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The Role of Parents in Literacy Development During Kindergarten

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Jason Harris

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Walden University

2018

Abstract

The Role of Parents in Literacy Development During Kindergarten

by

Jason Harris

MEd, Lamar University, 2012

BS, Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University, 2006

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Walden University

December 2018

Abstract

Parental involvement contributes to the improvement of student achievement. Although children entered kindergarten with varying levels of literacy development, parents might perceive kindergarten literacy instruction as a panacea for any lacking skills, therefore lessening their involvement in their children's literacy development. Thus, there was a need to understand parents' perceptions of the importance of (a) their involvement in the education of their children, (b) their role in their children's literacy development during kindergarten, and (c) their role in their children's early literacy development as influencing their children's overall literacy development. Bronfenbrenner's bioecological model of human development served as a guide for this qualitative exploratory case study. Semistructured telephone interviews were conducted with 11 kindergarten parents on their perceptions regarding their involvement in the literacy development of their child. Data analysis was guided by Yin's 5-phased cycle of analyzing case studies, through which 4 main themes emerged. First, the parents perceived their involvement in the early literacy of their children helped their children's overall literacy development. Second, they perceived their involvement in their child's education was important. Third, there was a change in the degree of involvement of parents once their children entered kindergarten. Last, parents perceived that their involvement in their children's literacy development was one of the various roles and responsibility they have in being a parent. The findings of this study may contribute to positive social change by serving as useful information that can assist schools and teachers in developing effective strategies for encouraging parental involvement for families with children in kindergarten.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

I focused on the important role of parents' involvement in the literacy education of their children and how parents perceived this role. This study was needed because scholars have found that parental involvement contributes to the improvement of student achievement (Silinskas et al., 2012). The findings of this study may contribute to positive social change by serving as useful information that can assist schools and teachers in developing effective strategies for encouraging parental involvement for families with children in kindergarten, which in turn may close reading gaps. In this chapter, I discuss this study's background, problem, purpose, and research questions. I also discuss the conceptual framework and the nature of the study, provide definitions of key terms, and outline my initial assumptions. The scope and delimitations, as well as limitations of the current research, are also presented. Last, I discuss the significance of how the findings can lead to positive social changes.

Background

Researchers have shown there is a literacy gap as students enter school, which may be attributed to issues of race, socioeconomic status (SES), and educational preparation (Powell, Son, File, & Froiland, 2012; Snell, Hindman, & Wasik, 2015; Waldfogel, 2012). Kindergarten students' progress and success depends on variable reading preparation and educational experiences after entering school; moreover, parents have a role in the level of involvement by beginning children's informal education at home (Bolton & Cook, 2012; Silinskas et al., 2012; Waldfogel, 2012). Other researchers have highlighted the importance of family-related factors and the family environment,

which can influence and predict literacy development of children after entering formal schooling (Heath et al., 2014; Kiuru et al., 2012; Kleemans, Peeters, Segers, & Verhoeven, 2012; Moorman Kim et al., 2012). Children, who have experienced good quality early informal education (i.e., learning at home) before they start school (i.e., learning in the classroom), tend to become more capable of faster literacy improvement after enrolling in formal schooling (Duke, 2012; Maguire, Hirsh-Pasek, Golinkoff, & Brandone, 2008; Silinskas et al., 2012; Snell et al., 2015).

Problem Statement

The general problem of this study was that, due to the varied preparation of kindergarten students, numerous reading readiness gaps existed within the classroom cohort at my partner school. The specific problem I studied was that parents of kindergarten students lacked involvement in their children's early literacy development and kindergarten education (see Moorman Kim et al., 2012; Powell et al., 2012; Silinskas et al., 2012). Thus, there was a need to examine parents' perceptions about their involvement in the education of their kindergarten children (see Heath et al., 2014; Waldfogel, 2012). However, I focused on parents' perceptions of their involvement in the education of their kindergarten children and they influenced literacy development of the child.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore the perceptions of parents of kindergarten students about their involvement in their children's early literacy (pre-kindergarten) development and kindergarten education.

Research Questions

Given the study's purpose, I designed the following research questions:

RQ1: How do parents perceive the importance of their role in the early literacy development of their child relative to the child's overall literacy development?

RQ2: How do parents perceive the importance of their involvement in the education of their children studying in kindergarten?

RQ3: How do parents perceive their role in their children's literacy development during kindergarten?

Theoretical Foundation

Bronfenbrenner's (1979) bioecological model of human development (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998) guided this study. Researchers have used the bioecological model to posit four components needed for developmental change and learning to occur within an individual (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998): (a) processes or the proximal interactions between one and their environment, which are the primary mechanism in human development; (b) personal characteristics, such as dispositions and biological resources of ability (i.e., experience, knowledge, skill), that are required for effective functioning of proximal processes; (c) the context of interactions within one's environment (i.e., parents, relatives, objects, and symbols); and (d) time where development takes place in terms of duration, regularity, and so on. Based on the bioecological model of human development, the context of interactions is related to the study of person's environment. For this component, Bronfenbrenner's (1979) main

proposition is that interactions between persons, objects, and symbols are central to human development (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2007; Powell et al., 2012).

For a child, literacy develops in early life, which is included in the pre-kindergarten phase (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2007). Children develop personality characteristics during this early life phase. The contextual relationships between children and their surroundings have a significant influence on their development (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2007). As part of their surroundings, parents play an important role in ensuring the child develops properly during the early life stage. According to Bronfenbrenner and Morris (2007), provision of books and other reading materials; the value parents place on literacy; and the reading and verbal interactions that occur between parent and child, especially before the years of formal education; can greatly influence the development of literacy skills and abilities. Therefore, I used this theory to guide the study because it emphasized how parental involvement was important for child literacy development, especially during the early stages of life, which was central to addressing my research questions.

Nature of the Study

I conducted this qualitative, exploratory case study to understand better the perceptions of parents themselves regarding their involvement in the literacy development of their children during kindergarten. I determined that a quantitative study would not have been sufficient for rigorously gathering or exploring the perceptions of the participants. A qualitative design offered me the opportunity to provide complex textual descriptions of how people experience a given research issue (see Mack,

Woodsong, MacQueen, Guest, & Namely, 2005). A qualitative method can also lead to information revealing the “human” side of an issue (Mack et al., 2005). Overall, I determined that a qualitative methodology was more appropriate than a quantitative method for understanding and describing the parental involvement in children’s literacy development within the context of parents’ perceptions.

Definitions

Literacy development: Literacy development is the learning process of an individual, which starts from birth and is an ongoing process throughout the life of a child (Morrow, 2012).

Literacy instruction: Literacy instruction is the manner of teaching students to improve their knowledge and skills in reading and comprehension (Moorman Kim et al., 2012; Silinskas et al., 2012).

Literacy skills: Literacy skills are the emerging skills related to phonological awareness (e.g., language sound structure awareness), alphabet usage (e.g., letter), and oral language usage, which cover sentence recall, depth, and spread of vocabulary terms and correct grammar (Heath et al., 2014).

Parental involvement: Researchers have defined parental involvement as having a parent attend meetings in school and volunteer for school activities (school-based involvement; Fan, Williams, & Wolters, 2012). Fan et al. (2012) further defined parental involvement to include having parents telling stories about family member’s school experiences, assisting their children in reviewing lessons, understanding tasks for

accomplishing homework, and actively ensuring their children arrive to school on time every day (home-based involvement).

Assumptions

Assumptions are part of all studies because researchers, in various fields, recognize and accept there are factors beyond their control. I assumed all participants were honest in their interview responses; thus, their responses were precisely what the participants thought or had experienced. This assumption has its limits because people's memories are not infallible. Their recollections of an event or their perceptions of a phenomenon might not be aligned with reality, which could make the responses unreliable. Therefore, I used triangulation to make sure the responses given were accurate as possible. According to Flick, von Kardoff, and Steinke (2004), triangulation involves observing a research topic from two angles or points to promote consistency (I discuss this further in Chapter 3).

I assumed that studying only one element—the parents' perspectives—was sufficient, even though it might not have provided a holistic picture of the problem. I understood that each individual's encounter was unique from one participant to another. Nonetheless, I assumed this difference among the participants was what made qualitative research so interesting and rigorous. Because each participants' experiences varied from each other, I uncovered themes and commonalities among their responses to arrive at a coherent picture.

Scope and Delimitations

The study had a limited scope. I covered only parents' perceptions regarding their involvement and its influence on their children's literacy development while in kindergarten. Parents' self-reporting of their involvement and their perceptions might not align with how these were perceived by their own children or teachers. However, I opted to just cover parents' perceptions.

The study contained three delimitations. The first involved the setting. The research was delimited to just one specific research site, which I chose because of its nearness to the school district where I served as a principal at the time of this study. The second delimitation involved the participants. The participants were delimited to parents of kindergarten students. Parents of early childhood education students or primary grade students might have insights worth considering, but I only focused on the parents of kindergarten children. Further, I focused specifically on parents and no other caregivers. Last, the study was delimited to parents' perceptions of their involvement on the literacy development of their children in kindergarten. While their involvement could influence many other aspects of the growth and progress of their children during this stage, I focused only on literacy or reading skills of the children.

Limitations

While delimitations are under the researcher's control or align with the researcher's interests and preferences, limitations are beyond the researcher's control. This study had several limitations. First was the sample size. Even though the number of participants could be set at 15 (Patton & Cochran, 2002), others could consider this small

number a limitation. The number could have been greater to be more representative of the population, given the number of kindergarten children in this district.

Another limitation was the time constraints that I confronted. Parents were busy, so I needed to work around their schedules and interview them without affecting their work and home responsibilities. If time was not issue, then I might have gotten more data and insights from the parents. The study was also limited because parents who participated in the study were not differentiated by the literacy status of their children. This aspect might have skewed the findings.

During this study, another limitation was that I was vulnerable to personal biases that might have interfered in the collection and analysis of data for this study, especially since I was a principal at a school in a neighboring school district with a professional relationship with the principal of the school serving as the site of the study. To address this limitation, I listed all expected outcomes in relation to the possible findings of the study. In this manner, I was more aware of these personal expectations and avoided making hasty generalizations or conclusions when analyzing data. I conducted the interviews through telephone to minimize interactions with participants, which could increase potential for bias.

Another limitation of the study was that the results might not be generalizable to other groups not included in the sampling frame for this study. Nevertheless, I documented methods used in this study. Therefore, other researchers might apply these methods to other populations in the same context to compare if the data generated similar or different results and findings.

Significance

In this study, I addressed a local problem of a persistent gap in kindergarteners' literacy skills by focusing specifically on the role of parental involvement in literacy during kindergarten, a year when children entered school with significantly varying literacy skills (Heath et al., 2014; Silinskas et al., 2014; Waldfogel, 2012). The existing literacy gap at the kindergarten level (Daily, Burkhauser, & Halle, 2010; Powell et al., 2012; Waldfogel, 2012) was one that school leaders might not be able to address completely, making the role of parents in literacy development that much more important (Bolton & Cook, 2012; Heath et al., 2014; Powell et al., 2012). The results of this study provide insight into the perceptions of kindergarten parents at the local site, relative to their involvement with early literacy development (Heath et al., 2014; Waldfogel, 2012). This involvement is particularly important, given the low levels of literacy development in kindergarten in the district's schools, which often persist through grade school (Soden et al., 2015). Input from the perspective of parents can help educators better understand children's literacy development as they arrive in kindergarten and what school leaders and others can do to assist parents in their involvement in the literacy journey of their children during the kindergarten year (Bolton & Clark, 2012; Heath et al., 2014; Waldfogel, 2012).

Summary

In this chapter, I discussed the local problem to emphasize the issue what the study addressed. The specific problem I studied was that, while children arrived in kindergarten with significantly varying levels of literacy development (Heath et al., 2014;

Waldfogel, 2012), parents might perceive kindergarten literacy instruction as a panacea for any lacking skills. This perception might lessen their involvement in their children's literacy development (Moorman Kim et al., 2012; Powell et al., 2012; Silinskas et al., 2012). The problem existed at my study site and throughout the district in which it was located.

There was a significant gap between the highest and lowest performing students. Specifically, while 21% of students scored in the top quartile, nearly 20% scored in the bottom quartile. With this existing reading achievement gap at the kindergarten level (Waldfogel, 2012), there was a need to explore the role of parental involvement further in literacy development during kindergarten. By addressing the problem, the results of this study provided insight into the experiences and perceptions of kindergarten parents relative to their involvement with early literacy development.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

In this study, I explored parents' lack of involvement in kindergarten students' early literacy development and education. Specifically, parents have a decreasing—or continuing lack of—involvement in their children's literacy development from pre-kindergarten to the different stages of formal education due to a parental perception that in-school literacy instruction will rectify any reading deficiencies (Moorman Kim et al., 2012; Powell et al., 2012; Silinskas et al., 2012; Soden et al., 2015). The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore the perceptions of parents of kindergarten students about their involvement in their children's early literacy (pre-kindergarten) development and kindergarten education.

In the literature search, I found many studies showing evidence of literacy gaps during early school years. Moreover, studies have indicated the influence of parental involvement on literacy development during those years. Based on the purpose of this study, I conducted a literature search to gather relevant studies that might further illuminate the problem.

This literature review includes research on existing literacy gaps as students enter school, specifically those associated with race, SES, and educational experiences. This literature review is divided into three sections. In the first section, I discuss the conceptual framework: Bronfenbrenner and Morris's (1998) bioecological model of human development. The second section includes subsections on parental involvement in children's literacy development, kindergarten year and parental involvement, and hindrances affecting parental involvement. The third section of the literature review

highlights the gaps in the literature. The chapter ends with a summary of literature review findings.

Literature Search Strategy

To search for existing literature, I used the following databases: Google Scholar, PubMed, ProQuest, Educational Resource Information Center (ERIC), Taylor and Francis, JSTOR, and Science Direct. To search these databases for relevant literature, I used the following search: *bioecological model of human development, parental involvement in children's literacy development, kindergarten year and parental involvement, and factors affecting parental involvement*. The majority of the studies I used while conducting this review were published from 2012 to 2017. I limited the review to these studies to include only the most recent and relevant developments from the literature. To include the seminal and foundational studies on the problem and the conceptual framework, I included a few older studies. The total percentage of studies published in and after 2012 was 95% of all the reviewed literature, while studies published before 2012 formed 5% of the reviewed literature.

