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Preschool Teachers' and Parents' Perspectives Regarding Factors That Affect Kindergarten Readiness

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Walden University
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Abstract

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by

Ebony Williams

MA, Walden University, 2013

BS, Southern University and A&M College, 2003

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

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Abstract

When children enter kindergarten, they are expected to demonstrate an interrelated set of skills and competencies including pre-academic skills, cognitive abilities, socioemotional well-being, and physical health. The problem that was the focus of this study was that many students who complete prekindergarten are not ready for kindergarten. Guided by Garcia's kindergarten readiness framework, the purpose of this basic qualitative study was to increase understanding of the perspectives of parents and prekindergarten teachers regarding their role in developing kindergarten readiness, and the factors they believe support or hinder their efforts. Eight prekindergarten teachers and 8 parents of prekindergarten students from one school district completed semistructured interviews. Data were analyzed using inductive, open coding to identify themes. Findings showed teachers and parents each play an important role in developing kindergarten readiness, but that their actions differ based on experiences and point of view. Support participants suggested for these efforts included explicit teaching of basic skills, reliance on established curriculum, and collaborative efforts between parents and teachers. Factors that hindered their efforts were lack of time, gaps in partnership, unrealistic achievement expectations, and favoritism from school administrators. Information gained from this study may aid school leaders as they make adjustments to how prekindergarten teachers and parents are supported in their efforts to develop kindergarten readiness. This study highlights the inherent complexity of building kindergarten readiness and suggests the need for a comprehensive approach that engages both professionals and parents, which may lead to positive social change for young children over time.

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Dedication

This study is dedicated to my husband Koran Wilson, my three children, Jazmyne, Destiny, and Koran Wilson Jr., and my parents Dr. Ernest and Denise Williams, who have helped me follow my dream and attain a long-term goal. They were my support system, offered many listening ears, and always had encouraging words and kind gestures. There were days when I thought I would not see the end, but I'm glad I kept the faith and stayed the course. I am very thankful for the people God placed in my life during this season. I thank God for allowing me to stay focused and determined even when things did not happen the way I thought they should have. Everything fell into place in God's timing, and for that I'm truly grateful. I would like to encourage others that have families, full-time jobs, and other obligations to stay the course and keep the faith; it will all fall into place in God's time.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

The topic of this research study was parents' and teachers' perspectives regarding their role in developing kindergarten readiness, and the factors they believe supported or hindered their efforts. This study needed to be conducted because teachers and policymakers use the concept of "school readiness" to define a variety of skills that are advantageous for children starting school, and because both teachers and parents have a role in supporting children in mastering those skills and making a successful transition from prekindergarten to school (Jose et al., 2020). Positive social change could result if the perspectives of parents and teachers regarding their roles in developing kindergarten readiness inform parenting and teaching practice, by establishing relationships, communicating with families, and supporting positive outcomes in learning environments that promote lifelong learning. Major sections in this chapter include a description of background information pertaining to the study topic, the study's problem, purpose, and research questions, and the study conceptual framework. I also describe the nature of this study, its possible limitations, and its possible significance.

Background

Pre-academic capabilities, cognitive ability, socioemotional well-being, and physical health are among the interconnected set of skills and competencies that children are expected to exhibit before they attend kindergarten (Parkes et al., 2016). Kindergarten readiness has become a national issue, gaining attention as a strategy to close achievement gaps among students (Williams & Lerner, 2019). The performance of children in school with regard to academic and social skills in primary and secondary

education is thought to be significantly influenced by their ability levels in language, mathematics, literacy, self-regulation, and socio-emotional adjustment when they enter kindergarten (Pace et al., 2019). Children's achievement trajectories are independently and reciprocally correlated to kindergarten-ready abilities and competences (Parkes et al., 2016).

According to Pan et al. (2019), an estimated 2.2 million, or 56% of the nation's young children, have developmental problems before starting kindergarten. Chmielewski (2019) examined achievement inequalities that existed when children entered kindergarten and found that similar differences also existed in noncognitive abilities, which are crucial for academic performance. Noncognitive abilities include critical thinking, problem-solving, sociability, tenacity, creativity, and self-control (Chmielewski, 2019). By the 2018-2019 school year, 35 states required kindergarten students to be tested on readiness within a few months of kindergarten entry (Garver, 2020). According to Pan et al., children's readiness for school should be a priority.

Because not all children who enter kindergarten are ready for kindergarten instruction, Baron et al. (2019) advocated increasing understanding of factors that hinder kindergarten readiness. The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD; 2020) suggested children's success is affected by their unique capacities, those of their parents, and the connections, chances, and resources they encounter at home and in early childhood institutions prior to beginning full-time schooling. When parents are involved in their child's education, and when prekindergarten teachers are proactive in supporting all children, more children may start kindergarten fully ready (Xia, 2018).

readiness among entering kindergarten students. This study is needed because the concept of school readiness is used to define a variety of skills that are advantageous for children starting kindergarten, and teachers and parents play a crucial role in supporting children's readiness for school.

Problem Statement

The problem that was the focus of this study is that many students who complete prekindergarten are not ready for kindergarten. For example, in one rural school district in a state in the southeastern United States, the percentage of beginning kindergarten students who scored below benchmark levels on developmental level screenings and early literacy assessments steadily increased in the 5 years between 2015 and 2019 from 38% to 49%, according to state reports. This trend is depicted in Table 1.

Table 1

Kindergarten Assessment Results in the Target District, 2015 to 2019

Year	# enrolled	% met benchmark	% below benchmark
2015	221	61.50	38.50
2016	225	54.00	46.00
2017	223	55.68	44.32
2018	226	58.75	41.25
2019	226	50.94	49.06

*Source: Local district published data

Miller and Kehl (2019) confirmed that readiness skills are taught in prekindergarten. Administrators in the target district indicated that 77% of entering kindergarteners

attended prekindergarten, and only 23% did not attend prekindergarten or an equivalent program. This suggests that more children who entered kindergarten should have met assessment benchmarks for readiness than the 51% to 62% of children indicated by data presented in Table 1. However, even children who attended public preschools operated under state guidelines failed to be kindergarten-ready; in 2017, only 33% of public prekindergarten graduates in the target district were considered ready for kindergarten.

Kindergarten readiness has become a national issue, growing in popularity as a method to bridge the academic gap between White and African American children, as well as to maximize all young children's developmental and lifetime learning potential (Yoon et al., 2021). Pre-academic capabilities, cognitive ability, socioemotional well-being, and physical health are among the interconnected set of noncognitive skills and competencies that children are expected to exhibit before they attend kindergarten (Parkes et al., 2016). These skills and competencies make kindergarten readiness more than merely the sum of children's academic abilities and suggest a reciprocal relationship between children's mastery of noncognitive skills and their demonstration of academic growth (Parkes et al., 2016). The work of prekindergarten teachers in support of both noncognitive and academic skill development has favorable short- and long-term effects on preschoolers' kindergarten success (Puccioni, 2015).

In addition, Cui et al. (2016) emphasized the importance of parents in prekindergarten education. The first instructor and learning role model for their children are their parents (Kirkwood, 2016). Parents may support their prekindergarten children's growth and development, especially in terms of their cognitive abilities, and promote

their education (Malovic & Malovic, 2017). The lack of kindergarten readiness includes 46% of entering kindergarten students and the steady decline in kindergarten readiness over the past 5 years in the target district, as illustrated by local data presented in Table 1 above, suggests a gap in practice. Many children who attended prekindergarten are not ready for kindergarten, which is the problem that inspired the purpose of this study.

Purpose

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to increase understanding of perspectives of parents and prekindergarten teachers regarding their role in developing kindergarten readiness, and the factors they believe support or hinder their efforts. According to Miller and Kehl (2019), teachers and parents of prekindergarten students believe that one of the main outcomes of prekindergarten is that children will be more prepared for kindergarten. The phenomenon of interest encompassed the fact that not all children are ready for kindergarten, including those who attended prekindergarten (Bernstein et al., 2014). In this study, I explored prekindergarten teachers' and parents' perspectives on their involvement in fostering kindergarten preparation and the elements they felt helped or impeded their efforts. I conducted a basic qualitative study using interviews to explore teachers' and parents' perspectives regarding their role in developing kindergarten readiness, and factors that supported or hindered their efforts. Participants included prekindergarten teachers and parents from one rural school district in the southeastern United States.

Research Questions

Three research questions guided this study.

RQ1: How do prekindergarten teachers and parents describe their role in developing children's kindergarten readiness?

RQ2: How do prekindergarten teachers and parents describe factors that support their efforts in developing children's kindergarten readiness?

RQ3: How do prekindergarten teachers and parents describe factors that hinder their efforts in developing children's kindergarten readiness?

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study was the work of Garcia (2015) on kindergarten readiness. Garcia analyzed achievement differences that already existed before kindergarten entry and showed that these gaps also affected noncognitive abilities, which are essential for academic performance and include social skills, tenacity, creativity, and self-control. Garcia and Bruce et al. (2022) found that at kindergarten admission, there were statistically substantial achievement inequalities across children from different socioeconomic origins, races, and ethnicities.

Belfield and Garcia (2016) examined parents' efforts and expectations for kindergarten throughout a 14-year period between 1993 and 2007, including expectations for their child's academic growth, to investigate school preparedness from the parent perspective. Although they discovered a significant rise in parental reports of children's development and a heightened set of requirements they believed were necessary for entry into kindergarten, Belfield and Garcia discovered only minor changes in parental effort

over the 14 years of the study, indicating that parents may not be aware of their agency in promoting children's readiness. In addition, Kamhorst et al. (2021) found that parental effort in supporting children's readiness was not replaced by prekindergarten enrollment; parents may be unaware of the importance of their continuing contribution to children's readiness beyond enrolling their children in prekindergarten.

Although Garcia and Weiss (2019) discovered that while parents and teachers assessed similarly children's readiness for kindergarten-level reading and mathematics, teachers and parents disagreed on how ready children were in noncognitive skills. Parents believed their children were more persistent on tasks and exhibited greater self-control than did the children's teachers. These differences were most apparent in minority families and in families of low socioeconomic status, such as those enrolled in public prekindergarten in the target state. Garcia's work made an effective framework for this study. It suggested possible differences in how teachers and parents regard kindergarten readiness and differences in how each sees their own role in developing readiness. Garcia's work informed the research questions and guided the development of the interview process.

Nature of the Study

This study followed a basic qualitative design, as described by Caelli et al. (2003), and employed a narrative approach in gathering data. Fontana and Frey (2008) supported using narrative to comprehend human experiences. To gather narratives, I used interviews, as described by Mishler (1986). The key concept under study was teacher and parent perspectives regarding their role in developing kindergarten readiness, and the

factors they believe supported or hindered their efforts. This study was suggested by the phenomenon of widespread lack of kindergarten readiness, even among children who attended prekindergarten. I interviewed a total of 16 participants in this study, including eight parents of children enrolled in the four district-funded public prekindergarten programs and eight prekindergarten teachers who worked in those programs, in one rural area of the southeastern United States. Interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed. Transcriptions formed the data set, which I analyzed using in vivo coding and thematic analysis.

Definitions

Achievement gap: a significant difference in academic outcomes or educational attainment between diverse groups of students. Achievement gap refers to the unequal output of educational results between two groups of students, such as high-income and low-income students (Garcia, 2015).

Kindergarten readiness: the result of assessments, screenings, and observations that are conducted at the end of prekindergarten and the beginning of kindergarten that determines levels of development and readiness (Sabol & Pianta, 2017).

Pre-academic readiness skills: Pre-academic abilities include early reading and mathematics knowledge, self-regulation and prosocial conduct in social-emotional development, and motor and sensory development in physical development (Denham et al., 2012). These skills are the foundation of a child's academic learning (Parkes et al., 2016).

Assumptions

I assumed that the prekindergarten teachers and parents who participated in this study were truthful and complete when providing information in their interviews. I also assumed that teachers and parents who participated in this study were representative of prekindergarten teachers and parents generally, and that the children in their classes and families were also representative of prekindergarten children. To mitigate the effects of these assumptions, I used purposeful sampling to identify participants. However, in a study such as this, which relies on the veracity and representativeness of participants, a researcher must assume these qualities in those who volunteer to be interviewed (see Ravitch & Carl, 2016).

