

Parental Satisfaction with Inclusive Education of Student with Autism

Sze Huey Khew, Hasnah Toran

Faculty of Education, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, 43600 Bangi, Selangor, Malaysia

Corresponding Author Email: hasnahto@ukm.edu.my

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Abstract

The Inclusive Education Program was introduced by the Ministry of Education for students with special education needs, including students with autism, to provide quality education. With this, students with autism have the same qualifications as typical students. Parents play an essential role in the education of students with autism. Studies on parental satisfaction with inclusive education have found a need for more discussion in Malaysia. Therefore, this study aims to explore parents' satisfaction with implementing inclusive education for students with autism. The qualitative study uses a case study by interviewing ten parents whose children with autism have attended inclusive education in primary school. The data findings were analysed thematically using Nvivo 14 software. The study's findings showed that seven respondents with high-functioning autism were satisfied. In comparison, three respondents who have low-functioning autism were less satisfied. Respondents who have low-functioning autism were found not to receive exposure from teachers. Inclusive education was successful in achieving high-functioning autism. The success of inclusive education is closely related to parents, teachers, and multidisciplinary groups. In conclusion, parents, teachers, and schools must work to ensure that no children are left behind in the opportunity to receive an education.

Keywords: Satisfaction Parents, Inclusive Education, Low, High, Functioning, Autism

Introduction

The Inclusive Education Program was implemented in Malaysia in 1962. However, only students with physical disabilities and vision problems are eligible to enter PPI (Latiff et al., 2015). The government has been working to integrate children with special educational needs in schools. However, the program was not introduced directly. On the other hand, special education integration programs and merger classes were widely taught. Therefore, the Ministry of Education Malaysia (MOE) continuously expands and integrates the inclusive program.

In 2020, the number of SEN students showed the most significant increase, at 16,855. In 2016, only 14,932 SEN students participated in the inclusive program. Although there has

been an increase in SEN students taking part in inclusive program, only 22 to 25 per cent of students are engaged (Bahagian Pendidikan Khas (KPM), 2020). As we know, the achievement of 75% of SEN students' enrolment in inclusive program was targeted in the Malaysian Education Development Plan (PPPM) 2013-2025 by the year 2025. In short, this statistical data has proven that SEN students taking part in inclusive program in mainstream classes are still unsatisfactory.

Students with autism are SEN students with communication and behavioural problems (Abdullah, 2017). According to The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, 5th Edition, autism spectrum disorder (ASD) has characteristics such as a deficit in communication and social interaction. ASD has limited and repetitive behaviours, interests, and activities (Posar et al., 2015). In addition, the DSM-5 describes ASD as a spectrum in the behavioural category (Rice et al., 2022). Therefore, MOE strives to provide quality and equal education to all children (Mathiyalagan & Toran, 2023). Thus, MOE has implemented the Zero Rejection Policy (ZRP) in stages of creating equality and educational opportunities, including for children with ASD to receive education in line with their disability (Sia & Tahar, 2023). In line with education principles, all SEN students who meet the criteria will be included in the mainstream class.

The involvement of parents in the education of students with autism plays a vital role in achieving their dreams. Parental involvement can help students with autism improve their children's academic and co-curricular achievement (Salim & Khairuddin, 2020). Based on previous studies, the involvement of parents can give an advantage to indirectly improving their children's lessons. Parental involvement is about more than just attending specific school activities and programs; they need to be fully involved in their children's learning activities at home.

The level of parental satisfaction was found to be high regarding the quality of children's education in school (Yasin et al., 2015). According to Yasin et al. (2015), it was found that most parents with children SEN have supported their children's education in special education and inclusive education. Parents can accept inclusive education conducted in schools. With that, the motivation in the child will increase, and children with autism are especially expected to increase their self-confidence while in inclusive classes.

To further explore the satisfaction level of parents with children with autism, this study was driven by these objectives:

- i. To explore the achievement of students with autism after participating in the Inclusive Education Program.
- ii. To explore the factors that determine the success of inclusive education.
- iii. To explore the satisfaction of parents of students with autism towards implementing inclusive education in schools.

Literature Review

In early 1926, special education programs began to be implemented in Malaysia. Students with vision and hearing impairment receive education in special education schools (Zubir, 2019; Farhan et al., 2020). MOE of Malaysia established a special education program for students with vision impairment, and then a special education program for hearing impairment was implemented the following year. The Special Education Unit of Malaysia was established in the lower school division to manage special education. In 1995, the Special Education Department of Malaysia was transformed from the Special Education Unit (Farhan et al., 2020).

MOE of Malaysia has developed three types of Special Education programs: special education schools, integrated special education programs, and inclusive education programs. Special Education Schools are schools attended by SEN students who receive a special education curriculum. In addition, the Integration education program is for SEN students undergoing the teaching and learning process in special education classes at regular schools. Furthermore, inclusive program is SEN students undergoing the teaching and learning process as typical students in the same class in traditional schools (Bahagian Pendidikan Khas, 2017).