Theoretical Foundation

I used Bronfenbrenner's (1979) bioecological model of human development (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998) as this study's guiding framework. Researchers have used the bioecological model to posit four components are needed for developmental change and learning to occur within an individual (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998): (a) processes or the proximal interactions between individuals and their environment, which are the primary mechanism in human development; (b) personal characteristics, such as

dispositions and biological resources of ability (i.e., experience, knowledge, skill), that are required for effective functioning of proximal processes; (c) context of interactions within one's environment (i.e., parents, relatives, objects, and symbols); and (d) time where development takes place in terms of duration, regularity, and so on. Based on the bioecological model of human development, the context of interactions is related to the study of person's environment. For this component, Bronfenbrenner's (1979) main proposition is that interactions between persons, objects, and symbols are central to human development (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2007; Powell et al., 2012).

For a child, literacy develops in early life, which is included in the pre-kindergarten phase (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2007). Children develop personality characteristics during this early life phase. The contextual relationships between children and their surroundings have a significant influence on their development (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2007). As part of their surroundings, parents play an important role in ensuring the child develops properly during the early life stage. According to Bronfenbrenner and Morris (2007), provision of books and other reading materials; the value parents place on literacy; and the reading and verbal interactions that occur between parent and child, especially before the years of formal education; can greatly influence the development of literacy skills and abilities. Therefore, I used this theory to guide the study because it emphasized how parental involvement was important for child literacy development, especially during the early stages of life, which was central to addressing my research questions.

Literature Review Related to Key Concepts and Variable

Parental Involvement in Children's Literacy Development

There are two primary sources of education in the lives of a majority of children: teachers and families (Enemuo & Obidike, 2013). The influence of parental behavior and attitude on the socioemotional, intellectual, and physical development of a child cannot be overemphasized (Enemuo & Obidike, 2013). According to Enemuo and Obidike (2013), research carried out in various parts of the world has shown that the parental role is a factor of motivation and acceleration in the literacy development of children. The building of a child's understanding regarding speaking, listening, writing, and readings skills is based on their active participation in the daily activities in which they engage (Enemuo & Obidike, 2013). Enemuo and Obidike (2013) noted that those children whose literacy was encouraged and supported through their surroundings at an early age showed higher levels of confidence toward acquiring new concepts and exploring the parameters of their existing knowledge. The involvement of parents in the practices related to literacy in the lives of their children had positive consequences on the academic performances of their children (Brady, 2015). Additionally, Brady (2015) found involvement of parents was the strongest construct for positive academic outcome, when compared to other constructs related to family background, such as parental educational qualification, size of the family, and social class.

Specifically, in the initial years, Compton (2013) linked parents' involvement in activities related to learning at home to better cognitive accomplishments in children. Further, the extent to which these consequences are effective and long-lasting depends on

how early the involvement of parents in the practices related to literacy in the life of children takes place (Compton, 2013). Despite the importance of parents' involvement in the literacy development of their children, findings have indicated the limited knowledge of parents regarding their roles in the learning development and education of their children (Department for Children, Schools and Families, 2009).

The frequency of parents reading to preschool-age children is related to children's language and literacy development, including growth in vocabulary knowledge, comprehension, letter knowledge, and awareness of sounds in words (Smith, Robbins, Stagman, & Mahur, 2013). Such skills are key predictors of children's success in learning to read, showing that parent-child reading can play an important role in promoting children's school success. Powell et al. (2012) found changes in parental support of literacy skill development during pre-school, kindergarten, and first-grade years. Their research supported using Bronfenbrenner's (1979) bioecological model of human development as a framework for studying parent involvement in literacy development.

Bronfenbrenner's (1979) biological model emphasizes interactions related to parenting practices experienced by children during their development (Heath et al., 2014; Kiuru et al., 2012; Kleemans et al., 2012; Moorman Kim et al., 2012; Powell et al., 2012; Roopnarine, Krishnakumar, Metindogan, & Evans, 2006; Silinskas et al., 2012). Heath et al. (2014) conducted research on family factors and the family environments that influenced and predicted academic and literacy development. Heath et al. learned that standard literacy exposure in school did not provide children with low literacy skills sufficient support to redress the deficit. Silinskas et al. (2012) found that the more parents

were involved in shared reading and teaching of reading, the better word reading skills children demonstrated. Bolton and Cook (2012) found that nearly one-third of parents perceived themselves as the most important influence on their child's communication and literacy skill development. However, that same group of parents believed the most important influence on communication skill development rested on someone else, specifically teachers and nursery staff.

Literacy can be viewed as a continuum of various skills, such as viewing, reading, listening, writing, and critical thinking, which are applied in social contexts to allow an individual to function in their community and group (Castro et al., 2015). According to social constructivists, literacy occurs in a broad environment of learning that includes community, home, and school (Castro et al., 2015). Therefore, constructivists have argued that literacy must be understood as a responsibility of everyone influencing a child's development and not only the schools (Castro et al., 2015).

Researchers have defined a parent as a caretaker with respect to the offspring of similar species who forms the development of the child through familial interaction (Enemuo & Obidike, 2013). Parenting involves the process of providing support and encouragement to the social, emotional, intellectual, and physical development of children between infancy and adulthood (Enemuo & Obidike, 2013). Therefore, parents should assist in the development of their children for their children to actualize their true potential in later life (Enemuo & Obidike, 2013).

Researchers have defined a child as a human being not yet 18, except in the case of variation in domestic legislation, whose care is the responsibility of adults (Enemuo &

Obidike, 2013). According to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (as cited by Enemuo & Obidike, 2013), every child is entitled to basic rights, such as the right to be brought up by their parents in a family and the right to have relationship with parents. The convention compels all countries to give parents the right to exert their responsibilities as parents (Enemuo & Obidike, 2013).

Researchers have noted a child's literacy development starts before the child enters school, as the child observes their parents in the process of reading newspapers, magazines, books, bills, and letters, and writing letters and notes (Hilado, Kallemeyn, & Phillips, 2013; Jeynes, 2014). Moreover, the child may have begun taking part in a number of these acts (Jeynes, 2014). Thus, there is a strong relationship between the literacy development of a child in the early years and parental involvement. Parental involvement refers to the support and participation of parents at home and at school, which results in positive and direct consequences on the child's academic performance (Enemuo & Obidike, 2013).

Despite the significance of parental involvement in the development of the child, and the national guidelines that underline the importance of the partnership between parents and school in the realm of education, Enemuo and Obidike (2013) noted leaders of most childhood centers did not involve parents. The significance of involving parents toward encouraging and accelerating the development of children's education has been established. Based on general background, I examined the role of parental involvement in literacy development during kindergarten, a year when children arrived at school with significantly varying levels of literacy skills (see Heath et al., 2014; Waldfogel, 2012).

Many parents do not recognize that reading literacy foundations are nurtured in the home setting (Heath et al., 2014; Waldfogel, 2012).

Literacy skill development among children is one of the main roles of teachers and parents because progress in student achievement is based on a student's ability to read (Niklas & Schneider, 2013). Reading ability in children affects skill developments across many areas of the curriculum (Niklas & Schneider, 2013). Reading ability influences not only the education of an individual, but also their social functioning. Reading skills help people develop communication skills, which is important in social interactions (Yingling & Bell, 2016).

Some children have difficulties in reading skill development due to poor learning and reading experiences at home (Kimathi, 2014). The primary activity that a child at school undertakes in the first years of schooling is learning to read (Enemuo & Obidike, 2013; Niklas & Schneider, 2013). Kimathi (2014) noted those children who experienced difficulties in reading early in their life faced difficulties later in their educational pursuits. Parents' involvement in the literacy development of children results in improvement in children's attitude toward reading, skills related to expression, and the development of language comprehension (Kimathi, 2014).

Parents' responsibilities in children's learning, such as supplying them a place where activities associated with education can occur in the home, informing them about school, and reading aloud to them, show association with the motivation of children towards leaning, which influences their literacy achievements in school (Villiger, Wandeler, & Niggli, 2014). Research also shows the effect of parental involvement in the

achievement of children through the reinforcement, motivation, and encouragement provided through parental involvement that assures the continuity in children's reading, which contributes toward reading skill improvement (Baker, 2013). Parental involvement is a significant factor in the literacy success of children due to the large amount of time children spend at home in the presence of parents (Sénéchal & LeFevre, 2014). There was a lack of research relative to the role of parental involvement through the factors associated with literacy development and the varying levels of literacy skills children possess as they begin kindergarten year (Kimathi, 2014). I provided further evidence of the importance of reading readiness by examining the role of parental involvement in literacy development during kindergarten.

The involvement of parents in their child's literacy development in school and at home can be classified in three categories; these include parents assisting their children during reading, parents listening to the reading of their children, and the reading of parents to their children (Kimathi, 2014). Programs where parents listened to the reading of their children and assisted in instructing their children during reading have shown positive outcomes in the reading development of children (St. Clair, Jackson, & Zweiback, 2012; Jarrett & Coba-Rodriguez, 2015). Researchers have shown the process of reading to children by their parents serves as a strong tool in the literacy development of children in the early years (Chao, Mattocks, Birden, & Manarino-Leggett, 2014; Sibley & Dearing, 2014).

The process of parenting is a multidimensional dynamic construct, which has direct association with the development of children (Niehaus & Adelson, 2014). Research

on children's development has shown the significance of parenting, especially in the initial five years in the life of children when gaining social-emotional and cognitive skills at a rapid rate, which can have a significant effect on the early educational success of children (Cuticelli, Coyne, Ware, Oldham, & Loftus Rattan, 2014). One specific area in the context of parenting that has association with the educational success of children is the literacy activities carried out at home with the participation of parents, such as shared reading of book (Jeynes, 2016; Van Voorhis, Maier, Epstein, & Lloyd, 2013). Moreover, most research conducted on early childhood development has focused on the role of only one parent: mothers (Baker, 2013).

Parents are important to the literacy process. Researchers have shown that mothers who participate in the home literacy activities more frequently influence positive educational outcomes in their children, such as advanced social-emotional, literacy, and language skills, in the initial years (Baker, 2013; Heath et al., 2014; Lerkkanen et al., 2012; Silinskas et al., 2012). Some researchers have focused on fathers' roles in the home literacy environment, finding association between the involvement of fathers in home literacy activities and the math and reading skill development among children (Baker, 2013). While research has shown the significance of father's and mother's involvement in the home literacy activities and their influence on the cognitive and social-emotional development of children independently, there is a lack of research where both fathers and mothers have been examined in this context (Baker, 2013). Therefore, I examined the role of parental involvement in literacy development during kindergarten to close this gap in literature by examining the role of both parents.

In the initial years, the parent-child interactions in literacy result in increased ability among children to follow directions and pay attention (DeLoatche, Bradley-Klug, Ogg, Kromrey, & Sundman-Wheat, 2014). In this process, one of the primary contexts for the early literacy and language development in children is the shared reading of a book (Ma, Shen, Krenn, Hu, & Yuan, 2016). Research has shown the process of interactions through reading between parents and children is capable of providing opportunities of guided learning to children not evident in other forms of interactions between parents and children, such as care-giving and play (Mathis & Bierman, 2012).

Those parents who succeed in providing their children appropriate support and assistance for development in shared reading of a book increase the capacity of children for development and learning (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Therefore, involvement of parents in early literacy activities, such as shared reading of books, provides opportunities for learning that expose information to actualize the cognitive potential of children (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). This exposure results in the internalization of language, social skills, and behaviors among children, which have positive outcome in their later cognitive development (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Based on the research that has indicated the importance of early parental involvement in the literacy development of children, I examined this process in literacy development during kindergarten. Additionally, this investigation was significant regarding studying the involvement of both parents, rather than a single parent. I examined the role of parental involvement in literacy development during kindergarten to provide insights toward this inquiry.

Kindergarten and Parental Involvement

The involvement of parents in their children's kindergarten year includes attending events and activities in classroom, conferences for parents and teachers, and open houses; communicating with teachers via notes and phone calls; taking the position of guest speaker at classes; and volunteering at classroom (Miller, 2014). These activities occur at the school level; however, the involvement of parents in their children's kindergarten year should also include activities beyond school (Miller, 2014). The latter activities include those that occur at homes through the participation of parents in the homework assignment of their children, as well as reading activities where parents ask their children to read to them or where parents read to their children (Miller, 2014). In the context of the kindergarten year, the involvement of parents can be classified into six categories of roles: volunteer at classroom, their own children's teacher, decision maker, learner, paraprofessional, and audience (Miller, 2014).

The activities of parents in the lives of their children in the kindergarten year can be understood in terms of two peculiar distinctions. First, these activities require leaders who involve parents by focusing on strengthening the school programs as a whole, which helps the children of the parents only indirectly, such as volunteering, advisory, advocacy, and fundraising activities. Second are the activities involving parents where the primary focus is aiding their own children, such as parent-teacher meeting, homework assistance, school event attendance (Compton, 2013). In this analysis, Compton (2013) noted the involvement of parents in their children's kindergarten year transformed over the years, moving from activities where assisting the school programs was the focus, to

activities where the focus was helping children academically. The involvement of parents in the kindergarten year can include a range of activities, from serving in the board at school to assisting with homework assignment (Brady, 2015). Brady (2015) noted that more involvement of parents in the kindergarten year increased their children's chances of success socially and academically. Similarly, the chances of success increase if the involvement of parents occurs sooner (Brady, 2015).

Parental involvement in the kindergarten year can be understood through three constructs, involving the perception of teachers, the perception of parents, and the perception of the child (Chatterji, 2014). Teachers have a significant role in the involvement of parents. It was noted that those teachers who had faith in their own effectiveness as teachers had higher chances of including their student's parents in areas such as parent volunteering, teacher-parent conferences, parent support, home instruction by parents, and tutoring by parents (Hilado et al., 2013). Thus, the characteristics of teachers play a significant role in the degree of involvement of parent in their children's kindergarten year. Similarly, the social and economic status where their children are enrolled play a significant role in the level of involvement of parents (Niklas & Schneider, 2013). For instance, researchers found that a school's higher level of social and economic status resulted in higher level of parental involvement; similarly, the school's lower level of social and economic status resulted in lower level of parental involvement (Niklas & Schneider, 2013).

