

## INNOVATION FOR ALL: UNLEASHING THE POWER OF ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY IN SPECIAL EDUCATION IN ARABIC SPEAKING COUNTRIES

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**Abstract:** *In this study, we look at how special education teachers are increasingly using assistive technology (AT) to help children with disabilities. Our research focuses on the available literature on AT implementation in special education in Arabic-speaking nations. Our analysis includes a look at the advantages, disadvantages, and prospective applications of AT in this setting. The study's findings shed light on a number of major topics that emerge from the literature. For starters, it highlights the importance of personalised and student-centered methods to AT implementation. Recognizing each student's unique needs and abilities means that AT interventions are personalized to optimize their impact. Furthermore, the study emphasizes the vital relevance of providing adequate training and continuous support to both teachers and students who use AT. Adequate training provides educators with the skills and knowledge needed to properly apply AT, while continual support ensures its continued effectiveness in the classroom. Furthermore, the evidence demonstrates AT's tremendous potential to improve outcomes across a wide range of academic and functional areas. Students can overcome barriers, learn key skills, and actively participate in their educational path by utilizing AT technologies. Finally, this paper explores the implications of these findings for future special education research and practice. The findings of the literature study serve as a platform for future research and show the importance of continuing to investigate the influence of AT on students with disabilities in Arabic-speaking nations. This study adds to the growing body of knowledge about assistive technology in special education, particularly in Arabic-speaking countries. It is a great resource for educators, policymakers, and researchers, emphasizing the significance of student-centered approaches, training, and the potential of AT to improve results for students with disabilities.*

**Keywords:** *assistive technology, special education, middle east, Arabic speaking countries.*

### **Introduction**

Assistive technology (AT, hereafter) has become an increasingly important tool in the field of special education for meeting the needs of students with disabilities. AT includes things like computers, tablets, and cell phones that disabled individuals use to help them carry out their daily activities (Cook & Hussey, 2002). The use of AT in special education is beneficial for students with a wide range of disabilities, including those related to mobility, cognition, sensory processing, and language (Bryant & Bryant, 2003). The purpose of this study is to take a comprehensive look at the present state of research on AT in special education, covering its benefits, drawbacks, and applications.

The introduction of AT into special education has been shown to be beneficial for students with disabilities in a variety of ways. A significant benefit of AT is its ability to encourage the development of cognitive and motor skills (Beukelman, 2008). Students with disabilities who use AT show gains in reading, writing, and communication (Cress & Chen, 2015). For students with disabilities to succeed in the long run, they must learn to work with others, advocate for themselves, and be self-sufficient, all of which can be facilitated by the use of AT (Furniss & Biswas, 2012). Students with impairments have the extra benefit of being able to fully engage in general education courses because to the use of AT in special education (McCarthy, 2013). By providing students with disabilities access to the same educational opportunities as their typically developing peers, AT can aid in reducing the achievement gap between students with and without disabilities.

While the use of AT in special education has the potential to yield many benefits, there are also many challenges that must be surmounted. Because of the need for tailored and student-centered approaches, AT implementation can be challenging (Bryant & Bryant, 2003). To ensure that each student receives the most beneficial AT solutions, educators must work closely with students and their families. One barrier to AT's widespread adoption in special education is the lack of consistent funding for it (Cook & Hussey, 2002). Teachers need training on how to integrate AT into their curriculum effectively. Students also need guidance on how to effectively advocate for themselves and use AT on their own.

### **Review of major literature in general**

The research literature documents both the benefits of AT for students with disabilities and its drawbacks in the classroom. Customized technologies have been shown to aid this student demographic by Angelo (2000) and others by piquing their interest in learning and providing them with additional support. In their research, Murray and Rabiner (2014) found that students who used AT reported greater gains in knowledge and skills. Additionally, they aid students with disabilities in performing tasks that would otherwise be difficult (Sullivan & Lewis, 2000). Nelson et al. (2013), on the other hand, investigated ways to improve students' intellectual and language development. Multimedia AT (MAT) was found to improve academic achievement in a study conducted by Howard-Bostic et al. (2015). McNicholl et al. (2019) conducted a systematic review of the use of AT by college students with disabilities and found four main themes: AT as a facilitator of academic engagement; barriers to effective AT use can hinder academic participation; the transformative possibilities of AT from a psychological perspective; and AT as a facilitator of participation. The potential benefits of AT for students with disabilities in terms of enhanced social acceptance and less stigma are similarly concluded by De Witte et al. (2018) and Asongu et al. (2019).