Scope and Delimitations

The scope of this study included the perspectives of parents and prekindergarten teachers regarding their role in developing kindergarten readiness, and the factors they believe support or hinder their efforts. This focus was chosen because teachers and parents are the key supports for children's development of kindergarten readiness. This study was delimited to include prekindergarten teachers and parents of prekindergarten children who are associated with four schools in one rural school district in the southeastern United States. Included as parents were adults who lived in the home with the child, participated in parent-teacher communication on the child's behalf, and whom the child appeared to regard as a central figure in their life. Parents therefore included foster parents, grandparents, and other persons without a biological connection with the child, but an emotional and functional one.

Persons excluded from the study were teachers of other grade levels or school districts; who had not taught in general education classrooms, but instead taught a special subject, like music or physical education; or who taught a special population, such as gifted students or students with a developmental delay. Parents who were excluded from the study were those whose children were not enrolled in prekindergarten, who did not live in the rural district that was the focus of this study, or who did not fulfill the role of parent as described above. Also excluded were parents who spoke no English because the study was conducted in English. These delimitations may affect transferability for readers whose context is more urban or comprises a different population of participants.

Limitations

One limitation that affected this study was that it was conducted during or following the COVID-19 pandemic, which altered how parents and teachers went about their daily lives. In response to the pandemic in the southeastern region of the United States, prekindergarten classrooms were closed for 5 months in the year prior to data collection; students engaged in remote learning through virtual platforms like Zoom, Google Classroom, Teams, and Facebook live sessions. Although this change in how prekindergarten was conducted did not directly affect families included in this study, whose children were not yet enrolled in prekindergarten, information about this change may have affected parents' perspectives regarding prekindergarten attendance and their role in supporting their children's learning. Changes to prekindergarten instruction also may have affected prekindergarten teachers, who adjusted their work to fit remote

learning, and may have altered their perspectives of their roles and parents' roles in supporting kindergarten readiness.

During the time when data were collected, participant parents' children were enrolled in prekindergarten, and prekindergarten instruction was conducted in-person in classrooms. Even then, however, schools or classrooms were occasionally closed due to COVID-19 protocols. Some prekindergarten students were still receiving remote instruction during the time when data were collected, because parents were reluctant to send them to class and risk COVID-19 exposure. In addition, prekindergarten teachers may have been exposed to COVID-19 and may have been absent at times during the period prior to data collection; oftentimes, class was canceled when a teacher was unable to be in the classroom and no substitute teacher could be found. Many parents may have needed to guide their children in remote learning, even after the school district returned to in-person instruction (see Masonbrink & Hurley, 2020). The difficulty of navigating instruction may have caused a strain on both parents and teachers in preparing children to be ready for kindergarten, as suggested by Lopes and Oliveira (2020).

As a result of the pandemic, I conducted interviews using the Zoom teleconference platform and telephone calls, and not face-to-face. Conducting interviews by Zoom or telephone posed a limitation to data collection because I was not able to read the body language of persons being interviewed. In addition, connectivity issues associated with the target rural area may have interfered with using the Zoom platform and clear cell phone transmission, especially during peak times. I confirmed participants had internet access and made sure interviews were not scheduled during high peak hours.

In addition, conducting interviews by Zoom or telephone with participants in their own homes may have increased interruptions from family members or pets. However, because participants did not need to meet me in person, they may have found the interview more convenient and less time-consuming for them than in-person interviews might have been.

As a professional working with children, families, and practitioners, I had my own thoughts and opinions regarding kindergarten readiness, so a possible limitation of this study was the intrusion of my biases into data collection and analysis. I knew what to look for and how to manage my biases. By asking quality questions at the right time, I remained aware and focused on sources of bias. I ensured that the resulting data were free from my own biases and opinions.

Significance

This study may be significant because it explored perspectives of prekindergarten teachers and parents of prekindergarten children regarding their role in developing kindergarten readiness, and the factors they believe supported or hindered their efforts. Children's earliest experiences contribute to their kindergarten readiness. Peterson et al. (2018) found that children who entered school ready for kindergarten are more likely to succeed academically than children who are believed to be less ready. Bassok and Latham (2017) stated if prekindergarten children do not enter kindergarten ready to learn, tremendous effort is needed in later years to bring about successful school outcomes. This study addressed a gap in practice evidenced by lack of readiness demonstrated by up to 46% of entering kindergarteners in the target district. This study provides insight into perspectives of parents and teachers, whose efforts contribute to the attainment of

kindergarten readiness in prekindergarten children. This study may contribute to positive social change by increasing understanding of factors prekindergarten teachers and parents identify that support or hinder children's kindergarten readiness and that provides insights that may contribute to children's kindergarten success.

Summary

In this chapter, I introduced my research problem, which was that many students who had completed prekindergarten are found to be not ready for kindergarten, and I suggested a gap in practice this problem reveals. The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to increase understanding of the perspectives of parents and teachers of prekindergarten children regarding their role in developing children's kindergarten readiness and what factors support or hinder their efforts in fulfilling that role. Three research questions guided this study. The work of Garcia (2015) on kindergarten readiness was described as the study's conceptual framework. In Chapter 2, I expand on this framework and describe research from the current literature related to my area of study.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The problem that was the focus of this study is that many students who complete prekindergarten are not ready for kindergarten. The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to increase understanding of perspectives of parents and prekindergarten teachers regarding their role in developing kindergarten readiness, and the factors they believe support or hinder their efforts. According to Pan (2019), many young children in the United States show challenges in key areas of development before entering kindergarten. In addition, Chmielewski (2019) stated that achievement gaps exist before children enter kindergarten. Major sections in this chapter included a description of my literature search strategy, an in-depth presentation of the study's conceptual framework, and a review of current literature related to key variables and concepts. I also summarize major themes in the literature related to the topic of study.

Literature Search Strategy

In my efforts to search for literature I used the Walden University library database, ProQuest, EBSCO Host, and Google Scholar search engine. Education Resources Information Center (ERIC) was used for journal articles, books, research syntheses, technical reports, policy papers and other education related materials. ERIC database was used for literature terms like pre-academic skills, kindergarten readiness and school readiness. International Bibliography of Social Sciences (IBSS) database had a focus on the social science subjects and covers current journals from every region of the world. The IBSS journal covers articles, reviews, research notes, and short essays. IBSS was used to search for literature with terminology like achievement gaps and trajectories

that were present in articles related to topic of study. Terms like *readiness, achievement gaps, kindergarten readiness, parents' perspectives, teacher's perspectives, noncognitive, trajectory*, *pre-academic, school readiness, kindergarten readiness, cognitive skills, early childhood developmental skills, assessment screeners,* and *developmental outcomes* were used in those search engines to gather over 50 recent articles related to the topic of study. Most articles were published between 2018 and 2023. Some earlier articles are included, especially on the under-studied topic of parents' role in school readiness, where little more-recent work was available.

Conceptual Framework

Garcia's (2015) work on kindergarten readiness formed the conceptual framework for this study. The phenomenon under study was the perspectives of teachers and parents of prekindergarten children regarding their role in developing children's kindergarten readiness, and the factors that support or hinder them in that role. Garcia found that achievement gaps exist even before children enter kindergarten and demonstrated that these gaps include both cognitive skills, such as the ability to think, explore, and understand, and noncognitive skills, such as social skills, persistence, and creativity. Belfield and Garcia (2016) examined parents' perspectives of school readiness, over a 14-year period from 1993 and 2007. They found a significant increase over time in parents' attention to aspects of child development and to kindergarten expectations, but they found only minimal changes in parents' efforts in preparing children to be ready for kindergarten. According to Belfield and Garcia, this suggests that parents may not be aware of the value of actions they might take in supporting children's readiness. In

addition, Belfield and Garcia found that parents' support for children's kindergarten readiness provides a separate positive effect, distinct from and not replaced by children's prekindergarten experience. The actions of parents and prekindergarten teachers contribute uniquely to children's readiness.

Garcia and Weiss (2015) reported that parents and teachers agree on children's readiness levels in reading and mathematics, but that parents rated their children more highly than did teachers on noncognitive skills. In particular, Garcia and Weiss found that parents believed their children were more persistent on tasks and exhibited greater self-control than the children's teachers did. These differences were most apparent in minority families and in families of low socioeconomic status, such as those enrolled in public prekindergarten in the target state. Garcia (2015) revealed that at kindergarten admission, there already were statistically substantial achievement inequalities across children from different socioeconomic origins, races, and ethnicities. Garcia recommended that teachers and parents collaborate to help children get ready for kindergarten.

Numerous researchers have addressed the strategies and techniques demonstrated in Garcia's (2015) work on kindergarten readiness. Slutzky and DeBruin-Parecki (2019) used Garcia's framework to expand the focus and understanding perspectives of how kindergarten readiness is defined, roles of early learning standards for defining kindergarten readiness, and the utility for guiding kindergarten readiness practices. Chen et al. (2020) used Garcia's work to support learning experiences provided at school to students who represent diverse backgrounds and to enhance early childhood education. Chen et al. recommended incorporating adaptable educational technologies to assist with

individualized instruction, following the guidance of Garcia. Peterson et al. (2018)

adapted Garcia's framework to support their contention that children who enter

kindergarten healthy and ready to learn are more likely to succeed academically. Children

who are affected by limited learning experiences, live in poverty, or have chronic health

conditions are less likely than other children to be ready for school. The purpose of the

current basic qualitative study was to increase understanding of the perspectives of

parents and prekindergarten teachers regarding their role in developing kindergarten

readiness, and the factors they believe support or hinder their efforts. Garcia's work

formed a framework for my study, in that it shaped my research questions and informed

the creation of the interview questions. Garcia's framework on kindergarten readiness

was insightful in helping me bring to light parents' and teachers' perspectives of

kindergarten readiness. Through my study, I was able to expand and provide factors that

support and hinder kindergarten readiness and focused on the complementary

contributions of each role in helping children enter kindergarten ready for school.

Literature Related to Key Concepts and Variables

In this review of current literature, I describe ideas and constructs relevant to the

study's purpose. Included is literature that describes what is meant by kindergarten

readiness, adults' role in support of kindergarten readiness, factors associated with

kindergarten readiness, and factors that hinder kindergarten readiness. The idea of

readiness for kindergarten has a long history. This current literature review begins there.

What is Meant by Kindergarten Readiness

A nonpartisan group of federal and state officials, whose work was to analyze and report on state and national progress toward attaining eight National Education Goals set for the country, made up the National Education Goals Panel, which was founded in July 1990 (Kagan et al., 1995). The first of these goals was that all American children begin school prepared to learn (Kagan et al., 1995, p. 8), and this goal was part of the Goals 2000: Educate America Act, passed by the U.S. Congress in 1994 (Vaisarova & Reynolds, 2022). According to a nativist perspective on preparedness, children are prepared for school when they are old enough to sit still, concentrate on their work, interact with their classmates in socially acceptable ways, and follow rules and directives from instructors and other people who are significant to them (Williams et al., 2020). An empiricist view of readiness, in contrast, emphasizes outward proof of mastery and relates readiness only in relation with the child's practical activities (Ogren & Johnson, 2021). The concept of school readiness suggests that there is a quantifiable benchmark that could be used to measure a child's physical, intellectual, and socioemotional functioning, and that attaining this benchmark can be applied to predict future academic performance (Vaisarova & Reynolds, 2022).

The viewpoint that takes seriously the variation that distinguishes readiness among young children and perceives readiness in terms of social and cultural concepts leads to the development of a distinct strategy (Gross et al., 2021). Thompson and Lagattuta (2006) characterized preparedness as "a collection of beliefs or meanings formed by people in communities, families, and schools as they engaged in the

kindergarten experience" (p. 320). These concepts are tied to specific children in terms of characteristics like their age, sex, and prekindergarten experience and are derived from community norms and expectations (Rouse et al., 2023). The acknowledgement that readiness might be different in different children, and in different communities, complicates the conversation around kindergarten preparation.