The encouragement of teachers regarding parental involvement can occur in a variety of ways. Researchers noted that all teachers at kindergarten level, at some point,

involved their pupil's parents through teacher-parent conferences, as well as through the messages they sent to the parents via the child (Wentzel & Miele, 2016). Regarding parental involvement in kindergarten year, the teacher's role is to establish communication with parents and encourage the parents to increase parental involvement by aiding in the classroom and home, participating in the club for parents, participating in the school board, and becoming involved in fund raising (Wentzel & Miele, 2016).

Research has shown that children whose parents take active roles in their education tend to fare better in the school experience (Yingling & Bell, 2016). With parental involvement, the role of parents is that of educator and nurturer, as parents represent the first educator experience for the child (Yingling & Bell, 2016). Parents can become involved as early as the kindergarten year of their child through direct or indirect involvement to aid their children (Sparks & Reese, 2012). Parents must become involved in the education of their children at kindergarten year, either through providing individual assistance individual to their children in their homework or through aiding in the classroom (Sim, Berthelsen, Walker, Nicholson, & Fielding-Barnsley, 2013). Researchers have noted that the involvement of the parents should be visible for the children to see their parents aiding and participating in the school (Sim et al., 2013).

Researchers have noted that collaboration between parents and teachers can result in a significant increase in the children's self-esteem, educational attitude, higher reading achievement, and learning motivation (Kim & Quinn, 2013). Witnessing such collaboration results in the development of respect in the child regarding individual rights and school (Kim & Quinn, 2013). Researchers encouraged parents to play an active role

in the home environment by ensuring their children have a balanced diet, proper sleep, complete their homework, and avoid excessive television watching (Kim & Quinn, 2013). Parents should read books and avoid excessive television watching, as they cannot expect school leaders to instill enthusiasm for reading in their children or their children avoiding excessive television if the parents are not reading to them, do not have the means to buy books for them because of their socioeconomic status, or are indulging in excessive television watching (Dumont, Trautwein, Nagy, & Nagengast, 2014). Researchers have noted that, in addition to the teacher and school quality provided to their children, the educational performance of the children reflects the intellectual environment of the child at home (Dumont et al., 2014).

Parental involvement in the kindergarten year is also influenced by the opinion of the parents regarding school (Reynolds et al., 2014). It is generally known that the experience of school is not enjoyable for everyone, and some people do not like school due to a particular teacher or subject, or due to being picked on by other students or teacher (Reynolds et al., 2014). Therefore, parents must not reflect a negative view of school in front of their children (Reynolds et al., 2014). Moreover, some parents may be reminded of unpleasant memories through the classroom, school, or the office of the principal (Niklas & Schneider, 2014). Despite these issues, parents must become involved in their children's educational activities by overcoming such unpleasant memories and fears (Niklas & Schneider, 2014).

Pre-kindergarten involvement of parents is equally important for the development of literacy skills among children in the kindergarten year (Otto, 2015). Despite the

predictable development of many children in reading and language skill acquisition, which occur through motivation-stimulating activities for reading, listening, and speaking, as well as through literacy material exposure in early childhood, success is not guaranteed (Baker, 2014). For instance, Lau (2013) noted that the necessary skills for school readiness, specifically for adequate reading, were not always developed among all children.

Many children beginning their kindergarten year are not capable of recognizing alphabet letters through name and are not familiar with the rules of print (Kiuru et al., 2012). Other children beginning their kindergarten year are not equipped with skills for sentence structure and vocabulary necessary for educational success (LaCour, McDonald, Tissington, & Thomason, 2013). This lack of skills is critical considering that literacy may persist in high school years, resulting in lower level of performance in reading (Malin, Cabrera, & Rowe, 2014).

In addition to reading preparation, many children also begin their kindergarten year without the adequate development of emotional and social skills (Baker, 2015). The lack of development in social and emotional skills can result in short-term and long-term negative outcomes (Neville et al., 2013). Lack of development in social and emotional skills in children in the initial years can result in anti-social behavior, educational failure, grade retention, and school dropout (Martini & Sénéchal, 2012). Similarly, kindergartners who are socially competent show positive perceptions toward school and perform better educationally when compared to their peers who are less socially competent (Martini & Sénéchal, 2012).

Researchers have associated the lower levels of development in early social and educational skills with a number of factors in the United States, including the child living only with one parent; the mother of the child possessing lower than high school education; the mother of the child having a language at home, which is not English; the family of the child living below poverty level income; and the child having an ethnic and racial identity, which is not Euro-American (Manolitsis, Georgiou, & Tziraki, 2013). Children in kindergarten who possess these factors have a lower chance of having family involvement in activities that nurture educational success (Manolitsis et al., 2013). Moreover, later difficulties in development among these children can mainly be attributed to the contextual factors that influence the child, rather than differences between children individually (Manolitsis et al., 2013).

Parental involvement in the kindergarten year has become one of the critical components due to benefits (Crosby, Rasinski, Padak, & Yildirim, 2014). Parents are children's first teachers, which makes their roles in the promotion of early educational success of their child significant (Crosby et al., 2014). Hence, increasing the involvement of parents in the education of their children has turned into a national priority (Crosby et al., 2014). Due to this reason, steps to promote the involvement of parents in schools have been taken by some state leaders, as well as those in the federal government (Crosby et al., 2014). These steps include rules on ensuring parents are made aware of relevant information about their child in school or encouraging parental involvement in different school activities. While some district leaders were successful in increasing the involvement of parents, some were not successful. However, due to the increased

attention nationally toward the role of parents in nurturing the skills for school readiness in children, the problem of parental involvement has turned into a crucial area for research (Crosby et al., 2014). Consequently, the goal of this study is to learn the role of parental involvement in literacy development during kindergarten, a year when children arrive at school with significantly varying levels of literacy skills (Heath et al., 2014; Waldfogel, 2012).

Pre-kindergarten and kindergarten education formed the fundamental structure for children's development and learning. In the context of the kindergarten year, Compton (2013) noted that parents attending pre-kindergarten programs resulted in the development of primary skills for learning that resulted in better preparation for instruction based on curriculum. The fundamental distinctions in the involvement of parents at the level of pre-kindergarten, as opposed to the involvement of parents at the kindergarten level, is that pre-kindergarten parental involvement occurs in the home environment, while kindergarten parental involvement occurs in the home and school environment (Compton, 2013). The involvement of parents at home, which occurs through activities such as reading aloud, shared book reading, and parent-child interaction, has positive consequences on the academic success of the children before school, and contributes significantly in the development of literacy skills before the kindergarten year (Powell et al., 2012). For instance, the experiences of children from low-income homes containing number-based board games had relation to their mathematical skill development (Compton, 2013). Compton (2013) noted that pre-kindergarten was the best time to instill and promote parental involvement, as it might

result in nurturing parental involvement in the following years. Therefore, I examined how parental involvement changed between pre-kindergarten year and kindergarten year.

Compton (2013) noted that the findings in the literature regarding the role of parents in their children's literacy skill development indicated mixed results. Some researchers have highlighted the activities related to reading undertaken by parents as significant, while others have noted no effect regarding the frequency with which activities related to reading were undertaken by parents on the reading skills of their children. Researchers have also suggested that there might be an impact of the educational skills of children on parental involvement, rather than the other way around (Jeynes, 2012). In other words, researchers have suggested the literacy skills of children could predict the amount of time spent by parents on the activities related to reading with their children (Jeynes, 2012). To acquire a thorough understanding of parental involvement in their children's kindergarten year, researchers should examine not only the context that influences parental involvement in the early literacy development of their children, but also how the parental involvement changes from pre-kindergarten to kindergarten year (Compton, 2013).

Barriers to Parental Involvement

A number of reasons may contribute toward lower parental involvement in the early literacy development and the overall education of their children. One such reason is the level of education of parents, which influences the involvement of parents in the activities related to reading between children and parent (Brady, 2015). In the United States, parents with higher educational qualifications are more involved in the learning of

their children when compared to parents with lower educational qualifications (Brady, 2015). Similarly, parents might not consider education valuable due to their own failures in school, experiences, or upbringing (Brady, 2015). Such factors may lead them to avoid school because they may feel inferior or hesitant in communicating with teachers (Compton, 2013).

Researchers have associated the educational qualification of parents with the involvement of parents in their children's learning in the home environment (Hilado et al., 2013). For instance, parents with higher levels of education have higher involvement in their children's learning (Hilado et al., 2013). In the context of racial and ethnic minorities, this is even more significant; for instance, when compared to parents of other races, researchers discovered Hispanic parents who lived in the United States could not be involved in the education of their children because of insecurities and socioeconomic status issues associated with lower educational background (Niklas & Schneider, 2013). Therefore, lower level of education among parents contributes significantly as a hindrance in children developing literacy skills.

The self-efficacy of parents is another factor that may contribute toward lower parental involvement in the literacy skill development and overall education of their children. Researchers noted parents' perceptions regarding their abilities in assisting their children in the process of learning to read had significant effect in the context of their involvement (Yingling & Bell, 2016). Those parents who did not feel they had adequate education or skills to assist their children had lower chances of becoming involved in the learning process of their children in the home environment (Yingling & Bell, 2016).

Parents who felt lower self-efficacy when helping their children in the process of literacy skill development might view that there was no positive effect of their efforts on the schooling of their children (Mol & Neuman, 2014). Conversely, parents who felt confident about their abilities to influence the performances of their children at school showed higher involvement (Mol & Neuman, 2014). Some parents also showed lower involvement in their children's education because they unaware of the ways they could get involved (Clarke, 2014).

One major factor affecting the involvement of parents in the literacy skill development of their children is the socio-economic condition of the parents (Zucker, Cabell, Justice, Pentimonti, & Kaderavek, 2013). Zucker et al. (2013) argued parental involvement was higher among parents with higher socio-economic status, as their status enabled them to provide more materials for learning to their children (e.g., books when compared to parents with lower socio-economic status; Zucker et al., 2013). Zucker et al. (2013) noted the positive relationship between parental involvement and socio-economic status of the parents.

Work schedules of parents were also influenced by socio-economic status, as researchers noted that parents coming from lower socio-economic status and poverty could not become involved due to their work schedules (Skwarchuk, Sowinski, & LeFevre, 2014). Parents with lower socio-economic status also face scarcity of resources necessary for higher involvement; such resources include financial resources, as well as the information regarding the ways they can get involved (Skwarchuk et al., 2014). Additionally, a number of stressors resulting from living in unsafe and disadvantaged

neighborhoods result in lower parental involvement among parents with lower socio-economic status (Pagan & Sénéchal, 2014). Lower socio-economic status presents the financial challenges of mental health and making ends meet, which have negative effects on the feelings of the parents about their abilities to aid their children (Pagan & Sénéchal, 2014). Poverty may result in these parents having different goals for their children when compared to the parents with higher socio-economic status, as they may be more concerned with their abilities to provide for their children's basic needs, and not their performances in the educational progress of their children (Farver, Xu, Lonigan, & Eppe, 2013).

Constraints from time are another factor that act as a hindrance in higher parental involvement in children's academic development. Kleemans et al. (2012) noted that some parents mentioned limited time as one of the reasons for lower involvement in the literacy skill development of their children in the home environment. No matter what the socio-economic condition of the family may be, regarding time constraints, Kleemans et al. noted a lack of parental involvement when parents had full-time jobs.

The major causes for lower amount of time for parental involvement included family involvement and work (Lam et al., 2013). Those parents with more inflexible and demanding jobs had lower levels of involvement in the education of their children when compared to parents with more flexible jobs (Lam et al., 2013). Similarly, parents with responsibilities due to extended family and multiple children had lower parental involvement in the school activities of their children (Lam et al., 2013). Lack of enough time resulted in parents not being able to attend school functions and teacher-parent

meetings, and not being able to help their children with projects and assignments (Lam et al., 2013).

Another construct related to time as a hindrance is work schedule, which may be inflexible, resulting in hindering parents from becoming a part of their children's education (Bindman, Skibbe, Hindman, Aram, & Morrison, 2014). Parents may not consider jeopardizing their career and employment because the income of their families depend on the employment (Bindman et al., 2014). Jobs of the parents may hinder parental involvement through time limit, as many parents cannot participate in school activities during school hours (Bindman et al., 2014). Such limit caused by lack of time may result in lower visible participation of parents, which can result in teachers viewing the parents as uninvolved in the educational activities of their children (Bindman et al., 2014).

The age of the child also plays an important role in hindering the involvement of parents in the literacy skill development of their child. For instance, as a child grows older and moves toward higher classes, the involvement of parents through assistance in homework of their children decreases; during the initial years, there is more parental involvement in homework (Powell et al., 2012). The involvement of parents decreases gradually as children graduate from pre-kindergarten to kindergarten to higher levels (Powell et al., 2012). One of the reasons for such decrease is that as children grow, their maturity level and the desire for independence increases (Powell et al., 2012). In addition to the age of the child, the type of school attended by the child is also an important factor as a hindrance toward parental involvement. For instance, parents whose children

attended private schools show higher involvement when compared to parents whose children attend public schools (Bojczyk, Davis, & Rana, 2016). Even in the context of preschools, participation of parents tends to be higher when the preschool is private when compared to public preschools (Bojczyk et al., 2016). The parents whose children attend public schools show higher participation rates, which include more communication with teachers, joining children during field trips, and commenting in the journal of the child.

Parental involvement is also influenced by cultural contexts and sociocultural values. Specifically, in ethnic minority groups, Manolitsis et al. (2013) noted that families of such families utilized different strategies as a form of parental involvement when compared to others. For instance, Manolitsis et al. noted that families of minority groups might see educating their children about how to support family and work as a type of parental involvement. Such involvement may not be widely significant, and thus not understood in the mainstream society. In the similar context, families of these groups might face difficulties when communicating with teachers due to language barriers, as some of these families might not speak English as their first language (Manolitsis et al., 2013).

