What are Singapore parents' perception of play in the early years?

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Abstract: International research indicate that play is the most effective way for children to learn and develop physically, cognitively, socially and emotionally as well as reduces stress and enhances confidence, curiosity and creativity. Despite the importance and benefits of play for children's learning and development, play seems to be vanishing from preschool classrooms globally (and in Singapore) for various reasons.   It is believed that one of the reasons for this phenomenon could be the lack of parents' support for children's play due to their high expectations and demand for academic achievement and the lack of their awareness or understanding on the importance of play in children's development. Hence, the key purpose of this exploratory study is to gather data from parents on their perception of play and holistic development in Singapore preschools. Data were collected from 30 parents through interviews using a semi-structured questionnaire. The data collected were transcribed verbatim and coded and subsequently, organised by research question and analysed and interpreted constructively and reflexively. The findings of the study revealed that although most Singapore parents understood and recognised the importance of play and holistic development in the early years, some of them wanted preschools to prepare their children academically for primary school. Parents also shared a list of factors which supported or impeded their support for children's play and some of them felt that they could benefit from parent education programmes. These findings highlight the importance of the school-family-community partnership in the education of young children in Singapore.

Introduction

Preschool education for children from birth to six years is not compulsory in Singapore. However, most parents enroll their children in a preschool (kindergarten or childcare centre) to ensure that their children are well prepared for primary school (Tan, 2007). In fact, it is reported that about 99 percent of children aged five and six years are currently attending a preschool (Ministry of Social and Family Development [MSF], 2020).

To ensure that children are provided with a quality preschool education, the Singapore government identified four key areas for review which were regulations, teacher-training, research and curriculum in 1999 (Ministry of Education [MOE], 2003). Consequently, in 2003, the Ministry of Education launched the *Nurturing Early Learners: A Curriculum for Kindergartens in Singapore* (NEL Framework) to ensure that children proceed from preschool to primary school with a common set of knowledge, skills and dispositions (MOE, 2012). The NEL Framework which was later revised in 2008 and further refreshed in 2012, in view of current and relevant local and international research on teaching and learning in the preschool years. Subsequently, the Early Childhood Development Agency (ECDA) provided the preschools with intensive training and comprehensive resource materials to support the implementation of the NEL Framework.

The NEL Framework is the first official document for preschool education in Singapore to identify best practices for teaching and learning and to emphasise on holistic development of children instead of

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academic school readiness alone (Tan, 2017). The underlying belief of the NEL Framework is that children are curious, active and competent learners (MOE, 2012). Based on this belief, teachers are expected to implement six *iTeach* principles which is the acronym for *integrated* approach to learning, <u>*Teachers*</u> as facilitators of learning, *engaging* children in learning through purposeful play, <u>*authentic*</u> experiences through quality interactions, <u>*children*</u> as constructors of knowledge, and <u>*holistic*</u> development (MOE, 2012). Purposeful play is defined as teachers intentionally planning the play experiences and organising the environment (based on carefully constructed objectives & facilitation) to enhance children's learning in the preschool (MOE, 2012). Purposeful or guided play where adults scaffold children's learning has been found to be valuable in preschool classrooms (Resnick & Johnson, 2020; Toub et al., 2016).

To ensure the holistic development of the children, there are six learning areas in the NEL Framework which are *Aesthetics and Creative Expression*, *Discovery of the World*, *Language and Literacy*, *Motor Skills Development*, *Numeracy*, and *Social and emotional Development*. Each of these learning areas has its own set of knowledge, skills and dispositions which preschools are encouraged to help develop in the children through careful planning and facilitation of the purposeful play activities.

However, three years later, many preschools are still facing challenges in implementing the NEL Framework (Bautisa et al., 2016). Some leaders and teachers in these preschools cite parents as a key challenge, claiming that parents place high emphasis on the acquisition of academic skills (e.g., language & numeracy skills through drill-and-practice & rote-learning) and are not supportive of a play-based learning (i.e., constructing knowledge through interacting with the physical & social environment) in the preschools (Berthelsen et al., 2011). They also believe that some parents enrol their children in enrichment and tuition classes and hence, preschools are expected to raise the bar to keep up with the children's higher levels of academic skills (Yongbeon & Fung, 2021). This, in turn, has placed pressure on primary schools to raise the bar as well, resulting in spiralling levels of stress placed on the children, parents and teachers in both the preschools and primary schools (Bach & Christensen, 2017; Ebbeck & Chan, 2011; Ebbeck & Warrior, 2008; Lim-Ratnam, 2013). An over emphasis on school readiness skills and employing primary school teaching methods has also led to the 'schoolification' of some preschools in Singapore (Gunnersdottir, 2004, p.1). Consequently, children in Singapore experience stress and have little time for play, rest and fun (Bach & Christensen, 2017; Ebbeck & Chan, 2011).

