



كلية محمد بن راشد
للإدارة الحكومية
MOHAMMED BIN RASHID
SCHOOL OF GOVERNMENT

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**HOW POLICIES IN THE UAE SUPPORT FAMILIES WITH SPECIAL
EDUCATION NEEDS AND DISABILITIES CHILDREN COMPARED WITH
GLOBAL BEST PRACTICES**

by

Amer AlMadani

ID: 00258253

This dissertation report is submitted in partial fulfillment of the award of Master of Public
Policy



Declaration

I, the undersigned, **Amer Abdulwahab AlMadani**, declare that this Dissertation is my original work, that all material presented to the university is my own, and has not been previously submitted to any other university for a higher degree. I also declare that the publications cited in this work have been personally consulted. I understand that if at any time it is shown that I have significantly misrepresented material presented to the university, any degree or credits awarded to me on the basis of that material may be revoked.

Signed: 

Date: 29.06.2024

Student ID: 00258253

Supervisor: Professor Immanuel Azaad Moonesar

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Abstract

This is the first study to examine policies supporting families of children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) or People of Determination as they called in the UAE compared with global best practice. The aim of the study is to explore the nature and range of services and support policies available to families with SEND children in the UAE and compare them with international best practice and standards for supporting SEND families. It analyses policies, issues and the UAE's performance compared to global standards. The report commends the UAE's inclusive policies but also points out gaps and limitations. Through a comprehensive analysis and relevant recommendations, the study aims to highlight the issues faced by families with special educational needs in the UAE, as well as highlighting significant gaps and contradictions. The study shows that families often face challenges such as financial stress, lack of awareness and inadequate healthcare coverage. In a comparative perspective, the paper evaluates successful international models such as Australia's National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) and Sweden's Inclusive Education Framework. These benchmarks demonstrate effective strategies for inclusive support, ranging from financial assistance and health services to community awareness and inclusive practices. Based on these global examples, the document proposes short-term and long-term recommendations to improve UAE policies, with the aim of creating a more equitable and supportive environment for families with special educational needs.

ملخص البحث

هذه هي الدراسة الأولى حول الاطلاع على السياسات الداعمة لأهالي الأطفال ذوي الاحتياجات التعليمية الخاصة والإعاقات (SEND) أو أصحاب الهمم كما يطلق عليهم في دولة الإمارات العربية المتحدة ومقارنة هذه السياسات بأفضل الممارسات العالمية. الهدف من الدراسة هو الاطلاع على نطاق الخدمات والسياسات الداعمة المتاحة لأسر الأطفال من ذوي الاحتياجات الخاصة في دولة الإمارات العربية المتحدة ومقارنتها بأفضل الممارسات والمعايير الدولية الداعمة لأسر الأطفال من ذوي الاحتياجات الخاصة. تحلل الدراسة السياسات وأداء دولة الإمارات مقارنة بالمعايير العالمية. يشيد التقرير بالسياسات التي تخص دمج أصحاب الهمم التي تنتهجها دولة الإمارات العربية المتحدة، كما يشير أيضاً إلى الثغرات والقيود المتعلقة بالسياسات. من خلال التحليل الشامل والتوصيات ذات الصلة، تهدف الدراسة إلى تسليط الضوء على القضايا التي تواجهها أسر ذوي الاحتياجات التعليمية الخاصة في دولة الإمارات العربية المتحدة، بالإضافة إلى تسليط الضوء على الفجوات والتناقضات الكبيرة، وتظهر الدراسة أن الأسر غالباً ما تواجه تحديات مثل الضغوط المالية، نقص الوعي وعدم كفاية تغطية الرعاية الصحية. من منظور مقارنة يقوم البحث بتقييم النماذج الدولية الناجحة مثل البرنامج التأمين الوطني لذوي الإعاقة في أستراليا وإطار التعليم الدامج في السويد. وتظهر هذه المقارنة المعيارية استراتيجيات فعالة للدعم الشامل، بدءاً من المساعدة المالية والخدمات الصحية إلى الوعي المجتمعي والممارسات الدامجة. وبناءً على هذه الأمثلة العالمية، يقترح البحث توصيات قصيرة وطويلة المدى لتحسين سياسات دولة الإمارات، بهدف خلق بيئة أكثر عدالة وداعمة لأسر الأطفال ذوي الاحتياجات التعليمية الخاصة.

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Abbreviations

SEND	Special Education Needs and Disabilities
UAE.....	United Arab Emirates
UNCRPD.....	United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
UNICEF.....	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
IEP	Individualized Education Plan
DIEPF	Dubai Inclusive Education Policy Framework
MBRF	Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum Knowledge Foundation
MOE	Ministry of Education
MOCD	Ministry of Community Development
EDSA	Emirates Down Syndrome Association
IDEA.....	Individuals with Disabilities Education Act
AODA.....	Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act
EHC.....	Education, Health and Care Plan
NDIS.....	National Disability Insurance Scheme
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
CDA.....	Community Development Authority
ZHO.....	Zayed Higher Organization for People of Determination
DCD	Department of Community Development in Abu Dhabi
SCHS	Sharjah City for Humanitarian Services

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Background and Context

In the UAE, support for families of children with special education needs and disabilities (SEND) is available. Whereas there are some policies and programs aimed at assisting these families. The landscape of education and support for children with special education needs and disabilities (SEND) has undergone a transformative shift in recent decades. Ventures of this transformation are driven by global recognition of the importance of inclusivity, equity, and equal opportunities in education. Once marginalized and overlooked, children with SEND are now at the forefront of educational policies and practices worldwide (Toseeb et al., 2020). Consistent with this global initiative, the UAE has endeavoured to guarantee the provision of essential assistance and resources to facilitate the optimal development of children with SEND and their families. Considering that supporting the education of children with SEND is in the interest of the family and is considered an indirect benefit to the family. This approach aligns with the framework of its socio-cultural milieu.

The paradigm of inclusive education has risen to prominence as an educational doctrine that promotes the assimilation of children with varying abilities into conventional classroom settings, incorporating both medical and legal dimensions. At its core, this approach is firmly rooted in the fundamental principle that each and every child, irrespective of their cognitive, physical, or emotional distinctions, possesses an inherent entitlement to access a high-calibre education that effectively cultivates their unique capabilities. It is visualized that the dynamics of inclusion go beyond mere access to education. It strives to build an environment that celebrates diversity by accommodating individual differences. Through inclusive education, the UAE's support for the families of children with SEND has emerged, which lies in supporting the families in providing education for their children.

UAE is visualized to have a rich cultural tapestry and forward-looking vision. It builds the capability to recognize the significance of inclusive education in shaping a cohesive society. For instance, the UAE Vision 2021 is featured as a strategic

framework that envisions a prosperous and sustainable future (Alhosani, 2022). This venture strongly emphasizes generating an inclusive society that enables individuals with disabilities to participate and contribute actively. In line with this vision, the UAE has taken substantial steps to integrate inclusive practices into its educational landscape, striving to provide children with SEND the tools they need to succeed academically and socially.

The Ministry of Community Development of UAE formulated the National Policy for Empowering People with Disabilities. Functioning as an exhaustive architectural framework, this policy functions as a foundational cornerstone for establishing a cohesive and inclusive societal structure. It accentuates the pivotal role of education in enabling individuals with disabilities to orchestrate gratifying and meaningful livelihoods actively. It contains the credibility to build tailored educational interventions that cater to the diverse needs of children with SEND (Warner & Moonesar, 2021). It underscores the children with SEND's independence, confidence, and self-esteem. The UAE's commitment to this policy reflects its dedication to upholding the principles of human rights, dignity, and equal opportunities.

Despite these commendable efforts, challenges persist in translating policy rhetoric into effective, on-the-ground practices that support families with children having SEND. It is demonstrated that practical implementation of inclusive education needs to address multifaceted issues, including teacher training, infrastructure adaptation, and curricular accommodations. Furthermore, global best practices continue to evolve as research and innovation drive improvements in inclusive education approaches. Due to this reason, it is crucial to critically evaluate the UAE's policies and initiatives for supporting families with children who have SEND in comparison with these global best practices.

1.2 Problem Statement and Research Motivation

The problem is reflected by the paramount concern of society aspiring to embed inclusivity and equality in education and support of children with SEND. At the same time, the UAE has made commendable strides in establishing policies and initiatives to

support families with children having SEND. Nevertheless, several challenges persist in translating these efforts into holistic, effective support systems. The issues arise from the complex interplay of practical implementation hurdles and evolving global best practices. Within the context of this master dissertation, an imperative emerges to unequivocally guarantee the comprehensive inclusion of every child in the educational trajectory of the UAE.

The issues at hand are multi-dimensional. While the UAE has outlined comprehensive policies to create an inclusive educational environment, meaningful practice still needs to be consistent across institutions. Families of children with SEND are often looked down upon due to their disadvantages in thriving in societies (Tokatly Latzer, Leitner & Karnieli-Miller, 2021). They also face physiological and emotional dilemmas due to the additional care these children need. This translates to the problem of inadequate and insufficient support for the children with SEND.

Moreover, financial constraints and burdens are overarching problems for families when providing resources for their children. Challenges such as inadequately trained educators, insufficient infrastructural adaptations, and limited specialized curricular resources often hinder the successful integration of children with SEND into mainstream classrooms. Moreover, as global best practices in inclusive education continue to evolve, it becomes essential to assess whether the UAE's policies keep pace with the latest research and innovations (Kaku et al., 2022).

The research motivation is based on bridging the gap between policy formulation and effective implementation. This research seeks to contribute practical recommendations for addressing the challenges that hinder the successful inclusion of children with SEND with alignment with global practices. Through robust analysis and meaningful recommendations, this research aims to make a tangible impact on the lives of children with SEND and their families, fostering an environment where their potential is nurtured and celebrated.

1.3 Research Aims, Objectives, Research Questions, and Hypothesis

1.3.1 Research aim and objectives

This study aims to assess the extent to which families of children with SEND in the UAE receive support from the government and relevant organizations. It also aims to highlight the comparison of this support with practices in other countries. The research is intended to provide insights into the effectiveness of existing policies and identify potential avenues for improvement.

The objectives of this research are two-fold, to determine the nature and scope of benefits and supportive policies available in the UAE for families of children with special education needs and disabilities to examine the challenges and gaps within the UAE's public policies concerning support for families of children with special education needs and disabilities to investigate best practices and benchmarks on support for families of children with special education needs and disabilities from other countries.

1.3.2 Research questions

Main Research Question:

What is the state of support and policies for families of children with special education needs and disabilities in the UAE, and how can it be improved?

Sub-Research Questions:

- What are the current benefits and policies in the UAE aimed at assisting families with children who have special education needs and disabilities?
- What challenges and deficiencies exist within the UAE's public policies regarding support for families of children with special education needs and disabilities?
- What international best practices and policy benchmarks for supporting families of children with special education needs and disabilities can be adapted effectively to the UAE's unique context?

