PERCEPTIONS OF PARENTS IN SAUDI ARABIA TOWARD COLLABORATION WITH PROFESSIONALS IN EARLY CHILDHOOD SPECIAL EDUCATION

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The role of the family in early childhood special education has long been highlighted by researchers. Collaboration between families and professionals is vital to learning, such efforts are also an integral factor in children's overall development. Moreover, some countries have enacted legislation requiring that educators include parents in infant and toddler inclusion and intervention programs. This mixed method study aims to investigate the perceptions of Saudi parents toward collaboration with education professionals during early childhood special education including aspects such as knowledge of practices, communication, commitment, equality, trust, and respect. A survey of 272 parents of young children with disabilities was conducted. In addition, six parents of young children with disabilities were interviewed about their perceptions and experiences of collaboration to obtain information on their lived experiences.

The study found that parents perceive they have some understanding of collaboration practices and that professionals respected parents’ cultural values. However, some parents experienced some issues in professionals' communication skills. Parents stated that they feel professionals have little skills in the areas of commitment, trust, and respect. Parents reported that professionals need more training overall and preparation to implement collaboration more effectively.

Based on these findings, several recommendations for future practices and areas of research are made.