6-12-2024

Prekindergarten Teachers' Perspectives Regarding Kindergarten Readiness in Childcare Centers

Adrienne Dominic Stephens
Walden University

Walden University

College of Education and Human Sciences

This is to certify that the doctoral study by

Adrienne Dominic Stephens

has been found to be complete and satisfactory in all respects,
and that any and all revisions required by
the review committee have been made.

Review Committee
Dr. Patricia Anderson, Committee Chairperson, Education Faculty
Dr. Rebecca Curtis, Committee Member, Education Faculty

Chief Academic Officer and Provost
Sue Subocz, Ph.D.

Walden University
2024

Abstract

Prekindergarten Teachers' Perspectives Regarding Kindergarten Readiness in Childcare Centers

by

Adrienne Dominic Stephens

MS, Walden University, 2016

BGS, University of Arkansas at Monticello, 2011

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Walden University

May 2024

Abstract

Prekindergarten forms an important transition between home and formal learning in kindergarten, and prekindergarten teachers are essential contributors and influencers in their students' readiness into formal schooling. The problem addressed in this study was early childhood educators in one state in the southwestern United States are challenged regarding how they support the academic readiness of students who will be entering kindergarten. The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore prekindergarten teachers' perspectives regarding their support of academic readiness for kindergarten in prekindergarten students. The conceptual framework of this study was Pianta's ecological and dynamic model of transition. The research question addressed how kindergarten teachers describe their support of the academic readiness of students transitioning into kindergarten. Data were collected from semistructured interviews via Zoom teleconferencing with 10 prekindergarten teachers who taught students aged 3 to 5 in the target state. Data were analyzed using thematic coding. Results showed that teachers have a shared definition of school readiness; teachers' firsthand classroom experiences in assessing children's skills shaped their instructional practices and how they prepared children for kindergarten; and factors, such as lack of parental involvement, lack of instructional time, and changes in the classroom, affected teachers' effectiveness in helping children become school ready. Implications for positive social change include that the findings can help administrators become better informed of challenges in developing readiness in children. Positive social change can result when teachers are supported in their readiness efforts, and all children enter kindergarten fully ready.

Prekindergarten Teachers' Perspectives Regarding Kindergarten Readiness in Childcare Centers

by

Adrienne Dominic Stephens

MS, Walden University, 2016

BGS, University of Arkansas, 2011

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Walden University

May 2024

Acknowledgments

First of all, I want to thank my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, for all that he has done. He has been a constant help to me on this journey and honestly, I would have not made it without him. He and he alone gets the glory!

I want to thank my parents, David and Patricia Taylor, for igniting my passion of learning and chasing after my dreams. Neither one of my parents completed their education, so they instilled the importance of having a education to me and my siblings. I took what they instilled within me and ran with it. I thank you for your prayers and motivation. Through your hard work, sacrifice, and tears, I have achieved my lifelong dream. I love you both.

To my siblings—David, Kourtney, Emanuel, Brittany, and Lakebia. Thank you for your love and support. I love you all!

Next, I want to thank my advisor, Dr. Patricia Anderson. You have been a godsend to me! I've heard several horror stories about doctoral students having a horrible advisor that was of no help to them. I prayed to God that I would not have that kind of advisor. God gave me the advisor that I needed. Doc, for the past three years, you have been a motivator to me. You pushed me beyond my limits of learning and challenged me in ways that I could never imagine. For that, I thank you.

Lastly, I want to thank my husband and daughter. Nicholas, I love you with all my heart. You are always down with my shenanigans and you did not stand in my way when I decided to go on this journey. You have been a constant sounding board, advice giver, and comforter. Thank you pumpkin. To my sweet girl, Ansleigh. I did this for you. I want

you to realize that you too can chase after your dreams and achieve whatever you set your mind to. Now I can finally stop doing homework and have you a little sibling!

Table of Contents

List of Figures

Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

The topic under study was the perspectives of prekindergarten teachers in regard to school readiness and how they are challenged to support the academic readiness of students for kindergarten. Forty-one percent of children who attended childcare centers in a major city in the southwestern United States where this study took place were assessed as not ready for kindergarten, suggesting a gap in practice at the prekindergarten level. The first chapter of this study includes a synopsis of background literature as well as a discussion of the problem, purpose, conceptual framework, and the research questions. In this chapter, I also describe the assumptions and limitations of the study and suggest why the study is significant.

Background

School readiness has been a reoccurring theme of debate among prekindergarten educators. Though previous research studies have explored this topic, there was little known about the perspectives of the prekindergarten educator and why they think that children are not properly equipped and prepared for school once they enter kindergarten. According to Rouse et al. (2020), prekindergarten educators present differing perspectives in regards of their views in school readiness and how much school readiness produces an actual challenge within their profession. Scherr and Johnson (2019) found that teacher perspectives and the way they view their role as educator may have possibly inhibited their actions in support of school readiness as readiness was defined by their school district. Purtell et al. (2020) found that educators and school administrators lacked the necessary knowledge about children's prior preschool experiences, thus indicating

that teachers exemplify a deficiency of understanding of school readiness. By gaining an understanding of and identifying what those deficiencies are, childcare center administrators can give educators the necessary support they need to be effective and properly prepare their students for kindergarten.

Problem Statement

The problem that was addressed through this study is early childhood educators in the target state located in the southwestern United States were challenged to support academic readiness for kindergarten in prekindergarten students. Pianta et al. (2020) found that many children nationwide lack school readiness competencies and those who eventually enter kindergarten with little readiness skills cultivate fewer skills over time. Bernstein et al. (2019) revealed risk factors that affect children's school readiness, including family socioeconomic status, ethnic backgrounds, and parents' educational background. Those factors are correlated with children's cognitive, language, and social skills prior to their entry into kindergarten (Bernstein et al., 2019).

Local newspapers in the target area reported that a total of 27 voluntary prekindergarten (VPK) providers had a readiness rate of 50% or less (Bryson, 2019). According to the target state's Department of Education, 2017–2018 readiness rates showed that 42% of the children participated in VPK were not prepared for kindergarten. The Office of Early Learning in the target state declared that for a provider to administer successfully, the provider must achieve a readiness rate of 60% of children enrolled (Bryson, 2019). In 2019 report, the National Institute for Early Education Research reported that 37% of children completing 70% of the target state's VPK program "were

not ready for kindergarten" and among 43% of VPK programs in the target state, fewer than 60% of children "were ready for kindergarten (Meloy et al., 2019). A gap in practice was indicated, in that, although 60% is the acceptance criterion for VPK programs in the target state, many programs fail to meet that criterion (National Institute for Early Education Research, 2020).

Purpose

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore prekindergarten teachers' perspectives regarding their support of academic readiness for kindergarten in prekindergarten students. I chose to employ the narrative paradigm, as described by Ford (2020) who stated that the purpose of a narrative inquiry is to invite readers to a sphere of possible contact with a developing, incomplete, and evolving situation, allowing them to rethink and reevaluate their views, prejudices, and experiences. This approach provided participants with the chance to share their personal experiences and stories in their own words, thus making the stories and experiences the raw data for the study. I conducted interviews with 10 prekindergarten teachers to gain an understanding about their perspectives regarding how they support children's academic readiness for school, which was the phenomenon of interest.

Research Question

The following research question guided this study: What are prekindergarten teachers' perspectives on their development of academic readiness in students who will be entering kindergarten?

Conceptual Framework

The phenomenon of interest in this study was the academic readiness of students for kindergarten. The conceptual framework of this study was based on Rimm-Kaufman and Pianta's (2000) theory of school readiness, which established that a variety of factors affect kindergarten readiness, including teacher actions and teacher relationships with parents. Early childhood educators make judgments about the construct of school readiness, and those perspectives are based on their expectations and experiences. Educators interact with their students daily within a learning context, and their judgments concerning children's school readiness may be the best source of information on the topic. Educators could be considered a great source of information about readiness because they have an awareness of the needs of their students.

Exploring those perspectives in this study provided insight into what factors teachers believe influence their ability to develop kindergarten readiness in their students. Rimm-Kaufman and Pianta (2020) indicated that although child factors and factors in the child's environment may affect readiness, prekindergarten teachers have agency in supporting children's academic readiness for kindergarten. This framework was appropriate for the current study because it broadly defined school readiness as a function of an organized system of interactions and transactions among people; settings; and institutions, such as communities, neighborhoods, and governments (see Mashburn & Pianta, 2006). Rimm-Kaufman and Pianta's ideas guided my development of the interview questions and shaped the data analysis in the current study. A more in-depth

description of the framework and its relevance to the current study will be presented in Chapter 2.

Nature of the Study

In this basic qualitative study, I used interviews as the data collection method, which gave the participants a chance to share their personal experiences and stories in their own words. Interviews were appropriate in the current study because they contributed to a body of knowledge based on the meanings that life experiences hold for the interviewees (see DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). Other study designs would not have been as appropriate as interviews. For example, conducting a Likert-scale survey would not have fulfilled the study's purpose of exploring teachers' perspectives, and the numerical data a survey is used to collect could not have provided the rich, deep narratives that a qualitative study would garner (see Ravitch & Carl, 2016). While a survey could have permitted me to solicit participation from more teachers than it was feasible to interview, this increased range of coverage would have come with a reduction in depth of information (see Kelley et al., 2003).

Other qualitative designs were considered for this study but were ultimately rejected. For example, I decided against conducting a case study because when using such a design, a researcher gathers information using multiple modalities and perspectives, which might have distracted from the current study's purpose of exploring teachers' perspectives (see Gerring, 2004). Similarly, an ethnographic study was not selected because when using such a design, the researcher is embedded in the target community and shares their experiences, which would have been outside the scope of this

study (see Hammersley, 2006). I, therefore, chose to conduct a basic qualitative study with interviews.

Participant interviews were conducted with 10 prekindergarten teachers who worked with students ages 3 to 5 years old. I used the Zoom teleconference platformto conduct and audio record the interviews. I downloaded the audio files from Zoom and used Otter.ai, an automated transcription tool, to create transcripts. These transcripts were converted to Microsoft Word files and then reviewed and edited for accuracy. To thematically analyze the collected data, I read the transcripts and coded the data using techniques described in Chapter 3.

Definitions

Early childhood education: Education that includes any part- or full-day group program in a center, school, or home that serves children from birth through age 8, including children with special developmental or learning needs (National Association for the Education of Young Children, 1993).

Preschool teacher: Teachers who educate and care for children younger than 5 years old who have not yet entered kindergarten (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2020).

School readiness: The skills, knowledge, and abilities that children need to succeed in formal schooling, which, for most, begins at kindergarten (Pan et al., 2019).

Assumptions

A researcher trying to discover the relationship between two variables must believe that the relationship between the two variables exists and can be discovered (Latief, 2009). In this study, I assumed that the prekindergarten teachers were open and

honest about their perspectives. Furthermore, I assumed that the prekindergarten teachers whom I interviewed were representative of prekindergarten teachers generally. Such assumptions are typical in an interview-based study that relies on the veracity of informants (see Ravitch & Carl, 2016). These assumptions within the context of the study were necessary because it was important to understand that the beliefs and perspectives that teachers have may affect the support they provide to children as they ready them for kindergarten.

Scope and Delimitations

Akanle et al. (2020) explained the scope as a section in the study where the researcher engages in the research discussion areas, research questions, objectives, population, and study area covered. The scope of this study included prekindergarten teachers' perspectives regarding how they support the academic readiness of students for kindergarten. The study was delimited to include prekindergarten teachers who worked with children ages 3 to 5 in independent childcare centers in the southwestern United States. Teachers of children 3 to 5 are the ones who prepare children for kindergarten, in contrast to teachers of younger or older children. Independent childcare centers are not constrained in curriculum and other policies that may limit centers that receive public funding. The childcare market in the United States is populated primarily by small, single-establishment firms, both profit and nonprofit, that rely on private financing (Tekin, 2021). Tekin (2021) noted that 62% of children of preschool age attend a childcare program, preschool, or prekindergarten.

Delimitations are defined as chiefly concerned with the scope of the study or are used to establish parameters (Creswell & Poth, 2016). I excluded teachers of other age groups, teachers who worked in other settings, teachers who taught only special topics, like physical education or music, or teachers who taught only children with special needs. These delimitations may affect transferability to teachers and settings not included in this study.

Limitations

A limitation of this study was that it was conducted while schools were restarting following the COVID-19 pandemic, so teachers' perspectives might have been shaped by the experience of teaching in new ways during the pandemic or not teaching at all. During the pandemic, educators had the responsibility of transferring face-to-face classroom learning experiences with their students to online learning experiences, which many teachers and students had never engaged in before. The suspension of face-to-face instruction during the pandemic or substitution of online instruction instead of face-to-face instruction has led to concerns about students' learning (Engzell et al., 2021), which may have affected teachers' perspectives regarding how they support the academic readiness of students for kindergarten.

I am a preschool teacher, so my experiences and perspectives represent a possible limitation of preexisting bias. To counteract this limitation, I kept a reflexivity journal during the research process. Considering that the researcher is the primary instrument of qualitative research, using a reflexivity journal helps the researcher to acknowledge any personal biases and assumptions that could affect the way research is conducted (Ravitch

& Carl, 2016). Having self-awareness while conducting research assisted me in producing credible work. I analyzed the data from the viewpoints and perspectives of the interview participants. Reducing the intrusion of bias in data collection, analysis, and reporting supported transferability of the study findings and enhanced the dependability of the results.

