Attitudes of Teachers of Learning Disabilities Towards Distance Education During the COVID-19 Pandemic

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The study aimed to identify the attitudes of teacher of students with learning disabilities towards distance education in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. The study used the descriptive and analytical method, and applied the study to a sample consisting of (32) teachers in Aseer region. The study used a questionnaire as an instrument of the study. The questionnaire consisted of (18) statements covering two main dimensions, the first included the basic data of the sample, and the second included the questionnaire phrases that were judged and verified the psychometric properties. The findings showed that teachers are keen to use the benefits of distance education. However, there was a lack of interdependence of relationships between students as a result of the lack of interaction between them during the distance education period in light of the Corona pandemic. Teaching using distance education is very stressful in the absence of the necessary activities that attract the attention of the student with learning disabilities. The degree of achievement of students is less and this is normal compared to the teaching in the presence of teachers in schools, which is more interactive and the acquisition of information.

INTRODUCTION

The current phase is one of the most dangerous stages that most countries in the world face, especially the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, due to the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic, which has caused a crisis at all local and global levels, especially in the field of education. Education shifted to online education and the attitude of teachers and special education teachers differed toward the new norm (Khlaif, 2020). The use of the distance education method is one of the successful means in dealing with the learning problems resulting from the Corona pandemic. It is the process of separating the teacher, the learner, and the textbook in the education environment and transferring the traditional environment of education to multiple and geographically separate environments. Distance learning is a new method that aims at providing the opportunity for all students who cannot obtain it in traditional conditions (Ramadan, 2020). Countries have tried hard to continue education despite this crisis. They have relied on the use of new strategies for distance education in order to complete the curricula and complete the school year by working with parents to provide them with guidance and directions on how to teach at home (Al-Saad, 2019).

Distance education does not mean cancelling the role of the teacher, but rather his role becomes more important and more difficult. He is a creative person with high efficiency who manages the process and works to achieve progress. The profession of the teacher has become a mixture of the tasks of the leader, director of the research project, critic, and mentor. In light of distance learning, the role of the teacher will change from transferring information to a guide and facilitator of the learning process, where the teacher prepares the scientific material, programming it, choosing methods to display it, and following up the learner during the learning process (Al-Shanaq, 2010). Teaching people with special needs requires appropriate educational and technological means to overcome disabilities and facilitate education, as well as ensuring the professional preparation of workers with all categories of people with special needs. The educational technology specialist and the teacher may employ technology according to the educational situations, the circumstances of these students, their capabilities, their readiness, their senses, their tendencies, and their abilities (Singh & Agarwal, 2013).

Since the application of technology in the educational field, it required a number of basic issues, the most important of which is the teacher's full awareness of the nature of educational technology and its importance in the educational field and the new role of the teacher in how to deal with it, preparing the teaching material and training them well on how to use modern technologies in the education process and methods of designing and producing materials. Therefore, the teacher must be prepared and trained so that he acquires the necessary professional competencies to deal with modern technology and its innovations (Al-Anzi, 2017). People with special needs are considered part of the educational system, and their education requires the presence of sensory stimuli provided by the surroundings away from technology. They need a sense of touch and sight to identify and develop communication skills and carry out decoding and installation operations to develop fine motor skills and imitation skills. Therefore, it was necessary to identify the attitudes of teachers of students with disabilities towards distance education and their willingness to accept this system, as it has become a reality within schools. Attitudes of teachers, the challenges they face during distance education can be

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identified to overcome them and achieve the maximum possible benefit. Several studies have sought to identify teachers' attitudes towards distance education, such as Amal (2016) and Al-Khudair (2019). The main objectives of this study are to identify the attitudes of teachers of learning disabilities towards distance education in light of the COVID-19 pandemic, identify the differences in the attitudes of teachers in Aseer region towards distance education according to the variable of teaching experience, and to identify the differences according to the academic qualification of the teacher. To achieve these objectives, the study attempted to answer the main question, which is to find the attitudes of teachers of learning disabilities toward distance education. This main question has two sub-questions:

1. Are there any statistically significant differences in the attitudes of teachers of students with LDs towards distance education due to the years of teaching experience?
2. Are there any statistically significant differences in the attitudes of teachers of students with LDs towards distance education due to the academic qualification?

