5-29-2024

Parents' Perspectives on School Readiness in Preschool-age Children in Idaho

Courtney Painton
Walden University

Walden University

'

College of Education and Human Sciences

This is to certify that the doctoral study by

Courtney Painton

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. Grace Lappin, Committee Chairperson, Education Faculty
Dr. Mary Trube, Committee Member, Education Faculty

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

Walden University
2024

Abstract

Parents' Perspectives on School Readiness in Preschool-age Children in Idaho

by

Courtney Painton

MEd, American College of Education, 2016

BA, The College of Idaho, 2014

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Walden University

May 2024

Abstract

Over half of Idaho's incoming kindergarteners lack the necessary school readiness skills. The environment in which the child lives and grows, which includes the child's parents, determines the child's readiness for school. This study addressed Idaho parents' roles in preparing their preschool-aged child for kindergarten, and their current ability to access resources and information on school readiness. The study was grounded in Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory, which provided a framework for the influence of parents on a child's school readiness outcomes based on the idea that a person's behavior evolves based on the relationship between the person and their environment. This study followed a basic qualitative research design and included interviews with 10 parent participants. Qualitative data about their perspectives on school readiness were collected, and interview data underwent open coding and categorization to identify patterns and themes. During the data analysis process, the data were sorted into five themes using deductive coding. The five themes were Parents' Perspectives and Experiences with their Child's Preschool Program, Parents' Perspectives on the Concept of Kindergarten Readiness, Parental Role and Responsibility, and Access to Resources. The findings may be used for positive social change by increasing stakeholders' understanding of the support parents in Idaho may need to prepare their child for a school setting, which may contribute to closing the kindergarten achievement gap.

Parents' Perspectives on School Readiness in Preschool-age Children in Idaho

by

Courtney Painton

MEd, American College of Idaho, 2016

BA, The College of Idaho, 2014

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education

Early Childhood Education

Walden University

May 2024

Table of Contents

List of Tables

List of Figures

Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

In this study, I explore Idaho parents' perspectives on school readiness, their role in preparing their preschool-age child for kindergarten, and their current access to resources and information on school readiness. This chapter introduces the different components of the study that serve to better understand the school readiness achievement gap of Idaho's kindergarteners through exploration of parents' perspectives and beliefs. This information will aid early childhood stakeholders in implementing support and resources for parents of preschool-aged children before they begin school, which could lead to narrowing the achievement gap in Idaho's kindergarten students. After an exploration of school readiness and the school readiness gap in Idaho, the problem statement and purpose will be identified and introduced, as well as the study's conceptual framework. This is followed by a discussion of the nature of the study, limitations, and delimitations. The chapter concludes with an overview of the significance and implications of the study.

School readiness is a foundational concept across early childhood systems and programs. School readiness can be determined by children that are prepared to start school, families who are prepared to support their child's learning, and schools are equipped for kids. (Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center, 2021). Increased academic success is supported by school readiness skills, including cognitive skills such as counting and numeral recognition, language skills and social emotional skills (Pan et al., 2019; Ricciardi et al., 2021). Despite this, not all children enter kindergarten with the necessary school readiness skills. Data from the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study

(Wertheimer et al., 2003, as cited in Pan et al., 2019) revealed that an estimated 56% of young children in the United States showed challenges in at least one key area of development before entering kindergarten. Inequalities in school readiness skills at the beginning of full-time education have far reaching consequences for success in school, with achievement gaps widening over time (Jose et al., 2022).

Background

In response to the concerns about preparing young children in school and beyond, as well as tackling persistent achievement gaps, school readiness topics have received significant attention over recent years. (Slutzky & DeBruin-Parecki, 2019). Preparing all children to enter kindergarten ready to learn is a centerpiece of Early Childhood Education (ECE) policy at the federal, state, and local levels of legislation (Barnett et al., 2020). School readiness is a multifaceted construct that involves the relationship between a child's level of social emotional and cognitive development and the expectations of school (Miller & Kehl, 2019). The presence of appropriate social-emotional, cognitive, behavioral, and physical skills in preschool-aged children impacts their schooling experience (Ricciardi et al., 2021). School readiness skills demonstrated at age 4 have a long-term influence on academic performance through fifth grade (Ricciardi et al., 2021).

A child's school readiness is largely determined by the environment in which they live and grow (Williams et al., 2019). Their readiness for school is enabled by their development of social, emotional, cognitive, linguistic, and physical competencies, as well as by the environment that supports them from birth. As a child's first teacher, parents play a key role in supporting their readiness for school (Öngören, 2021). Children

who receive quality early education and care from their parents develop better cognitive and social skills (Öngören, 2021). In addition, the level of communication between parents and children and the support provided to the child also play a part in their success at school (Barnett et al., 2020; Bay & Bay, 2020; Öngören, 2021).

Data from Fall 2022 standardized benchmark assessments for kindergarten students in Southwestern Idaho indicated that an average of 32% of children were performing "on level" for a child entering kindergarten. For students labeled as economically disadvantaged, the percentage of students entering kindergarten on level dropped to 23% (Idaho Department of Education, 2022). Families in this area face several potential barriers that contribute to the achievement gap among incoming kindergartners. Many parents lack a basic understanding of school readiness and do not know where to access resources or information (Idaho State Board of Education, 2021). The state of Idaho lacks systems to identify which settings within early childhood care and education are most effective in promoting school readiness and early literacy (University of Idaho, 2021). The challenges of limited access to early childhood programming and lack of understanding of school readiness in the state are systematic. There is a severe lack of childcare and early learning options for Idaho families (University of Idaho, 2021). Idaho is one of only four states in the United States that does not offer state-funded preschool programming, and only a third of Idaho's 3- and 4-year-old children are enrolled in a preschool program (Carlson, 2020). This lack of options for families directly influences school readiness since early care providers often serve as a

consolidated location for parents and families to access high-quality education materials school readiness resources (Öngören, 2021).

Children's achievement in kindergarten has been linked to parents' beliefs about school readiness (Puccioni et al., 2022). Through a large-scale state-wide needs assessment (University of Idaho, 2022), Idaho parents' needs were examined in relation to early childhood care and education. However, their perspectives regarding the specific topic of school readiness were not explored, which presents a need for additional research. Studies completed in other locations across the globe can provide insights. Various researchers (Jose et al., 2020; Peterson et al., 2018; Puccioni, 2022) have explored parent perspectives on kindergarten readiness and how their beliefs are linked to kindergarten readiness outcomes. Parents in these studies widely acknowledged the importance of school readiness and that preschool education positively impacts kindergarten readiness (Barrows-Goralczyk, 2021; Jose et al., 2020; Peterson et al., 2018; Puccioni, 2022). Although most parents expressed the importance of ECE, the values placed on different school readiness aspects and their parental role in imparting those skills to their children differed among parents (Jose et al., 2020). Different research discovered that parents value school readiness, but they are not knowledgeable about preparing their child for school, and do not make use of community resources like free preschool programs (Peterson et al., 2018). This lack of knowledge may be a large contributor to the kindergarten achievement gap across Idaho, especially among low-income populations with limited resources. Parents' beliefs about kindergarten readiness

are vital because they predict their own academic socialization practices and child's later

success (Elliott & Bachman, 2018; Puccioni et al., 2022; Simons et al., 2021).

Problem Statement

The problem addressed in this study is the lack of insights regarding Idaho

parents' perspectives on school readiness, their roles in preparing their preschool-aged

child for kindergarten, and current accessibility to resources and information on school

readiness. School readiness begins in the home when parents develop their children's

analytical thinking skills and ability to concentrate, think logically, and speak clearly

(Öngören, 2021). A child's development and readiness for school are largely dependent

on the immediate family environment (Öngören, 2021). Children with significant

disparities in school readiness are at risk of falling behind their peers in school (Finders et

al., 2021). The large achievement gap present in Idaho's kindergarteners, compounded by

the lack of access and participation in ECE programs, may indicate that many parents in

Idaho do not have adequate understanding or resources to properly prepare their child for

a school setting (Idaho Association for Education of Young Children, 2022). There is a

need for further exploration of parent beliefs and perspectives on kindergarten readiness

for stakeholders to better understand how to support parents in preparing their children

for school, therefore potentially narrowing the current achievement gap (Elliott &

Bachman, 2018; Puccioni et al., 2022; Simons et al., 2021).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore parents' perspectives on school

readiness, their roles in preparing their children for kindergarten, and current accessibility

to resources and information on school readiness. This information will aid early childhood stakeholders in implementing support and resources for parents of young children as they begin school, which could potentially lead to narrowing the achievement gap among Idaho's kindergarten students. In order to effectively increase parental involvement and support children's early and ongoing academic success, it is important to understand how parents' beliefs and opinions influence their education related behavior, given that socialization takes place in the home (Boyle & Brenner, 2020).

Research Questions

I sought to answer one research question in this study: What are parents' perspectives on school readiness in preschool-age children?

Conceptual Framework

There are complex conceptualizations that characterize the readiness of schools, and they are shaped by social-cultural contexts such as families, schools, communities, and the individuals that exist within each (Akaba et al., 2020). The conceptual framework that guides this study is grounded in ecological systems theory, developed by Bronfenbrenner (1979). The theory explains how several types of environmental systems influence a child's development. A person's behavior evolves as a function of the interplay between them and their environment (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). The theory provides a framework for the influences of parent, childcare, and preschool contexts on a child's school readiness outcomes. The theory proposes that a child's closest system is their family and school and can explain the differences in Childrens' academic and socioemotional readiness. The direct and indirect relationships within each system impact

a child's ability to learn and their school readiness. These concepts provide a framework for the exploration of parents' perspectives and beliefs on school readiness and their role in preparing their child for school.

Nature of the Study

For this study, I implemented a basic qualitative design in order to gain insight into the perspectives of parent participants. I addressed the study's research question through participant interviews. This design is appropriate because a basic qualitative research design uncovers parents' experiences and perspectives and uncovers the meaning parents ascribe to those experiences and perspectives. Direct insight into parents' perspectives is necessary and aligns with the conceptual framework, which is grounded in Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems theory. The theory asserts that a person's behavior and development evolve as a function of the interplay between a person and their environment. In this theory, the environment includes a child's parent or immediate caregiver, which Bronfenbrenner described as a member of the innermost system that directly influences the child's development (Öngören, 2021). The research design included recruiting 10–12 parent participants who have preschool-aged children entering kindergarten in the next 1-2 years. During the interview process, I followed a self-designed interview protocol that addresses the problem and purpose of the study (see Appendix A). Individual interviews and direct communication with participants allowed for a deeper exploration of parents' perspectives and to find complete answers to the proposed research questions.

Definitions

School readiness means that children are ready for school, schools are ready for children, and families are ready to support their child's transition to school as well as their learning (Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center, 2021). This is also known as *kindergarten readiness.*

School readiness skills are defined as the (individual skills that children have at school entry that prepare them for academic and social success (Pan et al., 2018, as cited in Boyle & Brenner, 2020).

The term *early childhood education* (also known as *ECE*) refers to the period from birth to age 8 (UNESCO, n.d.).

Parent educational involvement is a complex construct involving many parenting practices designed to foster and enhance children's learning outcomes. At home and at school, parents play a role in education (Epstein, 1992; Lareau, 2003, as cited in Barrett & Boyle, 2020).

An individual who is considered *low-income* is an individual whose family's taxable income for the preceding year did not exceed 150% of the poverty level amount. This amount ranges from $21, 870 to $75,840, depending on family unit size (U.S. Department of Education, 2023). This is otherwise known as *low socioeconomic status* or *low SES.*

Self-regulation is the act of managing thoughts and feelings to enable goal-directed actions (Rosanbalm & Murray, 2017).

Assumptions

In this study, I assumed that the participating parents would answer all my interview questions honestly, to the best of their ability, and provide answers that genuinely represent their perspectives, beliefs, and experiences. I assumed that the parents' perspectives in the study embody the perspectives of parents who have at least one child aged 3–5 years old. During the interview process, I assumed that participants would participate fully, at their own volition, and with full attention. If interviewing via the internet and we should lose reception, I assumed participants would be open to continuing the interview via telephone or by responding through email. Lastly, I assumed participants' responses to the open-ended questions would help me explore parents' perspectives of school readiness.

Scope and Delimitations

This basic qualitative study included interviews with parent participants who have at least one child that will be entering formal schooling (i.e., kindergarten) in the next 1 or 2 years and reside in the general geographic location of Southwestern Idaho, including Ada County, Adams County, Boise County, Canyon County, Elmore County, Gem County, Owyhee County, Payette County, and Washington County. This region was chosen due to my proximity and access to participants, as well as the need to explore the large achievement gap in this region. Delimitations of this study include the children's age and the participants' geographic location. Parents with no children and those with children under the age of 3 or over the age of 5 were excluded from the study. In addition, parents who reside outside of the region of study were excluded. In this study, I

sought to provide insight into parents' perspectives and beliefs on the topic of school readiness.

Limitations

The study includes two limitations. These limitations are the region of the study and the number of parent participants. The selected region, as well as the number of participants in the study, encompasses only a small portion of the state. The selected participants' interview data and results may not accurately reflect the perspectives and beliefs of all parents, including parents that reside in regions that were not included. Lastly, due to my connections and established relationships with many educators and families, it was imperative to consider potential biases when collecting or interpreting data. Established connections can provide a significant benefit to a qualitative study as qualitative research is built on relationships and establishing trust with participants. Engaging in reflective practices throughout the process allowed me to address potential biases and remain objective.

Significance

This study may contribute to positive social change by providing early childhood stakeholders with insight into parents' perspectives and beliefs on school readiness. This insight will increase understanding of the support parents in Idaho may need to prepare their child for a school setting, which may contribute to closing the kindergarten achievement gap. Empirical research is needed to examine the influences of parents' beliefs about school readiness, their child's competencies, and parents' educational involvement (Boyle & Brenner, 2020). Parents' beliefs about school readiness are linked

to their children's achievement in kindergarten and beyond (Elliott & Bachman, 2018; Puccioni et al., 2022; Simons et al., 2021). This study explored how parents in Idaho define and understand the concept of school readiness, how they view their role in preparing their child for school entry, and the accessibility and understanding of resources available to families. As a child's first teacher, parents must understand what children need to be successful in school (Simons et al., 2021).

Summary

In this chapter, I introduced a study designed to better understand the perspective of parents' and their understanding of school readiness, their role in preparing their child for a school setting, and their current accessibility to resources and information on school readiness. I provided a brief background on school readiness and the school readiness gap in Idaho. The purpose of the study and the problem statement were introduced, as well as the conceptual framework and nature of the study, assumptions, limitations, and delimitations. The chapter concluded with an overview of the significance and implications of the study that intends to give early childhood stakeholders better understanding of the perspectives and beliefs of parents and what is needed to support them in preparing their child for the school setting. Boyle and Brenner (2020) indicated that parents' school readiness beliefs likely influence their educational involvement decisions, as well as the academic materials they choose for their children. Chapter 2 will include a discussion and review of the current literature on school readiness and parent perspectives.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

In this chapter, I review literature related to my study that seeks to gain insight into Idaho parents' perspectives on school readiness, their role in preparing their preschool-aged child for kindergarten, and their current access to resources and information on school readiness. Research has linked parents' conceptions about school readiness to their practices and to children's early academic outcomes (Puccioni et al., 2022). Several recent studies examined the school readiness beliefs of parents in the United States and beyond (Boyle & Brenner, 2020; Jose et al., 2022; Liang et al., 2020; Sawyer et al., 2022; Simons et al., 2021), but there is a lack of insight into the perspectives and beliefs of Idaho parents, specifically.

In this chapter, I begin with an explanation of the literature search strategies used. After discussing the conceptual framework of the study, I provide a review of current literature related to the research problem. This study is grounded in the conceptual framework arising from Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory. This theory sets the foundation for the concept of a parent's influence on a child's development and school readiness. The key concepts explored through the review of literature include the conceptual framework, school readiness background, school readiness predictors, school readiness achievement gaps, and parent perspectives and beliefs.

Literature Search Strategy

A thorough literature review was conducted through exhaustive keyword searches of multiple databases, which included ERIC, SAGE Journals, Science Direct, Springer Link, Taylor and Francis Online, Walden Library ProQuest, and Google Scholar. My

sources and review also included federal, state, and local government and government-sponsored publications specific to the field of ECE, kindergarten readiness, and parents. In the research databases, I conducted a key word search of numerous phrases with multiple combinations. The keywords included s*chool readiness, kindergarten readiness, preschool,* and *parents.* Additional phrases and keywords such as *parent perspectives, parent role,* and *parent involvemen*t were added to narrow focus. The terms within the conceptual framework portion of this literature review include *ecological systems theory, Bronfenbrenner, child development, school readiness*. The search was limited to peer-reviewed or trustworthy publications published in the last 5 years apart from the select conceptual framework publications.