The term "readiness" refers to the link between a child's level of intellectual and social-emotional development and the particular requirements of the program in which they are enrolled (Iruka et al., 2022). The majority of definitions of kindergarten-ready include diverse sets of abilities and competencies that connect to a child's scholastic achievement in kindergarten and beyond across a variety of child development areas (Mackintosh & Rowe, 2021). Many years ago, key voices (see Copple & Bredekamp, 2009) identified readiness as a pressing issue and that recent research states readiness is still a problem (OECD, 2020). According to national and international reports (Williams & Lerner, 2019), around the world and in the United States, increasing children's preparation for kindergarten and first grade remains a critical concern.

A child's family, neighborhood, and school all have an effect on their physical, intellectual, and social-emotional development (Bernstein et al., 2019). Three aspects of "kindergarten readiness" are interconnected: children's readiness for school, schools' preparation for children, and families' and communities' preparedness to support children as they adjust to school (Bipath et al., 2021). Because it takes into account both a child's specific level of development in a variety of domains and a school's capacity to meet

each student's particular learning requirements, kindergarten readiness is an interactive notion (Puccioni et al., 2020).

The emphasis on readiness is based in the assumption that kindergarten-age children who are well-prepared are likely to learn more effectively than those who are less equipped ((Sulistyaningtyas & Fauziah, 2019). Kindergarten readiness has become a national issue, gaining attention as a strategy to close the achievement gap between White and African American pupils' performance (Yoon et al., 2021) and to improve the developmental potential all young children (Peterson et al., 2018). As readiness came to the forefront, much of the conversation around readiness is concentrated on early literacy and reading, so that readiness for school has been typically equated with reading readiness (Tunmer & Hoover, 2019). Schochet et al. (2020) reported that some researchers and educators have argued for a more developmental orientation, highlighting the conflict between readiness for school, that is, developmental readiness, and readiness to learn, exemplified by reading readiness. Although the phrase "kindergarten readiness" is not new, with use it has grown more complex.

Research has demonstrated that quality prekindergarten experiences can have value for children and their achievement (Moreno, 2018), but high-quality prekindergarten programs are not available for all children who need them. Many children may be less ready for kindergarten than others, in both developmental and literacy aspects, because they did not receive the support they needed in prekindergarten (Tunmer & Hoover, 2019). Young children who begin kindergarten with lower intellectual abilities and social-emotional school preparation than their peers risk poor

long-term educational results (Hohm et al., 2017). Although the prekindergarten classroom is a crucial setting for the promotion of school readiness, many parents must supplement their children's prekindergarten instruction with readiness support at home.

Adults' Role in Support of Kindergarten Readiness

According to Miller and Kehl (2019), prekindergarten educators and parents share the belief that a key benefit of the program was improved kindergarten preparedness. According to Odom et al. (2020), both parents and teachers play key roles in supporting children's readiness. In this section, the roles of parents and teachers are described as well as the importance of coordination of those roles.

The Role of Parents in Supporting Kindergarten Readiness

In the year before kindergarten, parents have a chance to support their children's growth and development, especially in terms of their cognitive abilities, and to speak up in favor of their preparation for school (Malovic & Malovic, 2017). Hong et al. (2020) stressed the crucial part parents play in prekindergarten education, implying that they should provide a good example for their children by being kind-hearted, upbeat, tolerant, aware of their obligations, and open to change. Parents serve as their children's first educators and learning role models (McDowell et al., 2018).

Parents' support for children's play may have different developmental and educational effects (Keung & Cheung, 2019). By allowing their children to engage in both scheduled and unstructured play, parents may promote their preparedness (Lin et al., 2019). Unstructured play gives children the freedom to choose their own rules and involve an adult in the play activities they find most fulfilling (Tortella et al., 2019).

Structured play has been described as an effort to strike a balance between children's right to play and preparation for school (Tortella et al., 2019). Parents' support for both scheduled and unstructured play develops children's learning at home and contributes to school preparation (Lin & Li, 2018). Play promotes children's responsibility and independence so they feel more confident and comfortable and increases their self-regulation skills (Keung & Cheung, 2019). When including structured and unstructured play throughout daily routines and learning experiences, parents promote and increase a child's readiness for kindergarten and bring about successful outcomes now and in the future (Lin et al., 2019).

In addition, school preparation is enhanced by parent-child interactions that support the youngster's physical, emotional, and social growth in a stable home learning environment (Curtin et al, 2021). Rose et al. (2018) suggested that a stable home learning environment is a key indicator of how well children develop academically and socially. A stable home learning environment, including the caliber of parent-child interactions and the accessibility of learning materials, promotes children's participation in learning activities and educational growth, and prepares them for kindergarten (Rose et al., 2018).

Another important element in parents' support for school readiness is their active participation in their child's early childhood education program (Benedetto & Ingrassia, 2020). The effectiveness and regularity of contact with teachers, as well as involvement in school events and activities, are prominent indicators of parent involvement (Hall et al., 2019). However, initiatives to incorporate parents have mostly emphasized academic success, paying little attention to how children develop socially and emotionally (Kang et

al., 2017). When parents are involved and supportive of their child's education, including

support for academic, social, emotional, and positive values and attitudes, children tend

to be ready for school and have successful outcomes (Benedetto & Ingrassia, 2020).

Together, the characteristics and contributions of parents who are involved in their

child's education help to support children to be school and kindergarten ready.

The Role of Prekindergarten Teachers in Supporting Kindergarten Readiness

Prekindergarten fills an essential role in ensuring that children are successful and

prepared for kindergarten (Bacon, 2019). According to Chen et al. (2020), the bond

between a teacher and student is important. Hunter et al. (2017) explained that when

teachers and students communicate well and have a healthy relationship, social skills

among the students improve. Teachers' teaching strategies, interpersonal relationships

with students, and quality of interactions with students all have an influence on how

social and emotional abilities in children develop (Alzahrani et al., 2019).

Teachers are in charge of putting into practice a well-designed curriculum that is

based on developmental activity sequences; good instructional practice necessitates that

educators comprehend those sequences, assess student progress, and remediate as

necessary (Odom et al., 2020). Baron et al. (2019) asserted that early childhood educators

who understand and are responsive to children's developmental processes and constraints

are successful in supporting children's capacity for thinking about and comprehending

subject matter. Early educators can apply their understanding of children to create

environments, instructional activities, and conversations that are effective in developing

learning (Baroody et al., 2019). Although language and literacy have gained increased

focus for young children relative to other subject matter, teachers also impart topic-specific information to students (Spillane et al., 2019). Teachers engage children in rich subject-matter experiences that enhance readiness and encourage youngsters to feel eager to learn (Hammond et al., 2020).

Many teachers believe that one of the main benefits of prekindergarten is that children become prepared socially, as well as academically, for kindergarten (Williams & Lerner, 2019). In fact, Hustedt et al (2018) found that teachers identify non-academic abilities as the most significant when ranking qualities of kindergarten preparedness. Horoz et al. (2022) confirmed that teachers understand the importance of non-academic abilities in preparing students for kindergarten. Teachers are crucial in supporting students' social and emotional development, which affects their general growth and learning (Keiler, 2018). According to Williams and Lerner (2019), children who are socially and emotionally healthy are often happier, more motivated to study, more enthusiastic about participating in class activities, and perform better academically than their less well-adjusted classmates. Teachers consciously encourage the social and emotional wellbeing of their students by reading children's books, organizing classroom activities, coaching on the spot, providing constructive criticism, modeling acceptable conduct, and giving clues to the solution of difficult tasks (Ho & Funk, 2018). When teachers use their role to promote academic, nonacademic, and social and emotional skills they support successful outcomes and readiness in school for children (Odom et al., 2020).

Social and emotional skill development is supported by positive teacher-child connections (Chen et al., 2020). Keiler (2018) found that, independent of age, gender, race, ethnicity, language, or level of poverty, young children's good interactions with teachers foster all elements of their development, including language, cognition, and social-emotional abilities. However, even within the same classroom, individual students' connections with their teachers are of varying strength (Rudasill et al., 2020). Children's participation in classroom instruction, which aids in their learning, is also correlated with teacher-student interactions (White, 2020). Teachers must take into account how each child interacts within the classroom and how various classroom elements interact to affect academic achievement and kindergarten preparation, because these linkages create long-lasting advantages when cultivated through strong teacher-child relationships (White, 2020).

The Collaborative Role of Parents and Teachers

Children do better at school and at home when parents and teachers collaborate (Kennedy et al., 2020). A well-designed system of family partnerships is one that is optimistic, respectful, continuous, and has the potential to affect learning, achievement, and kindergarten preparation (Steen, 2022). According to Curtin et al. (2021), a good partnership starts with a connection based on trust between families and the teaching staff, one that fosters strong parent-child interactions and links families to peers, the community, and being prepared for kindergarten upon entering school. Hoisington (2018) found that when parents and teachers work together, children's work habits, attitudes about school, and grades all improve. Children exhibit superior social skills, fewer

behavioral issues, and more situational and interpersonal adaptability when their parents and teachers work together (Keung & Cheung, 2019). Teachers and parents also gain from this: Hoisington (2018) reported that when parents and teachers collaborate as partners, they communicate more effectively, build better bonds, and acquire abilities to improve children's preparedness for school and beyond.

Factors Associated with Low Kindergarten Readiness

Every student should arrive to school prepared to learn (Williams & Lerner, 2019), and every child should have access to high-quality, developmentally appropriate school readiness programs that help them get ready for kindergarten admission (Morrissey, 2020). However, several factors impede children's success in achieving kindergarten readiness, including absenteeism, poverty, ineffective teaching, and lack of coordination among parents, schools, and the community. For example, children who are absent from prekindergarten frequently miss the instruction and social experiences necessary for developing kindergarten readiness. According to Ansari and Purtell (2018), children who missed school performed worse academically, were more likely to be socially disengaged, and were more likely to repeat kindergarten and primary grades. Regular attendance in school is essential for education (Haslip, 2018). According to Ehrlich (2018), high absence rates pose a serious problem for many pupils, especially those in prekindergarten. Ansari and Purtell (2018) revealed that frequent absenteeism in preschool was common among children who entered prekindergarten with the lowest skills, and that absence in prekindergarten is common, especially among African American children. Students in prekindergarten who missed 10% or more of their

scheduled school days showed poorer levels of intellectual and behavioral preparation for kindergarten and were more likely to be chronically absent in later grades (Gottfried & Ansari, 2022). Ehlich et al. (2018) suggested that simply increasing attendance in prekindergarten and the early elementary years may bridge achievement disparities and increase the level of children's academic success.

Poverty constitutes another risk factor for low kindergarten readiness. Children from low-income families may begin kindergarten unprepared, and with inferior social and reading abilities compared to those of their classmates (Morrissey & Vinopal, 2018). Children in the poorest homes are up to 10 times less likely to attend early childhood education programs and are less likely to get assistance for early learning at home (Naven et al., 2019). The accomplishment gap between children from socioeconomically advantaged and underprivileged backgrounds is known to exist from the time they first enroll in school, and this difference has long been acknowledged (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, 2000). The socioeconomic status of pupils greatly affects how well they do in school (Thomson, 2018). Garcia (2015) revealed that at kindergarten admission, there were statistically substantial achievement inequalities across children from different socioeconomic origins, races, and ethnicities. Evidence from UNICEF (2019) showed that initiatives to promote school readiness in children from marginalized groups enhance equity in access to education and in learning outcomes. According to Gobena (2018), low-wage families might not have the resources to give their children the same educational opportunities that middle- and upper-class families do. This implies that

even though schools may be well resourced, some children from low-status households struggle to achieve well (Hill, 2019).

Ineffective teaching hinders kindergarten readiness and is a significant issue in education (Lacina & Block, 2017). Hammond et al. (2020) discovered that the most significant school-related factor affecting student progress is the guidance of an inspirational and knowledgeable teacher, making it imperative to train and support instructors. Great educators foster great learners (Moses & Harrill, 2022), so developing a preschool and prekindergarten teaching cadre well-trained to educate and inspire children is important (Kim et al., 2019). However, Ribaeus et al. (2022) found that teacher candidates in early childhood may lack practice in actual classrooms under the supervision of an experienced mentor. Gottfried et al. (2020) agreed that preservice teachers are not required to complete practica intensive enough for them to apply what they learned about instructional theory to teaching in a real classroom. Gottfried et al. also found that teacher preparation programs often prioritize teaching for subject-matter mastery over developing children's learning capabilities. In addition, budgetary constraints in many areas of the country mean that new teachers frequently receive inconsistent and insufficient support (Kini, 2022).

