

Parental Involvement and the School Readiness of Preschool Children: A Few Insights

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Abstract

Preschools provide a school readiness programme to children, i.e., prepare the children with the necessary concepts, language, and motor skills that are important for the later learning of reading writing, and mathematics in the primary grades. This paper is based upon a study that was aimed at understanding the effect of parental involvement in the school readiness of their children at the preschool level. The primary data of the study was collected from the teachers and parents of different types of preschools from four districts of Delhi. From the study, it was quite clear that parental involvement has a strong positive impact on the school readiness of their children. The involvement of parents in the form of helping the children in completing activities or participating in extra-curricular activities motivates the children positively. However, it may be noted that the nature and intensity of parental involvement in the care and education of their children at the preschool level differ under different conditions.

Keyword: preschool children, school readiness, parental involvement

Context

Children in the age group of 3 to 6 years require specific learning opportunities in non-formal settings. Preschool education programme is meant for children in the age range from 3 to 6 years. Preschools provide a school readiness programme to children, i.e., prepare the children with the necessary concepts, language, and motor skills that are important for the later learning of reading writing, and mathematics in the primary grades. Pre-schools provide early childhood education through play-way methods which stimulate the physical, social and mental development and satisfy the curiosity of the children. In the preschool many activities take place. Children learn to play together, recite rhymes and songs and learn the concepts of colour and the surroundings and thereby develop school readiness which forms the basis for a sound primary education in later years. There is a good deal of flexibility in a good preschool programme. Research shows that wastage and stagnation seen in classes I and II can be minimized if the children have undergone a preschool programme . Parents and society are a part of the education system as are the children, teachers, and staff. The role of parents in children's education is accepted commonly. In the case of children in the preschool stage of schooling, the physical and mental growth, as well as development, take place at significant levels which shows the profound impact of these factors on an individual. Parental involvement can be increased and supported when parents have positive views about

their children's pre-schooling. Parents who are behaviorally involved participate in activities such as attending pre-school functions and volunteering at the pre-school. Parents who are personally involved communicate positively with their children about preschool matters. As a whole, parents can have a positive effect on children's preschool by being involved in their pre-schooling and impact on their school readiness.

Rationale of the Study

The involvement of the parents signifies the supporting nature of the family in their children's preschool. Parental involvement can be negative or positive. The non-involvement of parents regarding activities and involvement of their children can thwart their children from taking interest in preschool. The positive involvement of parents in the activities of the children can be beneficial to their children in many cases and can be reflected in the improvement in class routine, creating interest among children, and better pre-reading and pre-writing skill attainments.

The growing awareness regarding preschool education makes many families value their children's preschool and act favourably towards the activities to be conducted by their children. They become a part of the decision-making process of school and decide their children's future.

The present study aimed to study the relationship between parental involvement and the school readiness of their children. The study also tried to measure the effect of parental involvement in the activities of preschool children in improving their school readiness. It was felt that the findings of the study it would help to identify the gaps and strengths existing in the role of parents in improving the performance of their children. The study also helped to devise an approach regarding the role that parents need to play for the better performance of their children. Further, the findings of the study were also to be used by the parents to change or improve their strategy for the better school readiness of their children

Methodology

The broad methodology adopted was survey research. However, both qualitative and quantitative approach was followed based on the requirement. As the sector is unorganized in the private segment, a list of total preschools was not available. The list of preschools was compiled by the researcher from different sources. From the list, 15 private preschools and 10 NGO-run preschools, and 15 Delhi Government Schools with pre-primary sections were included in the sample. In addition to this 24, Anganwadi Centres (AWCs) were selected to constitute the sample of preschools. Data were collected from four districts (East, North, North East , South West) of Delhi. Two tehsils of each district were chosen for data collection. The data was collected from selected preschool teachers and parents by making a personal visit to each center. The data and information were collected from the teachers and parents by administering a structured schedule (Household/Parent Questionnaire) which contained the details about the household and parents of the children who had completed their preschool. The preschool data was collected from the sample schools selected for the study by using a structured schedule. Parents of 250 children who had completed their preschool were selected for the study based on random sampling. Most of the analysis of the data had been done using descriptive as well as parametric statistics.

Findings

The study showed a positive relationship between parental involvement in the academic activities of the children at their home and their school readiness. The study found a significant positive relationship ($r = 0.5$) between parental involvement in the activities of the children in the school and their school readiness.

It was found that there was a positive relationship between the educational qualification of the parents and their involvement in the activities of their children at preschool. On the other hand, most of the parents whose educational qualification was below undergraduate level (10%) could not fully devote themselves to the activities of their children.

