



Mainstream Preschool Teachers' Skills at Identifying and Referring Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)

XXXXXXXXXX^{1,2}, XXXXXXXXXXX^{1,*}, XXXXXXXXXXX²

¹ Department of early childhood education, Faculty of Social Sciences, Arts, and Humanities, Lincoln University College (LUC), Kelantan, Malaysia

² Department of TESL, Faculty of Social Sciences, Arts, and Humanities, Lincoln University College (LUC), Kelantan, Malaysia

* Correspondence: xxxxxxxx@lincol.edu.my

Abstract:

Background: Early intervention will help children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) to attain early learning reinforcement. This study focuses on exploring the ability of preschool teachers to identify children with ASD and their referral decision-making process. **Method:** This is a mixed-method study (qualitative and quantitative methods) involving 20 respondents. The qualitative study is based on an open-question case study, while the quantitative study consists of questionnaire with demographic variables to identify the effect of the demographic variables on the preschool teachers' ability to identify children with ASD. **Sample:** The sample was selected via convenience sampling among mainstream preschool teachers. The data was analyzed using SPSS software and thematic analysis. **Results:** The findings show that preschool teachers did not have skills at identifying children with ASD, and the majority of them labelled children with ASD as spoilt or hyperactive children. They also viewed children with ASD as having other disorders such as attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) or communication disorders such as introversion. Moreover, preschool teachers expressed that the reason for the child's behaviour could be due to the parents' inability to properly educate their child. Additionally, the demographic variables of the preschool teachers, such as age, education level and teaching experience, were found not to affect their ASD identification skills. **Conclusion:** Preschool teachers need to improve their skills in identifying ASD among children via training.

Keywords: autism spectrum disorder; identify; identifications skills; refer; preschool teachers

Dr. sahar M. Taresh is an assistant professor and currently working as a lecturer at the Department of early childhood, Faculty of social science, Art and humanities, Lincoln University College, she was a lecturer in the Kindergarten department, Taiz University, Yemen. She obtained her Ph.D. at Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM). She obtained her master's degree at Taiz University. She has publications in childhood and adolescence. She obtained some medals in innovation and competition and education. Her research interest is qualification training preschool teachers for students with special educational needs, <https://www.researchgate.net/profile/>