, especially in school settings. These social characteristics include social skills, communication skills with others, forming friendships, and maintaining healthy relationships with peers and adults. Psychological characteristics: Repeated failures can negatively impact a student's self-confidence, self-esteem, and self-concept, as well as their motivation to learn.

It's important to note that these characteristics may result from the difficulties a child experiences in a learning

situation, but they can also impact the child's ability to acquire and learn new information. Teachers dealing with this population need to be aware of these characteristics and may need special skills to address them effectively (Mahdi & Al-Shurbaji, 2016).

Statistics indicate that the number of students registered in the Learning Disabilities Program in government schools under the Ministry of Education in the Sultanate of Oman reached 9,990 students, distributed across 458 schools, according to educational statistics for the year 2020/2021. The number of students in the Muscat Governorate reached 1,397, distributed across 60 schools (Ministry of Education, 2022).

The Learning Disabilities program in the Sultanate of Oman began during the academic year 2000/2001, in line with the scientific campaign to teach students with learning disabilities. The program was implemented for grades 1-4 since the academic year 2000/2001 in primary and general education schools, in two schools in South Al Batinah and Muscat Governorates. The program expanded to include 458 schools in the academic year 2020/2021, with 9,990 students (Annual Educational Statistics, 2020/2021). The Ministry of Education in Oman had several reasons for implementing the Learning Disabilities program, including the emergence of behavioral and social problems among students enrolled in the program, which affected their academic achievement. Additionally, students with low academic performance were dropping out of school due to repeated academic failures. The program also aligned with the global trend as a scientific and educational approach to dealing with this group (MoE, 2022).

However, there is still some confusion in society regarding the objectives of the Learning Disabilities program and the target group it serves. The Ministry of Education, through the Special Program Department, has detailed the stages of the program, emphasizing the need to raise awareness in the local and school community about the concept of students with learning disabilities. The program also focuses on the services it offers to enrolled students, as well as the methods and approaches to dealing with them. Moreover, the program aims to highlight the importance of the community's role in helping individuals with learning disabilities integrate into daily life with their peers. It also emphasizes the importance of early intervention to improve the academic performance of students enrolled in the Learning Disabilities program and educate and guide parents on the significance of the program for their children (MoE, 2022).

The current researchers have reviewed previous studies that have addressed the study variable among mothers in general and mothers of children with disabilities in particular.

The study by Mohanan (2021) aimed to determine the effectiveness of collective training on relying on the components of therapy (trust) on the quality of life and resilience of mothers of children with learning difficulties in Zahedan, Iran. The sample consisted of 30 mothers divided into two groups, 15 in the control group and 15 in the experimental group. The researcher used the Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale (2003) and the World Health Organization Quality of Life (QOL) questionnaire (2002). The results of the study showed that the average QOL for mothers of children with learning difficulties who received training was higher than those who did not receive training. The collective training program for components of self-reliance therapy had a positive impact on improving the resilience and quality of life for mothers of children with learning difficulties.

The study by Jenaabadi & Abaasi (2020) aimed to investigate the effects of personal and environmental factors on maternal stress, mediated by perceived control over dealing with emotions and life problems, among Thai mothers of children with cognitive disabilities. The sample included 800 Thai mothers, and the researcher used standardized criteria, including the Perceived Stress Scale (PSS), Control Attitude Scale (CAS), Child Behavior Scale (CBS), Self-Compassion (SC), Locus of Control (LOC), Self-Efficacy, and Self-Dimensions (SE). The results indicated that children's behaviors, direct problems, direct and indirect self-compassion, and self-efficacy were directly influenced by maternal stress through the mediating role of perceived control and coping strategies.

The study by Al-Nimr (2020) aimed to identify the relative contribution of maternal psychological empowerment in predicting the adaptive behavior of their mildly intellectually disabled children through maternal psychological empowerment. The study sample consisted of 120 children (sons of the sample's mothers) and 120 mothers of children with mild intellectual disabilities. The researcher used the Maternal Psychological Empowerment Scale (developed by the researcher) and the Adaptive Behavior Scale. The results showed a statistically significant negative correlation between the adaptive behavior of their children and maternal psychological empowerment. There was also a significant inverse relationship between the adaptive behavior of children with intellectual disabilities and maternal psychological empowerment.

