



## KINDERGARTEN SCHOOL READINESS: THROUGH THE LENS OF PARENTS' PERSPECTIVE

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Author

### ABSTRACT

This study endeavored to describe the experiences and challenges of the parents in kindergarten school readiness of Valentin N. Daquio Elementary School Panabo North District, Davao del Norte. The participants of this study were eight (8) kindergarten teachers employing the qualitative design utilizing the phenomenological approach. The findings revealed that kindergarten parents encountered physical, socio-emotional, language, and communication readiness challenges. Preparing a child for kindergarten is a rollercoaster of emotions for parents. Excitement, anxiety, and pride often coexist as parents grapple with the reality that their child is growing up. The anticipation of a new chapter in their child's life can be overwhelming. While the journey can be emotionally taxing, it is also an opportunity for growth and development for both parents and children. Effective processing of the acceptance of kindergarten pupils can significantly ease this noteworthy life transition, ensuring that children who step into kindergarten are ready to learn and explore. Likewise, providing unwavering support is equally important, which can help their children embark on their kindergarten journey with confidence and enthusiasm. Through school readiness, cultivating children's skills to become engaged in school

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activities sets for a successful educational experience. Remember that every child is unique, and readiness varies from one child to another. It's essential to be patient and flexible, adapting your approach to your child's individual needs and pace. The findings of the study can be utilized to better inform parents about the skills that are crucial for readiness, help teachers in designing better instructional experiences, and aid legislators in planning and implementing policies that could improve the quality of early childhood education in the country.

**Keywords:** *Kindergarten school readiness, parents' perspective*

## INTRODUCTION

Kindergarten education is crucial for a child's development. Traditionally, it used to mean brightly colored paintings, music, clay, block building, bursting curiosity, and intensive exploration, but today's trend leans toward a more structured academic curriculum. However, because of stricter accountability and standards, increased pressure applied in elementary schools, and the demands of globalization, Kindergarten became a critical and mandatory entry stage to primary education. Hence, a five-year-old child prepared for grade school. A Help or a Hurt?

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Over the last century, in the U.S., the age at which children initiate their formal schooling has slowly increased. Historically, children attended Kindergarten at five years old and first grade at six years old. However, roughly twenty (20) percent of kindergarten learners are now six years old. The lengthening of the Kindergarten age changes in state laws that moved forward the cut-off birth date at which five (5) years old were eligible to enter Kindergarten (Deming & Dynarski, 2018). However, most parents increase starting ages due to academic redshirting, an increasingly common decision to seek the delaying and developmental advantages for their child's school entry to allow extra time for socio-emotional, intellectual, or physical growth (Bassok & Reardon, 2013).

In New Jersey, the state does not have a mandated entrance age to Kindergarten. Each local school district establishes an entrance age varying from community to section within the state (New Jersey Department of Education) (Kauerz, 2015). These local schools are managed and staffed by the local rather than the county, having variations in educational policies and practices within the state. However, the criterion for school entrance is obtaining the age of five years during the cut-off date. In the central part of New Jersey, there are five different cut-off dates for twelve school districts. Identifying the appropriate age for children to enter school is complicated because children do not all develop simultaneously (Blake & Finch, 2012).

Regardless of age, a substantial variation in school readiness started. For many years, the U.K. expecting children to start school early has been out of step. Though parents were happy with the early school age, more so raising children about the appropriateness of a school

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environment for young children. Teaching the 3Rs results in long-term advantages; however, there is a danger that young children would miss out on the other essential experiences damaged by an early start (Kildan, 2012).

Increasingly, problems seen in schooling, such as high repetition, early dropout rates, and poor learning, as well as poor health of children, are being traced to malnutrition, poor health, and abuse very early in the lives of children. Deped Secretary Briones argued that designing the kindergarten curriculum to respond to the holistic developmental needs of five-year-old learners such as socio-emotional values, physical health, creativity, mathematics, understanding of the material and natural environment, language, literacy, and communication development. Moreover, Briones states that the first quarter of the curriculum is structured to strengthen the learner's preparation to meet the kindergarten learning standards (Deped Order No. 20 s. 2018).