Conceptual Framework

Ecological systems theory provides a framework for exploring parents' perspectives on school readiness and their role in preparing their preschool-aged children for kindergarten. Bronfenbrenner's theory explains how children's development is influenced by distinct types of environmental systems (Ettekal & Mahoney, 2017). The concept that a child's closest "system" includes their family and school can be utilized to clarify the differences in their academic and socio-emotional readiness. According to this conceptual model, the transition to kindergarten takes place in an environment characterized by the evolution of interactions between children, school, classroom, family, and community factors (Puccioni, 2018). This mutual exchange of interactions means that school readiness is not a characteristic held by the child, but encompasses ready children, ready schools, ready families, and ready communities (Meng et al., 2023;

Williams et al., 2019). Thus, the transition process occurs within a broader bioecological system (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006).

Ecological Systems Theory

Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory (1979) holds that there are five ecological forces that influence a child's development. The ecological environment is conceived as a set of nested structures, each inside the next (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). These systems include the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, and macrosystem (see Figure 1). The individual is at the center of the system, with all the layers of the system interacting and influencing development. The first system, known as the microsystem, comprises family, friends, and primary care providers. It includes relationships and interactions that directly impact the child daily. The microsystem's immediate setting is the one in which the child experiences and creates their day-to-day reality and can comprise both the home and classroom (or childcare). The next level is the mesosystem. Along with the microsystem, this layer has a direct influence on the developing child. This level includes the forces of the connections between the people surrounding the child such as the parent–teacher relationship or the relationship between teachers and classroom peers. The next two levels, the exosystem and macrosystem, indirectly influence the developing person. The indirect influence of the exosystem would include factors such as education policies, relationships between a teacher and their administrator, or a parent and their boss. The final level, the macrosystem, consists of the broader patterns of ideology and the organization of social institutions that are common to a particular social class or culture to which a person belongs (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

The characteristics of a child and their environment are in a state of constant interaction that influence how the child grows and develops. According to Bronfenbrenner (1995), human development occurs because of increasingly complex reciprocal interactions between an active, evolving biopsychological organism and the people, objects, and symbols around it.

Figure 1

Bronfenbrenner's (1979) Ecological Systems Theory
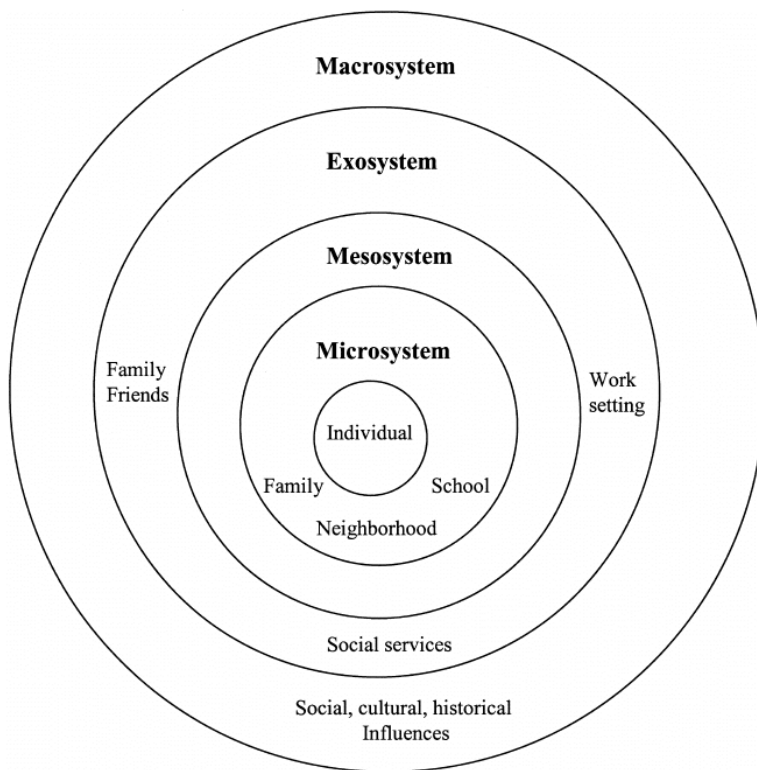
As the ecological systems theory describes, the parents are members of the microsystem, which is the innermost system that directly influences the child's development. Recent research grounded in the ecological systems theory (Öngören, 2021) supports the concept that children's developmental knowledge and skills can be

directly associated with the capacity for support from their environment and their interactions within the environment. Öngören (2021) found that the immediate family environment, consisting of family members, has a critical role to play in supporting the development of children and school readiness. These findings support Bronfenbrenner's theory and understanding of the microsystem. It was also noted by various researchers that it is important to understand the cultural context in which all development occurs because it influences how parents structure the environment for their children and children's subsequent development (Bronfenbrenner & Ceci, 1994; Garcia et al., 1996; Harkness & Super, 1996, as cited in Simons et al., 2021).

Literature Review Related to Key Concepts and Variable

School Readiness Overview

The transition to school is one of the most significant milestones in the early years. This significant occasion has evolved from marking the day a child starts school to recognizing that it is a process that occurs over an extended period and involves multiple stakeholders (Meng et al., 2023). Children who enter school less academically prepared than their peers have the risk of falling increasingly behind throughout elementary school. The risk of extending the persistent achievement gap has caused school readiness to be a centerpiece of ECE policy at the federal, state, and local levels (Barnett et al., 2020; Chaudry et al., 2017). However, children who have developed the skills and dispositions that equip them for success are likely to experience smoother transitions than their peers who are not school-ready (Barnett et al., 2020; Christensen et al., 2020; Niklas et al., 2018).

The definition of school readiness varies among stakeholders. There is no consensus or agreed-upon definition for the concept. Twenty-five states within the United States have a formally adopted definition of school readiness, all of which differ from the others (Education Commission of the States, 2020). Not all states have an agreed-upon definition of the concept, and some do not require or fund kindergarten. However, 45 states view the age of 5 as ready for kindergarten and have a designated cut-off date for school start based on that age (Bernstein et al., 2019). Many states note a desire for children to demonstrate developmentally appropriate skills in the domains of physical health and motor skills, emotional and social competence, language and literacy development, and mathematical thinking and cognitive skills (Education Commission of the States, 2020). Some states' definitions mention readiness as measured by an entrance assessment, while others define ready children as those who show eagerness to explore, discover, engage, and learn. Slutzky and Debruin-Parecki (2019) conducted a study exploring perspectives on how various stakeholders define kindergarten readiness, and their findings echoed the sentiment of widely varying perspectives and definitions. Their study found that state policymakers tend to view kindergarten through a developmental lens while also emphasizing early learning standards (Slutzky & Debruin-Parecki, 2019). Generally speaking, the concept can be mutually understood by policymakers as a multidimensional, often socially constructed concept based on children's maturity, physical development, set of skills, and knowledge (Puccioni, 2018). Authors of the 2019 Preschool Policy Report (Bernstein et al., 2019), asserted that focusing on an individual child's level of readiness for kindergarten, rather than imposing mandatory prerequisites,

will make children more likely to excel in school and maximize their learning. On the other side of the school readiness construct are those who view the concept as something more than the skills a child possesses as an individual. Head Start, a federally funded early childhood program delivered nationwide, believes that school readiness means children are ready for school, families are ready to support their children's learning, and schools are ready for children. The importance of children possessing skills, knowledge, and attitudes necessary for success in school are also emphasized, but as a community effort (Head Start Early Childhood Knowledge Center, 2022). Williams et al. (2019) also asserted that school readiness is not limited to the child, but includes the readiness of the individual child, the school, the family, and the community to support optimal early child development. This view of readiness aligns closely with the theoretical framework of Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems theory, which asserts that a child's development is a product of their environment and systems. The present study, which explored parent perspectives and beliefs on kindergarten readiness, more closely follows the construct describing kindergarten readiness as a comprehensive concept that involves the child, families, and the community.

The experiences that contribute to a successful transition into formal schooling are important because research has determined that positive school transitions are associated with academic achievement and lifelong success (Cook & Cooley, 2021; Meng et al., 2023). It has been repeatedly confirmed that a child's cognitive skills in literacy and mathematics at kindergarten entry have been positively related to later academic performance (Hunter et al., 2018; Pace et al., 2019; Pan et al., 2019; Justice et

al., 2020; Ricciardi et al., 2021). Ricciardi (2021) found that school readiness skills at age 4 predicted academic performance through fifth grade. The study also found that socioemotional skills modestly predicted achievement beyond pre-academic readiness skills and that school readiness predicted the odds of retention and suspension in elementary school. Justice et al. (2019) explored longitudinal, predictive relations between children's kindergarten readiness and their future third grade reading performance, the results suggested that the Kindergarten Readiness Assessment has strong predictive validity four years after kindergarten entry. Additional studies have found positive, significant relations between social and behavior measures and academic outcomes through elementary school. In addition, it was discovered that school readiness skills such as self-control were associated with linear increases in reading and math from kindergarten to fifth grade (Hunter et al., 2018; Ricciardi et al., 2021).

School Readiness Predictor: Preschool

Several factors impact a child's ability to make transitioning to school successful. These factors include the capabilities of a child, their parents, and the relationship, resources, and opportunities they experience at home and in early childhood settings before they start full-time school (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006; Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2016; Tayler et al., 2015; United Nations Children's Fund, 2012, as cited in Jose et al., 2022). Researchers (Bay & Bay, 2020) conducted a study analyzing 402 children to determine the factors contributing to a child being successfully ready for school. They determined that the variables of preschool

education, a child's age, parents' education levels, and parent's socio-economic or working conditions all significantly affect a child's school readiness.

To ensure the readiness of children to learn when entering kindergarten, it has been found that high quality early learning and family support systems are indispensable. (De Witt et al., 2020). Evidence suggests that participation in ECE contributes positively to this transition process and preschool programs are notably successful in enhancing children's academic readiness for school (Ansari et al., 2020; Meloy et al., 2019). Bay and Bay (2020) found that the school readiness level of children receiving preschool education was significantly higher than those who did not. Not only are early childhood programs beneficial for early academic readiness, but evidence demonstrates that ECE, especially preschool education for 4-year-olds, has significantly positive long-lasting effects on children's later lives. The positive effects noted are not only related to educational outcomes, but also to social-emotional skills and health (Akaba et al., 2020). Meloy et al. (2019) examined 18 programs and their academic effects at school entry and found that preschool programs consistently enhance children's school readiness, further supporting previous research findings. For example, more specifically, they found that in 17 out of 18 programs, there were clear benefits for the participating children's early literacy skills. Additionally, assessments of contemporary preschool initiatives consistently demonstrated that numerous large-scale programs enhance children's early academic abilities in reading and math (Meloy et al., 2019). Many stakeholders recognize the effectiveness of ECE and early learning experiences on school readiness. Several states have invested in ECE programs to boost children's early academic skills, narrow

achievement gaps, and support children's long-term academic success (Meloy et al., 2019). Unfortunately, the state in which this paper's study takes place does not provide universal opportunities for early learning. This places sole responsibility for school readiness into caregiver and parent's hands, which may be a contributor to the current kindergarten achievement gap (Carlson, 2020; University of Idaho, 2021).

School Readiness Predictor: Parent Involvement

Participation in an ECE program is not the only predictor of a successful transition to school; parental involvement has a significant effect on academic skill development, social competence, and school readiness (Polat & Bayındır, 2020; Puccioni et al., 2019; Slicker et al., 2021). The immediate home environment, which consists of family members, plays a critical role in supporting the child's development and school readiness (Öngören, 2021). An abundance of research (Barger et al., 2019; Barnett et al., 2020; Polat & Bayındır, 2020; Puccioni et al., 2020; Slicker et al., 2021) has demonstrated that parental involvement and engagement during early childhood has a strong positive influence on a range of child outcomes during the transition to kindergarten. Longitudinal findings supported the idea that parental involvement in children's education is a critical factor in the adjustment of children in the academic context and beyond (Barger et al., 2019).

Parent involvement includes engagement in both the home and the ECE setting. Within the ECE setting, there is evidence that demonstrates that when parents are more engaged and give higher quality support for early education, their children are better prepared for kindergarten and acquire higher cognitive and social skills (Barnett et al.,

2020; Öngören, 2021). This increase in readiness may be attributed to early childhood settings equipping parents and families with knowledge, skills, and resources that support home learning activities that are congruent with school experiences and are matched to the child's needs and abilities. This exposes parents to cognitively stimulating behaviors that reinforce school learning at home and promote school readiness (Barnett et al., 2020; Bay & Bay; 2020; Öngören, 2021).

Parents' involvement has been shown to predict important school readiness skills in the home, like social skills, reduced externalizing behavior, self-regulation, and attention (Puccioni et al., 2019). Research has shown that children who have more parental involvement at home perform better academically, experience fewer instances of troublesome behaviors, and are less likely to be hyperactive and inattentive (Puccioni et al., 2020). Notably, the quantity of parent engagement in home learning was not found to be a strong predictor of positive child outcomes, but the quality of parental engagement in home learning activities is a consistent predictor of children's academic readiness skills (Barnett et al., 2020). Others echoed that sentiment and argued that there is a clear link between parental participation in cognitive stimulation of literacy and numeracy activities for young children and their early learning and emotional development. (Barnett et al., 2020; Puccioni, 2020, 2021). The quality of parent-child communication and the support given to the child contributes to the child's healthy development (Belding et al., 2022) and schooling success (Barnett et al., 2020).

High-quality ECE and high-quality parent involvement in the home and ECE settings has an even greater impact on school readiness when looking at low-income

families (Ansari et al., 2021; Barnett et al., 2020). Research has revealed that parents'
participation in ECE programs can be advantageous for families facing economic
challenges as it can provide valuable exposure to educational activities and connections
to other resources that aid in home-learning and children's readiness for school (Barnett
et al., 2020). This further supports the importance of access to a high-quality early
learning environment that provides access to necessary resources for home learning.

School Readiness Achievement Gap

Despite the established importance of school readiness skills and their long-term
impact on schooling success (Hunter et al., 2018; Justice et al., 2020; Pace et al., 2019;
Pan et al., 2019; Ricciardi et al., 2021), there is a long occurring gap in school readiness
skills within populations living in poverty (Bierman et al., 2020) and across racial/ethnic
lines (Herring et al., 2022; Kuhfield et al., 2020; Lenehan, 2022) which emerge due to
learning opportunity disparities during early childhood (Kuhfield et al., 2020; Lenehan,
2022). Children of color and those from lower-income families spend less time with their
parents' doing activities related to language, literacy, and education, and those in lower
income families participate in less numeracy activities at home than their middle-class
peers (Puccioni et al., 2018, 2020).

Socioeconomic status (SES) has a powerful influence on cognitive, social, and
brain development (Moriguchi & Shinohara, 2019). Living in an economically
disadvantaged home can have both short and long-term impacts on the learning and
growth of a child. For example, SES has been found to be related to the functional
development of the brain, with poverty being linked to poor pre-frontal cortex

development (Moriguchi & Shinohara, 2019). Children living in economically disadvantaged households have a lower level of cognitive, emotional, and educational achievement than their peers; this gap increases over time as there are persistent differences between home environments and the resources available to young people from all economic backgrounds (Kenne et al., 2018; Roos et al., 2019). These readiness gaps have been strongly associated with educational developmental delays (De Witt et al., 2020) and have been shown to lead to potential lifelong hardships such as lowered income and productivity in adulthood (Miller et al., 2019). When children are raised in poverty, their families may lack the necessary knowledge, resources, relationships, and experiences to create a positive, nurturing, and stimulating environment (Kenne et al., 2018; Roos et al., 2019). Research findings demonstrate that the quality of parenting is negatively influenced by living in poverty. Poverty significantly increases parental stress, which deteriorates positive parental practices and jeopardizes children's outcomes (Saitadze & Lalayants, 2021). Low-resourced environments that provide less high-quality input can interfere with children's development of higher-level cognitive processes (Finders et al., 2021). The limited resources of families living in poverty include limited access to high-quality ECE opportunities. ECE programs that are attended by low-SES families are often lower quality than programs attended by children of higher-income families (Valentino, 2018). Although there are federal and state-sponsored programs specifically for low-income families, children from low-income families are still less likely to attend preschool. Children that enter school behind because of no prior

preschool experiences are at risk of never making up the differences (Duncan et al., 2018).