1.3.3 Research Hypotheses

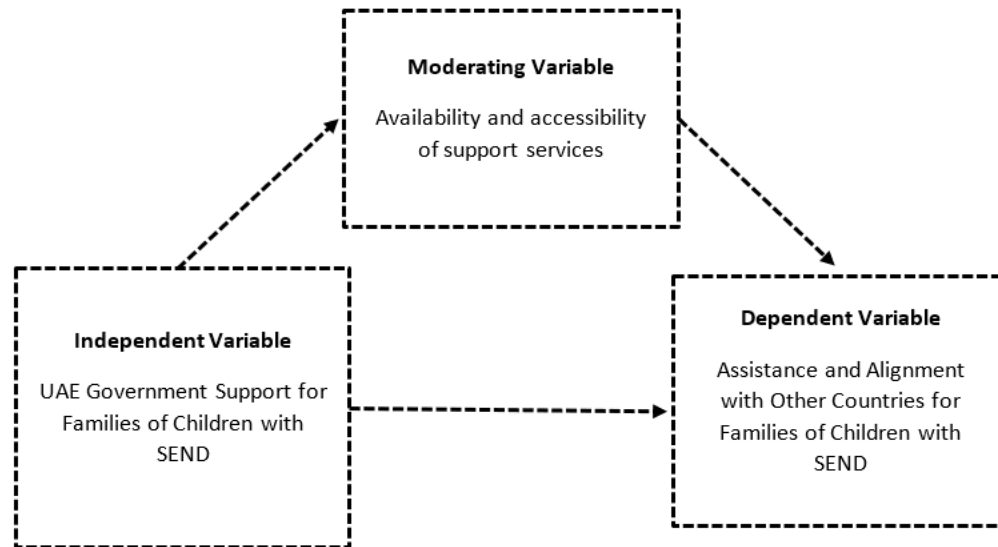


Figure 1 - 1.1: Research Framework

(Source: Self-made)

Hypothesis:

Improving support and policies for families of children with special education needs and disabilities in the UAE will enhance their well-being and inclusion of these families.

Suppositions:

- More accessible support services improve SEND families' well-being.
- Addressing policy challenges will enhance the quality of life for SEND families.
- Implementing global best practices will make UAE policies more effective and inclusive.

1.4 Rationale and Methodological Approach

1.4.1 Rationale

The imperative drives this research to ensure holistic development and equity for the families of children with SEND in the UAE. There is a need to critically evaluate the efficacy of existing policies and support mechanisms to analyze the UAE's commitment to inclusive education and the empowerment of individuals with disabilities. This research aims to provide actionable insights for refining policies and enhancing support systems by examining the current benefits, challenges, and global best practices. The effort aligns with the UAE's vision of an inclusive society and responds to the urgency of addressing the diverse needs of families of children with SEND (Conde, 2022).

Inclusive education is not solely about granting access to education; it involves creating an environment that ensures every child's holistic development. However, the practicalities of implementing inclusive practices often present significant hurdles. It arises due to unprepared educators and limited access to resources. These challenges can hinder children's learning experiences and families' overall well-being. In addition, the UAE's socio-economic growth and aspiration to create an inclusive society add urgency to this research (Cherian, 2020). Addressing this issue aligns with international human rights principles, equity, and equal access to education.

Furthermore, it is visualized that the landscape of inclusive education is dynamic and ever-evolving. This highlights the need for a continuous assessment of policies and practices. The research contributes to the global discourse on supporting families of children with SEND by offering a contextualized case study of the UAE's initiatives and comparing them against successful models from around the world. It is visualized that the insights gathered through this research have the potential to serve as a valuable reference for policymakers, educators, and stakeholders seeking to fortify their commitment to inclusive education.

1.4.2 Methodological approach

In this research, the methodology is based on the usage of secondary data collection. Through the usage of descriptive research design, the qualitative component is aimed to be gathered. This involves an extensive review of policy documents, reports, and academic literature related to inclusive education and support for families of children with SEND in the UAE (Mishra & Alok, 2022). The aim is to uncover the specific benefits, challenges, and gaps within the existing policies and initiatives. Moreover, a comparative analysis is aimed to be conducted using the qualitative data collection between the UAE and the other two countries. The identified policies, benefits, challenges, and gaps in the UAE context will be contrasted with global best practices. These best practices will be drawn from an in-depth examination of case studies, policy documents, and research articles from countries known for their successful inclusive education models. Also, the research aimed to undertake ethical considerations as paramount throughout the research process (Ishtiaq, 2019).

The research is aimed to adhere to ethical guidelines governing data collection, analysis, and reporting. Employing a qualitative method approach yields insights that help redefine inclusive education practices within the UAE and beyond. Ethics clearance is not required for this research, as it solely relies on the analysis of existing secondary data sources. This approach ensures the research's integrity and compliance with ethical standards while contributing valuable insights to the field of inclusive education. Since the research relies solely on publicly available information and does not engage in direct human-subject interactions.

1.5 Potential Outcomes

This research endeavors to yield several meaningful outcomes that contribute to academic knowledge and practical policy enhancement in supporting families of children with SEND in the UAE. This research is poised to significantly contribute to improving resource allocation for parents of children with SEND and support systems by critically assessing the current policies and comparing them with global best practices. One of the foremost outcomes of this research is aimed at a comprehensive

understanding of the existing policies and challenges families of children with SEND face. Through a rigorous analysis of policy documents and resource allocation, a clear picture emerges regarding the extent to which these policies effectively cater to the diverse needs of families. This understanding will provide a solid foundation for identifying gaps and areas requiring improvement.

The insights garnered from this research are intended to pave the way for generating evidence-based recommendations to refine existing policies and support mechanisms. Another significant outcome of this research lies in its potential to raise awareness and advocate for the needs of families of children with SEND. By highlighting the challenges and gaps in existing policies, the research aims to draw attention to the needs of family's children with SEND. This can potentially foster a broader understanding of the needs of these families within the broader community, leading to increased empathy, understanding, and support in a global format. Moreover, a comparative analysis with other countries is subjected to enhance the knowledge-sharing and capacity-building capabilities. It is aimed to help educational institutions and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) working in the field of inclusive education. This leads to informed decision-making and more targeted interventions that directly benefit families of children with SEND. The potential outcome of the research is aimed to extend beyond academic inquiry. It is also subjected to promote the promise of tangible improvements in the lives of families of children with SEND.

1.6 Chapter Overview

This chapter serves as an introductory aspect of the research dissertation. It highlights the contextual background of the supportive policies for families of children with SEND in the UAE. It outlines the problem statement, emphasizing the need to assess the effectiveness of existing policies. It presents the research questions that guide the study and introduces the overarching aim and objectives. Also, the rationale behind the research is highlighted, and a concise overview of the chosen methodological approach is discussed in this chapter. Lastly, the chapter previews the anticipated outcomes and sets the stage for the subsequent chapters in the dissertation.

Chapter 2 of the research will encompass a comprehensive literature review focusing on the research objectives and questions. The literature review will be structured to inform policy reforms by examining the state of knowledge regarding support for families of children with special education needs and disabilities in the UAE and globally.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This section highlights the evaluation and exploration of policies supporting families with SEND children in the UAE and on a global scale. The UAE, characterized by its rapid economic growth and multicultural society, has featured a growing demand for effective policies and support mechanisms for families with SEND children. Understanding the historical context and current state of policies in the UAE is imperative to ascertain the evolution of support systems in this unique environment. This chapter aims to delve into the rich tapestry of literature encompassing different functional overviews of the SEND policies. It also aims to explore the international best practices that have emerged globally in addressing the needs of SEND families. This helps in acquiring a benchmark for evaluating the UAE's policies. This chapter serves as the foundation for the dissertation. It intends to provide valuable insight for answering the main research question and sub-research questions outlined in the study.

2.2 Search Strategy and Data Sources

The conduction of a comprehensive literature review on policies supporting families with SEND children in UAE and globally is carried out systematically using a rigorous search strategy. The initial focus is portrayed on the usage of academic databases such as PubMed and Google Scholar. This helps in acquiring extensive coverage of scholarly literature. These databases provided access to peer-reviewed articles and policy documents that are pivotal for gathering insight. The research strategy also involves the usage of keywords and phrases such as SEND, UAE policies, and international best practices to gather the relevant data. Boolean operators are employed to refine the search in these databases. Furthermore, certain government websites and relevant international organizations are consulted to understand the relevance of the policies. These sources are essential in gathering official policy documents and reports that inform the policies in the UAE and best practices globally.

The selection of sources is based on their relevance to the research questions. This helps ensure the inclusion of high-quality and authoritative materials. This literature

review sets the stage for the examination of the current benefits, challenges, and global benchmarks in supporting families with SEND children in the UAE. This reminder provides a clear context for the search strategy and connects it directly to the study's objectives.

2.3 Overview of SEND historical developments in the UAE

Significant transformations characterize the historical development of policies supporting families with SEND children in UAE. It reflects the nation's commitment to inclusivity and support for individuals with SEND. Before establishing the UAE in 1971, historical records indicate limited formalized support for individuals with disabilities. Charitable organizations and individual initiatives often drove the earliest efforts. The country's journey towards developing comprehensive policies for SEND children gained momentum with the country's formation. In the year 1974, the country adopted the Ministry of Social Affairs (iupui.edu. 2023). It played a pivotal role in addressing social welfare issues. This marked the initial step towards acknowledging the importance of inclusive policies. Over the subsequent decades, the country and its government launched several initiatives to integrate SEND children into mainstream education, emphasizing early intervention and support.

The Dubai Centre for Special Needs, established in 1982, is regarded as a vital institution in the country for supporting children with SEND (dcsneeds.com, 2023). Dr. Mariam Mattar worked towards making this institution a center dedicated to providing specialized education, therapy, and support services over the decades. This organization has broadened its offerings to accommodate a diverse range of disabilities, encompassing conditions such as autism, learning disabilities, and Down syndrome. It adopts a comprehensive approach to education and therapy, centering on the distinctive requirements of each child. It takes pride in nurturing these children with the essential skills to manifest their full potential.

AlKhamis et al. (2022) stated that milestones in the area of SEND policies occurred in 2006 with the ratification of UNCRPD. This commitment reinforced the nation's dedication to ensuring the rights and well-being of individuals with disabilities. It

involved the access to quality education and support services. The evolution of SEND policies and practices in the UAE is closely tied to its economic development and societal changes. As the country rapidly modernized and diversified its economy, educational opportunities for SEND children expanded. The facilitation of specialized centers and schools tailored to the needs of students with disabilities. During this timeframe, the country also established Federal Law No. 29 of 2006 as legislation that aimed to protect the rights and promote the well-being of individuals with disabilities.

2.4 Current Benefits and Policies in the UAE

The UAE has made substantial progress in developing and implementing policies and support mechanisms for families with SEND. The country has established a comprehensive policy framework to support SEND children and their families. Resolution No. 43 of 2018 focuses on supporting the rights of people with disabilities, including children (u.ae, 2023). Through the creation of the Emirati Sign Language Dictionary in 2018, the country marked a significant upliftment in providing adequate services for children and their families. This initiative aligns with Vision 2021 and the National Agenda's goals of fostering a cohesive society and inclusive environment. Abdelhadi (2023) mentioned that in UAE, the CDA offers tuition assistance in cash to families of low income having children with SEND. It also introduced relevant social surveys in the region to acquire feedback. Also, financial support helps families access the necessary services and education for their children with special needs. The ZHO and SCHS are crucial organizations in the UAE that serve individuals with disabilities. ZHO, based in Abu Dhabi, fulfils a vital role as an umbrella organization for humanitarian and social services. SCHS, located in Sharjah, is dedicated to supporting people with disabilities. Understanding the roles and policies of such organizations aligns with the research questions about the UAE's support for families of children with special education needs and disabilities. It helps identify any existing gaps and challenges in these services.