Byrd and Leon (2017) identified three main barriers that prevent students with disabilities from being approached and involved in the use of so-called tailored ATs: First, there is a lack of accessible technology for students with disabilities. The high cost of AT and the unpredictability of its funding both function as barriers to the provision of AT to students with disabilities. Third, not enough teaching is given on how to use digital tools and resources, which is a major barrier for students with impairments. Some limitations on their application in special education were noted by Copley and Ziviani (2004). Among these are insufficient funds, problems with equipment management, a lack of time, teachers' bad attitudes, and inadequate assessment and planning procedures. Murray and Rabiner (2014) and Howard-Bostic et al. (2015), among others, highlight the problem of inadequate training for educators on the use of AT.

### *Potential Applications of AT in Special Education*

When discussing the educational needs of pupils who have some kind of impairment, the term "special education" is typically used. The program's overarching goal is to help these students grow intellectually, socially, and emotionally by giving them a tailor-made education. The field of special education research is expanding, with

recent studies looking at topics including the function of evaluation in shaping lessons and the effects of technology in the classroom. The application of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles, as demonstrated by the research of Rose and Meyer (2002), can increase the accessibility of educational materials for students with disabilities, hence improving their academic performance. Wiener and Dobler (2007) conducted research on the role of technology in special education and found that assistive technologies like text-to-speech software and voice recognition technology are helpful for students with impairments. Studies on the application of individualized teaching in special education have yielded positive results, showing that it can be an effective method for catering to the wide range of demands that students with disabilities have (Tomlinson, 1999). When it comes to assessment, Thurlow, Ysseldyke, and Moch (2002) discovered that using assessment data to influence instructional decision-making and boost students with disabilities' academic outcomes.

There is great promise for AT to promote the learning and development of students with disabilities across a wide range of academic and functional domains, despite the limitations connected with its implementation. Literacy, numeracy, and even executive function can all benefit from the use of AT (Cress & Chen, 2015). Self-advocacy, social skills, and independent living can all benefit from the use of AT. The use of AT into special education programs with the goal of enhancing children' academic performance has gained popularity in recent years. Different types of AT have been studied for their efficacy, along with the factors that help and hinder their use in educational settings. The study of how students with disabilities might benefit from mobile technology and apps is an exciting new topic. Johnston and coworkers (2012), for instance, discovered that iPads helped autistic youngsters with speech and attention. Another study that demonstrated an iPad software to be helpful in enhancing social communication skills in autistic children was conducted by Hume and colleagues in 2013.

The study of how AT can improve literacy is another active area of inquiry. Reading comprehension and fluency were found to be enhanced when students with reading challenges used text-to-speech software, according to research by Arndt and colleagues (2015). Students with dyslexia who used dictation software had greater gains in writing ability, according to research by Fidalgo and colleagues (2019). The benefits and drawbacks of implementing AT in classrooms have also been studied. According to research by Okolo and colleagues



(2012), a lack of knowledge and training among educators is a significant barrier to the widespread use of AT. Choi et al. (2018), on the other hand, discovered that teacher training and support aided in the adoption of AT in schools. Recent studies have shown that AT can be a useful tool for helping students with disabilities succeed in school. To guarantee successful implementation, however, AT in schools may require supplementary teacher assistance and training.

The use of virtual and augmented reality as AT in special education is another field of study. Students with special needs may benefit from a more interactive and immersive educational experience with the help of virtual and augmented reality technologies. Researchers Anderson and colleagues (2018) showed that autistic pupils' spatial skills and problem-solving abilities improved with VR training. It has been shown that students with disabilities who use AT see positive changes in their social and emotional well-being as well as their academic performance. Zhang (2017) reported that social robots helped autistic youngsters with their communication and emotional development. Ramdoss et al. (2011) discovered that video self-modelling intervention helped students with disabilities become more socially and communicatively adept. Nonetheless, despite AT's promise, there remain obstacles to its widespread implementation in classrooms. According to research by Zainuddin and Perera (2018), a lack of money is a significant impediment to the widespread implementation of AT in educational settings. Vasa et al. (2018) also discovered that further research is needed to determine which AT solutions are most helpful for people with different types of disability.

Involving students with disabilities in the process of choosing and implementing AT has also been highlighted by recent studies. Students' happiness and use of AT improved when they were included in the decision-making process, according to research by Wu et al. (2019). In conclusion, current studies on AT in special education have shown its promise to enhance kids' academic performance, social and emotional well-being, and quality of life. However, more study is required to determine the most efficient AT interventions and remove obstacles to adoption in educational settings. Students with disabilities can benefit the most from AT if they are actively involved in the process of choosing and implementing this tool.