The poverty-related gaps in school readiness are not solely demonstrated through deficits in skill-based components of readiness but are accompanied by differences in a child's ability to self-regulate (Elliot et al., 2022; Hails et al., 2019). Self-regulation is fundamental for well-being, learning, and school success (Promoting Self-Regulation in the First Five Years: A Practice Brief, 2020). The presence of self-regulatory skills is viewed as important components or predecessors to school readiness because self-regulation skills help children to be more successful at accomplishing academic tasks. These tasks can include focusing attention on an activity, regulating, and controlling emotions and impulses (Bayindir & Polat, 2020), and engaging in social tasks (Miller & Kehl, 2019). Micalizzi et al. (2019) assert that higher executive function levels are related to better school readiness. Children living in poverty face significant hurdles in social-emotional development and school success. Poverty directly disrupts brain development, leading to impaired self-regulation and executive function (Moriguchi & Shinohara, 2019). In addition, stress and other individual child factors may compromise the development of self-regulation skills (Encinger et al., 2020; Hails et al., 2019). SES tends to be a positive predictor of these self-regulatory skills, which in turn relates to academic achievement (Elliot et al., 2022; Gullo, 2018; Hails et al., 2019; Micalizzi et al., 2019). Self-regulation has been posited to be a key mechanism through which SES relates to children's academic skills (John et al., 2019; Micalizzi et al., 2019) at four years old, as well as through elementary school (Elliot et al., 2022). The school readiness gap in the

context of poverty demonstrates the strong relationship between a child's environment within the microsystem and mesosystem and their development. Positively, in a comprehensive review of studies, Saitadze and Lalayants (2021) found that warm and supportive parenting, complemented with home learning activities, can mediate the harmful effects of poverty.

School Readiness: Parent Perspectives and Beliefs

In recent literature (Boyle & Brenner, 2020; Liang et al., 2020; Jose et al., 2022; Sawyer et al., 2022; Simons et al., 2021), parents of various backgrounds were studied in relation to school readiness, including topics such as engagement in home-based learning activities, parents' beliefs on the concept of readiness and access to resources, and parents' perceived role in school readiness. The research studies that will be extensively reviewed in this section will demonstrate that parents' perspectives on these topics drove parenting practices and children's achievement (Simons et al., 2021) and a parent's school readiness beliefs predicted parents' academic socialization practices and children's academic scores in kindergarten, regardless of SES status (Simons et al., 2021). Exploring diverse perspectives from parents outside of the United States can provide additional, valuable insight and representation of the beliefs of parents on the topic of school readiness.

To begin, an ethnographic study by Jose (2022) explored the perspectives of 39 parents with preschool-age children attending an ECE setting in Australia. He sought to understand how they experience and support their children's transition to school. The parental discussions of school readiness during this study found that parents

conceptualized school readiness in different terms but considered it their role to impart many of the requisite 'readiness' skills to their children. The parents also discussed the benefits and value of ECE services in building readiness in children and providing parents with information and resources on helping their children (Jose et al., 2022). Four specific developmental competencies that the parents considered critical aspects of school readiness were revealed in the discussions of specific readiness skills. These skills include toileting, the ability to interact positively with other children, separation from parents, and listening (Jose et al., 2022).

Another study that explored parents' perspectives on the topic of school readiness was conducted by Miller and Kehl (2019). Eighty-one parents of 30–42-month children in the United States were examined to determine which characteristics of early school readiness were seen as most and least important. Like the previous study discussed (Jose, 2022), parents acknowledged the relative importance of early school readiness characteristics. Parents ranked health, communication, and enthusiasm among the top three when asked to rank ten readiness skills. Specifically, being well rested and physically healthy, effectively communicating needs, wants, and thoughts, and having enthusiasm and curiosity for approaching new activities. Overall, being healthy, happy, and socially skilled were ranked as more important than cognitive abilities in the preschool-aged child (Miller & Kehl, 2019). One potential limitation of this study was the lack of socio-economic diversity among the participating parents. Most families were in the middle to upper socio-economic class and many participants in sample one was highly educated individuals having received many years of schooling (Miller & Kehl,

2019). Research suggests that parent and caregiver knowledge of school readiness exists in relation to their level of education, parenting skills, abilities, and variations in social, economic, and cultural environments (Dee Witt et al., 2020). Parents' levels of education affect their views about the importance of cognitive skills, such that parents with a higher level of education do not place an equal weight on this ability to be ready for school. (Miller & Kehl, 2019).

Additional research that speaks to the exploration of parent perspectives includes studies conducted by Simons et al. (2021, 2022). In Simon's earlier study (2021), 43 Latinx immigrant parents from the Dominican Republic and El Salvador who were living in the United States at the time of the study, participated in semi-structured interviews. They spoke to parents about the skills their children should have before starting school, how they perceived their role in helping children acquire these skills, and how they had learned what skills were needed for success. The responses fell into the categories of language and literacy, social skills, mathematics, general knowledge, self-care skills, motivation, motor skills, and age requirements. The most mentioned skills and categories included literacy and language (including learning English), social foundations, mathematics, and general knowledge (colors, animals, days of the week, etc.). Parents in this study indicated that they felt responsible for teaching their children academic and social/behavior skills and they also typically reported taking an active role in fostering readiness skills (Simons et al., 2021). The last area of discussion during the study was regarding the source of information and knowledge about the skills needed for kindergarten. The most common source included their social network of family, friends,

and community members. Very few parents described receiving messages from schools about the skills necessary for kindergarten. The later study completed by Simons (2022) included 63 first- or second-generation parents of preschool-age children who participated in a Q-sort task where they ranked thirty-six school readiness skills along a continuum of importance for being successful in kindergarten (Sawyer et al., 2022). The results revealed two distinct learner profiles that could be predicted based on their country of origin. Parents in the first profile emphasized academic skills whereas parents in the second one emphasized learning-related skills (Sawyer et al., 2022). Parents in the learning related skills profile were more likely to be Chinese immigrants, whereas parents in the academic orientation were more likely to be Dominican and Salvadoran immigrants. Like what was found in the study by Miller and Kehl (2019), the group of parents that viewed learning skills (such as social-emotional skills) as more important to school readiness were parents with higher incomes and more educational backgrounds. The Salvadoran and Dominican parents prioritized 'shows respect,' but no other social-emotional skills were prioritized over academic skills. Latino parents strongly valued educational achievement as the vehicle for their children's success, and they likely see these basic academic skills as foundational (Sawyer et al., 2022). The cultural values combined with the low-SES status of the Salvadoran and Dominican parent participants align with the previous research that found that low-SES parents were more likely to prioritize academic skills than higher SES parents. Similar to the ethnographic study of Australian parents (Jose, 2022), all parents had children enrolled in prekindergarten programs, which could impact parents' beliefs and practices. Also, children's attendance

in ECE was associated with immigrant parents' practices (Sawyer et al., 2022). This study will serve as important background information and provide valuable insight into the cultural demographics of the target population of this paper's study.

Researchers Boyle and Brenner (2020) have also investigated the associations between parental beliefs and parenting practices during the transition to kindergarten. The study examined the links between parental beliefs on school readiness (both general and individual) after the transition to kindergarten and parents' involvement in the subsequent year (Boyle & Brenner, 2020). Unlike the previous studies that worked directly with parent participants, the researchers analyzed data from the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study, Kindergarten Class of 2010–2011 (ECLS-K: 2011). The ECLS-K: 2011 is a nationally representative, longitudinal study developed by the National Center for Education Statistics (Boyle & Brenner, 2020). The researchers used the data to measure the relationships between parental general school readiness beliefs, child-specific competency beliefs, parental school-based involvement, parental classroom-based involvement, and parental homework involvement. The researchers found strong, well-established relationships between parental attitudes towards school readiness, child-specific competency, and school involvement the following school year (Boyle & Brenner, 2020). There were reported correlations to a parent's perceived competency of their child in areas such as early academics and behavior and their involvement. For example, parents that believed their kindergarten children to be more behaviorally competent than same-aged peers were more likely to be involved in school-based activities. Also, higher perceptions of children's academic competencies were related to

less homework involvement but higher levels of school- and classroom-based

involvement (Boyle & Brenner, 2020). Researchers noted that, although parental

involvement strategies appear to vary as a function of family SES or poverty, Differences

in the levels of family poverty were not observed and suggest that a narrative

characterized by similarity exists as to how parents' beliefs influence their involvement

with education when they enter kindergarten (Boyle & Brenner, 2020). This result was

contrary to the researcher's hypothesis, but in line with previous research (Puccioni,

2015) that failed to find significant SES variation in the relation between general school

readiness beliefs and a concurrent measure of home-based involvement. This could

indicate that deliberate efforts made by the schooling system to provide inclusive

opportunities and accommodations for low-income parents encourages and elicits

increased participation (Boyle & Brenner, 2020). Another result that emerged from the

study was the lack of significant relations between parents' general school readiness

beliefs and homework involvement. The specific target area of homework differed from

the commonly reported area of home-based activities and its correlation with

kindergarten readiness (Barrett et al., 2020; Kenne et al., 2018; Öngören, 2021; Puccioni,

2021). The researchers in this study (Boyle & Brenner, 2020) cited this difference in

study area as important because assistance with school assignments familiarizes parents

with the classroom curriculum and informs parents about what skills teachers believe a

typically developing child should master. This study is important because it demonstrates

the long-term link of parents' perceptions and beliefs surrounding school readiness and

the transition into the first year of schooling.

The previous study briefly explored parent perspectives and beliefs and their correlation to homework-based activities. Additional research (Liang et al., 2020) expanded on parents' views of children's learning experiences and homework specifically in the pre-k setting. Liang et. al (2020) echoed Brenner and Boyle's (2021) perceived importance of homework as a way to familiarize parents with the skills a typically developing child should master. The researchers cited New York City's Early Education Center Policy Handbook (2018) which asserted that extended learning activities encourage families to be 'partners in their child's education' by engaging in a variety of activities with their children outside of the classroom (3-K for All & Pre-K for All Policy Handbook for NYCEECs, 2018). During the interview of this specific study (Liang et al., 2020), parents indicated a preference to receiving homework from teachers daily, even during weekends and holidays. Some parents demonstrated a belief that if a child did not continue to practice what they learned in school through homework, they would immediately forget, affecting their transition to kindergarten. In fact, only two parents felt their parents should take a break after coming home from preschool (Liang et al., 2020). When exploring parent's beliefs of children who attend schools that do not assign homework, parents explained that they sought out and bought homework for their preschool students to engage in. Some parents expressed the ease of a concrete way for involvement in their child's learning, especially for families that speak limited English (Liang et al., 2020). The results of the study demonstrated a trickle-down effect of standards and outcome-based learning practiced in later schooling as worksheet-based homework is not developmentally appropriate for a preschool-aged child (3-K for All &

Pre-K for All Policy Handbook for NYCEECs, 2018). A deeper understanding of parents'

needs, capacity, and knowledge of their child's needs and development gives stakeholders

insight into the necessary partnerships and resources for successful kindergarten

transition in all domains.

   The research in the studies presented above (Boyle & Brenner, 2020; Jose et al.,

2022; Liang et al., 2020; Sawyer et al., 2022; Simons et al., 2021) uncovered common

themes from a diverse group of parents of children currently in pre-k programs across the

United States and other parts of the world. The theme of middle to higher-income parents

focusing on social-emotional, health, and independence skills emerged. This contrasted

with lower-income, Latino, or immigrant families who expressed a higher level of

importance for academic and cognitive skills. Interestingly, earlier research on the social-

emotional skill of self-regulation found that low-income, Spanish-speaking English

language learners tended to perform worse on direct assessments of Executive Function

tasks in preschool and kindergarten, even when these assessments are given in Spanish

(Finders et el., 2021). This may result from their beliefs and views of the important skills

needed to transition to kindergarten. Because the above studies (Boyle & Brenner, 2020;

Jose et al., 2022; Liang et al., 2020; Sawyer et al., 2022; Simons et al., 2021) explored

perspectives and beliefs of parents with children currently in a preschool program, that

may suggest that additional research that explores perspectives and beliefs of parents with

preschool-aged children not in a preschool program may be beneficial.

Summary and Conclusions

The purpose of this study is to examine Idaho parents' perspectives on school readiness, their role in preparing their preschool-aged child for kindergarten, and their current accessibility to resources and information on school readiness. In this chapter, I provided an explanation of the literature search strategies used and discussed the conceptual framework of the study. The chapter concluded with an examination of current literature related to the research problem. The literature explored included the key concepts of school readiness including the school readiness predictors of preschool and parent involvement. In addition, the literature review explored the concept of school readiness achievement gaps and parent perspectives and beliefs. In the next chapter, I will discuss the study's research design and methodology, the study participants' ethical principles of research participants, and data collection methods.

Chapter 3: Research Design and Rationale

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore Idaho parents' perspectives on school readiness, their role in preparing their preschool-aged child for kindergarten, and their current accessibility to resources and information on school readiness. In this chapter, I will describe the study's research design and rationale, the role of the researcher, methodology, and qualitative tradition. I will also discuss the participants, ethical principles of research participants, and data collection methods. Lastly, I will discuss my role as an interviewer and the ethics and procedures.

Research Design and Rationale

This study was designed to answer the following research question: What are parents' perspectives on school readiness in preschool-age children?

A basic qualitative study was used to explore the perspectives of Idaho parents with preschool-aged children. A qualitative approach, rather than a quantitative approach, was chosen because experiences, attitudes, and behaviors are difficult to quantify. Qualitative research allows participants to explain how, why, and what they thought, felt, and experienced (Tenny et al., 2022). Other qualitative research design methods were considered but rejected for this study. Since this study seeks to explore perspectives of multiple individuals in various locations, an ethnography or case study would not be appropriate. An ethnographic approach is most appropriate and effective when it aims to depict the operations of a cultural group or investigate their shared experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2018, as cited in Tomaszewski et al., 2020). Although this study includes only parents as a target population, the individuals are not members of a shared cultural group.

Creswell (2014, p. 241, as cited in Priya, 2021) defined case studies as a qualitative design in which the researcher explores a program, event, activity, process, or one or more individuals in-depth. This type of approach may be more appropriate if I wished to examine a single parent's experiences as they participate in a specific program or process. A basic qualitative design is the most fitting approach for this study, as generic qualitative inquiry focuses on people's reports of their subjective experiences and opinions (Percy et al., 2015).

Role of the Researcher

The researcher's role includes developing research questions, interviewing protocols, and analyzing all data. More importantly, the role of the researcher is to make meaning of the participants' perspectives to understand the phenomenon better (Burkholder et al., 2016). I assumed this role as the primary researcher, interviewer, and data analyzer. As the primary researcher, I developed the interview protocol, selected participants, conducted interviews, and transcribed, coded, and analyzed interview data. The information I gathered from interview participants served as the primary data source to answer my research question. To alleviate any conflict of interest between my role as a researcher and my position as a professional development director, I took great care to critically reflect on potential biases while preparing for interviews, interviewing participants, and analyzing interview data. Johnson et al. (2020) explained that acknowledging researcher bias is critical to the credibility and trustworthiness of data collection. Ravitch and Carl (2020) asserted that researchers can uncover and confront their biases through critical self-reflection and dialogue. One self-reflection strategy that I

utilized was a reflective journal, which served as a reflection and data collection tool to record notes and other information during the interview process that may not be captured via audio recording. Saldana and Omasta (2018) claimed that journal entries written during the participant interviews can increase the richness of the data collected.

Methodology

In this study, I explored the perspectives of Idaho parents with preschool-aged children. Through this exploration, I gained insight into the parents' perspectives and beliefs on school readiness, their role in preparing their child for school, and their current ability to access resources and information on school readiness. In Idaho, there is currently a large kindergarten readiness gap (Idaho Department of Education, 2022). However, research by Boyle and Brenner (2020) showed that parents' beliefs can be linked to a child's school readiness success. The results of the study can aid stakeholders in making meaningful decisions in the development and implementation of opportunities and resources to increase parent engagement, parents' awareness of and access to community resources, and parents' understanding of the child development process.

I conducted this research using a basic qualitative approach. In a basic qualitative design, the researcher's objective is to determine what meaning people derive from their personal experiences (Saldaña & Omasta, 2018). In this section, I describe how participants were selected. I also describe the use and selection of data sources and instruments used to collect data. I then discuss the data analysis plan and the measures used to ensure the study's trustworthiness. I conclude the section with a description of ethical procedures used to ensure rigorous and quality research.

Participant Selection

For this study, I recruited 10 parent participants. The sample size was based on foreseen resource availability and capacity. No universal rule dictates the minimum or maximum number of interviews for a qualitative study (Bekele & Ago, 2022). Some researchers use the concept of data saturation to determine the proper sample size. This concept is grounded in the idea that sample size is appropriate if the research questions can be adequately answered and the study's purpose is achieved (Mocanasu, 2020). Saturation is achieved when new theoretical or thematic categories that would be useful to the study can no longer be identified through further data collection (Mocanasu, 2020). The participants for this study were chosen using purposive sampling. Purposive sampling is the practice of deliberately selecting research participants to optimize data sources for answering the research question (Johnson et al., 2020). The homogeneous participant group was selected according to specific criteria: (a) being a parent of a child between the ages of 3–5 years old and (b) residing in the state of Idaho. The use of a homogeneous sample occurs when the participants possess corresponding characteristics or sets of traits (Crossman, 2019).