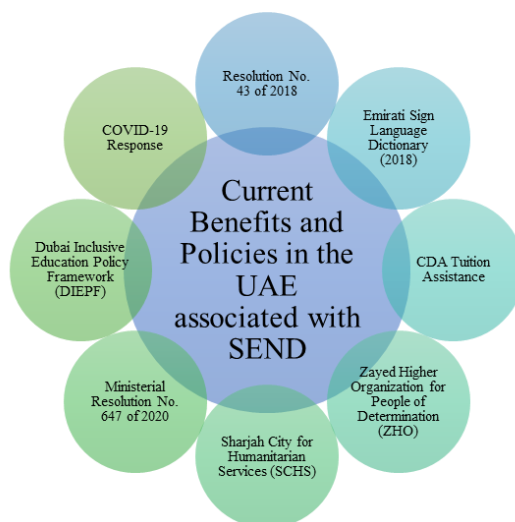


Figure 2 - 2.1: Current Benefits and Policies in the UAE associated with SEND

(Source: Self-made)

One of the key policies is the Ministerial Resolution No. 647 of 2020. This ensures the mandate regarding the integration of SEND children into mainstream schools. This policy encourages inclusive education and ensures that children with disabilities receive quality education alongside their peers. It places a strong emphasis on providing quality education for SEND children. This involves guaranteeing that educational materials are customized to align with each child's unique requirements and capacities. The resolution promotes the creation of Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) in schools to target precise learning objectives. It directs public schools to adapt to the needs of people of determination and provide them with the best educational opportunities.

Moreover, in line with the Dubai Disability Strategy 2020, the city of Dubai has developed DIEPF (Pineda & Pineda, 2020). This framework provides standards and guidance for educational practices across all sectors in Dubai. It portrays the primary emphasis on quality services for students with disabilities. Saeed et al. (2020) stated that during the COVID-19 pandemic, the UAE ensured that students with disabilities had access to remote learning resources and devices to facilitate online education.

2.5 Association of Sharia law with SEND policies of UAE

It is crucial to recognize the distinctive interplay between religious values and the country's dedication to inclusivity and support for all its residents. The UAE operates under the influence of Islamic principles across various facets of governance and policy formulation. As a fundamental aspect of the UAE's legal and cultural landscape, this law emphasizes compassion, justice, and social responsibility. These principles align with the UAE's efforts to ensure that SEND children receive equitable opportunities and support. In Islamic teachings, the community is responsible for the welfare of its members. Prakoso, Hakim & Tawakkal (2022) determined that Zakat is one of the Five Pillars of Islam. It portrays the reason for obligatory charitable giving by Muslims. It is often used to assist the needy and provide financial assistance to children with disabilities. It is seen as a form of charity and a means of fulfilling one's religious duty. The UAE government often collaborates with charitable organizations to offer financial assistance.

For instance, the MBRF is a significant entity in the UAE, actively involved in improving the lives of individuals with disabilities through charitable initiatives and support services (Gaad, 2019). The foundation's advocacy for policy changes and legal reforms that promote the rights and well-being of individuals with disabilities aligns with the research questions. It underscores the UAE's commitment to enhancing the support system for families of children with special education needs and disabilities. Furthermore, the influence of Islamic values is pivotal in understanding the UAE's approach to supporting families of SEND children. Islam encourages believers to provide compassionate care and support to those in need, reflecting the principle of benevolence. The UAE's policies for SEND children are rooted in these Islamic values, aiming to offer comprehensive support and opportunities for these children and their families.

Additionally, the influence of Sharia law and the UAE's commitment to aligning its policies with international human rights standards are vital considerations in the research. These factors play a role in shaping the policies and practices that impact families with SEND children. Understanding this context is essential in addressing the

research questions related to the UAE's policies and their alignment with global best practices in supporting families of children with special education needs and disabilities.

2.6 Involvement of key stakeholders in policy development

The development of policies supporting families with SEND involves a collaborative approach that actively engages key stakeholders from various sectors. Some of the key stakeholders in the policy development are highlighted below,

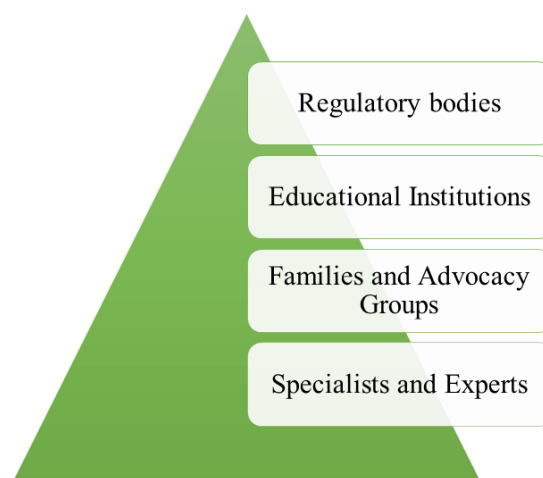


Figure 3 – 2.2: Key stakeholders in policy development

(Source: Self-made)

Regulatory bodies: The UAE government takes a proactive stance in policy development. This incorporates the efforts of the (Ministry of Education) MOE, (Ministry of Community Development) MOCD, and different agencies to formulate the policies that impact SEND families. They collaborate to ensure policies align with the broader national agenda and adhere to international standards. For instance, in 2017, the country launched the National Policy for Empowering People of Determination. This initiative addressed the healthcare needs of people with disabilities, including early diagnosis and intervention (Al Hamrani & Al Hamrani, 2021).

Educational Institutions: Schools and educational institutions are integral stakeholders in the development of SEND policies. They provide valuable insights into the practical implications of policies and contribute to the creation of inclusive learning environments. For example, the Rashid Centre for the Determined Ones is recognized

as an institution that is working towards providing children with SEND with a wide range of educational and therapeutic services. This institution has actively involved teachers and special education professionals in policy discussions to ensure that the needs of children with disabilities are addressed effectively (rashidc.ae, 2023)

Families and Advocacy Groups: It is an essential component and important in policy development. These stakeholders provide firsthand experiences and insights into the challenges faced by SEND families. They advocate for policies that address the specific needs of SEND children and work to ensure that the voices of SEND families are heard at all stages of policy formulation. For instance, the EDSA advocates for the rights and inclusion of individuals with Down syndrome in various aspects of society (edsa.ae, 2023). They work closely with government authorities and organizations to raise awareness about the needs and capabilities of individuals with Down syndrome.

Specialists and Experts: They contribute their knowledge to inform policy development. Their expertise helps shape policies that are evidence-based and effective in addressing the unique needs of SEND children (Ginis et al., 2021). The UAE has sought guidance from international experts to ensure that policies align with global best practices. Dr. Ammar Albanna is a well-respected specialist in pediatric neurology and developmental disorders. He has played a significant role in contributing his knowledge to inform policies related to pediatric healthcare and developmental support in the UAE.

2.7 Challenges and Deficiencies in the Policies

The country has made commendable strides in developing policies to support families with SEND. Yet, several challenges persist regarding the upliftment of these children. Acknowledging these issues is crucial for continued policy improvement and the betterment of the SEND community.

Limited Inclusive Education Opportunities: UAE promotes inclusive education, but there still needs to be more schools and resources to provide quality inclusive education for SEND children (Gordon-Gould & Hornby, 2023). For instance, SEND children might have educational options in the smaller northern Emirates. For parents of children with

SEND in the UAE, the limited availability of inclusive education opportunities is a significant concern. They face difficulty finding suitable educational options for their children. This can increase stress and frustration as they navigate the complex education landscape. This challenge directly addresses the research question about the UAE's current benefits and supportive policies for families of children with SEND.

Financial issues: Financial challenges persist as families raising children with SEND face higher expenses. This incorporates the needs for education, medical care, and therapy fees. These financial burdens strain families. It hinders the well-being and development of children with SEND (Orim & Udie, 2023). This challenge directly addresses the research question about the current benefits and supportive policies in the UAE for families of children with SEND.

Variability in Support Services: Support children vary significantly for children with disabilities needing special education. Disparities in resources and services mean that various families are subjected to face limitations of better support than others. This leads to inequality in opportunities for SEND children. This speaks to the question about international best practices, as it emphasizes the disparities in support services.

Parent's mental issues: Many parents of children with SEND experience mental health issues such as depression. Caring for a child with SEND can be physically and emotionally demanding, leading to feelings of helplessness and isolation. Additionally, the financial strain from the high costs of specialized care compounded by limited insurance support. This issue exacerbates the burden on these parents. This relates to the question about challenges and gaps, as it reveals a deficiency in the support system, with parents facing emotional burdens and financial strains.

Bureaucratic Hurdles: Some families encounter bureaucratic challenges when seeking support services and benefits for their SEND children. The complexity of administrative procedures can be overwhelming and time-consuming. For instance, obtaining a disability certificate and securing government support can involve complex paperwork and procedures. This relates to the question about challenges and gaps, as it reveals a deficiency in the support system, with parents facing emotional burdens and financial strains.

Lack of Awareness and Stigma: There is still a certain level of societal stigma associated with disabilities in some segments of society. It results in isolation and discrimination against SEND children and their families (Heru, 2020). This is pertinent to the question about best practices.

Data Collection and Research Gaps: There is a need for improved data collection and research on SEND. Limited data availability makes it challenging to assess policies' effectiveness and identify areas for improvement. Robust data collection and research are essential to inform evidence-based policy reforms. This directly relates to the need for international best practices.

Transition to Adulthood: SEND children often face challenges during adulthood. This includes the limitation of vocational training opportunities and employment prospects (Fang, Galambos & Johnson, 2021). Ensuring a smooth transition into adulthood for SEND individuals is an area that requires attention. This phase can be emotionally taxing for parents, as they worry about their child's future and their ability to secure meaningful employment and lead a fulfilling life. This connects with the challenges and gaps in UAE's policies.

2.8 Global models and best practices in supporting SEND families

Several countries have implemented comprehensive strategies to ensure inclusivity, accessibility, and support for individuals with disabilities and their families. Evaluation of the policies from a few global powers is discussed below,

United States: The country has implemented the IDEA initiative as a landmark policy that mandates free and appropriate public education for all children with disabilities. This policy promotes inclusive education by requiring schools to provide specialized services. It also provided accommodation to meet the unique needs of the SEND children (Francisco, Hartman & Wang, 2020). It also emphasizes the importance of parental involvement in the education process, ensuring families have a say in their child's education plan. 7.2 million Students have acquired services under IDEA in 2021. This demonstrates the initiative's credibility to generate a positive impact on children. Family and Medical Leave Act in the country is focused towards allowing eligible

employees to take up to 12 weeks of unpaid leave per year to care for a child with a serious health condition. It aligns with research on the UAE's policies and international benchmarks.