Additionally, Khalayleh (2019) aimed to determine the level of psychological empowerment and its relationship with occupational stress among working mothers in the Saham region. The sample consisted of 280 working mothers from a population of 1400. The researcher used the Psychological Empowerment Scale and Occupational Stress Scale. The results of the study showed that the psychological empowerment of working

mothers in the Saham region was moderate, and there was a statistically significant negative relationship between psychological empowerment and occupational stress among working mothers. There were also statistically significant differences in the level of psychological empowerment among working mothers attributed to the number of children, with no children being associated with higher psychological empowerment.

Furthermore, Al-Dalbhi (2018) aimed to identify the social support and its relationship with psychological empowerment among mothers of children with intellectual disabilities in the special education program in Al-Dawadmi governorate. The sample included 30 mothers of children with intellectual disabilities in Al-Dawadmi, divided into 15 working mothers and 15 non-working mothers, aged between 35-45. The researcher used the Maternal Psychological Empowerment Scale (developed by the researcher) and the Social Support Scale for Mothers of Children with Intellectual Disabilities. The results showed a positive correlation between mothers of children with intellectual disabilities in the social support scale and their scores on the maternal psychological empowerment scale. There were also statistically significant differences in the level of psychological empowerment among working mothers attributed to social support, with working mothers having higher empowerment.

Additionally, Asran (2018) aimed to evaluate the effectiveness of a current study program based on positive psychological support in improving the psychological empowerment of mothers of children with learning difficulties and to identify the impact of developing psychological empowerment in improving the adaptive behavior of their intellectually disabled children. The sample consisted of 14 male intellectually disabled children who were eligible for learning, scored the lowest quarter on the adaptive behavior scale, and their mothers scored less than 72% on the psychological empowerment scale. The sample was randomly divided into two groups: control and experimental, with equal numbers. The results showed a significant effect of the counseling program based on positive psychological support in improving the adaptive behavior of children in the experimental group.

The study by Al-Ahmad, M & Abu-Assad (2017) aimed to identify the effectiveness of two counseling programs based on reality therapy and meaning therapy in developing planning and psychological empowerment for mothers of mentally disabled children in Jerash Governorate in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. The study sample consisted of 44 mothers of mentally disabled children. The two programs were equally and randomly distributed among two experimental groups, with 11 mothers exposed to reality therapy and 11 mothers exposed to meaning therapy. Another 11 mothers were not

exposed to any program. The researcher used the Planning and Empowerment Scale, developed with appropriate validity and reliability for the purposes of this study. The results of the study indicated significant differences in the mean scores of individuals in the experimental groups and the control groups in planning and psychological empowerment in favor of the experimental groups, both dimensionally and dimensionally in the two programs. The results also indicated the continued effectiveness of the program in planning and psychological empowerment in the two-dimensional and follow-up measurements after a month for individuals in the experimental groups.

Finally, the study by Salem & Al-Nimr (2008) aimed to determine the level of psychological empowerment of mothers of mentally disabled children and its relationship to the psychological adjustment of their children. The study sample consisted of two groups: the first included 30 mothers of disabled children aged between 30-45 years old, and the second group included mentally disabled children aged between 9-13 years old. The researcher used the Psychological Adjustment Scale for Mothers of Mentally Disabled Children (developed by the researchers) and the Adaptive Behavior Scale developed by Farouk Sadek (1985). The results of the study showed a statistically significant correlation between the psychological empowerment of mothers and some areas of adaptive behavior. There was also a statistically significant correlation between maternal psychological empowerment and some developmental areas of their children.

There have been numerous previous studies, both Arab and foreign, that have addressed the topic of psychological empowerment. These studies have varied in their objectives and content, and they either align with or differ from the current study. Here, we will outline the points of agreement and divergence between the previous studies and the present study.