### **AT In Middle Eastern Countries**

Few studies have been conducted on the topic of AT in special education in the Arab world, but this is beginning to change. Alshehri

and Alzahrani (2019) conducted research to better understand how educators in Saudi Arabia feel about using AT. The study indicated that while educators generally viewed AT favourably, barriers to its widespread implementation existed, notably a dearth of appropriate training and funding. Al-Saggaf et al. (2016) conducted research into how students in Saudi Arabia with visual impairments make use of assistive technologies. Students with visual impairments who used assistive technologies like screen reading software showed significant gains in reading and writing ability, according to the study.

Alghamdi et al. (2018) looked at how students with learning difficulties in the United Arab Emirates make use of assistive technologies. The study concluded that students with learning difficulties who used AT, such as text-to-speech software, saw significant gains in reading comprehension and academic accomplishment. Despite the obvious advantages, the Arab world faces challenges when it comes to embracing AT. Some of these are things like not enough money or knowledge about AT. Evidence suggests that the use of AT in special education can be successful in enhancing learning outcomes for children with disabilities, although research on its usage in the Arab world is currently scarce. However, more study is required to discover efficient interventions and conquer obstacles to adoption in the area.

There have been a number of reports on the effectiveness of incorporating AAC into special education in Saudi Arabia in recent years. Students in Saudi Arabia who have learning problems are the focus of a study by Al-Azawi et al. (2018). Reading comprehension and academic performance were found to improve significantly for children with learning difficulties who used assistive technologies such as electronic dictionaries and text-to-speech software. Al-Gahtani, et al. (2016) conducted research on the use of mobile apps for students with autism in Saudi Arabia. Researchers found that teaching autistic pupils to use mobile apps like "social stories" and "communication apps" improved their ability to interact with others.

Despite the obvious advantages, there are still barriers to the widespread use of AT in Saudi Arabia. According to research conducted by Alshehri and Alzahrani (2019), educators in Saudi Arabia confront numerous challenges when it comes to implementing AT. In response to these difficulties, projects have been launched to expand the use of AT in Saudi Arabia's special education system. The Saudi Ministry of Education, for instance, has initiated a number of

programs to equip educators with knowledge and tools to implement AT in the classroom. A lot more work needs to be done to remove obstacles to the use of AT, but there is evidence that it can help students with disabilities in Saudi Arabia learn more effectively. The success of students with disabilities in school depends on efforts to raise understanding, supply instruction, and distribute adequate resources.

Alkharusi and Al-Tobi (2019) conducted research into the same topic but in the neighbouring country of Oman, where many pupils with visual impairments attend school. Students with visual impairments were found to benefit from the use of AT like screen readers and magnifiers, according to the study. The use of AT in Omani special education for students with intellectual disabilities was also studied by Al-Said and Al-Abri (2018). Students with intellectual disabilities were found to benefit from the usage of AT, such as augmentative and alternative communication devices, in terms of their ability to communicate and interact with others. Efforts have been made to increase the availability of AT for students with special needs in the classrooms of the United Arab Emirates (UAE). The relevance of AT in facilitating the integration of students with disabilities into regular classrooms is highlighted, for instance, in the Dubai Inclusive Education Policy Framework, which was introduced in 2017. Alghazo et al. (2018) conducted research into the integration of AT into UAE special education for kids with impairments. Researchers found that students with impairments who used assistive technologies like screen readers and voice recognition software had significant gains in both academic performance and autonomy. In the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Saudi Arabia, and Oman, there is a growing body of literature on the application of AT in the field of special education. Although there are barriers to the widespread use of AT in education, it is crucial that students with disabilities have access to the devices they need to be successful.

### **AT in Egypt**

Several recent Egyptian studies have examined the utility and efficacy of AT tools and services in inclusive and specialized classrooms. One major takeaway from this research is that the implementation of AT in Egypt's special education sector is still in its infancy and faces numerous obstacles. Educators' and parents' lack of familiarity with the benefits of AT, the scarcity of appropriate devices and services, and the inability to secure adequate money all work against its widespread implementation in Egypt's special education system (Abd El-Ghaffar et

al. 2019). Elgandy (2018) came to a similar conclusion: inadequate teacher preparation is a major barrier to the successful integration of AT into Egypt's special education system.

Despite these obstacles, some work has been done to increase the incorporation of AT into Egypt's special education curriculum. Special education students in Egypt, for instance, can now access AT equipment and services thanks to a new initiative by the country's Ministry of Education and Technical Education (Ministry of Education and Technical Education, 2021). Educators and officials in Egypt are also becoming increasingly interested in AT's potential to expand opportunities for students with impairments (Elgandy, 2018). There have been multiple investigations into how well AT works in special education settings in Egypt. Research by Elhoussein et al. (2019), for instance, demonstrated that AT interventions can improve the academic performance and engagement of students with visual impairments in Egypt's mathematics classroom. Students with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) in Egypt's special education settings can benefit from the usage of AT devices and services, according to research by Elwahsh et al. (2018).