Canada: AODA has been implemented in the country to address the accessibility barriers of SEND children. It requires public and private sector organizations to comply with accessibility standards. It makes the services and facilities more inclusive for people with disabilities. The Act includes provisions related to accessible transportation and customer service. By 2025, this organization aims to make Ontario fully accessible for people with disabilities (Walsh, 2022). Highlighting the importance of accessibility standards is intended to inform policy improvements in the UAE.

United Kingdom: In the UK, the SEND reforms introduced in 2014 aim to improve support for children and young people with SEND. These reforms strongly focus on joint working between education and social care services (Clarry, Wood & Long, 2023). Also, the EHC plan in the country is focused on outlining the needs of every child to provide individualized support. Another initiative aimed at directly supporting parents of children with SEND is the Carer's Allowance. This program provides financial assistance to parents and caregivers with £76.75 per week. It offers valuable insights into the UAE's context and its policy challenges.

Australia: NDIS is a groundbreaking policy that provides funding and support to individuals with permanent and significant disabilities (Veli-Gold et al., 2023). It works towards providing the SEND families access to services tailored to their specific needs, including therapy and support work. It also empowers the families by giving them more control over the services they need. 500,000 people with disabilities have acquired access to relevant services with this initiative. The Carer Payment program helps alleviate some of the financial burdens associated with caregiving. It allows the parents to focus on providing necessary care and support. This serves as a relevant benchmark for policy improvement in the UAE.

Sweden: The County's inclusive education policy is a notable example. The country prioritizes inclusive practices by requiring schools to adapt their teaching methods and environments to accommodate all students. Support teams work closely with teachers

to provide individualized support for SEND students (Magnússon, Göransson & Lindqvist, 2019). The Support for Parents Act provides financial support to parents who need to take time off work to care for their child with a disability. It offers lessons for the UAE's policy development and implementation.

Japan: The country has adopted universal design principles in architecture and public spaces. This allows people with disabilities to gather more access. The country actively promotes barrier-free environments. It helps every individual with accessibility needs. Barrier-free stations and accessible train cars enable him to commute to work easily. In this country, around 90% of train stations in major cities are now accessible (bloomberg.com, 2022). It intends to inform UAE policies and practices, particularly concerning inclusivity and accessibility for SEND children.

New Zealand: The country offers comprehensive transition support services for young adults with disabilities. This includes vocational training and ongoing support to help SEND individuals transition into adulthood with independence and confidence (McCarthy & Duff, 2019). It provides insights for the UAE's policy considerations regarding SEND children's future prospects and independence.

2.9 Comparative review of implementation strategies for UAE

A comparative review of implementation strategies for supporting SEND families globally and in the UAE is presented below,



Figure 4 – 2.3: Implementation Strategies for UAE

(Source: Self-made)

Study Successful Models: The UAE must extensively study successful SEND strategies from countries with well-established programs. This is intended to enable the country to develop valuable strategies that work best in inclusive education. It helps segment capabilities and support services in the SEND policies (Al Gharaibeh & Al Remainh, 2022). These insights provide a foundation for understanding what works in supporting parents and their children.

International Collaboration: Collaborating with international organizations like UNESCO and UNICEF is aimed towards facilitating knowledge exchange and access to best practices. These organizations often have extensive research and resources related to inclusive education and SEND policies (Warner & Moonesar, 2021). Their insights and recommendations can inform the development of more family-centred and supportive policies.

Benchmarking and Assessments: Conduct benchmarking exercises to compare the UAE's current SEND policies and practices against those of leading countries. Using regular assessments, the nation becomes able to identify the areas for improvement in alignment with global best practices. The perspectives and feedback of parents contribute to more effective policies and support mechanisms.

Sharing and Research Collaboration: Collaborate with international research institutions to improve data collection and analysis related to SEND. Sharing research findings and collaborating on studies allows the country to understand the unique needs of SEND children. By involving parents in these research collaborations, their experiences and challenges are used to inform research outcomes directly.

Policy adaptation: Tailoring successful global models to the UAE's social and educational context is crucial for ensuring that the policies are sensitive for the children of the UAE. It also ensures that the policies align with the vision and values of the country. This adaptation process needs to take into account the specific needs of parents and SEND children within the UAE. This helps in resulting in policies that are more responsive and supportive.

Engage Stakeholders: Actively involving parents and SEND experts in the policymaking process is needed to ensure that policies are relevant (Camulli & Guohui, 2030). It helps the nation adequately respond to the local needs.

Pilot Programs: Consider piloting new SEND initiatives based on successful international models in specific regions or schools within the UAE. This allows for testing and refinement before scaling up successful strategies nationwide. Parents are often key participants in these pilot programs, providing feedback on their effectiveness and usability.

By drawing insights from the global context and adopting a holistic, evidence-based approach. The country can develop and refine its SEND strategies to better support SEND families and promote inclusivity in education and society.

This comparative review of implementation strategies for supporting SEND families, both globally and in the UAE, directly addresses the research questions. It provides a framework for evaluating the UAE's policies by studying successful models, collaborating internationally, benchmarking against leading countries, involving stakeholders, and adapting policies to local needs. These strategies aim to bridge the gaps and challenges identified in the previous sections, ultimately promoting inclusivity

and better support for families of children with special education needs and disabilities in the UAE.

2.10 Legal underpinnings of SEND policies in the UAE

The UAE Special Education Needs and Disabilities policies are underpinned by the combination of the international agreement, federal law, and regulations aiming at making sure that children with SEND receive inclusive education and proper support. This legal foundation highlighted inclusion for all equal opportunities, irrespective of their disabilities and abilities.

Federal Law No. 29 of 2006: This law is mainly well-known as the "Rights of People with Special Needs" law, as it serves as an essential legal framework for SEND policies in the UAE. It has outlined the protections and rights of people with disabilities, including their right to access social services, education, and healthcare (Cheikhmous, 2022).

Federal Law No. 2 of 2004: This law underpins the principle of non-discrimination and inclusion by criminalizing discrimination based on disability. It obligates private and public entities to offer essential accessibility and accommodation features to ensure equal access for people with disabilities.

The UAE Vision 2021: The national agenda of the UAE comprises a vision to develop an inclusive society where every individual, comprising those with SEND, has the chance to contribute to the development of the nation. This vision is demonstrated in different governmental initiatives and policies to integrate people with disabilities into the recognized society.

UAE National Strategy for Empowering Individuals with Disabilities 2020 to 2023: This approach outlines particular actions and goals to improve the quality of life for individuals with disabilities, involving enhancing educational services and opportunities (Policy, 2019).

Ratification of the international agreement: The UAE endorses global agreements like UNCRPD. This commitment demonstrates the UAE's dedication to aligning its

policies with worldwide standards, including those associated with inclusive education and assisting people with SEND.

Local Government Initiatives: In the UAE, local government plays a significant role in adopting SEND policies. They may develop programs and centers mainly designed to assist people with disabilities and ensure their inclusion in society and education.

The legal underpinnings of SEND policies in the UAE, encompassing federal laws, the national vision, and international agreements, are fundamental to addressing the research questions. These legal foundations set the stage for understanding the UAE's policies and their alignment with global best practices in supporting families of children with special education needs and disabilities. They provide the necessary context for assessing the benefits, challenges, and gaps in the UAE's approach to SEND support.

2.11 Review of Accessibility and Inclusivity Measures in the UAE

In recent years, the UAE has made notable strides in improving inclusivity and accessibility in different sectors. These measures demonstrate the UAE's commitment to developing an equitable society where all, regardless of their abilities, can fully participate.

Accessible Infrastructure: The nation has invested heavily in developing accessible infrastructure. Government buildings, public spaces, and transportation systems are designed to accommodate people with disabilities. These comprise accessible public transportation, ramps, and elevators, ensuring that mobility never becomes a barrier to participation.

Inclusive Education: The UAE has effectively involved students with disabilities in well-recognized education. The inclusive classroom and particular education centre have highly qualified professionals with trained and highly qualified professionals assisting students with different needs. The Ministry of Education's guidelines highlight the significance of offering proper resources and adapting curricula for inclusive learning (Policy, 2019).

Employment Opportunities: The nation has promoted inclusivity in the workforce through various efforts. Employees are also encouraged to recruit people with disabilities, and there are various provisions for workplace accommodations. Furthermore, vocational training programs and job fairs are organized to improve the employment prospects of individuals with disabilities (Massouti, Shaya & Abukhait, 2023).

Legislation and Rights: Federal Laws, such as Federal Law No. 2 of 2014 and Federal Law No. 29 of 2006, offer a legal framework for the rights of people of determination and protection of people with disabilities. The determination based on the disabilities of the individuals is prohibited, and people with disabilities have the right to access social services, education, and healthcare.

National Strategy: The National strategy of the UAE for encouraging people with disabilities from 2020 to 2023 has shown a comprehensive approach to improving the quality of life for people with disabilities. It sets distinctive goals for social inclusion, education, employment, and healthcare (Massouti, Shaya & Abukhait, 2023).

International Commitments: The UAE is endorsed by the UNCRPD, reinforcing its commitment to align its policies with the international standards for inclusivity and disability rights.

Advocacy & Awareness: The nation actively fosters advocacy and awareness for disability rights through community involvement and campaigns. This promotes a more inclusive society through acceptance, understanding, and challenging stereotypes.

The comprehensive review of accessibility and inclusivity measures in the UAE underscores their relevance to the research questions. These measures exemplify the UAE's commitment to supporting families of children with special education needs and disabilities. They provide essential context for understanding the current benefits, challenges, and gaps in the UAE's policies and their alignment with global best practices. These measures also highlight the proactive steps taken to ensure inclusivity and accessibility for individuals with disabilities.

2.12 Research Gaps

The research gaps identified in this study have direct implications for the research questions. Firstly, the reliance on secondary sources highlights a potential limitation in comprehensively understanding the current benefits and challenges in the UAE's policies for supporting families with SEND children. In order to address this gap, incorporating primary data through global models and best practices would provide real-world insights and a more nuanced perspective on the experiences and needs of these families. Secondly, the difficulty in accessing some relevant articles and journals due to restrictions or the cost associated with obtaining them signifies a challenge in evaluating the effectiveness of the UAE's approach in comparison to global best practices. This raises questions about the transparency and availability of data necessary for such assessments.

Furthermore, the presence of resources in languages other than Arabic or English poses a language barrier that may hinder a complete understanding of international best practices. It potentially limits the ability to effectively access and analyze policies and practices from a broader range of countries. In essence, these research gaps emphasize the need for improved data accessibility, the inclusion of primary research, and an exploration of how language barriers impact the evaluation of global best practices. Addressing these gaps will enhance the quality and comprehensiveness of the study, providing a more robust foundation for assessing the UAE's policies for supporting families with SEND children and their alignment with international benchmarks.