The need to define kindergarten school readiness is gaining attention and interest from the educational community. Times have changed; consequently, kindergarten readiness expectations have transformed and evolved more academically than a generation ago (Hustedt et al., 2017). According to (Harmon & Viruru, 2018), parents' views of readiness are multilayered, reasonably complex, and challenging as parents consider mental, physical, emotional, and social development skills. This study in early childhood education supports that early childhood life is a time of rapid growth and development (Ramey & Ramey, 2009). Despite the increased interest and attention on school readiness, many different viewpoints on what is ready for kindergarten.

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## MATERIALS AND METHOD

This section presents the description of the method used in the study. The unit comprises philosophical assumptions, the study's qualitative stance, design, procedure, research participants, ethical considerations, role of the researcher, data collection, data analysis and trustworthiness of the data.

### *Philosophical Assumptions of the Study*

Qualitative research comprises different orientations, approaches, and various intellectual and disciplinary traditions, grounded often in different philosophical assumptions. The presence of a basic system of ontological, epistemological, axiological, and human nature occurs and generates new data-gathering and analysis strategies for the study (Walsman 2015). It is essential to define the philosophical positions clearly to reflect my basis in the conduct and reporting of my work. First, the Ontological assumptions relate to whether the phenomenon under investigation is understood by the kindergarten parents or just a product of their consciousness. The ontological assumptions provide a detailed description of ordinary life experiences, including perceptions, beliefs, feelings, judgments, and evaluations. The focus of this phenomenology is on the meaning of individual experiences. Secondly, an epistemological assumption is concerned with how the researcher understands and justifies the experiences of the kindergarten parents on their perspective on kindergarten school readiness. Being close to my participants, they

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assisted me in gathering the first information that I needed based on the natural and actual knowledge and feelings of their challenges and experiences.

It is necessary to adopt multiple perspectives, reflect periodically on philosophical positions, and pay attention to how they interpreted the research material. Consequently, reflective objectivity is the key to producing knowledge to make judgments based on understanding (Gadamer, 2015). The reader better understands this phenomenon through detailed descriptions the researcher gathered through interaction with the kindergarten parents who experienced the sensation. Therefore, the goal of this study is for the reader to understand the phenomenon of kindergarten school readiness without the mental health reservation they need to succeed in kindergarten and how this phenomenon impacts the school setting, including the school's administrative support.

### ***Qualitative Assumptions***

As a researcher, I believed in the philosophy of pragmatism because it accepts concepts to be relevant to support the action of the parent's perspective on kindergarten school readiness. Pragmatics recognize that there are many different ways of interpreting the world and undertaking research, that no single point of view can ever give the entire picture, and that there may be multiple realities" (Saunders et al., 2012). According to pragmatism research philosophy, the research question is the most crucial determinant of the research philosophy.

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## ***Design and Procedure***

This study is a qualitative method utilizing a phenomenological approach as a framework for this study. Schwandt (2007) describes a phenomenologist as someone who provides a detailed description of the ordinary life experiences of parents in their perceptions of kindergarten school readiness in Valentin N. Daquio Elementary School, Panabo North District, Davao del Norte. Their life experiences include perceptions, challenges, feelings, and evaluations of kindergarten school readiness. The focus of phenomenology is on the meaning of individual experiences. Creswell (2012) states that phenomenology examines the importance of the experiences of individuals based on the premise that human experiences make sense to those who live them before all interpretations and theories. It comes away understanding the phenomenon better on what it was like for someone else to experience, Creswell further said.

A goal of this study is for the reader to understand the phenomenon of kindergarten school-age readiness from the teacher’s perspective and how this phenomenon impacts the school setting, including the administrative support systems and classroom instructional practices. The reader better understands this phenomenon through the rich descriptions provided by the researcher as they interact with the kindergarten parents who experienced the sensation regularly. The participants provide interview guides during the scheduled time to facilitate the gathering of information and further enhance the clarity of the interview questions. After the two

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or three questions, the researcher started summarizing and clarifying the interviews so the participants had time to reflect, glance, and provide additional insights on the prior consultation.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter presents the various experiences of the parents in kindergarten readiness in Valentin N. Daquio Elementary School, Panabo North District, Davao del Norte. Their experiences and challenges were given significance through the themes extracted from the transcribed narratives of the eight (8) parents as participants. It was summarized in figure form followed by a comprehensive discussion of each category and theme. Three (3) themes were generated from the parents' narrations on their experiences and challenges of kindergarten school readiness Physical readiness, Socio and Emotional Readiness, Language and Communication Readiness.