This study is important as it enriches knowledge on the subject of teachers' attitudes towards distance education and their students with learning disabilities. The results of the study could be used in improving the distance education system to be suitable for the abilities of students with learning disabilities. The study prepared an instrument to measure the attitudes of teachers of students with learning difficulties towards distance education, which can be used in other studies. The study contributes to the teaching staff of the category of learning disabilities in identifying the most important trends for these students.

The medical definition mentions the concept of learning difficulties and explains it in terms of the mind or mental causes related to the brain and the reasons that are in the person's brain that cause learning disabilities, such as brain defect or damage (Emerson, & Heslop, 2010).

Learning disabilities were defined by the National Advisory Committee as "the inability to learn normally, where this difficulty appears in the inability to understand well, focus, read, speak, or calculate. This inability is due to the disorder within the person with a learning difficulty. The disorder resulting from a defect in the central nervous system in the brain, and the individual may suffer a very large period throughout his life. A person with learning difficulties also has problems in his behavior, cognition, and social interaction, but these behaviors are not an obstacle to the learning process, and despite the occurrence of some cases of disability with people with LDs, learning difficulties are not the result of this disability (Al-Rousan et al, 2015).

Distance education is one of the modern methods used in education, which differs from traditional education, which requires a direct relationship between the teacher and the students within a specific place, which is the classroom. Abu Al-Nasr (2017) defines it as "the use of technology to enable students to learn and teach at anytime and anywhere, and it refers to the provision of educational materials through advanced technology such as the Internet, CDs, and DVDs. It is one of the relatively modern methods of education that relies on its basic concept, the presence of the learner in a place that differs from the source, which may be the book, the teacher, or even a group of learners (Abdullah, Hamad, 2020).

One of the characteristics of distance education is that it has expanded access. Distance education can help meet the demand for education and training for the general public and companies, especially as it offers the possibility of flexibility to save time due to limitations imposed by personal responsibilities and obligations. Distance education reduces capacity constraints, as it is fully managed off-site and the system reduces the demand for institutional infrastructure such as buildings (Abu Al-Nasr, 2017).

Distance education, like any other method of education, has obstacles that limit its implementation and dissemination on a large scale. Among these obstacles are the developing standards, regulations, and compensatory incentives, as e-learning still suffers from a clear lack of clarity in the systems, methods, and techniques in which education is used. Other obstacles include guaranteed and effective delivery of the educational environment, including finding the support and cooperation provided for education, action, and lack of standards for developing and operating an effective and independent program. The need to publish the contents of the courses to be of a high level of quality because the competition is global.

The governments of many countries of the world were forced to close educational institutions due to the Coronavirus, which caused more than 89% to be deprived of access to educational institutions to receive an education. Many institutions went through a great experience, which is remote teaching in emergency situations in order to limit the spread of the virus (Khlaif, 2020).

As a result of the sudden transformation of remote teaching into shock and tension for both students, parents, and teachers in general, in addition to leaders and decision-makers from educators. The process needs

different and great efforts to move forward in the continuity of the educational process, and what this requires in terms of infrastructure and provision of technical and interfacing devices for suitable learning in addition to the lack of readiness of digital content, etc. (Kyungmee, 2020).

As a result of the closure of many countries of the world of their educational institutions, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia was one of the countries that developed alternative solutions to maintain the continuity of students' learning in their homes by activating many e-learning platforms in addition to television broadcasting of many study subjects and subjects according to a specific and known schedule. For students, however, this information came as shocking to mothers because it was surprising and unprepared for many parents, especially mothers of children with LDs. These measures increased tension towards their children because of the desire to preserve the academic aspect of their children. However, mothers tried to meet the challenges to preserve their children and keep them in the educational mood.

Previous Studies

Asbury, et al. (2020) described the impact of the emerging coronavirus on the health and the mental health of children. A content analysis of data was conducted on the changes in moods and behavior as a result of the rapid social changes that occurred as a result of the spread of the new Coronavirus. Some parents reported feeling exhausted and the impact of this on the child's understanding and awareness.

Courtenay (2020) identified the challenges facing people with mental disabilities in light of the emerging coronavirus pandemic. The study indicates that these people face difficulty in society as a result of their dependence on other people. The study believes that this pandemic causes specific challenges for people with mental disabilities and their caregivers.