2.13 Summary

This chapter offers a comprehensive overview of the policies assisting families with SEND Children in the UAE and globally. The analysis has highlighted the significance of understanding the policy evolution in the UAE and global best practices. In addition, it also outlines the systematic search strategy and data sources utilized to gather relevant information, ensuring the inclusion of high-quality materials. The historical expansion of the SEND policies in the UAE has also been discussed,

highlighting the nation's commitment to inclusivity and assistance for people with disabilities. The critical milestone, like the ratification of the UNCRPD in 2006, has been highlighted. The chapter has addressed the relation of Sharia law with the SEND policies of the UAE, highlighting the alignment of the policies with Islamic principles of social responsibility and compassion. The analysis has shown global models and best practices supporting the SEND families, offering insights from nations such as the US, New Zealand, the UK, Japan, Canada, Sweden, and Australia. In the next chapter, the methodology will be presented in a detailed manner, outlining the data collection methods, approach, and analysis technique used to identify the research objective and questions.

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1: Introduction

In the methodology chapter of this research, a realism philosophy is adopted to objectively examine policies and actions about special education needs and disabilities in the United Arab Emirates. A descriptive research design explores policy issues, focusing on qualitative data comparison. Secondary research, encompassing laws, government publications, and academic sources, is conducted to gather data from the UAE and two comparison countries. Data analysis is approached directly, without the influence of theoretical frameworks, ensuring an objective evaluation. This methodology adheres to ethical standards despite potential limitations such as limited prior research and language barriers. It aims to provide insights into inclusive education practices for families with special needs children.

3.2 Methodology

The nature of the research question in this research revolves around studying actions and policies assisting families with special education needs and disabilities (SEND) children in the UAE compared to the international best practices. These research questions need a detailed exploration of the complex policy issues and identification of the support mechanisms accessible to the families. This research employs a realism philosophy to examine policies and actions regarding special education needs and disabilities, focusing on the support offered to families in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) (Kirongo & Odoyo, 2020). The research is framed within a descriptive research design, which allows for the exploration of policy issues and enables easy comparison of qualitative data. Two primary research approaches are adopted: the qualitative and descriptive-comparative approaches. The former facilitates the exploration of policies and the identification of best practices worldwide. (Pandey & Pandey, 2021).

Data is primarily collected through secondary research. This includes a comprehensive review of published literature, encompassing laws, government publications, research papers, and newspaper articles relevant to special education

needs and disabilities in the UAE and the chosen comparison countries. These countries are selected based on demographic and GDP per capita criteria to ensure meaningful comparisons. Data analysis will involve direct comparisons, avoiding the influence of theoretical frameworks to maintain objectivity.

3.3 Research Design

The research methods used in this research build upon the findings gained from the literature review and are tailored to fit the descriptive research design (de Vries, 2020). The secondary research methods are implemented by thoroughly reviewing the published literature, newspaper articles, law government publications, and research papers relevant to the SENDs in the UAE and comparison nations. These methods are justified as they assist in gathering data from credible sources, ensuring an inclusive understanding of the practices and policies.

The selection of secondary methods aligns with the descriptive research design, promoting the exploration of policy issues. By using secondary sources, the research can access the broader level of the data from the different sources, contributing to the detailed analysis of support methods for families with special needs children. The chosen research design and methods are most suitable for achieving the research objective in the descriptive research framework, enabling an objective evaluation of the actions and policies assisting families with special needs children across the UAE compared to the global best practices.

3.4 Study Variables

This research focuses on different vital variables to assess the assistance offered to families with children having SEND in the UAE compared to global best practices. The policies and actions variables encompass the actions and policies adopted by both local and federal governments, which are aimed at assist families with special needs children. The support for families' variables assesses the particular measures, resources and programs accessible to the families, comprising healthcare, financial and educational support. The study includes comparing the actions and policies in the UAE

with those in two carefully selected comparison countries, considering factors like GDP per capita and demographics.

3.5 Recruitment, Participation & Data Collection

Recruitment for this research will primarily involve accessing publicly available secondary data sources. The study depends on available literature, laws, government journals, research papers, and newspaper articles about distinct education policies and practices in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and the selected comparison countries.

Participation in this study is restricted to the researcher, who will extensively review the available literature and data. No surveys or interviews are involved in this study; thus, informed consent and ethical considerations specific to human participation are not applicable (Tamminen & Poucher, 2020).

The data for this research has been obtained by secondary research methods comprising a thorough review of newspaper articles, published literature, law, research papers, and government publications relevant to the SEND in the UAE and comparison nations. This approach has elected to ensure a detailed brand analysis of the practices and policies assisting families with special needs children. As per the study's exploratory nature, no specific population of interest or sampling methods are involved. In this place, the research focuses on making secondary data sources available that offer insights related to particular educational practices and policies. The research instrument examined existing literature related to special education across the UAE and comparison nations.

3.6 Instrumentation

This research's primary instrument is a comprehensive analysis and review of the secondary data sources. This instrument systematically collects and examines published materials, including academic literature, laws, government publications, research papers, and newspaper articles related to particular education policies and practices in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and two selected comparison countries.

3.6.1 Procedures for Informed Consent

In this research, the primary data collection method is the review and analysis of secondary data sources, and human participation is not involved. As such, there are no human subjects or participants for whom informed consent is required. The data collection relies exclusively on publicly available literature, laws, government publications, research papers, and newspaper articles related to particular education policies in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and comparison countries (Sileyew, 2019).

However, ethical considerations still apply to the use of these secondary sources. While informed consent from individuals is unnecessary, ethical guidelines concerning data use and citation will be strictly followed. This includes maintaining the privacy and confidentiality of individuals mentioned in the sources by citing and referencing them appropriately. The researcher will ensure that all sources are correctly attributed, and that personal information is handled responsibly and respectfully.

3.7 Data Collection

The data collection process for this research mainly includes systematic review and secondary data sources. The chosen secondary sources have remained accessible from reputable databases, official government websites, libraries, and credible platforms. The research will ensure the specific support systems and education policies. These sources are meticulously chosen based on their alignment with the research objectives and their capacity to shed light on special education policies and practices in the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

3.8 Data protection and handling

Ensuring data protection and accountable management is the most essential part of this paper. All the selected sources will remain carefully vetted to ensure their reliability and credibility. The newspaper articles, academic literature, and government publications will remain sources from reputable platforms, official websites, and libraries. This rigorous selection process ensures that the information is trustworthy and of higher quality. The collected data will be stored securely and confidentially. Digital records will be stored on password-protected devices and encrypted for added security

(Siedlecki, 2020). Physical documents will be securely archived to prevent unauthorized access. The researcher will also maintain backups to safeguard against data loss. The researcher will ensure full compliance with ethical standards and guidelines related to data protection, confidentiality, and responsible research practices. This includes adherence to relevant institutional, legal, and ethical data handling regulations. A stringent focus on privacy, confidentiality, and ethical compliance characterizes data protection and handling in this research. The researcher is committed to upholding the highest standards of data security and ethical conduct throughout the research process (Siedlecki, 2020)

3.9 Data Analysis Plan

In the data analysis plan, the researcher uses a thematic approach to analyze the qualitative information collected from secondary sources like newspaper articles, academic literature, and research papers. The thematic analysis includes addressing recurring patterns and themes in the content of these critical sources (Lester, Cho & Lochmiller, 2020). By systematically cataloguing and organizing the information, the study aims to uncover the key insights into the exceptional educational support, policies and actions for families in the UAE. In order to answer the research questions efficiently, thematic analysis offers a structured method to obtain detailed data from different sources. The themes this analysis addresses serve as a basis for comparing practices and policies in the UAE with effective global practices. By studying the nuances and prevalence of these themes across diverse sources, the researcher can provide a nuanced and detailed understanding of the support mechanism accessible for families with special needs children. By adopting this approach, the researcher can ensure that the analysis remains grounded in the information, allowing for an objective assessment of support and policy systems. By focusing on the key themes that emerge from the data gathered, the research aims to offer a concise and clear insight that addresses the research objectives.

3.10 Threats to Validity

In order to conduct the research effectively, technical and practical considerations are needed to ensure steadiness with the accepted practices. As the research adopted secondary methods, there is not specific test for the reliability and validity conducted (Lester, Cho & Lochmiller, 2020). However, specific measures have been taken to ensure the trustworthiness and credibility of the source used. The practical aspect comprises gathering information from well-known sources. The technical considerations include grouping and organizing gathered information to facilitate analysis. This research has not conducted any formal tests but follows practices for secondary research that include ensuring the credibility of the sources by choosing sources from reputable databases and credible platforms to prevent bias and ensure reliability. In addition, it verifies data across different sources to improve the findings' validity and decrease the risk of inaccuracies. After that, the research documented the methodology and sources used to gather information, allowing for reproducibility and transparency of the research process.

3.11 Ethical procedures

Ethical consideration is vital to the research process; this research has established a series of ethical processes to ensure responsible data management and the protection of confidentiality and privacy. The research depends on secondary data sources, and privacy and ethical conduct remain paramount. The source attribution is an essential ethical practice in the paper. To safeguard data privacy, stringent measures are undertaken to limit the inadvertent disclosure of sensitive or personal data found in the collected data. This includes accountable data-handling practices like secure storage of digital records, encryption and protection archiving of physical documents (Lester, Cho & Lochmiller, 2020). On the other hand, the paper has used a broad level of sources and published materials, some of which may need to be more standard or professionally completed journal articles or completed research. Audience-appropriate transparency, thus, will remain a primary ethical issue for the research. It is challenging to deal with as it would need a source to be dropped if it includes personal details or is used at the expense of privacy and breach of confidentiality.

3.12 Summary

The selected methodology, which combines the descriptive research design and realism philosophy, has efficiently identified the research questions by offering a detailed understanding of the actions and policies assisting families with the SEND in the UAE compared to the global best practices. By secondary research method, comprising a detailed review of the existing literature and other sources, the study has explored the critical variables related to the policies, assistive mechanisms, and comparative analysis. This strategy allows for identifying patterns and insights, promoting an objective evaluation of the assistive offered to the families with SEND children. The methodology has contributed to the detailed understanding of the overall educational policies, assisting stakeholders and policymakers in improving support for families with special needs children in the UAE.

Chapter 4: Findings and Data Analysis

4.1 Introduction

The pertinent chapter extensively explores the policies for children with special education needs and disabilities (SEND) in the UAE. The chapter examines the relevant research themes by exploring the historical development of SEND as per the evolution of the supporting landscape with the formulation of national policies. The research strategy of collecting qualitative secondary data involves collecting data from the academic database and other online resources. In the historical context, the Ministry of Social Affairs in the UAE was established in the year 1974. Further, the UAE endorsed the principles and strategies of the UNCRPD in 2006 to support the concept of an inclusive education environment for children with disabilities. Several other initiatives, like the Dubai Center for Special Needs, have resembled the commitment of the UAE towards an inclusive education system for special children.

It has also been observed that the UAE passed Ministerial Resolution No. 647 in 2020, Which has ensured a continuous development of infrastructure to support the SEND children. The chapter verifies the beneficial impact of the national policies of the UAE in developing the educational infrastructure and support to the families of special children with disabilities. Resolution No. 18 of 2018 is an exceptional initiative by the UAE to launch an Emirati sign language dictionary for translation into English. It has also been observed that the UAE's Community Development Authority (CDA) has supported the initiative with sufficient financial aid.