Significance

This study is significant because it increased understanding of prekindergarten teachers' perspectives regarding kindergarten readiness and how they support the academic readiness of children for kindergarten. Children's success in kindergarten is predictive of their success in later grades (La Paro et al., 2000), so the current study has a potential positive effect on current and future school readiness experiences for both children and educators in the southwestern region of the United States. In this study, I addressed the gap in practice that was evident because, although 60% is the acceptance criterion for VPK programs in the target state, many programs failed to meet that criterion, according to the Department of Education in the target state. The results of this study have implications for positive social change because a better understanding of teacher perspectives on how they support children's kindergarten readiness may lead to practices that improve student readiness outcomes.

Summary

The problem that was addressed in this study was that educators have been challenged to support academic readiness for kindergarten in prekindergarten students. The study's purpose was to explore prekindergarten teachers' perspectives regarding their

support of academic readiness for kindergarten in prekindergarten students. There was little to no research that explored the perspectives of teachers and why their students are unequipped for kindergarten. The conceptual framework of this study was Rimm-Kaufmann and Pianta's (2000) theory of ecological and dynamic model of transition in which various factors that affect kindergarten readiness are described. Limitations that could have affected the study included my own experiences and perspectives and the suspension of face-to-face instruction due to the COVID-19 pandemic during the time prior to commencing interviews. In Chapter 2, I will present a review of scholarly literature relevant to my study's purpose.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The purpose of this study was to explore prekindergarten teachers' perspectives regarding their support of academic readiness for kindergarten in prekindergarten students. In Chapter 2, I explain the process and strategy for searching the literature. The conceptual framework is explored in detail and is followed by a discussion of literature relevant to the focus of this study, including literature on the definitions of readiness, elements that contribute to readiness, development of academic skills in prekindergarten children, and how school readiness is assessed by schools is explored. A summary of key concepts related to the research problem, purpose, and research question is also included in the chapter. The chapter is concluded with a summary.

Literature Search Strategy

I searched for suitable literature in the following search engines and databases accessed through the Walden University Library: Google Scholar, Education Source, PubMed, SAGE Journal, ERIC, and Taylor and Francis Online. The search words and phrases used were *early childhood education, preschool, kindergarten, school readiness, teacher perspectives, attitudes, school maturity, preparation, teacher-children relationships, teacher beliefs, child development, preschool children, preschool teachers, preschool education, transition to school, transition, transition practices, teacher actions, academic achievement,* and *classroom teachers.* My iterative search process included terms, such as *education, academic readiness,* and *early childhood education*, that occurred in articles I had found previously. The literature contained in Chapter 2 provides factors that support school readiness.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study was based on the work of Rimm-Kaufman and Pianta (2000). In their ecological and dynamic model of transition, the researchers outlined how links between home, school, peers, and neighborhood cultivate a network of relationships that can influence a child's transition to school, both directly and indirectly. Rimm-Kaufman and Pianta showed that school readiness involves the whole child and that readiness should be looked at as a pattern of qualities. Pianta (2002) also stated that those patterns of conditions and characteristics, taken together, enable children to take the fullest advantage of the opportunities and demands of formal schooling.

Pianta's (2002) ideas of school readiness were predicated on five dimensions: a child's physical well-being, emotional maturity, social confidence, language richness, and general knowledge. Pianta described the core of school readiness as multifaceted and complex and that it is created through a combination of a child's home experience and resources of the home, the resources and experiences present at childcare and preschool settings attended by the child, community resources that support high-quality parenting and childcare, the extent to which the elementary school is well linked to these families and child care resources, and the degree to which the classroom experiences provided the child in kindergarten and first grade in effectively build on competencies they brings to school. This suggests that teacher-child interactions, connections between the home and school, and child-focused instruction are factors that determine children's school readiness.

Pianta (2002) stated that the interactions that the child has over time form a transactional process that creates patterns and relationships that influence the child's development and transitional outcomes. Rimm-Kaufman and Pianta (2000) suggested that as children make the transition from preschool to schooling, a new ecology associated with formal schooling becomes a key focal point for the child's transitional process and the degree to which the child is able to achieve a successful outcome. According to Velan and Vorkapic (2020), for most children, the transition from a family home to an institution of early childhood care and education is the first and most significant ecological transition in their educational life. The second significant transition is the child's adaptation to kindergarten (Velan & Vorkapic, 2020). Pianta's ideas of school readiness focus on teacher-initiated transitional practices and how those practices can be effective in providing the child with social and emotional support before and during a time of challenging adaptation. The most important aspect of Pianta's ecological and dynamic model of transition, according to LoCasale-Crouch et al. (2008), is that coherent connections within and between the various contexts in a child's life leads to stability in relationships and confident adjustment to a new ecology. Therefore, prekindergarten teachers' practices can create a bridge of support for children as they transition to kindergarten (LoCasale-Crouch et al., 2008). Pianta's ecological and dynamic model of transition was an appropriate framework for the current study because it gave relevance to transitional practices and how those practices can develop children's ability to create links between people and settings during the transition to kindergarten.

Literature Related to Key Concepts and Variables

In this section, I describe the school readiness initiative in the United States, including an extensive discussion of the definition of school readiness and how the definition has changed throughout the years. The review also incorporates the elements that contribute to school readiness, how those elements play a role in the development of children's academic skills. and how school readiness is assessed by schools while using tools such as performance-based assessments and observation.

Definitions of Readiness

School readiness refers to the competencies a child possesses upon school entry that are essential to academic and social development (Bender et al., 2011). Snow (2006) reported that the notion of school readiness arose from compulsory education laws that were passed in 1836 in Massachusetts. The first compulsory act passed in Massachusetts required attendance at school of 8- to 13- year-old children for 12 weeks in the year, suggesting that 8-year-old children were ready for instruction, but that perhaps younger children were not (Clay et al., 2012). Clay et al. (2012) mentioned that even with such a limited educational requirement, state governments were unwilling or unable to enforce the attendance of children of the specified ages. In 1830, 55% of children aged 5 to 14 were enrolled in public schools, and by the year 1870, the figure had risen to about 78% (Kober & Rentner, 2020, p. 4). Nonetheless, the Massachusetts School Attendance Act of 1852 became the central focal point of the U.S. educational system in regard of educating its youngest citizens (Snow, 2006). The Attendance Act of 1852 also specified that children between the ages of 8 and 14 had to attend school for 12 weeks.

During the period from 1920 to 1930, being able to read was primarily regarded as being school ready. During the 1920s and 1930s, many children were failing first grade usually because of reading (Hoskisson, 1977). Hoskisson (1977) mentioned that the concept of readiness became associated with a particular stage of development, and therefore, any child who was having problems with beginning reading had not reached the developmental stage necessary for success in readiness. May and Campbell (1981) documented evidence that reading is the decisive factor in the promotion of readiness. Smith (1950) stated that the reading readiness concept began to unite one broad stream of improvement shortly after the publication in 1925 of the 24th Yearbook of the National Society for the study of education. Authors of the yearbook recognized the "preparatory period" as one period in total reading development and pushed influence the practice of providing preparatory work preceding first-grade practice (Smith, 1950).

In the 1940s and 1950s, readiness still focused on reading. Certain factors were incorporated into the concept of reading readiness, and these factors implied that to be successful in school the child must have developed a variety of visual, auditory, and verbal experiences, which are all related to reading readiness (Roslow, 1940). Reading readiness mechanisms in 1940 included building and making things, playing cooperative games, singing songs, and reciting rhymes (Roslow, 1940). Although reading remained at the forefront, the concept of readiness expanded during this period to include subjects, such as spelling, arithmetic, and geography (Staiger, 1973). According to Whipple (1941), the concern with geography readiness was recognized as a factor in determining reading abilities and led to an emphasis on the study of geography. Russell (1943)

examined the factors associated with readiness for spelling, or the ability to learn English spelling in the primary grades. Schindler (1948) discussed readiness for learning with reference to the initial stages of primary reading but also recognized that readiness conditions included subjects, such as arithmetic, social studies, and other areas, as well as reading.

In the 1950s and 1960, readiness continued to be a controversial subject. The goals of reading readiness included reading comprehension, interpretation, application, and word recognition (Pearson, 2000). Skills, such as auditory discrimination and memory, visual discrimination and memory, letter names and sounds, word recognition, and some general skills, were added to the concept of reading readiness during this period (Mason & Sinha, 1992). There was an ongoing struggle during the period in defining what reading readiness was, and the idea of readiness as a more global concept, incorporating cognitive abilities not specifically related to reading, was beginning to emerge (Mason & Sinha, 1992).

The notion of school readiness as a phrase to define children becoming prepared for formal schooling is still open to interpretation today (Emig, 2000). An overall view of school readiness today that is endorsed by the National Education Goals Panel is that readiness to learn hinges on a range of factors, including a child's health and physical development, social and emotional development, approaches to learning, language and communicative skills, and cognition/general knowledge (Shore, 1998).

School readiness gained national attention in 1991 through the implementation of six National Education Goals (Wesley & Buysse, 2003). One goal that was implemented

in 1991 was that all children in the United States would start school ready to learn by the year 2000 (Wesley & Buysse, 2003). In July 1990, the National Education Goals Panel, consisting of members of the Bush administration, discussed a more comprehensive definition of school readiness as it related not to just verbal proficiency, but also to emotional maturity, social skills, attention span, and child's physical condition (Pianta, 2002). Williams et al. (2019) described readiness as a combination of the readiness of an individual child, the school's readiness for children, and the ability of the family and the community to support optimal early child development. Emig (2000) proposed another definition of school readiness that included physical, social, and emotional well-being as well as cognitive readiness. Linder et al. (2013) defined school readiness in relation to students' cognitive abilities, while Ray and Smith (2010) related school readiness to maturational, social, and emotional domains and whether students have the tools necessary to work effectively in a classroom setting. An additional definition of school readiness is framed in terms of a child's proficiency with a specific set of skills that can be acquired through teaching; by this definition readiness is outside of the child (Hadani & Rood, 2016). Lastly, Pianta (2002) described school readiness as a pattern of qualities and a cluster of conditions and characteristics that, taken together, enable children to take full use of social and intellectual opportunities and demands. School readiness includes the academic skills and knowledge cultivated in assisting a child to achieve the highest optimal learning experiences possible (Pianta, 2002).

Elements That Contribute to Readiness

Elements that contribute to school readiness includes physical health, language skills, social and emotional development, motivation to learn, creativity, and general knowledge (Wangke et al., 2021). Physical health is positively associated with child academic achievement and active participation in society (Meates, 2021). According to Mak et al. (2021), evidence shows that engaging in regular physical activity at a young age results in numerous benefits, such as associated improvements in physical, psychosocial, and cognitive development domains and eventual academic performance. Cheung et al. (2019) suggested that preschool teachers may not be aware that motor development provides a foundation for cognitive development. Motor development refers to changes in movement patterns that occur over an individual lifespan and the process through which these changes take place (Wang et al., 2023). Wang et al. (2023) stated that gross motor skills, fine motor skills, and motor coordination comprise of a series of fluid and effective movements learned for the acquisition of specific skills. This type of development is essential for children's readiness.

Emotional and social maturity are demonstrated by independence, resourcefulness in various situations, dutiful persistence in pursuing goals, and acceptance of failure (Ziemba, 2019). Emotionally mature children have little trouble establishing contact with other people, comply with classroom rules, can function easily in a group setting, and possess self-discipline (Ziemba, 2019). Social competence in the early years is characterized by the effectiveness of a child engaging in social interaction with peers and adults (Junge et al., 2020). According to Junge et al. (2020), being socially competent is

the behavioral manifestation of a child's emotional and regulatory competencies while interacting with other people. Abilities, such as cooperation, empathy, or autonomy, promote well-being and adjusted status in the diverse contexts of human interaction (Romero-Lopez et al., 2020). By acquiring social competence skills, children in preschool build and maintain more successful relationships with parents and teachers at the start of school and have more positive interactions with friends (Martinsone et al., 2022). Having social competence and skills are among the most significant achievements in childhood for interpersonal adaptation (Romero-Lopez et al., 2020). The preschool classroom becomes a social laboratory where children develop and improve their emotional and interpersonal skills, learn and understand established norms, and make their first friends (Romero-Lopez et al., 2020).

Children rapidly develop their vocabulary during the early years, and early vocabulary skills are found to be a strong predictor for later reading abilities and educational attainment (Hansen & Broekhuizen, 2021). Children's development is strongly influenced by the home language environment, which consists of speech children hear (both quantity and quality) and their own language productions (Beecher & Van Pay, 2021). Language development requires input from and practice with knowledgeable communication partners, such as parents and other caregivers (Beecher & Van Pay, 2021). Linberg et al. (2020) noted that early differences in vocabulary could be traced back to experiences in the learning environment at home when vocabulary starts to grow quickly. A literacy-rich classroom environment is one in which children interact with different kinds of print, such as signs, labels, age-appropriate books, word walls,

graphs, and other printed materials, as well as deliberate and recurrent high-quality verbal input from fellow students and teachers (Pratiwi et al., 2019).