Despite the studies' encouraging results, more investigation into AT's utility and efficacy in Egypt's special education context is clearly warranted. It is challenging to evaluate the effect of AT on students with disabilities due to the paucity of empirical data on the use and effectiveness of AT in the country. More research on the efficacy of AT and the identification of best practices for using AT in different settings was called for by Elgandy (2018). Egypt's special education system has struggled to incorporate AT due to a lack of funding and knowledge about the benefits of AT for students with disabilities. While there have been negative findings on the efficacy of AT interventions for students with disabilities, there have also been efforts to promote the use of AT. More study is required to assess the effectiveness of AT on students with disabilities and to determine the most effective ways to implement AT in a variety of Egyptian educational contexts. To improve the usage and efficacy of AT in special education in Egypt, it is crucial that instructors obtain training and support in how to use the technology effectively.

### **AT in Jordan**

Over the past decade, there has been a growing demand for AT in Jordan, prompting researchers to examine the effectiveness of AT interventions in the country's special education institutions. These

studies have found, among other things, that the implementation of AT in special education in Jordan is still in its early stages and confronts a number of obstacles. The lack of money for AT programs, the restricted availability of AT devices and services, and the lack of awareness and knowledge among educators and parents are just some of the obstacles to the use of AT in special education in Jordan (Abu-Hamour & Abu-Saad, 2016). Al-Sa'di (2018) came to a similar conclusion, stating that inadequate training and support for teachers using AT is a major barrier to the successful implementation of AT treatments in special education in Jordan. Despite these obstacles, some work has been done to expand the use of AT in Jordan's special education system. For instance, in Jordan, the Ministry of Education has initiated a program to supply special education students with AT devices and services (Ministry of Education, 2021). Educators and politicians in Jordan have also shown a growing interest in AT as a means of expanding opportunities for children with impairments to participate fully in the classroom setting (Al-Sa'di, 2018).

Research into the usefulness of AT in Jordanian special education settings has also been conducted. Studying the role of AT in the literacy development of students with dyslexia in Jordan, Al-Taani (2018) discovered that AT interventions can improve students' reading and writing skills. Similarly, Abu-Rmaileh and Abu-Zhaya (2019) discovered that students with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) in special education settings in Jordan benefited from the incorporation of AT devices and services into their daily routines. Despite these encouraging results, the studies also show that more investigation into AT and its effectiveness in Jordanian special education settings is needed. It is challenging to evaluate the effect of AT on students with disabilities due to the paucity of empirical data on the use and effectiveness of AT in the country. More studies on the efficacy of AT and the identification of best practices for using AT in different settings were called for by Al-Sa'di (2018). Several obstacles have impeded the implementation of AT in special education in Jordan, including a dearth of funding and a general lack of understanding on the part of teachers and parents. While there have been negative findings on the efficacy of AT interventions for students with disabilities, there have also been efforts to promote the use of AT. The effectiveness of AT for disabled students and the identification of best practices for its use in various settings in Jordan need for more study. To improve the usage and efficacy of AT in special education in Jordan, it is crucial that instructors receive training and support in how to use the technology effectively.

### **AT in Yemen**

As a result of being one of the region's poorest countries, special education in Yemen has had limited access to AT. In Yemen, special education settings have struggled to effectively implement AT treatments due to a lack of resources, infrastructure, and experience, despite rising acknowledgment of the relevance of AT in boosting the learning and development of students with disabilities. Only a small number of studies have looked at where AT stands in special education in Yemen right now. In Yemen, Al-Sakkaf (2017) surveyed special education teachers to gauge their level of familiarity with and understanding of AT. The survey indicated that while most educators were familiar with the concept of AT, their understanding of its many forms and uses was limited. The study also emphasized the difficulties special education instructors in Yemen face in implementing AT interventions due to a lack of resources and training opportunities. The views and opinions of Yemeni parents of disabled children about AT were also investigated in a study by Al-Worafi et al. (2019). The study revealed that parents in Yemen knew very little about AT and its benefits, and that there were substantial financial hurdles to gaining access to AT devices and services. The research also showed that more education and training programs for parents and caregivers are needed to help them make the best use of AT.