I utilized a passive approach when seeking participants. Recruitment methods can include passive, active, or multimodal approaches. Passive approaches include flyers and newsletters, while active strategies include person-to-person interactions (Negrin et al., 2022). Some other factors of successful recruitment include the researcher's ability to build rapport, trust, and credibility. The participants' motivations to volunteer and participant incentives are also factors of participant recruitment (Negrin et al., 2022). I

recruited via social media, utilizing the platforms of LinkedIn, Facebook, and Instagram. A flyer was posted to the platforms and potential participants were advised to complete a participant interest form by scanning a QR code displayed on the flyer. They were also given the option to contact me via email for additional information. Since my study was specific to a geographic location, and I was able to achieve adequate saturation, I did not utilize the Walden University participant tool. I did not offer a formal monetary incentive to participants. Rather, I encouraged participants to enroll due to their inclination to assist in providing insight to improve existing practices (Coyne et al., 2016).

Instrumentation

I addressed the research questions through semi structured, one-on-one, face-to-face interviews with parents of children ages 3–5 years old living in Southwestern Idaho. Semi structured interviews allow a researcher to gather information from participants with individual experiences, attitudes, perceptions, and beliefs related to the research topic (DeJonckheere & Vaughn, 2019). This interview structure is also designed to be used where participants have preset open-ended questions (Haugstvedt, 2020). I completed this process using a self-designed interview protocol, which ensured a similar questioning of all participants related to the interview questions. Dejonckheere and Vaughn (2019) explained that semi structured interviews demand a combination of relational focus, active engagement, and curiosity, as well as the ability to interview effectively. All interview questions were reviewed by an expert panel of early childhood professionals who hold a doctoral degree in the field. The Walden University Institutional Review Board (IRB) also approved the questions.

Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection

To recruit participants, I distributed study information via social media. The informational flyer included an overview of the dissertation's background, purpose, and research question, as well as any participant criteria. Potential participants were advised to correspond via email to express interest and provide consent. Potential participants from whom I received email communication were contacted via their indicated preferred communication method to collect consent documentation. Following the receipt of signed consent, I provided information for scheduling a 45- to 60-minute interview in person or via the Zoom online meeting platform, depending on participant preference and availability. I also informed participants, via their preferred contact method, of interview procedures such as audio recording and their right to confidentiality. I also informed them of closing procedures that may include a brief follow-up interview for participant review of interview transcription. Ten participants were chosen to participate in the study.

Data Analysis Plan

The process of data analysis is making meaning of data to answer a research question (Saldaña, 2021). To ensure trustworthiness and integrity within this process, I used the standard of rigor referred to as peer review. Peer review is a process whereby researchers invite an independent third-party researcher to examine a detailed audit trail maintained by the author of the study (Johnson et al., 2020). The peer review protects against research bias through study critique and validation of conclusions drawn by the researcher (Johnson et al., 2020). I had an expert panel of doctoral level early childhood professionals review all interview questions in preparation for interviewing participants.

I recorded the audio of the interviews and transcribed them verbatim to ensure accuracy. Since the words and ideas shared by the parent participants are the principal component of the study, the accuracy of the transcription process was essential to the quality of the study (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Prior to analyzing, coding, or interpreting the data, I used the practice of transcript checking to increase the study's credibility and confirmability (Johnson et al., 2020). In this process, participants are asked to verify the accuracy of their interview responses through a review of their interview transcript. This ensured the results truthfully reflect the intent of the subject's responses (Johnson et al., 2020). Following the transcription checking process, the data were analyzed and coded for common themes. During this stage, it was imperative to challenge my interpretations and potential biases of the data consistently and critically. Preconceived ideas can cloud the ability to question or identify alternative themes in the data (Saldaña, 2021). All data collected before, during, and after participant interviews were kept secure by password-protected data storage and will be protected for a period of 5 years.

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness, or validity, is essential to the researcher–participant relationship (Johnson et al., 2019). The experiences of participants must be accurately reflected in complex and holistic research findings (Creswell & Poth, 2018). It is recommended that researchers adhere to the principles of credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability to achieve a high level of trustworthiness in a study (Creswell & Poth, 2018). In the following paragraphs, I describe the strategies I used to adhere to these standards.

Transferability

The importance of qualitative studies lies in their transferability, which enables the researcher to provide a detailed description of the setting and study assumptions for readers to use when generalizing to broader audiences (Burkholder et al., 2019). I used thick descriptions to establish transferability. Thick descriptions involve conveying a complete depiction of the participants' perspectives, aspirations, circumstances, motivations, implications, and comprehensions. Thick descriptions also require the concise account of what unfolded in the researcher's minds as they interpret the findings (Younas et al., 2023).

Credibility

Credibility involves ensuring the findings generated from the study reflect what is present in the data (Saldaña, 2021). I utilized transcript checks and peer review to establish credibility in this study. Transcript checking involves providing data or results, or in this case, interview transcriptions, to participants to check for accuracy and resonance with their experiences. A peer reviewer also aids in establishing credibility and will protect from bias by critiquing and validating the researcher's conclusions throughout the study (Johnson et al., 2020).

Confirmability

Confirmability is a principle that states that if another researcher analyzes the same study data, the results will be confirmed (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). To assure confirmability in this study, I utilized the practice of reflexive journaling. This strategy is used to bring intention to the researchers' perspectives and assumptions to the research

process (Olmos-Vega et al., 2022). This reflective strategy allowed me as the researcher to critically reflect on potential biases that emerged during the study and map my research process, allowing for potential replication.

Ethical Procedures

I obtained approval from Walden University's IRB before beginning research. IRB guidelines were adhered to throughout the entirety of the research process to ensure the protection and privacy of all study participants. During all stages of the research process, participants must be protected from harm related to respect and dignity issues and confidentiality should be maintained (Johnson, 2020). The study included the use of a consent form that outlined the purpose of the study, procedures, risks, benefits, and participant rights including the protection of their identity and information as well as their right to withdraw from the study at any time.

Summary

In this chapter, I described the methodology for this basic qualitative study. I detailed the procedures for participant selection, instrumentation, and data analysis. I ended the chapter by discussing how I ensured the study's trustworthiness and addressed ethical considerations. In Chapter 4, I will discuss the study results, including data collection and analysis.

Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of this study was to explore parents' perspectives on school readiness, their roles in preparing their children for kindergarten, and current accessibility to resources and information on school readiness. The research question that guided the study was: *What are parents' perspectives on school readiness in preschool-age children?* In this chapter, I discuss the setting, data collection and analysis, the interview data that were created from the interview questions to develop themes, and the results of the study. I also discuss evidence of trustworthiness for the study.

Setting

The setting for this study was the online video conferencing platform Zoom. Semi structured interviews were conducted online with 10 participants. No identifying information was included, so as to maintain confidentiality. To my knowledge, no personal or organizational conditions influenced participants or their experience during the study.

Demographics

In this section, I present the demographic data for the 10 participants who participated in semi structured interviews (see Table 1). There were 12 individuals who initially expressed interest in the study, 11 who completed the interest form via the QR code displayed on the flyer posted on social media, and one individual who emailed me directly after seeing the recruitment flyer on LinkedIn. Of the participants who expressed interest, 10 participants met the requirements for the study and consented to participate. All participants were parents living in three counties across Southwestern Idaho and had

a child of pre-school age, which fulfilled the participant requirements of the study. The

participants' incomes were gathered to determine whether the study's findings align with

previous research (Boyle & Brenner, 2020; Jose et al., 2022; Liang et al., 2020; Sawyer et

al., 2022; Simons et al., 2021) that places income and SES as a factor and influence on

parents' perspectives on the topic of kindergarten readiness.

Table 1

Participant Demographics

Participant	Age	Education level	Language spoken in the home	Income
1	26–35	Bachelor's	English	$120,000 and above
2	26–35	Bachelor's	English	$91,000–$120,000
3	26–35	Masters	English	$120,000 and above
4	26–35	Bachelor's	English	$120,000 and above
5	36–45	Masters	English	$91,000–$120,000
6	26–35	Doctorate	English	$120,000 and above
7	36–45	Bachelor's	English	$61,000–$90,000
8	26–35	Bachelor's	English	$61,000–$90,000
9	26–35	Bachelor's	English	$120,000 and above
10	26–35	Bachelor's	English	$61,000–$90,000

Data Collection

Prior to collecting data for this study, I obtained IRB approval (Approval No. 01-

19-24-0976462). Following approval, I posted the study's recruitment flyer on multiple

social media platforms including Facebook, Instagram, and Linked In. Utilizing multiple

platforms allowed the information to reach potential participants within both my

professional and personal networks. The information was public, so it could also be shared by other users of the platform to reach potential participants outside of my network. Individuals who were interested in participating completed a participant interest form via a QR code found on the flyer or emailed me at my Walden University email. Interested individuals who met the study's requirements to participate were sent the participant consent form via email. The consent form included general information about the study and explained in detail the purpose of the study, the procedure of the interview, voluntary nature of the study, risks and benefits, and privacy of participant information. Individuals consented via email by saying, "I consent." Once individuals consented via email, they scheduled a date and time from a link provided for the interview.

All participants took part in an interview that consisted of semi structured open-ended questions and probes. The interview length ranged from 43 minutes to 66 minutes. Interviews took place on the videoconferencing platform Zoom. This platform allowed for increased flexibility in participant scheduling and location, while maintaining the ability to conduct the interviews face-to-face. The recording feature on Zoom was used for each interview. The recordings of the interviews, including the video and audio files, were saved on the secure, password-protected cloud of the Zoom platform. The video files were permanently deleted to protect participant privacy, and the audio files were downloaded and utilized for transcription purposes of the study. In addition to the audio recording, I took written notes throughout the interview process to assist me in identifying potential bias and analyzing potential themes. There were no unusual circumstances that required me to deviate from the processes described in Chapter 3.

Additionally, all data collected before, during, and after participant interviews has been kept secure by password-protected data storage.

Data Analysis

In preparation to analyze the data collected from the semi structured participant interviews, I transcribed the audio from each interview with the assistance of the transcription software tool TurboScribe. All transcriptions were stored and downloaded from the secure, password-protected server of the TurboScribe platform. The tool allowed me to make any necessary edits of errors that arose during the transcription process. Prior to analyzing, coding, or interpreting the data, I utilized the practice of transcript checking to increase the study's credibility and confirmability. Each participant received a copy of the transcription via email to review for accuracy, and each participant responded with their confirmation and approval, or requested edits. Transcripts were sent to all participants. All participants reviewed and returned the transcript within an acceptable time frame.

After the transcription process, I conducted a thematic analysis on the data collected. *Thematic analysis* is an umbrella term that describes a variety of approaches to identifying patterns in qualitative datasets (Braun et al., 2019). I was guided by the widely adapted, six-step methodological approach by Braun and Clark (2006), as outlined in Kiger and Varpio (2020). To support the analysis process, I utilized the qualitative analysis software program MAXQDA, as well as Microsoft Word and Microsoft Excel. In the written documentation, I identified participants by assigning a number to each and labeled them as P1, P2, P3, and so forth for all 10 participants. This ensured

confidentiality and the protection of participant privacy. All information was saved on password-protected servers and will be saved for 5 years according to Walden University's policies. No truly discrepant data were found that did not fit within the parameters of the developed research question of "What are parents' perspectives on school readiness in preschool-age children?" or subsequent interview questions.

Step 1: Familiarization With the Data

To begin the process of thematic analysis, I familiarized myself with the data by carefully immersing myself into each transcript. Initially, I printed hard copies of all transcripts and, line by line, highlighted participant quotes that stood out as relevant to the research objectives. Naeem et al. (2023) explained that the researcher should emphasize quotations that are relevant to the interview context, inject life into the narrative, and adhere to ethical principles. The selection should reflect robust patterns in the data, reflect diverse viewpoints of participants, and ensure balance between readability and authenticity (Eldh et al., 2020; Lingard, 2019, as cited in Naeem et al., 2023). In addition to highlighting words and phrases, I also accompanied highlighted segments with written notes or keywords to summarize, provide context for later coding, and help clarify the meaning. In the process of developing and interpreting data from quotations, the selection of powerful, meaningful, and pertinent words creates a deeper and more detailed analysis (Naeem et al., 2023). After my first read-through of all transcripts, I repeated the process within the MAXQDA software program. I used my hard-copy transcripts with highlights, as well as notes from my reflective journal to guide this. Upon my first read-through of the 10 participant transcripts within the software

system, I highlighted a total of 1,697 segments consisting of single words, phrases, or larger segments of narration from the participants that pertained to the guiding theory of Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory (1979) and the developed research question of "What are parents' perspectives on school readiness in preschool-age children?"

Steps 2 and 3: Coding and Searching for Themes

Following the initial familiarization of data and capture of participants' narrative segments, I used a deductive approach to code the data. A deductive approach identifies themes based on preexisting theories and frameworks (Braun & Clarke, 2012; Varpioetal, 2019, as cited in Kiger & Varpio, 2020). Alternatively, an inductive coding method involves "analyzing the text with an open mind in order to identify meaningful subjects that answer the research question" (Bengtsson, 2016, p. 10). The use of deductive coding allowed me to use my research question and subsequent interview questions to guide the selection and development of codes, categories, and themes. With the compilation of 1,697 coded segments, consisting of single words, phrases, or larger segments, I assigned each coded segment to one of four themes. For this project, the development of themes was done deductively based on the research question and interview questions. The themes included *access and resources, preschool experiences and kindergarten readiness, parent role and home involvement, and parent experiences and beliefs.* These themes were later refined during a subsequent review of coded data. This coding process was completed within the MAXQDA software system. In utilizing the MAXQDA software, I was able to export each theme's compilation of coded segments, resulting in five separate Excel documents. The document of coded segments assigned to the theme

titled *access to resources* included 324 coded segments. *Preschool and kindergarten readiness* included 265 coded segments, *parent role and home involvement* included 184 coded segments, *parent experiences and beliefs* included 420 coded segments, and *demographics* included 504 coded segments. These exported documents were securely scored within the password-protected cloud of OneDrive.

Step 4: Reviewing Themes

During the second review of coded segments and their assigned theme, I organized the segments using Microsoft Excel. I made a tab for each theme, which included: *Access and Resources, Preschool Experiences and Kindergarten Readiness, Parent Role and Home Involvement,* and *Parent Experiences and Beliefs*. Within each tab, I organized the information by participant and by the interview question that generated the participants' response. I highlighted keywords that summarized the main idea of the coded response, as it pertained to the theme. It was during this time that I carefully refined and organized the coded segments, as well as the themes. This involved separating one of the themes: *Preschool and Kindergarten Readiness* into two separate themes to organize the data more accurately and precisely. Additionally, I made the decision to remove the theme of *Parents' Personal Experiences as a Preschool-age Child*. This was done to better align and adhere to the research question of *What are parents' perspectives on school readiness in preschool-age children?* Ultimately, the data within this theme did provide information that answers the study's research question. Kiger and Varpio (2020) explained that Step 4 of the process is an ideal time to modify themes and re-sort data extracts to better reflect the coded data. This can include adding,

combining, dividing, or discarding themes. The final themes were as follows: *Parents'*

Perspectives and Experiences with their Child's Preschool Program, *Parents'*

Perspectives on the Concept of Kindergarten Readiness, *Parental Role and*

Responsibility in the Home, and *Access to Resources*. Table 2 shows the alignment of the

emergent themes to the interview questions that were developed to answer the research

question.

Table 2

Theme Alignment with Interview Questions

Theme	Interview questions (IQ)
Parents' perspectives and experiences with their child's preschool program	IQ1: When will your child enter kindergarten? IQ2: Does your child attend an early childhood education program? • IQ2a: What made you select that program? • IQ2b: What qualities do you look for in an early childcare and education provider? • IQ2c: How did you find this provider?

Parent's perspectives on the concept of kindergarten readiness	IQ4: In your own words, how would you define kindergarten readiness?
	• IQ4a: What skills do you view as important for a child to master prior to entering kindergarten?
	• IQ4b: What is your knowledge or understanding of the kindergarten entry benchmarks (skills required at entry)?
	   ○ IQ4b1: Where did you receive this information?
	   ○ IQ4b2: In your opinion, how important is it that your child meets these entry benchmarks?

Parental role and responsibility in the home	IQ5: In your opinion, whose responsibility is it to give children necessary school readiness skills and why? (Parent, childcare provider, both) • IQ5a: What steps have you taken in the home setting to support your child's development and school readiness?
Access to resources	IQ6: What resources have you used to support your child's readiness? • IQ6a: Where did you get the resources? • IQ6b: What resources do you feel that you need, but are lacking in order to support your child in gaining those skills?

Step 5: Defining and Naming Themes

During this step, I worked to identify the most important aspect of each theme and which specific aspects of the data it covered. As a result, I was able to work towards creating a coherent narrative illustrating how and why the coded data within the themes provide unique insights, contribute to a broader understanding of larger questions, and interact with other themes. Braun and Clarke (2006) explained that, while addressing these questions, the researcher seeks out areas of overlap among themes, identifies emergent subthemes, and clearly defines what each theme entails or includes. Table 3 demonstrates the final themes and subthemes that emerged during this stage of data analysis. A total of four themes and nine subthemes were identified.

