



'Challenging behaviours are how the child communicates': Teachers and Parents Perception of Challenging Behaviours in Children with Autism in Saudi Arabia

Lamya Alfadhel

PhD student/ School of Education/ University of Leeds/ United Kingdom

Lecture/ Princess Nourah Bint Abdul Rahman University/ Saudi Arabia

Abstract

Challenging behaviours are common in the autism field and are reported widely by teachers to be one of the greatest difficulties in the educational setting. The impact of these behaviours is not limited to the individual's quality of life; they may extend to the people surrounding them, including peers, teachers, and families. Understanding behaviours that are often considered to be problematic and making sense of their causes are crucial to gaining a holistic view of teachers and parents' perceptions regarding these behaviours. As part of a wider study, perspectives of seven teachers and seven parents with autistic children attending primary mainstream or special schools in Saudi Arabia were explored using semi-structured interviews. The interviews were focused on participants' understanding of behaviours that may be challenging, their attribution of behavioural cause and their reaction to them. Using reflexive thematic analysis, the rich findings that explain perceptions of challenging behaviours across three main themes are discussed. These include perceived challenging behaviours related to functions, consequences and correlation with autism characteristics. The presentation will highlight implications and recommendations that could enhance support and training provision for teachers and parents of children with autism spectrum disorders.

Keywords: Autism Spectrum Disorders, Attribution, Challenging Behaviours, Education, Perceptions.