In Malaysia, there are two types of inclusive education: partially inclusive education and fully inclusive education. Partially inclusive education is an education model involving SEN students and typical students getting the same opportunities for specific academic subjects or co-curricular activities (Bahagian Pendidikan Khas, 2017). This educational concept was developed to support SEN students who can learn without intensive support. This partial inclusive education has been observed under the inclusive education model. SEN students are included in mainstream classes (Paseka & Schwab, 2020). Inclusive education is a challenging thing. This is because the implementation of inclusive education needs to consider various aspects. For example, changes in attitudes, values, teacher training programs, and school systems (Ahmad, 2014). Therefore, not everyone will leave their comfort zone to face it. Some parents with SEN children still face problems determining placement that suits their children's abilities (Nurul et al., 2022). In addition, there is stigma and negative views from the school community. At school, one-sided situations and unfair treatment have been given to SEN students (Hisam & Khairuddin, 2022).

Many studies have discussed parents' satisfaction with inclusive education abroad. The study's findings have shown high parental satisfaction with implementing inclusive education in Italy. In addition, Zanobini et al. (2018) found that parents were more satisfied with the relationship between SEN students and typical students and family members of typical students. In addition, in the United States, Kurth et al. (2020) conducted a study to review parents' perspectives on self-involvement in inclusive education for children with autism and parents' satisfaction with implementing this inclusive education. The study found that parents' satisfaction is moderate because parents have limited options. After all, they live in rural areas, which causes them to have problems cooperating with the school. In Malaysia, research in this field has yet to be carried out. Therefore, this study must be implemented, and its findings must be presented in Malaysia. This study only explores parents' satisfaction with inclusive education by conducting interviews using instruments from Hisham and Khairuddin's study (2022).

Tahar and Najib (2019) found that mainstream teachers need more desire and preparation to implement inclusive education. Ali & Nasri (2021) stated that mainstream teachers who need to prepare to implement inclusive education are an obstacle to the success of inclusive program. Palaniandy and Yasin (2021) found that they needed to be qualified and designed to meet the diverse needs of SEN students even though they had been exposed to inclusive ideas. Zaman and Salleh (2017) argue that professional groups, parents, and the community must work together to provide support services to SEN students in line with the emphasis on inclusive practices. The community should fully support collaboration between parents and multidisciplinary groups (Jelas & Ali, 2014). With that, collaboration from multi-disciplinary groups has shown to be less than satisfactory in providing support services to SEN students.

Holmqvist and Lelinge (2020) stated that collaboration from multidisciplinary groups shows promising results for SEN students and teachers. Support from multidisciplinary groups

benefits SEN students, teachers, and organisations. Support between special and mainstream education teachers is critical in implementing inclusive program. This is because support is one of the holistic methods that can provide effective teaching in the context of comfort (Govindasamy, 2018). Abdullah (2017) believes that education teachers should help mainstream teachers who teach inclusive program classes handle challenging teaching and learning activities for SEN students. The support of special education teachers can help SEN students achieve teaching objectives in inclusive program classes. Zagona et al. (2017) state that communication with parents and teachers can make inclusive education successful. The study shows that two-way communication can overcome student behaviour and mastery-level issues. Communication between parents and the school was found to be at a less-than-satisfactory level. Therefore, parents have not been exposed to implementing inclusive education at school. The study results show that collaboration and cooperation from parents, teachers, and multidisciplinary groups are the keys to opening the door to the success of inclusive education.

Bowen (2010) also stated that social skills are essential in building a child's self-esteem and self-confidence. A study by Haris and Khairuddin (2021) said that students' achievement in terms of social skills is closely related to typical students who study together with SEN students. Regular students can provide support by helping SEN students who follow inclusive education in mainstream classes. Once the parents understand the intervention and the children's needs, it is necessary to implement the intervention and monitor its implementation (Ng & Kwan, 2020). Parents must also get special education and mainstream teachers' feedback about learning development. With these parents' monitoring, SEN students' achievement and the targeted goals of inclusive education can be successfully achieved (Soriano et al., 2017).

Successfully implementing the educational program for SEN students requires appropriate support from special education teachers and parents. Đurišić and Bunijevac (2017) stated that the main principle of inclusive education is an education system with parents' support and shared responsibility from various parties. The role of parents is significant in special education because they are the group that meets the needs of SEN students by receiving education in schools that have provided an environment that supports SEN students.

Research Method

This study is a qualitative study that uses a case study design. Meanwhile, the case study design is to explain one or several specific cases of a small social unit. In addition, the study should have sufficient data so that the trust and validity of the data are high (Rahim, 2019). In this study, the researcher plans to interview parents of students with autism who have followed the Inclusive Education Program. According to Lebar (2009), interviews are a method for researchers who want to know what is in a person's mind.

For this study, ten parents in Mersing district, Johor, Malaysia, were selected as respondents. In the meantime, all study respondents must have a child with autism who has attended mainstream classes under the Inclusive Education Program. Furthermore, the respondent's child is a student with autism who receives inclusive education in primary school. This is to ensure that all the selected study respondents are based on the same criteria: to have a child with autism who follows inclusive education in primary school and is in line with the study's objectives. The respondents of this study consist of a mixture of

mothers and fathers with children with autism who follow inclusive education at school. In this context, the researcher uses non-random sampling, which is purposive sampling.

In this study, semi-structured interviews were used by the researcher to collect information from the study respondents. The researcher formulated and developed interview questions to obtain information from the study respondents. After undergoing a library study, the researcher adapted and modified the instrument from Hisam and Khairuddin's study 2022. The researcher used an interview instrument to collect data. This instrument consists of four parts, namely (a) demographic part, (b) questions that explore the achievement of students with autism after following PPI, (c) questions that explore the factors that determine the success of inclusive education, and (d) questions that explore the satisfaction of parents of students with autism to the implementation of inclusive education in schools.