The role of teachers is important to note as a possible source of hindrance in parental involvement in the education of children. The attitude of teachers toward parental involvement plays a significant role in encouraging or discouraging parental involvement in the education of children in the school environment (Kingston, Huang, Calzada, Dawson-McClure, & Brotman, 2013). Teachers with a positive view for parental involvement consistently encourage parents to become involved in the learning

of their children (Kingston et al., 2013). Such teachers also encourage parents to enhance their interactions with the children in the home environment and make teachers feel positive regarding their capacity for assisting their children in the work related to school (Costa et al., 2013). In this context, the positive role of teachers depends on their perceptions regarding the efficacy of parents (Myers, 2015). If teachers believe the parents of a child have the ability to provide positive contribution in the educational success of their child, they have higher chances of encouraging the involvement of parents in the learning of their child (Myers, 2015). Such lack of belief or positive attitude may become a hindrance in parental involvement in the education of children (Myers, 2015).

Poor performance of students can cause parents to show lower participation in the education of children at school (Manz, Gernhart, Bracaliello, Pressimone, & Eisenberg, 2014). Many parents withdraw their involvement because they receive mostly negative communication from teachers (Manz et al., 2014). The specialized learning material of the child that results from their grade promotion may also cause parents to decrease their involvement in the education of their children (Manz et al., 2014). While most parents do believe they should become more involved in the education of their children and assist teachers when asked, teachers are often unsure regarding creating substantial experiences for the child in the home environment (Manz et al., 2014).

Teachers often encourage parental involvement in the early years by sending activities to home, which must be conducted with parents (Manz et al., 2014). The development of such activities is based on the factors associated with teachers (Lam,

Chow-Yeung, Wong, Lau, & Tse, 2013). As teachers also have limited time, they put higher priority toward developing activities that are school-based, rather than those that are home-based (Lam et al., 2013). Another factor in the development of such activities is their confidence, as teachers feel more confident when creating lessons that are utilized in class, rather than those done at home (Lam et al., 2013). To increase parental involvement, teachers must create work that is meaningful, while respecting the time of the family.

Another challenge in developing activities for parents at home that teachers face is the different capacities of different parents (Lam et al., 2013). Children whose parents are less educated have different abilities for doing home-based activities when compared to parents who are more educated (Froiland, Peterson, & Davison, 2012). Especially in the context of children who come from lower socio-economic backgrounds, the challenge faced by teachers is significant (Froiland et al., 2012). In this context, the experience of teachers plays a significant role, as teachers with higher experience are more likely to develop activities that fit all parents (Froiland et al., 2012). In contrast, the inability to meet such challenges may result in teachers developing activities for home that are not suitable to some parents and may result in creating a barrier in higher parental involvement in the education of children (Froiland et al., 2012).

Research Gap

A number of research gaps emerged from the review of literature presented in this chapter that showed the rationale for conducting the study. The review of literature showed that, despite the importance of the involvement of parents in the literacy

development of their children, findings indicated the limited knowledge of parents regarding their roles in the learning development of their children and their lack of awareness about their significant role in the education of their children (Department for Children, Schools and Families, 2009). Despite the significance of parental involvement in developing the child, and the national guidelines that underlined the importance of the partnership between parents and school in the realm of education, Enemu and Obidike (2013) noted that the condition in the majority of childhood centers did not involve active involvement of parents.

The review of literature established the significance of the involvement of parents toward encouraging and accelerating the development of children's education. Based on this general background, I examined parents' perceptions about their involvement in literacy development during kindergarten, a year when children arrived at school with significantly varying levels of literacy skills (see Heath et al., 2014; Waldfogel, 2012). To acquire a thorough understanding of parental involvement in their children's kindergarten year, I examined the perceptions about parental involvement in the early literacy development of their children (see Compton, 2013). I examined the role of parental involvement in literacy development during kindergarten through parents' perceptions that their involvement in their children's early literacy development could influence their children's overall literacy development.

Summary and Conclusions

The literature review presented an understanding of the problem studied to explain the rationale for conducting the study. The review of literature was divided into

three sections. The first subsection provided a more detailed version of the conceptual framework, Bronfenbrenner and Morris's (1998, 2007) bioecological model of human development, which considered the varying literacy experiences and interactions children have prior to entering kindergarten for literacy development (Heath et al., 2012). I found that through this conceptual framework, I could examine the extent of meaningful dimensions within the context of parent and child during an early period, such as kindergarten (see Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2007).

The second subsection provided a discussion of relevant literature to the study. In this context, the first subsection focused on parental involvement in children's literacy development, where I found that research carried out in various parts of the world indicated support for the parental role as a factor of motivation and acceleration in the literacy development of children. Brady (2015) noted parents' involvement in literacy in their children's lives was the strongest construct for positive academic outcome when compared to parental educational qualification, size of the family, and social class.

The second subsection focused on kindergarten year and parental involvement, where I found that, in the context of the kindergarten year, the involvement of parents was classified into volunteer at classroom, their own children's teacher, decision maker, learner, paraprofessional, and audience (Miller, 2014). The third subsection focused on the hindrances affecting parental involvement, where several reasons were discovered that might contribute toward lower parental involvement in the early literacy development, as well as overall education of children involving constructs related to parents, teachers, and the child.

The three research questions guiding the study included the following:

RQ1: How do parents perceive the importance of their role in the early literacy development of their child relative to the child's overall literacy development?

RQ2: How do parents perceive the importance of their involvement in the education of their children studying in kindergarten?

RQ3: How do parents perceive their role in their children's literacy development during kindergarten?

In Chapter 3, the discussion focuses on the methodological plan for the present study. Chapter 3 includes descriptions of the selection process of participants, recruitment procedures, instrumentation, participation, data collection, data analysis plan, and issues of trustworthiness. Chapter 4 contains the results of the study, while Chapter 5 will complete the study with recommendations and a summary.

Chapter 3: Research Method

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore the perceptions of parents of kindergarten students about their involvement in their children's early literacy (pre-kindergarten) development and kindergarten education. For the purposes of this study, I defined role of involvement as the teaching and active interaction of parents in literacy activities with their child, especially in reading. To address the purpose and answer the research questions, I used a qualitative case study design for research.

This chapter contains a discussion of the research design and the rationale behind this choice, and a discussion of my role as researcher. I discuss the methodology in detail, including information on the how participants was selected, the instruments I used, the data collection procedures, and the data analysis plan. I outline the measures I took to ensure trustworthiness and the procedures I used to ensure ethical considerations were observed. The chapter closes with as summary and transition to the next chapter.

Research Design and Rationale

I conducted a qualitative, exploratory case study to understand the role of parental involvement in literacy development during kindergarten. While quantitative researchers present results in quantities (Patten, 2007), qualitative researchers focus on context and interpretation of data in terms of "what" and "how" (Patton & Cochran, 2002; Rossman & Rallis, 2003). The strength of qualitative research is its ability to provide complex textual descriptions of how people experience a given research issue (Mack et al., 2005). Researchers can use qualitative method to discover information about the "human" side of an issue (Mack et al., 2005). Qualitative methodology was consistent with

understanding and describing the parental involvement in children's literacy development within the context of parents' perceptions.

The case for this exploratory case study was parental involvement in kindergarten literacy program at one elementary school. Therefore, the subjects of the interviews were the parents of kindergarten students. I used an exploratory case study approach to understand and describe the phenomenon of literacy development through open-ended questions. I used these questions to provide explanations or justifications of the answers to the question. I collected qualitative data via semistructured telephone interviews about parents' perceptions regarding their involvement in the literacy development of their child. Descriptions were gathered from parents' perceptions of their involvement in their children's early literacy development and the contexts in which the experiences occurred. I analyzed these responses to interview questions for emerging themes related to the parents' perceptions about involvement in their kindergarten children's early literacy development. The results of this study provided insight into the parents' perceptions about the role of their involvement in the literacy development of their children during kindergarten, a year when instruction through school might not be enough to meet the differing levels of children's literacy development (see Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2007; Heath et al., 2014).

I considered using the ethnographic research model; however, it proved inappropriate for the research questions. Ethnographic researchers seek to understand a group of people and their values that guide their actions and understandings of their actions. Although the focus of this study was to examine participants' actions and

understandings of their actions, ethnographic researchers focused on a cultural group or the culture of a group of people, mostly through field work, such as observations (Rossman & Rallis, 2003). This study included a specific group of people; however, the culture and demographics of the group I studied varied, as did their beliefs and values. Additionally, observations would not have been appropriate for this study because these would have involved observing parents in their setting or during classroom activities, which would artificially influence how parents involve themselves in their child's literacy development.

I considered using a narrative research method to learn about the parents' experiences and perceptions of their involvement in the literacy development of their children. Narrative research involves collecting narratives, stories, and reflections (Chataika, 2005). The stories are an important means for representing and explaining the personal and social experience in the service of answering two central questions: (a) What does this narrative or story reveal about the person and world from which it came? (b) How can narrative be interpreted so that it provides an understanding of and illuminates the life and culture that created it (Patton, 2002; Rossman & Rallis, 2003)? Although I focused on parents' experiences, I sought to learn not of experiences within their culture or of an event, but of many different experiences and perceptions among varying cultures of involvement in their kindergarten children's literacy development.

A grounded theory research design was not appropriate for this study. I sought to explore perceptions of parents to make sense of their decisions to be involved in the education of their children. A grounded theory design was used to develop a theory based

on standardized data collected for the study. Developing a theory was not part of the purpose of this study; therefore, grounded theory was not appropriate for this study.

Role of the Researcher

As the researcher, I was responsible for data collection in this study. As the instrument of data collection, I was the interviewer and facilitator during the interview sessions with parents of kindergarten students. I was responsible for developing valid interpretations and analyses of the experiences and perceptions of the participants regarding their perceptions of their involvement in the education of kindergarten students to improve literacy. At the time of this study, I was a principal in a school located in a neighboring district. Because of the nearness of the research site to my school, I ensured that no participants would have either a transactional or familial relationship with the principal (e.g., family, relative). This aspect ensured I had control over this discriminatory variable.

As a person familiar with the problem and the chosen school for participant recruitment, I had personal biases and expectations regarding the possible results of the study. To minimize the influence of any potential bias, I used an interview protocol (Appendix A) as a guide in asking questions to remain aligned with the topic and phenomenon of the study. To minimize the impact of personal biases further when gathering and analyzing data, I identified my previous experiences, attitudes, and beliefs, which were relevant to the biases in expected results of the study (see Friga & Chapas, 2008). I kept all information gathered in its original form. I stored all data gathered in a

locked cabinet. I will keep these data for 5 years after completion of the study. After 5 years, I plan to destroy all data through burning or shredding.

Methodology

To understand the role of parental involvement in literacy development during kindergarten, I conducted an exploratory case study using specific methods to select participants, collect data, and analyze data. These are discussed in detail in the following subsections.

Participant Selection

The target population for this study included parents of kindergarten students. I chose this population for this study because members of the chosen target population were those with the appropriate background (regarding knowledge and experience of being a parent of a child in kindergarten) within parental involvement in the literacy development of kindergarten students. From this target population, I recruited a sample through purposive sampling. For the chosen area, the population was composed on African American (9.4%), Hispanic (38.3%), White (49%), and mixed-race (2.5%) families. Fifty-two percent were classified as economically disadvantage, and 43.7% were considered to be at risk.

Common scholarly practice with this type of case study requires the selection of 6 to 25 participants to achieve data saturation (Marshall, Cardon, Poddar, & Fontenot, 2013). The intended sample was approximately 10 parents of kindergarten children at elementary schools within a single school district. After coding the data from 10

participants, I determined the number of codes generated and the frequency of occurrence of each code.

The inclusion criteria for participation in this study were as follows: (a) had a child in kindergarten within the past 2 years, and (b) the child attended school in the chosen school district. The exclusion criterion was those who were not living with their children while they were in kindergarten. Only those who satisfied the inclusion criteria and without any trait in the exclusion criterion were considered for the study. I determined the eligibility of a participant by asking a series of questions based on the inclusion and exclusion criteria; hence, the accuracy of the sample was contingent on the honesty or accuracy of the answers or declarations of the participants. The screening questions included the following:

1. Have you had a child in kindergarten within the past 2 years?
2. Does your child belong to the chosen school district?
3. Were you living with your children while they were in kindergarten?

Although some parents had multiple children attending the participating school or in the school district at the time of the study, the sample of parents participating in the study was not asked to describe their experiences or perceptions of literacy involvement with those children, only of their kindergarten children.

I used purposive sampling to select participants based on the inclusion and exclusion criteria. Purposive sampling is a recruitment technique where researchers select a participant based on a set of criteria, which was purposefully determined in alignment with the requirements of the purpose and research questions of the study (Ishak & Bakar,

2014). For the purpose of recruitment, I gathered a group of participants who (a) had all the traits or characteristics under the inclusion criteria and (b) did not have any traits under the exclusion criteria. Therefore, the purpose of recruitment was to access participants that formed one homogeneous group based on the characteristics described in the inclusion and exclusion criteria.

Instrumentation

Semistructured telephone interviews were the main data source for this study. I chose to use semistructured interviews to collect data for this study to keep questions aligned with the topic while providing flexibility to ask follow-up and relevant questions based on participants' answers (Jamshed, 2014; Kallio, Pietilä, Johnson, & Kangasniemi, 2016; Seedat, Hargreaves, & Friedland, 2014). I used an interview protocol as the main instrument for this data source (Appendix A). The protocol contained a list of relevant questions that guided me in the interviews and were aligned with the research questions of the study. Despite having an interview protocol, I asked other questions (e.g., follow-up questions) to obtain a deeper understanding of the participants' answers.

I asked a panel of experts (my doctoral committee members) to review the questions in the interview guide in terms of question structure, wording, and content. The experts reviewed the appropriateness of each question for answering the research questions of the study. Based on the panel's comments, I made changes to the questions where appropriate.

Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data

Recruitment. Before recruiting participants, I asked the permission of the principal of a school from the school district chosen for the study. The letter of cooperation that served as a proof of granting permission allowed me to conduct the study with the parents of students in the concerned schools (Appendix B). To recruit participants, I handed flyers (Appendix B) to parents of kindergarten students inside the chosen school for this study. Therefore, I directly targeted the population of interest of the study.

In the flyers, information regarding the nature, purpose, and possible implications of the study were included. The inclusion and exclusion criteria for the study were also be a part of the flyers. All interested parents were asked to email me about their intent to participate.

I set up an appointment, and then contacted the interested participants via telephone to ask a series of questions based on the inclusion and exclusion criteria. In this manner, I ascertained the eligibility of the participant to be a part of the study. I sent an email to all eligible participants to provide the informed consent (Appendix C). The informed consent form had the details of the following: (a) research title, (b) purpose statement, (c) method of participation, which is interview, (d) length of participation, (e) potential but minimal risks related to participating, (f) procedures for ensuring confidentiality and data security, and (g) contact information (e.g., IRB of the university, dissertation committee chair, and researcher). The participant who agreed to the contents of the informed consent form replied “I CONSENT” to the email. The same participants

must send a photo or electronic file of the signed form to me through email. After receiving the signed copy of the consent form, I contacted the participant to schedule the interview.

Interview process. Each individual parent telephone interviews took 30- to 45- minutes to complete. I scheduled interviews at a time convenient. I digitally recorded all interviews, after each of the participants granted permission.

At the time of the scheduled interview, I called the participant. If I could not talk to the participant after two attempts, I sent a text message to the participant asking for a response when the participant is ready. I waited for the reply before trying to call again.

At the beginning of the interview, I provided a brief review of the topic, purpose, and importance of the study. I provided the interview protocol to let the participant know what to expect from the interview session. I then started asking questions based on the interview guide. After asking all the questions in the interview guide, I informed the participant that the interview is done. The participants could ask any question or provide comments about the study. I addressed each question or react to each comment in the appropriate manner. I thanked the participant for their time.

After interviews, an email was sent to participants containing the interview transcript and researcher notes for participants to confirm the correctness of the content of the transcripts. Any changes to the transcript had to be discussed between the participant and myself. To ensure confidentiality, I used pseudonyms for each parent participating in the study. No identifying data of participants or their children was included from interview.

Data Analysis Plan

I used Yin's (2013) five-phased procedure in analyzing this case study. I conducted qualitative descriptive analysis based on data collected from telephone interviews. I analyzed answers to interview questions corresponding to the first research question separately from answer corresponding to the second research question. I first read data collected from telephone interviews thoroughly to learn of parents' experiences and perceived involvement with kindergarten literacy development, as well as any other relevant data specific to literacy development within the home environment.

I coded data into descriptive categories derived from themes related to "literacy development," an important aspect of the study. Recurring words and phrases generated codes that fit into emergent themes (Rossman & Rallis, 2003). I reviewed the analysis of participant responses to the telephone interviews.

As a guide, I used Yin's (2013) five-phased cycle of analyzing case studies: (a) compiling, (b) disassembling, (c) reassembling, (d) interpreting, and (e) concluding. I began by compiling and sorting the transcripts of the interviews. In this phase, I read the answers to the interview to familiarize myself with the data. In the second phase, which included disassembling, I broke down the data into smaller segments (e.g., words, phrases, sentences). While disassembling, I assigned new labels or *codes* to the fragments or pieces. Moreover, I repeated this step as a part of a trial-and-error process of testing and validating the codes (see Yin, 2013). In the reassembling phase, I used substantive themes or clusters of codes to reorganize the disassembled fragments or pieces into different groupings and sequences (Yin, 2013). I performed the second and third phases

in a repeated and alternating manner until all data were processed (see Yin, 2013). I gave codes to participants for review, a process called member checking (see Fusch & Ness, 2015). In the fourth phase, I used the reassembled data to generate a narrative of the overall interpretation of the data. After developing interpretations, the fifth phase involved developing conclusions (see Yin, 2013).

Trustworthiness

To show the data and analysis for this study is of good quality, I ensured trustworthiness of the results. In qualitative research, researchers have referred to validity of study findings as trustworthiness of study findings (Bowen, Rose, & Ware, 2006). In establishing trustworthiness, researchers have stated data sources, collection, and study results should have credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Bowen et al., 2006). Therefore, I implemented different procedures to ensure the improved trustworthiness of the study.

Credibility refers to a researcher's confidence about the truth of data and interpretations of data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). I improved credibility of data through member checking transcripts. The participants reviewed the transcripts of their respective interviews to determine the accuracy and correctness of the information stated in the form (see Fusch & Ness, 2015).

Transferability refers to the extent by which the data are usable and transferable to other types of research in the area being studied (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). To improve transferability, I provided detailed discussion of the procedures involved in implementing

this case study. Through this discussion, I enabled future researchers to reproduce the study in different settings.

Dependability is the level of reliability of the data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). I provided an audit trail to improve dependability of the data. I documented the inputs and outputs of each step involved in the recruitment, data collection, and data analysis of the study.

A confirmable study is one that has objective data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). To improve data objectivity and confirmability, I provided questions to confirm or reinforce answers of participants. These questions were directed toward acquiring similar answers that might be stated differently.

Ethical Procedures

I addressed all ethical issues using an informed consent, which was important for any study with human participation of any form (Holloway & Wheeler, 2013). This consent form (Appendix D) included a discussion of the rights and roles of the participants. The form contained all information that the participant must know before agreeing to participate in the study. I obtained the approval of the IRB first before handing out the informed consent to potential participants.

The ethical issues in the informed consent included the following (a) confidentiality, (b) data security, and (c) voluntary nature of participation in the study. Confidentiality was one of the most essential issues of ethics when performing studies with human participants. For the purpose of confidentiality, I assured participants that their identification would not be disclosed to other people aside from me. To do this

process, I assigned a pseudonym (e.g., alphanumeric code) to each participant. These pseudonyms were the ones used in data collection, analysis, and reporting, instead of real names of participants. I was the only one who knew the true identities of participants. Although some parents had multiple children attending the participating school or in the school district at the time of the study, I asked participating parents to describe their experiences or perceptions of literacy involvement with those children, only of their kindergarten children. No identification of children was included in interview data.

The second consideration is data security. All files remained safe and secured. I kept electronic data or information in password-protected files in my personal computer. To address the issue of IP address recordation, all emails were permanently deleted from my account after downloading any attachment as needed. All physical data or printed information sheets remained in a cabinet kept locked inside my private office. I kept all electronic and physical files for 5 years from the conclusion of the entire study. After 5 years, I will destroy all related data through permanent deletion (for electronic files) and burning or shredding (for physical or printed files).

Summary

In summary, I used a qualitative case study approach to address the purpose of the study and research questions of the study. I used semistructured telephone interviews as the data sources for this study. The sample for this study involved parents of kindergarten students in the chosen school for the study. Data were analyzed through qualitative descriptive analyses. Section 3 includes a discussion of the findings and implications of the analysis results.

Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore the perceptions of parents of kindergarten students about their involvement in their children's early literacy (pre-kindergarten) development and kindergarten education. The following research questions guided the research:

RQ1: How do parents perceive the importance of their role in the early literacy development of their child relative to the child's overall literacy development?

RQ2: How do parents perceive the importance of their involvement in the education of their children studying in kindergarten?

RQ3: How do parents perceive their role in their children's literacy development during kindergarten?

In this chapter, I present answers to these three questions after reviewing the data collection and analysis procedures, and the results.

Data Collection

I interviewed each participant via telephone. All participants answered the interview questions; when completed, I transcribed the recordings. I finished interviews with a total of 61 transcribed pages.

Data Analysis

I employed the data analysis plan discussed in the previous chapter. I used Yin's (2013) five-phased cycle of analyzing case studies: (a) compiling, (b) disassembling, (c) reassembling, (d) interpreting, and (e) concluding. I started by compiling and sorting the transcripts of the interviews. In this phase, I read the answers to the interview questions

to familiarize myself with the data. In the second phase, which included disassembling, I broke down the data into smaller segments (e.g., words, phrases, and sentences). While disassembling, I also assigned new labels or codes to the fragments or pieces.

Moreover, I repeated this step as a part of a trial-and-error process of testing and validating the codes (see Yin, 2013). In the reassembling phase, I used substantive themes or clusters of codes to reorganize the disassembled fragments or pieces into different groupings and sequences (see Yin, 2013). I performed the second and third phases in a repeated and alternating manner until I had processed all data (see Yin, 2013). In the fourth phase, I used the reassembled data to generate a narrative of the overall interpretation of the data. After developing interpretations, I developed the conclusions (Yin, 2013).

Results

Based on the analysis conducted, I obtained significant findings about parents' perceptions of the importance of their roles in a kindergartener's early literacy development. Results indicated how parents perceived the importance of their involvement in the education of their kindergarten children. Lastly, results indicated how parents perceived their roles in their children's literacy development during kindergarten. In the following subsections, I present the results gathered according to the research questions raised.

Research Question 1

For the first research question I asked: How do parents perceive the importance of their role in the early literacy development of their child relative to the child's overall

literacy development? From the interviews with the 11 parents, I found most participants perceived they had an essential role in a kindergartener's early literacy development and in the child's overall literacy development. Specifically, participants perceived that their involvement significantly helped their children. Table 1 contains the frequency and percentage of themes and subthemes addressing Research Question 1.

Table 1.

Breakdown of Subthemes Addressing RQ1

Subthemes	Number of occurrences (<i>n</i> = 11)	Percentage of occurrences (<i>n</i> = 11)
Key role in their child's overall literacy development	6	55%
Involvement helped a little	2	19%
Without involvement, children might have been left behind	2	19%

The first theme, *parents perceived that their early literacy involvement helped their child's overall literacy development*, aided in answering the first research question. The parents perceived they had a key role in their child's early literacy development and in the child's overall literacy development. Participants 1, 3, 4, and 5 perceived their involvement *greatly* helped their child's overall literacy development. These parents perceived their involvement positively affected their children's performance during their kindergarten years. Participant 1 believed her involvement significantly helped her child and reported regularly watching her child read words in sentences:

I think she just soared. It's amazing where we started out in the year with maybe two or three words on a page, and now there's maybe three sentences on the page. For her to read that, or like Ranger Rick, there's another little magazine, just for her to pick that up and read the story, it's just amazing of where she's come in just

these few months. I think it's, yeah, just for her to read ... start out with two or three words and then to read sentences and her vocabulary, I think she's just done well.

Participant 4 stated that the involvement really helped: "I really do think this helps with that a lot." Participant 5 said the involvement helped her children's overall literacy development:

Yes. And I think so because I kept reading. He got to totally pick whatever he wanted to read. And I feel like, at school, we gear it to this is what you're gonna have to do. And at home, we just did it for fun.

Participants 2 and 3 perceived their involvement only helped a little in the overall literacy development of their children. One reason for this feeling was because they did not exactly know what they were preparing their children for. They reported not knowing what specific things to teach their children to prepare them for their literacy development. These parents would wait for the evaluation of the school or the teacher to let them know whether their early practices helped their children. Participant 2 stated the following:

Yeah, I do think it helped to an extent, but not really knowing what to prepare him for. That was kind of a shoe-in on us. We didn't really know if we were doing the right thing or if it was gonna be for nothing at all. It turned out to really be it because they did work on sight words and things in kindergarten, so I think it did help him. But like I said, it was just kind of a guess for us.

Participant 3 mentioned that she "winged" the preparation and only repeated what her mother did for her. Most participants mentioned their childhood experiences

influenced what they did for their children in the early literacy process. One parent read books to her child because she remembers her mother doing that activity. The parents mentioned that some of their relatives, such as their parents or grandparents, influenced their love of reading, which influenced the literacy activities of their children. Participant 3 added the following:

That also helped too, because after we learned the sight words, the base words, we went over how to do bigger words. *With* was one of his words, and *out* was one of his words. Then I was able to write on a paper *without*, and he could read that to me, because we were having the flashcards sent home, which also made reading a little bit easier, because when he'd see the bigger words, he could break them down.

Two parents positively perceived their involvement in their child's overall literacy development. Participants 1 and 11 believed that without their involvement in the early literacy process of their children, their children might have been left behind. Participant 1 mentioned that her early involvement with her child's literacy development gave her child the competitive advantage to be exposed to reading, regarding shapes and sounds of the letters. Participant 1 stated, "I think she may have been a little behind, but I don't feel that it's something she couldn't have overcome. It may have just taken a little bit longer."

Participant 11 stated that her involvement was not only limited to reading, but to studying in general. These two parents firmly believed that their involvement helped their children, especially in meeting the literacy standards of the state. Moreover, they expressed the need to be involved with their child's literacy development to ensure that

their child was not left behind. The parents wanted their children not to struggle with literacy. Participant 11 added that literacy

Affects every class. It's not just reading. It affects every single class in school.

And it's going to. If in the school they're struggling, they're going to struggle a long way, most kids. It's going to be a continuous struggle. I mean, yeah, you can bring kids up. But, you know, they're always going to be a little bit behind.

For the first research question, I found most parents believed their involvement in their children's literacy development helped their children. The three subthemes that I used to answer the first research question showed the various degrees of how parents perceived their influence on their children's literacy development. On one side of the spectrum, most parents perceived they were a positive influence because they believed they had a crucial role in their child's overall literacy development, and their children might have been left behind without their involvement. Conversely, some parents believed their involvement had an impact on their children's literacy development but only to a certain extent and was limited by their own lack of knowledge of how to teach reading.

Research Question 2

In the second research question, I asked the following: How do parents perceive the importance of their involvement in the education of their children studying in kindergarten? All parents perceived that it was important to be involved in their children's education, even in kindergarten. All parents perceived that it was their responsibility as parents to be involved with the education of their children. Another

theme was the degree of involvement before and during kindergarten. Some parents reported staying involved, while some parents left their children in the hands of the teachers.

Table 2.