4.2 Qualitative Data Analysis

According to the research analysis the below results answer's the sub-research questions as following:

Sub-Research Questions 1: What are the current benefits and policies in the UAE aimed at assisting families with children who have special education needs and disabilities?

The collected set of qualitative secondary data has revealed the UAE's initiatives in developing policies and initiatives to support families with SEND children, in addition to international best practices that can benefit the country. It has also displayed the UAE's initiatives to adhere to the international standards for developing special education infrastructure. The UAE's historical trajectory towards supporting the SEND children has taken its course with the establishment of the Ministry of Social Affairs in 1974. The approval of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) in the year 2006 resembles the commitment of the UAE to develop inclusive education for special children (Fang, Galambos, & Johnson, 2021). It has been observed that various government agencies in the UAE have put on initiatives to provide supports for children with Special Education Needs and Disabilities.

The pertinent resolution has transformed the entire policy landscape of the UAE from the perspective of creating equal and effective educational and employment opportunities for persons with disabilities by supporting their families with proper training sessions. The resolution no. 43 of 2018 in the UAE shows the transformative change prioritizing employment opportunities for the people of determination (Special needs and disabilities). The local government has launched special training and development session for the parents to upgrade the education and health of children with SEND (Gaad, 2019). The UAE's Community Development Authority (CDA) has played a crucial role by providing sufficient financial aid from the government for the welfare of children who need support, contributing to the cost of services such as paying school and rehabilitation fees, hiring a caregiver, purchasing technology devices, and many other assistances. The pertinent agency supports families with SEND children and lower income rates (CDA, 2024).

The UAE legal agencies developed Federal Law No. 29 of 2006 to preserve the rights of a disabled person to enjoy all social services in bound of capabilities (Pineda & Pineda, 2020). The Vision 2021 of the UAE is a significant national policy developed to empower children with disabilities and their parents. The UAE has launched the 2020-2023 policy with a broader vision to develop an inclusive society (Walsh, 2022). The

pertinent legal provision denies any sort of discrimination and oppression of equal rights for persons with disabilities in the UAE.

The Ministry of Community Development supports people with SEND (known in the UAE as People of Determination) with the People of Determination card. This card offers a wide range of services supported by various government agencies, including Transport, medical, and other government services. In addition, the Ministry provides care and rehabilitation services for people of determination to enable them to integrate into society through its centers. (MOCD, 2024).

The Zayed Higher Organization for People of Determination in Abu Dhabi provides many services to support people of determination, including traffic services, psychological and social consultations, sports club membership, translation, applying for a job, and others (ZHO, 2024).

Department of Community Development in Abu Dhabi launched the Abu Dhabi Strategy for People of Determination 2020-2024. It supports people of determination and their families within an integrated system that provides high-quality services to enable them to participate effectively in society. The strategy aims to make the Abu Dhabi Emirate an inclusive and empowering society for people of determination. They are breaking all barriers that hinder access to rights, services, and opportunities and building a comprehensive support system for people of determination and their families. The strategy also brings together 30 initiatives related to various priorities, including health and rehabilitation, education, employment, and social care (ADDCCD, 2024).

The Abu Dhabi Early Childhood Authority also provided a training program for parents during the Corona pandemic, entitled Parenting during the Pandemic and Beyond, as the program includes a special section for parents of children of determination (0-8) years. This initiative is considered a positive step, as part of the program has been allocated to parents of people of determination from the lower age levels, who constitute the first positive steps towards the development of people of determination through their families, who are considered the constant supporters of people of determination in their journey (ADECA, 2024).

Sub-Research Questions 2: What challenges and deficiencies exist within the UAE's public policies regarding support for families of children with special education needs and disabilities?

According to the research, it been observed significant differences in the availability of services across the emirates, with Abu Dhabi and Dubai often having more comprehensive support systems compared to the Northern Emirates. There is also lake of data collection and analysis on the needs of children with SEND and their families.

Despite numerous government efforts, there appears to be a need for coordination between different agencies, resulting in fragmented and inefficient service delivery. The lack of a centralized system to manage and streamline support services also causes delays and confusion for families seeking support.

The limitation of support groups, which help the families to generally share common experiences and exchange important information about schools, therapies, and interventions, found experience-based knowledge exchange beneficial. Support groups help mothers to respond to their children's needs. Furthermore, Inadequate awareness and training programs for caregivers to effectively support children with SEND and integrate them into the mainstream education system and society (Lamba, N., Van Tonder, A., Shrivastava, A. and Raghavan, A., 2022).

Sub-Research Questions 3: What international best practices and policy benchmarks for supporting families of children with special education needs and disabilities can be adapted effectively to the UAE's unique context?

The qualitative analysis guides the exploration of global models by motivating the development initiative of inclusive policies in foreign states. In the United Kingdom, a joint initiative by education institutions and social care services has created an inclusive learning model from the perspective of SEND. It has been established to develop personalized support plans related to education, health, and care. This program provides financial assistance to parents and caregivers.

In Australia the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) is a pioneering policy that offers funding and support to individuals with permanent and significant disabilities (Veli-Gold et al., 2023). It ensures that families with SEND have access to services specifically tailored to their needs, including therapy and support work. Additionally, it empowers these families by giving them more control over the services they require. The Carer Payment program also helps ease the financial burden of caregiving, allowing parents to focus on providing necessary care and support. These initiatives serve as important benchmarks for policy improvements in the UAE.

In Sweden the County's inclusive education policy serves as a remarkable model. The country emphasizes inclusive practices by mandating schools to adjust their teaching methods and environments to meet the needs of all students. Support teams collaborate closely with teachers to deliver individualized assistance for SEND students (Magnússon, Göransson & Lindqvist, 2019). Additionally, the Support for Parents Act offers financial aid to parents who need to take time off work to care for a child with a disability. These measures provide valuable insights for the UAE's policy development and implementation.

4.3 Thematic Analysis

4.3.1 SEND Policies and its Historical Evolution in the UAE

The UAE has taken significant steps by examining global benchmarks and best practices, leading to the introduction of Law No. 29 in 2006, which reflects the country's dedication and international commitment to persons with disabilities. Law No. 29 of 2006, also known as the "Rights of People with Special Needs" (Matsumoto, 2019), underscores the UAE's efforts in this area. The ratification of the UNCRPD policies by the UAE further demonstrates the country's commitment to enhancing educational infrastructure for SEND children. Collaboration with international agencies such as the UNCRPD has enabled the UAE to align with global best practices in supporting children with SEND.

The development of the special institutions is aligned with the supporting policies of the UAE. Dubai Centers for Special Needs was founded in 1982 and became the

pioneer of the initiative related to developing a special education system for SEND children (Keis, 2020). The pertinent institution is situated in Dubai and caters to educational and therapeutic services to ensure holistic services for persons with disabilities. The centres offer extensive curriculum options for the students to access special education according to their special needs. The Vision 2021 of the UAE comes out to be an effective national strategy with cohesive initiatives to develop the SEND policies. The theme of the historical evolution of SEND policies has integrated broader goals with Vision 2021.

Item	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total	Mean	Standard Deviation
Acad1	-	-	1 (10%)	1 (10%)	8 (80%)	10	4.7	0.67
Acad2	-	-	-	1 (10%)	9 (90%)	10	4.9	0.32
Acad3	-	-	-	5 (50%)	5 (50%)	10	4.5	0.53
Acad4	-	-	-	5 (50%)	5 (50%)	10	4.5	0.53
Acad5	-	-	-	5 (50%)	5 (50%)	10	4.5	0.53
Acad6	-	-	-	6 (60%)	4 (40%)	10	4.4	0.52
Acad7	-	-	-	1 (11%)	8 (89%)	9	4.9	0.33
Overall	-	-	1 (1%)	24 (35%)	44 (64%)	69	-	-

Figure 5 - 4.1: Academic Well-being of Students with SEND

(Source: Keis, 2020)

The Dubai Inclusive Education Policy Framework launched in 2017 by the Knowledge and Human Development Authority (KHDA) in Dubai enhanced the presences and integration of students with SEND into private schools in Dubai (KHDA, 2017), and also supports the wellbeing of SEND students in the educational environment. The quantitative study conducted by Yasmine keis in her research showed the level of academic wellbeing for a sample of SEND students, as the table above shows the agreement of 99% of participants with the survey questions (Keis, 2020).

The inclusive practices with the ratification of the UNCRPD have ensured a steady evolution of the SEND policies in the UAE for supporting the families. It has been observed that the Vision 2021 of the UAE aims to create an inclusive society that allows each disabled individual to participate in the programs of national progress. Significant initiatives have been observed with the development of private and government

agencies. The development of the transportation system has been aimed to accommodate disabled individuals actively in every corner of society. The 2020-2023 national policy for empowering people of determination has become a significant initiative of the UAE in developing education and other service opportunities for disabled individuals (Thabet, Gaad, & Abu-Ayyash, 2020).

The collaboration of the UAE with international agencies like UNICEF and UNESCO has allowed the UAE to draw insight into the international best practices to develop the nation's policies related to SEND. The initiatives by the foreign States have acted as a benchmark for the UAE in developing the SEND policies by sharing best practices. The international collaboration has allowed the UAE to develop the best practices to create an inclusive education environment to support children with special education needs (Keis, 2020). The forward-thinking of the UAE has developed an inclusive approach to creating a comprehensive commitment to support education for children with disabilities.

4.3.2 Legal Framework and Initiatives

The UAE has put up several initiatives under the legal framework to improve the education system for the SEND children and the needed support. The federal law No. 29 of 2006 has been developed to protect the fundamental rights of people with disabilities (Usman, 2019). The pertinent law ensures the rights of an Emirati individual with disabilities to easily access all sorts of social services. Federal law no. 29 of 2006 has also encompassed the right to access equal healthcare and education services. The enforcement of the UAE's federal law 29 of 2006 resembles the commitment of the UAE to establishing an inclusive society to protect the rights of disabled individuals with safety and dignity.

Furthermore, the Ratification of the UNCRPD resembles the commitment of the UAE to creating an inclusive and adequate education environment for the SEND children. Dubai Executive Council Resolution No. 3 of 2014 established a Higher Committee for the Protection of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in the Emirate of Dubai. This cross-sector committee ensures the seamless integration and full

participation of individuals with disabilities by providing suitable opportunities and infrastructure. (Usman, 2019).

The compliance with international disability rights by the UAE has fostered collaboration and the exchange of essential knowledge with the global community. The international commitment of the UAE to protecting the rights of disabled individuals resembles the establishment of universal human rights on the global landscape. Approving collaboration with UNCRPD and UNICEF has allowed the UAE to adhere to global standards in developing the SEND policies. The Vision 2021 of the UAE aims to create equal opportunities for disabled individuals to participate in national progress. It will be monitored by the established higher committee to protect the rights of people with disabilities. The international collaboration decided the global commitment of the UAE to creating an inclusive education policy to SEND children The Vision 2021 of the UAE has been developed with the national agenda of developing an inclusive society (Badawieh, Abukari, & Gaad, 2023).