*Physical readiness.* The start of school is a significant milestone in the life of a child and their parents. The success of children's transition to school is influenced by the child's readiness and parents' relationships, resources, and opportunities they experience at home and in early childhood settings before they start full-time school. The participants' narration emphasized that independence is important and signaled a child's ability to manage personal hygiene, optimal gross and fine motor skills development, and more. Here is their narration:

*Para sa akoo, ready na ang bata mag school kung maka balance na sya ug kanang modagan, maglukso or kanang makahawid ug butang.* (For me, I could say that the child is ready for school is when the child can develop balance when walking, jumping and running. He can hold things on his own and develop his sensory skills). (P2 & 3)

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*Sa akong tan aw ready na bata para mag eskwela kung mokaon na sya ug iyaha lang, energetic siya ug maayong lawason niya. (I observe that when the child is physically healthy, eat on his own, energetic and flexible in doing things.)*  
(P5)

*Dapat ang bata makai istorya na gyud para kabalo mag ingon sa iyan gibati. The child should be ready to communicate and speak well before we could say the child is ready for school.*  
(P7)

The narration of the participants is related to the Maturalist theory that development of the child undergoes biological process that happens in stages of life. Maturalist posited that before children can be successful in school, they need to reach a certain level of maturity and believe that development needs to precede learning and that certain levels of maturity must develop before learning can happen (Graue & DiPerna, 2018). Being healthy and well-nourished are important skills for school readiness. When the child is healthy, rested, and well-nourished can communicate needs, wants, and thoughts verbally and enthusiastically and curious in approaching new activities (Hayes & Price (2017). Moreso, according to (Kaufman, & Sandilos 2017) maturity leads children who are better able to focus and control their emotions.

Some participants mentioned that they feel comfortable when the child knows how to manage their own personal hygiene like going to the toilet independently. Participants expressed that:

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*Akong anak dili pa gyud kabalo mag ingon ug malibang xa. Usahay maolaw ko sa maestra kay makalibang man ang akong anak. My child does not know how to control her bowel movement. The teacher will attend to her mess. (P3)*

*Tungod bata pa gyud ako anak mag 5 pa sa December, wala pa gyud buot. My child is still very young and do not mind anything. (P4)*

With the narration of the parents, children should have developed fine and gross motor skills to be efficient and effective movers when involved in wholesome physical activities. They are also believed that children would acquire understanding of good habits and develop awareness about the importance of safety and how they can prevent danger at home. Further, another parent commented that:

*Kinahanglan gyud na mayo ilang health para ma develop kayo ilang mga msucles, baskog and energetic para ma explor nila ang ilang kaugalingon ug maka tuon sa ilang mga gihimo. (It is important that the health condition of the child is in optimum condition to explore and learn from their works). (P5)*

*Importante kabalo sila makihalobiosa ilang mga kauban ug makigdula. The child needs to interact and play with their playmates. (P7)*

The readiness of the child involves the level of development of motor skills that enables a child to adjust to the instruction and activities. This entail skill that allow children to participate in the school activities and learn through physical exploration of their environments. Delays in the

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development of good physical health, sociability (e.g., taking turns, and sharing), and enthusiasm for learning are more important in readiness skills than knowledge of letters and numbers (Fazel & Tol W., 2014). Likewise, (Erbentraut 2015) suggest that child should begin schooling when reaches the age of six. Erbentraut further elaborated that play in early education is an efficient way of learning for children and can be used in a way that children learn with joy.