Toseeb, et al (2020) identified the outbreak of this global epidemic and its impact on how children and adults carry out the tasks of their daily lives. An online survey during the first two weeks of social distancing measures introduced by the UK government shows that (11%) received adequate support while most respondents felt the need to more support from schools, health, and social care services.

Sidebottom (2020) explored the effect of quarantine for the Covid-19 virus on the frequency of physical activity, the frequency of food consumption, and food insecurity among college students. The study found that the proportion of individuals who reported significant food insecurity during COVID-19 reported a large number. of students reported negative changes in dietary habits, in particular in alcohol consumption, and food insecurity increased significantly among the current sample.

Maldonado (2020) identified the negative impact of Coronavirus (COVID-19) on mental health through the pandemic as these changes have affected all levels of society and the rise of mental health care continues to grow as COVID-19 continues at this time. The study found that data had a normal distribution, and it was observed that there was a statistically significant increase in the average test scores in the post-test score after the intervention and the lifestyle program appeared to make a positive difference to the participants.

Neff (2020) examined the effect of physical activity breaks on stereotyped behaviors and academic engagement of middle school students affected by autism spectrum disorder. The data has revealed the need for open and regular communication with families, access to the curriculum, a consistent schedule and plan for student accountability, and time for students to socialize with each other.

Al-Sharqawi (2021) identified the effect of the Corona pandemic on students with LDs. The researcher prepared a questionnaire and distributed it to the study sample. The results of the study showed that due to the suspension of services provided during the Corona pandemic, there was a loss of expressive language skills, while their impact was less on the receptive language of the mentally disabled child from the point of view of parents.

Shehata (2021) explored the attitudes of special education teachers towards distance education. The study sample consisted of (60) male and female teachers. The results revealed no statistically significant differences between attitudes of special education teachers towards distance education according to specialization. There were statistically significant differences showing trends between special education teachers towards distance education according to the educational stage.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This section provides information on the methodology of the present study, which includes population and sample, research instrument, and validity and reliability of the instrument.

Population and Sample

The study population consisted of all (67) teachers of learning disabilities in Aseer region during the academic year 2020. The sample consisted of (32) teachers, who were chosen in the purposeful random method. Table (1) shows the characteristics of the study sample members.

.Table 1. Distribution of the sample members according to demographic variables

Variable	Category	No.	Percentage
Academic qualification	BA	21	٪65.6
	MA	10	٪31.2
	Ph.D.	1	٪3.1
Years of experience	Less than 5	6	٪18.8
	From 5-10 years	9	٪28.1
	More than 10 years	17	٪53.1
Specialization	Special education	30	٪93.8
	Other	2	٪6.2
Total		32	٪100

Instrument of the study:

The questionnaire consisted of (18) statements on the attitudes of teachers of students with learning disabilities towards distance education in light of the Corona pandemic. The validity of the questionnaire was verified by using the judges' validity.

Based on the amendments and suggestions made by the judges, the researcher made the necessary amendments agreed upon by the majority of judges. The percentage of the agreement reached more than (80%) for amending some of the phrases. The questionnaire then was formulated in its final form.

The validity was also verified by using the internal consistency. Table (2) shows the results of the analysis.

Table 2. Pearson correlation coefficients for the questionnaire expressions with the total score.

Item No.	Total score	Item No.	Total score
1	*0,201	10	**0,692
2	*0,247	11	**0,675
3	**0,453	12	**0,704
4	**0,430	13	**0,514
5	*0,301	14	*0,227
6	*0,372	15	**0,572
7	**0,538	16	*0,298
8	**0,667	17	**0,685
9	**0,404	18	**0,667

Significance at 0.01 or less

It is clear from the previous table that the values of the correlation coefficient of each of the phrases with the dimension are positive and statistically significant at (0,01), which indicates the validity of its consistency with the total score of the dimension.

The reliability of the instrument was verified by using the Cronbach Alpha method as shown in the following table.

Table 3. Results of the reliability of the questionnaire using the Alpha Cronbach method

No. of items	Mean scores	Standard deviation	Variation	General correlation coefficient
18	72.906	11.1156	124.465	0.726

The value of Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the questionnaire as a whole was (0.726), which means that the questionnaire has a good degree of stability.