There have been various initiatives to increase the availability of AT for students with special needs in Yemen's public schools. One such partnership is between the World Health Organization (WHO) and the Ministry of Education in Yemen to promote the use of AT in special education and to offer related training and resources (WHO, 2021). While the ongoing conflict in Yemen has limited the reach of these programs, some non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have provided AT devices and services to children with disabilities. A lack of funding, facilities, and trained professionals hinders the implementation of AT in special education in Yemen. The continuous violence in the country has also made it more challenging to give the required assistance and services to children with disabilities. Some efforts, however, are being made to spread the word about AT and raise awareness among teachers, parents, and other caretakers. There needs to be more investigation on the efficacy of these interventions and the best ways to implement AT in the specific setting of Yemen.

### **AT in Qatar, Kuwait and Iraq**

In Qatar, Kuwait, and Iraq, there is a dearth of studies examining the role of AT in special education. However, a number of studies have highlighted both the obstacles and possibilities associated with AT's widespread adoption in these nations. The attitudes of Qatari educators and parents on the implementation of AT in special education were investigated in a study by Al-Hamed and Al-Jaber (2019). The research showed that both educators and parents understood the value of AT in helping students with disabilities learn. However, they also noted several obstacles to the efficient application of AT, such as a dearth of resources and technical support, inadequate teacher training and awareness, and pervasive cultural attitudes and beliefs about disability.

Aljassar et al. (2021) conducted research in Kuwait to find out how students with visual impairments use AT to help them succeed in school. Researchers showed that students who used AT like screen readers and braille displays had dramatic gains in their academic performance. However, the study also highlighted the difficulties students and teachers face in gaining access to and using AT devices, such as the high cost of devices and the lack of readily available technical support. Al-Bayati et al. (2019) conducted research in Iraq to explore the barriers and benefits of incorporating AT into special education. The research uncovered a number of barriers, such as inadequate money and resources, a lack of proper regulations and guidelines for the use of AT in special education, and a lack of awareness and expertise about AT among teachers and parents. The survey did find some bright spots, though, including rising policymaker interest and support as well as access to foreign resources and experience. Overall, the scant study into AT's usage in special education in Qatar, Kuwait, and Iraq reveals that, while there are chances for the effective implementation of AT, there are also substantial problems that must be addressed. The efficient use of AT in special education settings is hindered by a lack of resources, including money, technical assistance, and training for educators and parents.

### **AT in Saudi Arabia**

A brief summary of AT's application in Saudi Arabia is provided by Al-Ateeq and Al-Beeshi (2019). More research and resources are needed to support the use of AT in the country, which is something the authors emphasize. Although it's informative, the article doesn't delve deeply into the benefits and drawbacks of implementing AT in Saudi Arabia. Children in Saudi Arabia who have autism spectrum disorder (ASD) were the focus of a scoping review by Alahmadi et al. (2021). Based on their findings, the authors argue that more research and

resources are needed to effectively employ AT with children who have ASD. The essay sheds light on the difficulties children with ASD have in gaining access to AT in Saudi Arabia, however it solely addresses this particular impairment.

Students with impairments in Saudi Arabia have access to a comprehensive overview from Al Sobhi and Ahmad (2020). The authors emphasize the positive effects of AT on pupils' academic performance and social integration. However, more resources and training for teachers to effectively use AT in the classroom are also highlighted in the article. Insights into the current level of AT use in special education in Saudi Arabia are provided in this article; however, the article does not include an analysis of the obstacles and potential benefits of adopting AT in the country. Al-Zahrani and Al-Mansour (2018) examine the barriers to and potential benefits of AT for students with special needs in Saudi Arabian classrooms. While there is a growing recognition of the importance of AT in the United States, the authors argue that there are still significant challenges that must be addressed. These include a lack of resources, a lack of awareness among educators and families, and a lack of training and support for using AT. In this essay, we take a close look at the current condition of AT in Saudi Arabia's special education system and highlight crucial areas for development. You can learn more about the government's initiatives to promote the use of AT in special education on the website of the Ministry of Education Saudi Arabia (2021). The website emphasizes the government's dedication to supplying kids with disabilities with AT devices and services, as well as providing teachers and families with training and assistance. The webpage is helpful, but it doesn't go into detail on the benefits and drawbacks of adopting AT in Saudi Arabia's special education system. The results of these research shed new light on the accessibility technology landscape in Saudi Arabia. Access to appropriate technologies and the requisite support for those with disabilities to utilize them effectively is an issue that has to be addressed despite the growing use of AT in the country. Improving access to AT devices and services, boosting knowledge of the benefits of AT, and increasing resources and training for educators and families are all crucial areas for development.