In terms of objectives, the current study aligns with all the previous studies, such as Mohanan (2021), Jenaabadi and Abaasi (2020), Al-Nimr (2020), Khalayleh (2019), Al-Dalbhi (2018), Asran (2018), Al-Ahmad and Abu-Assad (2017), and Salem and Al-Nimr (2008), in its focus on psychological empowerment. Regarding the study sample, the current study agrees with Mohanan (2021), Al-Ahmad and Abu-Assad (2017), Al-Dalbhi (2018), and Jenaabadi and Abaasi (2020) in examining a sample of mothers who are students and have children with mild disabilities. However, it differs from Khalayleh (2019) and Asran (2018), which focused on a sample of working mothers and their male children with mild disabilities. In terms of methodology, the current study aligns with Al-Nimr (2020) and Khalayleh (2019) in adopting a descriptive methodology, while differing from Mohanan (2021), Abu-Assad (2017), and Asran (2018),

which used an experimental approach. Regarding the instrument used, the current study agrees with Al-Nimr (2020) and Asran (2018) in utilizing the Spreitzer scale (1995). However, it differs from Al-Ahmad and Abu-Assad (2017), Al-Dalbhi (2018), Jenaabadi and Abaasi (2020), Mohanan (2021), and Salem and Al-Nimr (2008), which employed various researcher-developed instruments, including those by Farouk Saad (1985) and others.

The current study differs from previous studies in that it comprehensively and precisely addressed the research problem from a theoretical perspective. Additionally, it varied in terms of the geographical scope as it was conducted in the Muscat Governorate, Oman, and had not been studied previously. The current researchers drew upon previous studies in various significant ways. They utilized previous efforts to diagnose the research problem accurately, treated it comprehensively, formulated a precise research title, selected a suitable methodology (descriptive), enriched the theoretical framework of the study, explored concepts related to the study individually, examined recent references, chose appropriate research tools (utilizing scales), determined the necessary statistical procedures to complete the current study, and integrated and connected the results of previous studies into the current study's findings. It became evident

that there were no studies that had examined psychological empowerment among mothers of children with learning difficulties. Hence, the current study aimed to address this gap in the Muscat Governorate, Oman. Due to the scarcity of Omani studies in general, and particularly in the Muscat Governorate, this study will contribute by providing researchers, both in Oman and globally, with a scale and tool for measuring psychological empowerment that possesses appropriate psychometric properties. Researchers can rely on this instrument for their studies applied within the Omani environment.

Methods

Participant

The study population consists of mothers of students with learning disabilities in the Muscat Governorate, Sultanate of Oman, totaling 1,397 mothers (MoE, 2022). The study sample was a subset of the study population consisting of 142 mothers of students with learning disabilities. The sample was selected using cluster random sampling, representing 10.2% of the original population. Table 1 illustrates the distribution of sample members according to study variables.

Table1. The distribution of sample according to study variables

Variable	Category	No.	Percentge
Students gender	Male	42	29.6%
	Female	100	70.4%
Mothers employment	Employed	65	45.8%
	Unemployed	77	%54.2
Mothers age	30 years or younger	31	21.8%
	31 and 40	68	%47.9
	41 years or older	43	30.3%

Study Instrument

Based on a review of previous studies and the theoretical literature, the researchers employed the Psychological Empowerment Scale developed by Spreitzer in 1995. This scale consists of 12 items divided into four dimensions, namely:

Competence: Reflecting an individual's belief in performing tasks efficiently and effectively.

Self-determination: Pertaining to the ability to choose and control the methods used in task performance.

Meaning: Representing the perception that one's work is valuable and meaningful to others.

Impact: Indicating the sense that one's actions are influential within the organization and capable of making a difference in society. Each dimension includes three statements. This scale has been previously used in some Arabic studies, such as the research conducted by Abbas (2021) and Abu Ghali (2016).

The researchers selected a random sample consisting of 30 mothers of students with learning difficulties from the original study's population in the Muscat Governorate. They administered the Psychological Empowerment Scale (Spreitzer, 1995) to verify the suitability of the study instrument for application to the sample population and to extract its psychometric properties, including reliability and validity. The scale's validity was assessed through two methods: content validity and item validity.

Content Validity:

To establish content validity, the scale was initially presented to a group of experts specializing in

psychological counseling, educational psychology, mental health, and teaching methods, totaling 11 experts. They were asked to provide their opinions and suggest appropriate modifications. Afterward, the experts' opinions were collected and a consensus was reached on the suitability of the scale's items for the study's purpose, alignment with the study's objectives, and linguistic clarity.