Types of Respondents (Parents)

Of the total respondent from the parents, 60% were the biological father, 30% were the biological mother and 10% were the guardians. The guardians are those relatives of the children with whom they are staying for the purpose. They were found to be mostly like paternal uncle, maternal uncle, and maternal grandparents.

Table I : Type of Respondents

Respondent	Father	Mother	Guardian
Number	144	72	34

Source: Data collected through questionnaire

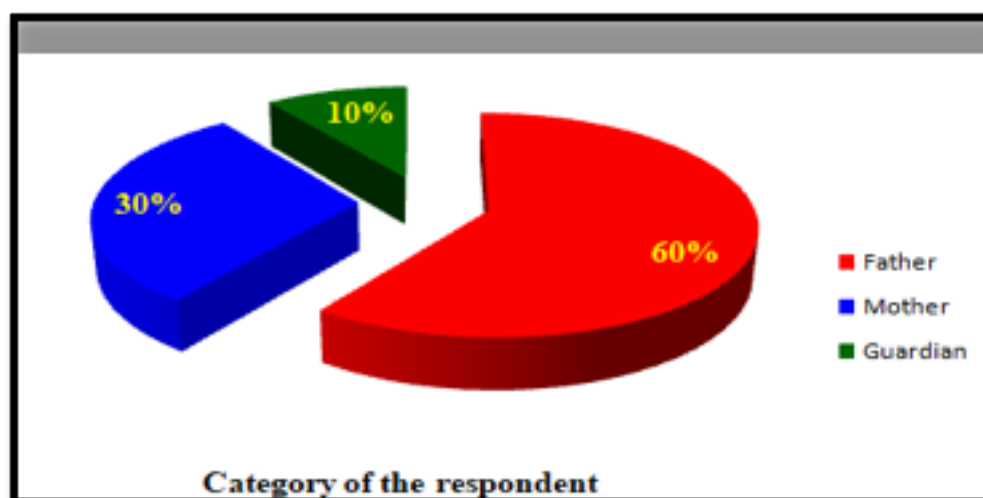


Fig: Composition of the respondents

Extent of Parent Preschool Relationship

Parents' response towards sending their children was found to be positive. Most of the parents (81%) revealed that they enjoy listening to their children talk about school activities. More than half of the parents (55%) visit preschools, attend parent meetings and involve themselves in preschool activities. To gather information on parents' understanding of the importance of pre-school education, some more information was sought from the parents (Table II).

Table II: Parents Response to Sending their Child to Preschool

Sl.no	Response	Yes	No	partially
1	Does your child enjoy going to preschool	125	0	0
2	Do you listen to your child when he is talking about school activities	125	0	0
3	Do you attend the parents' meeting when called for?	125	0	0
4	Do you think your child is receiving a good education	125	0	0
5	Is there free schooling provided to your child by the school?	125	0	0
6	Does the school supply free uniform and learning materials to your child?	125	20	0
7	Are you aware of the Right to Education Act 2009?	22	99	04
8	Are you aware of the ECCE Policy 2013?	01	124	0
9	Does your child imitate the classroom happenings at home with his friends?	121	04	0

Overall, the knowledge and attitude of the parents were found to be highly favourable for ensuring better school readiness of their children.

Parental Involvement in Preschool

The mean scores of the parents' response on parental involvement (at home, at school, and future plan of

preschool) were 0.9, 0.6, and 0.9 respectively. The standard deviation for parent's response on parental involvement (at home, at school, at future plan of school) was 0.3, 0.4, and 0.2 respectively. The mean and standard deviation scores indicate that there is enough involvement of parents in the activities of the children in the home, school, and also in the future plan of preschool.

Table III: Mean and Standard Deviation Values for Overall Parental Involvement in Activities of their Children

	N	Mean	SD
Parental Involvement at home	250	0.9	0.3
Parental Involvement at preschool		0.6	0.4
Parental opinion on future plans of preschool		0.9	0.2

Source: Data collected through questionnaire

Mean and Standard Deviation (Teachers' Response)

Analyses of responses of teachers show that the mean scores of responses on parental involvement are 0.7 and standard deviation is 0.2 which indicates that the teacher also agrees about the involvement of the parents in their activities.

Table IV: Mean and Standard Deviation values for overall parental involvement in activities of their children

	N	Mean	SD
Parental Involvement	64	0.7	0.2

Source: Data collected through questionnaire

The mean scores of the responses on parental involvement (at home, at school, and future plan of the school) are 0.8, 0.6, 0.7 respectively which indicates that there is fair involvement of the parents in the activities of the children. The standard deviation for the response on parental involvement (at home, at school, and future plan of school) is 0.3, 0.2, and 0.1 respectively which indicate that the teachers accept the involvement of their parents in their activities.