Over the past two decades, AT has gained widespread acceptance in Saudi Arabia as a vital resource for facilitating students with disabilities' access to and participation in general education classrooms. Researchers have looked into the usefulness of AT tools and services in a variety of special education settings around the country. These



studies have found, among other things, that the availability and implementation of AT in special education settings in Saudi Arabia remain problematic areas for improvement. A lack of awareness and expertise among educators and parents, limited availability of AT devices and services, and a lack of money for AT programs were all cited as obstacles to the use of AT in special education by Al-Zahrani and Al-Mansour (2018). These findings were repeated by Al-Ateeq and Al-Beeshi (2019), who pointed out that a lack of skilled personnel and scarce resources pose serious obstacles to the efficient implementation of AT in special education in the country. Despite these obstacles, there have been some initiatives to increase the incorporation of AT into special education in Saudi Arabia. A program to provide AT equipment and services to students with impairments in special education has been launched by the Saudi Arabian Ministry of Education (Ministry of Education Saudi Arabia, 2021). According to AlSobhi and Ahmad (2020), educators and policymakers in Saudi Arabia have shown a growing interest in AT, which may indicate a growing acknowledgment of the potential benefits of AT for children with disabilities.

There have been multiple investigations into AT's usefulness in Saudi Arabia's special education programs. A scoping review of the literature on AT for children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) in Saudi Arabia by Alahmadi et al. (2021) indicated that AT therapies can improve children with ASD's communication and social abilities. Based on their comprehensive assessment of research on AT for students with disabilities in Saudi Arabia, AlSobhi and Ahmad (2020) concluded that AT has the potential to boost students' academic and social performance. Despite the studies' encouraging results, more investigation into AT's usefulness in Saudi Arabia's special education context is warranted. It is challenging to evaluate the effect of AT on students with disabilities due to the paucity of empirical data on the use and effectiveness of AT in the country. More studies, according to Al-Ateeq and Al-Beeshi (2019), are needed to determine the efficacy of various forms of AT and to determine best practices for their application in various contexts.

In addition, the studies analyzed indicate that teachers and other special education professionals could benefit from additional training and professional development in order to make the best possible use of AT in the classroom. According to Al-Zahrani and Al-Mansour (2018), many Saudi Arabian teachers aren't properly trained on how to use AT devices and services, which hinders their capacity to effectively

integrate AT into their classrooms. AlSobhi and Ahmad (2020) came to a similar conclusion, observing that many Saudi Arabian educators struggle with AT owing to a deficiency of training and assistance. Therefore, it is crucial that special education teachers be given the resources they need to learn how to incorporate AT into their lessons. This includes instruction in the use of AT devices and services, as well as guidance on how to most effectively incorporate AT into classroom instruction. Teachers' familiarity and comfort using AT for students with special needs can be improved by participation in workshops and other professional development opportunities.

Educators, policymakers, and researchers are all key players in the field of special education, and the evaluated papers highlight the importance of working together. When discussing the barriers to AT use in special education in Saudi Arabia, Al-Ateeq and Al-Beeshi (2019) stressed the importance of collaboration between various stakeholders. Al-Zahrani and Al-Mansour (2018) echoed this sentiment, noting that successful AT intervention requires collaboration between teachers and other specialists including speech and occupational therapists. To sum up, insufficient resources and a lack of understanding among educators and parents have been two of the biggest obstacles to implementing AT in special education in Saudi Arabia over the past two decades. While there have been negative findings on the efficacy of AT interventions for students with disabilities, there have also been efforts to promote the use of AT. More research, training, and collaboration among different stakeholders in the field are needed to increase the use and effectiveness of AT in special education in Saudi Arabia. These initiatives have the potential to boost the educational and social outcomes for students with disabilities by increasing their access to and participation in mainstream classrooms.

### **AT in Oman**

The role of AT in facilitating the education of students with disabilities in Oman has grown significantly in recent years. The government of Oman has taken action to increase both access to and understanding of AT. However, more study and funding are required to fully implement AT in Oman's special education system. The dearth of study and awareness on the problem was observed in a review of the literature on AT use in special education in Oman by Al-Mahrooqi et al. (2022). To better understand the current state of AT use and to identify the gaps and difficulties that need to be addressed, they suggested conducting additional research.