*Social and Emotional Readiness.* The foundation for relationships that give meaning to the school experience involves a sense of personal well-being that comes from stable interactions in children's early lives. The first year of schooling is built on a firm foundation of children's emotional and social skills. As the participants mentioned that:

*Akong anak dili kabalo mag dula sa iyang klasmeyt, mahadlok sa uban bata.* My son does not know to interact with her classmate and have fear mingling with kids in school. (P2)

*Dili pa biya sa school. Gusto niya kanunay ko sa iyang daplin. Mohilak ug biyaan.* My child does not like to be left in school. He will cry. He wants that I should be in his side always. (P6)

The interactions are critically important conditions of social and emotional development which includes emotional support and secure relationships. These engender in the child's acquisition of characteristics as self-confidence and the ability to function as a member of a group. This is consistent with the study (Dee & Sievertsen, 2015), that a child who is able to regulate

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activity level emotionally, focus attention, persist, and endure distractions is more ready for formal instruction compared to a child who does not have these erratic tendencies.

Similarly, Adams (2015) posits that social and emotional skills can be acquired by young children through sharing with others and following instructions to regulate emotions. These skills lay the foundation for developing literacy, numeracy, and other cognitive abilities that are critical for success in school life. Participants said that:

*Dali lang gyud maka tuon ang bata basta mag dula sa mga klasmeyt niya. Kay mag sunod sunod lang man sila sa dulaan. (The child could immediately learn when they are interacting with their classmate. They just imitate what others is doing). (P4& 6)*

*Ang bata kinahanglan pud tudluan unsaon mag maki ambit sa iyang kadula para dili mahadlok. Sa balay pa lang I ipagawas ug ipa dula sa mga bata. Dad on sila sa mga malls or sa mga parke para ma experience nila unsaon pag mingle sa uban. (The child needs to be exposed in the malls, parks and play with children to avoid fear and anxiety when they go to school. (P2*

While most respondents suggested that starting kindergarten at 5 years old is preferable to best manage the academic nature of kindergarten, however, there are few said that academic skills as a substantial indicator of kindergarten readiness. The most commonly identified readiness indicators were related to listening and attention, peer interactions, ability to follow directions, social behaviors, and personal responsibility. The participants' observation was supported by (Dee

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& Sievertsen, 2015) who states that children who start school at a later age benefit from an extended period of informal, play-based preschool that complements language development and the capacity for self-regulation of cognitive and emotional states. The social and emotional health of the growing child has the capacity to form close personal relationships with other people, especially parents and caregivers; express and manage emotions; and explore new environments. Duncan, R. J., et al (2018). Some parents express that children enjoy interacting with their peers, making and keeping friends, demonstrating a wide variety of emotions, calming down when upset without hurting others, being curious about the people and things around them, and liking to discover new things.

*Dali lang ka adjust ang akong anak emotionally kay ako man xa kanunay dad on sa mall, mag pasyal pasayl sa mga park dayon mag dula man sila sa mga bata. Lipay kaayo sila (My child easily adjust emotionally because I used to bring them in malls and in park. They are happy mingling with other kids exploring and playing. (P1).*

*Dili na mohilak akong anak ug ibilin sa school kay nalingaw makig dula sa classmate. (My child does cry if I leave them for school because they are enjoying with their classmate.) (P3)*

Children who are emotionally well-adjusted have a significantly greater chance of early school success while children who experience serious emotional difficulty face an increased risk of early school difficulty. Similarly, Taylor (2016) agreed that children perform better in cognitive, social-emotional, and oral language skills when they have preschool experience. The scheme

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supports the current interventions and the government’s policy related to investing in early years education which highlights the development of social and emotional skills as an integral part of the (DepEd No. 20 S. 2018). Likewise, children acquire social skills through conversation with their peers. The involvement they encountered gave them learning experiences with motivation and excitement thus, embracing the anticipation of learning (Bassok, Latham, & Rorem, 2016).

*Language and Communication Readiness.* Parents often wonder if their child is developmentally ready to attend kindergarten. They assume that when their child is enrolled in a preschool program, their child is being adequately prepared for the kindergarten school year (Hatcher, Nuner, & Paulsel, 2012). While preschool is a pillar of preparation, parents can’t entirely depend on preschool to teach their children every skill needed for kindergarten. Here are some narrations of the participants:

*Ako i pa enroll akong anak para ang teacher na ang mag tudlo sa iyaha kay na busy ko kayo. (I will enroll my child in kindergarten to learn how to write and read because my son is not listening to me and I am too busy with my household chores.(P4).*