Table V: Mean and Standard Deviation values for overall parental involvement in activities of their children

	N	Mean	SD
Parental Involvement at home	64	0.8	0.3
Parental Involvement at school		0.6	0.2
Parental opinion on future plans		0.7	0.1

Source: Data collected from questionnaire

Coefficient of correlation: Parental Involvement (part wise) and academic performance

Analyses of parents' responses reveal that the coefficient of correlation on parental involvement at home comes out to be 0.51 which is significant at 0.01 level of significance. The coefficient of correlation on parental involvement at preschool comes out to be 0.49 which is significant at 0.01 level of significance. The coefficient of correlation on parental involvement in future plan of preschool is 0.48. This means that there is a significant positive relationship between parental involvement school readiness of preschool children on the three factors or parts.

Table VI: Coefficient of Correlation between Parental Involvement and School Readiness of Children at Preschool Level

Part Wise	Coefficient	of	Level of
Parental Involvement	Correlation		Significance
Parental Involvement at home	0.51		0.01
Parental Involvement at preschool	0.49		0.01
Parental Involvement in future Plans in a preschool	0.48		0.01

Source: Data collected through questionnaire

Thus, it is once again clear that there exists a positive significant relationship between parental involvement and school readiness of children at the preschool level concerning their involvement at home, school and future plans.

The findings of the study showed that the parents of the majority of the children were involved in their preschool activities. Correspondingly almost the same proportionate number of children showed better academic readiness. The study also threw some light on the fact that parents nowadays are actively engaged in the preschool activities of their children regardless of their social, economic, and other impediments. The value attached to preschool education of children has substantially improved compared to earlier times. Earlier, the activities of the preschool children were not considered a responsibility of the parents and it mostly remained with the preschool. But, nowadays there has been a paradigm shift in the attitude of parents towards the preschool education of their children and as a result, more focus was being given by the parents to the academic activities of their children.

Major Findings, Conclusions, and Recommendations

This study was aimed at understanding the effect of parental involvement in the school readiness of their children at the preschool level. From the study, it is clear that parental involvement has a strong positive impact on the school readiness of their children. The involvement of parents in the form of helping the children in completing activities or in participating in extra-curricular activities motivates the children positively. However, it may be noted that the nature and intensity of parental involvement in the care and education of their children at the preschool level differ under different conditions. The study showed a positive relationship between parental involvement in the activities of the children at their home and their school readiness. The study found a significant positive relationship between parental involvement in the activities of the children in the preschool and their school readiness thereafter. The study found that few children stay with their guardian other than their biological parents have comparatively poor school readiness than those who are staying with their parents perhaps one of the factors behind this could be the lack of initiatives by the guardians to get involved in the activities of the children in the preschool and also

related activities at home. It is a joint responsibility of both the teacher and parents to facilitate learning among the children. This education partnership is necessary to give an effective learning experience to the children. So mutual trust and equality among teachers and parents may prove to be an important element for this educational partnership. Differences in power, expertise, and background may play a disturbing role in this partnership. So, it is the professional responsibility of teachers and schools to establish this educational partnership with the parents (*Singh and Singh, 2013*).

The effective parent-school relationship is one of the major features of preschool education. Opportunities for children's learning are strengthened as the connections across the parents; preschool and community are acknowledged and respected. Therefore, to strengthen the bond between parents and preprimary education organized in primary schools:

- Emphasis on community-oriented education and greater parental participation should be adopted in all pre- schools.
- Effective strategies for working with parents based on the realities of the local environment should be employed by all the preschools.
- Continuous efforts should be made by the preschool and also primary school administration to strengthen the partnership with parents.
- To this effect, a forum for parent education, meetings, and discussions, conferences, home visits, etc., are recommended.
- Parents should also take full advantage of all the formal and informal means of communication made available to them to work harmoniously and constructively with the pre-primary schools
- Effective partnerships with parents need to be promoted and these are also among the great challenges of education organized in all the preschools.
- The more frequent meeting between the parents and the teachers has to be conducted to make the parents comfortable to discuss any problem related to the activities of their children with the teachers as well as with their children.
- Awareness has to be developed among the parents' members to understand the importance of their involvement in the academic activities of the child.
- The atmosphere of the preschool has to be made very conducive so that the parents and the guardians find it comfortable to visit as and when they feel to interact with the teachers.

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