Before this study is conducted, the researcher will obtain permission from the parents who will be interviewed to obtain consent. In the meeting, parents were informed about the purpose of the study and the procedure for conducting the survey. The researcher will assure all study respondents about the confidentiality of the conversation and their identity. In addition, the study respondents were also informed that they were free to answer the questions asked. Researchers analysed themes from the research findings based on interview sessions with respondents, whether they supported or did not support the research findings. In this study, interview analysis was done with the help of Nvivo 14 software. This software can be used to analyse qualitative data. The researcher reports the findings after analysing keywords and themes using Nvivo 14 software.

Research Findings

The study's primary objective was to explore the satisfaction level of inclusive education from interviews conducted with parents. These interviews aimed to gain insights into the achievement of students with autism and factors that determine the success of inclusive education.

A total of 10 parents with children with autism were selected as respondents. This finding was obtained before the interview session began. Respondents provided information about relationships with students, age, gender, race, education level, and home location. Meanwhile, additional information, including the respondent's child's age, the respondent's child's autism diagnosis, and the respondent's school location, is also provided. Parents involved in the study were given codes such as R1, R2, R3, R4, R5, R6, R7, R8, R9, R10. Interview research findings have been analysed and stated according to the study's objectives.

Table 1

Respondents' demographics

Respondents	Relationship with students	Age	Gender	Ethnicity	Education Level	Home Location
R1	Mother	45	Female	Bidayuh	SPM	Urban
R2	Mother	42	Female	Chinese	Bachelor's Degree	Urban
R3	Mother	44	Female	Malay	SPM	Urban
R4	Mother	41	Female	Malay	SPM	Urban
R5	Father	45	Male	Malay	SPM	Rural

R6	Mother	44	Female	Siamese	SPM	Rural
R7	Mother	43	Female	Chinese	SPM	Urban
R8	Father	44	Male	Chinese	SPM	Urban
R9	Mother	32	Female	Chinese	Bachelor's Degree	Urban
R10	Mother	35	Female	Chinese	Bachelor's Degree	Urban

In addition, for the respondents' children's information, they received education at the primary education level. The respondent's children are between 8 and 12 years old. All the respondents' children have undergone a diagnosis of autism and have validation from a medical expert. All the respondents' children attend school in urban areas. The placement of students with autism in mainstream classes is partial. Subjects studied by students with autism in mainstream classes, such as Malay, English, Mathematics, Physical Education, and Visual Arts Education. Most subjects are made up of main subjects except Visual Arts Education and Physical Education, which are electives. Children R1, R2, R3, R4, R5, R6 and R7 are high-functioning autism. Meanwhile, children R8, R9, and R10 are low-functioning autism. High-functioning autism study main subjects. Meanwhile, low-functioning autism only takes one elective subject, which is Physical Education.

Table 2

Respondents' children's demographics

Respondent	Child's age	Autism diagnosis	School location	Type of Inclusion	Subject
R1	9	Yes	Urban	Partial	English, Visual Arts Education
R2	9	Yes	Urban	Partial	Mathematics
R3	11	Yes	Urban	Partial	English
R4	11	Yes	Urban	Partial	English, Malay, Mathematics
R5	12	Yes	Urban	Partial	Malay
R6	12	Yes	Urban	Partial	English, Physical Education
R7	8	Yes	Urban	Partial	Physical Education
R8	10	Yes	Urban	Partial	Physical Education
R9	8	Yes	Urban	Partial	Physical Education
R10	12	Yes	Urban	Partial	Physical Education

Achievement of students with autism after participating in the Inclusive Education Program

This part answers the first research question, "Is there an increase in the achievement of students with autism after following the inclusive program?". Interview findings were obtained regarding the academic and non-academic achievement of students with autism after following the inclusive program in mainstream classes. The achievements of students with autism are divided into three types: academic achievement, co-curricular achievement, and student functionality.

Academic Achievement

The study finds that children of R1, R2, R3, R4, R5, and R6 have mastered reading skills. Students with autism were found to be able to read in English and Malay. Not only can they read, but they understand the meaning of the words they read.

R3 states that:

"In terms of reading, sometimes while we are just sitting there, he can read the signboard and understand the meaning... He can read the 3-syllable Malay language."

R1 states that:

"Whatever he reads, he understands like that too. He read and talked to his sister. He said that is not possible."

R1, R2, R3, R4, and R5 also found that their child's social skills showed improvement after attending inclusive program in the mainstream class. Previously, their child was found not to get along with their classmates. Then, they started talking more with their classmates than before.

R4 states that:

"Social skills are like getting along, and it looks like he used to like one person, now he is good at making friends with other boys. he can even be friends with the leading boy... with other people, you can get along and play. He would play with him if he used to go to the toy park. Now he can mix with other boys; he is like hi, hi, a little bit with other people. If it were not before, if he saw people playing, he would not play. If he played sliding, he would watch quietly. So now."

R2, R5, and R7 also stated that their child had shown significant changes in speech and communication, which differs from before attending PPI in the mainstream class.

R2 states that:

"His biggest challenge was communication, so he went to class 3C; what he did and learned there will make him change. His classmates in class 3C once told me after school that Jianjie was very good at speaking compared to last year." "His friends told me about it after school, "Jian Jie Mama said. He is good at talking and talks a lot today; he did not talk as much as he does today. He is talking a lot now. So, I think his communication has improved."