Pan (2019) defined cognition and general knowledge as ways of thinking and acquiring knowledge that promotes learning. According to Bai et al. (2021), of all the domains of child development, general knowledge is the most important for a child's school readiness because it is the foundation on which young learners will base their understanding of science, mathematics, and social studies. Children's cognitive understanding develops through the combination of maternal and nonmaternal childcare (Chaparro et al., 2020). Cognition or thinking spans a range of information processing skills involved in learning, memory, communication, and problem solving (Zelazo et al., 2021). Zelazo et al. (2021) explained that cognition skills are essential for healthy adaptation in society, and individual differences in such skills predicts important developmental outcomes, educational achievement, and job success.

Development of Academic Skills in Prekindergarten Children

Kuhfeld et al. (2020) suggested that the first 5 years of a child's life lays the foundation for all subsequent learning and development, and the academic skills mastered by prekindergarten students are highly predictive of future academic success. Acquiring preacademic reading and math skills starts at home and contributes to school readiness (Avelar et al., 2023). Preschoolers' skills in language, literacy, math, and social and self-regulation are the central focus of most states' early learning standards (Ansari et al., 2021).

Avelar et al. (2023) indicated that children who acquire preacademic skills in their preschool years have a great likelihood of successful entry to school, which is also associated with highr academic achievement later in school, graduation from high school, and securing employment. Ricciardi et al. (2021) also found early advantages in cognitive, numeracy, and literacy skills resulted in better academic outcomes in early elementary school. Ricciardi et al. stated that skills measured during the preschool years that historically have not been classified as "academic" are related to academic outcomes in elementary schools. These less traditional skills in school readiness include socioemotional skills, including secure attachment, directed attention, management of interpersonal problems, and self-control (Ricciardi et al., 2021).

Although children's preacademic skills are important to their later school success, they are unable to learn those skills on their own. McCoy et al. (2019) stated that preacademic skills in prekindergarten children includes their math, language, and literacy content knowledge. The role of the preschool teacher in particular has been shown to positive short-term and long-term impacts on preschoolers' academic outcomes (McCoy et al., 2019). Chen et al. (2020) suggested that positive interactions with teachers and with peers and the way that teachers manage interpersonal relationships interactions in the classroom influence children's long-term social, emotional, and academic development. At the same time, teachers have concerns about children's mastery of skills that are needed to ensure prekindergarten readiness, as well as the issues that are created in teachers' self-efficacy. According to Allee et al. (2024), teachers now report significantly increased academic expectation of children at kindergarten entry than was

the case 30 years ago. Musa et al. (2019) indicated the role of teachers in this century is more challenging than in the past, because of the current need to develop students who meet the requirements from various professional perspectives, compared to instructional requirements of the last century which focused on a limited set of demands. Teachers with low self-efficacy often face difficulty in performing their task (Musa et al., 2019).

A recent study conducted by Murphy et al. (2023) stated that nearly 80% of teachers felt that overall student functioning was worse or much worse than before the COVID-19 pandemic. Murphy et al. stated that teachers reported being underprepared, unqualified, and unsupported at the start of virtual learning conducted in response to pandemic restrictions on group assembly, which led many teachers to quitting. The resulting influx of replacement teachers now causes concern about a lack of qualified early education teachers remaining in the profession. Inexperienced preschool teachers who are not confident in their content knowledge or who perceive classroom management as an obstacle in their daily work may avoid challenging content areas in their daily teaching activities (Nasiopoulou, 2023). Nasiopoulou (2023) indicated the intensified learning orientation of the preschool curriculum over the last decade, combined with a lack of knowledge and teaching skills, affect preschool teachers' work in curriculum content areas, particularly when there is an increase of the number of children in the group. Barriers such as these could create discouragement in teachers and affect how they instruct their students in mastering academic skills for kindergarten.

How School Readiness is Assessed by Schools

School readiness is typically determined using performance-based assessments or observational measures. Polly (2019) summarized performance-based assessments as those in which learners complete a complex task or series of tasks in order to demonstrate their learning. Gyamfi (2023) stated that performance-based assessment tasks access all aspects of student learning by determining means of by which students assimilate information, store, and apply information in novel ways. Early childhood educators carry out school readiness assessment based on child development achievement (Retnawati, 2021).

Observation is a well-established tool for assessing children's skill mastery and their cognitive approach to contextual problems (Birkeland et al., 2020). The observation of young children's learning requires gathering evidence of growth within the natural classroom environment, often recorded in anecdotal records or checklists based on informal surveillance of classroom activity (Gökce, 2019). According to Peterson and Elam (2020), intentional teachers use their observations to plan and implement curriculum, set up engaging learning environments, monitor the children's social interactions, track behaviors, communicate with families, and assess each child's progress and development. Gökce (2019) suggested that observation is a valuable research and education tool widely used to assess children's capabilities, and Heydarnejad et al. (2022) noted that performance-based assessments concentrates on observation and evaluation of the learner's progress in action and on action. Furthermore,

performance-based assessments potentially informs how the learners authentically mastered the materials (Heydarnejad et al., 2022).

The key element in assessing school readiness is what is assessed. In addition to displaying validity at any given point, these measures also need to measure changes in children's skills over time (Russo et al., 2019). Observational measures are more variable because they rely on classroom events and interpersonal relationships to create the context for what is assessed. According to Gökce (2019), observations typically occur as they happen, usually without prior intention on the part of the observer, and may extend over many minutes or even create a pattern over a longer period of time. Preschool teachers are suggested to use ongoing observations as a way of being proactive and preventing possible problems that would arise in the classroom (Gökce, 2019). Because observations happen in the course of an ongoing school day, they typically are made by teachers in the course of their work and so may be vulnerable to situational and personal factors that make observations less standardized than performance-based assessments. Observation data often are narrative and not criterion referenced; thus, participatory and narrative methodologies appear to be the most used and profession-relevant (Birkeland et al., 2020). However, observations capture the thinking and performance of a child in their natural environment and so may provide insights into a child's school readiness not captured by performance-based measures, particularly regarding social skills and executive functions.

Assessment systems established by a childcare center or kindergarten program may influence what preschool teachers regard as important in their work in developing

academic readiness in young children. This requires teachers to have a deeper knowledge of how to address a diverse array of learners and more defined diagnostic abilities to inform their decisions (Kim et al., 2019). The emphasis in readiness assessment on discrete skills or wholistic patterns of thinking creates an expectation for what is taught and how (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020). Teachers' perspectives regarding their support of academic readiness for kindergarten in prekindergarten students may be guided by how readiness is assessed.

Summary

In this chapter, I first discussed the various definitions of school readiness and how those definitions have changed throughout the years. In recent years, the most recognized definition of school readiness was developed by the National Education Goals Panel. Next, I described the five elements that contribute to readiness for young children and how each element plays an essential role in the success of young children within a formal school setting. Then, I presented the development of academic skills in preschool children and what academic skills are considered in predicting young children's success in later years. Prekindergarten teachers are deemed to be the most effective facilitators in assisting young children in acquiring pre-academic skills. Finally, I indicated how school readiness is assessed in schools by using effective tools such as performance-based assessments and observation. The tools are used as a guide to help educators keep track of the overall academic progress of their youngest learners, in addition to supporting a child's capacity of increasing their fullest potential. In Chapter 3, I will present the

method by which I explored teachers' perspectives regarding their support of academic readiness for kindergarten in prekindergarten students.

Chapter 3: Research Method

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore prekindergarten teachers' perspectives regarding their support of academic readiness for kindergarten in prekindergarten students. In this chapter, I describe my use of a basic qualitative design in this study. This chapter also includes a discussion of my role as researcher, the study methodology, and how I addressed issues of trustworthiness and ethical procedures.

Research Design and Rationale

The following research question guided this study: What are prekindergarten teachers' perspectives on their development of academic readiness in students who will be entering kindergarten? A basic qualitative design supported my intention to elicit people's individual, diverse experiences in the context of their lifeworld (see Caelli et al., 2003). Although a survey would have permitted me to solicit information from many more participants, a quantitative method was inappropriate for this study because surveys enable numerical tabulation of specific concepts but do not solicit participants' original perspectives (see Ravitch & Carl, 2016). I considered using observations as the basis for my qualitative inquiry but did not because qualitative observation involves collecting data using one's senses, especially looking and listening in a systematic and meaningful way, which did not align with my purpose of exploring teacher perspectives (see Smit & Onwuegbuzie, 2018). In a typical case study, information is gathered using multiple modalities and perspectives, which might have distracted from the current study's purpose of exploring teachers' perspectives (see Gerring, 2004). An ethnographic study, in which the researcher is embedded in the target community and shares their

experiences, was outside the scope of the current study (see Hammersley, 2006). Therefore, I conducted this study using a basic qualitative design and interviews.

Role of the Researcher

My role in the research process was that of the participant observer. The participant observer role is defined as the process of entering a group of people with a shared identity to gain an understanding of their community (Allen, 2017). To fully understand the perspectives of the teachers, I interacted with them in one-to-one interviews. A supportive connection was established with participants because I am a fellow educator and was not in either the instructor or supervisory positions. I currently teach 3-year-olds in the same district from which I invited participants, but I did not include participants with whom I worked. I had no authority over any teachers, including prospective participants.

I have personal biases regarding the topic of academic readiness for kindergarten because although I am not a prekindergarten teacher, I am aware of the need to prepare prekindergarten children for kindergarten success. These biases were addressed by structuring and framing my interview questions skillfully and maintaining objectivity during the interviews and the data analysis process. Keeping a reflexivity journal, as suggested by Ravitch and Carl (2016), helped monitor my preexisting ideas and kept them from intruding into the study. This method decreased any likelihood of biases affecting the study process.

Methodology

Participant Selection

The population of interest in this study was teachers of prekindergarten children in one state in the southwestern United States. I used the snowball sampling method in this study. As noted by Etikan et al. (2016), snowball sampling refers to a sample in which an initial participant shares information about the study with another prospective participant; this second participant, then shares information about the study with a third prospective participant. The sample expands through word-of-mouth, leveraging current participants to locate future participants This qualitative study included prekindergarten teachers who taught children ages 3 to 5 and who worked in public prekindergartens in the target state. I asked a colleague to distribute the flyer to prekindergarten teachers whom they knew personally, which helped me to gain access to participants that were suitable for and relevant to the study. When an individual completed an interview, I asked them to share the flyer with other teachers whom they knew.

Snowball sampling continued until I interviewed 10 teachers. Creswell and Poth (2016) suggested that this number of participants is sufficient to develop data saturation in an interview-based study. I sought participants who were lead prekindergarten teachers working in a public-school setting with more than 1 year of teaching experience with this age group. The flyer described these inclusion criteria. As prospective participants responded to my flyer, I emailed those individuals a copy of the consent form and confirmed in that email that the prospective participants met the inclusion criteria.

Instrumentation

In this qualitative study, I collected data through semistructured interviews. I created a set of 10 open-ended interview questions, including follow-up questions to use as needed to probe for details (see Appendix). To answer the research question, I developed the interview questions to ask teachers about the skills and abilities they believed support kindergarten readiness. The questions were derived from the conceptual framework and referenced the five dimensions identified by Pianta (2002), a child's physical well-being, emotional maturity, social confidence, language richness, and general knowledge, as well as Pianta's emphasis on coordination between parents and teachers.

I asked an individual who holds a doctorate in early childhood education to review my interview questions regarding the study's purpose and research questions. Allowing a fellow colleague to look at the questions that I created allowed for certain corrections and avoided unnecessary interpretations and opinions coming out of the research. This person made suggestions to improve the focus and clarity of each question, and I incorporated their recommendaitons into the interview questions.

Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection

After receiving permission to conduct the study from Walden University's Institutional Review Board, I used snowball sampling as the primary recruitment strategy for the study. I created a flyer that targeted early childhood professionals and described the purpose of the study, criteria for participation, and my contact information. I asked a professional colleague to share the recruitment flyer with prekindergarten teachers they

knew. As potential participants responded, I emailed them an informed consent form; individuals who wished to volunteer to participate replied via email with "I consent." Once the potential participant gave their consent, I scheduled their interview on a mutually convenient day and time. The consent form informed the participants that the interviews would be audio recorded; that participants may decline to answer any question asked; and that they may, at any time, end the interview or leave the study without any repercussions. At the beginning of each interview, I reviewed this information with the participant and confirmed their understanding and consent.

Each interview was conducted over Zoom and audio recorded using the recording function on the Zoom application. Only the audio recordings of the interviews were retained; the video recordings were not downloaded or included in the data. I took field notes to record ideas that I wished to remember after the interview. A total of 10 interview questions were asked of each participant (see Appendix), and I strove for a conversational interaction, using follow-up questions as needed to further pursue the participant's train of thought or clarify their meaning. Each interview lasted about 30 minutes.

Following each interview, I uploaded the audio file to Otter.ai, a transcription application. Each transcript was reviewed and corrections were made as needed. I emailed each corrected transcript to the respective participant so they could review their transcript for accuracy and make any clarifications or changes they wished.