Newly qualified prekindergarten teachers often are placed in the most difficult schools and classrooms, with no guidance and assistance, which increases the likelihood that these teachers will struggle (Thomas & Hammond, 2017). More care must be taken to give new teachers early and proper assistance, especially if they are placed in difficult school contexts (Garcia & Weiss, 2019), particularly because over half of all new

teachers, including prekindergarten teachers, quit the profession in their first 5 years (Kanika, 2022). Excellent induction programs provide new instructors the chance to examine and reflect on their teaching while learning from best practices (Hammond et al., 2020). In addition, all instructors should have regular and continuous opportunity to learn from one another, yet ongoing professional development is frequently lacking (Barker et al., 2022). Young children's preparation for school and kindergarten is significantly influenced by effective teaching, so lack of prekindergarten teacher effectiveness is a key factor associated with low kindergarten readiness (Kim et al., 2019).

The preparedness of children is influenced by readiness support received in their community (Williams & Lerner, 2019). Pan et al. (2019) indicated that political, social, economic, and relationship issues all have an effect on how prepared students are for school. Children participate in intimate sociocultural and environmental relationships with their families, neighborhoods, schools, and communities (Kokkalia et al., 2019). As a result, local community activities and school-community partnerships contribute significantly to children's academic achievement (Sells & Mendelsohn, 2021). Despite this fact, partnership approaches often only include a small number of parent populations and are limited to a few specific forms of parent involvement (Medina et al, 2019). Numerous barriers prevent community partners from participating in more systematic and meaningful ways, including partners who are unwilling to get involved, educators who are unwilling to promote community partnerships, scheduling conflicts, competing ideas about the role that community partners should play in partnerships, a lack of teacher preparation, and a lack of administrative support (Gross et al., 2020). Lara and Saracostti

(2019) agreed that positive relationships among families, the school, and community partners form an important set of factors that contribute to a child's readiness for kindergarten, and gaps in these relationships may result in lack of readiness.

Summary

In this chapter, I defined the concept of kindergarten readiness, and described the role of prekindergarten teachers and parents of prekindergarten children in readying young children for kindergarten. I described factors associated with kindergarten readiness, such as social-emotional competence and mastery of basic academic tools, including alphabet knowledge, numeracy, and vocabulary. I also described factors that interfere with children's ability to be ready for kindergarten, including chronic absenteeism in prekindergarten, poverty, and ineffective prekindergarten instruction. Kindergarten readiness is receiving attention on a national level as a way to reduce achievement gaps. Too many children are not prepared for kindergarten when they leave their prekindergarten programs. Low levels of kindergarten preparation among incoming kindergarten pupils illustrated by the literature reviewed in this chapter suggest the gap in practice addressed in the study. This chapter enunciated how essential it is that teachers and parents promote children's readiness for school. In Chapter 3, I describe the research design of the study and the methodology by which I sought to answer the research questions.

Chapter 3: Research Method

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to increase understanding of perspectives of parents and prekindergarten teachers regarding their role in developing kindergarten readiness, and the factors they believe support or hinder their efforts. In this chapter, I describe the research design of this study and the rationale for that design, my role as researcher, and the methodology by which I conducted this study, including details of participant selection, instrumentation, procedures for recruitment, participation and data collection, and the data analysis plan. I conclude with methods I used to ensure the trustworthiness of study results, and ethical procedures I followed.

Research Design and Rationale

Three research questions guided this study:

RQ1: How do prekindergarten teachers and parents describe their role in developing children's kindergarten readiness?

RQ2: How do prekindergarten teachers and parents describe factors that support their efforts in developing children's kindergarten readiness?

RQ3: How do prekindergarten teachers and parents describe factors that hinder their efforts in developing children's kindergarten readiness?

The phenomenon under study was the perspectives of teachers and parents of prekindergarten children regarding their role in developing children's kindergarten readiness, and the factors that support or hinder them in that role. I used a basic qualitative design using interviews to determine teacher and parent perspectives regarding their role in developing kindergarten readiness, and factors that support or

hinder their efforts. According to Caelli et al. (2003), a basic qualitative study using interviews is appropriate when a research problem can be resolved by listening to informants who can illuminate the phenomenon under study. I chose the interview process because conversations one-to-one with participants, and being able to ask open-ended questions and have them elaborate to clarify points, provided a coherent narrative that supported the study's purpose. I did not choose to give participants a survey because surveys are closed ended and cannot provide information about participants' perspectives of the problem of preparing children for kindergarten (see Jain, 2021). According to Jain (2021), interviews often provide better data for analysis of participants' thinking than do surveys because interviews ask participants open-ended questions and allow for wide-ranging replies that may contribute ideas unanticipated by the researcher.

Role of the Researcher

My current professional role is an early childhood specialist with Head Start Training and Technical Assistance. I have been an early childhood specialist with the Office of Head Start for 5 years. Prior to joining Head Start Training and Technical Assistance, I was an education coordinator for the rural school district that was the location of this study. I was employed with the school district for 13 years before moving into my current role as a Head Start training and technical assistance provider.

My professional experience has led me to being concerned about readiness. In my professional practice with the school district, I encountered many students who completed prekindergarten but were not school ready when entering kindergarten. I have witnessed a lack of parent involvement, and a lack of teacher-parent partnerships and

community presence in the school district in which I was employed. The lack of those components present in the district may have had an effect on students' readiness for kindergarten and on the effectiveness of efforts to promote school readiness in prekindergarten classrooms. I witnessed in some teachers what appeared to be a lack of motivation and interest in successful outcomes for students. These experiences have created in me some bias or preexisting ideas that threatened the validity of the study. I sought to manage my thoughts and feelings by using reflexivity techniques that provided me a chance to reflect on self and implement techniques and allowed me room to describe and relate those experience to the study's focus (see Tanweer et al., 2021). This process of reflexivity assisted in identifying all the ways to look at my study, and even identified some of the filters I tended to use that could interfere in the study process, as described by Cambo and Gergle (2022). Reflexivity helped me manage my biases and opinions in a way that minimized their influence on different study components (see Markham et al., 2021).

Methodology

Participant Selection

The population under study comprised parents and teachers of prekindergarten children. I used purposeful sampling strategies to identify eight parents and eight teachers to interview. Purposeful sampling is a method that is frequently employed in qualitative research (Patton, 2002). The criteria for selection of parent participants included parents or legal guardians of children between the ages of 4 and 5 who were enrolled in one of the four public schools within the target district. The criteria for selection of teacher

participants included certified prekindergarten teachers working at one of the four schools in the target district, teaching children ages 4 to 5. I was not employed by the target district; I included in this study only individuals with whom I had no prior relationship.

I explained the criteria to prospective participants in the recruitment materials and on the consent form. I confirmed with each participant at the start of the interview that they met the criteria as a parent or as a teacher. I interviewed a total of eight parents of prekindergarten children and eight prekindergarten teachers. Dworkin (2012) noted that the objective and scope of the research should be taken into consideration when calculating the number of interviews that are necessary, and that there is some variation in what may be recommended as a minimum. Recommended guidance and suggestions indicated from five to 50 participants can be adequate (Baker & Edwards, 2012). Malterud et al. (2016) stated that the size of a sample with adequate information power relies on the purpose of the study, the specificity of the sample, the application of known theory, the caliber of the discussion, and the analytic approach. Therefore, as I progressed through the interviews, I evaluated the completeness of the information participants provided and recruited and interviewed additional participants until new information was redundant of previously received information.

Instrumentation

I created a series of questions to ask parents during their interviews and a similar set to use in the interviews with teachers. Each series included nine questions, which were based on the conceptual framework and focus on key elements of kindergarten readiness identified by Garcia (2015). Questions in each series differed only in their reference to one particular child (for parents) or a classroom of children (for teachers), and in wording of some questions to make them clearer for each participant group. For example, Interview Question 3 asked parents: "What are things you do to introduce math skills to your child, like counting, comparing sizes and amounts of things, and seeing patterns?"; and asked teachers: "What are things you do with the children in your class to introduce math skills like number concepts, quantifying, and patterns?" In each series, Questions 1 through 6 addressed RQ1, on a parent's or teacher's role in promoting kindergarten readiness. Question 7 addressed RQ2, on factors that supported parents or teachers in promoting kindergarten readiness, and Question 8 addressed RQ3, on factors that inhibited parents or teachers in promoting kindergarten readiness. In each series, Question 9, "What more can you tell me about getting your child [the children in your classroom] ready for kindergarten?" offered the participant an opportunity to contribute additional information beyond the questions already asked. The interview questions for parents and for teachers are presented in the Appendix.

To verify the suitability of these interview questions, I asked a person who holds a doctorate in education to review interview questions for prekindergarten parents and

prekindergarten teachers. This person confirmed the fitness of my interview questions for the study's purpose and research questions.

Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection

After receiving approval (09-09-22-0332181) from Walden University's Institutional Review Board (IRB), I recruited participants for my study. I posted a message to my personal Facebook page, the What's Happening Facebook page maintained by the local community, and the local community's general Facebook page. I reached out to the administrators of both accounts and sent the flyer to them for posting. I chose these pages because my personal Facebook page had over 500 followers at the time of participant recruitment, and some of those included residents and teachers who live and work in the target community. The local community's What's Happening Facebook page had 7,700 followers, and the local community's general Facebook page had 2,000 followers. I encouraged Facebook subscribers and friends to share the public post in hopes of finding interested volunteers. I also obtained permission from the library branch director to place flyers in the library.

The Facebook post and library flyer contained a brief description of the study, including the qualifications to participate in the study and my contact information. Participants who were interested in taking part in the study contacted me by direct message on Facebook or by emailing my Walden email account. The interested participants who sent me a direct message on Facebook were asked to forward me their email address. As individuals contacted me by email, I sent them the consent form with directions to email me back with the words "I consent" if they wished to volunteer. As I

received email messages indicating consent, I scheduled individual interviews with each volunteer. I continued recruiting until I achieved the target number of eight consenting parents and eight consenting teachers. One additional teacher and two parents volunteered after I had received consent from the needed eight participants in each group. I kept these volunteers on standby just in case another participant did not follow through with the interview process. At the end, I emailed these three volunteers to let them know that I had all participants for the study and thanked them for being interested.

Interviews took place by Zoom and telephone. I used Zoom and the voice recorder on my phone to record the interviews. I used Otter.ai, a real-time transcription tool, to transcribe interviews. I then reviewed the transcriptions while listening to the audio files to correct any transcription errors. I emailed these corrected transcriptions to the corresponding participant so they could review their transcript and confirm its accuracy or request corrections. I used these corrected and confirmed transcriptions as the data set. Each participant received one $20 Visa gift card for their help in providing data and participating in the study.

Data Analysis Plan

My plan for data analysis began with organizing the transcript data, using any corrections made by participants during the transcript reviews. I began data organization by eliminating from each transcript my words as interviewer and any casual talk not part of the interview (e.g., talk about the weather). I then separated individual sentences and blocks of explanation in each transcript, so individual thoughts were distinct. I then created a spreadsheet using Microsoft Excel and inserted in a single column all the

prepared transcripts, one after another, so that each thought unit was on its own row in the spreadsheet. I also inserted the participant code for each thought unit in another column, so each row of the spreadsheet included a snippet of data and an identifier of who said it. Each snippet or thought unit constituted an in vivo code. This process of organizing and coding the data in Excel aligned with Saldaña (2015).

Next, I moved codes in the spreadsheet so that similar ideas expressed by participants were positioned one after the other. I moved entire rows of data and participant identifiers by using the cut-and-insert function of Excel. In this way, I created categories of data, as described by Saldaña (2015). At this point, I evaluated the categories for the themes they represented. I then moved all rows in a particular category to be near rows of other categories that seemed to represent a theme. In this way, I funneled codes into categories and categories into themes (see Saldaña, 2015). I anticipated this process would result in a few hundred codes, 20 or so categories, and between four and six themes. As described in Chapter 4, these estimates were accurate, as I derived 409 codes, 19 categories, and five themes.