The national strategy of the UAE for empowering disabled individuals of 2020-2023 has been established to promote the quality of life for every disabled Emirati individual. The respective strategy envisions creating an inclusive education system by opening equal service accessibility to disabled persons. It comes with an open provision to allow the UAE to create effective SEND policies (Badr, 2019). The active participation of the local government agencies in the UAE is quite remarkable from the perspective of developing SEND policies. The role of the local government in the UAE is to establish programs to provide thorough assistance to disabled individuals. The activities of the local government ensure the active participation of disabled individuals in social services and inclusive education.

4.3.3 Accessible and Inclusive Educational Infrastructure

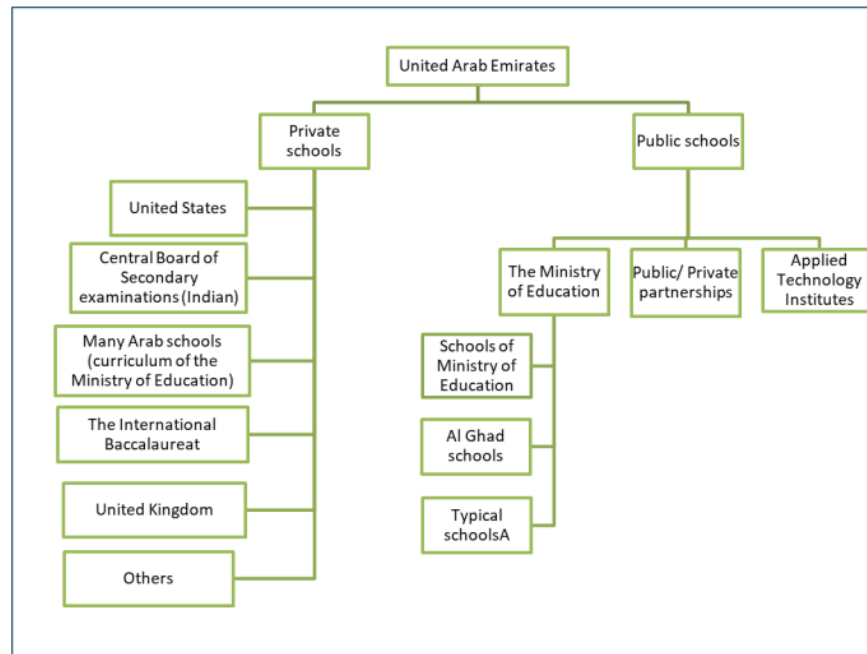


Figure 6 – 4.2: Type of Academic Institutions in the UAE

(Source: Haddad, 2019)

The key initiative of the UAE is developing inclusive classroom practices under the guidance of the Ministry of Education. It comes with the facility to adapt a proper curriculum for inclusive learning and optimize proper sources. Recruitment of high-quality professionals in the special education sector has created an inclusive and productive learning experience for the SEND children (Haddad, 2019). This initiative of the UAE has fostered tailored support for disabled children in special education. As per the federal law no. 29 of 2006, the UAE has established a robust foundation of inclusive education for the children with disabilities. The respective law creates a strong legal framework to avoid discrimination against disabled individuals and have easy access to private and public educational institutions.

The inclusive educational infrastructure is a direct outcome of the solid foundation for the legal framework of disability rights in Emirati society. An inclusive learning ecosystem allows children with disabilities to access equal education opportunities in the UAE. The UAE is committed to developing physical infrastructure with the establishment of Dubai Centers for Special Needs in 1982 (Alharbi, 2022). The

creation of numerous government and private buildings have been designed for special needs. The development of the transport system has been done by integrating of ramps and elevators for disabled individuals. The commitment of the UAE to disabled persons resembles that the initiatives have gone beyond creating facilities only for inclusive classrooms. Furthermore, the recruitment of highly qualified professionals in the special education sectors has reinforced the SEND policies.

The UAE government has supported the teamwork of educators to establish a collaborative ecosystem in building an inclusive education system for SEND children. The national strategy for empowering people of determination from 2020 to 2023 serves as a special action goal to develop special education infrastructure (Madani, 2019). Proper training and development programs program have been launched by the UAE government to provide pedagogical standards for teaching special children. It allows teaching professionals to offer quality teaching and accommodate all the SEND children with individual special needs. The support team of educators is committed to working closely for the exercise of individual aid to the people of determination. With the inclusive education system, the UAE has created a comprehensive education landscape that comes with opportunities to serve for national development for disabled individuals.

As per the relevant content, the inclusive education system can be multifaceted and involves all legal policies and practical dimensions. Incorporating inclusive education practices into the national agenda has allowed the UAE to create immense opportunities for SEND children. The Dubai Inclusive Education Policy System aimed for full inclusivity in private education by 2020, ensuring that all students could enroll in any private school or university without the possibility of being rejected (Alharbi, 2022). As compared to the global initiative, the UAE has established itself as a leading player in promoting inclusive education through adopting international standards in preserving human rights. The commitment to establishing inclusive infrastructure for disabled individuals also comes with the developing initiative beyond classrooms. A holistic approach to developing an accessible transportation system for the people of determination is a remarkable initiative toward an inclusive community.

4.3.4 Engagement of Stakeholders in Developing SEND Policies

In 2017, the national policy to empower the people of determination was a significant outcome of the active involvement of stakeholders (Alshamsi, 2022). The bottom-up approach to local government involvement ensures the immense contribution of the regional stakeholders in policy development. The involvement of the stakeholders in developing SEND policies comes with the detection of challenges that are common in families with disabled children. In the pertinent context, academic institutions are the key stakeholders in developing the SEND policies. Active engagement of the key stakeholders is necessary to establish a successful SEND policy for the family with children who need special education.

The collaborative initiatives of the government initiatives help in aligning the national agenda by complying with the global standards of policymaking. Moreover, the initiatives from the local government provide immense assistance to disabled Emirati people in accessing equal opportunities and services in society. The responsibilities of the stakeholders are to spread the practical implications of the SEND policies in establishing an inclusive learning environment (Abdat, Safi, & Sartawi, 2022). The development of institutions like Rashid Centers for the People of Determination has come up with a wide range of education and therapeutic services for SEND children. A group of active and highly qualified faculty group have been recruited in the Rashid Centre. The teachers are involved in the policy-making process to address the difficulties of the SEND children in the educational sector.

The role of parents is considered to be quite crucial in collecting accurate feedback regarding the progress of their children under the supervision of SEND policies (Alshamsi, 2022). The SEND policy-making has also been contributed by an eminent pediatric neurology and development disorder expert, Dr. Ammar Albanna. He has immensely contributed to the development of healthcare policies for the SEND children in the UAE. On the other hand, the international partnership with organisations like UNICEF and UNESCO has facilitated the exchange of knowledge with the regional stakeholders in the UAE. The initiative of the Emirates Down Syndrome Association

(EDSA) has promoted the inclusion of children with Down syndrome in distinctive societal aspects (KASSBAH, 2022).

In Dubai, EDSA has conducted several joint initiatives with the local government to promote awareness of the welfare initiatives of individuals with Down syndrome in the UAE. As per the local government initiatives, the plotting of the SEND policies incorporates the idea of making an inclusive learning environment for disabled individuals. The practical involvement of the parents in the feedback session promotes the actual workability of the programs related to developing the SEND policies. The engagement of the key stakeholders involves certain specialists and experts to persuade the process of evidence-based policy-making for SEND children in the UAE. The UAE has also sought for consultation from foreign policymakers to integrate best international practices in developing the SEND policies (KASSBAH, 2022).

4.3.5 Deficiencies and Challenges in the Current Policies

Within the landscape of policies supporting families with special education needs and disabilities (SEND) in the UAE, despite strides, there remain some significant deficiencies and challenges. These difficulties persist despite sincere efforts by the government of UAE. It also points to areas that need improvement and focused attention.

Fragmented implementation

In exploring the current policies supporting families with special education needs and disabilities (SEND) in the UAE, some deficiencies are hampering the process and hindering optimal support for these specific families. One main issue lies in the fragmented enforcement of policies across various institutions and regions (Francisco, Hartman, & Wang, 2020). At the same time, the United Arab Emirates has implemented some exclusive policies for education. However, their execution lacks consistency. This leads to huge disparities in the provision of resources, services and educational support for SEND children, developing an uneven assistance landscape (Francisco, Hartman, & Wang, 2020).

Disparities in resource allocation

Resource allocation represents another vital deficiency. While the UAE has shown commitment to supporting all SEND families, resource allocation remains an exception. Differences in staffing, funding and infrastructure between institutions and regions create bias in the quality and accessibility of support services. Insufficient funding can limit access to all special education programs, assistive technologies and therapeutic interventions, affecting SEND children's well-being and development.

Limited awareness and training

Challenges persist due to limited training and awareness programs among caregivers, educators and the community. While policies are implemented to boost an inclusive environment, the shortage of comprehensive awareness programs hinders their effectiveness. Inadequate training for all educators in managing different learning needs can lead to inadequate support within mainstream classrooms (Greenway & Eaton-Thomas, 2020). Additionally, misconceptions and stigma around disabilities persist, affecting the acceptance and inclusivity of SEND kids within communities.

Transition and post-school support

Transitioning SEND children into post-school and adulthood life represents significant gap in existing policies. The support mechanisms often decrease as students age out or graduate from the education system, leaving families with limited guidance and resources for their kids' future (Toquero, 2020). Employment opportunities, ongoing support structures, and adequate vocational training for free living are lacking; this creates issues for the integration of SEND individuals into society and long-term well-being.

Limited collaborative framework

Coordination and collaboration between relevant stakeholders remain challenges. Effective policies necessitate multi-agency collaboration, including educational institutions, government bodies, community organizations and healthcare providers (Toquero, 2020). The absence of collaborative solid frameworks hampers holistic support delivery, which results in duplicative efforts and fragmented services.

Mitigating these challenges and deficiencies needs a concerted effort involving policy refinement, comprehensive campaigns or awareness, enhanced resource allocation, the implementation of a collaborative framework and increased training programs. This holistic approach focusing on equitable distribution of resources, standardizing enforcement, fostering inclusive communities and constant support beyond schooling years will significantly contribute to preventing these issues and better-supporting families with SEND children in the United Arab Emirates through various means, including psychological, and financial, social, and awareness and guidance assistance.

4.3.6 Benchmarking According to Global Best Practices

The practices and policies of benchmarking supporting children with special education needs and disabilities (SEND) in the UAE against best practices showcase both the challenges and successes encountered in implementing an inclusive educational landscape. The UAE's approach to inclusive education is connected with some international principles, which enhance equity, equal opportunities and inclusivity. It's a reflection of the wide recognition of the inherent right of every child to quality education, regardless of their physical, emotional and cognitive distinctions. The UAE Vision 2021 emphasizes creating a unique society where a person with disabilities actively contributes and participates.

Central to this approach is the National Policy for empowering disabled people, serving as a foundational framework. This policy enhances education's vital role in enabling people with disabilities to lead fulfilling lives, supporting tailored interventions for kids with SEND to increase their confidence, self-esteem and independence. These policies point out the UAE's commitment to dignity, equal opportunities and human rights. However, issues persist in translating policy rhetoric into efficient on-the-ground support. Practical enforcement faces complexities in infrastructure adaptation, curricular accommodations and teacher training. These issues represent an international trend, indicating that evolving best practices constantly influence the inclusive education landscape. However, analyzing the policies of the UAE against these practices becomes vital (Keis, 2020).