According to Ebbeck & Warrior (2008), this phenomenon could be attributed to Singapore being a "result-oriented, exam focused education system" (p. 248). Similarly, Lim-Ratnam (2013) also believes that the pressures of Singapore's high-stakes examination system in schools have contributed to a strong emphasis on academic skills in the preschools and schools. This has resulted in parents expecting preschools to prepare their children for primary school academically (esp., how to read, spell & write as well as be able to count, add & subtract) through drill-and-practice and rote-learning (Bach & Christensen, 2017). Parents become concerned, stressed and anxious when their children are unable to meet their expectations (Yongbeon & Fung, 2021). Recent articles in the local media indicated that parents contribute to academic stress and anxieties which children face in Singapore (Qing, 2021). One of the reasons for the lack of parents' support for children's play in preschools could be due to their high expectations and demand for educational achievement, and their lack of awareness or understanding on the importance of play in children's development (International Play Association [IPA], 2010).

While parents in Singapore want the 'best' for their children, they may focus on academic school readiness skills, and not realise the importance of both academic and non-academic skills, and the well-being of children for a smooth transition from preschool to primary school (Dockett & Perry, 2001; Gunnersdottir, 2004). They may not also realise that holistic development of young children is important for future school, work and life (Bach & Christensen, 2017; Tan, 2017). Hence, this exploratory study intends to gather data on parents' perception of play and holistic development in the early years as well as understand what their fears, anxieties and concerns are and more importantly, why they have such fears, anxieties and concerns about their children's preschool education.

Concept of Play

While play has been universally accepted as important and beneficial to young children, it is difficult to define play precisely and concisely (Whitebread et al., 2012). However, play is commonly viewed as pleasurable, voluntary, spontaneous, engaging and intrinsically motivating (Bullard, 2017) and contributes to children's happiness and mental well-being (Fisher, 2008). Children can participate in different types of play (e.g., exploratory, constructive, dramatic, etc.) which could involve the use of toys, books, blocks or other materials (Bullard, 2017; Fisher, 2008). Children can play alone (solitary play) or with others (parallel, associative or cooperative play) (Bullard, 2017; Fisher, 2008).

It is believed that childhood is a time where children build social skills, learn values and emotional intelligence through play (Yongbeom & Fung, 2021). Besides providing children with opportunities to explore, learn and solve problems, play also helps to enhance their confidence, curiosity and creativity (Malkovichuk et al., 2014) and reduce their stress (Wang & Aamodt, 2012).

Play creates powerful opportunities for children to acquire critical knowledge, skills & dispositions across various domains of development (including physical, cognitive, social & emotional) in their early years (MOE, 2012; United Nations Children's Fund [UNICEF], 2018). Hence, play is pivotal in preparing young children holistically to succeed not only in preschool but also in later school, work and life (Clouder, 2004; Weisberg et al., 2014).

Relationship between Play and Learning

Play, learning and holistic development are intertwined and there are many benefits of play, learning and holistic development for young children (Ducusin & Dy, 2016). Since play and learning are not dichotomous, many countries around the world have emphasised the explicit link between play and learning (and not play versus learning) in the early years (Rentzou et al., 2019). These countries have deliberately made learning through play or play-based learning the central pedagogy for their early childhood education (Bubikova-Moan et al., 2019).

Play-based learning which is being universally recognised as a developmentally appropriate practice, involves child-centred learning, hands-on experiences and open-ended inquiry (Moore et al., 2014). Unlike direct or didactic teaching, children in play-based learning environments are encouraged to explore, express and make their own choices within meaningful, engaging and authentic contexts, through the holistic employment of their physical and intellectual capacities, and social-emotional abilities (Bergen & Fromberg, 2010; Bullard, 2017, Fisher, 2008; Howard, 2010).

However, progressing from direct teaching to play-based learning has posed challenges to preschool teachers and parents (Keung & Cheung, 2019). Hence, it is essential for preschool teachers and parents to work together to nurture and support the development of the whole child (or holistic development of the child) through play-based learning (Pyle et al., 2017).

Socio-cultural Perspectives of Play

Despite the importance and benefits of play for children's learning and development, play seems to be vanishing from preschool classrooms in many countries (Resnik & Johnson, 2020; Warash et al., 2017). In a report on the implementation of Article 31 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), the International Play Association (IPA, 2010) has revealed that there is a lack of children's play globally due to "excessive pressure for educational achievement" (p. 38) and a lack of parental "awareness of the importance of play in children's holistic development" (p. 27).

International research has also revealed that there are cultural differences in parents' perceptions of play (Babuc, 2015). While Euro-American parents tend to view play as important for the children's learning and development in the early years, Asian parents tend to believe that there is little value in play (Parmar et al., 2004). One of the key reasons behind Asian parents' perception that play has little value could be attributed to the tension between play and learning (Howard, 2010; Toub et al., 2016). While the dichotomy between play versus learning has been generally debunked, some Asian teachers and parents continue to

hold the view that play is for fun and enjoyment, and learning is for acquiring academic skills (Keung & Cheung, 2019). They also believe that academic skills can only be acquired through drill-and-practice and rote-learning (Yongbeon & Fung, 2021).