Table 3

Themes and Subthemes

S/N	Themes (T)	Subthemes (ST)
T1	T1: Parents' Perspectives and Experiences with their Child's Preschool Program	T1S1: Parents' Expressed Preferences in Selecting a Preschool Program T1S2: Parents' Experiences in Communicating and Connecting with Their Child's Preschool Program
T2	T2: Parents' Perspectives on the Concept of Kindergarten Readiness	T2S1: Parents' Define Kindergarten Readiness T2S2: Parents' Knowledge and Understanding of Kindergarten Readiness Benchmarks
T3	T3: Parental Role and Responsibility in the Home	T3S1: Parent Involvement in The Home to Promote Kindergarten Readiness T3S2: Parents' Perspective on Responsibility for Supporting Kindergarten Readiness
T4	T4: Access to Resources	T4S1: Parents' Experiences Accessing and Utilizing Community Resources T4S2: Parents' Perspectives on Barriers to Access T4S3: Parents' Connection to Kindergarten Readiness Resources

Results

In this section, I discuss the findings of the study based on the research question "What are parents' perspectives on school readiness in preschool-age children?" During the data analysis process, the data were sorted into four themes using deductive coding. The four themes were: *Parents' Perspectives and Experiences with their Child's Preschool Program*, *Parents' Perspectives on the Concept of Kindergarten Readiness*, *Parental Role and Responsibility*, and *Access to Resources*. In addition to direct quotes and summaries of participant responses, I created tables and charts to visualize and summarize the data analysis results. Braun and Clark (2006) explained that the data analysis should use both narrative descriptions and representative data to describe the data and provide an argument for why the described results fully answer the research question. In this section, I provide descriptive responses from the participants as they align with each theme and subtheme.

Theme 1: Parents' Perspectives and Experiences With Their Child's Preschool Program

The first interview question given to the participants was "Does your child attend an early childcare or preschool program?" All 10 participants expressed that their child attended some sort of formal early childhood care or preschool program, at least 2 days per week. Table 4 shows the participants' responses and additional information gathered about the frequency and description of the programming their child attends, and how they initially discovered the program. Included is information gathered from subsequent and probing questions, as it pertains. All participants reported that their child attends a

tuition-based program. The programs are described to be of various settings including in-home, church-based, and center-based programs. In response to the question "How did you find the program (through what resource or relationship)," four participants noted hearing about the program though a friend or family connection, while two others reported using Google to initially find the program. The keywords "waitlist" and "tour" appeared within at least three parent responses. Two other keywords that appeared at least two times included "church" and "only available option." Two subthemes were generated based on participant responses to the follow-up interview questions of "What made you select that program?" and "What qualities do you look for in an early care and education provider?" The subthemes developed to explore these topics were: *Parents' Expressed Preferences in Selecting a Preschool Program* and *Parents' Experiences in Communicating and Connecting with their Child's Preschool Program*.

Table 4

Participant's Descriptions of their Child's Preschool Participation

Participant	Child attend	Type of preschool	Frequency		How did you find (keywords)
1	Yes	Center-based, private	Full day, 5 days. per week	FT	Close by, Local, Ads
2	Yes	Church-based	Half day, 2 days per week	PT	Local, Driving Around, Toured a few
3	Yes	Childcare center	Full day, 4 days per week	FT	Google, got waitlisted
4	Yes	Center-based, Montessori	Full Day, 2 days per week	PT	Knew somebody, waitlist, tour, no advertising
5	Yes	Center-based nonprofit,	Full day, 5 days per week	FT	5-6 waitlists
6	Yes	Church-based	Half Day, 2 days per week	PT	Local, church, family connection
7	Yes	In-home provider	Half day, 2 days per week		Local, friend, church
8	Yes	Parks and Rec Dept, tuition-based	Half day, 3 days per week	PT	Google, local, limited options
9	Yes	Childcare center	Full day, 4 days per week	FT	Local, only two available options
10	Yes	Center-based, nonprofit	Full day, 4 days per week	FT	Local, toured, recommendation

Subtheme 1: Parents' Expressed Preferences in Selecting a Preschool Program

In response to the interview question "What qualities do you look for in an early care and education provider?" participants expressed various qualities and preferences within their preschool or childcare program of choice. The most common patterns throughout included *the emphasis (including lack-of) on academics*, the *location* and *affordability of the program*, and *the importance of an outside relationship and connection.* The preference of their child attending a program that was academic versus play-based was also a common pattern. Four participants specifically mentioned their preference in a setting that was academic or structured. P1 stated, "Linguistics and

reading are really an emphasis at [child's school], and I love reading, and that was important to me. I like that [child's school] focuses on a lot of reading and is very curriculum-based." P2 described their preference, stating,

> I probably picked the closest to what I would do [as a former preschool teacher].
> Kind of a balance of emphasis on academic skills and social emotional skills. We
> were looking for a place that offered *more than free play*, not just childcare, but
> like specifically academic…Structured.

P5 noted the structured curriculum, as well as the additional emphasis on educator credentials when stating,

> We really looked at what was happening in the preschool class. Was there a
> structured curriculum? What was the expectation of the educators in that space?
> Were they educated or did they have degrees? Was the expectation that they got
> some kind of training?

P10 echoed the sentiment of P2, while also expressing their individual desire for an emphasis on community involvement when they said,

> We wanted [child] to have opportunities where she can involve herself and she
> would be involved in the community and learn about the importance of her
> community while also having some structure eventually. They are not just playing
> all day, but there is some pseudo structure.

Alternatively, multiple parents noted priorities outside of an academic-based or structured program. P3 discussed their preference for close relationships when initially looking at a program for their then-infant child. They stated,

We were kind of trying to steer away from the ones [childcare providers] that just

stick them [infants] in swings for eight hours a day. So, more interactions and

more relationships. Our priority wasn't necessarily learning per se, It was like...

[child] is spending so much time there, we really want someone who loves our

child.

P4 expressed their preferences towards the physical space, a Montessori philosophy, as

well as considering the atmosphere and type of interactions. They stated,

The Montessori curriculum was a big thing for us. I like that the kids are barefoot

pretty much all day unless the weather isn't good and they have a really big

outdoor area. And, when the weather is nice, they spend a lot of their time

outside, which was important for me. Also, it's mostly play based. They don't do

a whole lot of like structured learning…They have open, sort of large, windows

that go into the center, but there's no glass on them and there's no closed doors or

anything. So, you'd think that you would hear like kids crying or throwing

tantrums or whatever, but you walk in and it's just like quiet and there's like light

music playing and it smells like infused lavender or something and it's just very

peaceful. I like the atmosphere of it.

P7 stated a similar perspective,

The teacher said she really wanted to focus on cooperation with other students

and learning how to work with each other. And, honestly, again, it was just close.

I know this person. I feel like I can trust her with [child] and really the academics

part of it wasn't important to me. It was more like wanting to get her around other

kids and learning how to take directions from someone else besides me. I really

wanted her to be able to have a chance to play.

P8 brought up similar preferences to P7 and P3 in their desire to have their child learn

from someone other than them. They stated,

It just seemed like it was more constructive or better for another person to teach

him. … I think having, like I said, someone outside of our household that's like

loving him and like wanting him to grow … that's only a positive in my mind,

like having someone else help build him up.

Subtheme 2: Parents' Experiences in Communicating and Connecting with their Child's Preschool Program.

This subtheme emerged from the patterns described in participants' experiences in

communicating and connecting with their child's preschool or childcare program.

Participants described receiving information from their child's preschool program

through both direct and indirect communication methods. The direct methods of

communication included utilizing digital communication apps (P3), communicating at

drop-off and pick-up (P4, P5), and parent-teacher conferences (P1, P5, P10). Indirect

methods of communication mentioned included weekly or monthly newsletters (P3, P4,

P5, P7, P8, P10) and the use of social media such as Facebook to post pictures (P4). A

common pattern that emerged from parents' discussion on this topic was the *lack of*

direct and personal communication, as well as *lack of resources provided from the school*

to support school readiness or development. This can be seen in statements such as the

one received from P7, a former elementary school teacher,

We do have an outline that [teacher] puts in her newsletter with what letter they're working on and a little blurb about what they're working on, but it's very general. She doesn't communicate on a personal level and that is something that I kind of have missed just because I know that would have been an expectation for myself to communicate to parents. So, I would like to know more about what I think every parent wonders like, are they getting along with the kids during playtime? Because I see things the way that sometimes she will behave at home or react at home to certain situations.

Outside of direct communication, the majority of participants noted that they learn about their child's day through papers received at home. Papers received at home included a child's completed work or a weekly or monthly schedule/update. Participants mutually expressed that they do not receive any resources to support their child's school readiness from their child's preschool teacher.

Theme 2: Parents' Perspectives on Kindergarten Readiness as a Concept

Parents' perspectives around the topic of kindergarten readiness were important to explore to answer the research question of "What are parents' perspectives on school readiness in preschool-age children?" To provide insight into their perspectives and beliefs, participants were prompted to, in their own words, define the concept of "kindergarten readiness." The follow up question of "What skills do you view as important for a child to master prior to entering kindergarten?" probed for more specific information on their perspective of the expectations upon school entry. Responses from the participants guided the development of the subthemes of *Parents' Definition of*

Kindergarten Readiness, Parents' Knowledge and Understanding of Kindergarten and Readiness Benchmarks.

Subtheme 1: Parents' Definition of Kindergarten Readiness

Many common keywords of specific skills that participants believed were important emerged. Common skill-based responses included both social and academic skills. Table 5 demonstrates the academic and social skills that were repeated by at least two participants. The skills include both general skills such as *prepared to learn*, *participate in classroom setting*, and *self-regulation,* we well as specific skills such as sharing were noted by participants.

Table 5

Participants' Perspectives of Important Kindergarten Readiness Skills

Skill category	Skill or ability	Frequency	Participants
Social skills	Ability to follow directions, listen	5	P1, P2, P6, P8, P9
	Participate in classroom setting	3	P2, P3, P8
	Independence	2	P4, P7
	Self-regulation, patience, focus	4	P3, P4, P6, P10
	Sharing	2	P4, P10
	Prepared to Learn	3	P1, P3, P10
	Personal boundaries	2	P4, P10
	Form friendships, work with others, interact with others	4	P2, P7, P9, P10
Academic skills	Letter names and sounds, reading	7	P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P8, P10
	Numbers and counting	7	P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P8, P10
	Colors	3	P4, P6, P8
	Using scissors, cutting	2	P3, P4

Other than specific skills mentioned, participants' definitions of the concept of *kindergarten readiness* revolved around the general idea of being "ready to learn." The idea of being ready to learn included the desire for their child to enter kindergarten with

"confidence" or "ensure the experience is a positive one." Similarly, other participants reported that they wanted their child to be "excited to learn." The majority of participants shared the common belief that social skills outweighed the importance of academic skills. P7 shared their opinion on social skills outweighing academic skills, they stated,

> Kindergarten readiness for me is social skills. So that's part of why we put [child] in before, even when I was a stay-at-home mom, so they could advance her social skills, and that she was prepared, more than anything, prepared to learn … in my world, social skills would probably be the number one thing and like understanding how to prepare themselves for education, which is like accepting rules or accepting responsibility, or those are the things that I think are more important than like reading specifically.

P3 shared a similar sentiment of the importance of social skills when they stated,

> I personally wouldn't [weigh social and academic them equally … I think if they don't have a foundation of being able to even sit still and focus, you're not really getting anywhere with it. So, I think that kids who can sit still have the patience for learning are going to do better in kindergarten than kiddos who maybe know some numbers and letters but can't really build off of it because they can't sit or focus.

No participant indicated that academic skills were more important to have than social skills prior to entering kindergarten. Two (P4, P5) parents reported a balanced approach and expressed equal importance, or no specific importance, on either academic or social skills.

Subtheme 2: Parents' Knowledge and Understanding of Kindergarten Readiness
Benchmarks

As demonstrated above, participants shared many skills, both social and academic, that they perceived as important prior to entering kindergarten. When participants were asked about their knowledge and understanding of the standardized, published kindergarten readiness benchmarks, as deemed by the school or state, the majority of participants had no knowledge or understanding of any 'official' benchmarks that may be recommended. Eight participants expressed sentiments such as "I have no idea," "I know nothing on that front," "I have very little knowledge on what is needed for kindergarten," or "I don't know what the state expectations are." One participant indicated their understanding that benchmarks existed, but that they didn't know specifically what they were. P4 stated,

> I know there are [published kindergarten benchmarks] out there, and I know we'll eventually look at them when that time comes. I don't know the kindergarten readiness skills off the top of my head I'm guessing he has to be at the count of 10 and do his ABC**s.** Maybe write his name, but I don't actually know if those are what they are.

P4 expanded on their understanding, or lack of, stating,

> I'm hoping that like when they would when you go in for your kindergarten orientation you know like the in the school year prior to kindergarten that they would hopefully give you a list and if there's anything that like you haven't already covered you can cram for it.

Two other participants (P3, P10) noted their hope to receive more information at kindergarten registration. Two participants (P1, P6) similarly expressed that they are assuming their child's preschool teacher is aware of the benchmarks, and that the child's teacher will ensure their child is ready for kindergarten and on track. P1 expressed,

> I just assumed that [child's school] had them on track. [Child's school] will tell you if your kids are falling behind on anything. They tell you, like, even in a way where I'm like, okay, does my kid really need to be good at scissors? Like, I don't know if they do. So I just assumed that that was the rule, you know.

Three participants who were current or former teachers, indicated their understanding of expectations going into kindergarten, but were not aware of published standards for preschool-age children. They also expressed that, although they hold a degree in education, their knowledge is limited to children 5 and above. P5 stated, "I know we're very lucky to be able to have our child be taught by an expert in the space versus me. Even though I have education background, I don't know how to teach a five-year-old or four-year-old."

Theme 3: Parental Role and Responsibility in the Home

Participants responded to the interview question of: In your opinion, whose responsibility is it to give children necessary school readiness skills and why? (Parent, childcare provider, both). This was followed by the question of: What steps have you taken in the home setting to support your child's development and school readiness? The responses to these questions guided the creation of the general theme of Parental Role and Responsibility in the Home. The subthemes of Parents' Perspective on Responsibility

for Supporting Kindergarten Readiness and Parent Involvement in The Home to Promote Kindergarten Readiness developed to better describe the patterns that emerged from the participants' responses.

Subtheme 1: Parents' Perspective on Responsibility for Supporting Kindergarten Readiness

The pattern that emerged from the interview question of "In your opinion, whose responsibility is it to give children necessary school readiness skills and why?" was the keywords of *partnership* and *shared responsibility*. Initially, the majority of participants' responses placed the responsibility on themselves as the parent. By the end of their responses, the majority of participants settled on the responsibility being a shared one between the parent and the preschool or daycare provider. P4's response summarized the sentiments of many of the participants. They stated,

> I think it's the parent's responsibility to ensure that they are not holding their child back. … I think it's the parent's job to not like withhold that education from their child, but I think it's the government's job to ensure that it is a possibility for every family by doing it like through subsidies or just free program. …I think it's definitely shared … like his preschool can do everything possible to help him while he is there but when he's at home like it's up to us to I mean like it it'd be silly if I was expecting them to like potty train him solely.

The sentiment of the parent being responsible to ensure their child has access to education opportunities was echoed by participants 3, 5, and 10. Another pattern that emerged was participants' perceptions of what is realistically possible in assuming the

sole responsibility of preparing their child for kindergarten. P5 expresses the sentiment by stating,

> In a perfect world I would say it should be the family's responsibility to make sure they're ready to roll, but at the same time I know that's not a realistic thing. So, I think it's a joint responsibility. I would say a mutual responsibility between myself and the daycare or the preschool. I think whether I was staying at home, [child] would still be going to some kind of a preschool because they are the experts in the space of teaching kids at this age group in this level and what they need to know. And so I think either way, it would be a shared responsibility for us.

Many of the parents that discussed what is "ideal" versus "realistic" shared their beliefs from the perspective of families that may not have the same privilege as they do. This perspective led many to declare the responsibility a shared one. P7 stated,

> I think it's the parent's role, ultimately. I think it's logical to say that, I mean, a parent can only do what they can do, right? And, their first priority, even though I'm sure they would like their priority to be able to teach their kids those little those skills, would be to put food on their table. And so even I think sometimes your brain is not even thinking about those things, even if there are a few moments now and then. So yeah, I do think it becomes more of a shared responsibility.

Similarly, P8 stated,

I want to say parent, but if the parent only has a couple hours with them, like if

you are paying for school and someone to overwatch your kids, then that should

be happening there. But I hate to put like everything on other people for your own

children. I don't know. I feel like it should be obviously driven at the daycare and

then maybe just backed up by parents. It depends on, I guess, who sees the child

more, which is crazy because you should have ownership of your child. Right.

Like I'm the parent, I should be willing them to success, like to be successful. But

if you only get a couple hours a day with them.

P9 stated,

It's kind of a double-edged sword there because I do feel like it should be the

parents but when the parents are gone for 11 hours out of the day, and then you

get dinner and nighttime routine going, then, there isn't a lot of time in the day to

do it other than the weekend.

