ABSTRACT

The involvement of parents at home and in school is a crucial factor in the development of children with autism. This qualitative study explored the similarities and difference between the perceptions of Malaysian parents on parental involvement. The selected participants are parents of children with autism, and are currently enrolled either in a primary government or private school. The present study used semi-structured interviews to examine the participants’ views on parental involvement. A thematic analysis was used to interpret the interview findings. The study showed that parents have similar definitions of parental involvement. However, it was also revealed that parents engaged in different types of parental involvement such as decision-making, collaboration with the community and learning-at-home. The parents also shared their views on the barriers to parental involvement including: lack of parent resources, financial constraints, poor education system and the lack of skilled special education teachers. The parents also shared their concerns about the children’s ability to live independently in the future. However, the research showed that more than the type of school (government or private), the severity of the child’s condition influenced the degree of parental involvement. The study also revealed the importance and benefits of parental involvement to a child’s progress. Therefore, there is a need to provide opportunities for parents to be actively involved in their child’s education at home and in school.

KEYWORDS: parents, autism, parental involvement (PI), qualitative study, semi-structured, perceptions, government school, private school, strengths, barriers, concerns