Throughout this process, I was alert to the possibility of discrepant data. Vanover et al. (2021) warned against deleting data that seem discrepant and instead suggested considering how discrepancies could be used to solve the problem. According to DiLoreto and Gaines (2016), discrepant data can include participants' responses that are unrelated to what was asked; seem inscrutable to the interviewer and this disconnect cannot be resolved by probing for clarity; and if participants seem antagonistic to the

interview process, to the interviewer, or to the topic under discussion. No such

discrepancies were detected, during the interviews or in the transcribed data.

Trustworthiness

The terms credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability are

essential to quality in qualitative research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Credibility is the

degree of confidence in the veracity of study findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Credibility assesses if the research findings are a valid interpretation of the participants'

original perspectives and represent believable information derived from the participants'

original data (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). I created the codes, ideas, and key categories to

aid in the examination of the data's features, using the persistent observation technique

described by Tracy (2017). Following Tracy, I continually read and reread the

information, examined it, developed theories about it, and updated the notions as

necessary. Then I recoded and relabeled codes, concepts, and themes. According to

Tracy, this process can enhance credibility by providing depth of insight within the study.

Transferability is the extent to which findings from qualitative research may be

applied to other situations or settings with different respondents (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Through extensive explanation, the researcher aids a future user's assessment of

transferability (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). In my study, I gave a thorough explanation of

descriptive data, including the setting, sample, sample size, sampling technique, and

features of the context in which the research was conducted. Additionally, I presented

details on the interview method and subjects, modifications to the interview questions

based on the iterative research approach, and in vivo results.

The consistency of results over time is referred to as dependability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Dependability enables the reader's assessment of the study's conclusions, interpretations, and recommendations when these elements are all supported by the information gathered from study participants (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). I ensured that my study's conclusions, interpretations, and recommendations were backed by data from study participants in order to provide dependability.

The degree to which the research study's conclusions may be corroborated by other researchers is known as confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). According to Korstjens and Moser (2018), the researcher aids in confirmability by outlining the processes they followed from the beginning of a study through the creation and reporting of the findings. Records of the research process are kept throughout the study, should future researchers request information regarding these processes (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). I supported confirmability of this study's results by providing step-by-step descriptions of my research path.

Ethical Procedures

After receiving approval from Walden University's IRB, I recruited participants following the procedures outlined previously in this chapter. I ensured that each participant was a free volunteer and consented to participating. The consent form explicitly described the process of the study, its purpose, and participants' role.

I protected participants' privacy by not referring to them in the study documents by their name but by a code name I assigned to them. I did not share with anyone who participated or declined to participate. The file that associated the code names with actual

names and contact information was kept separate from other files, to avoid inadvertent use of confidential information. I conducted the interviews from my private office at my home and I encouraged participants to choose a private location for the interviews where they could not be overheard and were unlikely to be interrupted.

All study data have been kept on a password protected personal computer, and paper files kept in a locked file cabinet. Only I and my dissertation committee has had access to raw data from the study. All files to the study will be kept for 5 years following completion of my study. After the 5 years I will then shred paper files and wipe digital files from my computer of the study using the Eraser™ tool.

Summary

In this chapter, I described the basic qualitative study using interviews to explore the perspectives of parents and prekindergarten teachers regarding their role in developing kindergarten readiness, and the factors they believe support or hinder their efforts. I described my interest in this topic as a professional working as an early childhood specialist with Head Start Training and Technical Assistance. I described my sampling strategy by which I identified 16 participants and how I created interview questions to be used in the data collection. I also described my plan for data analysis and resolved issues of trustworthiness and ethics. In Chapter 4, I present results of this study.

Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to increase understanding of perspectives of parents and prekindergarten teachers regarding their role in developing kindergarten readiness, and the factors they believe support or hinder their efforts. The research questions that guided the study were:

1. How do prekindergarten teachers and parents describe their role in developing children's kindergarten readiness?

2. How do prekindergarten teachers and parents describe factors that support their efforts in developing children's kindergarten readiness?

3. How do prekindergarten teachers and parents describe factors that hinder their efforts in developing children's kindergarten readiness?

In this chapter, I describe the setting, participant demographics, and issues that arose during data collection. I describe my analysis of the data and the results with reference to each research question.

Setting

The participants included prekindergarten parents and teachers who lived or worked and have prekindergarten children that attended one of the four school in the community that was the focus of this study. Participants were recruited through social media and with flyers posted at local community library. I conducted interviews either by telephone or Zoom due to the rise in COVID-19 numbers in the community at the time, and participants chose an interview date and time convenient for them. Fifteen interviews were conducted by telephone, due to internet capabilities being compromised throughout

the community, and one interview, of a teacher, was conducted by Zoom. The first interviews were prekindergarten teachers, and they were conducted at their schools during break periods. Some prekindergarten parents' interviews were done at participants' homes during the morning hours. Other interviews were conducted later during the day from their homes. During the data collection period, I conducted telephone and Zoom interviews from my home office.

Data Collection

I gained approval from Walden University IRB and began recruiting participants through my own Facebook page and two Facebook pages maintained by the target community, and through posted flyers at the local community public library. I posted the initial invitation to the Facebook groups and received no participants for the first week. I posted another invitation the second week and invited Facebook friends to share the message with others they knew, and I received a response from three prekindergarten teachers and two prekindergarten parents. I repeated the process each week and received more participants; by the beginning of the next month enough participants had volunteered to meet my target of 16 participants evenly divided between parents and teachers. Participants emailed me their contact information, and I responded by sending the consent form. Participants emailed back the words "I consent" to demonstrate their consent before starting the study.

After participants consented, each participant and I agreed upon a date and time to conduct the interviews. Although I offered participants the option to interview by telephone and Zoom, all participants except for one chose the telephone option. For

Zoom, I emailed a link to conduct the interview. Each interview lasted 35 to 45 minutes except the initial interview lasted 60 minutes. I used Otter.ai to audio record all 16 interviews. I conducted the interviews with participants from my home office, which is quiet so others could not hear the conversations, and I encouraged participants also choose a quiet, private space for the interview. During two of the parent interviews, children can be heard in the background, and those parents sometimes needed for an interview question to be repeated. That was to be expected because of the time the interview was scheduled by the prekindergarten parents after school hours due to work schedule. Some prekindergarten teachers scheduled interviews during their planning period and had to rescheduled due to shortage of staff during that time. During one interview, the first 3 minutes of the interview was not recorded due issues with internet connectivity that interrupted the Otter.ai transcription service. Immediate actions were taken, and the issue was resolved, and recording resumed.

All recordings were transcribed using Otter.ai; I edited these transcriptions for errors. I then emailed transcriptions to each participant, using my Walden email address. In the body of the email, I asked the participant to review their transcription for any errors and email me back the corrections or let me know that no corrections were needed. All participants emailed back stating no corrections were needed. The process of recruiting and interviewing took 5 weeks.

Data Analysis

Each participant was assigned a code name to protect their privacy. Parents were assigned a number preceded by the letter P; teachers were assigned a number preceded by

the letter T. I then created a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet to receive transcripts organized

by participant and divided into individual thought units, with one thought unit per row.

These thought units were the codes derived from the data; there were 409 codes. I then

reorganized the data by idea, identifying similarities and differences in codes and moving

rows on the spreadsheet so codes formed categories. I created 19 categories from the

codes, as follows: basic skills instruction, complementary support roles, curriculum type,

developmentally appropriate practices, gaps in partnership, high quality interactions, the

home-school connection, kindergarten readiness, learning abilities, learning games, other

hindering factors, positive affirmations, professional development, routines and

schedules, social and emotional development, skill reinforcement, supplemental learning,

time restraints, and transition to kindergarten.

I then organized the data again, this time sorting categories into coherent themes.

I derived five themes across all the data: actions in support of school readiness, support

for child development, instructional resources that support readiness efforts, collaborative

efforts in support of school readiness, and impactful situations affecting readiness efforts.

The theme of actions in support of school readiness included categories of kindergarten

readiness, supplemental learning, learning games and skill reinforcement and is

associated with RQ1, regarding how prekindergarten teachers and parents describe their

role in developing children's kindergarten readiness. The theme of support for child

development included categories of developmentally appropriate practices, social and

emotional development, learning abilities, routines and schedules, and positive

affirmations and also is associated with RQ1. The theme of instructional resources that

support readiness efforts included categories of basic skills instruction, curriculum type, high quality interactions, and professional development and is associated with RQ2, on factors parents and teachers described that support their efforts in developing children's kindergarten readiness. The theme of collaborative efforts in support of school readiness was also associated with RQ2 and includes categories of complementary support roles, the home-school connection, and transition to kindergarten. The theme of impactful situations affecting readiness efforts included categories of time restraints, partnership gaps, and other hindering factors, and is associated with RQ3, regarding factors that hinder the efforts of parents and teachers in developing children's kindergarten readiness. This information is illustrated in Figure 1.

Figure 1

Research Questions With Associated Themes and Categories
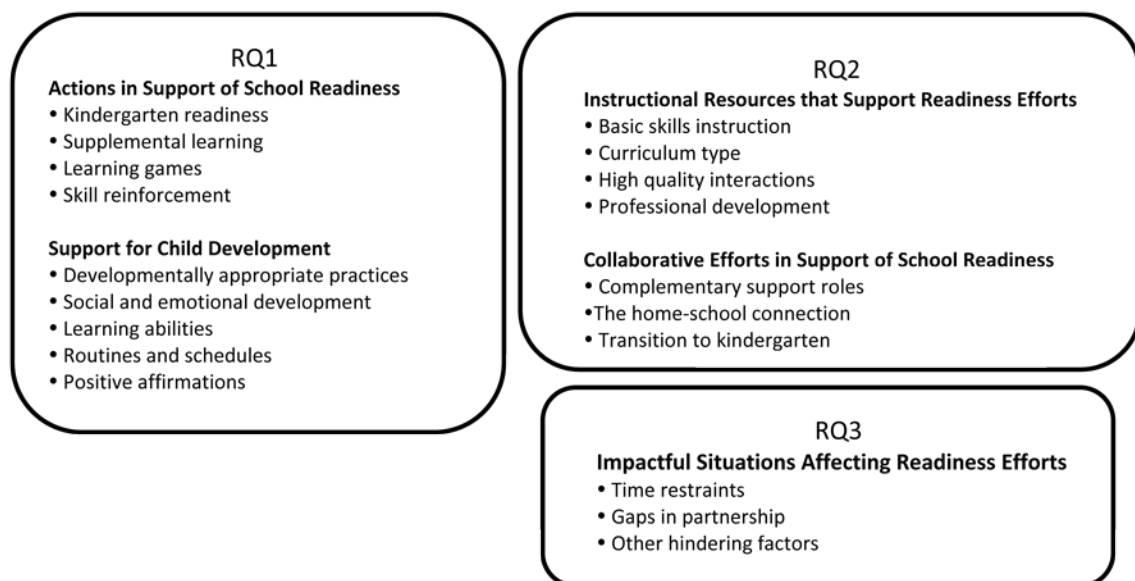
Results

This section presents the results for each RQ and uses participants' words to illustrate the results. Five themes emerged from these data. I will incorporate themes into the description of results by RQ.

Results for RQ1

RQ1 asked how prekindergarten teachers and parents describe their role in developing children's kindergarten readiness. The themes I applied to RQ1 were actions in support of school readiness, which included the categories of kindergarten readiness, supplemental learning, learning games, and skill reinforcement, and the theme of support for child development, including categories of developmentally appropriate practices, social and emotional development, learning abilities, routines and schedules, and positive affirmations. Parents and teachers alike described taking seriously their role in support of school readiness and offered many ways they enacted their roles.

Actions in Support of School Readiness

Parents and teachers described an understanding of what is meant by "school readiness" and their role in facilitating the development of school readiness in children. For example, P1 said,

> my role is to teach my child everything he needs to know to prepare him for kindergarten. I will not wait on the teacher to teach him. The things that the teacher teaches I will go over at home so it will be heard twice.