R7 states that:

"It is noticeable... my child's interaction and social and speaking skills can be improved over time. My child's verbal skills are improving. Now, my son can speak in sentences and be understood."

R2 found that her child could read the price of goods and calculate the remaining money. Also, R2 stated that his son can now read the clock correctly. R4 and R5 also said that

their child could master counting skills, for example, adding and subtracting from a number that cannot be learned.

R2 states that:

"Sometimes, when we go out, I will ask Jianjie how much this is. He will tell me. Sometimes, I ask him how much will be left if I spend RM50 to buy this item. He can count quickly." "Now he is good at looking at the price of goods and reading the clock. Sometimes, I ask him what time it is, and he can answer me."

R4 states that:

"He can do the subject of addition and subtraction and is good at it. Now, he can pick up a little brain; he is already walking. He used to be slow, but now he thinks it is okay. That is how it is."

Meanwhile, R6 stated that his son still does not show development in terms of socialising. R8 noted that her child had not mastered reading, writing, and counting skills and had no academic or non-academic achievements. R9 and R10 stated that their child's low functioning impacts the low level of achievement.

R8 states that:

"My child is weak and cannot read, write, count, etc. So, the achievements he can talk about are nothing. I also got a negative comment from my son's teacher. The teacher gave my son's comments passively and did not respond to the things around him."

Co-curricular Achievements

The study finds that two respondents' children are active in co-curricular activities. R4 recalled that his son participated in many outdoor competitions, such as shot put, singing, and sports parades. R2 also stated that his son has a talent for colouring and was chosen to represent the school in a district-level colouring competition. The student with autism won first place in the competition.

R4 states that:

"My child also entered a lot of external competitions. Even though the extracurricular activities are there, he also participates in the parade. An example is the day he entered the shot put competition. Many teachers included him in activities like that day he entered a singing competition."

R2 states that:

"He entered a district-level colouring competition. He got first place in the competition."

Student Functionality

The study finds that children of R1, R2, and R4 are braver when trying to hang out with new friends, participate in competitions, and express thoughts by speaking.

R1 states that:

"Now he talks more and asks more. Before, it was like this, with hand signals only. Now he wants to talk about everything before. He will show us if we ask."

R2 states that:

"My child is not good at expressing himself, but at least he is trying to express something. He dared to speak. Maybe he was not good at talking before, maybe he was shy or something, but now he has some confidence and will be able to talk if he has confidence."

Meanwhile, R7 stated that his son could cooperate and tolerate in everyday life.

R7 states that:

"Moral values such as cooperation and tolerance can be instilled in my son compared to last year."

R1, R4, and R6 state that their child can complete homework. It was found that most students with autism avoid completing homework. From here, students with autism become more independent in completing school assignments, routines, and homework.

R4 states that:

"We give a paper with questions 1 to 5 and say, "Alif, do all of them." So later, he will do the work given first. After that, he went to play. If not, he only asks 1 or 2 questions because he is lazy. It is normal for a boy like this to have fun playing; his focus is short."

R1 and R2 stated that their children's behaviour shows a positive change. R7 noted that her child can accept touch from friends and share stationery with classmates. On the contrary, the child of R7 is still learning to control emotions.

R2 states that:

"His behaviour and attitude are that he always leaves class and teases his classmates. Although there is still that behaviour, now he knows less that the behaviour is not good, but he has tried to control himself."

R7 states that:

"My child can also accept friends and people around him hugging, sharing stationery, and so on, compared to his previous attitude of refusing to interact with others. My child's emotions are getting more stable. My child needs to strive to achieve the objectives set by the teacher and learn to accept defeat. This is because my son is very concerned about winning. He cries and gets angry when he experiences defeat. Now he is in the process of learning how to control his own emotions when facing defeat."

Meanwhile, R8, R9, and R10 state that their child needs help and guidance from the teacher and school assistant.

R8 states that:

"My child likes to sit on the sidelines and does not like to join friends. So, he will be helped by a school assistant, and his teacher will also encourage him to join activities with his friends. The teacher at the therapy centre always says positive things about my son."

R9 states that:

"My child can run, jump, walk. However, he still needs his teacher to help him. The teacher will help from his side because he is sometimes afraid to walk on the bridge. If you mix with an ordinary boy, he will not focus, so the teacher has to show him once."

R10 states that:

"My child can perform gross and fine psychomotor activities without guidance. However, you have to follow his mood. If his mood is okay, he can follow the teacher. If his mood is not good, he will throw a tantrum if he loses a game."

In conclusion, most of the respondent's children showed high achievement. They are made up of high-functioning autism. One respondent stated that his son still did not socialise with his classmates. However, there is a minority of the respondent's children show a low level of achievement, and they are comprised of low-functioning autism.

Factors that Determine the Success of Inclusive Education

RQ2: "What factors determine the success of inclusive education?" will be discussed in this part. The analysis of the study's findings found that six factors can make inclusive education successful in schools.

Acceptance of Mainstream Teachers

The study finds that R1, R2, R3, R4, R6, R7, R9, and R10 state that accepting SEN students from mainstream teachers is crucial to successful inclusive programs in schools. SEN students are often labelled as students who are "difficult to teach" and "naughty." Therefore, mainstream teachers need more patience and focus more attention on SEN students in mainstream classes with many students. Apart from that, mainstream teachers also need to use appropriate teaching methods for SEN students, which will increase the work of planning lessons.