Only one participant shared the belief that the responsibility was solely on the daycare or

preschool provider. P3 stated,

Currently, I'm saying daycare's. Like, I paid them a lot of money and they're

doing a lot of the time for it and that's one of the things that we like about them is

that they're doing all of that extra stuff that when she's home with us, we can kind

of do more enjoyable stuff.

Subtheme 2: Parent Involvement in The Home to Promote Kindergarten Readiness

Participants expressed a variety of activities that they took part in with their child

to support their kindergarten readiness skills and demonstrate general involvement. All

participants mentioned the activity of reading with their child frequently. Other common keywords included *time outside*, *active*, and *hands-on learning opportunities*. Five (P1, P3, P7, P9, P10) participants mentioned the implementation of worksheets, flashcards, or workbooks in the home. P3 discussed how they choose to do sit-down work on a limited basis. They stated,

> We're not doing like a structured sit down 'let's practice your letters' or anything. They sometimes send home… they sent her home a book that has like some stuff for learning to write and like little tracing things. She'll choose to do those sometimes, but we're not necessarily scheduling time with it.

In contrast, P2 engages in sit-down, academic-related activities frequently. They state,

> We do worksheets with it at our house. We do however old you are. So since he's four, he does four a day of, um, you know, tracing letters and matching colors and shapes and some safety stuff, you know, these kinds of things. Like the preschool workbook to get him used to the discipline of sitting down and doing it for 10 minutes at a time.

Although no other participant mentioned engaging in worksheet-style activities to the extent as P2, another did share the sentiment of wanting to prepare their child to participate in routines. P7 stated, "maybe less flashcard drills and more like just getting more in routine of like practicing certain skills ... still in a way that it fits [child]."

The other common at-home activity that participants expressed engaging in with their children included active learning opportunities or hands-on learning opportunities. P5 summarized it well by stating,

I think we try and learn lean on like active learning opportunities like hitting the Children's Museum or going to the zoo and doing those sorts of things where he gets to get up and move, but also have a lot of learning opportunities attached to it. I mean even things like the playground and that kind of stuff. … just really trying to give [child] opportunities to be to be in more active spaces, but with potential learning opportunities attached to it. That's kind of our biggest priority or goal.

Theme 4: Accessibility to Community Resources to Support Kindergarten Readiness

The final theme that was developed in response to the interviews completed with 10 participants relates to the participants' accessibility to resources within the community. This includes resources that are directly related to kindergarten readiness, as well as other community resources that participants reported utilizing for their child. The subthemes that emerged include *Parents' Experiences Accessing and Utilizing Community Resources and Parents' Expressed Barriers to Access.* There were 28 unique community resources mentioned in the participants' responses. The most common or repeated responses were the local library and social media (or other digital source). Other common responses included the park, pediatrician, and church. Table 6 details the variety of resources mentioned by participants, the type of resource, and the frequency mentioned. Due to the number of items, related items have been combined.

Table 6

Participants' Utilization of Community Resources

Community Resource	Type of Resource	Frequency	Participants
Park	Free public	2	P1, P5
Library, Bookmobile	Free public	8	P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P10
Church	Free public	2	P6, P8
Department of Health and Welfare	Free public	1	P6
Sign language class, little gym, swim lessons, mom and me classes, ballet, soccer, ice skating, forest school	Paid enrichment/class	5	P1, P3, P4, P7, P10
Children's museum, zoo, trampoline park, YMCA	Paid activity	4	P1, P4, P7, P10
Grandparent, friend	Personal relationship	4	P5, P6, P8, P10
Parenting Books, Bookstore, Pamphlets	Printed materials	4	P1, P8, P9, P10
Pediatrician, Counselor, Speech Therapy	Paid provider	5	P1, P2, P3, P8, P10
Social Media (Facebook, Instagram), Google, Blogs, YouTube, ABC Mouse, Teachers Pay Teachers, Waterford	Digital Resource	8	P1, P2, P3, P5, P7, P8, P9, P29

Subtheme 1: Parents' Expressed Barriers to Access

Participants responded to the interview question "What resources do you feel that you need, but are lacking access, to support your child in gaining those skills?" The responses of the participants brought forward multiple barriers to accessing resources and information, as well as an exposure to the general lack of information available. The discussion extended into what participants believed they needed to better support their child prepare for kindergarten. The most common responses about the barriers that participants' have experienced were related to cost (P1, P3, P8), schedules and hours (P1, P3, P4, P7), and lack of information and support on the transition into the public school system (P3, P4, P8, P9, P10). A barrier that was repeated by four participants (P2, P3, P8, P9) was the lack of a central list of available resources. P3 stated,

I mean, something that we're kind of actively dealing with, it's not necessarily

kindergarten readiness, but just kind of, you know, transitioning into the public

school system is like, we have no idea before and after school care. Like, we're

trying to find before school care. I'm going onto the school website and I'm

having a hard time finding anything…it doesn't feel like any of that's really

accessible.

Similarly, P8 stated,

I'm a first-time parent. Once you have a sibling and you start talking to people

that are older and whatever … but there's nothing. So, it felt like you had to really

seek out and be really like driven and like motivated to get this information,

which just makes me sad because there's parents that are busy and have jobs.

The same participants also talked about their experience with financial barriers in
accessing speech therapy for their child. They stated,

I talked to this pediatrician, they sent us to a place in Boise [for speech therapy],

which we did for a couple of months, it was $600 after insurance every week.

[Child] went once a week and it was $600 and it was like 30 minutes. And then,

they wouldn't let you have siblings. So then I would have to find a babysitter for

my other two. The only reason he could get into it [developmental preschool in

public school] is because, technically speech is special needs, but I wasn't even

allowed to put them in at full time because it wasn't as bad as other kids. So, it

just seemed like interesting to me that there wasn't a better option of something

affordable.

A participant that noted scheduling and hours as a barrier, also noted their experience with lack of access to transportation options. Participation 7 stated,

> We're only a one car family so we are kind of limited to that area or to people who will come pick us up. I mean, I think that we probably wouldn't have been able to do it [attend preschool program] if I didn't know about her. Just because, you know, schedules don't work out that way with my husband having to go to work. I think the [preschool program] at CWI (College of Western Idaho) even starts a little bit later.

Other access challenges that were mentioned include the limited options that come with living in a rural area and being overwhelmed by the number of resources available and not knowing where to begin.

Following the discussion of the participants' expressed access challenges, participants provided information on the resources they feel that they need, or would like to have, but are lacking access to. Many of the responses aligned with the barriers that participants discussed previously. The most common request expressed was the desire to receive information that describes milestones or expectations of their child prior to entering kindergarten. Some mentioned the possibility of receiving this information in a pamphlet from the pediatrician when they do scheduled check-ups, while others expressed the preference to receive the information digitally through email, or at kindergarten registration. P6 shares their perspective stating,

> I would think for me personally, the most successful would be if it came through the pediatrician because that's kind of how I've gotten their milestones. You

know, the walking, the crawling, the stringing beads, whatever. Like, I wouldn't

know about those milestones either, except for my pediatrician has talked to me

about them. And so, then I'm like, oh, yeah, I need to I need to try that with Kate.

I've never even thought about that.

P1 shared their insight and perspectives. They stated,

I noticed the older they get, there's, there's severely less of that [milestone

resources]. There's arguably too much information [for infants]. The first year of

moms feeling like we're failing at breastfeeding and we're failing at poop and

failing at sleep. And then all of a sudden it just disappears. So, it would be nice if

there was something like that ahead of time that the state gave that was like, is

your kid on track for kindergarten? Right? It would be nice just to know in

general because I don't think any of us know after like that first year of life, if our

kids are on track.

Subtheme 2: Parents' Experiences Accessing Kindergarten Readiness Resources

Following the discussion of participants' perspectives and understanding of the

concept of kindergarten readiness, the skills associated with it, and standardized

benchmarks, participants responded to questions about their experiences accessing

resources directly related to kindergarten readiness. Participants described their

experiences receiving direct information on the topic from a variety of sources including

their child's preschool teacher, a friend, provider, or other relationship. Additionally,

participants described their experiences with public exposure to kindergarten readiness

information and resources through social media or printed materials. Seven participants

spoke about this specific topic, with five participants noting that they have not seen or received resources or materials directly related to kindergarten readiness. P9 stated, "In regard to before she started, I got nothing. I received nothing like on how to prepare for kindergarten. Even at physical registration to register, the paperwork was not educational based at all. It was just paperwork." One participant discussed their knowledge of a free kindergarten readiness workshop available to parents. P3 stated,

> The Ready for Kindergarten program I only heard about because I'm on like the education vision council for United Way and they've requested funding in the past. I was like, okay I'm interested…it sounds really cool like I'd like to check it out. But otherwise, I would never have heard of them and I don't have any parent friends who have done their programs.

In addition to participants' lack of information received on the topic, multiple parents commented on the lack of communication from the public school system regarding the process of registering for kindergarten, and their frustration of the process. P10 stated,

> Not knowing ahead of time when it was even happening, to understanding what was going to happen at kindergarten registration … that information wasn't shared. Granted, [child] has been in preschool, but it's not easy to just get all that stuff prepared within a week."

Evidence of Trustworthiness

Transferability

In my data analysis plan, I discussed my intention to use thick descriptions to establish transferability. In a thick description, views, intentions, circumstances, motives,

meanings, and understandings of the participants are described thoroughly. Through the process of completing lengthy interviews with participants, I gathered descriptive, detailed information on the participants' perspectives and beliefs. In addition to interviews, I took detailed notes and spent ample time reviewing and analyzing the participants' narrative responses.

Credibility

To ensure credibility, I utilized transcript checks and peer review. The process of transcript checking involves providing interview transcripts to the participants of the study following the completion of their individual interview. The participants reviewed the transcript for accuracy and to ensure the transcript captured the integrity of their responses. Additionally, a peer reviewer who is experienced in the field of education and qualitative research, provided their critique and feedback on my conclusions throughout the data analysis process and discussion of the results.

Confirmability

To ensure confirmability, the researcher ensures and communicates to the reader that the results are based on and reflect information collected from participants and not his or her own interpretations and biases (Johnson et al., 2020). To ensure confirmability in this study, I implemented the practice of reflexive journaling. This practice allowed me to critically reflect during the research process, including during the development of the study, the collection of data, and analysis of results.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to examine Idaho parents' perspectives on school readiness, their role in preparing their preschool-aged child for kindergarten, and their current accessibility to resources and information on school readiness. The research question that guided the study was: *What are parents' perspectives on school readiness in preschool-age children?* In this chapter, I discussed the setting, the data collection and analysis, the interview questions that were created to answer the research questions, the data collected from the interview questions to develop themes, and the results. I also discussed evidence of trustworthiness for the study. In Chapter 5, I will discuss and interpret my findings and describe the limitations of trustworthiness, recommendations for further research, the potential impact of social change, and methodological implications.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to examine Idaho parents'
perspectives and beliefs on school readiness, their role in preparing their preschool-aged
child for kindergarten, and their current accessibility to resources and information on
school readiness. In conducting this study my objective was to answer the research
question: What are parents' perspectives on school readiness in preschool-age children?
During the data analysis process, the data was sorted into five themes using deductive
coding. The five themes were *Parents' Perspectives and Experiences with their Child's
Preschool Program*, *Parents' Perspectives on the Concept of Kindergarten Readiness*,
Parental Role and Responsibility, and *Access to Resources.* In this section, I provide an
interpretation and discussion of findings in relation to the literature review and the
conceptual framework. I also discuss the limitations of the study, recommendations, and
describe the potential impact for positive social change.

Interpretation of the Findings

I discuss the findings in this section and how they confirm, disprove, or extend the
peer-reviewed literature presented in Chapter 2 as a basis for comparison. I interpret and
analyze the findings in the context of the conceptual framework used for this study,
Bronfenbrenner's ecological system theory. Bronfenbrenner's theory explains how
children's development is influenced by distinct types of environmental systems (Ettekal
& Mahoney, 2017). This theory sets the foundation for the concept of a parent's influence
on a child's development and school readiness. In this study, I interviewed 10
participants who were parents of preschool-age children to better understand their

perspectives on the topic of school readiness, their role in preparing their preschool-aged child for kindergarten, and their current accessibility to resources and information on school readiness. In the following sections, I address the alignment of literature by briefly reviewing each theme. The four themes are: *Parents' Perspectives and Experiences with their Child's Preschool Program, Parents' Perspectives on the Concept of Kindergarten Readiness, Parental Role and Responsibility, and Access to Resources*

Theme 1: Parents' Perspectives and Experiences With Their Child's Preschool Program

In examining Theme 1 and its subtheme of Parents' Expressed Preferences in Selecting a Preschool Program and Parents' Experiences in Communicating and Connecting with their Child's Preschool Program, one finding included the common pattern of the participants' preferences of their child attending a program that was academic instead of play based. Multiple participants specifically mentioned their preference in a setting that was academic or structured. The preference was also found in a survey of 723 parents in Idaho that was completed as part of the 2024 Idaho Needs Assessment Study (Idaho State University, 2024). The survey reported that 78% of parents indicated a priority of selecting a childcare program that supports their child's academic development and cognitive development. The surveyed parents also were asked about the most important factor in selecting a preschool program and 22% (the highest percentage of the indicators) noted curriculum as the most important factor (Idaho State University, 2024). Although the majority of participants in my study responded with a preference for a structured, academic program, when participants later discussed the

specific skills that they viewed as important for children to have upon kindergarten entry, a larger emphasis was placed on social skills than academic skills. In fact, no participants indicated that academic skills were more important to have than social skills prior to entering kindergarten.

Parents' reported emphasis and preference towards social skill development in preschool aligns with the literature presented in Chapter 2, as well as data collected in Idaho's most recent comprehensive Needs Assessment Study completed in 2024. The importance of social skill development was reflected in the Idaho Needs Assessment Study (2024) where 85% of surveyed parents indicated that it was a priority to select a childcare program that supports their child's emotional and social development. In previous research (Boyle & Brenner, 2020; Jose et al., 2022; Liang et al., 2020; Sawyer et al., 2022; Simons et al., 2021), parents repeatedly demonstrated similar views on the preference towards social skills. Particularly, parents of specific demographics demonstrated the preference. Miller and Kehl (2019) suggested that parents' views of the importance of cognitive versus social skills can be affected by their level of education, and parents with a higher level of education don't place an equal weight on the cognitive ability to be ready for school. All 10 participants of this study reported having a bachelor's degree or higher, and the majority of participants shared the common belief that social skills outweighed the importance of academic skills. The factor of all participants of this study being highly level educated may contribute to their reported values of social skills as more important prior to entering kindergarten. This is discussed in further detail in the examination of findings from Theme 2.

Theme 2: Parents' Perspectives on the Concept of Kindergarten Readiness

Through exploration of Theme 2 and the subtheme of *Parents' Definition of Kindergarten Readiness*, it was determined that when participants defined the concept of kindergarten readiness, parents most commonly noted specific skills they associated with kindergarten readiness, as well as the concept of kindergarten readiness involving the idea of being "ready to learn." The specific skills mentioned were a mix of both academic and social skills, with parents placing a larger value on social skills. Parents' responses of specific skills and general definition and idea of kindergarten readiness align with previous research where parents discussed specific competencies and skills that they viewed as important to school readiness (Jose et al., 2022; Miller & Kehl, 2019). Results of Miller and Kehl's (2019) study showed that parents ranked health, communication, and enthusiasm among the top three when asked to rank ten readiness skills. Specifically, being well rested and physically healthy, effectively communicating needs, wants, and thoughts, and having enthusiasm and curiosity for approaching new activities. Participants in my study did not mention their child's health as an important factor in kindergarten readiness, but there were multiple responses indicating a desire for their child to be excited and eager to learn, have a positive experience, and effectively communicate and interact with others. In Jose's study (2019), four specific developmental competencies that the parents considered critical aspects of school readiness were revealed in the discussions of specific readiness skills. These skills include toileting, the ability to interact positively with other children, separation from parents, and listening. The skills of listening, interacting positively with others, and

separating from parents were all seen in the responses of this study's participants as well. Listening and interacting with others were among the most common responses in parent participants for my study. The similarity in responses between my study's participants and the previous research may also be contributed to the similar demographics of the participants. In Miller and Kehl's (2019) research, most families were in the middle to upper socio-economic class and many participants were highly educated individuals having received many years of schooling. Other research has also connected parents' demographics to their views that emphasize social skills. Sawyer et al. (2022) compared the perspectives of two groups of parents and found that the group of parents that viewed learning skills (such as social-emotional skills) as more important to school readiness, were parents with higher incomes and more educational backgrounds. In my study, all parents had incomes ranging from $60,000 to $120,000 or more. The majority of parents reported an annual household income of at least $90,000, which is above the national medium household income of $75,149 and the Idaho medium household income of $70,214 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2024).