Data Analysis Plan

I used the corrected interview transcripts as the basis for data analysis. To analyze interview data, I employed in vivo coding as described by Saldaña and Omasta (2016). According to Manning (2017), in vivo coding is a form of qualitative data analysis that places emphasis on the actual spoken words of the participants. Because I conducted semistructured interviews, in vivo coding assisted me in establishing the credibility of the study results. To begin coding, I first removed my own words from the transcripts (e.g., the questions I asked of participants) and any incidental conversation not germane to the interview, such as comments about the weather. Working one transcript at a time, I separated a participant's comments into distinct phrases, sentences, or narratives to create individual expressions of ideas. These individual ideas were then transferred to a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet, so each idea sat on its own row in a single column. I created a second column and inserted the participant's code name on each row. In this way, individual spreadsheet rows contained a significant idea copied verbatim from the transcript along with the participant identifier. I continued to separate all transcript copies into individual ideas and copied these into the same single column in Excel, with participant code names in another column. The interview data were then organized into individual ideas that constituted the in vivo codes derived from the data.

Following the procedures described by Saldaña and Omasta (2016), I continued data analysis by grouping codes into categories. To do this, I reviewed the codes on the Excel spreadsheet, noticing similarities across all participants. Using Excel's copy and insert function, I moved rows of data within the spreadsheet so that similar codes

followed each other. This stage of analysis helped me see patterns, recurring thoughts, and ideas that seemed unique or discrepant in the data. I inserted a category label for each grouping of codes in another column in Excel.

After I created categories from in vivo codes, I reviewed these categories for logical groupings. My intention at this point was to discover themes that united several categories into a significant idea that could be applied to answer the research question. Using Excel's copy and insert function again, I moved whole categories of data within the spreadsheet so that categories that seemed to form themes followed each other. I inserted a theme label in a new Excel column and, in this way, developed themes that described the data and were associated with the research question.

I incorporated an audit trail procedure into the study. This procedure is aimed at ensuring the quality of the research, in terms of visibility, comprehensibility, and acceptability (De Kleijn & Val Leeuwen, 2018). By keeping a detailed record of what was done, heard, and said, I was able to find errors and irregularities. According to Bowen (2009), audit trails are a principal technique for establishing the dependability and confirmability of qualitative research findings. An audit trail encompasses other techniques to establish trustworthiness (Bowen, 2009).

Trustworthiness

Credibility

Credibility is defined as the extent to which a research account is believable and appropriate (Mills et al., 2010). Johnson and St. John III (2020) described credibility as ensuring that the results accurately represent what was studied and imparting to the

reader supporting evidence of that accuracy. In this study, I supported credibility by interviewing a variety of individuals, which provided the triangulation of data. Interviews provided prolonged contact with each participant, which is another appropriate method that can be used to create credibility. By being able to engage with the participants for an extended amount of time and building a relationship of trust with each participant, credible results can be expected. I also sent transcripts to the participants and received additional feedback from them, which helped me to correct transcription errors and errors of understanding that happened at the time of interview. This process helped confirm that the information that I received from the interviewees was indeed correct and factual.

Transferability

Transferability is similar to the generalizability of inquiry (Nowell et al., 2017). Moon et al. (2017) suggested that transferability is a type of external validity that refers to the degree to which the phenomenon of findings described in one study are applicable or useful to theory, practice, and future research. In a qualitative study, transferability is determined by the reader, who evaluates the usefulness of study results to their own situation (Moon et al., 2017). I provided thick descriptions of both the participants and the overall research process to help readers judge whether the findings that I discovered within the bounds of the data can be transferred in their own contexts. The thick descriptions provided give my readers a deeper understanding of the current study and helps them get to the essential findings that I am attempting to convey.

Dependability

Connelly (2016) defined dependability as the stability of the data over time and over the conditions of the study. One strategy that can be used regarding dependability in research is audit trails. By making usage of audit trails, I kept thorough records of how I conducted this study. Writing down field notes of what I saw, heard, or thought about helped me to figure out the next steps that I should take while conducting the study and gathering data. An audit trail also helped me to explore exactly what I was observing and the role that I played while participating in the research process. In short, keeping these trails allowed me to review what I did and create an alternative plans as needed to ensure the dependability of my research.

Confirmability

Confirmability is defined as the degree to which the findings of the research study could be confirmed by other researchers (Korstjens & Moser, 2017). An overall concept of confirmability is the researcher's concern for objectivity. Reflexivity is a method that helped me to properly critique and acknowledge the role that I played within the study. I incorporated a reflexive journal to document the day to-day logistics of the study. Reflexivity helped me explore the overall influence that I had in the research process. As both a teacher and researcher, engaging in a reflexive journal heightened my awareness and kept me vigilant to the effects of certain biases and possible distorted views that I may had at the outset of this study.

Ethical Procedures

Before I began this study, I sought approval from Walden University's Institutional Review Board. Once approval was obtained (Approval No. 03-01-23-0544004), I then recruited participants for the study. Participants provided informed consent through consent forms. To avoid possible conflicts of interest within the study, I recruited participants with whom I had no supervisory power or preexisting relationships. I also ensured the participants understood that they could withdraw from the study at any time without penalty.

Code names were used in all files so that participant confidentiality was preserved; no one besides myself knew participants' names or other information about them. To guarantee safekeeping of the participants' information, I kept digital files on a password-protected computer and stored paper files in a secure cabinet in my home office. Lastly, I will retain all files related to the study for 5 years after the study is concluded, at which time I will destroy digital files by using the Eraser removal tool and shredding paper files.

Summary

In Chapter 3, I explained the overall methodology of the study. The qualitative data collection consisted of semistructured interviews of 10 prekindergarten teachers to explore their perspectives regarding their support of academic readiness for kindergarten in prekindergarten students. Interview questions addressed what comes to mind when teachers think of academic readiness in kindergarten, what they believe are the most crucial skills and developmental milestones that children require to succeed in

kindergarten, and the biggest challenges teachers find in their work of getting their students ready for kindergarten. Data were evaluated using thematic analysis. This chapter also contained a description of how issues of trustworthiness and ethical practice were addressed. I will present the results of the study in Chapter 4.

Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of this study was to explore prekindergarten teachers' perspectives regarding their support of academic readiness for kindergarten in prekindergarten students. The research question that guided the study was: What are prekindergarten teachers' perspectives on their development of academic readiness in students who will enter kindergarten? This chapter includes descriptions of the setting of the study, data collection and analysis processes, results, and evidence of trustworthiness before concluding with a summary.

Setting

The participants were all female teachers from the southeastern region of the target state. The majority of the participants resided in small, rural towns that did not have a wide selection of preschools and facilities to choose from. One of the 10 participants had been teaching young children for close to 30 years. Another one of the participants is no longer in the classroom, but she is a childcare director for two developmental facilities and has earned two doctoral degrees. I was not aware of any issues happening in participants' communities that might have affected their responses. For my part, no personal issues that might have affected the results occurred.

Data Collection

Following the procedures that were discussed in Chapter 3, I recruited and interviewed 10 participants. Recruitment began in June 2023, and the last interview was conducted in August 2023, for an 8-week data collection process. All 10 participants took part in interviews from their homes. Whenever a participant needed to communicate with

their child, I would immediately cease from asking questions and let the participant attend to their child. In one of the interviews, a participant had an emergency situation that pertained to one of her three children, so I halted the interview and eventually called the participant back once the emergency had been resolved.

Two of the participants conducted their Zoom interviews with their cameras on, while the remaining eight conducted their interviews with their cameras off. No video data were preserved because I used only audio files as the data set. The semistructured interviews lasted 20 to 30 minutes, which was shorter than anticipated but delivered rich data. The interviews flowed naturally and the data provided from each participant seemed based on their actual experiences.

I had a difficult time recruiting participants for the interviewing process. A few teachers volunteered to participate in the study but then decided not to take part. The recording of the first interview was not saved to Zoom, and I was unable to salvage any possible data that I had gained. I asked the participant if it was possible to interview her once again. She was very generous to let me conduct a second interview with her. No other issues with data collection occurred.

Data Analysis

I analyzed the collected data by following the process described in Chapter 3. The audio files were transcribed using Otter.ai, and I then made the necessary corrections in the transcripts. I emailed each participant their edited transcripts to to ensure that the information that was provided was accurate. None of the participants asked me to change

any of the information that they provided to me during their interview. The edited, approved transcripts were used as the data set.

Next, I organized the data in a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet. I removed my own words from each transcript and any information that did not pertain to the interviews. Then, the participants' comments were separated into distinct phrases, sentences, and narratives to capture each individual's expression of ideas. Those individualized ideas were placed onto the Excel spreadsheet so that each idea sat on its own in a single row. In this way, I created a total of 264 codes that were derived and extracted from the data. In the second cycle of coding, I moved the rows of codes that expressed similar ideas so they were grouped into categories. There were a total of 18 categories: children's background and environment, challenges for teachers, definition of readiness, differences in children's readiness, emotional maturity in readiness, importance of cognition in readiness, importance of readiness in language, parental involvement and readiness, physical well-being in readiness, process of readiness, required milestones/skills in readiness, struggle versus success, teacher indication in readiness, teacher experience of cognition in readiness, teacher experience of language in readiness, teacher experiences with children's emotional maturity, teacher experiences with children's physical well-being, and teacher experiences of cognition of readiness.

Following a similar process, I reorganized the rows of data so that categories of data that indicated similarities in topic were combined into three themes: influence of teacher beliefs, issues and factors that hinder school readiness, and teacher concern for skill mastery. The theme of influence of teacher beliefs included the categories of process

of readiness, definition of readiness, differences in children's readiness, teacher experiences of cognition in readiness, teacher experiences of language in readiness, struggle versus success, teacher experiences with children's emotional maturity, and teacher experiences with children's physical well-being. Categories of challenges for teachers, parental involvement and readiness, and children's background/environment were included in the theme of issues and factors that hinder school readiness. Finally, the theme of teacher concern for skill mastery included the categories of required milestones and skills in readiness, teacher indication of readiness, emotional maturity in readiness, importance of cognition in readiness, importance of language in readiness, and physical well-being in readiness.The relationship between categories and themes is illustrated in Figure 1.

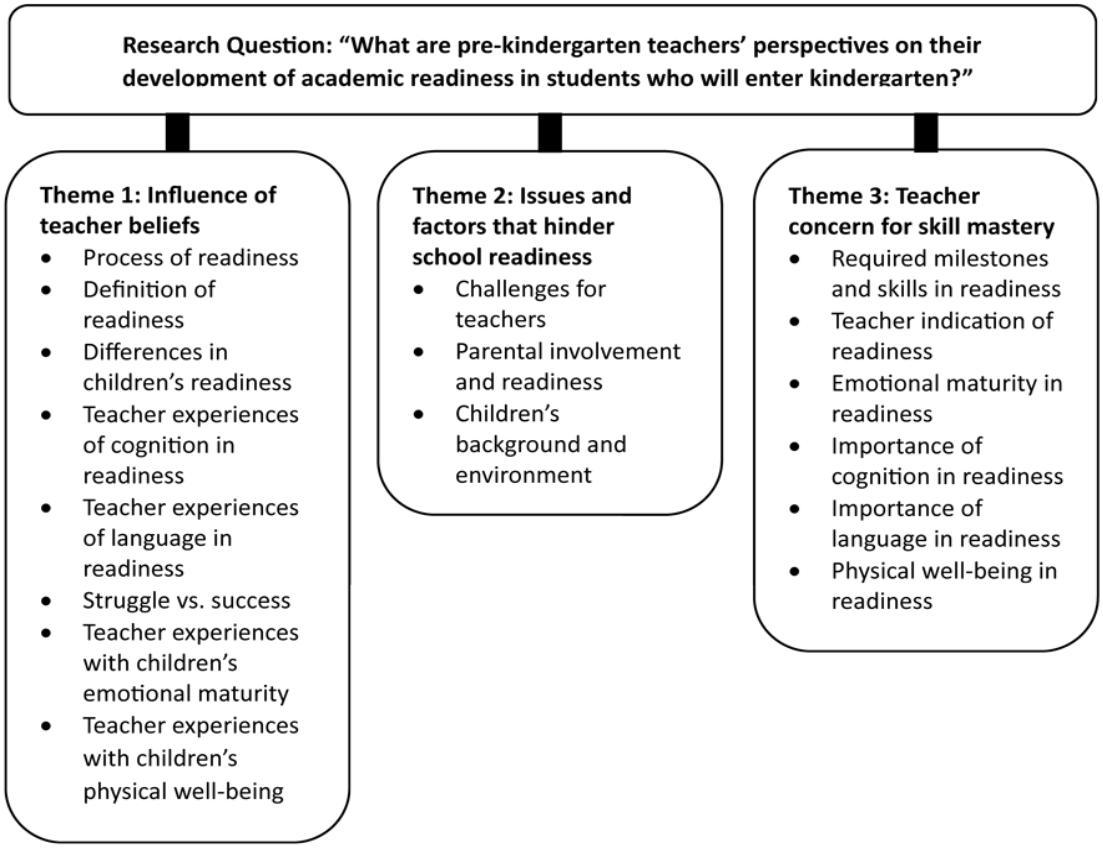
Results

Results Associated With Theme 1

Participants emphasized their own descriptions and definitions of what academic kindergarten readiness meant to them. The data showed that several teachers believed that not everyone has the same definition of kindergarten academic readiness. P1 stated "No matter how you look at it, it all plays a role in academics because at some point you have to be able to sit there and comprehend what is being said." P2 chimed in saying, "Kindergarten readiness is having a child ready to be integrated into a public school or any other type of school that provides an educational environment." P2 further explained her views of school readiness saying, "I do believe that education overall is a business, more than what is teaching." P8 stated,

Figure 1

Research Question, Themes, and Associated Categories



> I think my idea of readiness differs a little bit. It is just a little different because I know how the standards are equipped for children in kindergarten and what is developmentally appropriate in different areas for them. When we go through the developmental route, there are some things that kids should and should not know, but a lot of times those developmental goals that are set for children do not align with the school's plan of academics.