Item Validity

It was calculated to determine the consistency of the scale's items with each other using the following procedures:

1. Pearson correlation coefficients were calculated to assess the correlation between each item of the scale and the total score of the respective dimension to which it belongs, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2. The Pearson Correlation Coefficients between each item and the dimension

Meaning		Competance		Self-determination		Impact	
Item	Correlation	Item	Correlation	Item	Correlation	Item	Correlation
1	0.738**	4	0.817**	7	0.556*	10	0.767**
2	0.781**	5	0.898**	8	0.750**	11	0.656*
3	0.769**	6	0.904**	9	0.673**	12	0.719**

** Statistically significant at the 0.01 * statistically significant at the 0.05

The results from Table 2 indicate that all items of the Self-Empowerment Scale exhibit a high and statistically significant correlation, at the 0.01 level for most items and at the 0.05 level for items 7 and 11. This suggests an appropriate level of item correlation.

2. Calculating the correlation coefficients for each dimension of the scale with the total score of the scale as a whole, as shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Pearson Correlation Coefficients between Scale Dimensions and the Total Score

Dimensions	Correlation Coefficients
Meaning	0.687**
Competance	0.726**
Self-determination	0.715**
Impact	0.726**

** Statistically significant at the 0.01

 Original investigations / commentaries

Table 3 illustrates that all four dimensions of the scale have a statistically significant correlation, at the 0.01 level, with the total score of the scale. The correlation coefficients ranged from 0.687 to 0.726 for the dimensions. This indicates a strong and significant relationship between the dimensions and the overall scale score, which is a positive indicator of the scale's validity. Based on these results, it can be concluded that the items of the Self-Empowerment Scale demonstrate high face validity and item validity.

Scale Reliability

To assess the reliability of the Psychological Empowerment Scale, the researchers calculated the reliability coefficient for each dimension of the scale individually and then computed the reliability coefficient for the entire scale using Cronbach's Alpha. Table 4 presents the values of Cronbach's Alpha coefficients for each dimension separately and for the overall Psychological Empowerment Scale.

Table 4. Cronbach's Alpha Coefficients for Each Dimension Separately and for the Psychological Empowerment Scale

Dimensions	No. Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Meaning	3	0.758
Competance	3	0.868
Self-determination	3	0.806
Impact	3	0.545
Psychological Empowerment Scale	12	0.866

Table 4 shows that the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient for the Psychological Empowerment Scale was 0.866, indicating high and suitable reliability for the scale's purposes. Additionally, the Cronbach's Alpha coefficients for the individual dimensions were 0.758 for Meaning, 0.868 for Competence, 0.806 for Self-determination, and 0.545 for Impact. These coefficients suggest good internal consistency for each dimension of the scale.

Scoring

The Psychological Empowerment Scale consists of 12 items, and participants respond to each item on a five-point Likert scale (strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree, strongly agree). The scoring involved computing the mean score for each dimension and each item. The scale provides a total self-compassion score that is interpreted based on predefined categories. To determine the range for the five-point scale, the lower and upper boundaries were calculated, then the range (highest value - lowest value) was determined, resulting in a range of 4 (5 - 1 = 4). To obtain the category width, the range was divided by the highest value in the scale, which is 5, yielding a category width of 0.8. Then, the category width was added to the lowest value in the scale, which is 1, to

determine the upper limit for each category. The adopted standard for determining the level of Psychological Empowerment is as follow: Very Low 1 – 1.79; Low 1.80 – 2.59; Moderate 2.60 – 3.39; High 3.40 – 4.19; and Very High 4.20 – 5. The scale also included instructions regarding confidentiality and the use of information solely for research purposes. Respondents were instructed to condense their responses to ensure the privacy of mothers of students with learning disabilities in the Muscat governorate

Study Results and Discussion

The study aimed to assess the level of psychological empowerment among mothers of students with learning difficulties in Muscat Governorate. To answer this question, the researchers calculated the mean scores and standard deviations for the overall psychological empowerment as well as for each of its four dimensions (Meaning, Competence, Self-determination, and Impact) among mothers of students with learning difficulties in Muscat Governorate. Table 5 presents the mean scores and standard deviations for all dimensions of psychological empowerment.