*Dili ko kabalo motudlo sa bata unsaon ang Teknik pag sulat ug wala nakoy panaho mag tudlo pa kay naa pa koy anak na atimanon. (I do not have time to teach my children because I still have my other sibling to attend to. I leave it to the teacher. (P5)*

Children’s language skills grow considerably in the preschool years. The early school years are the foundation for students and their future success. Without an understanding of literacy

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skills, students often have difficulties reading proficiently. This is in congruent with the study of (Janus, et al, 2016) parents have the responsibility to start language and communication readiness at home since this is fundamental to human development. Early exposure to language, interactive communication, and a supportive environment play key roles in nurturing skills. Recognizing the critical periods of language acquisition and implementing effective strategies, individuals can ensure that language and communication readiness are cultivated to their fullest potential, enabling richer cognitive development and meaningful social interactions. Some participants expressed that children who lack language and communication skills have difficulty understanding others and expressing themselves. Here is their story:

*Sa edad na upat, ang bata dili pa kayo maka express sa ilang mga feelings kay nag lisod ug tarong istorya. (At the age of four, the child could still hardly speak and express themselves) (P6 & 7).*

*Wala man ko panahon mag story telling sa mga bata kay busy pud ko sa trabaho sa panimalay. Mao mag lisod pud akong anak mag istorya. Yungit xa. (I do not have time to tell stories because of my household chores. It follows that my son ) (P3)*

*Na obserbahan nako mas motu o ang bata sa maestra kaysa amo mga ginikanan. Mao nang ako gyud ipa enroll sa kinder akong anak para maka tuon. Kay dili motu manug tudluan nako mag hawid ug lapis. Mag yaga yaga ug akong tudloan. (I observe that children believe and follow much the instruction of the teachers than us parents. That is why I need to enroll the child in the kindergarten school. (P 5&8)*

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The acquisition of language is one of the most remarkable achievements of early childhood. Children with poor and delayed language are at risk for social, emotional, and behavioral problems and continue to experience reading (Wood, T. L. (2019). It is expected that children acquired foundational literacy skills before the start of kindergarten level. Moreover, (Rabiner, D. L., et al, 2016) recommend that good communication, language, and literacy at a young age can express ideas and interact with others which are the fundamental building blocks for a child's development.

It is also important that the quality of parent interactions plays a formative role in children's early language and learning according to (Hampton & Fantuzzo, 2019). The language that parents use when conversing with their children is one of the strongest predictors of children's early language. In addition, Hampton said that children benefit from exposure to adult speech that is rich in information about objects and events in the environment. Additionally, parents who contingently respond to their young children's verbal and exploratory initiatives tend to have children with more advanced receptive and productive language.

## CONCLUSION

The findings from this study answered the guiding research questions concerning how parents view kindergarten readiness. The participant's lived experiences are what has shaped their beliefs and perspectives about kindergarten readiness. Based on the themes generated, the physical, socio, and emotional readiness, language, and communication readiness emerged from

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the data. The participants understand what kindergarten readiness is, how preschool education influences kindergarten readiness, and ways parents can assist their children in developing skills to aid in their successful transition to kindergarten. The start of school is an essential milestone in the life of a child and their parents or carers, and the success of a child's transition to school readiness is echoed by the child's readiness and the active involvement of parents in guiding their child's milestones.

Part of the parent's involvement is to impart many of the requisite readiness skills to their children framing them as life skills. Encouraging their children to be proactive in reading providing them the opportunities that support their child's readiness, and exposing them to new experiences and activities lead them to self-regulation and independence. The domains of social, emotional, physical, and cognitive skills develop over time and should be viewed as a process, not a single goal. A parent's role in preparing their child for kindergarten is to create an environment where their child feels secure, supported, and empowered.

The role that parents play in early childhood experiences cannot be lessened, but rather, should be strengthened and empowered. Since kindergarten readiness encompasses a vast array of developmental domains and skills, it is imperative that preparation for kindergarten begins at birth and is sustained through the preschool years. The support received from parents, teachers, family members, and peers, can be a significant help for the child's preparation for school to

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overcome the fears, tensions, and challenges that come across during the start of school. Hence, this would lessen the stressful experience of the child’s first day of kindergarten schooling.