P3 suggested an interpersonal quality to their readiness component, saying, "My role is to work with my child at home and make sure he knows that I am on his side." P5 agreed, noting, "My role is to be present for her at home, at school and every time she needs me." P8 emphasized academic skill preparation when they said, "My role is to make sure my child can count, know her alphabets, each sound they make, recognize her name, shapes and colors."

Prekindergarten teachers in this study expressed the view that kindergarten readiness is their responsibility when preparing children in their class. T4 stated, "My role as a teacher is to provide the best possible foundation for early learners to be successful and have positive outcomes at their next level." T1said, "My responsibility as a teacher is for children to have a clear knowledge of letters, letter sounds, recognition of numbers and developmentally appropriate skills that will prepare them for kindergarten." T8 stated, "The skills I teach is gonna lay the foundation for developing literacy, numeracy and phonological skills that will help them in being ready for kindergarten." Both parents and teachers recognized their role in support of readiness and focused on academic skill development; however, parents also indicated the power of their personal support for the child as a key part of their readiness role.

Prekindergarten parents and teachers agreed that supplemental learning helps them in getting their children and children in their class ready for kindergarten. P5 stated, "I use workbooks, Gracie's Corner [an online series of instructional music videos], YouTube videos, and homework that is sent home by the teacher." P1 also said they use "YouTube videos, workbooks, [and] homework sent home by teachers" but added, "I use

educational apps to assist with getting my children ready for kindergarten." While parents relied on digital media and seatwork-type activities with their individual children, teachers described using games and toys with groups of students. For example, T4 stated, "I engage the children in my class by using sequencing games, order of operations, [and] quantifying and counting manipulatives." T5 added, "I use word games, Bingo, matching, and different themes and manipulatives to engage students in my class." Both prekindergarten parents and teachers used supplemental learning tools to ensure that their children enter kindergarten ready.

Another factor identified under the theme of actions in support of school readiness was skill reinforcement, including reviewing rules and expectations, and practicing skills over and over again. Teachers often cited using rewards as their method of encouraging skill mastery. According to T5, "I use positive reinforcement to promote learning in my class. Students are more receptive and engaged in learning when I use positive reinforcers." Similarly, T1 said,

> children are willing to participate when positive things are going on in the class. When students are learning expectations in my classroom, I consistently go over the rules and expectations to make sure they understand. This is something I do when teaching and modeling new skills to make sure students understand what's being taught.

In addition, T7 stated, "I give verbal encouragement, praise, [and] stickers, and they look forward to treasure chest rewards."

Parents focused more on intrinsic support for children's skill mastery. For example, P2 stated, "I help my child stick with a difficult task by letting them know it is okay to go slow and making sure we reread and go over it again." P3 emphasized, "Rules repetition. You just have to keep enforcing, make your rules stick." P4 shared, "I think being in school and seeing other children work through difficult tasks has helped my child do the same thing. At home, we just encourage her to keep trying. There's nothing real specific other than just encouraging her." Although both prekindergarten parents and teachers described a focus on reinforcement of rules and expectations for children, teachers relied more on extrinsic motivation than did parents, who focused more on intrinsic encouragement.

Support for Child Development

The second theme associated with RQ1 was support for child development. Support for child development described by parents and teachers in this study included use of developmentally appropriate practices in support of children's progress, attention to individual learning abilities, support for children's social and emotional development, adults' use of routines and schedules, and adults' use of positive affirmations. T1 stated, "planning, developmentally appropriate activities for the children and also just helping them become independent and, not need as much support from us. So, we try to get them to be, independent little people." T3 said,

> I use the Brigance to see at the beginning of the year where they are to see strengths and weaknesses. After that I do basic letter, number and name recognition. I work on social skills, following directions, the basic things they

need to have a good school year in kindergarten. I teach developmentally appropriate skills to try and get them just use basic skills, their manners, how to play with their peers, following the rules, and following directions.

P4 agreed with prekindergarten teachers that "it is important to teach the basics like the alphabets, alphabet sounds, numbers, playing with others, and following rules." P6 described a more experiential approach, saying, "I just read to her and as I'm reading, she follows along and looks at the pictures and I'll say something she'll like kind of want to repeat it." Parents and teachers agreed working on basic, developmentally appropriate skills, like following directions, the alphabet, and numbers, helps the children to be kindergarten ready.

Children's learning abilities determine what is developmentally appropriate for each of them. P1 shared, "I think the classroom is a more focused environment where … they can learn at their own pace with support." P4 described helping their child with learning challenges, saying, "We try to work on being able to learn the same things that other kids are learning but at a slower pace and working on tools that will help her learning at her own pace and her own learning style." T7 stated, "It's not a one size fits all. That's right. And I find that that's what we're having. That's why education in Louisiana, right now is failing because the one fits all model." T2 said, "Now a lot of the children are eager to learn and they're receptive to everything presented. They're willing to try it whether they can do it or not." Teachers expressed the need to differentiate instruction, even when that is not supported by policy; parents described the classroom as

a structured setting, and they were alert to the need to provide their child with individual support in mastering school instruction.

Another contributing factor to growth and development of children mentioned by teachers and parents was support for their social and emotional development. T5 said, "We start promoting social emotional skills from day one, you know. we start with [how] we're a school family, you know, we are an extension of your home family." T6 stated,

> We do lessons that are geared towards sharing and promoting friendship skills.
> We will turn to our friends and talk to our friend about a specific subject or take a
> look at an item. You hold it, you let your buddy hold it, so they have a chance
> with the item. Social emotional development starts at this age group. Everything
> is geared towards social emotional development.

T2 stated, "I provide opportunities so they can show how they're doing and [how that makes] them feel. If they don't want to talk about it, I try to put it into words for them, so they'll better understand what it is they're dealing with." P3 stated, "I think at their age, they're very emotional and a lot of them have not been around other children before and have not really had to share and stick with difficult tasks." P6 agreed: "Little kids don't know how to deal with their emotions. Sometimes they have a bad day. So, I just try to take deep breaths and get her through them." Teachers reported that they promote social and emotional development daily through lessons taught and through interactions with children who have difficulty during the day. Parents acknowledged the social-emotional challenges children present but did not describe any efforts to guide children in self-regulation.

Teachers cited their use of routines and schedules as one way they support children's development. T3 said, "In my classroom we follow a schedule and develop a routine, so [children] know what comes next and [are] able to take the lead once they are familiar with the routine." T3 added,

When I say "establish a routine with the children" [I mean] do the little exercises to increase the motivation to do self-regulate and self-control. Tell them don't forget when you go home tonight [to] ask mom or someone to do a little reading to you and try to get at least one sentence and repeat that sentence and have a good night's rest. Go to bed early. Don't stay up late playing the game. You know tell mommy that you have to go to bed and get up in the morning and be ready for learning.

T8 stated she, "prepare[s] students for next year and to be kindergarten ready by following a schedule and having a set routine in my class." Teachers emphasized the use of schedules and routines with children, even though this was not a specific question in the interview; however, parents did not mention their use of schedules or routines.

Both parents and teachers stressed the need for positive affirmation to support children's growth and development of kindergarten readiness. P5 stated, "As a parent I just try to keep helping and encouraging over and over again." P7 said, "I always tell her when she was doing a good job. I always just mainly reassure her when she was doing good and that would kind of encourage her to keep doing it better." T2 agreed, saying, "I encourage them when they can't do something to keep trying and we try with them. We show them how to do it." T5 said,

I use encouraging words when they tend to give up easily. I motivate students to

try to make the activities that you plan on, so you won't lose their interest. I also,

like to show love and acceptance to all the children for their efforts.

Parents and teachers agreed that positive affirmations help children to be persistent and

continue working even on difficult tasks.

In summary, both prekindergarten parents and teachers acknowledged their role in

developing children's kindergarten readiness. Parents and teachers had different

strategies and techniques they use to engage children. Parents engage their children in

more digital learning that was individualized in preparing them for kindergarten.

Teachers used hands on opportunities within their learning environment along with their

peers to prepare the children in their class for kindergarten. Both parents and teachers

talked about reinforcing rules and expectations for children, but teachers relied on

extrinsic motivation like treasure chest rewards and stickers to assist with promoting

readiness while parents focused on intrinsic support like verbal encouragement and praise

to promote readiness. Teachers noted that having schedules and routines helped children

in their class know how to transition and be familiar with classroom routines. Parents and

teachers actively support children's development of readiness but in different ways, due

to different experiences and points of view.

Results for RQ2

RQ2 asked how prekindergarten teachers and parents describe factors that support

their efforts in developing children's kindergarten readiness. The themes were applied to

RQ2 were instructional resources that support readiness efforts and collaborative efforts

in support of school readiness. The theme of instructional resources that support readiness efforts included basic skills instruction, curriculum types, high quality interactions, and professional development to support the promotion of kindergarten readiness. The theme of collaborative efforts in support of school readiness included categories of support roles, home-school connection, and transitions.

Instructional Resources that Support Readiness Efforts

Teachers and parents alike emphasized basic skill instruction. T6 stated, "By focusing on alphabet, number recognition, colors, shapes, literacy and math skills this supports kindergarten readiness." T5 said "I focused on basics like letter, number recognition, foundational literacy awareness and writing skills these support kindergarten readiness in my class." T4 added she, "Facilitat[es] activities that promote math, social, language and literacy these expose children to high quality learning experiences." T3 stated, "I prepare the children in my class to read by starting with alphabet recognition and moving to alphabet sounds." P5 described much the same, saying, "First, I make sure she knows at least the alphabets, which we've got there." P1 described similar work with numbers:

> I use flash cards like numbers one to 10 and from 10 to 20. So [yeah], and I'd sit there and count them out. Either we start off on like one to five and then we move from like from five to 10 and then also have like different shapes. Like the little magnet that goes on the icebox I have the numbers in alphabets on there too.

P7 added, "I go over the alphabet, numbers, colors and shapes." P2 said, "I prepare my child to read by reading books and going over sight words, sounding out words to him

and having him say the words back to me." Parents and teachers agreed that making sure children knew the alphabet, letter sounds, numbers, basic math skills, and other information.

Curriculum types was another data category associated with the theme of instructional resources that support readiness efforts. Teachers mentioned a variety of different curriculum supports that were used in the classroom to promote kindergarten readiness. T1 stated, "I use Conscious Discipline when it comes down to behavior that also helps with their behavior, different things they could do to calm down in a situation or even just tell me how they feel." T5 said, "I use Waterford; it is a good support for phonological awareness." T8 added, "I use Creative Curriculum and it supports me to promote kindergarten readiness in my class." These programs addressed everything from behavior to basic skills and their use by teachers suggests teachers have tools they need to prepare children for kindergarten. Parents did not mention any program or curriculum they used at home, except for the Gracie's Corner video series mentioned above.

Collaborative Efforts in Support of School Readiness

Another theme that emerged regarding RQ2 described the collaborative efforts of parents and teachers in support of school readiness. These efforts included categories of complementary support roles, the home school connection, and attention to the transition to kindergarten. Parents and teachers acknowledged each other's positive contribution to readiness. For example, P4 stated, "The teachers play a huge role in supporting children's readiness, but it's up to us to have our child ready and set those expectations for them." P1 added,

Teachers have been a huge help in being a support and assisting me in my child

being ready for kindergarten. Teachers give updates, on how our children are

doing and what we need to work on to get them ready for the next level. Teachers

believe learning starts at home and the parent is the child's first teacher.

T1 said, "When parents support the learning that is taking place within the learning

environment that helps because learning starts at home." T5 stated, "I just make sure that

each child feels safe in the environment that they're in, make friends, share taking turns

and expressing their feelings because that alone is very important for us to know how

they feel at the moment." T7 said, "Support for me is making sure I have everything I

need to do the best job I can in my classroom." Parents agreed teachers have helped a lot

with their children being ready for kindergarten. Teachers believed that having parents

support in the classroom helps in promoting kindergarten readiness.

Another contributing factor participants said supported their collaborative efforts

of parents and teachers was the strength of the connection between home and school.