Table 5. Means and Standard Deviations for Participants' Responses on the Psychological Empowerment

Dimensions	Mean	Standard Deviations	Order	Level
Meaning	4.17	0.64	2	High
Competence	4.24	0.66	1	Very High
Self-determination	4.00	0.76	3	High
Impact	3.65	0.48	4	High
Overall psychological empowerment	3.97	0.54		High

their

Table 5 shows that the level of psychological empowerment was high overall, with a mean score of 3.968 and a standard deviation of 0.54. The dimensions of psychological empowerment also indicated high to very high levels, with Competence having the highest mean score (4.242) and Self-determination having the lowest (3.651).

The current researchers attribute the overall high level of psychological empowerment to the mothers' acceptance and positive perception of their children with learning difficulties, their awareness of the goals they are pursuing for their children, and their cultural competence, which enables them to better interact with this group. This increased psychological empowerment positively influences the behaviors and attitudes of children with learning difficulties, aligning with the findings of previous studies, including Mohanan (2021), Al-Nimr (2020), Al-Dalbhi (2018), Al-Ahmad and Abu-Assad (2017), and Salem and Al-Nimr (2008). These studies all agree that psychologically empowered mothers tend to have high self-esteem, effectiveness, and the ability to control their lives normally, as well as to handle difficulties more effectively. They are also more aware of themselves and have a greater sense of security in social relationships. The current researchers attribute the high level of the Competence dimension to mothers' possession of high self-esteem and their ability to control their lives, as they have specific goals and objectives for the benefit of their children with learning difficulties. This finding is consistent with the results of studies conducted by Al-Nimr (2020) and Khalayleh (2019), which suggest that mothers' ability to utilize and develop their skills and competencies enables them to make informed decisions at both behavioral and emotional levels. It also aligns with the findings of Pandora (1977), indicating that competence is positively correlated with initiative, effort, perseverance, and all motivational aspects that affect life in general. The researchers also found that the Meaning dimension ranked second, with mothers having a high sense of meaning in their actions. This can be attributed to

awareness and feelings of empathy, compassion, love, and mercy towards others, including their children with learning difficulties. The ability to identify strengths, weaknesses, and improve personal qualities enhances their sense of meaning in the work they do and their engagement with it. This result is consistent with the findings of Abu Ghazaleh (2016), which suggest that psychological empowerment is influenced by an individual's self-awareness and their sense of social security. The higher the individual's ability to identify their own thoughts and feelings characterized by empathy, compassion, love, and mercy towards others, as well as their avoidance of conflicts and disputes, the more they enhance their sense of meaning in their actions.

In summary, the study found a high level of psychological empowerment among mothers of students with learning difficulties in Muscat Governorate. This high level of empowerment is attributed to the mothers' positive perception of their children, their goals for their children, their cultural competence, and their ability to control their lives. Additionally, the Competence dimension had the highest score among the four dimensions of psychological empowerment, followed by Meaning and Self-determination. These findings align with previous research and highlight the importance of psychological empowerment in improving the well-being and behaviors of children with learning difficulties. Presentation of the results related to the second question, which asks whether there are statistically significant differences in the level of psychological empowerment among mothers of students with learning difficulties in Muscat Governorate attributed to the following variables: (student gender, mother's employment, mother's age).

1. Student's Gender

Table 6 presents the mean, standard deviations, and the independent t-test for the level of psychological empowerment based on the student gender variable.