Despite the obstacles, Oman has seen some positive results with the use of AT in special education. For instance, Al-Mahrooqi et al. (2021) discovered that students with learning difficulties in Oman benefited greatly from the implementation of AT. They advocated for training and assistance for both instructors and students, as well as the use of assistive software and hardware to facilitate education. However, special education teachers still face obstacles when trying to incorporate AT into their lessons. According to Al-Harthy (2019), a scarcity of AT devices and inadequate training and support for educators were two of the biggest obstacles to adoption. They advocated for the necessity of further training and assistance, as well as the creation of policies and guidelines to facilitate the use of AT in special education. More study, publicity, and funding for AT in special education are all needed in Oman. Access to and use of AT in special education in Oman could benefit from the establishment of laws and guidelines, as well as from increased training and support for teachers and students.

### **AT in the UAE**

Students with disabilities can benefit greatly from AT in the classroom since it allows them to overcome obstacles and reach their full potential. The United Arab Emirates (UAE) has been pushing hard to get more schools to adopt AT for students with disabilities. The current landscape of AT in special education in the United Arab Emirates will be analysed critically, along with the potential and obstacles that exist in this subject. The government of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) has made many measures to promote the use of AT in the classroom. For instance, the 2017 Dubai Inclusive Education Policy Framework aspires to create a fully accessible and inclusive educational environment for all students, including those with special needs. The policy framework emphasizes AT and suggests ways to implement it in the classroom.

Several groups in the UAE advocate for the inclusion of AT in special education, complementing the efforts of the government. For instance, the Abu Dhabi Rehabilitation Centre (ADRC) offers evaluations of AT and training for parents and educators of disabled children (Abu Dhabi Rehabilitation Centre, n.d.). Support for students with ASD can also be found through the Dubai Autism Centre (DAC) in the form of through services and resources (Dubai Autism Centre, n.d.). Despite these gains, several obstacles remain in the way of AT's usefulness in UAE special education. The widespread lack of knowledge and

understanding among teachers and parents is a significant barrier. Sulaiman, et al. (2020) found that many teachers lacked knowledge about accessible technology and its successful use in the classroom. When students with disabilities could benefit from using AT, they may be reluctant to do so because of this.

The restricted supply of AT in the UAE is another difficulty. Some groups and service providers do offer AT evaluations and instruction, but the selection may be limited or the costs too high for some people (Alqahtani et al. 2021). Because of this, schools and families may be hampered in their efforts to gain access to and benefit from AT. In addition, there is a dearth of studies examining the efficacy of AT in special education in the United Arab Emirates. While there are studies of AT's application elsewhere, more studies tailored to the UAE are needed (Sulaiman et al. 2020). This would aid in determining how best to employ AT tools and practices for students with disabilities in the UAE classroom. Despite these obstacles, however, the UAE presents an opportunity to successfully implement AT in special education. The widespread adoption of technological solutions presents one such chance. Increased access to online education and digital resources in the UAE as a result of the COVID-19 epidemic may open up fresh avenues for the implementation of AT (Alqahtani et al. 2021).

The United Arab Emirates' (UAE) increasing interest in inclusive education is another possibility. For instance, the Dubai Inclusive Education Policy Framework (2017) argues that all students, regardless of their background or physical capabilities, deserve access to the same high-quality educational opportunities. Students with disabilities can benefit greatly from using AT in general education settings, and this emphasis on inclusion makes a compelling argument for its usage in special education. Another study that looked into how educators and parents in the UAE felt about AT was undertaken by Al-Shamma'a and Al-Qaroot (2019). Researchers found that educators generally viewed AT favorably and believed it had the potential to improve student learning and classroom inclusiveness. Parents, on the other hand, were more wary and worried about AT's price and availability. Although progress has been made in implementing AT in special education in the UAE, there are still some obstacles that must be removed. Lack of teacher training in the usage of AT is one such issue. Studies have shown that many educators lack the expertise to successfully incorporate AT into their classrooms. Because of this, kids with disabilities may not reap the full benefits of using AT. The price and accessibility of AT also pose a challenge. Many educational facilities

may lack the financial means to purchase AT, despite its obvious benefits. This can lead to disparities in the availability of AT for children with impairments, which in turn can worsen existing educational disparities. To rephrase, AT may prove useful in facilitating the education and growth of students with special needs in the United Arab Emirates. There are prospects for its expansion and integration in the school system, despite various hurdles to its effective usage, such as limited awareness and availability of AT and a lack of research on its usefulness in the UAE environment.

### **AT in Sudan**

Despite some recent progress, AT is still in its infancy in Sudan. In spite of this, there has been some development in recent years regarding the accessibility of AT tools and programs. The government of Sudan has taken measures to increase accessibility to AT for individuals with disabilities as a result of this recognition. The government of Sudan formed the National Council for Disabilities in 2010 to coordinate the country's efforts to improve the lives of individuals with disabilities. In addition to the government, a few of NGOs and private businesses in Sudan offer AT equipment and services. For those who are blind or visually impaired, resources including Braille printers, screen readers, and other AT equipment are available at the Khartoum Centre for the Rehabilitation of the Blind (KCRB) (El-Bashir et al. 2019).