Parents described their work at home with their children as an effort to support teachers'

work at school. P1 said, "I always talk to his teachers. I get reports on him. I always

practice at home with him, because I always feel like he might get behind." P3 stated,

It's just not the school responsibility because you as a parent, have to get them

ready yourself. If you can't do it one on one, how can a teacher do it in a little

short amount of time that they have to get the kids ready. So, I just work with

them at home and do it every day even if they don't have homework. You just

have to give them something to do make them write their name practice, practice their ABC's, colors, you have to just practice it every day.

P4 added, "Obviously, they learn different at home than they do in the classroom." P7 said, "I try to do extra practice with her as much as I can at home." T1 stated, "I think it should be both [parents and teachers] coming together. You know, the teacher knowing what she has to do in school and parent doing what they have to do at home also to get their child ready." T6 said, "I send home little packets to aid in the studies, letters and numbers of the month, sight words, and specific targets of the curriculum for that month." Parents and teachers agreed that having collaboration between home and school helps children be ready for kindergarten.

The transition from prekindergarten to kindergarten was cited by both parents and teachers as a challenge that requires collaborative effort to result in kindergarten readiness. Parents and teachers acknowledged that kindergarten will be more advanced and structured than their children's prekindergarten class. P1 stated,

I know when he goes to kindergarten, it'll be more advanced where you have to sit there and listen to the teacher, and you'll be riding a bigger bus with the other kids it will be more of those type of things that I have to get him ready for.

P4 said, "I think it's going to be a big transition." T1 stated,

I try to prepare my children for kindergarten by giving them different learning opportunities, but it will be different than my prekindergarten class. They will have shorter center times, outdoor learning and more time focused on academic and meeting benchmarks.

Teachers and parents agreed that helping children make the transition to kindergarten is part of their task in preparing children to be kindergarten ready.

In summary, prekindergarten teachers and parents described specific efforts they make to develop children's kindergarten readiness, including attention to mastery of basic skills in early literacy and mathematics. Also, parents and teachers expressed support for the roles each play in promoting kindergarten readiness. Parents and teachers appreciated the challenge children encounter in making the transition to kindergarten. In sum, parents and teachers appeared to recognize key elements of kindergarten readiness and acknowledged that they each contribute to development of readiness through their separate roles.

Results for RQ3

RQ3 asked how prekindergarten teachers and parents describe factors that hinder their efforts in developing children's kindergarten readiness. The theme applied to RQ3 was impactful situations affecting readiness efforts. Impactful situations include challenges that emerged as data categories, including time restraints, gaps in partnership, and other hindering factors, that participants said increased the difficulty of guiding children to kindergarten readiness. For example, P2 stated, "I think the only thing that may hinder me is my child ready for kindergarten is time. I wish I had more time to work with her on a daily basis, but I have to work." P3 questioned the amount of time devoted to non-academic activities in prekindergarten, describing a key hindering factor this way: "It's time, but they want it to be the way it's set up, [with] so much play, and I understand that play is a form of learning and all that good stuff." P4 added, "If it were my choice, I

would spend all afternoon, you know, teaching and playing with her. But work and school gets in the way. So, I think time is a big factor." Teachers also felt hindered by lack of time. T2 stated, "The ones that come to mind quickly is our time constraints. Our time has been adjusted. You know, we were accustomed to having so much time to do activities with the children. All that has been condensed." T8 said, "Time is a big factor in meeting learning objectives and expectations." T5 added, "I would say time. It seems as if all lessons and activities have been shortened to accommodate the school schedule." Both teachers and parents agreed that time is a factor in promoting kindergarten readiness.

A gap in partnerships was another factor participants identified as a hindrance to kindergarten readiness. P3 suggested, "Non supportive teachers; non supportive administration, I don't have a problem, but that could be a hinderance." T7 also cited lack of administrative support as a hindrance and suggested that administrators favor parents too much: "the parents are in control, and before the parents were in control it was politics." Parents and teachers reiterated the importance of home-school partnership. P8 said, "I think really, it's a shared responsibility between the parents and the teachers, The teachers can't be responsible for all of it." T6 stated,

> A holistic approach is never going to work without parent participation. So, I can teach, and you know, till I'm blue in the face, and I'm sure the children will pick up on it. But if it's not continued at home, then they'll be more apt to forget it. It's not going to stick. My input is valuable, but I think the parents' is more so.

T5 added,

As a teacher I have a huge role. So, I believe that parents play as much of a part in

readiness as I do, because without the parents - I tell parents every year, "without

you, this will never work." It has to be that home to school, school to home

connection.

Participants in this study concurred that preparing children for kindergarten takes full

participation of both parents and teachers, but also the support of district administrators

and school boards.

A variety of other hindering factors was cited by participants as having a negative

effect on kindergarten readiness. For example, P8 stated, "I think the learning standards

for kindergarten are way too high." The misunderstanding on the part of parents of what

might be needed for a child to be ready for kindergarten was implied by T5's comment

that, "Sometimes we have some kids, they come in, and you can tell they don't get as

much as attention or support as they should from their parents." Teachers in this study

seemed to have expectations for parents, as demonstrated by their description of work

expected to be done at home and hints to parents about adhering to routines and

schedules, but parents seemed less academically-oriented in their approach to readiness.

Tension between parents and teachers surfaced in the comments of T7, who stated, "I

find that our parents have more power than the actual school board itself and the actual

principals themselves, so in education across the board [in] Louisiana the parents are in

control…. education is no longer education."

In summary, prekindergarten teachers and parents described specific factors that

hinder children's readiness, including time restraints, gaps in partnership, and their

struggle to maintain positive home-school connections. Parents described how work and school schedules prevented them from spending time on promoting skills to increase their children's readiness but also that lack of support from teachers and administration create a hindrance to their efforts to promote kindergarten readiness. Teachers agreed that time constraints imposed by school schedules, daily classroom schedules, and required learning activities have hindered them in preparing the children in their class for kindergarten, and also that gaps in partnership, including lack of administrative support for teachers, hinder their efforts.

Summary of Results

The themes that formed as a result of the data analysis suggest prekindergarten parents and teachers both provide support to their children, but that support is different, based on parents' and teachers' unique perspectives and roles. Parents used a digital approach and programs like Gracie's Corner to engage their children and prepare them for kindergarten. Teachers described using hands-on activities with manipulatives, group engagement, and support from a curriculum, to ensure their children are kindergarten ready.

The data also revealed both prekindergarten teachers and parents experienced hindering factors that made support for children's kindergarten readiness difficult. Teachers cited a lack of parental and administrative support, and time constraints as hurdles that limit their effectiveness. Parents also talked about lack of support but from teachers, and also lack of time and excessively high standards as factors that interfere with their efforts to help their children achieve readiness. Both prekindergarten parents

and teachers acknowledged that readiness is not one particular person's responsibility but that it takes a holistic and collaborative approach to ensure children's kindergarten readiness. As previously discussed, no discrepant data were detected either during the interviews or in the transcribed data subjected to data analysis.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

Prior to data collection, I supported content validity through the process of peer-review to ensure that the interview questions were aligned to the research questions and intended to ask. To support credibility, participants were provided with a copy of their transcription file to review for accuracy. All participants felt that their transcription file accurately captured their perspectives regarding kindergarten readiness.

Transferability of study results was supported by giving a thorough description of research information, including the context, setting, and sampling procedures. I supplied details on the interview method and subjects, and described my study in detail. Readers may determine from this information if and how this study's results might transfer to their own situations.

To establish dependability, I ensured that participant data supported the results, interpretations, and recommendations of my study (see Korstjens & Moser, 2018). To support confirmability, I refrained during interviews from commenting on what I was told or providing information about my own experiences and opinions, as advised by Creswell (2009). Prior to my data analysis, I requested participants to check their interview transcripts for correctness after interviews. In order to authentically portray the

viewpoints of both prekindergarten parents and teachers, I used verbatim statements from participants, which enhanced confirmability of the results.

Summary

In Chapter 4, I set out to answer the study's research questions, using data gathered from interviews with eight parents of prekindergarten students and eight prekindergarten teachers. I found that prekindergarten teachers and parents agreed they each have an important role in developing children's kindergarten readiness, and that these roles complement each other. Parents described their use of educational technology and digital tools, and also provided intrinsic support to promote readiness. Teachers described using experiential and cooperative learning in the classroom, and reliance on extrinsic motivational strategies. Prekindergarten teachers and parents described factors that supported these efforts in developing children's kindergarten readiness, including explicit instruction in basic skills, reliance on established curriculum, and collaborative efforts between parents and teachers. In addition, teachers and parents described factors that hinder their efforts in developing kindergarten readiness, including lack of time, gaps in partnership, and a variety of other hindering factors, such as achievement expectations too great for children to reach, and feelings of favoritism from the school administration felt separately by both parents and teachers. In Chapter 5, I provide an interpretation of these findings, discuss recommendations, and describe the potential impact of these results for positive social change.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to increase the understanding of perspectives of parents and prekindergarten teachers regarding their role in developing kindergarten readiness and the factors they believe support or hinder their efforts. I interviewed 16 participants in this basic qualitative study, that included eight prekindergarten parents of children enrolled in the four district-funded public kindergarten programs and eight prekindergarten teachers who work in those programs in the district. Results indicated that parents and teachers both felt responsible for developing children's readiness for kindergarten, but that parents relied on educational technology and intrinsic motivational support, while teachers used experiential and collaborative learning and extrinsic motivational strategies. Teachers and parents both identified hindering factors, including time restraints and gaps in partnerships among parents, teachers, and administrators. In this chapter, I will discuss the significance of these results for practice and future study, as well as how they may help to good social change. I will also relate these findings to the existing literature.

Interpretation of Findings

A key finding of this study was that prekindergarten parents and teachers support children's development of readiness in different ways due to their experiences and points of view. Parents used digital tools, YouTube, and other educational sites to engage and individualize learning for their children. Parents used intrinsic support to motivate and encourage children to stay on task and stick to them. Teachers used hands on opportunities to keep children engaged in their learning environment. Odom et al. (2020)

confirmed that teachers are responsible for implementing a well-designed curriculum built on developmentally appropriate activities and effective teaching techniques. Alzahrani et al. (2019) argued that teachers' use of games and collaborative learning, as well as their relationships and the quality of their interactions with the students they teach, all have an influence on how social and emotional abilities in children grow. Teachers and parents in this study agreed with Bacon (2019), they reaffirmed the importance of prekindergarten instructors in ensuring that children are successful and ready for kindergarten. The study of parents' viewpoints adds to knowledge in this area because the literature is virtually quiet on the role of parents in helping children become kindergarten-ready.

The second key finding of this study is that prekindergarten parents and teachers used cultivation of basic skills in early literacy and mathematics to promote kindergarten readiness. Parents focused on alphabet recognition, number recognition, colors, and shapes. Parents used household items like magnets on the refrigerator, books, magazines, and flashcards to assist in promoting readiness. They also read books and used sight words to promote literacy. Teachers agreed that alphabet recognition, letter sounds, number recognition, and basic math skills like quantifying, patterns and matching are important in promoting readiness. Teachers also believed that consistency, having daily routines in place, and using a structured curriculum and supplemental learning tools assisted children in being kindergarten ready. These findings align with those of Kim et al. (2019), who said that a key element in young children's preparedness for school and kindergarten is a desire for good teaching and learning. Hammond et al. (2020) showed

that early childhood educators should expose children to rich subject matter that fosters preparedness and lays the foundation for success in school later on. Again, sparse literature addressed the contributions of parents in developing children's kindergarten readiness, so this study provided insights into the work parents do at home with their prekindergarten children.

A third key finding was that both parents and teachers identified as a hindering factor in promoting kindergarten readiness a lack of supportive partnerships between teachers and parents, and between teachers and district administration. While parents and teacher agreed that a strong home-school partnership is essential in supporting children's kindergarten readiness, they suggested that these partnerships sometimes suffer from misunderstandings, disagreement about curriculum expectations, and issues of control. Teachers in particular suggested that district administrators elevate parents' concerns over teachers' needs. Williams and Lerner (2019) agreed that children's readiness is influenced by their own preparedness as well as their family's, school's, and community's preparation to assist their learning. Curtin et al. (2021) verified that a connection based on trust between families and teaching staff, one that fosters strong parent-child interactions and links families to peers, the community, and be kindergarten-ready upon entering school, are the foundations of a successful collaboration. Gross et al. (2020) confirmed that a number of barriers prevent systematic and meaningful community involvement, including the unwillingness of partners to get involved, the unwillingness of educators to promote community partnerships, scheduling conflicts, competing ideas about the role that community partners should play in partnerships, a

lack of teacher preparation, and a lack of administrative support. Sells and Mendelsohn (2021) suggested that a solid foundation for children's academic achievement is created when parents, prekindergarten instructors, primary schools, and local community organizations collaborate, according to research.