R2 states that:

"The mainstream class teacher must accept the child with special needs to have a chance to go to the regular class to learn; if the regular teacher does not accept it, then the special needs child has no chance to enter the regular class, so this is very important."

R3 states that:

"I think mainstream teachers are also one of the factors that can make inclusive education successful. Must be. Because he is the one who teaches the class, if he can accept the student with autism, it would be great so the student with autism would have a way to teach him. However, it might be possible if the teacher is a little patient."

R7 and R8 think students with autism have different needs and wants than typical students. Mainstream teachers need to understand the needs and wants of SEN students.

R7 states that:

"The physical education teacher can accept my child with an open heart. In my son's school, there are few regular students. Taste in 6 people only. Most of them have a disability card. Mainstream teachers understand the needs and wants of special education students."

R9 and R10 think mainstream teachers can educate SEN students like typical students and not label them as "weirdos" in school and the eyes of parents of typical students and the local community. This will also cause students with autism not to feel that they are not the same as typical students.

R9 states that:

"Mainstream class teachers can affect my child. If the teacher in the regular class does not accept my child, how can my child learn to play together with regular kids? My child can only join with regular boys if there is a class. The teacher can also teach my child the same as a normal child, and my child will not feel that he is different from a normal child."

Collaboration between parents, teachers, and therapists

The study finds that seven respondents; R1, R2, R3, R6, R8, R9, and R10, think they need to work together to make inclusive education successful in schools. From this, students with autism can meet their social skills needs. Not only that, children's development can also be increased during the process of learning.

R1 states that:

"All 3 of them have a connection for.... special.... for him, there is good for him. Can help him is what I mean. Regular teachers, special education teachers, and parents. So the three of us join together to form a team."

R9 states that:

"I think these three parties are significant. This school provides occupational therapy for my child. Throughout the therapy that my child has carried out, he has shown progress. Annual school sports, teachers, therapists, and parents will join to make this program successful."

R10 states that:

"I feel very grateful because this school helps special children a lot. The school has invited an occupational therapist to come to the school for therapy sessions twice a week. Many special children can benefit from this therapy, including my son. I also sent my son to the hospital for therapy. Therefore, with the efforts of the school and the community, I can see my child grow occasionally."

However, R8 received mixed comments from schools and therapy centres. R7 only cooperates with the teachers at his son's school. R7 does not establish relationships with professional groups other than the teachers at the school.

R8 states that:

"I think there should be cooperation between teachers at school, teachers at the therapy centre, and parents. I also try to communicate with the special education teacher at school and the teacher at the therapy centre. However, the strange thing is that the teacher's comments at school differ from those at the therapy centre."

R7 states that:

"So far, I have not had the opportunity to establish relationships with professional groups at school. However, I always cooperate with the special education teachers in my child's development."

Communication between parents, teachers, and therapists

The study finds that R2, R4, R5, and R6 communication is essential among parents, teachers, and the school. Parents can monitor the current development of students with autism by communicating with therapists. Parents can undergo enrichment or remedial activities at home that are needed by students with autism. Through communication, parents can convey the child's development at home. On the other hand, teachers and even the school can convey to parents the problems and issues faced by students with autism.

R2 states that:

"This should be achieved through communication, just like what parents want their children to do. Parents can teach them at home, but when at school, because it is not parents who teach, but teachers who teach, so parents should communicate with the teacher."

R6 states that:

"When we take him to the therapy centre, the therapist can tell him what our son's level is and what he is not good at when asked ..."

R4 states that:

"So we have to discuss home, how do we want to raise our children? Go to extra classes? You do not necessarily want to rely on PPKI, right? So we are looking for the rest of the alternatives and have to talk to my parents. This mother and father cannot be said to be the only ones who handle each other. Mother.. mother is put here. Mother and father make it beautiful, isn't it beautiful? There cannot be two sides either."

On the other hand, R7, R8, R9, and R10 were found to receive less disclosure about inclusive education. Therefore, R7 only knows that his son attends mainstream classes and studies with typical students. Therefore, R7 rarely communicates with the school.

R7 states that:

"I rarely receive information about the implementation of inclusive education in schools. I only know that my child is studying with ordinary enslaved people on the subject of physical education."

R8 states that:

"I do not know much about this inclusive education program."

Feedback from parents and teachers

From the finding, R2 stated that feedback from parents is important because the school cannot do any activities and programs if they do not get parental consent. R3, R4, and R6 believe that the feedback from parents is their opinion on the implementation of inclusive education and detect the lack of students with autism. Meanwhile, R7 thinks that teacher feedback is more critical because teachers better understand the development of students at school.

R2 states that:

"Parents do not give feedback; the school cannot conduct any activities. For example, if the school wants to hold a sports day, the students must participate, right? When the teacher asks students to participate, he must ask their parents. Does the mother or father agree? If the parents do not respond, the teacher cannot select the student for this activity because the parents did not respond. If he speaks okay, his son can get a chance to enter the competition."

R4 states that:

"Because people say teachers also want to know how our children are at home, how to see how they are progressing at home, right? Because we can see from our children who do not know what they are now able to know what they are. When there is an assessment at the school, we will... talk to the teacher. How do we now share how we want our children to develop."

R7 states that:

"Special education teachers are sometimes clearer about my child's progress at school. Special education teachers see my child's development directly through inclusive education."