P10 described why the description of kindergarten academic readiness varies from teacher to teacher:

> My perspective of kindergarten readiness may be totally different than the teacher next door. I feel like if you push them too hard, they'll shut down, but she [the other teacher] may feel like they're ready to go ahead and be on this reading level.

Lastly, P5 noted, "What I think comes to mind about readiness is making sure that the kids are ready, so our things for getting them ready for kindergarten are making sure that they can listen, they can follow directions, they know their shapes, their colors, their alphabets, their sounds, and some phonemic awareness."

Another finding was teachers' experiences of language in readiness and how language development does indeed play a critical role in kindergarten academic readiness. For example, P3 stated. "I like teaching bigger vocabulary words. Yeah. That is exposure to language." P4 described why it was important to cultivate children's exposure to language at an early age, saying, "You have to give the kid your children the proper vocabulary, nouns, adverbs." P4 indicated,

> I had children that had not been exposed to the proper language words. That was a barrier for them. It goes back to the staircase of how parenting comes from the parents, and then they [the children] expose what they got from their parents.

P7 summed up the differences between children who have been richly exposed to language in comparison to children with lesser exposure to language:

> Those students with rich language seem to be able to put sentences together quickly and are very competent in their language to you [the teacher]. Those students seem to blossom quicker than my students whose mothers are treating

> them like babies. They do not know how to ask for things and they do not know how to hold a conversation.

P2 described how exposure of various rich languages and home environment have been the key factors in both her children's and her niece's language acquisition, stating,

> My own children and my niece. She's 2 years old and she already speaks two languages. My daughter speaks three languages, my other two children speak two languages. It's just the environment that you're kind of raised in and what you are exposed to, so it is important to have some type of language, especially to express yourself, to express your wants and needs.

P3 summed things up this way: "Vocabulary in language is important because they are going to have to learn different words and with that, they learn newer words."

Teachers also discussed the role of the teacher in children's struggles and successes in preparing for kindergarten. P2 stated, "Honestly, readiness depends on the child. I don't necessarily think that having those types of skills that are required by some type of mandate are projections for success." P3 explained, "Well, you know, to me, that depends on the teacher and how much time that child gets." P3 also added, "Because you're going to have a child that is kind of behind, but if you have a teacher and somebody that's really caring, they can come up and pass the child that may have all the skills." P4 added that "We as educators need to meet the child where they are in order for them to get what they need."

Teacher experience with children's emotional maturity was another factor that emerged from the study. A few teachers expressed how they played a key role in the

implementation and sustainability of children's emotional development within the classroom setting as well as in the home environment. P2 stated,

> You know there are a lot of shy kids and a lot of kids that are not very social. My own child, my youngest one, who's 15 now. He grew up with an older brother and sister. And there was like 9 and 11 years difference between the oldest two and him. He really was able to interact with other kids from a very young age but had no idea how to play with kids his age.

P5 explained how she encouraged her student to display kindness to his peers, "I had to explain to one of my students about feelings. I'm not saying that he said anything wrong." P9 stated that she was the only person some children would communicate with while at school, explaining, "I saw some kids that would come in and the only person they would talk to is me and if I'm not at school, they didn't want to do their work." P7 remarked how the behavior of a former student that displayed an adequate level of emotional maturity played a factor in his academic progress:

> I have a student that is academically smart, but his behavior has killed his progress. He has temper tantrums and tells us that we can't tell him what to do. He did have a problem.When the parent is in denial and there is a problem, and if there isn't something we can't do about it, then the child is going to suffer.

P6 cited that a few of her students did not display emotional maturity because they lacked confidence in their skills. P6 stated,

> I speak for the shy kids because it's hard sometimes to know whether or not they are learning or they are not learning. It's obvious that they do not participate in

> class because they're shy, but there are some that are actually learning. There are some that are not learning because they do not know how to express themselves. It does affect their early academic learning.

P5 added, "You have to let them know that every child comes from different situations and home environments."

Lastly, teacher experience with children's physical well-being was an influence in teachers' beliefs about readiness that emerged in the study. P1 described her experience when there was a lack of physical well-being that occurred with one of her previous students by saying. "And this child, she slept the entire time I had to make her stand up. She laid down, put her head on the desk, and fell asleep, She'd stand up sleep, and when it was time to work, she never knew anything." P2 recalled her experience with a child who was disabled and how the student's disability played a difficult role in their physical well-being, stating,

> I've actually had an experience where there was a child going into kindergarten or first grade and she was wheelchair bound. She did not have any type of assistance. It was very difficult for her to get around and do some things that she needed to do without having the extra assistance.

P3 described her experience with a former student who displayed inadequate physical well-being and how it affected his overall academic performance in school by saying,

> I have a child that comes to school in the morning, you know, he's sleepy. So when he comes into the classroom, he's grouchy, moody, and wants to lay down. So during our learning activities, he's asleep and if you try to make him stay up,

> he's at the table sleepy and grouchy. When they feel like that, it causes a behavior problem.

P6 spoke about her own experience with a former student that was being reared in a negative home environment and how the child's home environment affected her physical well-being:

> There was a girl in my class. She had some problems at home with her parents and ended up getting taken away from her parents. Now she is living with her grandma, and I could tell that it affected her.

Although educators spoke highly about the importance of children's physical well-being and how that plays a factor in children's academic performance and success, the experiences that they shared about some of their student's poor nutrition, lack of adequate rest, and family instability are stressors that have negatively affected a child's readiness for school.

In summary, teachers provided multiple definitions of what school readiness meant to them. The definitions that were shared did have a common goal: to ensure that children were equipped with the basic skills in hopes of successfully transitioning into kindergarten. The definitions of academic readiness varied from teacher to teacher. Rich exposure to language was important to these teachers, and teachers were able to differentiate children that were exposed to a rich language environment compared to those who were not exposed to rich language. The findings showed that children who lacked rich language exposure were unable to express themselves and what they have learned, while children who displayed a rich exposure to language were able to converse

and express themselves more effectively in the classroom environment. The participants also shared their experiences in regards to children's emotional maturity and how the abundance or lack of emotional maturity can affect the way that children regulate their emotions within the classroom environment, thus affecting children's school readiness. Lastly, teachers recognized that the lack of physical well-being can negatively affect children's school success, especially when this problem is a lack of sleep; however, they did not find physical disability an consistent problem for school readiness.

Results Associated With Theme 2

When I asked teachers about the biggest challenges they found in their work of getting children academically ready for kindergarten, I was provided with different responses. Some teachers stated that the lack of time, meeting children where they are, maintaining the class routine, and parental involvement were among the challenges they found in helping children achieve school readiness. P3 stated, "The biggest challenge for me is having time because honestly, I am by myself throughout the year. So, you know, sometimes I can't give everybody their time like that. That extra time." P4 added, "The challenge is meeting every child where they are. Because every child is different." P4 continued in describing challenges by saying, "If you see a child that's not quite where they need to be and there's another child that is making progress, then you put them together." P5 described her routine problem in this manner: "I think right now my biggest challenge is once I get the kids on a routine, then we add new kids. So now we got to stop and teach those new kids our routine."

Other teachers suggested that lack of parent involvement contributed to their challenges. P7 stated, “The number one challenge is getting the parents on board. Most parents think that preschool is just a drop off babysitter and they do not really care.” P1 stated she involved parents by sending home monthly informational newsletters: “First, there is a monthly newsletter that is sent out. It kind of gives a general idea of what is going to be covered during that month and the different activities.” P6 mentioned, “We cannot send homework. There are some parents that have the time and there are some parents that can’t because they work.” P9 stated, “We do parental involvement packets and I would send ghostwriting packets.” P9 further explained: “If I’m sitting at home during Christmas break and I think of something, I text the parents and suggest that they should watch so and so.”

Children’s background and environment was another category that teachers cited as a factor that influences children’s learning and readiness. P2 stated:

> Definitely having the knowledge, the educational background, and the understanding of what is expected of children when they reach a certain age or certain level. That is definitely something that as a preschool teacher, you have to keep in mind and work towards certain goals to get the kids ready.

P3 described ways that children can become school ready in spite of their background and environment: “A child’s economic background might not be all that great, but if that parent instills it in you, it makes a difference to the situation.” Although a child’s economic background and environment can affect a child’s readiness, a high-quality

education can be the support that children need to be academically ready for kindergarten, as well as have a productive educational career in the future years.

In summary, teachers discussed the issues and factors that affected the school readiness of children. Teachers shared that the lack of parental involvement played a factor in preparing children for kindergarten and not having the support from the parents presents a problem of effectively building a positive relationship that would ensure success for the child. The lack of time and children's education and home background were factors that were found as issues that hindered teachers in how they could academically prepare children for kindergarten.

Results Associated With Theme 3

I asked all 10 participants what were the most crucial skills or developmental milestones that children require in order to be ready to succeed academically in kindergarten, P1 noted, "Fine motor skills are very important. Because they have to be able to hold that pencil and do those strokes. That those letter and numbers are the way that they're expected to be." P2 mentioned that following the classroom schedule is one of the most important skills that children should have to be successful in kindergarten:

> Most definitely the ability to follow a schedule or some type of structure is important to readiness. Understanding that the schedule that you have to follow during the day, it's like a huge thing when it comes to having successful integration into kindergarten.

P6 stated the required milestones that children needed to reach were recognizing their letters, letter sounds, as well as social skills: "Students need to be able to recognize the

alphabet and sounds. I think that the social skills are needed in kindergarten, but every child is not at the same level." P10 had a few ideas of what she considered as skills and milestones for school readiness: "know their first name, last name, how to pronounce first name, last name, know how to at least write their first name. All letters of the alphabet. Here at Drew Central they require a lot more than that." P5 had a slightly different outlook of what she perceived as required milestones and skills that children needed to possess in order to be academically ready for kindergarten, stating, "There are basic skills like being able to sit still, listening, having good comprehension skills and understanding." Although there were slight differences in what teachers considered the required milestones and skills that children needed to be academically ready, they all have the belief that these skills are important in a child's education.

Teachers in this study suggested that assessments were an effective tool that assisted them in determining whether children were academically ready for kindergarten. P1 noted, "I know a child is academically ready for kindergarten when I can go through this list that I have that tells me what they need to." P1 also stated, "They [children] can give me over 60% of what I need for them to know and that lets me know, I feel like they are ready." P5 stated, "We do assessments when they come in. An assessment is: do you know your first name, your last name, your date of birth. They had to tell us their alphabets and they can count one to 10." Similarly, P6 stated, "Assessment lets us know whether they have been learning, what they have learned, and what they're still struggling with." Lastly, P10 stated,

> This is my personal opinion and what I do is even though the kindergarten teachers bring me a checklist sheet, I go by that checklist. I also have my own personal checklist sheet that I go by as well. If I see a child know so much of this or knows so much that, it is an indicator to me that shows their growth and maturity level.

Most teachers interviewed stated that emotional maturity is the most important skill that children should possess when becoming academically ready for kindergarten. P1 described emotional maturity as being one skill that some children do not possess, as well as how that can affect children in social situations in the classroom. P1 noted,

> I think that socially there are a lot of kids that do not necessarily have a lot of social skills. Some children have never attended preschool and have been around family the whole time. They may not necessarily know how to parallel play or play with other children, but that is something that they can learn and pick up very quickly.

P4 mentioned,

> Social skills are very important. It is scary enough to go into a school where you must develop relationships with other peers, teachers, and other adults. It is very important that a child develop social interactive skills and relationships with people and peers of their age. That will help them better inside of a classroom and a school.

P7 expounded:

> He or she must have those social emotional skills to be able to handle those adjustments and if he/she does not have those social emotional skills, then how will he/she be able their anger and outbursts? And if he/she does not have a teacher who understands them, then they're going to have a hard time adjusting.

When the question of cognition in readiness was raised in the study, P1 stated how cognitive skills can be correlated into children's academic readiness. P1 elaborated:

> I would say that a [child's general knowledge or cognitive skills] are very important. Why? because no matter how you look at it, it all plays a role in academics, because at some point, you [children] have to be able to sit there and comprehend what is being said. You have to play it back. You have to give it back. Like it all correlates.

P2 stated,

> As far as you know, them having this ability to express basic needs, but a child will definitely have hard time catching up if they had absooutely no exposure or very little exposure to any type of skills. They are basically kind of of thrown into kindergarten.

P3 noted,

> I think cognitive skills are important.When I first started, I felt that kids were being pushed a little too hard because a lot of them had a hard time of figuring things out. Over time, some children begin to have cognitive understanding and then they'll be ready for kindergarten.