Breakdown of Themes Addressing RQ2

Themes	Number of Occurrences (<i>n</i> = 11)	Percentage of Occurrences (<i>n</i> = 11)
It is important to be involved with child's education	11	100%
Degree of involvement	6	54%
Increased involvement during kindergarten	3	27%
Decreased involvement during kindergarten	3	27%

The second theme, *parents' perceived that their involvement in their child's education is important*, aided in answering the second research question. All parents perceived they must be involved in the education of their children in kindergarten. Participants 1 and 2 stated that involvement was important because it showed they loved and cared for their children. Participant 1 expressed that being involved was important:

It shows her that we care and we're going to stay on top of what she's doing in school. And I want to be, so I think it's important for parents to be involved overall in different activities, not just the academic, but the ... I can't even say it.

The extracurricular activities. I think that's an important role.

Participant 2 said that involvement was important: "I think it's important to show the kids that you know, their school, and their time in school is very important to you. I think it

helps them be more motivated and be a little more involved in what they're doing in school, as well.”

Additionally, Participants 5 and 6 mentioned that building relationships with teachers would positively influence their child’s academic performance. Building relationships with teachers helped the parents assist their children not only with their literacy development but also in their children’s overall academic performance.

Participant 5 reported the following:

As a parent, whenever you take a step away from the school. I guess no news is good news. So, if you're not constantly engaging with the teachers, the activities going on at the school, you think everything's just fine, going perfectly fine. But, versus being involved all the time, you get to know, you build a relationship with those teachers, and they're going to tell you, even if they're not concerned, but even two or three steps before getting to be concerned.

Participant 6 valued the role of teachers in her child’s life. In addition, Participant 6 recognized the difficulties of the role of teachers, especially in the literacy development of their students:

It's huge. I talk to many teachers, and I know that some of them say when the kids go home that they have to take care of siblings, parents are working. They've even had parents that have told them, "It's your job to teach my kid to read," or whatever, and they don't help and aren't involved, and those kids are struggling. I just can't imagine doing it any other way.

Participants 7 and 9 mentioned that their involvement was important because it was their jobs as parents to stay involved with the lives of their children. Participant 7 wanted her child to be the best possible:

To me, it's part of the territory. It comes with the title of being a parent. I want my kids to be the best that they can be. I know that that requires pushing them because I see the two different cases with my kids. One of my kids is naturally very intelligent but has no drive and no self-confidence. They have to be pushed. The other child maybe isn't as naturally smart but is very determined and very motivated. I see both of those cases, and I know what I need to do with each of my children. It has to be approached in a different manner. With the one that has no motivation, it's a fight to get them to read the higher level books. The other one, they want to read all the time, but I had to sit there and listen to them because they're not as strong of a reader. Knowing your kids and knowing their strengths and their weaknesses, it really just, like I said, it all goes back to wanting the best for your kids. Sometimes you have to make that sacrifice as a mom when you just want to sit there and watch TV, but you have to work with your children. I just always tell my husband this, too. He'll make comments like, "You all don't need to ..." I'll push with my oldest to read some more or let's get some more points. My husband will kind of make a comment like, "You think you're pushing him too hard?" I just kind of laugh, like, "Tell me that when they graduate in the top ten percent." Because I just feel like you have to push your kids and you have to make them realize their full potential because if you don't do that, there's not too

many people that will. Yes, you have some teachers and stuff, but it all starts at home.

Participant 9 stated some examples of noncommitted parental behavior were only telling their children to have a nice day or asking them about their day. Participant 9 asserted that a parent had to understand the overall well-being of his or her children, which included being engaged in what happened and what was happening in school. Similar to other participants, Participant 9 mentioned that this was one of the ways a parent showed love a child. Participant 9 recommended that parents should be heavily involved with their children, especially during kindergarten since this is the start of their children's education:

The importance that I think it is it helps your child, it helps you to get a better understanding, a lot of times send their children to school with a backpack and tell them just to have a good day, but I think it's important to the total well-being of child you get an understanding of what's going on in the class, being able to have that interaction with those teachers, being able to actually see what's going on, let your child see that you're involved, one of the things that I heard a lot working with young people in schools is that the absence of their parents, my mother was never there for me when I was younger [inaudible], or they didn't never check my backpack, they didn't see about my homework and doing those things like that, so I think when you're a parent, and you're involved in your child's educational experience it helps them, it helps you, it helps the teachers in the class, and everybody that's involved and it shows that they love and they care and that

coming together, that a parent and a teaching staff should have when it comes to your child.

Participant 3 mentioned that her involvement served as a reassurance to her children so that she would not be frustrated and would be motivated to continue going to school. Some children might feel frustrated when they were struggling, but the support from their parents would help them overcome these frustrations and ensure that their children would still want to go to school. Participant 3 stated the following:

I mean for one, to me it does help them academically. Two, my biggie is I'm showing him that yes, this is hard, but mom is right here, and mom can still be involved with school, and school can talk to ... Just a reassurance factor that they're not doing it by themselves, because I feel like a lot of kids feel that way, and they get frustrated, and they quit.

Participant 10 believed that involvement was important. Participant 10 mentioned the importance of assessment from teachers:

I think it's very important. I'm actually glad that you asked that. I know you're probably familiar with because it has to go through you. I came here right before Christmas, and I was concerned about his handwriting. They told me that they were going to do an eval. I just actually hadn't heard back from them, so I called them ... His teacher sent me a message, so I told her ... You know, I hadn't heard back from the eval that he was supposed to have, and it's like March, and that was before Christmas.

Participant 11 stated that being involved was also role-modeling for their children. If the child saw that their parent was involved with his or her education, then the child would be interested and become involved, as well. This activity would motivate the students to take part in any activity. Participant 11 recommended that parents should be involved for their children to develop an engaging attitude toward school activities:

Well, if you don't show an interest and make it a priority, they're not going to either. If you don't, you know, make, impress on them homework before play or games or phone or whatever, then it's not going to be important to them. And that's going to trickle down all the way through all their schooling.

Participants 4 and 7 shared the same sentiment. They mentioned that they were involved with their child's education but not overly involved to avoid making the children dependent on them as parents. These two parents wanted to make their child feel that they supported them but also give them the freedom to become independent learners. Participant 4 mentioned that an appropriate level of involvement was important for the child to feel supported, and become independent and confident:

Having that one on one with parent and child, you know? They have something to work with and do with and just besides the same old, same old. When leaving your child on their own and doing stuff, they feel like they get pushed more, get them more confidence and would you say ... what's that one word? Motivation, that's it. Looking for that motivation. And it helped to say my mother can do this and he's seen me do what I do, and he wants to be there too. I told him this is how we do it, so it's even pushing for like teacher stuff.

Yes. I think it's very important. You see when a parent is involved, and stuff and they may see that that's what their parents are wanting and needing, and seeing this is what they need to do and stuff. They don't have ... their just open air and have no achievements; they have no goals to head for, you know? I think if they see that you're involved in it, and you're encouraging them to do that, that they'll do it much more. And keeping and continuing to do it because they know that it's important.

In addition, Participant 7 mentioned that it would depend on the nature of their children. Some children were independent and confident, needing little involvement from parents. However, some children might need more parental involvement because they were shy with no self-confidence.

Another theme that emerged was the degree of involvement of the parents once their children entered kindergarten. This theme was connected to parents' perceptions of the importance of their involvement in their children's education. For some parents, their involvement increased, while some parents admitted their involvement decreased. The varying degree of involvement was influenced by the belief of the parents regarding the education of their children and their own experiences, as well.

Participants 2, 5, and 9 declared engaging in more of their children's academic activities once their children entered kindergarten. They wanted their children to have a competitive advantage compared to their other classmates. They wanted their children's performance to be above average. They wanted their children to go beyond the academic standards. For some parents, being involved in kindergarten might not be important

because their children were still very young. For Participant 9, she believed kindergarten was the *real thing*. Kindergarten was the first phase of their children's education, and they wanted their children to have a positive performance. Participant 9 believed that a good performance in kindergarten would be a positive influence on her child's academic performance.

The three parents increased their involvement for various reasons. Participant 2 mentioned that the school gave them materials to help her child:

We had a lot more material that was coming home from school from the teachers, and we took some of those, and did use those, and did some research to find some other activities that we could do to help him.

Participant 5 talked with friends who have children at similar ages and wanted her child to stay on top and competitive:

You know, a big factor in there is that I do have a lot of friends that we all have kids about the same age, and you do communicate with them and know what each kid is doing. And it just kind of builds that, we wanna make sure that our kids stay on top and that we can be ... that they can be competitive. And I think that starts from reading, it goes to T-ball, it goes across the board.

Participant 9 believed that her child's experience during kindergarten would influence her child's overall academic performance:

It actually changed, and it changed for me because pre-kinder is still kind of viewed of still kind of a baby stage if you will in school, but that kindergarten and up, the kindergarten year, the year that's that mandatory start and it's like okay this

is real now so to speak if you will in that term, and so it's like this is where the ball really starts rolling, not that pre-K is no less important than that, but it's just like okay this is the real thing, and we got to really hit the ground running, so yes my attitude toward it has really changed, and it's really developed from that one year.

Some parents shared their involvement decreased once their children entered kindergarten. Participants 4, 10, and 11 mentioned their involvement decreased mainly because of the presence of the teachers. The parents believed the performances of their children would depend on the input of the teachers. Moreover, these teachers were trained to address the needs of their children. Participants 4 and 11 stated their children did not need much assistance once they entered kindergarten. Participant 4 mentioned, "He feels more confident, he's wanting to do it more, he gets into it more than he does than usual. Pressing forward to read and get the words right." Participant 11 added, "Decreased. Well, they didn't need as much help anymore, you know."

Participants 4 and 10 stated they thought that their children learned to become confident and independent. Participant 10 added the following:

It changed, in the fact that we were noticing the progress in him now, so it's a lot easier to allow him- He's bringing [AR] books home, so we noticed that he's progressed, so it has allowed us to practice it a little more. Even with the Teacher Award thing, I think they're doing. So many days out of the month they have to read, and we check that off, so that's been kind of a big deal for us to practice and make sure he's doing that.

A consensus answer to the second research question was that the parents perceived their involvement in their children's education as important. Two themes supported this result: Parents must be involved with the child's education, and parents had increased and decreased involvement during kindergarten. All parents believed that a parent must be involved in his or her children's education because it showed their love for their children, and it motivated their children to study harder. There were differences in the degree of the involvement of the parents when their children started kindergarten. Some parents increased their involvement once their child started kindergarten because they believed it would increase the competitive advantage of their children. Some parents decreased their involvement because they believed teachers of their children would do a better job of helping their children. However, these parents remained involved in their children's education.

Research Question 3

For Research Question 3, I asked the following: How do parents perceive their role in their children's literacy development during kindergarten? The third theme, *the various roles of parents in their child's education due to their responsibility as a parent*, answered the third research question. The parents' main reason for having a role in their children's literacy development was due to their obligation as a parent. All participants expressed they were involved in their children's literacy development because they were the parents, and it was included in the responsibilities of a parent.

Table 3.

Breakdown of Themes Addressing RQ3

Themes	Number of Occurrences (<i>n</i> = 11)	Percentage of Occurrences (<i>n</i> = 11)
It is part of their responsibilities as parents to have a role in their child's literacy development	7	63%
Reinforce what their children have learned in school	3	27%
Encourage and motivate their children	3	27%

Participant 1 read to her child every night before and during the kindergarten year.

Participant 1 thought that introducing books at an early age was crucial for the overall literacy development of the child:

I think just reading to her every night, even before kindergarten or introducing her to books when, even at the toddler stage, even though they're not going to sit there for more than five minutes, but introducing her to books and paper and crayons to maybe draw out a picture of what she's feeling or what she's seeing. It's kind of amazing at the younger stage of what, how she drew certain pictures and then now, what she's drawing and how much clearer it is, just letting them have their imagination, I think.

Participant 2 had an important role in the overall literacy development of her child. The main role of a parent was to influence their child. Participant 2 added, "We're going to have a lot more influence on him, I feel than his teacher would and that along with his peers would also kind of contribute more into that."

Participants 3, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, and 11 mentioned they had a role in their children's literacy development because they were the parents. Participant 3 stated the following:

I want to say a mother's instinct. I want what's best for my kid, and I want to be involved in absolutely everything he does, and that includes academically. When doctors are forcing in your brain that, "Hey, he's going to be behind and reading is one of the harder subjects for little kids," I guess it ushered me a little more to be on top of it, more so than say math or something else.

Participant 5 stated that her role was to be a model for her child; because she also did a lot of reading herself, she influenced her child in this way:

I also thought very highly of educators, and especially his teachers. And I feel like that is important for him to understand that it is respect and that what they're telling you, that's exactly what you need to be successful.

Participant 6 believed that her involvement was part of her responsibility as a parent. Participant 6 felt that she had to prepare her child for the future:

My job is to prepare them for the future, whether that future be first grade, kindergarten, or me teaching them how to do laundry and cook so that they can live independently. I mean that's our job. Our job is to teach and to guide and to support.

Participant 10 indicated that involvement was important. She considered herself to be her son's biggest advocate. Participant 10 added, "I think if he is obviously too young to do it, and I think as a parent it's our job to enforce it and to make sure that he's meeting milestones academically."

Participant 11 shared her experiences to improve the literacy development of her children. Participant 11 read with her child and enjoyed the literacy night at elementary school:

At last year, it was pre-K, I mean Kinder. And, the kids, the school thinks that are geared towards that. Just be involved, you know. And that's ... I mean, like I said, if I had a kid who was really struggling, I might have a different answer. But they do good and I just kind of oversee that and, you know, make sure they're reading. Make sure they're getting their ... I check every time they take an AR test; I check their goal. See how far they are. I'm constantly talking to them about; you need this many more points. You have this much more time. I think just, you know, oversee that they're meeting their goals.