However, substantial obstacles remain in the creation and use of AT in Sudan. According to research by El-Tahir and Hassan (2019), the adoption of AT in Sudan is hindered by a number of factors, including a lack of AT competence among professionals, a scarcity of appropriate devices, and prohibitive costs. Another study by Hamza and Alashry (2017) found that there should be more public education and training about AT for individuals with disabilities, and that there should be policies and guidelines to back up the creation and use of AT in Sudan. Overall, more education, training, and funding are required to advance the use of AT in Sudan. People with disabilities in Sudan need the government, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and private sector to work together to overcome these obstacles and expand availability of AT and related services.

Countries in Arabic-speaking Africa, such as Tunisia, Palestine, Algeria, and Morocco, are seeing a growth in interest and development of AT. Some literature from the past decade is listed below for your perusal: Mobility aids, hearing aids, and communication aids were

reported to be the most commonly requested pieces of AT by the respondents of a survey conducted by Ben Slama et al. (2018) in Tunisia. Khemakhem and Karray (2019) dug into the topic of incorporating AT into regular classrooms for intellectually disabled pupils. AT, such as multimedia materials and interactive whiteboards, was found to increase students' participation and engagement in classroom activities for those with intellectual disabilities. Masmoudi et al. (2019) created a mobile app with visual aids, communication boards, and social stories for children with ASD in Tunisia who speak Arabic. According to research by Alareeni et al. (2020), there is a need for education and advocacy, as well as a shortage of resources, which prevents Palestinians with disabilities from making use of AT. In Palestine, a web-based software developed by Khader et al. (2016) was used to successfully treat Arabic-speaking infants with speech sound problems.

Ammor et al. (2017) developed a smartphone app to assist the visually handicapped in Morocco with cash recognition. According to studies conducted by Ennaji et al. (2020), persons with hearing loss in Morocco are primarily using hearing aids and cochlear implants as their primary types of AT. Students on the autistic spectrum (ASD) have been the focus of Bouabid et al.'s (2020) investigation of the efficacy of AT. Students with ASD were found to benefit greatly from AT, such as communication aids and visual timetables, in terms of both increased communication and decreased challenging behaviours.

According to Elzbieta and Abou-Zahra's (2020) survey of web accessibility in Arabic-speaking African countries, few sites make use of the guidelines available to them. Mahamane et al. (2015) developed a speech recognition system for the Hausa language in Niger, which may pave the way for AT in other Arabic-speaking African countries. Benaouicha and Benachour (2016) looked into the difficulties of providing supplementary aids and services to high school pupils in Algeria who are blind or visually impaired. They concluded that the primary obstacles to efficient AT implementation were a lack of funding and insufficient teacher preparation. Despite the growing interest and advancement of AT in Arabic-speaking African countries, significant barriers remain in terms of resources, device availability, expert and public knowledge, and training. More study and teamwork are needed to remove these roadblocks to accessing AT for people with disabilities in these countries.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, in Arabic-speaking countries, AT has become an essential component in fostering inclusive education for students with disabilities. Accessible technology has the ability to aid students with disabilities in their academic and social pursuits, despite some obstacles such as limited resources, lack of awareness and training, and problems in identifying acceptable solutions. According to the research that was analysed, numerous Arab-speaking countries have made efforts to incorporate AT into special education. The United Arab Emirates (UAE), Tunisia, and Morocco are just a few examples of countries that have set up centres and programs to offer AT services to students with impairments. Sudan, Palestine, and Egypt are just a few of the countries that have begun including AT in their special education curriculums.

To advance AT in Arab-speaking countries, however, further work is required. More money and resources need to be allocated by governments and institutions to help with the creation and distribution of AT services. Teachers, parents, and students would all benefit from increased familiarity with AT devices and software if awareness campaigns and training programs were put into place. Furthermore, more study is required to examine the efficacy of AT interventions and to determine the best solutions for various disabilities and settings. Finally, it must be stressed that AT is not a replacement for good pedagogical methods or for addressing the underlying causes of disability. Therefore, AT should be incorporated into special education as part of a holistic strategy that also includes early detection and intervention, individualized lesson plans, and fully inclusive classrooms. By taking this stance, Arab-speaking nations may guarantee that its disabled citizens have full participation in and benefit from the educational system. When partners in Arab-speaking nations work together, the future of AT is bright, and the lives of students with disabilities can be greatly improved.

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