P4 explained, saying, “I feel that children need to have some kind of base knowledge for their cognitive development to be prepared for kindergarten. I feel like you need to know some basics.” P8 explained, “Well you know that cognitive skills are important because they all tie in together.” Responses from these participants established that cognitive skills are important in readiness and that this skill is included necessary alongside other skills pertaining to prekindergarten academic readiness.

P2 stated the necessity of exposure to language and how the lack of rich language exposure can affect a child’s academic readiness:

> The inability to express what they want or what they need, especially basic skills or basic needs. Thr frustration, a lot of behaviot comes form the lack of being able to express your wants and needs, but it can be in any type of form.

P8 stated, “I think it’s important to have a rich exposure to language. Because they are learning and people are speaking in different things. So it’s important that they know how to speak.” P9 explained,

> Language skill exposure is very important. It’s the vocabulary and the vernacular of a child. You have to listen to kids, and you really don’t expect much or if you get a 4 year old that barely talks, sometimes there can be a developmental delay.

A few teachers expressed mixed feelings about the importance of children’s exposure to rich language in readiness. P1 noted:

> A kid in my class that had been exposed to language at home. One, they will talk all day long. That will talk when it’s not their turn, when you’re trying to teach

> something and they already know it, they are willing to correct you. If you do it wrong, they're going to correct you.

Most teachers seemed to agree with P10, who stated, "Language skills are very important because if they do not know what you're talking to them about or what you're asking them, then they are going to be lost."

The importance of physical well-being in school readiness varied from teacher to teacher. P2 stated:

> Well , the physical well-being is important, but it's really not everything. I think we see more of a need for emotional, social, and mental health skills. There is more of a need for that rather than physical well-being. You can have a child that has a disability, using some kind of assistive technology or a child that uses a wheelchair are just as successful as somebody who is able bodied.

P4 noted,

> Getting their immunizations are up to par, getting accurate amount of rest, being on a schedule, and have nutritious meals. We have our meals being a part of the USDA meals where children can get breakfast, lunch, and snack. Some kids do not even get that at home.

P6 stated that the lack of physical well-being should not necessarily affect children's school readiness.

P6 said, "I guess that it depends, but physical ability really should not affect readiness because we have some that are disabled and I do not think that it should keep them from being successful." In contrast, P10 stated that physical well-being played a

major role in readiness and if this domain of development is not properly cultivated, it can negatively affect children's outcomes in school. P10 remarked, "That is one of the most important things. If they are not physically or mentally prepared, it's hard on them." Physical well-being plays a huge role in how they learn."

The results of this theme explored a total of six categories in regards of teacher concerns for skill mastery. Responses from the participants indicated that teachers strongly believe that assessments are a useful tool that assists them as an indicator of children's academic readiness. Another finding that was discovered in this theme was that the importance of cognition in readiness is included as being one of the many important domains of development in children's academic readiness. Finally, the importance of physical well-being can affect a child's school readiness if it not properly fostered by educators in the classroom.

Summary of Results

Several key finding emerged from the data. The first key finding was that teachers shared a belief that school readiness is a a valid goal in prekindergarten teaching. Another key finding that emerged from the data was factors such as the lack of parental involvement, lack of instructional time, and changes in the classroom created challenges for the teacher with regard to children's prekindergarten academic readiness. A third key finding that emerged is that the firsthand classroom experiences that the teachers have in assessing children's skills have shaped their instruction, as well as how they decide to prepare children for kindergarten. The last key finding that emerged is that teachers have concerns about children's mastery in their skills, and the importance of cultivating those

skills effectively to ensure prekindergarten readiness. Teachers suggest negative implications for children's school success when essential academic skills are not cultivated in children before they begin kindergarten.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

As a means of establishing credibility, I conducted semistructured interviews with a variety of individuals which provided triangulation of data. The questions that were created were based on the literature. Before I conducted interviews with my participants, I conducted a trial with a few colleagues to ensure crebility. The interviews supplied prolonged engagement with those participants, which established a trusting relationship between myself and the participants. The participants also looked over their interview transcripts to ensure that the information they provided were factual and concise.

I developed transferability in my study by providing thick descriptions of both the participants and the overall research process to help readers make sound judgment on whether the findings that I had discovered within my research could be processed in their own way. The participants were all located within the same region of the target state. This allowed me to maintain transferability throughout my data and the results. Because of the thick descriptions, this allows my readers to gain a deeper understanding of my research, as well as assist them in finding the key points that I attempted to communicate.

I maintained dependability during the data collection process by using audit trails. By using audit trails, I kept records of how I conducted the research. Using the audit trails helped me to figure out the next steps that I needed to take while conducting my research, as well as collecting data. To support confirmability, I emailed interview transcriptions to

each of the participants so that they could review their transcription for accuracy, as well as make changes if they wished to do so. This was a reflection of their own perspectives as prekindergarten teachers who participated in the study.

Summary

The purpose of this basic qualitative study with semistructured interviews was to explore prekindergarten teachers' perspectives regarding their support of academic readiness for kindergarten in prekindergarten students. Results indicated that teachers do have shared beliefs of what they defined as school readiness, as well as the various dimensions of school readiness as being a applicable concept. The second result revealed barriers that hindered teachers in their role as instructor in prekindergarten academic readiness. The third finding highlighted the experiences that teachers have had in teaching prekindergarten students have shaped their beliefs in how they prepare children for kindergarten. Participants identified concerns that they have when teaching, as well as the importance of skills being properly cultivated. There were also implications of skills not being mastered by children and the affects of those implications in children's learning. A discussion of these findings will be discussed further in Chapter 5.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore prekindergarten teachers' perspectives regarding their support of academic readiness for kindergarten students. Results indicated that teachers do have shared beliefs of what they defined as school readiness and the various dimensions of school readiness as being an applicable concept. Barriers that hindered teachers in their role as instructor in prekindergarten readiness included inconsistent parental involvement, lack of instructional time, and changes made in the classroom. Another key finding was that teachers' experiences in teaching prekindergarten students shaped their beliefs in how they prepare children for kindergarten. The last key finding that emerged was that teachers have concerns about children's mastery in their skills and the importance of cultivating those skills effectively to ensure prekindergarten readiness. In this chapter, I present an interpretation of the findings and suggest recommendations for future research and implications for practice that derive from the findings.

Interpretation of Findings

The first key finding was that teachers shared a belief that school readiness is a valid goal in prekindergarten teaching. Teacher beliefs play a critical role in readiness because teachers are responsible in the cultivation and development of prekindergarten children. This particular finding aligns with the work of Rimm-Kaufman and Pianta (2020), who indicated that although child factors and factors in the child's environment may affect readiness, prekindergarten teachers have agency in supporting children's academic readiness in kindergarten. This current study finding also aligns with the work

of Scherr and Johnson (2019), who suggested focusing preschool education on kindergarten readiness reflects notions that teaching academics is an appropriate measure of quality. Rouse et al. (2023) stated that while educators are reporting on academic readiness as an important precursor for school success, there is also a wide body of literature that suggests that educators identify social and emotional readiness as greater indicators of future school success than any other factor.

Another key finding was that factors, such as the lack of parental involvement, lack of instructional time, and changes in the classroom, create challenges for the teacher with regard to children's prekindergarten academic readiness. These factors present noticeable barriers that hinder prekingerten teachers from effectively executing classroom curriculum, and therefore, forfeiting positive child learning outcomes. Bernstein et al. (2019) had similar findings that revealed risk factors that affect children's school readiness include family socioeconomic status, ethnic backgrounds, and parents' educational background. Bernstein et al. suggested that those factors are correlated with children's cognitive, language, and social skills prior to their entry into kindergarten. Rimm-Kaufman and Pianta (2020) agreed that challenges with classroom management and noninstructional activities interfere with teacher effectiveness. Rimm-Kaufman and Pianta stated the average prekindergarten child is exposed to some form of learning activity for roughly one third of the time they spend in the classroom, while almost 30% of time is devoted to management and routine activities and another 40% is devoted to nonacademic or no content. Purtell et al. (2020) noted commonly used practices, such as sending letters home to parents and children, did not directly afford engagement between

teachers and parents and may not facilitate relationship development. Additionally, more direct relationship-building practices were much less common, with only 5% of teachers conducting home visits with families and only 54% talking with parents before the school year started (Purtell et al., 2020). This finding of challenges to teacher readiness efforts also aligns with the work of Ricciardi et al. (2021), who found that income and ethnicity play a large role in academic achievement to the disadavantage of low-income students and students of color.

The third key finding was that the firsthand classroom experiences that teachers have in assessing children's skills shape their instruction and how they decide to prepare children for kindergarten. Participants had awareness that children learn in different ways and at different speeds, and assessment helped them to differentiate instructional practices in children's academic preparation for kindergarten. This finding aligns with the work of Russo et al. (2019), who stated performance-based, observational measures require teachers to collect data from several sources, including observational notes and samples of children's work. Darling-Hammond et al. (2020) noted the emphasis in readiness assessment on discrete skills or holistic patterns of thinking creates an expectation of what is to be taught and how. In contrast, Gokce (2019) suggested that because young children are familiar with their classroom surroundings, the most appropriate of assessment for young children is the observation of play and classroom activities rather than using the standardized tests.

The last key finding of this study is that teachers have concerns about children's mastery of skills needed to ensure prekindergarten readiness. Although teachers are

placed in the essential role of influence in a child's earliest years of education, their concerns with how they assist their students in mastering academic readiness skills can create an issue of low self-efficacy beliefs surrounding readiness. Allee et al. (2023) noted teachers now report significant increased academic expectations of children at kindergarten entry compared to 30 years ago. This finding aligns with the work of Murphy et al. (2023), who mentioned that teachers reported feeling underprepared, unqualified, and unsupported at the start of virtual learning during the COVID-19 pandemic, which led many to quit. This reduction in experienced teachers caused concern about the lack of qualified early education teachers remaining in the profession. Teachers with low self-efficacy face difficulty in performing their task (Musa et al., 2019). Lastly, Nasiopoulou (2023) cited that the intensified learning orientation of the preschool curriculum over the last decade, combined with a lack of knowledge and the didactic skills in specific content areas, affect the preschool teachers' work with challenging curriculum content areas, particularly when there is an increase of the number of children in the group.

Limitations of the Study

One limitation that could have affected the current study was that a few participants had difficulty answering one of the interview questions that pertained to general knowledge: "For a child to be academically ready for kindergarten, how important is a child's general knowledge?" The responses of the participants were limited, even when the question was presented to them to be answered to the best of their knowledge and ability. Another limitation was that two participants who agreed to

interview with me withdrew at the last minute. This presented a challenge for the study because these two participants were included in the original 10 that volunteered for interviews, forcing me to reopen recruitment to replace them. Despite the fact that the withdrawals of the participants posed a problem, I was able to replace them with two new participants; therefore, the results of the study were not affected.

Recommendations

Because participants of the study were located in only one region of the focus state, I recommend that the study be replicated in a different location within the state. In addition, replicating the study with a larger population and using the same method of study but with more participants could provide additional information about teacher perspectives of the academic readiness of prekindergarten children.

Another recommendation is that researchers explore the issue of teachers' self-efficacy with regard to kindergarten readiness. The work of Murphy et al. (2023) and the experiences participants shared in this study suggested that lack of self-efficacy may be an important variable regarding teachers' effectiveness. A similar study of preservice teacher training and in-service professional development around readiness instruction might help discover the source of the lack of self-efficacy that was hinted at in this study.

My last recommendation is that future studies be conducted to explore the complexity of what is expected of children at kindergarten entry and consider if these expectations are excessive. This possibility emerged in connection with expressions of low self-efficacy by some participants in the study and as a factor cited by Allee et al. (2023). Low teacher self-efficacy suggests a reason why some children do not meet

readiness requirements. Kindergarten is an important first step in students' academic career, but it may be that getting children ready for today's kindergarten demands is a more difficult task than some preschool teachers and students can accomplish.

Implications

One implication of this study is that administrators should take the same training and professional development courses, particularly in kindergarten readiness, that teachers are required to take. Training alongside the teachers would give administration a sense of exactly what is required of educators from the curriculum as well as provide them with an understanding of the pressure of getting an entire class of 5-year-olds prepared for formal school. Having additional training may help administrators become better equipped to talk to parents and other stakeholders about kindergarten expectations and have a better understanding of the work preschool teachers do.

Another implication of this study is that teachers should be more proactive in inviting parents to help in their child's education and engage with parents if teachers have any questions or concerns about the child. Teachers should contact the parent on a regular basis to share positive things that are occurring with the child in the classroom, which can allow for a positive, collaborative relationship to develop between both parties.

A further implication of this study is that because teachers said they lack instructional time because of the need to handle behaviors in the classroom, teachers should be more intentional in using methods to maximize instructional time and minimize behaviors that interrupt instructional time. One action that could be taken is that teachers come up with a cohesive and effective set of rules for managing their classroom. Having

classroom rules and expectations of those rules being followed can provide structure and reduce behavioral issues within the classroom setting. Another action that teachers could take is spending additional time with the child or children that display behavioral problems in the classroom. Individualized instructional that includes instruction in social skills will allow teachers to address the individualized needs of their students, especially those students that may experience difficulty in learning the lesson of the day, as well as motivate and challenge those students who are already familiar with the material. Adding additional help, such as teacher assistants or paraprofessionals, can be an effective way to increase instructional time because these individuals can give attention to children with behavior issues and help in managing said behavior.