R8, R9, and R10 did not give feedback to teachers about their children's development at school after they attended inclusive education in mainstream classes. Feedback from schools and therapy centres will vary.

R8 states that:

"Oh... I never updated the teacher at school on my child's progress after he studied with the boy in that regular class."

R10 states that:

"I rarely give feedback to teachers at school. Because I am busy with work, the teacher will update me on how my child is progressing."

Parental Monitoring

The study finds that six respondents, R2, R3, R4, R6, R7, and R8, think monitoring from parents is essential in implementing inclusive education. Parental monitoring can detect weaknesses and continue to guide students with autism. With that, they guide students with autism to

complete assignments and homework and review the content of lessons that mainstream teachers have taught.

R4 states that:

"It is true that if there is monitoring, it would be good to make this inclusive education program successful, right? Why do we want to know what our children are learning at school? If we do not monitor him, we let go of the child to the teacher. When the assessment is completed, the teacher gives negative comments. We cannot accept it while we are not monitoring our child."

R9 and R10 do not monitor their children's learning and only rely on the teachers at the school who teach their children.

R9 states that:

"I trust the teachers at school who teach my child. The teachers at the school are smarter and more professional in teaching these special needs children."

Teacher Support

The study finds that nine respondents, R1, R2, R3, R4, R5, R6, R7, R9, and R10, believe that support from teachers is essential in making inclusive education successful in schools. Four out of nine respondents think teachers are people who move students with autism into mainstream classes to take part in inclusive program. R7 thinks students with autism can learn with typical students in mainstream classes, which is one of the teachers' supports. R4 also thinks that support from parents is crucial in implementing inclusive education. Parental and teacher support can help students with autism succeed in mainstream classrooms.

R3 states that:

"The special education teacher who will take the student to the first class must also be monitored. If there is nothing, it is hard, too."

R4 states that:

"If the teacher pushes the child, the mother and father support the child, he can succeed. If we do not have support, we do not even know that our child is at that level. There are no changes if he is good at reading, just reading, he does not like to count, does not like to write, isn't there some teachers sometimes even yes, this PPKI teacher is like that, isn't there some teachers who do not care."

R7 states that:

"The Special Education teacher allowed my child to enter a mainstream class. For him to join the typical boys. My son is included in physical education subjects. So, the special education teacher will take my child to class 2M according to the regular class schedule."

As a conclusion to the explanation of the factors determining the success of implementing inclusive education, six main factors encourage implementing inclusive education in schools. Most respondents also agreed on these main factors. Among the factors determining the success of inclusive education are mainstream teacher acceptance, cooperation and communication between parents, teachers, and therapists, feedback from parents and teachers, parental monitoring, and teacher support.

Satisfaction of parents of students with autism towards implementing inclusive education in schools

This part answers RQ 3: "What is the satisfaction level of parents with students with autism toward inclusive education?".

Successful Implementation of Inclusive Education in Schools

The study finds that seven respondents, R1, R2, R3, R4, R5, R6, and R7, stated that PPI at their child's school was successful. Seven respondents stated that their children had good changes in many ways. For example, they are more independent, decrease tantrums, can complete homework, participate in various outdoor activity competitions, and so on.

R1 states that:

"Successful. So far, I see that he is okay. He is more independent in completing assignments. He does his homework. He knows that if he is doing school work, he has to do okay with us so we do not have to be angry with him. After that, he does not have many tantrums anymore."

Meanwhile, R8, R9, and R10 think they are unsure about the successful implementation of inclusive education for their children. This is because R8 cannot observe any development.

R8 states that:

"I am not sure if it is successful or not. Because my son's performance is still the same."

R9 states that:

"Much effort is still needed to make this inclusive education successful. I think it is less successful."

Rating of Inclusive Education Programs in Schools

The study finds that six respondents, R1, R3, R4, R5, R6, and R7, give eight points to the rating of the implementation of inclusive education in their child's school. Eight marks were given because the implementation of inclusive education in their child's school started this year, and they feel they are still "newbies" in inclusive program. Meanwhile, R2 gave ten full marks for the inclusive program because of many changes in her son.

R1 states that:

"8, perhaps. It is good because my child has changed a lot."

R2 states that:

"10 marks."

R6 states that:

"I rate it by eight first because I am new to it."

Meanwhile, R8 and R9 rate inclusive program below five out of ten. Their children still do not show good changes while following inclusive school programs. The R10 rate for five marks out of ten means she is satisfied with implementing occupational therapy at school but is less sure about implementing inclusive education.

R8 states that:

"Only two marks for this."

R9 states that:

"I think only 4."

R10 states that:

"Just five because I do not know much about implementing inclusive education in schools."

Parents' satisfaction with the implementation of the Inclusive Education Program at school

The study finds that seven out of ten respondents, R1, R2, R3, R4, R5, R6, and R7, stated they were satisfied with implementing PPI at their child's school. Their children can learn together with typical students, which can, directly and indirectly, increase the level of development and occurrence of students with autism.

R3 states that:

"We would indeed like it if he entered inclusively because we want to enter prime. I am satisfied because the class teacher, even though he is 11 years old but the teacher placed him in grade 2 so he can catch up again."

Meanwhile, R8, R9, and R10 are less satisfied with implementing inclusive program at their child's school. They were not exposed to inclusive education in schools. Their children show a low level of development.

R8 states that:

"I am not satisfied because the teacher at the school does not provide information about the Inclusive Education Program that is carried out at the school."