Participants 3, 6, 7, and 9 mentioned they believed it was their responsibility to prepare their children for their future, and staying involved in their children's literacy development was a way to achieve that goal. Participant 7 wanted her child to be the best:

Just it's do or die. I wanted my kid to [inaudible] up there with the best of them. I just knew that it was going to take my input and my help to get them to excel. I guess you would say, I always had this thought, like, "If I could get my kids above level a little bit, if there ever came a time in any of their schooling where they would struggle or they would kind of hit a little roadblock, at least they would have that little bit of leverage to help them out." Whereas if they were floating along, skimming, I didn't want them to totally sink. I just knew if I could immerse them as early as I could, I would build it up more to give me a little bit

more play room in case anything ever happened. Because you just don't know.

Everybody thinks their kid is a genius when they're little, but there's so many factors that can come in play when they get into a school setting. You don't know if they're going to be dyslexic or what. Just trying to build them up as much as I could kind of helped ease my mind a little bit, too, from if anything would come about in the future.

Participant 9 mentioned the parents must be involved because the teacher alone could not do everything in the classroom:

I think as a parent it's our job too if you will keep the ball rolling. That teacher is going to do what they do in the classroom, it's only so much that they can do within that eight hour day, but when they bring those things home and when they give us those extra tools that we can use to help our children to be successful and when we have them in their time that they're at home that time that we can spend with them helping them and reiterating and doing all of those things I think it's very important and that's where our job as a parent comes in to help keep the ball rolling, don't let it just stop at school, but continue it at home and [inaudible] and all of that helps with their literacy development as a child.

Participants 3, 7, 9, and 10 perceived that their role was to reinforce what is occurring inside the classroom. Participant 3 emphasized that parents needed to reinforce the skills their children learned in school, so that these would continue growing in the children:

Second, I feel it's also to reinforce. I know it's school, you know? Some people think it's the teacher's job to teach them how to read. Well, yes and no. You need to come home and reinforce every skill that they learn so that it sticks.

Participant 7 mentioned that most of the knowledge and skills of the children would come from school. The job of the parent was to be *a backup* to what the teachers did in school. The parent must reinforce the things that their children learned in school. In addition, Participant 7 shared that the parent was the *de facto* tutor after school. The parent should be able to help their children to do their homework and conduct sessions that will discuss advanced topics:

In my opinion, the parents' role is basically it's to back up teachers. The kid gets the meat of their knowledge from the school setting. The parents' job is that evening, first of all, talk about what you did at school and get some ideas, look at their homework, what do you need to work on. You're basically their after school tutor. You're reinforcing the letter sounds or the sight words or the comprehension pieces, the main idea and all that stuff. If you don't do that, like I said before, nobody else will. Yeah, some kids can handle that, but I just wanted to make sure that that didn't happen to mine.

Participant 9 asserted parents should continue at home what their children have learned in school. Participant 9 indicated that reinforcement at home would have a positive impact on the overall literacy development of their child:

I think as a parent it's our job to if you will keep the ball rolling. That teacher is going to do what they do in the classroom, it's only so much that they can do

within that eight hour day, but when they bring those things home and when they give us those extra tools that we can use to help our children to be successful and when we have them in their time that they're at home that time that we can spend with them helping them and reiterating and doing all of those things I think it's very important and that's where our job as a parent comes in to help keep the ball rolling, don't let it just stop at school, but continue it at home and all of that helps with their literacy development as a child.

Participant 10 stated that parents must reinforce what has been done in school.

The participant also recommended that it was important to have a good relationship with the teachers. Participant 10 added, "She's very good about communicating with us, and some of the things that work in the classroom, and we've tried to implement that at home, as well."

Participants 3, 4, and 5 mentioned they perceived their roles as encouraging their children to do schoolwork. Participant 3 shared that her role was to encourage reading. One of the strategies was to find books that are interesting for the child. Participant 3 added the following:

My role, I feel is to for one, encourage it, because I know a lot of people don't like to read. I know a lot of people don't want to do AR, but you've got to read. That's just life. I feel like my first, and foremost thing is to encourage the reading, to make sure that, "Yes, you can do this. Yes, we'll find good books."

Participant 4 also mentioned she encouraged her child to read. In particular, the parent kept track of the progress of the literacy skills of the child. Participant 4

emphasized the importance of reading with the child to show the child the value of reading and instill a love for reading:

The encourager, the motivator, the person that keeps him on track to learn how to progress and to read, to say that reading is ... you know, try to encourage it.

Because you know how important it is. Reading with him and showing that he has the love for reading too and say that he can learn and get more knowledge from it.

Participant 5 shared the same sentiment with Participants 3 and 4 that their role as parents was to encourage their children to read. Similar to Participant 3, Participant 5 highlighted the importance of providing materials that would interest the child: "My role is to help to facilitate the reading and to encourage the reading, and provide materials so that they can do that."

Lastly, the parents perceived their role as individuals who positively influenced their children's literacy development. Participants 2 and 5 wanted to influence the literacy development of their children positively. Participant 2 stated that parents had a greater influence on the child at this stage compared to the teachers and peers: "We're going to have a lot more influence on him, I feel, than his teacher would and that along with his peers would also kind of contribute more into that."

Participant 5 mentioned that parents served as role models for the children. Because she read a lot, she believed her children would also develop an interest in reading. Participant 5 wanted to show the child that the parents respected the teachers and educators to make them respect the teachers, as well. Participant 5 believed that when the child respected a person, then that person would influence the life of the child:

I feel like my role as a parent is to model, and I do a lot of reading myself, so that's one thing. I also thought very highly of educators, and especially his teachers. And I feel like that is important for him to understand that that is respect and that what they're telling you, that's exactly what you need to be successful.

The parents perceived they had different roles in their children's literacy development during kindergarten. This fourth theme addressed the third research question. The parents perceived they had a role in their children's literacy development because it was one of their responsibilities as a parent. As parents, they must ensure their children developed literacy skills to have a good future. They had different roles from encouraging and motivating their children to do their best at school to reinforcing what they learned in school.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

I ensured the gathered data and analysis for this study were of good quality through credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Bowen et al., 2006). The credibility of data was ensured through the process of member checking transcripts. The participants reviewed the transcripts of their respective interviews to determine the accuracy and correctness of the information (Fusch & Ness, 2015). To improve transferability, I provided a detailed discussion of the procedures involved in implementing this case study. I provided an audit trail to improve the dependability of the data. I documented the inputs and outputs of each step involved in the recruitment, data collection, and data analysis of the study. I also provided questions to confirm or reinforce the answers of participants.

Summary

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore the perceptions of parents of kindergarten students about their involvement in their children's early literacy (pre-kindergarten) development and kindergarten education. There were 11 interviews conducted for this study. Four themes emerged: (a) Parents perceived that their early literacy involvement helped their child's overall literacy development; (b) parents' perception that their involvement in their child's education is important; (c) for many, the degree of involvement of the parents increased once their children entered kindergarten; and (d) the various roles of parents in their child's education due to their responsibility as a parent.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

At my study site, the results of the Istation Early Reading Assessment revealed a significant gap in the reading skills between the highest and lowest performing kindergarten students. After a personal correspondence with staff at the school who claimed that students scoring lower on the ISPIP were the ones who did not have formal early childhood learning experiences before kindergarten, and after reading extensive literature on the subject, I deduced that the role of parents is paramount in the early literacy development of all children. The role of parents relative to children's early literacy has also been highlighted in previous studies (Bolton & Cook, 2012; Silinskas et al., 2012; Waldfogel, 2012). Moreover, due to varied preparations of kindergarten students, some through formal education, others under their parents' instruction, there are numerous reading readiness levels within a single classroom cohort at the said school.

Researchers have posited the lack of parental involvement in their children's early literacy development and kindergarten education has negative consequences on the children's reading skills, more so in comparison to their peers with formal learning experiences before entering kindergarten or with adequate support from their parents on reading (Moorman Kim et al., 2012; Powell et al., 2012; Silinskas et al., 2012). Therefore, I deemed it necessary to explore the role of parental involvement in early literacy development and kindergarten education.

I conducted a qualitative case study to explore parents' perceptions of kindergarten students about their involvement in their children's early literacy (pre-kindergarten) development and kindergarten education. I examined how the parents

perceived the importance of their role in their children's early literacy development relative to their overall literacy development. In addition, I examined how the parents perceived the importance of their involvement in their kindergartener's education and literacy development during this grade level. The study was timely and necessary because researchers found that kindergarten students who lacked fundamental reading skills before kindergarten were at great risk of failure in higher grade levels and of not joining their peers (Heath et al., 2014).

I interviewed a total of 11 adult parent participants. After analyzing their interview responses, four main findings or themes emerged that addressed the three research questions. First, the parents perceived that their involvement in the early literacy of their children helped their children's overall literacy development. Second, the parents perceived their involvement in their child's education as important. Third, there was a change in the degree of involvement of the parents once their children entered kindergarten; for some it increased as the stakes grew, and for others it decreased as the child gained independence in reading. Last, parents perceived that their involvement in their children's literacy development is one of the various roles and responsibility they have in being a parent.

Interpretation of the Findings

Theoretical Contributions

Bronfenbrenner's (1979) bioecological model of human development (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998) guided this study. This model holds that four components should be present before individual learning and development can take place

(Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998). These are interactions with the environment, dispositions and biological resources, context of interactions (parents, relatives, and objectives), and time. Because literacy development occurred even before kindergarten, I expected that parents would be aware of how important their roles were in the overall literacy development and kindergarten achievement of their children.

Bronfenbrenner and Morris (2007) explained that parental involvement, expressed by buying and providing books and other reading materials, prioritizing their child's literacy, and engaging in reading and verbal interactions with their children, especially before the years of formal education, can greatly shape the development of the child's literacy skills and abilities. The findings of the study regarding parents' awareness of how important their involvement was in the children's literacy development and disclosure that their involvement changed as the child grew, strengthened the theory's claims that parental involvement was important for child literacy development, especially during the early stages of life.

From a western tradition, Bronfenbrenner (1979) was one of the first theoreticians to emphasize the necessity to account for both individuals' biological and personal characteristics, which could be quite complex, and the social and ecological contexts in understanding the factors that influenced development (Rosa & Tudge, 2013), including literacy development. The problem was that no matter how the theory highlighted the value of parental interaction and involvement, and no matter how many studies established the positive effects of parental involvement on children's academic achievement, it was unknown how parents viewed the importance of this to their

kindergarteners' literacy development and learning experience during this grade level.

The findings of the study showed that most parents were aware of this aspect, given that the majority claimed their roles as important. While they claimed their role as important, they had varied levels of involvement in their children's kindergarten literacy education, highlighting the influence of their own perceptions.

Contributions to the Literature

From the parental perspective, parents knew how valuable their involvement was in their kindergartener's literacy development. Their descriptions of their roles and the effects of what they have completed at home to aid their children in forming the necessary skills showed they were cognizant of the positive effects revealed in past studies about parental involvement. Examples of what they did at home included reading to the children and explaining new vocabularies to the children. For instance, several researchers have found that children who are encouraged and supported by their parents in acquiring literacy skills through their interactions and surroundings at an early age can have higher levels of confidence in accepting new concepts (Brady, 2015; Enemuo & Obidike, 2013).

The responses of the parents showed that their perceptions and experiences with their own children are in line with what these studies found. These findings were in contrast with what the Department for Children, Schools, and Families (2009) found. Back in 2009, the department reported that despite the importance of parental involvement in the literacy development of their children, parents have limited knowledge of their role in the learning development of their children, and their lack of

awareness about their significant role in the education of their children precludes their involvement (Department for Children, Schools, and Families, 2009). Eight years after this report, my study showed that parents have already attained the much-needed awareness. However, these differences can be explained because participants of this study were not the same group of people surveyed years ago, especially regarding their socioeconomic statuses and environment.

According to Smith et al. (2013), the frequency of parents reading to preschool-age children is linked to their children's language and literacy development, as exhibited by the growth in vocabulary knowledge, reading comprehension, letter familiarity and knowledge, and sound awareness. All these skills act as the primary predictors of children's success in learning to read, demonstrating that parent-child reading does serve a crucial role in promoting children's school success. Parents responded that they continually read aloud to their children and relayed how their involvement led them to witness their child's development soaring. Hence, their children read words more quickly, with some acquiring the ability to read sentences.

The findings that the degree of parents' involvement can change over time from the years before kindergarten and during kindergarten years find support in existing literature. For instance, according to Bolton and Cook (2012), even though parents perceived themselves as the key influencers of their child's communication and literacy skills, they believed that teachers hold as great a role. Moreover, research studies have shown that parental involvement in a child's reading development during the early years before formal schooling and during the first years of formal education can change,

regardless of the involvement's positive impact on the child's academic achievement in the later grade levels (Heath et al., 2014; Kleemans et al., 2012; Powell et al., 2012).

These past studies showed that the reason for this decrease in parental support is the increasing independence of students as they spend more time in school than they used to at home. My findings supported this notion. Some of the parents reported that the reasons why their involvement decreased were because they saw how much their children had become independent and confident in their reading and literacy skills.

Still, some parents reported their involvement increasing instead of decreasing because they believed that the learning experiences of their children during kindergarten are crucial; this is the unique finding of my study. What the past studies did not reveal, and that this research did, was that parental involvement can also be higher or lower. The increase can be explained by the parents' desire to ensure their children remain competitive and have an advantage over their peers in the upper-grade levels. It can be deduced that compared to earlier studies, parents today have really started to see the importance of parental involvement. Past researchers arrived at their findings about the changes in parental involvement not by interviewing the parents, but by _____, and they called for additional studies on parent perceptions of their role in their children's literacy development during enrollment in kindergarten (Heath et al., 2014; Kleemans et al., 2012; Powell et al., 2012; Roopnarine et al., 2006; Silinskas et al., 2012; Waldfogel, 2012). By interviewing parents and gathering their perceptions, I could more comprehensively identify changes in their degree of involvement, thereby showing that changes could go both ways.