A final implication of this study is that administrators recognize some teachers' lack of self-efficacy regarding their ability to get all of their students prepared for kindergarten. Administrators should provide teachers with professional development in supporting school readiness and addressing individual needs, thus bolstering confidence in their teaching abilities. Administrators might also provide teachers with a community of practice in which to discuss their instructional issues with their colleagues, develop creative ideas for improving instruction, and prevent isolation that may contribute to low self-efficacy. Finally, administrators should reexamine skills expected of children at kindergarten entrance and determine if they are asking too much of children and of their prekindergarten teachers.

Conclusion

The problem explored in this study was that early childhood educators in the target state are challenged to support academic readiness for kindergarten in prekindergarten students. I conducted this study to explore the perspectives of prekindergarten teachers because these individuals are responsible for the preparation and transformation of young children into students prior to advancing into kindergarten. The conceptual framework based on Rimm-Kaufman and Pianta's (2000) theory of school readiness suggested a variety of factors affect kindergarten readiness, including teacher actions and teacher relationships with parents. I interviewed 10 prekindergarten teachers via Zoom and thematically analyzed the collected data. The results indicated that teachers have a shared belief of what they defined as school readiness and shared factors, such as the lack of parental involvement, lack of instructional time, and changes in the classroom, that affected teachers' effectiveness in helping students achieve kindergarten readiness. An additional finding was that participants' firsthand classroom experiences in assessing children's skills shape their instructional practices and how they decide to prepare children for kindergarten. The last key finding was that teachers have a concern regarding their students' skill mastery. Teachers in the study were aware that they play an essential role in children's early years of education, but they had concerns about their inability to develop academic readiness skills in some of their students, and these concerns contributed to feelings of low self-efficacy surrounding student readiness. The literature cited in this study and the experiences participants of the study shared suggested that the lack of self-efficacy could be an important variable affecting teachers' effectiveness.

Despite the barriers that teachers face in their role as educators, administrators and teachers can collaborate to adjust their present strategies that are used in the classroom to create positive, effective methods for parental involvement, instructional time, and changes in the classroom that would prove acceptable in meeting the needs of their students. Teachers need to have more of an awareness of how they assess the skills of their students and be intentional in providing their students with individualized instruction that fills the students' readiness gaps. These actions could bring about a powerful social change in the early childhood field but, most importantly, could result in the overall support of prekindergarten teachers and their successful preparation of prekindergarten children for kindergarten and beyond.

References

Akanle, O., Ademuson, A. O., & Shittu, O. S. (2020). Scope and limitation of study in social research. In A. Ademuson & O. S. Shittu (Eds.), *Contemporary issues in social research* (pp. 105 – 114). Ibadan University Press. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/345136333_Scope_and_Limitation_of_Study_in_Social_Research

Allee, K. A., Clark, M. H., Bai, H., & Roberts, S. K. (2024). Direct and indirect impacts of voluntary pre-kindergarten on kindergarten readiness and achievement. *Early Childhood Education Journal, 52*(2), 319–331.

Allen, M. (2017). *The sage encyclopedia of communication research methods (Vols. 1-4).* SAGE Publications, Inc.

Ansari, A., Pianta, R. C., Whittaker, J. E., Vitiello, V., & Ruzek, E. (2021). Enrollment in public-prekindergarten and school readiness skills at kindergarten entry: Differential associations by home language, income, and program characteristics. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly, 54*, 60–71. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecresq.2020.07.011

Avelar, D., Hull, D., & Middlemiss, W. (2023). Children's pre-academic school readiness and home learning activities: A moderated-mediation analysis of home visiting. *Frontiers in Psychology, 14*, 1245893. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2023.1245893

Bai, P., Johnson, S., Trost, S. G., Lester, L., Nathan, A., & Christian, H. (2021). The relationship between physical activity, self-regulation and cognitive school

readiness in preschool children. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health, 18*(22), 11797. https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph182211797

Beecher, C. C., & Van Pay, C. K. (2021, February). Small talk: A community research collaboration to increase parental provision of language to children. *Child & Youth Care Forum, 50*(1), 13–38. https://doi.org/10.1007/S10566-019-09507-7

Bender, S. L., Pham, A. V., & Carlson, J. S. (2011) School readiness. In S. Goldstein & J. A. Naglieri (Eds.), *Encyclopedia of child behavior and development* (p. 191). Springer.

Bernstein, S., Barnett, W. S., & Ackerman, D. J. (2019). *What is readiness? Preparing all children to succeed in kindergarten and beyond. Preschool policy brief.* National Institute for Early Education Research. https://nieer.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/NIEER-Policy-Brief-August-2019.pdf

Birkeland, J., Baste, V., & Eriksen Ødegaard, E. (2020). Observation as a professional tool in Norwegian kindergartens and kindergarten teacher education. *Cogent Education, 7*(1), 1789381. https://doi.org/10.1080/2331186X.2020.1789381

Bowen, G. A. (2009). Supporting a grounded theory with an audit trail: An illustration. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology, 12*(4), 305–316. https://doi.org/10.1080/13645570802156196

Brookhart, S. M. (2018, April). Appropriate criteria: Key to effective rubrics. *Frontiers in Education, 3*, 22. https://doi.org/10.3389/feduc.2018.00022

Bureau of Labor Statistics, U. S. Department of Labor. (2020). *Occupational outlook handbook, preschool teachers.* https://www.bls.gov./ooh/education-training-and-

library/preschool-teachers.htm

Caelli, K., Ray, L., & Mill, J. (2003). “Clear as mud”: Toward greater clarity in generic qualitative research. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods, 2*(2), 1–13. https://doi.org/10.1177/160940690300200201

Campbell, S., Greenwood, M., Prior, S., Shearer, T., Walkem, K., Young, S., & Walker, K. (2020). Purposive sampling: Complex or simple? Research case examples. *Journal of Research in Nursing, 25*(8), 652–661. https://doi.org/10.1177/1744987120927206

Castleberry, A., & Nolen, A. (2018). Thematic analysis of qualitative research data: Is it as easy as it sounds? *Currents in Pharmacy Teaching and Learning, 10*(6), 807–815. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cptl.2018.03.019

Chaparro, J., Sojourner, A., & Wiswall, M. J. (2020). *Early childhood care and cognitive development* (No. w26813). National Bureau of Economic Research. http://www.nber.org/papers/w26813

Chen, J., Jiang, H., Justice, L. M., Lin, T. J., Purtell, K. M., & Ansari, A. (2020). Influences of teacher–child relationships and classroom social management on child-perceived peer social experiences during early school years. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 2746. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2020.586991

Cheung, W. C., Ostrosky, M. M., Yang, H. W., Akamoglu, Y., Favazza, P. C., & Aronson-Ensign, K. (2019). Merging motor and cognitive development: There’s so much to learn while being physically active! *Grantee Submission, 33*(3), 48–54.

Clay, K., Lingwall, J., & Stephens, M. (2012, October). *Do schooling laws matter? Evidence from the introduction of compulsory attendance laws in the United States.* National Bureau of Economic Research. https://doi.org/10.3386/W18477.

Connelly, L. M. (2016). Trustworthiness in qualitative research. *Medsurg Nursing, 25*(6), 435.

Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2016). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches.* Sage Publications.

De Kleijn, R., & Van Leeuwen, A. (2018). Reflections and review on the audit procedure: Guidelines for more transparency. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods, 17*(1). https://doi.org/10.1177/160940691876321

DiCicco-Bloom, B., & Crabtree, B. F. (2006). The qualitative research interview. *Medical Education, 40*(4), 314–321. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1365-2929.2006.02418.x

Emig, C. (2000). *School readiness: Helping communities get children ready for school and schools ready for children.* Child Trends Research Brief.

Engzell, P., Frey, A., & Verhagen, M. D. (2021). Learning loss due to school closures during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, 118*(17), e2022376118. https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.2022376118

Etikan, I., Alkassim, R., & Abubakar, S. (2016). Comparison of snowball sampling and sequential sampling technique. *Biometrics and Biostatistics International Journal, 3*(1). https://doi.org/10.15406/bbij.2016.03.00055

Ford, E. (2020). Tell me your story: Narrative inquiry in LIS research. *College &*

Research Libraries, 81(2), 235. https://doi.org/10.5860/crl.81.2.235

Gerring, J. (2004). What is a case study and what is it good for? *American Political Science Review, 98*(2), 341–354. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003055404001182

Gökce, K. (2019). Observing young children's play: A brief review. *Gyermeknevelés Tudományos Folyóirat, 7*(2-3), 20-27. https://edit.elte.hu/xmlui/bitstream/handle/10831/57660/GyN_7evf_2019_2-3sz_G%C3%B6kce.pdf

Grysman, A., & Lodi-Smith, J. (2019). Methods for conducting and publishing narrative research with undergraduates. *Frontiers in Psychology, 9*, 2771. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2018.02771

Gyamfi, A., Langee, P., Yeboah, A., & Adu, I. A. (2023). Performance-based assessment in contemporary classroom assessment: The forms and nature. *Asian Research Journal of Arts & Social Sciences, 19*(4), 1–7. https://doi.org/10.9734/ARJASS/2023/v19i4431

Hadani, H., & Rood, E. (2016). *Reimaging school readiness.* https://bayareadiscoverymuseum.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/SchoolReadinessLitReview_Issuu.pdf

Hammersley, M. (2006). Ethnography: Problems and prospects. *Ethnography and Education, 1*(1), 3–14. https://doi.org/10.1080/17457820500512697

Darling-Hammond, L., Flook, L., Cook-Harvey, C., Barron, B., & Osher, D. (2020). Implications for educational practice of the science of learning and development. *Applied Developmental Science, 24*(2), 97–140.

https://doi.org/10.1080/10888691.2018.1537791

Hansen, J. E., & Broekhuizen, M. L. (2021). Quality of the language-learning environment and vocabulary development in early childhood. *Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research, 65*(2), 302–317. https://doi.org/10.1080/00313831.2019.1705894

Heydarnejad, T., Tagavipour, F., Patra, I., & Farid Khafaga, A. (2022). The impacts of performance-based assessment on reading comprehension achievement, academic motivation, foreign language anxiety, and students' self-efficacy. *Language Testing in Asia, 12*(1), 51. https://doi.org/10.1186/s40468-022-00202-4

Hoskisson, K. (1977). Reading readiness: Three viewpoints. *The Elementary School Journal, 78*(1), 45–52. https://doi.org/10.1086/461082

Johnson, K. A., & St. John III, B. (2020). News stories on the Facebook platform: Millennials' perceived credibility of online news sponsored by news and non-news companies. *Journalism Practice, 14*(6), 749–767. https://doi.org/10.1080/17512786.2019.1637272

Junge, C., Valkenburg, P. M., Deković, M., & Branje, S. (2020). The building blocks of social competence: Contributions of the Consortium of Individual Development. *Developmental Cognitive Neuroscience, 45*, 100861. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.dcn.2020.100861

Kelley, K., Clark, B., Brown, V., & Sitzia, J. (2003). Good practice in the conduct and reporting of survey research. *International Journal for Quality in Health Care, 15*(3), 261–266. https://doi.org/10.1093/intqhc/mzg031

Kim, S., Raza, M., & Seidman, E. (2019). Improving 21st-century teaching skills: The key to effective 21st-century learners. *Research in Comparative and International Education, 14*(1), 99–117. https://doi.org/10.1177/1745499919829214

Kober, N., & Rentner, D. S. (2020). *History and evolution of public education in the US.* Center on Education Policy.

Korstjens, I., & Moser, A. (2017). Series: Practical guidance to qualitative research. Part 2: Context, research questions and designs. *European Journal of General Practice, 23*(1), 274–279. https://doi.org/10.1080/13814788.2017.1375090

Kuhfeld, M., Soland, J., Pitts, C., & Burchinal, M. (2020). Trends in children's academic skills at school entry: 2010 to 2017. *Educational Researcher, 49*(6), 403–414. https://doi.org/10.3102/0013189X20931078

La Paro, K. M., Pianta, R. C., & Cox, M. J. (2000). Teachers' reported transition practices for children transitioning into kindergarten and first grade. *Exceptional Children, 67*(1), 7–20. https://doi.org/10.1177/001440290006700101

Latief, M. A. (2009). *Assumption and hypothesis in language learning research.* https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Mohammad-Latief/publication/228385864_Assumption_and_Hypothesis_in_Language_Learning_Research/links/58119b9f08aef2ef97b2e007/Assumption-and-Hypothesis-in-Language-Learning-Research.pdf

Linberg, A., Lehrl, S., & Weinert, S. (2020). The early years home learning environment – associations with parent-child-course attendance and children's vocabulary at age 3. *Frontiers in Psychology, 11*(1425).

https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2020.01425

Linder, S. M., Ramey, M. D., & Zambak, S. (2013). Predictors of school readiness in literacy and mathematics: A selective review of the literature. *Early Childhood Research & Practice, 15*(1). https://ecrp.illinois.edu/v15n1/linder.html

LoCasale-Crouch, J., Mashburn, A. J., Downer, J. T., & Pianta, R. C. (2008). Pre-kindergarten teachers' use of transition practices and children's adjustment to kindergarten. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly, 23*(1), 124–139. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecresq.2007.06.001

Mak, T. C., Chan, D. K., & Capio, C. M. (2021). Strategies for teachers to promote physical activity in early childhood education settings—A scoping review. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health, 18*(3), 867. https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph18030867

Manning, J. (2017). In vivo coding. *The International Encyclopedia of Communication Research Methods, 24*(1-2). https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118901731

Martinsone, B., Supe, I., Stokenberga, I., Damberga, I., Cefai, C., Camilleri, L., Bartolo, P., O'Riordan, M. R., & Grazzani, I. (2022). Social emotional competence, learning outcomes, emotional and behavioral difficulties of preschool children: Parent and teacher evaluations. *Frontiers in Psychology, 12*, 760782. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.760782

Mashburn, A. J., & Pianta, R. C. (2006). Social relationships and school readiness. *Early Education and Development, 17*(1), 151–176. https://doi.org/10.1207/s15566935eed1701_7

Mason, J. M., & Sinha, S. (1992). *Emerging literacy in the early childhood years: Applying a Vygotskian model of learning and development.* Center for the Study of Reading Technical Report.