R9 states that:

"My child still needs help from the teacher, and I think my child's development is still low. I am not satisfied."

Parents' expectations for the implementation of the Inclusive Education Program at school

R1, R4, R7, R9, and R10 hope that PPI can continue in school so that students with autism can continue to develop in all aspects.

R7 states that:

"I hope the school can continue to include my child in any subject. This is so because I can see that my child's overall development is better than before he entered primary school."

R10 states that:

"I hope the teachers at the school can continue educating the children because it is not easy to teach this special child. I also hope the community can care about special children and support the school."

Meanwhile, R3 hopes that PPI can be implemented as early as possible. Students with autism who are ready are encouraged to be in mainstream classes.

R3 states that:

"Teachers start early, start. If he is ready, we will continue to put him. Example: 7 years into PPKI. After that, if the teacher looks at him like it is ok, he can be included in the mainstream class for inclusiveness. However, in terms of words, for sports only, include sports only."

Next, R2 and R6 hope to add more subjects for PPI at their children's schools.

R2 states that:

"I hope to be able to add more subjects for inclusive education, such as jian jie; other subjects, such as English and Chinese, can be included in inclusive. With that, He mingled with ordinary students and studied with ordinary students. Allowing Jian Jie to learn other subjects in the regular class."

Furthermore, R8 hopes the special education teacher and school assistant can provide continuous guidance to his low-functioning child while following inclusive education in the mainstream class.

R8 states that:

"I hope my child can be actively involved in class. I hope the special education teacher and school assistant can help my child over time."

In conclusion, regarding the satisfaction of parents of students with autism with the implementation of inclusive education, most respondents have a high level of satisfaction with the implementation of inclusive education in their child's school. This is because most respondents' children are high-functioning autism students who have shown a high level of achievement. Some respondents have children with low-functioning autism who show a low to moderate level of satisfaction with the implementation of this inclusive education.

Discussion

The study has achieved its three research objectives and has found answers to them. The first research question is about the achievement of students with autism after participating in an inclusive program. The results of this study show that the level of achievement of high-functioning autism students is higher than low-functioning autism students. Bashir and Muhaidat (2014), high-functioning autism has a moderate or moderately high level of intelligence. High-functioning autism can master basic skills and social skills. These findings align with the study of Estes et al (2011), which showed that good social skills can contribute to academic achievement.

Estes et al (2011) state that children's academic achievement is closely related to intellectual, social, and behavioural abilities. Children with good social skills have shown higher levels of academic achievement, especially in reading skills. The results of the study by Estes et al (2011) showed that most high-functioning autism showed higher levels of achievement than expected. However, some achieve lower levels of achievement than expected.

The results of this study can be linked to the levels described in DSM-5 (Carpenter, 2013). According to the DSM-5, autism is divided into three levels based on the degree of autism spectrum disorder ranging from mild to severe. High-functioning autism has the mildest autism spectrum disorders. They only need minimal support in everyday life. On the other hand, low-functioning autism needs more support, and they also have communication and social problems at a level where they are unable to communicate. They also have trouble accepting change and quickly lose focus.

In this context, the results of Zimmerman et al (2018) found that the functionality of students with autism is affected by several factors, namely the level of autism spectrum, level of intelligence, cognitive deficit, negative thinking style, and low social support. These factors are related to psychological, social, and self-adjustment for children with autism. Low-functioning autism has low levels in all three aspects. Because of this, low-functioning autism students face communication and social problems and still need more support than high-functioning autism students. The study's findings by Zimmerman et al. (2018) supported the DSM-5 level, stating that children with autism at level three need more support than at levels one and two. They also still cannot master social and communication skills.

The second research question, the factors determining the success of inclusive education, is also answered. The results of this study show that acceptance of mainstream teachers is an essential factor in making inclusive education a success. Students with autism have different spectrum disorders, so mainstream teachers need to be prepared to accept the placement of Special Needs Students (SNS) in the classroom. Teacher readiness in terms of attitude, teacher knowledge and skills, teaching techniques, and materials. This supports

the findings of Mokhtar and Farhana's (2019) study, which states that mainstream teachers who have exposure are more willing to accept SEN students placement in mainstream classes. The findings of this study differ from the study of Nirmala and Mohd Hanafi (2021), who stated that mainstream teachers who have received exposure to inclusive education are still not ready to accept SEN student's placement in mainstream classes. They also cannot meet the requirements of SEN students, which have different levels of achievement.

The findings of this study state that cooperation between parents, teachers, and therapists is a factor that determines the success of inclusive education. Cooperation between parents, teachers, and therapists is essential in improving the quality of education for students with autism. This is supported by the findings of a previous study by Nur Adibah and Norshidah (2017), stating that cooperation from parents, schools, and multi-disciplinary groups is critical to successful inclusive education. Multidisciplinary teams and parents should provide support services. Holmqvist and Lelinge's (2020) study shows that collaboration from multidisciplinary groups benefits SEN students and teachers. Support from multidisciplinary groups benefits SEN students, teachers, and organisations. Studies report that the achievement of SEN students in class improves with the cooperation of multidisciplinary groups, including parents. Teachers are also more satisfied with the support from various disciplinary groups.