Results

Results of the main question

To answer the main question, the researcher calculated the mean scores and standard deviations of the answers of the study sample towards revealing the "attitudes of teachers of students with LDs towards distance education." These phrases were arranged according to the mean scores as presented in the following table.

Table 4. Frequencies, percentages, mean scores, and standard deviations of the answers of the study sample to the main question

No.	Statement	F & %	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	neutral	agree	strongly agree	Mean score	Standard deviation	Rank	Agreement level
17	Making a list of useful educational motives for distance learning	f	0	0	4	0	28	4.750	0.672	1	Strongly agree
		%	0	0	12.5	0	87.5				
13	Distance education via the Internet weakens social cohesion among students	f	0	0	5	0	27	4.687	0.737	2	Agree
		%	0	0	15.6	0	84.4				
14	Distance education has revolutionized the teaching and learning process	f	0	1	4	0	27	4.656	0.827	3	Strongly agree
		٪	0	3.1	12.5	0	84.4				
1	I feel satisfied with working in the field of teaching children with LDs.	f	1	1	4	0	26	4.531	1.046	4	Strongly agree
		%	3.1	3.1	12.5	0	81.2				
3	Using the Internet in distance education for people with LDs is tiring and stressful	f	2	2	3	0	25	4.375	1.263	5	Agree
		%	6.2	6.2	9.4	0	78.1				
18	Distance education via the Internet reduces the degree of students' achievement of course materials.	f	1	3	4	0	24	4.343	1.207	6	Strongly agree
		%	3.1	9.4	12.5	0	75				
12	Distance education via the Internet does not take into account the individual differences between students	f	2	3	3	0	24	4.281	1.325	7	Strongly agree
		%	6.2	9.4	9.4	0	75				
11	There is an overestimation of distance education via the Internet	f	0	4	7	0	21	4.187	1.176	8	Strongly agree
		%	0	12.5	21.9	0	65.6				
10	The disadvantages of distance education are more than its advantages	f	3	2	4	0	23	4.187	1.401	مكرر	Strongly agree
		%	9.4	6.2	12.5	0	71.9				
16	I hope that different materials not to be taught remotely via the Internet	f	1	4	6	0	21	4.125	1.288	9	Strongly agree
		%	3.1	12.5	18.8		65.6				
9	Distance education makes me freer to express myself	f	0	4	9	0	19	4.062	1.189	10	Strongly agree
		%	0	12.5	28.1	0	59.4				
5	Distance education contributes to solving many of the problems that traditional education suffers from, such as the ability to express - freedom.	f	1	7	5	0	19	3.906	1.399	11	Strongly agree
		%	3.1	21.9	15.4	0	59.4				
2	Make sure to educate people with learning disabilities as long as distance learning is available	f	3	4	7		18	3.812	1.468	12	Strongly agree
		%	9.4	12.5	21.9	0	56.2				
7	I feel isolated if I use distance education	f	3	4	9	0	16	3.687	1.446	13	Strongly agree
		%	9.4	12.5	28.1	0	50				
4	Distance education is a waste of time	f	4	6	6	0	16	3.562	1.564	14	Strongly agree
		%	12.5	18.8	18.8		50				
15	I avoid participating in any training courses on the use of the Internet in distance education	f	6	5	5	0	16	3.468	1.665	15	Strongly agree
		%	18.8	15.6	15.6	0	50				
9	I do not recognize the certificates obtained by students who study remotely using the Internet at all educational levels	f	4	0	9	0	19	3.187	1.554	16	Strongly agree
		%	12.5	0	28.1	0	59.4				
6	I support the use of distance education in all educational stages for those with LDs.	f	8	7	4	0	13	3.093	1.710	17	Strongly agree
		%	25	21.9	12.5	0	40.6				
Total score								72.906	11.156		Strongly agree

Statement (17) ranked first with a mean score of (4,750) and a standard deviation of (0.672). Statement No. (6) came in the last rank with a mean score of (3.093) and a standard deviation of (1.710). The researcher explains the results obtained through teachers that distance education may be useful in training courses, educational workshops, meetings, or even professional certificates. However, education for people with special needs requires participation, interaction, and identifying individual differences for students to focus on

developmental and academic aspects and the use of reinforcement Immediate and reliance on observation in improvement processes, which is an acceptable point of view. This was recommended by many previous studies, such as Daniels (2018), Edinger (2018), and Al-Sharqawi (2021).