Table 6. Means, Standard Deviations, and t-test for psychological empowerment according student gender

Dimension	Gender	N	M	SD	t-value	df	Sig.
Meaning	Male	42	4.13	0.59	-.436	140	.663

	Female	100	4.19	0.67			
Competance	Male	42	4.17	0.63	-.879	140	.381
	Female	100	4.27	0.67			
Self-determination	Male	42	3.96	0.75	-.403	140	.687
	Female	100	4.02	0.76			
Impact	Male	42	3.61	0.50	-.734	140	.464
	Female	100	3.67	0.47			
Overall self-compassion	Male	42	3.93	0.56	-.526	140	.600
	Female	100	3.98	0.54			

Table 6 shows that there are no statistically significant differences attributed to the student's gender in the overall psychological empowerment scale or its dimensions. The current researchers attribute this result to the fact that the student's gender, whether male or female, does not affect the psychological empowerment of their mothers. In other words, the gender of the student with learning difficulties does not impact whether their mothers have high or low psychological empowerment. Mothers of children with learning difficulties naturally do not differentiate between their children based on gender. They are prepared to utilize their experiences and capabilities for both genders. This is in line with the findings of

Khalayleh (2019), which demonstrated the ability of psychologically empowered mothers to utilize and develop their abilities and psychological readiness, enabling them to make appropriate decisions, whether on the behavioral, emotional, or cognitive levels. There are no conflicting studies on this result based on the researchers' investigation.

Mother's employment

Table 7 presents the mean, standard deviations, and the t-test for the level of psychological empowerment according to the mother's employment variable.

Table 7. Means, Standard Deviations, and t-test for psychological empowerment according mother's employment

Dimension	mother's employment	N	M	SD	t-value	df	Sig.
Meaning	Employed	65	4.36	0.53	3.302	140	.001
	Unemployed	77	4.01	0.69			
Competance	Employed	65	4.34	0.57	1.701	140	.091
	Unemployed	77	4.16	0.72			
Self-determination	Employed	65	4.14	0.65	2.101	140	.037
	Unemployed	77	3.88	0.82			
Impact	Employed	65	3.66	0.40	.255	140	.799
	Unemployed	77	3.64	0.54			
Overall self-compassion	Employed	65	4.09	0.45	2.499	140	.014
	Unemployed	77	3.87	0.60			

Table 7 shows statistically significant differences in favor of mother's employed in the overall psychological empowerment scale and some of its dimensions, such as the self-determination and meaning dimensions. However, there is no statistically significant differences in the competence and impact dimensions among mothers of student with learning disabilities due to mother's employment variable.

The current researchers attribute this to the fact that working mothers tend to be more open and engaged with the outside world, which results in increased psychological

empowerment. Working mothers have a better understanding of themselves, the value of the work they do, and this makes them more empowered and aware of what is happening around them. This often leads to a more positive outlook on life, higher self-esteem, and the ability to deal better with their experiences and how they interact with people in general and children with learning difficulties in particular. This aligns with the findings of Al-Sahma (2020), which demonstrated that psychologically empowered mothers have a high self-esteem and effectiveness compared to non-working

mothers, as working mothers have the ability to control their lives and increase their self-awareness, unlike non-working mothers whose relationships are limited to their immediate environment, and their experiences are limited unless they are provided with information and diverse experiences.

These results are consistent with the study of Al-Dalbhi (2018), which showed statistically significant differences between the average scores of working mothers of children with intellectual disabilities and non-working mothers on the psychological empowerment scale in favor of working mothers. The results are in agreement with the findings of Mohanan (2021), Al-Nimr (2020), Al-Dalbhi (2018), Al-Ahmad, M & Abu-Assad (2017), and Salem & Al-Nimr (2008), all of which indicated that psychologically empowered mothers have high self-esteem and greater effectiveness than others. They have the ability to control their lives better and are more self-aware.

The study by Saud et al. (2013) also emphasized that freedom and independence in utilizing hidden abilities and trying to develop the individual's personality and psychological state, along with feeling in control of one's work, are strong factors influencing psychological empowerment. Through these factors, individuals possess the competence and the ability to perform the required tasks. They also feel that what they are doing has importance and value, leading to a sense of purpose and meaning in their actions. This aligns with the results of this study.

Mother's age

Table 8 presents the mean scores and standard deviations for the mother's age variable, while Table 9 presents the One-Way ANOVA analysis.