The findings in this study confirm the work of Garcia (2015), which formed the conceptual framework. Garcia discovered differences in children's performance that existed before kindergarten entry. In my study, I found that parents valued their role in preparing their children for kindergarten. Parents felt using technology and digital tools provided a more supportive environment in getting children ready for kindergarten. Teachers also valued the support they provided prekindergarten students in their class to prepare them for kindergarten. Teachers kept students interested in their learning environment by providing hands-on activities. Garcia noted to assist children in preparing for kindergarten, teachers and parents should work together. My study revealed that prekindergarten parents and teachers both acknowledge they play an important role in preparing children for kindergarten, albeit through different approaches, to capture interest, but collaboration, and establishing strong partnership are key to successful entry into kindergarten.

In summary, the findings of this study confirm the work of Garcia (2015), who, along with colleagues (see Belfield & Garcia, 2016; Garcia & Weiss, 2015), suggested that achievement gaps exist even prior to children's kindergarten entrance, and that these gaps could be influenced by the actions of parents and prekindergarten teachers. Similar to the work of Garcia, results of this study indicated that parents and teachers are aware

of the importance of readiness and acknowledge their role in developing readiness in children, but that parents and teachers contribute uniquely to readiness development. As Belfield and Garcia (2016) found, parents and teachers provide a separate positive effect. The work of both parents and teachers is needed if children are to be kindergarten-ready.

The findings of this study confirm much of what was already known about kindergarten readiness in early childhood education and extend the knowledge in the discipline, particularly with regard to parents' actions and perspectives. Results highlighted the different ways parents and teachers support kindergarten readiness and suggested that the differences of approach complement each other to support children's development in a comprehensive way. This suggests that parents' role in readiness is essential because it contributes unique aspects not found in the role of prekindergarten teachers. The study results also confirmed that both prekindergarten parents and teachers used mastery of basic skills in early literacy and mathematics as an indicator of kindergarten readiness. In addition, results indicated that parents focus on being a support and advocate for their child, while prekindergarten teachers focus on children's self-regulation skills as part of the classroom community. Finally, both parents and teachers agreed that their partnership is important to promoting readiness, but both suggested gaps in these partnerships. Parents in the study cited their experience with unsupportive teachers and administrators as a hinderance to their efforts to promote kindergarten readiness in their child. Teachers suggested that lack of parent cooperation and administrative attention to parents' demands over teachers' needs hinder their efforts in promoting kindergarten readiness. This disconnect between parents' and teachers'

perspectives of the quality of the home-school partnership, with each suggesting the other is unresponsive to their needs, is a key take-away from this study.

Limitations of the Study

The study was subject to few limitations. The data collection process took place during the COVID-19 pandemic, and numbers of persons in the community affected by the virus were increasing as the study began. This hindered my ability to conduct face-to-face interviews as originally planned, so I conducted interviews by telephone and Zoom. Although interviewing in this way may have encouraged participation in teachers or parents with complex scheduling needs, some information that could have been gained from body language and facial expressions may have been missed. In some cases, I had to reschedule interviews from their initially arranged time due to changes in participants' work and personal responsibilities. This limitation did not reduce the ability for participants to answer research questions or quality of findings. During one interview, a situation occurred where the first 3 minutes of the recording was not recorded due issues with internet connectivity that interrupted the Otter.ai transcription service. Immediate actions were taken, and the issue was resolved, and recording resumed. All interview questions were answered by this participant and voice notes were captured from this interview. This minor occurrence had no effect on the data available in the study.

Recommendations

Several recommendations for future research emerged in the course of this study. First, more research is needed in the in-home resources, video series, web-based learning programs, and digital tools parents use at home to engage children and prepare them for

kindergarten. Parents in this study reported that they find it convenient and effective to initiate learning and to help their child work on particular skills through mobile devices, but the literature does not address the resources available to the general public, searching on their own, to promote kindergarten readiness. Research into family-friendly digital tools and development of educational phone-based programs might assist parents in their efforts.

Second, I recommend more research focused factors that affect partnerships among teachers, administrators, and parents, and on promoting sustainable partnerships; this recommendation derives from the disconnect that was noticed in this study between parents and teachers. Some parents in the study had issues with teachers who they thought did not provide information on children's progress and the next steps parents could take to promote readiness. The teachers in this study expressed concern that some parents were not involved in their child's education and that participation in school events to promote readiness was very limited. Both parents and teachers described feeling unheard by district administrators, and members of each group seemed to think administrators favored members of the other group. More research into factors that affect communication and partnership might lead to more effective support for collaboration around school readiness.

A third recommendation for the study is that the study be replicated with a larger sample, in a different region, or with individuals whose home language is not English, to see if results would be duplicated. This study enrolled a small number of parents and teachers, all women, from a single rural area in the American South compared to the

participants in this study, parents and teachers from various regions or from more metropolitan areas may have different perspectives on kindergarten preparation and their role in encouraging it. In addition, research into the perspectives of fathers and male teachers would provide additional insights into the work of developing kindergarten readiness and the challenges adults' encounter.

The method used in this study, of interviewing parents and teachers using a matching interview protocol for each group, worked well to produce useful information about readiness development. The same method could be applied to future research about the proposed communities of practice and training opportunities. In addition, the interview method used in this study could be applied to study the experiences of teachers and parents of children who enter kindergarten not ready and on the effects lack of readiness may have on the perspectives of parents and teachers as children move forward to first and second grade. Future studies instead might employ a survey to quantify with a larger sample the reliance on factors that emerged in this study, such as use of digital media, use of extrinsic and intrinsic motivation, and challenges teachers and parents encounter. An observational study might also be undertaken, of school board meetings and deliberations, to discern the favoritism both parents and teachers in this study believed was at work in policy-making that affects their readiness efforts. A longitudinal study might examine the level of parent engagement in children's grade-level preparation across all the primary years, including children's willingness to engage with parents and the level and tenor of teacher-parent collaboration as it evolves over time. Left unexamined in this study is whether the readiness is an idea only applied to kindergarten,

so that readiness for first grade, second grade, and third grade are not afforded the attention devoted to kindergarten readiness.

Implications

Implications for practice that emerged from this study included greater emphasis on parent, teacher, and community partnerships to promote readiness. Administrators in public schools like the district that was the focus of this study should use social media outlets, school apps, call out systems, and newsletters to promote school wide events, readiness skills of focus, and forecasted areas of readiness focus, and to create excitement and teamwork around the shared task of increasing the number of children entering kindergarten ready. An after-school program for prekindergarten students that is fun and promotes kindergarten readiness might support readiness efforts and assist in children's transition to kindergarten. The district administration should encourage participation in parent-teacher organizations among prekindergarten and kindergarten teachers and parents. Doing so might provide a forum for communication between home and school and could reduce feelings of favoritism both parents and teachers in this study reported.

This study's finding that parents and teachers both emphasize academic skill development in their conception of kindergarten readiness suggests a second implication, that more be done to validate and support academic readiness efforts. For example, targeted professional development for prekindergarten teachers should include theories and practices regarding early literacy and mathematics that are developmentally appropriate for children entering kindergarten. In addition, the district could offer more professional development for teachers in sharing what they know about academic skill

development with parents and providing family-friendly activities parents can share with children at home. The district could also offer information meetings and hands-on workshops for parents to help them in supporting children's academic readiness. Parents in this study relied on digital tools and videos in supporting readiness, so it might be helpful to provide parents with more personal ways to work with their children. Literacy and math nights where families and teachers come together and share in hands on activities that model and promote kindergarten readiness could be fun, lively events for both groups and would help develop collaborative partnerships.

According to this study, prekindergarten parents and teachers promoted children' ready development in various ways since they had diverse perspectives and experiences. This finding suggests that a community of practice could be developed among parents and another community of practice among teachers, so members of each community can share tips and techniques with each other and increase the adoption of the practice's members found helpful for their children and their students. A handout of these tips and tricks could be created by each group, for new kindergarten teachers and for parents of beginning prekindergarten students, so the level of readiness preparation might increase over time and have cumulative effects for children in the district. Such communities might persist beyond the prekindergarten and kindergarten year, in that kindergarten teachers in the teacher community and prekindergarten parents in the parent community might continue to work together for the benefit of learners. Eventual collaboration between the two communities of practice could support the need for greater communication and partnership found in this study.

Positive social change may result from this study if school districts use the study's findings to implement changes to how kindergarten teachers and parents of prekindergarten students are supported in their efforts to develop kindergarten readiness in children. Such support may reduce the number of children entering kindergarten not ready and may increase positive outcomes for young. The results of this study spotlight the different perspectives of teachers and parents, and districts that create supports that meet the unique needs of teachers and families as they strive to provide for children's success. Results of this study may increase awareness of the complexity of school readiness and demonstrate that a wholistic readiness approach that engages both professionals and parents might create positive social change.

Conclusion

This study addressed a gap in practice evident in that many children enter kindergarten not ready for formal schooling. One key idea that emerged from the findings that was not noted in prior literature was that prekindergarten parents and teachers support children development of readiness in different ways due to their experiences and points of view. Another key finding was that prekindergarten parents and teachers used cultivation of basic early literacy and mathematic skills to promote kindergarten readiness. Finally, both parents and teachers identified a lack of supportive partnerships between teachers and parents and teachers and district administration that hinder factors in promoting kindergarten readiness.

Kindergarten readiness does not just involve parents and teachers but requires a holistic approach that includes schools and communities working together to bring

about change. To be effective in promoting kindergarten readiness and ensure children enter kindergarten ready for formal schooling, teachers and parents require support from each other and from school administrators that meets their individual needs and that validates their unique perspectives and relationship to the child. Positive social change may result when teachers, administrators, and parents in the early childhood field work together to strengthen the development, learning, and preparation of young children as they are about to enter kindergarten.

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Appendix: Interview Questions

Interview Questions for Parents

1. Your child will start kindergarten next school year. That's great! What sorts of things do you do to prepare them?

2. Tell me about things you do to get your child ready to learn to read...

3. What are things you do to introduce math skills to your child, like counting, comparing sizes and amounts of things, and seeing patterns?

4. How do you help your child to try hard and stick with a difficult task?

5. Tell me how you promote self-control with your child to get them ready for kindergarten...

6. As a parent what is your role in promoting kindergarten readiness? [Possible follow up: Who is most responsible for getting your child ready for kindergarten, do you think?]

7. What factors support you in your role as a parent in promoting kindergarten readiness? [Possible follow ups: Does your child's teacher support your efforts? Is working with your child something you feel good at?]

8. What factors hinder you in your role as a parent in promoting kindergarten readiness? [Possible follow ups may continue on from things parents said in response to the previous question…]

9. What more can you tell me about getting your child ready for kindergarten?

Interview Questions for Teachers

1. The children in your classroom will be starting kindergarten next school year. That's great! What sorts of things do you do to prepare them?

2. Tell me about things you do to get them children in your classroom ready to learn to read...

3. What are things you do with the children in your class to introduce math skills like number concepts, quantifying, and patterns?

4. How do you promote social emotional skills like persistence in a task?

5. Tell me how you promote self-control with your children in the class to get them ready for kindergarten?

6. As a teacher what is your role in promoting readiness?

7. What are factors that support you in your role as a teacher in promoting kindergarten readiness? [Possible follow ups: Do parents help you in this? Does your director or principal support you? Do you have the materials you need?]

8. What are factors that may hinder you in your role as a teacher in promoting kindergarten readiness? [Possible follow ups: extend from answers to the previous question. Also ask about child attendance, and home factors if these don't come up in conversation…]

9. What more can you tell me about getting the children in your classroom ready for kindergarten?