May, C. R., & Campbell, R. M. (1981). Readiness for learning: Assumptions and realities. *Theory Into Practice, 20*(2), 130–134. https://doi.org/10.1080/00405848109542941

McCoy, D. C., Gonzalez, K., & Jones, S. (2019). Preschool self-regulation and preacademic skills as mediators of the long-term impacts of an early intervention. *Child Development, 90*(5), 1544–1558. https://doi.org/10.1111/cdev.13289

Meates, J. (2021). Problematic digital technology use in children and adolescents: Impact on physical well-being. *Teachers and Curriculum, 21*(1), 77–91.

Meloy, B., Gardner, M., & Darling-Hammond, L. (2019). *Untangling the evidence on preschool effectiveness: Insights for policymakers.* Learning Policy Institute. https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/product/untangling-evidence-preschool-effectiveness-report

Miller-Bains, K. L., Russo, J. M., Williford, A. P., DeCoster, J., & Cottone, E. A. (2017). Examining the validity of a multidimensional performance-based assessment at kindergarten entry. *AERA Open, 3*(2), 2332858417706969. https://doi.org/10.1177/2332858417706969

Mills, A. J., Durepos, G., & Wiebe, E. (2010). Credibility. In *Encyclopedia of case study research* (pp. 243-244). SAGE Publications,

Moen, T. (2006). Reflections on the narrative research approach. *International Journal of*

Qualitative Methods, 5(4), 56–69. https://doi.org/10.1177/160940690600500405

Moon, J. B., Dewitt, T. H., Errend, M. N., Bruins, R. J., Kentula, M. E., Chamberlain, S. J., Fennessy, M. S., & Naithani, K. J. (2017). Model application niche analysis: Assessing the transferability and generalizability of ecological models. *Ecosphere, 8*(10), e01974. https://doi.org/10.1002/ecs2.1974

Murphy, K., Giordano, K., & Deloach, T. (2023). Pre-k and kindergarten teacher perception of school readiness during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Early Childhood Education Journal, 52*, 1–11.

Musa, K., Yusof, H., Noor, M. A. M., Mansor, M., & Abidin, M. Z. (2019). The influence of pre-service teacher's self-efficacy on teacher leadership readiness. *International Journal of Academic Research in Progressive Education & Development, 8*(4), 66–76. https://doi.org/10.6007/IJARPED/v8-i4/6436

Nasiopoulou, P., Williams, P., & Lantz-Andersson, A. (2022). Preschool teachers' work with curriculum content areas in relation to their professional competence and group size in preschool: A mixed-methods analysis. *Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research, 66*(3), 533–548. https://doi.org/10.1080/00313831.2021.1897875

National Association for the Education of Young Children. (1993). *A conceptual framework for early childhood professional development.* https://www.naeyc.org/sites/default/files/globally-shared/downloads/PDFs/resources/position-statements/PSCONF98.PDF

National Institute for Early Education Research. (2020). *The state of preschool.*

https://nieer.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/YB2019_Full_Report.pdf

Nowell, L. S., Norris, J. M., White, D. E., & Moules, N. J. (2017). Thematic analysis: Striving to meet the trustworthiness criteria. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods, 16*(1), 1609406917733847. https://doi.org/10.1177/1609406917733847

Pan, Q., Trang, K. T., Love, H. R., & Templin, J. (2019, November). School readiness profiles and growth in academic achievement. *Frontiers in Education, 4*, 127. https://doi.org/10.3389/feduc.2019.00127

Pearson, P. D. (2000). *Reading in the twentieth century*.

Peterson, G., & Elam, E. (2020). *Observation and assessment in early childhood education*. College of the Canyons.

Pianta, R. (2002). *School readiness: A focus on children, families, communities, and schools.* The Informed Educator Series.

Pianta, R. C., Whittaker, J. E., Vitiello, V., Ruzek, E., Ansari, A., Hofkens, T., & DeCoster, J. (2020). Children's school readiness skills across the pre-K year: Associations with teacher-student interactions, teacher practices, and exposure to academic content. *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology, 66*, 101084. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.appdev.2019.101084

Polly, D. (2019). Performance-based assessment in preparing teachers. In *Oxford research encyclopedia of education.* https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190264093.013.752

Pratiwi, N. M. R. H., Padmadewi, N. N., & Paramartha, A. A. G. Y. (2019). A study on the literacy-rich classroom environment at bilingual kindergarten Singaraja Bali.

International Journal of Language and Literature, 3(2), 68–77. https://doi.org/10.23887/ijll.v3i2.20844

Purtell, K. M., Valauri, A., Rhoad-Drogalis, A., Jiang, H., Justice, L. M., Lin, T. J., & Logan, J. A. (2020). Understanding policies and practices that support successful transitions to kindergarten. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly, 52*, 5–14. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecresq.2019.09.003

Ray, K., & Smith, M. C. (2010). The kindergarten child: What teachers and administrators need to know to promote academic success in all children. *Early Childhood Education Journal, 38*(1), 5-18. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10643-010-0383-3

Ravitch, S., & Carl, N. M. (2016). *Qualitative research: Bridging the conceptual, theoretical, and methodological.* Sage Publications.

Retnawati, H., Kistoro, A., Cahyo, H., & Putranta, H. (2021). School readiness assessment: Study of early childhood educator experience. *Ilkogretim Online, 20*(1). https://doi.org/10.17051/ilkonline.2021.01.041

Ricciardi, C., Manfra, L., Hartman, S., Bleiker, C., Dineheart, L., & Winsler, A. (2021). School readiness skills at age four predict academic achievement through 5th grade. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly, 57*, 110–120. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecresq.2021.05.006

Rimm-Kaufman, S. E., & Pianta, R. C. (2000). An ecological perspective on the transition to kindergarten: A theoretical framework to guide empirical research. *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology, 21*(5), 491–511.

https://doi.org/10.1016/S0193-3973(00)00051-4

Romero-López, M., Pichardo, M. C., Bembibre-Serrano, J., & García-Berbén, T. (2020). Promoting social competence in preschool with an executive functions program conducted by teachers. *Sustainability, 12*(11), 4408. https://doi.org/10.3390/su12114408

Roslow, S. (1940). Reading readiness and reading achievement in first grade. *The Journal of Experimental Education, 9*(2), 154–159. https://doi.org/10.1080/00220973.1940.11010200

Rouse, E., Nicholas, M., & Garner, R. (2023). School readiness–what does this mean? Educators' perceptions using a cross sector comparison. *International Journal of Early Years Education*, 1–15. https://doi.org/10.1080/09669760.2020.1733938

Russell, D. H. (1943). A diagnostic study of spelling readiness. *The Journal of Educational Research, 37*(4), 276–283. https://doi.org/10.1080/00220671.1943.10881248

Russo, J. M., Williford, A. P., Markowitz, A. J., Vitiello, V. E., & Bassok, D. (2019). Examining the validity of a widely-used school readiness assessment: Implications for teachers and early childhood programs. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly, 48*, 14–25. https://ifp.nyu.edu/2019/journal-article-abstracts/s0885200619300158/

Saldaña, J., & Omasta, M. (2016). *Qualitative research: Analyzing life*. Sage Publications.

Scheffelaar, A., Janssen, M., & Luijkx, K. (2021). The story as a quality instrument:

Developing an instrument for quality improvement based on narratives of older adults receiving long-term care. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health, 18*(5), 2773. https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph18052773

Scherr, M., & Johnson, T. G. (2019). The construction of preschool teacher identity in the public school context. *Early Child Development and Care, 189*(3), 405–415. https://doi.org/10.1080/03004430.2017.1324435

Schindler, A. W. (1948). Readiness for learning. *Childhood Education, 24*(7), 301–304. https://doi.org/10.1080/00094056.1948.10726027

Shore, R. (1998). *Ready schools. A report of the Goal 1 Ready Schools Resource Group*. National Education Goals Panel. https://govinfo.library.unt.edu/negp/reports/98RPT.PDF

Smith, N. B. (1950). Readiness for reading I. *Elementary English, 27*(1), 31–39. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.appdev.2007.06.003

Smit, B., & Onwuegbuzie, A. J. (2018). Observations in qualitative inquiry: When what you see is not what you see. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods, 17*(1), https://doi.org/10.1177/1609406918816766

Snow, K. L. (2006). Measuring school readiness: Conceptual and practical considerations. *Early Education and Development, 17*(1), 7–41. https://doi.org/10.1207/s15566935eed1701_2

Staiger, R. C. (1973). *The teaching of reading*. International Reading Association.

Syah, R., & Hermawati, I. (2018). *Evaluation of children's performance assessment in pre-school.* The 2nd International Conference On Child-Friendly Education

(ICCE) 2018. http://hdl.handle.net/11617/10260

Tekin, E. (2021). *An overview of the child care market in the United States* [White paper]. National Bureau of Economic Research. https://www.nber.org/sites/default/files/2021-10/White%20Paper-Tekin-101.06.21_revised.pdf

Velan, D., & Tatalović Vorkapić, S. (2020). Contextual determinants of kindergarten culture as indicators of children's well-being during their transition and adaptation. *Economic Research, 33*(1), 1182–1193. https://doi.org/10.1080/1331677X.2019.1710230

Wang, J. W., Qu, S., & Zhao, X. (2023). Global hotspots and trends in research on preschool children's motor development from 2012 to 2022: A bibliometric analysis. *Frontiers in Public Health, 11*. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpubh.2023.1118674

Wangke, L., Joey, G., Masloman, N., & Lestari, H. (2021). Factors related to school readiness in children: A cross-sectional analytic study of elementary school children in Manado. *Open Access Macedonian Journal of Medical Sciences, 9*(B), 1387–1393. https://doi.org/10.3889/oamjms.2021.7294

Wesley, P. W., & Buysse, V. (2003). Making meaning of school readiness in schools and communities. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly, 18*(3), 351–375. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0885-2006(03)00044-9

Whipple, G. (1941). Elements in geography readiness. *The Elementary School Journal, 42*(4), 256–267. https://doi.org/10.1086/458018

Williams, P. G., Lerner, M. A., Council on Early Childhood, Council on School Health, Sells, J., Alderman, S. L., Hashikawa, A., ... & Weiss-Harrison, A. (2019). School readiness. *Pediatrics, 144*(2). https://doi.org/10.1542/peds.2019-1766

Zelazo, P. D., Lourenco, S. F., Frank, M. C., Elison, J. T., Heaton, R. K., Wellman, H. M., Slotkin, J., Kharitonova, M., & Reznick, J. S. (2021). Measurement of cognition for the National Children's Study. *Frontiers in Pediatrics, 496*. https://doi.org/10.3389/fped.2021.603126

Ziemba, K. (2019). Educational maturity and motor and somatic development of kindergarten and early school age children. *Journal of Physical Education & Health, 8*(13), 50–61. https://jpeh.po.opole.pl/index.php/jpeh/article/view/17

Appendix: Interview Questions

1. Please describe what comes to mind when you think about kindergarten academic readiness.
2. In your opinion, what are the most crucial skills or developmental milestones that children require in order to be ready to succeed academically in kindergarten?
3. For a child to be academically ready for kindergarten, how important is a child's physical well-being? [Tell me about a time when physical well-being affected a child's academic readiness…]
4. For a child to be academically ready for kindergarten, how important is a child's emotional maturity and confidence in social situations? [Can you give an example of a time when emotional maturity and social confidence affected a child's academic readiness?]
5. For a child to be academically ready for kindergarten, how important is it that a child have a rich exposure to language? [Tell me about a child whose academic readiness seemed to be affected by their level of exposure to rich language?]
6. For a child to be academically ready for kindergarten, how important is a child's general knowledge? [Can you tell me about a child whose academic readiness for kindergarten was affected by their level of general knowledge?]
7. How do you, in your role as a prekindergarten teacher, involve the parents and guardians to participate in their children's development of readiness skills?
8. Tell me about the biggest challenges you find in your work of getting all your children academically ready for kindergarten.

9. How do you know when a child is academically ready for kindergarten?
10. What more can you tell me about children's academic readiness for kindergarten?