Communication between parents, teachers, and therapists is a factor that determines the success of inclusive education. The results of this study are consistent with the study of Zagana et al (2017), who stated that communication with parents and teachers can make inclusive education successful. The findings of this study show that two-way communication between parents and teachers can overcome issues such as student behaviour and mastery in learning. This is supported by the findings of Falkmer et al (2015), who stated that two-way communication is "good communication"; teachers listen to parents' expectations, ask for advice, and inform parents about their children's problems and development.

Through feedback, parents and teachers can "update" each other on the current level of development of students with autism. The school and parents can also find joint solutions to the problems faced by students with autism. This is supported by the findings of a study by Garrick Duhaney and Salend (2000), stating that feedback from parents to schools, such as education and the child's level of development, can influence their children's education. Watkins and Ebersold (2016) state that the achievement of SEN students and inclusive goals can be achieved with monitoring from parents. Parental monitoring is a support and intervention that helps them overcome class problems. Not only that, but parental monitoring throughout this inclusive education can also increase the effectiveness and capability of inclusive program.

The results of this study show that support from parents and teachers is a factor that makes inclusive education successful. Support from special education teachers, such as moving students with autism to mainstream classes to follow the teaching and learning process in mainstream classes. According to Norramlah and Nurfaradilla (2021), the support of special education teachers plays an important role. With the support of teachers, the academic achievement of students with autism can be improved. Not only that, the quality of the teaching and learning process can also be improved.

The results of this study show that parents with low-functioning autism do not monitor their child's development, and there is no feedback from parents to teachers at school. Parents do not play a role and do not involve themselves in meeting the needs of children with low functioning. They send their children to school and expect it to meet their needs.

Previous studies have shown that a few parents do not want to get involved and leave the responsibility of managing the children to the teacher alone (Asmawi & Farhah, 2020).

Most respondents have a high level of satisfaction with the implementation of inclusive education. Many respondents stated that inclusive education is implemented successfully in schools. This has shown that the respondent's children benefit significantly from inclusive education at school. A previous study by Zanobini et al (2018) showed high parental satisfaction with implementing inclusive education in Italy. However, this is not in line with the findings of the Kurth et al (2019) study, which shows a moderate level of parental satisfaction.

Parents with low-functioning autism were found to have a low level of satisfaction with the implementation of inclusive education in their child's school. Bashir and Mohammad Muhaidat (2014), parents with low-functioning autism were found to have a negative attitude towards inclusive education practices. Parents believe that mainstream classes are not enough to meet the needs of their low-functioning autism. Apart from that, parents also think that it increases the teacher's burden when low-functioning autism is in mainstream classes.

Special Education teachers do not disclose to parents who have children with low-functioning autism about the implementation of inclusive education in schools. This causes parents to be less satisfied with implementing inclusive education. Special Education teachers are given other tasks, causing them to be unable to carry out their duties perfectly. This has given a negative impression to parents as irresponsible teachers (Mohd et al., 2006).

Sansosti and Sansosti (2012) stated that teachers think students' academic excellence is one of the things considered when including students in mainstream classes. The results of Bashir and Mohammad Muhaidat's study (2014) stated that most teachers agreed that the minimum academic level, such as mastering pre-school level skills, should be considered to place students with autism in mainstream classes.

This study provides awareness to the public that children with autism are the same as typical children. We should not isolate them from typical children to the point of marginalising them. They can also show outstanding achievements despite taking longer and different ways of learning compared to typical children. Parents should know about their children's development to increase their children's motivation in and outside learning. With solid support from parents, students with autism can master specific knowledge and skills more quickly. Therefore, parents should spend more time following their children's development, finding ways to improve their children's development and continually supporting them occasionally.

Through this study, the MOE provided support by implementing professionalism development training for teachers implementing inclusive education in schools. For example, mainstream teachers, special education teachers, and school administration rank. With this, parents feel more confident and satisfied with the quality of education their children receive at school. This is because the schoolteachers have enough expertise and knowledge to improve the development of autistic students.

Next, the MOE can also monitor and guide the implementation of inclusive education in schools. Forming a mentoring and guidance team at the District Education Office level is one of the suitable alternatives. The team will go to schools that conduct inclusive education to provide support services. This can guarantee the quality of inclusive education received by students with autism. The Individual Education Plan (IEP) can improve the quality of inclusive education for autistic students in schools. The practical implementation of the Individualized

Education Program (IEP) is the primary key to improving the achievement level of autistic students while following PPI in mainstream classes.

Through this IEP, appropriate support will be planned and carried out specifically for each autistic student based on the level of functionality. The Ministry also needs to involve parents in the process of making and taking decisions in the implementation of inclusive education. Parents know what is best for their children because they have "first-hand" experience from caring, educating and teaching. With that, parents' satisfaction can be increased with their children's education at school. Active involvement from parents will also improve the quality of inclusive education by considering their opinions.

Conclusion

This study has answered the research objectives in exploring parents' satisfaction with implementing inclusive education for students with autism. The majority of respondents were found to be satisfied with the implementation of inclusive education in their children's schools. Respondents with low-functioning children were found to be less satisfied with the implementation of inclusive education. Through inclusive education, the respondent's children have had positive changes in terms of achievement and functionality. In addition, the study found that the behaviour, social skills, and communication of students with autism have shown good development after following PPI in mainstream classes. Low-functioning autism still needs support. As we already know, students with autism are children who have late development in communication and social interaction, as well as repetitive behaviour (DSM-5 2013). Therefore, the progress shown by students with autism has proven the effectiveness of implementing inclusive education. The majority of respondents gave a high rating to inclusive education.

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