According to Heath et al. (2014) and others, exploring the perceptions of parents would bring significant information about the different aspects of their decisions regarding involvement in the education and development of their children, revealing possible reasons behind the lack of parental involvement. However, my findings showed that parental involvement is actually perceived as important by the parents themselves and that they have concrete strategies for being involved. They claimed that being involved is part of their parenting role, and that although their degree of involvement may change, all these changes are for their children's best interests. From these unexpected findings, it might be worth pondering why, even if this was the case, the reading gaps kept persisting. Is parental involvement not enough if not all children have the same formal literacy education before entering kindergarten? Are parents' awareness, strategies, and desires for involvement not recognized by teachers and administrators who can create policies for more effective parental involvement? Enemu and Obidike (2013) noted that most childhood centers did not have policies conducive to the active involvement of parents. Future researchers can focus on determining these policies.

Limitations of the Study

As mentioned at the start of the study, there were limitations to conducting this study, which could influence the findings. First was the vulnerability of the researcher to personal biases, because of my position as a principal in a neighboring school district, as well as my professional relationship with the principal of the school that he studied. This limitation was addressed by bracketing, listing all possible findings of the study to remain aware of my biases or expectations. Still, even after the study was completed, I could not

help but compare the findings to my expectations and write the implications of the findings based on these expectations. I expected that the participants would report parental involvement as not that important for them or that parents cannot be involved because of the various barriers they faced, but none of these expected results materialized.

Another limitation of the study was that the findings might not be generalizable to all parents. The findings of the study could not be just generalized to parents of children in other grade levels or parents of children in other schools. Teachers and administrators who come across this study cannot just take on face value that all parents understand that as parents, their involvement is key to their children's literacy skills and development. They must still be discerning that some parents do face barriers in becoming involved and address these issues, or that some parents may understand involvement is important but do not have an idea on how to be effectively involved, unlike the participants of the current study.

Even though I ascertained the demographics of the participants, such as their racial identities and socioeconomic statuses, I did consider whether race or income could have significantly affected the participants' perceptions. As the study was qualitative in nature, knowing the statistical significance of these variables on the parents' perceptions might not have been possible, as well.

The decision to use a qualitative method was also a limitation. Although I firmly believed and justified using a qualitative method to carry out the current study, a quantitative study would have yielded equally important results. A quantitative study

could establish relationships between variables, such as whether parental involvements before entering kindergarten and literacy development of the kindergarten children had a positive and significant relationship to each other. A quantitative method also determined if race or income could moderate or mediate this relationship. The qualitative method had inherent limitations, such as the need to trust the participants' responses as being honest and accurate, but I chose it for equally valid reasons. Still, future researchers could build on this current topic and use a quantitative method instead.

Recommendations

Future researchers can address the limitations of the current study and also build upon what was found. First, future researchers can use a quantitative method to measure whether parental involvement before a child enters kindergarten is significantly related to literacy development during kindergarten and learning at this grade level. Future researchers who will use a quantitative study can also evaluate whether race, educational background, and socioeconomic statuses of the parents can affect their perceptions of involvement and their strategies of involvement.

I was motivated by observing a gap in the literacy development of low and high performing kindergarten skills and indicated most kindergarten students varied in their reading skills after entering this grade because some had formal education in reading while others did not. However, I did not evaluate whether parental involvement before kindergarten could already equal to having pre-K formal education in reading. Future researchers can consider this gap. I also did not determine if the parents interviewed in this study were parents of low performing or high performing students. If they were

parents of mostly high performing students or mostly low-performing students, then the findings might not be as reliable. Future researchers can also ask the parents to detail what kind of policies and interventions teachers and administrators can form to increase or sustain their involvement and support.

Implications

The overriding implication of the study's findings was for educators or schools to understand that parental involvement can lead to higher literacy achievement for kindergarten students. The findings revealed that parents do view how important it is for them to be involved in the early literacy development of their children. The fact that reading and literacy gaps are persisting is an indicator that parents may not be capable of measuring adequate progress toward reading readiness. The participants shared that they knew they played a key role in their child's literacy development, before and during kindergarten. A majority shared that their involvement has the capacity to greatly shape their child's literacy development, specifically in their performance in the kindergarten years. Some of the parents even shared that they suspect that their involvement before their children entered kindergarten and during the kindergarten years, might have resulted in their children becoming great readers. Some reported that their children's vocabulary increased and reading skills significantly improved. The parents claimed that without their involvement in the early literacy process of their children, their children would not have performed at par with their classmates. The participants of the study were a mix of racial backgrounds and income status; however, their responses were overwhelmingly similar to each other, highlighting how they positively viewed involvement. One of the

implications of these positive perceptions is that it may not be the lack of awareness of the role of parental involvement that is hindering involvement for some students. The participants in the data showed just how aware they were of involvement's value. If not the awareness of the value of parental involvement, it could be the quality of parental involvement activities that the participants engaged in, although this is not definite and cannot be generalized to all parents outside the participants of the study.

The current research has been carried out in the recognition that the existing literacy gap at the kindergarten level with respect to reading and literacy skills (Daily et al., 2010; Powell et al., 2012; Waldfogel, 2012) is one that the school, including the teachers, alone may not be able to completely address, highlighting the need for parents to participate (Bolton & Cook, 2012; Heath et al., 2014; Powell et al., 2012). The results of this study showed the positive perceptions of kindergarten parents in the local level for District P in relation to their involvement with early literacy development (Heath et al., 2014; Waldfogel, 2012), which implied that the existing literacy gap could be explained by other factors than the lack of parental involvement. Conversely, while teachers and administrators of the school in my study site understand this involvement is particularly important to the development of literacy in kindergarten in the schools, there are not enough policies and opportunities created to make the involvement of parents more effective in closing the reading and literacy gap between the low and high performing kindergarten students. Teachers may not meet the parents as much as the parents want or believe parents will not bother being involved, regardless of what they do. With the current study showing clearly what parents think of involvement, teachers and

administrators can now use this as a springboard for creating the policies and programs for a higher level of parental involvement.

I addressed a local problem of a persistently widening gap in the kindergarteners' literacy skills between low performing and high performing students by focusing specifically on the role of parental involvement in literacy during kindergarten. I deemed that this was the year when children entered school with significantly varying literacy skills because some did not undergo formal education or pre-kindergarten education and have instead, relied on interacting with their parents for their literacy skills (Heath et al., 2014; Silinskas et al., 2014; Waldfogel, 2012). By finding out that majority of parents view their role as important in their kindergarten children's literacy development and overall learning experience at the grade level, I believed that the existing literacy at the kindergarten level could be closed if school leaders supported the importance of parental involvement in kindergarten children's learning and development. These policies are important because, as revealed by the parents in this study, their involvement in kindergarten can change from those years before kindergarten, either increasing or decreasing due to several reasons. Apart from schools, I deemed it the best interest of society to lobby for political, as well as economic policies, to support or highlight the importance of parent's roles in their children's development, in literacy, in kindergarten, and even beyond.

When the parents answered whether they viewed their involvement as crucial to their child's literacy development in kindergarten, they provided reasons and evidence to back their responses. Most claimed their involvement showed why their children picked

up new words easily and could read sentences much better than others. The implications of these findings are that both intentional teaching on the part of the parents as well as socialization practices engaged in at home, even outside formal education, can be critical for the development of children's early literacy skills. It is in the best interest of the nation to have political and economic policies that will enable parents to have the chance to engage in teaching and socialization with their children. With the economy forcing parents to spend less time with their children and more time trying to make ends meet, these opportunities for teaching and socialization are lost for some families or children.

The majority of parents have reported that they believed that their involvement is necessary for their children's kindergarten success because it is one way for children to feel that they are valued and that their learning is important. They also reported that having a quality relationship with their children's teachers can certainly positively affect academic performance during the kindergarten years. Some concluded that it is simply their job to be involved as parents. The findings showed how in contrast to what teachers believe, parents view involvement as effective to their children's learning experiences in kindergarten. It is apparent from the findings that parents care and have concrete ideas of as to why they should be involved and what kind of involvement can have merit. Included in the activities that have merit is having a closer relationship with the teacher to stay updated with their children's learning and development. It is recommended that teachers recognize the desire and want of parents to have better parent/teacher relationships and engage in more communication with the parents and provide them with more opportunities and ideas to help their children at home, not just in reading. If

teachers recognize the desires of the parents, they can also help the school to find new and improved ways to let these happen.

Another striking finding of this study was that parents' degree of involvement is fluid. The degree of involvement can increase or decrease depending on their beliefs about education overall and their own experiences. Those whose involvement increased believed that their continuous support and guidance can give their children a competitive advantage over the other students. They believed that kindergarten is a time where learning can have a long-term impact on the child's overall academic performance. For those whose involvement decreased, they believed that teachers should play a larger role in the academic performance of their children and not them, especially since the teachers have the training. They also mentioned that their children were becoming more independent and confident at this stage, which necessitated less involvement from them.

From these findings, I recommend that schools and teachers are constantly on top of the children's progress and keep the parents aware of occurrences within the classroom, whether they know the parents have become more or less involved. Whether their involvement increased or decreased, their decisions were based on their children's interests and not their own. These were the same parents who disclosed how aware they were of the value of parental involvement, after all. Their becoming more involved was for their children to be competitive and they are becoming less involved was because they know their children were more confident and independent at that stage and their involvement might affect these traits. Decreased involvement was also due to a high level of trust for the teachers. Seeing that they have claimed to try to have better relationships

with teachers, this also showed how much respect they have for the teachers' instruction quality. What schools and teachers can do is to constantly inform the parents of their children's progress and conduct regular family activities that can be done in school where parents can still show their children how invested they are in their education, even if they are trying to give them independence and autonomy in learning.

Schools can take the lead and give more opportunities for the parents to stay involved even in the non-traditional ways. For example, schools and teachers can hold meetings and consultations at different hours, where they can create individualized involvement opportunities. Schools can also practice a more community-centered model of parental involvement, where the focus is less on the school interests but on the families' instead. Whether or not the parents claimed to have increased or decreased their involvement, these opportunities give every parent the chance to be sure that their children's learning experiences are right on track. Lastly, the findings that the parents in the study believed that being involved is important because it is part of their role as parents to be the role model, the main influencer, and the key support of their children led to some recommendations as well. From the findings, it can be recommended that teachers and administrators work with parents to design involvement opportunities that all sides believe will positively affect children's learning, literacy development, and achievement. How parents' positive perceptions or acceptance of their roles as the key influencer and supporter of their children's literacy development and kindergarten learning can be further strengthened should be thought of by teachers and administrators.

Conclusion

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore the perceptions of parents of kindergarten students about their involvement in their children's early literacy (pre-kindergarten) development and kindergarten education. Results showed that contrary to what past studies established, parents in the study site were now more aware of the value of their involvement, familiar with the strategies to express involvement, and in tune with the effects of their involvement. However, the findings could not be generalized to parents outside the study participants.

The findings also showed that like previous studies, parents' degree of involvement can change from when the child was not yet in kindergarten to when the child is already at this crucial grade level. However, past studies only showed changes in the negative. The current findings showed that involvement could increase further because the parents want their children to have a competitive advantage. With the overwhelming evidence that parents are ready to devote more time and attention to their children's literacy development these days, teachers and administrators should be called to work more closely with parents in shaping the kindergarteners' literacy development and closing the reading skills gap between low performing and high performing students. By working more closely together, parental involvement can also be more meaningful and coordinated with what is going on in the students' classroom activities. Parents wanted to be there for their children in this school at my study site; therefore, school leaders must create and design ways to allow this to happen more effectively.

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Appendix A: Interview Questions

Q1. How do parents perceive the importance of their role in a kindergarten's early literacy development to the child's overall literacy development?

1. What are your experiences of interacting with your child to teach him/her how to read before he/she entered kindergarten?
2. What activities did you do with your child before he/she entered kindergarten that helped him/her learn how to read?
3. If you have taught your child how to read before kindergarten, do you think these activities were effective in helping him/her perform well in school during kindergarten?
 - a. What are the internal or personal (e.g., family background, race, etc.) factors that influenced this decision?
 - b. What are the external (e.g. influence of friends, social media, current events, etc.) factors that influenced this decision?
 - c. Please justify or explain your answer in #3.
4. If you have not taught your child how to read before kindergarten, kindly discuss your reasons for this action.
 - a. What are the internal or personal (e.g., family background, race, etc.) factors that influenced this decision?
 - b. What are the external (e.g. influence of friends, social media, current events, etc.) factors that influenced this decision?
 - c. Please justify or explain your answer in #4.

Q2. How do parents perceive the importance of their involvement in the education of their children studying in kindergarten?

5. What are your experiences of interacting with your child to teach him/her how to read during his/her kindergarten year?
6. How did your child perform academically during his/her kindergarten year?
7. Do you think your involvement in the education of your child helped in his/her academic performance?
 - a. Please justify or explain your answer in #7 by citing examples.
8. What do you think is the importance of you getting involved in their school activities or school-related work?
 - a. Please explain or cite examples.

Q3. How do parents perceive their role in their children's literacy development during kindergarten?

9. What do you think is your role in promoting the literacy development of your child in kindergarten?
 - a. Please justify or explain your answer in #7 by citing examples.
10. What are the activities you did that helped in your child's literacy development, if any?
 - a. Why did you decide to participate (or not) in your child's literacy development in kindergarten?

- b. What are the internal or personal (e.g., family background, race, etc.) factors that influenced this decision to participate (or not) in your child's literacy development in kindergarten?
- c. What are the external (e.g. influence of friends, social media, current events, etc.) factors that influenced this decision to participate (or not) in your child's literacy development in kindergarten?

Appendix B: Flyers for Recruitment

CALLING ALL PARENTS OF KINDERGARTEN STUDENTS

If you have the following characteristics:

- has a child in kindergarten within the past 2 years
- has a child belonging to the chosen school district (District P)
- living with the child while in kindergarten

Then, you are invited to participate in a study about parental involvement in the education and development of kindergarten students. The purpose of this qualitative case study is to better understand parent perceptions of their role in children's literacy development. The findings of the study may help in improving awareness of parents' perceived roles in the education of their children. Therefore, the possible ultimate benefit of this study will be improvements in programs to encourage parental involvement, especially if there is a lack of awareness on the part of parents about the importance of their involvement in their children's education.

If you are interested, please contact me through Jason.harris2@waldenu.edu or call me at [REDACTED]. I will be glad to assist you and have you as part of my dissertation.

Thank you for your time!