Understanding kindergarten school readiness requires attention to the child’s developing social and academic competencies and to the ways in which these competencies are enhanced by experiences with adults in family and early education settings. Great disparities exist in terms of children’s competencies as they start school, as well as the opportunities to which they are exposed that could enhance those competencies ensuring that all children come to school ready to learn. Stakeholders should make a concerted effort to broaden their ideas about children’s competencies beyond academic skills, enhance the likelihood of exposure to high-quality early educational environments, and learn how to build upon those competencies in kindergarten and thereafter.

The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 and its requirements push academics to infiltrate into kindergarten classrooms. Children are now expected to enter kindergarten with a developed, multifaceted toolset that supports academic, physical, emotional, and social skills. This implies a responsibility to inform parents how they can support and encourage their children before they actually enter the walls of a kindergarten classroom. The research study supports the premise that parents should be aware of what kindergarten readiness entails and their desire to help with kindergarten readiness skills and behaviors.

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The study suggests that administrators should educate the parents, simply because, they are the great motivating factor that children pursue or stop schooling. The goal is very idealistic, but in reality, the common people are mostly affected. Education is a boon if it makes life better or easier for someone, but it could also be a bane to students because education without financial assistance & moral support, and emotional guidance from parents will make their scholarly life feel unhappy or annoying. Parental involvement practices needs a wide array of transitional practices at home, school, and in the community but effective practices need to be tailored to children’s personalities and development status.

Since this study is only limited to eight (8) kindergarten parents, the following directions for future research are encouraged.

The study encourages the Department of Education to make complex decisions regarding curriculum development and academic expectations to help the teachers to be more motivated despite the difficulty of handling the early childhood learners they were still enthusiastic to assist the children’s teaching and learning activities effectively.

School Heads should encourage teachers to pursue graduate or postgraduate courses to enhance their professional competence in handling early childhood children. The development of another study on the impact of Early Childhood Care Development could be a possible subject for research. Future research needs to consider children’s individual differences when examining parents’ perceptions and practices in children’s school readiness.

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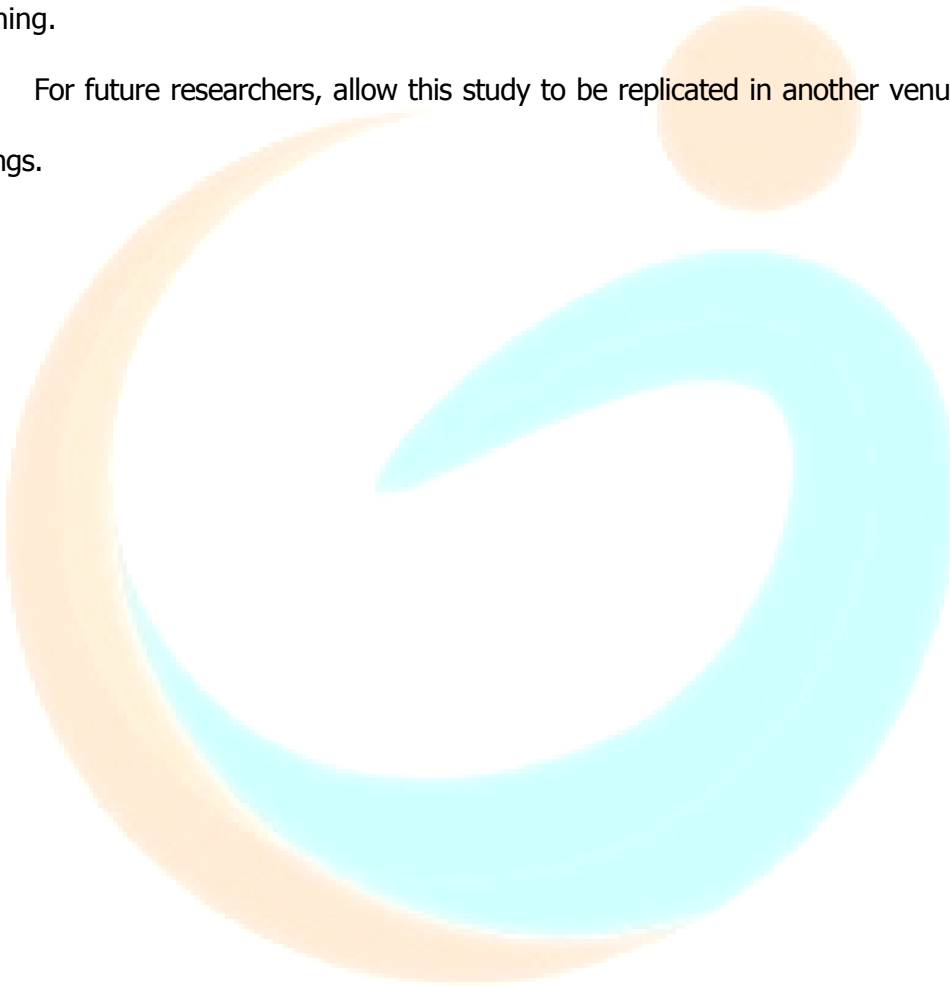
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Kindergarten teachers should engage themselves in different relevant trainings that would enhance their instructional or pedagogical competence in teaching kindergarten. Teachers should establish connections and linkages with other teachers assigned to other schools for the sharing of information pertaining to trends and new approaches or strategies to improve performance in teaching.