This research's motivation lies in covering the gap between policy implementation and policy formulation. The aim is to provide practical recommendations to mitigate issues that hamper the proper inclusion of children with SEND. It's about boosting an environment where their potential is celebrated and nurtured. Adopting a descriptive design of research, this study combines descriptive comparative and qualitative descriptive approaches. This exploration involves reviewing laws, research papers, literature and government directives related to special education in the UAE and other countries. However, considering economic and demographic factors, a comparative assessment will be made between the UAE and other nations.

The UAE has made commendable progress in supporting families with children who have SEND through its inclusive policies of education, legal framework, and some specialized support centers. However, benchmarking against best practices points out opportunities for further development. Prioritizing parental involvement through comprehensive support networks and investing in teachers' professional development and extensive training can elevate the UAE's approach to supporting families with children who have SEND. Incorporating some successful strategies from leading international models, the UAE can build a more supportive and inclusive environment for children with special needs and also their families.

4.4 Conclusion/Summary

This research chapter has conducted a comprehensive thematic analysis of the supportive policies in UAE related to special education needs and disabilities (SEND). The chapter has also lucidly delineated the comparative analysis to analyze distinctive best global practices in developing SEND policies. The study in this chapter also explains the historical evolution of the UAE's SEND policies. The chapter also highlights the UAE's initiative in developing SEND policies by complying with the best international standards. The instances of ratification of UNCRPD in 2006 and the enforcement of Federal law no. 29 of 2006 resembles the commitment of the UAE to developing inclusive and equal rights and social provisions for disabled people.

In the chapter, the comparative analysis of the distinctive SEND models of different nations like the UK, Australia, and Sweden has provided vital insight into the development of SEND policies. The legal framework of the UAE has created a stable foundation for the UAE's SEND policies. The involvement of the stakeholders is also highlighted to be quite crucial from the perspective of developing inclusive education and social services infrastructure for individuals with a disability. The challenges encountered by parents were highlighted, including a lack of awareness and support and the scarcity of initiatives targeted at them.

Chapter 5: Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1 Summarizing the main argument

UAE is considered one of the eminent nations in the Middle East due to its cultural opulence. This study mainly seeks insights into the academic feasibility and assistance scenario for families of children with special education needs and disabilities (SEND). All of them live with their families in the UAE and get assistance from the UAE government and other relevant agencies or not. The study seeks to shed light on the identification of better policies to help families with SEND children and to evaluate the issues they experience.

Moreover, this consists of manifesting the best practices executed in other nations to support disabled children's families who require support. There is a problem with the UAE's implementation of many of the finest practices, though a few still need to be more comprehensive. This is due to the psychological and emotional dilemmas they encounter. Moreover, the children's families only get a little assistance alongside financial limitations. Issues such as partiality in resource distribution and limited collaboration among shareholders of SEND policies are also mentioned as severe issues.

5.2 Reflectively critique the account provided in the dissertation

In my opinion, the UAE is eminent for its cultural affluence and wealth and has progressive thoughts towards making its nation brilliant. The context mentioned in this study is quite severe and has many connotations regarding its significant application. The United Arab Emirates has a lot of better methods and policies to offer education and medical help to needy disabled children and their families. UAE government provides a lot of comprehensive policies like the UAE Vision 2021, which, in me, is a tactical structure that gives much preference in making a better society. It has been a beneficial approach for the SEND children in the UAE, who could benefit greatly from their education and healthcare assistance.

A lot of other nations are there too in offering best practices, such as the collaborative initiative by social care services along with educational establishments within the UK, which has made a comprehensive learning structure, furthermore, the

financial assistance to the caregivers. It made the nation based purely on the SEND model. Following this, it was considering Australia and its National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS), a trailblazing scheme that bestows much assistance and funding to people with chronic disabilities. Sweden is there too, as per the comprehensive education scheme along with financial aid for parents who need to take time off from work to care for their child, which is contemplated as a significant model.

However, I also contemplated that there are a few challenges, like resource limitations, giving proper favour to disabled children, and offering help to their families in massive numbers. These exist in terms of implementing the policies in the UAE, which can be reduced or mitigated by modifying the policies and mandates. Moreover, the UAE must consider other nations' approaches and aid in making methods similar to this feasible for all without prevailing discrimination. Considering the country must take better measures of global standards, which goes well with preserving human rights.

5.3 Discussing the results in the UAE context

This study is about depicting the policies for the betterment of families with SEND children within the UAE. In 2006, the UAE promoted the norms and methods of the UNCRPD to facilitate the idea of a comprehensive education circumstance regarding disabled children. The approval of the UNCRPD has affirmed stable growth regarding the SEND policies within the nation to offer much assistance to needy families with disabled children. The UAE also opts to employ best practices globally to improve the infrastructure of special education. The Community Development Authority in Dubai (CDA) and the Department of Community Development in Abu Dhabi (DCD) also acted as vital players in providing much assistance in terms of childcare support. They launched many initiatives that support people of determination. Moreover, the UAE Vision 2021 is a remarkable national policy established to strengthen disabled children and their families.

Alongside, Abu Dhabi's Zayed Higher Organization for People of Determination offers multiple services to facilitate individuals. The Abu Dhabi Strategy for People of Determination 2020-2024 aids people of determination by offering them exquisite offerings to allow them to live correctly in society. The Abu Dhabi Early Childhood

Authority also offered an extensive training initiative for parents during the time of COVID-19, and this program consists of a special section for children between 0-8 years and their families. Dubai Executive Council Resolution No. 3 of 2014 built a Higher Committee regarding safeguarding the rights of persons with disability within the UAE. There are SCHS and ZHO, which are vital agencies in the UAE that to serve people with disabilities. SCHS, based in Sharjah, and ZHO, located in Abu Dhabi, are committed to helping people with disabilities.

Moreover, the right to acquire the same healthcare provision and educational facility for all has additionally been encircled within 2006's Federal Law No. 29. In 2020; the Dubai Education Policy System pointed to overall comprehensiveness in private education. It ensures that each and every student can enroll in any private school or college without the chance of being declined. However, there are a few limitations, which are that all the established methods to help SEND children do not aid the families of the child in a significant way.

5.4 Stating the conclusions and recommendations

Based on the above-stated facts, it can be concluded that comprehensive education and medical assistance are pretty essential for SEND children. However, they will not be sufficient without providing adequate support to the parents, who are considered the basis in developing the skills and abilities of children with difficulties. Most initiatives and programs are intended for people of determination and ultimately benefit parents indirectly. However, this is not enough, as parental support has a positive impact on the quality of life of children with disabilities and the whole family. Support does not only mean financial support but must also include awareness and advisory. To sensitize parents and make them aware of the need to address their children's difficulties and needs. Moreover, parents may need advice depending on the child's situation, especially during early childhood.

Referring to the state initiatives and programs mentioned, it has been observed that most of the initiatives are from local authorities in the UAE (limited to Abu Dhabi and Dubai) and not at the federal level. This highlights the limited initiatives and programs for

people of determination in the Northern Emirates, indicating that, unfortunately, the efforts are unequal, as the initiatives of the federal entity are minimal.

The recommendations for supporting the families/parents of children with SEND are mentioned below:

Short-Term Recommendations:

- Establish a dedicated counselling center in each emirate for parents of children with SEND to provide them with the consultation support they need in relation to dealing with their child's difficulty or disability.
- Launch workshop programs in all Emirates to provide practical information for families/parents and the public on addressing SEND needs according to children's age groups and difficulties in collaboration with federal and local government entities and services providers who is responsible for special education.
- Organize an awareness campaign to educate parents and the community about SEND.
- Introduce financial grants to support families with immediate childcare needs.
- Provide temporary funds to parents who need to take time off work to care for their SEND children.
- Provide immediate coverage for essential treatments and procedures under existing health insurance plans to reduce the burden on parents.

Responsible stakeholders:

- The UAE Cabinet (Counsel of Ministries)
- Ministry of Community Development
- Ministry of Finance
- Ministry of Health and Prevention
- Community Development Authority - Dubai
- Zayed Higher Organization for People of Determination
- Department of Community Development in Abu Dhabi
- Abu Dhabi Early Childhood Authority
- Department of Health Abu Dhabi

- Dubai Health Authority

Long-Term Recommendations:

- A national supportive policy for SEND and their guardians should be pursued consistently across all Emirates. This policy should cover their rights, support programs, financials, mental health, and health benefits. Also, the policy should contain a pathway for the families of children with SEND that includes all life stages that family/parents might go through, from the moment they are informed that their child has a difficulty, until he/she depends on him/herself in life.
- Create a permanent financial assistance program to support families with long-term costs related to SEND.
- Develop a centralized online platform for ongoing support and consultation to provide the families with the support they need through the platform or app, without the need to visit a center in person. The platform or app should also offer an option to track the child's development by the concerned agencies.

Responsible stakeholders:

- The UAE Cabinet (Counsel of Ministries)
- Ministry of Community Development
- Ministry of Finance
- Community Development Authority - Dubai
- Department of Community Development in Abu Dhabi

Implementation and rolling out the recommendations:

Funding governmental initiatives and projects is often prohibitively expensive, limiting the launch of numerous initiatives due to their high costs. This financial burden falls on the government and relevant authorities, requiring them to allocate substantial budgets for implementation. Therefore, it is crucial to encourage the contribution and cooperation of private entities in financing these national initiatives as part of their society responsibility. The Ministry of Community Development is the primary body responsible for financing these initiatives in collaboration with ministry of finance and local government entities who are responsible for community development and family care. Consequently,

a collaborative approach will be undertaken to allocate national funding in partnership with private entities to secure the necessary financial resources for the successful completion of these recommended initiatives.

5.5 Discussing the implications of the research in the study area

This study is based on the execution of better methods to help the families of SEND children in the UAE. SEND children's families are pretty distant regarding getting proper awareness, consultations, and financial assistance. The UAE has established several policies to help disabled children and their families, but these policies turn out to be few for the SEND community.

The country should concentrate on serving a few significant initiatives, such as offering them comprehensive health insurance coverage for essential therapies and medical treatments. All of these will help the country secure a better future. The country should also provide them with serious follow-up of the development on cases; this will help sustain a better society and their families and create a generation with high determination, as they are called in the country, people of determination.

5.6 Reflections

Writing this dissertation has been a valuable journey that has significantly expanded the researcher's academic and professional skills. It is the first study on the support provided to families of children with SEND in the Emirates. The study faced challenges regarding the limited detailed data on UAE policies and initiatives.

Future studies could benefit from field research by surveying parents of children with SEND to obtain accurate and detailed data on their children's conditions and difficulties. Furthermore, incorporating quantitative methods and qualitative data would allow for a more robust analysis.

Skills gained through this study include research and analytical skills by improving the ability to conduct a comprehensive literature review and critically analyze policies, as well as improved project management skills through improved time management, resource allocation, and coordination. This reflective exercise highlights

the importance of continuous learning and adaptation, which are essential to succeed in any field.

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