Results of the sub-questions:

First sub-question

To find out whether there are statistically significant differences between the views of the study sample in the attitudes of teachers according to the difference in the educational qualification variable. The Kruskal Wallis test was used instead of the One Way Anova test, due to the inequality between the categories of the variable of students, as shown in Table (5).

Statement	academic qualification	No.	Mean score	Significance	
I feel satisfied with working in the field of teaching children with LDs.	BA	21	17.95	0.023	Sig.
	MA	10	15		
	Ph.D.	1	1		
Make sure to educate people with learning disabilities as long as distance learning is available	BA	21	15.05	0.040	Sig.
	MA	10	21		
	Ph.D.	1	2		
Using the Internet in distance education for people with LDs is tiring and stressful	BA	21	16.33	0.059	Sig.
	MA	10	18.35		
	Ph.D.	1	1.50		
Distance education is a waste of time	BA	21	18.69	0.049	Sig.
	MA	10	11.10		
	Ph.D.	1	24.50		
Distance education contributes to solving many of the problems that traditional education suffers from, such as the ability to express - freedom.	BA	21	15.67	0.604	Not sig.
	MA	10	17.60		
	Ph.D.	1	23		
I support the use of distance education in all educational stages for those with LDs.	BA	21	15.05	0.099	Sig.
	MA	10	20.75		
	Ph.D.	1	4.50		
I feel isolated if I use distance education	BA	21	18.64	0.069	Sig.
	MA	10	13.45		
	Ph.D.	1	2		
I do not recognize the certificates obtained by students who study remotely using the Internet at all educational levels	BA	21	17.24	0.338	Not sig.
	MA	10	13.95		
	Ph.D.	1	26.50		
Distance education makes me freer to express myself	BA	21	15.71	0.617	Not sig.
	MA	10	17.50		
	Ph.D.	1	23		
The disadvantages of distance education are more than its advantages	BA	21	17.12	0.586	Not sig.
	MA	10	14.75		
	Ph.D.	1	21		
There is an overestimation of distance education via the Internet	BA	21	16.55	0.757	Not sig.
	MA	10	15.85		
	Ph.D.	1	22		
Distance education via the Internet does not take into account the individual differences between students	BA	21	18.17	0.107	Not sig.
	MA	10	12.60		
	Ph.D.	1	20.50		
Distance education via the Internet weakens social cohesion among students	BA	21	18.17	0.051	Sig.
	MA	10	15.80		
	Ph.D.	1	3		
Distance education has revolutionized the teaching and learning process	BA	21	15.93	0.729	Not sig.
	MA	10	17.45		
	Ph.D.	1	19		
I avoid participating in any training courses on the use of the Internet in distance education	BA	21	17.55	0.267	Not sig.
	MA	10	15.60		
	Ph.D.	1	3.50		
I hope that different materials not to be taught remotely via the Internet	BA	21	18.19	0,126	Not sig.
	MA	10	12.40		
	Ph.D.	1	22		
Making a list of useful educational motives for distance learning	BA	21	16.21	0,881	Not sig.
	MA	10	16.90		
	Ph.D.	1	18.50		
Distance education via the Internet reduces the degree of students' achievement of course materials.	BA	21	17.40	0.428	Not sig.
	MA	10	14.20		
	Ph.D.	1	20.50		

It is clear from the above table that there are differences in some of the questionnaire statements according to the academic qualification at the level of significance of 0.05. The research explains these results as a natural thing for the rate of academic qualification to have an impact on the knowledge of the teacher in determining the attitudes towards distance education in that nervous period. Some teachers accepted distance education while others refused it. This result agrees with Al-Subaie (2016) and Courtenay (2020), which resulted in a variation of teachers' attitudes toward online education.

Results of the second sub-question

To find out whether there are statistically significant differences between the views of the study sample towards distance education, according to the difference in the teaching experience variable, the Kruskal Wallis test was used as shown in Table (6).