Table 8. Means and Standard Deviations for psychological empowerment according to Mother's Age

Dimension	Gender	N	M	SD
Meaning	30 or younger	31	4.11	0.84
	31 to 40	68	4.12	0.56
	41 or older	43	4.30	0.59
Competance	30 or younger	31	4.20	0.83
	31 to 40	68	4.20	0.60
	41 or older	43	4.33	0.63
Self-determination	30 or younger	31	4.04	0.87
	31 to 40	68	3.96	0.73
	41 or older	43	4.04	0.74
Impact	30 or younger	31	3.59	0.49
	31 to 40	68	3.74	0.47
	41 or older	43	3.56	0.47
Psychological Empowerment Scale	30 or younger	31	3.94	0.64
	31 to 40	68	3.94	0.50
	41 or older	43	4.04	0.54

Table 8 shows some apparent differences in means concerning the mother's age variable. To confirm whether

these differences are statistically significant, the One-Way ANOVA test was conducted, as shown in Table 9.

Table 9. One-Way ANOVA for psychological empowerment according to Mother's Age

Dimension	Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F-Value	P-Value
Meaning	Between Groups	1.06	2	0.53	1.285	.280
	Within Groups	57.326	139	0.412		
Competance	Between Groups	0.517	2	0.259	.591	.555
	Within Groups	60.848	139	0.438		
Self-determination	Between Groups	0.254	2	0.127	.219	.803
	Within Groups	80.635	139	0.58		

		80.889	141			
Impact	Between Groups	0.975	2	0.488	2.155	.120
	Within Groups	31.446	139	0.226		
		32.421	141			
Psychological Empowerment Scale	Between Groups	0.295	2	0.147	.493	.612
	Within Groups	41.537	139	0.299		
		41.831	141			

Table 9 reveals that there are no statistically significant differences in psychological empowerment attributed to the mother's age variable for both the overall scale and its dimensions. The researchers attribute this to the fact that age, in general, is not related to higher psychological empowerment. There are mothers with younger ages who possess a cultural background and self-esteem that make them better able to adapt and choose, compared to older mothers. Additionally, psychological empowerment is a dynamic state and not a personal trait. This suggests that every mother has the opportunity to become empowered over time with a process of empowerment and favorable conditions, especially when dealing with children with learning difficulties. It also depends on the individual's beliefs, faith, and internal conviction, regardless of age. This aligns with the findings of the Jenaabadi & Abaasi (2020) study, which emphasized that a mother's feelings and self-perception, as well as her ability to confront negative experiences, directly affect the behavior of children with learning difficulties. The same was confirmed by the Rabieat (2020) study, which pointed out that parents have a significant impact on the child's growth and behavior, and this importance increases when the child has learning difficulties. These results differ from the study by Wakimizu (2016), which found that factors associated with higher family psychological empowerment include older maternal age, higher education level, and higher income.

Conclusion

The current study find out that the level of psychological empowerment among the mothers of students with learning disabilities in the Governorate of Muscat was high. According to variables, the results showed that there are no significant differences in the level of psychological empowerment and all domains among the mothers of students with learning disabilities due to the student's gender and mother's age variables. In addition, the results showed that there are significant differences in the level of psychological empowerment as a whole, as well as self-determination, and competence domains due to type of mothers work variable, whilst there are no significant differences in the competence and impact

domains among the mothers of students with learning disabilities due to the type of mothers work variable. Based on the results presented in the study, the following recommendations can be formulated:

- Establish counseling programs for non-working mothers aimed at enhancing their psychological empowerment, especially in the dimensions of Impact and Competence. These programs can focus on boosting self-confidence, developing life control skills, and enhancing the ability to make a positive impact on their lives and their children's lives.
- Activate parent councils and focus the efforts of the Ministry of Education on mothers, as their role has a significant impact on how they interact with their children who have learning difficulties.
- Provide specialized support for students with learning difficulties by experienced professionals in the field, helping them improve their behavior and overall well-being.
- Conduct further research to explore the factors that contribute to maintaining the level of psychological empowerment among mothers, as it has a positive impact on both the mother and the child.
- Promote the use of the psychological empowerment scale within the Omani community, given its favorable psychometric properties that make it a reliable tool for descriptive studies.
- Investigate the impact of other demographic variables on psychological empowerment within the Omani context.
- Extend the study to include fathers as well and explore their compatibility behaviors with students who have learning difficulties across different governorates of the Sultanate.

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