Theme 3: Parental Role and Responsibility

The theme of Parental Role and Responsibility and the subthemes of Parents' Perspectives on Responsibility for Supporting Kindergarten Readiness and Parent Involvement in the Home to Promote Kindergarten Readiness shed light on the perspective that parents' hold on their role in supporting their child. Parents' responses revealed that they believed the responsibility of preparing their child for school is a partnership between the caregiver or preschool and the parents. The parents commonly

discussed the "realistic" nature of a parent being solely responsible for their child's preparation and development for school. The majority mentioned barriers such as time with their child that may prevent a parent from taking sole responsibly. The idea of a shared responsibility aligns with Bronfenbrenner's theory which asserts that the transition process occurs within a broader bioecological system (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). This idea also aligns with previous researchers who have discussed the concept of school readiness being a mutual exchange that encompasses ready children, ready schools, ready families, and ready communities (Meng et al., 2023; Williams et al., 2019).

Most parents acknowledged their role as an important one and discussed a variety of activities they do in the home to promote school readiness. The most common activity parents report doing in the home is reading with their child. This was followed by the emphasis of hands-on, active learning opportunities, and the use of worksheets and flashcards to support their child in the home. Previous literature revealed similar views and practices on responsibility. Parents in a study completed by Simons et al. (2021) also indicated that they felt responsible for teaching their children academic and social/behavior skills, and they also typically reported taking an active role in fostering readiness skills. Similarly, previous literature by Jose (2022) found that parents conceptualized school readiness in different terms but considered it their role to impart many of the requisite readiness skills to their children. When specifically examining parents' perspectives on activities in the home, previous research has discussed the topic of parent engagement through the use of worksheets and workbooks. The study presented in the literature review explores the concept of worksheets and workbooks as a form of

homework for preschool students. Although the parents in my study did not discuss worksheets in relation to homework, parents similarly sought out and bought workbooks or used worksheets as a concrete way for involvement in their child's learning (Liang et al., 2020).

Theme 4: Access to Resources

The final theme of *Access to Resources* and the subthemes of Parents' Experiences Accessing and Utilizing Community Resources, Parents' Expressed Barriers to Access, and Parents' Experiences Accessing Kindergarten Readiness Resources revealed that the parents commonly accessed a large number of community resources including free, public resources such as the library, as well as community providers such as counselors, pediatricians, and speech therapists. The most utilized resource noted was social media. Social and digital media allowed participants to connect to curricular resources that support their child's school readiness, as well as support resources such as mom groups. Also, the majority of participants noted utilizing a friend or family member as a resource. The use of social networks as a resource for parents was also seen in previous literature. Research by Simons et al. (2021) revealed that the most common source of information and knowledge about the skills needed for kindergarten included their social network of friends, family, and community members. The Idaho Needs Assessment Study (Idaho State University, 2024) revealed similar findings of resources that are accessed by families. In a survey of 691 parents, 61% indicated utilizing a friend or family member as a resource. Other resources mentioned included pediatrician or

health department (67%), online searches (40%), library (35%), and social media (30%). These same resources were also mentioned by the participants in my study.

When specifically examining the subtheme of *Parents' Experiences Accessing Kindergarten Readiness Resources, responses* demonstrated the lack of information received on the topic. The majority of participants who spoke on the topic of accessing community resources specific to kindergarten readiness, noted that they have not seen or received resources or materials directly related to kindergarten readiness. The majority also noted the lack of information received from local school districts about the transition to kindergarten and registering their child for kindergarten. When parents commented on their experiences in receiving communication and general information on the topic of kindergarten readiness from their child's current preschool program, they again described a lack of resources received. This experience aligns with the perspectives presented in literature by Simons et al. (2021), where very few parents described receiving messages from schools about the skills necessary for kindergarten.

Parents' discussion of barriers to access uncovered that cost, schedules, and lack of information were the most prevalent obstacles in preparing their child for school or utilizing available resources to support the preparation. This aligns with the information gathered in the Idaho Needs Assessment Study (Idaho State University, 2024). In a survey of 530 parents in Idaho, the most reported challenges with accessing services such as early childcare and preschool included cost/affordability and hours/scheduling. Additionally, the Idaho Needs Assessment Study surveyed 469 parents about their knowledge on available programs or resources, 63% were unaware and 17% were unsure

(Idaho State University, 2024). This finding aligns with my study, as well as previous literature that discovered that parents value school readiness, but they are not knowledgeable about preparing their child for school, and do not make use of community resources (Peterson et al., 2018).

Limitations of the Study

There were some limitations presented in the study. One limitation was the homogenous demographic background of the participants. Due to the utilization of social media as the solitary recruitment method, the visibility of the recruitment information was limited primarily to individuals within my professional and personal networks. Many of the individuals active on my personal and professional social media platforms fall within the demographic of college-educated, higher-income, and working in the field of education. The individuals who volunteered to participate were all English-Speaking, college-educated, and double-income families. Multiple participants had some form of professional background in the field of education. This limited the scope of data collected. The lack of diversity in background demographics provides a narrower opportunity for interpretation and implementation.

Another limitation included the small number of participants within a confined geographical area. The study parameters limited the participant recruitment pool to 10 counties in Southwestern Idaho and the participants resided in three of those counties. The data collected from the limited participant range may not accurately reflect the perspectives and beliefs of all parents, including parents that reside in regions that were not included. An increase in participant numbers could expand the geographical diversity

and range and provide a broader scope of perspective. Despite these limitations, the minimum number of participants was reached, and data saturation was achieved in order to answer the research question: What are parents' perspectives on school readiness in preschool-age children?

Lastly, due to my connections and previously established relationships with many of the participants, this presented the possibility of bias during the process. However, having established relationships, even if at an acquaintance level, benefited the establishment of trust during the qualitative interview process. Engaging in reflective practices throughout the process allowed me to address potential biases and remain objective throughout data collection, analysis, and interpretation.

Recommendations

The purpose of this study was to explore parents' perspectives on school readiness, their roles in preparing their children for kindergarten, and current accessibility to resources and information on school readiness. The participants included a group of 10 parents who had a pre-school age child residing in Southwestern Idaho. Given the narrow focus on parents in southwestern Idaho, I recommend future studies extend to include other geographical areas and additional participants from more diverse demographic backgrounds. Considering the kindergarten achievement gap that is prevalent in Idaho, and previous research suggesting the higher risk of low-income children falling into this gap (De Witt et al., 2020; Duncan et al., 2018; Finders et al., 2021; Kenne et al., 2018; Moriguchi & Shinohara, 2019; Roos et al., 2019; Saitadze & Lalayants, 2021), I would recommend that future research intentionally include parents from low-income or more

culturally diverse backgrounds. This would also increase understanding of the difference in perspectives on school readiness that have previously been attributed to SES, education level, and cultural background of the parents (Boyle & Brenner, 2020; Jose et al., 2022; Liang et al., 2020; Sawyer et al., 2022; Simons et al., 2021).

The last recommendation would be to expand participant numbers with the implication that a larger participant group may include parents of pre-school-age children that have a child that is not currently attending a preschool program. The purpose of this study, as well as the literature reviewed in this study (Boyle & Brenner, 2020; Jose et al., 2022; Liang et al., 2020; Sawyer et al., 2022; Simons et al., 2021) of this study explored perspectives and beliefs of parents with children currently in a preschool program. Additional research that explores perspectives and beliefs of parents with preschool-aged children not in a preschool program may be beneficial.

Implications

The results of this study can contribute to positive social change by providing early childhood stakeholders with insight into parents' perspectives on school readiness. This insight will increase understanding of the support that parents of pre-school-age children in Idaho need to prepare their child for a school setting. Ultimately, the greatest impact could occur from this information contributing to the narrowing of the kindergarten achievement gap in Idaho. The findings that could greatly contribute to determining the supports needed were revealed in the discussion of parent's perspectives on barriers to accessing resources, as well as the qualities they expressed looking for in a preschool program, and their perceptions on their role in preparing their child for school.

The findings on these topics revealed that parents value preschool programs that are structured and focus on social-emotional skills. Their perspectives on their role in preparing their child for kindergarten acknowledged the responsibility that parents have in supporting their child's development, while also revealing the challenges that inhibit parents from being able to provide that support such as limited time, limited knowledge, and limited resources (or rather limited centralized access to available resources). In the discussion of barriers to accessing support and resources, two large findings that will serve as important to stakeholders include the lack of knowledge about published kindergarten readiness benchmarks and lack of communication regarding the transition to kindergarten, as well as the lack of communication and resources from their child's preschool program. Parents repeatedly expressed frustration with the process of kindergarten registration and the lack of information on the process from their local school district.

These findings have the potential of supporting actionable goals for school districts, preschool educators, and other community stakeholders. The information reveals a need for increased communication regarding the transition into the public schooling system and an increase in visibility and distribution of available resources that support kindergarten readiness, including the state-published 0–6-year-old readiness benchmarks. Many parents noted the possibility of receiving more readiness information from their pediatrician during annual well-check visits, as it aligns with the pediatrician existing discussions about milestones. They also noted their desire to receive information digitally, through text, email, or social media. Also, preschool educators serve as a source

of dissemination of information and resources. An increase in awareness of necessary kindergarten entry expectations from the school district or state, or even increased awareness of parents' expectations, could provide additional information and accessibility to families. This could also involve the partnership of local preschool programs and neighboring school districts to provide more communication on the kindergarten transition process.

Conclusion

This study explored how 10 parents in Idaho define and understand the concept of school readiness, how they view their role in preparing their child for kindergarten, and the accessibility and understanding of resources available to families. The results of the study shed light on how parents define the concept of kindergarten readiness and revealed the barriers to accessing resources and information on the topic of school readiness. The results also provided insight into parents' perspectives on their role in preparing their child for kindergarten. The results of the study aligned with previous literature (Boyle & Brenner, 2020; Jose et al., 2022; Liang et al., 2020; Sawyer et al., 2022; Simons et al., 2021) that explored parents' perspectives on school readiness. Largely, the results validated the previous literature demonstrating parents' acknowledgment of the importance of school readiness and that preschool education positively impacts kindergarten readiness (Barrows-Goralczyk, 2021; Jose et al., 2020; Peterson et al., 2018; Puccioni, 2022). Additionally, the results aligned with previous research which suggested that parents of certain demographics such as higher income and higher educated, value

social-emotional skills over academic skills in relation to kindergarten readiness (Boyle & Brenner, 2020; Jose et al., 2022; Liang et al., 2020; Sawyer et al., 2022; Simons et al., 2021). The results also aligned with the conceptual framework of Bronfenbrenner's ecological system's theory which asserts that the transition to kindergarten takes place in an environment characterized by the evolution of interactions between children, school, classroom, family, and community factors (Puccioni, 2018). The findings of this study will aid early childhood stakeholders in implementing support and resources for parents of young children as they begin school, which could potentially lead to narrowing the achievement gap among Idaho's kindergarten students.

References

Akaba, S., Peters, L. E., Liang, E., & Graves, S. B. (2020). "That's the whole idea of college readiness": A critical examination of universal Pre-K teachers' understandings around kindergarten readiness. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, *96*, Article 103172. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2020.103172

Ansari, A. (2018). The persistence of preschool effects from early childhood through adolescence. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, *110*(7), 952–973. https://doi.org/10.1037/edu0000255

Barger, M. M., Kim, E. M., Kuncel, N. R., & Pomerantz, E. M. (2019). The relation between parents' involvement in children's schooling and children's adjustment: A meta-analysis. *Psychological Bulletin*, *145*(9), 855–890. https://doi.org/10.1037/bul0000201

Bay, Y., & Bay, D. N. (2020). Determining children's primary school readiness level. *European Journal of Educational Sciences*, *7*(4), 80–110. https://doi.org/10.19044/ejes.v7no4a6

Barnett, M. A., Paschall, K. W., Mastergeorge, A. M., Cutshaw, C. A., & Warren, S. M. (2020). Influences of parent engagement in early childhood education centers and the home on kindergarten school readiness. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 53, 260–273. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecresq.2020.05.005

Bekele, W. B., & Ago, F. Y. (2022). Sample size for interview in qualitative research in social sciences: A guide to novice researchers. *Research in Educational Policy and Management*, *4*(1), 42–50. https://doi.org/10.46303/repam.2022.3

Bengtsson, M. (2016). How to plan and perform a qualitative study using content

analysis. *NursingPlus Open*, *2*, 8–14. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.npls.2016.01.001

Boyle, A. E., & Benner, A. D. (2020). Understanding parental educational involvement:

The roles of parental general and child-specific school readiness beliefs. *Merrill-

Palmer Quarterly, 66*(2), 199–226.

https://doi.org/10.13110/merrpalmquar1982.66.2.0199

Bronfenbrenner, U. (1979). *The ecology of human development: Experiments by nature

and design*. Harvard University Press.

Bronfenbrenner, U. (1995). Developmental ecology through space and time: A future

perspective. In P. Moen, G. H. Elder, Jr., & K. Lüscher (Eds.), *Examining lives in

context: Perspectives on the ecology of human development* (pp. 619–647).

American Psychological Association. https://doi.org/10.1037/10176-018

Bronfenbrenner, U., & Morris, P. A. (2007). The bioecological model of human

development. In W. Damon & R. M. Lerner (Eds.), *Handbook of child

psychology: Vol. 1. Theoretical models of human development* (6th ed., pp. 793).

https://doi.org/10.1002/9780470147658.chpsy0114

Burkholder, G. J., Cox, K. A., Crawford, L. M., & Hitchcock, J. H. (2019). *Research

design and methods: An applied guide for the scholar-practitioner*. SAGE

Publications.

Christensen, D. B., Taylor, C. L., Hancock, K., & Zubrick, S. R. (2020). School readiness

is more than the child: a latent class analysis of child, family, school, and

community aspects of school readiness. *Australian Journal of Social Issues*,

57(1), 125–143. https://doi.org/10.1002/ajs4.138

Coyne, E., Grafton, E., & Reid, A. (2016). Strategies to successfully recruit and engage

clinical nurses as participants in qualitative clinical research. *Contemporary*

Nurse, *52*(6), 669–676. https://doi.org/10.1080/10376178.2016.1181979

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

among five approaches. SAGE Publications.

Crossman, A. (2020, March 19). *Understanding purposive sampling: An overview of the*

method and its application. ThoughtCo. https://www.thoughtco.com/purposive-

sampling-3026727

DeJonckheere, M., & Vaughn, L. M. (2019). Semistructured interviewing in primary care

research: A balance of relationship and rigour. *Family Medicine and Community*

Health, *7*(2), Article e000057. https://doi.org/10.1136/fmch-2018-000057

Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (2017). *The SAGE handbook of qualitative research*.

Sage Publications.

De Witt, P. A., Du Toit, K., & Franzsen, D. (2020). Medical students' experiences and

perspectives from a local, multidisciplinary trauma conference. *South African*

Journal of Occupational Therapy, *50*(1). https://doi.org/10.17159/2310-

3833/2020/vol50no1a5

Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center. (2021). *School readiness*. U.S.

Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and

Families. https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/school-readiness

Duncan, R. J., Schmitt, S. A., Burke, M., & McClelland, M. M. (2018). Combining a

kindergarten readiness summer program with a self-regulation intervention improves school readiness. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, *42*, 291–300. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecresq.2017.10.012

Education Commission of the States. (2020). *State K-3 policies*. https://reports.ecs.org/comparisons/state-k-3-policies-06

Elliott, L., Bachman, H. J., Pereira, J. C., Coulanges, L., Duong, S., Montue, T., Miller, P., Libertus, M. E., & Votruba-Drzal, E. (2022). Self-regulation in toddlers and the emergence of pre-academic disparities. *Infant Behavior & Development*, *69*, Article 101779. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.infbeh.2022.101779

Encinger, A., Kutaka, T. S., Chernyavskiy, P., Acar, I. H., & Raikes, H. H. (2020). Relations among low-income preschool children's self-regulation, marginal food security, and parent stress. *Early Education and Development*, *31*(8), 1264–1280. https://doi.org/10.1080/10409289.2020.1749492

Ettekal, A. V., & Mahoney, J. L. (2017). Ecological systems theory. *The SAGE encyclopedia of out-of-school learning*. Sage. https://doi.org/10.4135/9781483385198.n94

Finders, J. K., McClelland, M. M., Geldhof, G. J., Rothwell, D. W., & Hatfield, B. E. (2021). Explaining achievement gaps in kindergarten and third grade: The role of self-regulation and executive function skills. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, *54*, 72–85. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecresq.2020.07.008

Hails, K. A., Zhou, Y., & Shaw, D. S. (2019). The mediating effect of self-regulation in the association between poverty and child weight: A systematic review. *Clinical*

Child and Family Psychology Review, *22*(3), 290–315.

https://doi.org/10.1007/s10567-019-00279-z

Haugstvedt, H. (2020). Research Note: 'How can I get them offstage?' – Critical

reflections on a researcher's approach to qualitative data collection with 84 social

workers involved in preventing violent extremism in Norway. *Journal for*

Deradicalization, (23), 214–234.