Table 6. The results of the Kruskal Wallis test for the differences between the scores of the study sample according to the teaching experience

Statement	Years of experience	No.	Mean score	significance	
I feel satisfied with working in the field of teaching children with LDs.	Less than 5	6	11		
	From 5-10 years	9	17.83	0.064	Sig.
	More than 10 years	17	17.74		
Make sure to educate people with learning disabilities as long as distance learning is available	Less than 5	6	14.25		
	From 5-10 years	9	20.72	0.205	Not sig.
	More than 10 years	17	15.06		
Using the Internet in distance education for people with LDs is tiring and stressful	Less than 5	6	8.75		
	From 5-10 years	9	20	0.005	Sig.
	More than 10 years	17	17.38		
Distance education is a waste of time	Less than 5	6	11.67		
	From 5-10 years	9	15.17	0.186	Not sig.
	More than 10 years	17	18.91		
Distance education contributes to solving many of the problems that traditional education suffers from, such as the ability to express - freedom.	Less than 5	6	21		
	From 5-10 years	9	14.33	0.295	Not sig.
	More than 10 years	17	16.06		
I support the use of distance education in all educational stages for those with LDs.	Less than 5	6	17.42		
	From 5-10 years	9	17.17	0.900	Not sig.
	More than 10 years	17	15.82		
I feel isolated if I use distance education	Less than 5	6	8.58		
	From 5-10 years	9	17.11	0.040	Sig.
	More than 10 years	17	18.97		
I do not recognize the certificates obtained by students who study remotely using the Internet at all educational levels	Less than 5	6	13.17		
	From 5-10 years	9	13.50	0.179	Not sig.
	More than 10 years	17	19.26		
Distance education makes me freer to express myself	Less than 5	6	20.67		
	From 5-10 years	9	16.89	0.321	Not sig.
	More than 10 years	17	14.82		
The disadvantages of distance education are more than its advantages	Less than 5	6	10.17		
	From 5-10 years	9	17.67	0.067	Sig.
	More than 10 years	17	18.12		
There is an overestimation of distance education via the Internet	Less than 5	6	10.83		
	From 5-10 years	9	15.17	0.068	Sig.
	More than 10 years	17	19.21		
Distance education via the Internet does not take into account the individual differences between students	Less than 5	6	12.33		
	From 5-10 years	9	15.06	0.129	Not sig.
	More than 10 years	17	18.74		
Distance education via the Internet weakens social cohesion among students	Less than 5	6	11		
	From 5-10 years	9	17.22	0.038	Sig.
	More than 10 years	17	18.06		
Distance education has revolutionized the teaching and learning process	Less than 5	6	16.42		
	From 5-10 years	9	19	0.298	Not sig.
	More than 10 years	17	15.21		
I avoid participating in any training courses on the use of the Internet in distance education	Less than 5	6	14		
	From 5-10 years	9	12.89	0.150	Not sig.
	More than 10 years	17	19.29		
I hope that different materials not to be taught remotely via the Internet	Less than 5	6	13.17		
	From 5-10 years	9	14.33	0.200	Not sig.
	More than 10 years	17	18.82		

Statement	Years of experience	No.	Mean score	significance	
Making a list of useful educational motives for distance learning	Less than 5	6	15.83		Not sig.
	From 5-10 years	9	18.50	0.420	
	More than 10 years	17	15.68		
Distance education via the Internet reduces the degree of students' achievement of course materials.	Less than 5	6	12		Sig.
	From 5-10 years	9	15.06	0.099	
	More than 10 years	17	18.85		

It is clear from the above table that there are differences in some of the questionnaire statements according to the years of teaching experience at the level of significance of 0.05, while there are statements that were not significant in the years of experience. This result could be due to the difference in the knowledge the teachers had during their years of working with students with LDs.

Conclusion and Recommendations
Based on the results of the study, the researcher concluded a number of conclusions and recommendations:
1. The teacher's keenness on educational motivation is beneficial to the student in the distance education process.
2. The lack of interconnectedness of relations between students is a result of the lack of interaction between them during the period of teaching distance education during the period of the Corona pandemic.
3. Teaching using distance education is very stressful in the absence of the necessary activities that arouse the attention of students with learning disabilities.
4. Not taking into account the individual differences between students due to the lack of it in one place and discovering the weaknesses in the developmental aspects and focusing on them.

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