For future researchers, allow this study to be replicated in another venue to validate these findings.



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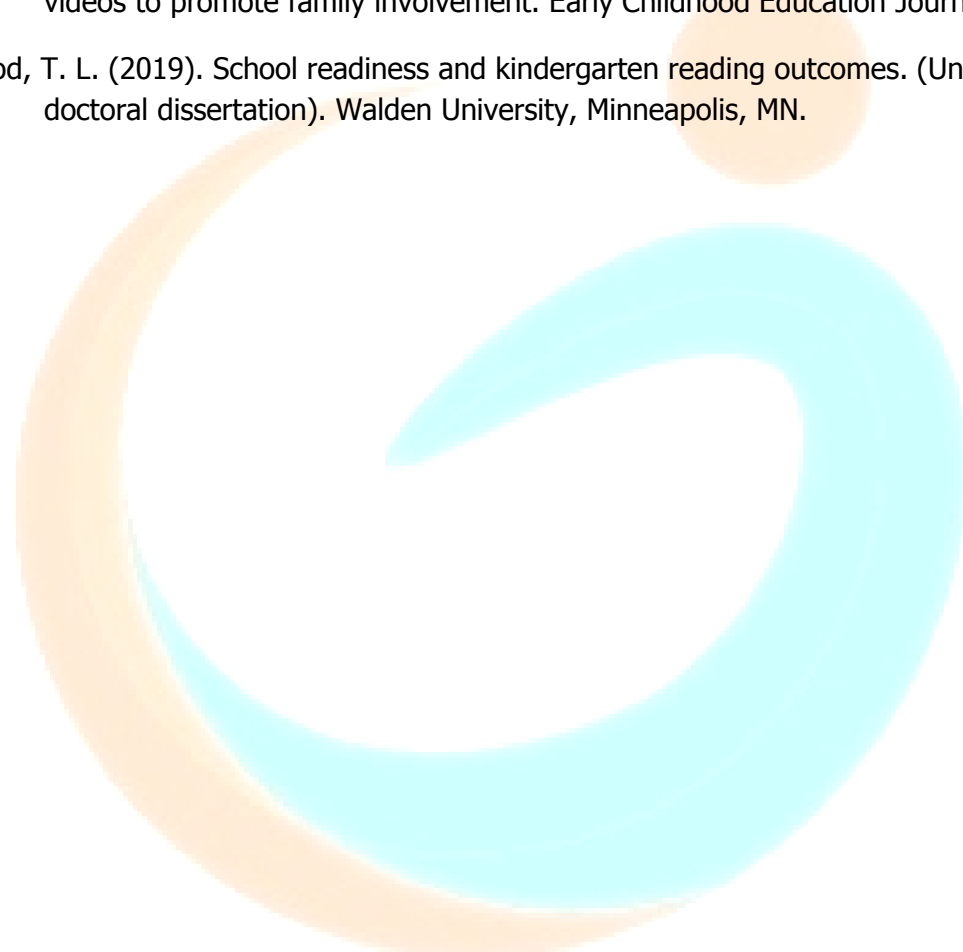
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