Herring, W., Bassok, D., McGinty, A. S., Miller, L. C., & Wyckoff, J. (2022). Racial and

socioeconomic disparities in the relationship between children's early literacy

skills and third-grade outcomes: lessons from a kindergarten readiness

assessment. *Educational Researcher*, *51*(7), 441-450.

https://doi.org/10.3102/0013189x221091535

Hunter, L. J., Bierman, K. L., & Hall, C. M. (2018). Assessing noncognitive aspects of

school readiness: the predictive validity of brief teacher rating scales of social–

emotional competence and approaches to learning. *Early Education and*

Development, *29*(8), 1081–094. https://doi.org/10.1080/10409289.2018.1495472

Idaho Association for Education of Young Children. (2022). *School readiness*.

https://idahoaeyc.org/theneed-school-readiness

Idaho State Board of Education. (2021*). Kindergarten readiness needs more attention*

[Press release]. https://boardofed.idaho.gov/resources/article-kindergarten-

readiness-needs-more-attention/

Jensen, J., Goldstein, J., & Brunetti, M. (2021). *Kindergarten readiness assessments help*

identify skill gaps. WestEd. https://www.wested.org/wp-

content/uploads/2021/09/PP-Paper1_Kindergarten-Readiness-Assessments-Help-Identify-Skill-Gaps.pdf

Johnson, J. L., Adkins, D., & Chauvin, S. W. (2019b). A review of the quality Indicators of rigor in Qualitative research. *The American Journal of Pharmaceutical Education*, *84*(1), 7120. https://doi.org/10.5688/ajpe7120

Jose, K., Banks, S., Hansen, E., Jones, R., Zubrick, S. R., Stafford, J., & Taylor, C. L. (2020). Parental perspectives on children's school readiness: An ethnographic study. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, *50*(1), 21–31. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10643-020-01130-9

Justice, L.M., Koury, A.J., & Logan, J.A.R. (2019). *Ohio's kindergarten readiness assessment: Does it forecast third-grade reading success?* https://crane.osu.edu/files/2020/01/Kindergarten-Readiness-Whitepaper_051619_SINGLES_WEB.pdf

Kenne, D. R., Fischbein, R., DeLuca, T. A., Bryant, J., Laurene, K. R., Mulvany, J. L., Leahy, P., & Banks, D. (2018). Economic disparities: SPARK Ohio and narrowing the kindergarten readiness gap. *Child Development Research*. https://doi.org/10.1155/2018/4383792

Kiger, M. E., & Varpio, L. (2020). Thematic analysis of qualitative data: AMEE Guide No. 131. *Medical Teacher*, *42*(8), 846–854. https://doi.org/10.1080/0142159x.2020.1755030

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

Leu, J. C.-Y. (2008). Early childhood music education in Taiwan: An ecological systems

perspective. *Arts Education Policy Review*, 109(3), 17–25.

https://doi.org/10.3200/AEPR.109.3.17-26

Lenahan, T., LoCasale-Crouch, J., Chamberlain, C., Williford, A. P., Downer, J. T.,

Whittaker, J. V., & Miller, L. C. (2022). Examining the association between

neighborhood conditions and school readiness across low and highly segregated

school attendance boundaries. *Frontiers in Education*, *7*.

https://doi.org/10.3389/feduc.2022.932558

Lester, J. N., Cho, Y., & Lochmiller, C. R. (2020). Learning to do qualitative data

analysis: A starting point. *Human Resource Development Review*, *19*(1), 94–106.

https://doi.org/10.1177/1534484320903890

Liang, E., Peters, L., Akaba, S., Lomidze, A., & Graves, S. B. (2020). "If they have more

work, they learn more": Parents' views of their children's learning experiences

and homework in Pre-K settings. *Early Years*, *42*(3), 327–342.

https://doi.org/10.1080/09575146.2020.1728735

Markowitz, A. J., & Ansari, A. (2020). Changes in academic instructional experiences in

Head Start classrooms from 2001–2015. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, *53*,

534–550. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecresq.2020.06.008

Marks, L. C., Hund, A. M., Finan, L. J., Kannass, K. N., & Hesson-McInnis, M. S.

(2023). Understanding academic readiness for kindergarten: The interactive role

of emotion knowledge and teacher–child closeness. *Journal of Experimental*

Child Psychology, *227*, 105585. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jecp.2022.105585

Martí, M. A., Merz, E. C., Repka, K. R., Landers, C., Noble, K. G., & Duch, H. (2018). Parent involvement in the getting ready for school intervention is associated with changes in school readiness skills. *Frontiers in Psychology*, *9*. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2018.00759

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

Meng, C., Cohrssen, C., & L. Lau, C. G. (2023). Perspectives of children, parents and teachers on school readiness and school transitions in Mainland China: A narrative literature review. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Research in Early Childhood Education*, *17*(1), 91–114. https://doi.org/10.17206/apjrece.2023.17.1.91

Micalizzi, L., Brick, L. A., Flom, M., Ganiban, J. M., & Saudino, K. J. (2019). Effects of socioeconomic status and executive function on school readiness across levels of household chaos. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, *47*, 331–340. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecresq.2019.01.007

Miller, M. M., & Kehl, L. M. (2019). Comparing parents' and teachers' rank-ordered importance of early school readiness characteristics. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 47(4), 445–453. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10643-019-00938-4

Mocănașu, D. R. (2020). Determining the sample size in qualitative research. *International Multidisciplinary Scientific Conference on the Dialogue Between*

Sciences & Arts, Religion & Education, *4*(1), 181–187.

https://doi.org/10.26520/mcdsare.2020.4.181-187

Moriguchi, Y., & Shinohara, I. (2019). Socioeconomic disparity in prefrontal

development during early childhood. *Scientific Reports*, *9*(1).

https://doi.org/10.1038/s41598-019-39255-6

Naeem, M., Ozuem, W., Howell, K. E., & Ranfagni, S. (2023). A step-by-step process of

thematic analysis to develop a conceptual model in qualitative research.

International Journal of Qualitative Methods, *22*.

https://doi.org/10.1177/16094069231205789

National Institute for Early Education Research (2019). *What is readiness? Preparing all*

children to succeed in kindergarten. [Policy Brief]. https://nieer.org/wp-

content/uploads/2019/08/NIEER-Policy-Brief-August-2019.pdf

Negrin, K., Slaughter, S., Dahlke, S., & Olson, J. (2022). Successful recruitment to

Qualitative Research: a critical reflection. *International Journal of Qualitative*

Methods, *21*, 160940692211195. https://doi.org/10.1177/16094069221119576

Niklas, F., Cohrssen, C., Vidmar, M., Segerer, R., Schmiedeler, S., Galpin, R., Klemm,

V. V., Kandler, S., & Tayler, C. (2018). Early childhood professionals'

perceptions of children's school readiness characteristics in six countries.

International Journal of Educational Research, *90*, 144–159.

https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijer.2018.06.001

NYC Department of Education. (2018). *3-K for All & Pre-K for All: Policy Handbook for*

NYCEECs. https://infohub.nyced.org/docs/default-source/default-document-

library/3kforall_and_prekforalll_nyceec_policy_handbook_2018.pdf

Olmos-Vega, F. M., Stalmeijer, R. E., Varpio, L., & Kahlke, R. (2022). A practical guide
to reflexivity in qualitative research: AMEE Guide No. 149. *Medical Teacher*,
45(3), 241–251. https://doi.org/10.1080/0142159x.2022.2057287

Öngören, S. (2021). The role of parents in children's school readiness. *Educational
Policy Analysis and Strategic Research*, *16*(3), 167–190.
https://doi.org/10.29329/epasr.2021.373.10

Pace, A., Alper, R. M., Burchinal, M., Golinkoff, R. M., & Hirsh-Pasek, K. (2019).
Measuring success: Within and cross-domain predictors of academic and social
trajectories in elementary school. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, *46*, 112–
125. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecresq.2018.04.001

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

Pennsylvania State University. (2017). *Parent engagement practices improve outcomes
for preschool children* (Issue brief).
https://www.prevention.psu.edu/uploads/files/rwjf432769-ParentEngage.pdf

Percy, W. H., Kostere, K., & Kostere, S. (2015). Generic qualitative research in
psychology. *The Qualitative Report*, *20*(2), 76-85. https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-
3715/2015.2097

Peterson, J. W., Bruce, J., Patel, N., & Chamberlain, L. (2018). Parental attitudes,
behaviors, and barriers to school readiness among parents of low-income latino

children. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, *15*(2), 188. https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph15020188

Polat, Ö., & Bayındır, D. (2020). The relation between parental involvement and school readiness: the mediating role of preschoolers' self-regulation skills. *Early Child Development and Care*, *192*(6), 845–860.

https://doi.org/10.1080/03004430.2020.1806255

Priya, A. (2021). Case study methodology of qualitative research: Key attributes and navigating the conundrums in its application. *Sociological Bulletin*, 70(1), 94–110. https://doi.org/10.1177/0038022920970318

Puccioni, J., Froiland, J. M., Moeyaert, M., Desir, S., & Galimore, Z. (2022). Associations among African American parents' beliefs, involvement, and measures of school readiness. *Journal of Child & Family Studies*, 31(5), 1246–1260. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10826-021-02092-1

Puccioni, J., Froiland, J. M., & Moeyaert, M. (2020). Preschool teachers' transition practices and parents' perceptions as predictors of involvement and children's school readiness. *Children and Youth Services Review,* 109.

https://doi.org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2019.104742

Puccioni, J., Baker, E. R., & Froiland, J. M. (2019). Academic socialization and the transition to kindergarten: Parental beliefs about school readiness and involvement. *Infant & Child Development, 28*(6). https://doi.org/10.1002/icd.2154

Puccioni, J. (2018). Parental beliefs about school readiness, home and school-based involvement, and children's academic achievement. *Journal of Research in*

Childhood Education, *32*(4), 435–454.

https://doi.org/10.1080/02568543.2018.1494065

Puccioni, J. (2015). Parents' conceptions of school readiness, transition practices, and children's academic achievement trajectories. *Journal of Educational Research*, 108(2), 130–147. https://doi.org/10.1080/00220671.2013.850399

Ravitch, S. M., & Carl, N. M. (2020). *Qualitative research: Bridging the conceptual, theoretical, and methodological.* SAGE Publications.

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

Roos, L. L., Wall-Wieler, E., & Lee, J. B. (2019). Poverty and early childhood outcomes. *Pediatrics*, *143*(6). https://doi.org/10.1542/peds.2018-3426

Roller, M. R., & Lavrakas, P. J. (2015). *Applied qualitative research design: a total quality framework approach.* The Guilford Press.

Rosanbalm, K. D., & Murray, D. W. (2017). *Promoting self-regulation in early childhood: A practice brief* (OPRE Brief #2017-79). U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation, Administration for Children and Families.

Saitadze, I., & Lalayants, M. (2020). Mechanisms that mitigate the effects of child poverty and improve children's cognitive and social–emotional development: A systematic review. *Child & Family Social Work*, *26*(3), 289–308.

https://doi.org/10.1111/cfs.12809

Saldaña, J., & Omasta, M. (2018). *Qualitative research: Analyzing life*. SAGE

    Publications.

S Sawyer, B. E., Dever, B. V., Kong, P. A., Sonnenschein, S., Simons, C., Yu, X., Zhang,

    X., & Cai, Y. (2021). Dominican, Salvadoran, and Chinese immigrant parents'

    reasoning about school readiness skills. *Child & Youth Care Forum*, *51*(1), 137–

    159. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10566-021-09623-3

Slutzky, C., & DeBruin- Early Child Development & Care. Parecki, A. (2019). State-

    level perspectives on kindergarten readiness. *ETS Research Report Series*,

    2019(1), 1–40. https://doi.org/10.1002/ets2.12242

Slicker, G., & Hustedt, J. T. (2020). Children's school readiness in socioeconomically

    diverse pre-K classrooms. *Early Child Development & Care*, *190*(15), 2366–

    2379. https://doi.org/10.1080/03004430.2019.1582527

Simons, C., Sonnenschein, S., Sawyer, B. E., Kong, P. A., & Brock, A. (2021). School

    readiness beliefs of Dominican and Salvadoran immigrant parents. *Early*

    Education and Development, *33*(2), 268–289.

    https://doi.org/10.1080/10409289.2021.1930747

Tenny, S. (2022). *Qualitative study*. StatPearls - NCBI Bookshelf.

    https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK470395/

Tomaszewski, L. E., Zarestky, J., & Gonzalez, E. (2020). Planning qualitative research:

    Design and decision making for new researchers. *International Journal of*

    Qualitative Methods, 19. https://doi.org/10.1177/1609406920967174

UNESCO. (n.d.). *Early childhood care and education*. https://www.unesco.org/en/early-childhood-education

University of Idaho James A. and Louise McClure Center for Public Policy Research (2021*). Idaho's Early Childhood Care and Education Strategic Plan*. https://www.uidaho.edu/-/media/UIdaho-Responsive/Files/president/direct-reports/mcclure-center/Research-Reports/idahos-ecce-strategic-plan-2021.pdf

U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts. (n.d.). *U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts: Idaho; United States*. Census Bureau QuickFacts. https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/ID,US/INC110222

Valentino, R. (2018). Will public pre-k really close achievement gaps? Gaps in prekindergarten quality between students and across states. *American Educational Research Journal*, *55*(1), 79–116. https://doi.org/10.3102/0002831217732000

Von Hippel, P. T., & Hamrock, C. (2019b). Do test score gaps grow before, during, or between the school years? Measurement artifacts and what we can know in spite of them. *Sociological Science*, *6*, 43–80. https://doi.org/10.15195/v6.a3

Weyer, M. (2021). *A Systems Focus to Improve School Readiness*. Education Commission of the States. https://www.ecs.org/wp-content/uploads/A-Systems-Focus-to-Improve-School-Readiness.pdf

Williams, P. G., Lerner, M., Sells, J. M., Alderman, S., Hashikawa, A., Mendelsohn, A. L., McFadden, T., Navsaria, D., Peacock, G., Scholer, S. J., Takagishi, J., Vanderbilt, D., De Pinto, C. L., Attisha, E., Beers, N., Gibson, E., Gorski, P. A.,

Kjolhede, C. L., O'Leary, S., . . . Author_Id, N. (2019). School readiness. *Pediatrics*, *144*(2). https://doi.org/10.1542/peds.2019-1766

Younas, A., Fàbregues, S., Durante, A., Escalante, E. L., Inayat, S., & Ali, P. (2023). Proposing the "MIRACLE" narrative framework for providing thick description in qualitative research. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, *22*, 160940692211471. https://doi.org/10.1177/16094069221147162

Appendix A: Parent Interview Protocol

Title: Parents' Perspectives on School Readiness in Preschool-age Children in Idaho

Participant: _____

Interviewer: _____

Date of Interview: _____

Interview start: _____

Interview end: _____

Time: 45-60 minutes.

Format: audio recorded

Opening Statement:

Thank you for taking the time to participate in this interview. This research study seeks to explore parents' perspectives and beliefs of school readiness, your role in preparing your child for a school setting, and your current accessibility to resources and information on school readiness. Participating in this study is voluntary and no compensation will be granted. You are free to stop or withdraw at any time, without any penalty or loss. I will ask you a series of questions that include both background demographics and semi-structured open-ended questions that will be audio recorded, per your consent. These questions are used to guide the interview process. There may be some probing questions to gain further information on the topic. Feel free to ask any questions during our interview sessions. All information shared today will be confidential. I will also send you a copy of the transcription to you to ensure my recordings are accurate. If you do not have any concerns or questions at this time, we will begin.

Appendix B: Parent Interview Questions

Basic info and Demographics

1. Which age range best describes you?

    a. 18-25 years old

    b. 26-35 years old

    c. 36-45 years old

    d. 45 and above

2. Which income range best describes your total annual household income?

    a. $0-$30,000

    b. $31,000-$60,000

    c. $61,000-$90,000

    d. $91,000-$120,000

    e. $120,000+

3. What is the highest level of education that you have completed?

4. What language is primarily spoken in the home?

Parent Perspectives

1. When will your child enter kindergarten?

2. Did your child attend an early childhood education program?

    a. What made you select that program?

    b. What qualities do you look for in an early care and education provider?

    c. How did you find this provider? (what resource or relationship)

3. In your own words, describe your own preschool-age experience.

   a. How do you think your experience differs from your children's early childhood experience?

4. In your own words, how would you define kindergarten readiness?

   a. What skills do you view as important for a child to master prior to entering kindergarten?

   b. What is your knowledge or understanding of the kindergarten entry benchmarks (skills required at entry)?

      i. Where did you receive this information?

      ii. In your opinion, how important is it that your child meets these entry benchmarks?

5. In your opinion, whose responsibility is it to give children necessary school readiness skills and why? (Parent, childcare provider, both)

   a. What steps have you taken in the home setting to support your child's development and school readiness?

6. What resources have you used to support your child's readiness?

   a. Where did you get the resources?

   b. What resources do you feel that you need, but are lacking access, to support your child in gaining those skills?