Despite extensive research on the importance of play in the early years, many Asian parents (including Singapore parents) continue to place high emphasis on preparing their children academically for primary school as early as possible. They place undue stress and pressure on their children and preschools as well as enrol their children in various enrichment and tuition classes, believing that this would increase their children's chances of succeeding later in school, work and life (Bach & Christensen, 2017; Tan, 2017).

School-family-community Partnership

Play-based learning which provides an excellent environment for promoting young children's academic and non-academic learning and holistic development, encompasses both free play and guided play (Bullard, 2017; Hui et al., 2014; Weisberg et al., 2013). During guided play, teachers and parents can be co-players or take a participative role during children's play activities (Howard, 2010). They can also play an active role in preparing the environment, materials and activities as well as responding sensitively, asking open-ended questions and providing suggestions in order for children to reach precise or intended targets (Peterson et al., 2017; Pyle et al., 2018; Pyle et al., 2020; Toub et al., 2016). Such guided play is also known as purposeful play in the NEL Framework (MOE, 2012).

If play and holistic development are crucial for children in the early years then, it is important for Singapore parents to understand, appreciate and support play and holistic development (Peterson et al., 2017; Pyle et al., 2018) as well as the play-based learning presented in the NEL Framework (MOE, 2012). In order to provide the necessary information, programs and support to help Singapore parents, it is first important to stop and listen to them.

Hence, this exploratory study intends to gather data on parents' perception of play and holistic development as well as understand what their fears, anxieties and concerns are and more importantly, why they have such fears anxieties and concerns. It also intends to identify factors that support or impede parents' support for children' play and holistic development as well as how they can be supported. The idea of schools and the community engaging and involving parents in their children's education is based on Joyce Epstein's School-Family-Community Partnership Model which was developed in the 1990s and remains influential in the field of education despite undergoing revisions over the years.

Hence, the research questions (RQs) for this study are as follows:

RQ1: What are parents' perceptions of play and holistic development for their young children?

RQ2: What are the factors that parents' consider contributing to or impeding parents' support for play?

RQ3: What are the kinds of assistance and support that parents think they need to support and guide their children's play and learning?

RQ4: What are parents' goals for their children's preschool education? What are parents' overall goals for their children's education?

The findings from this study will help inform preschools and the community (e.g., teacher-training institutes, employers, policymakers, etc.) on how they can support parents and their children in the early years.

Method

This exploratory study is primarily qualitative in nature in order to obtain data from participants in a naturalistic setting which would be rich, thick, descriptive and insightful (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003; Cohen et al., 2011; Creswell, 2008). As such, the sample size was intentionally kept small in order to ensure that

data collection and data analysis were both manageable and practical but yet meaningful and useful as well as fit for purpose of the study (Cohen et al., 2011). Prior to commencement of the study, approval was sought and obtained from the Nanyang Technological University Institutional Review Board (NTU IRB).

Participants

A total number of 30 parents (fathers & mothers) with at least one child aged four to six years old, were invited to participate in the study through purposeful sampling (Cohen et al., 2011; Creswell, 2008). These parents were approached through the preschools (kindergartens or childcare centres) which were located in various parts of Singapore. However, as the sample was small and comprised parents who were willing and agreed to participate in the study, it was not completely representative of the population in Singapore. However, the demographic data were collected from the parents prior to the interview and summarised and presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Parents' demographic data

Category	Number of Mothers	Number of Fathers	Total Number of Parents
	21	9	30
Type of Service			
Childcare	7	5	12
Kindergarten	14	4	18
Racial Composition			
Chinese	13	7	20
Malay	5	1	6
Indian	2	0	2
Eurasian	1	1	2
Highest Education Level			
Tertiary	17	8	25
Post-Secondary	2	0	2
Secondary	2	1	3
Occupation Type			
Homemaker	9	0	9
Teaching	6	1	7
Non-Teaching	6	8	14
Gross Monthly Income			
NA	3	0	3
$2000 and below	1	0	1
$2001 - $4000	3	5	8
$4001 - $6000	8	3	11
$6001 and above	6	1	7
Type of Housing			
Public	19	8	27
Private	1	1	2
Other	1	0	1

Data collection

Instrument

Data was collected from the parents through one-to-one, face-to-face interviews using a semi-structured questionnaire. The duration of each interview which was about two hours long, was conducted at a venue which was convenient and agreed upon with each parent. During the interview, parents were asked open-ended questions as stated in the questionnaire. Examples of questions asked to solicit their response are *Do you think 'play' is important in the early years? Do you think 'play' is being supported in the early years in Singapore?* and *What do you think preschools can do to support you or your child's play and learning at home?* Parents were also asked probing questions to gain a better and deeper understanding of their *responses.*

Procedure

Prior written consent was sought and obtained from the parents who were willing to participate in

the study. The parents were briefed on the purpose of the study, data collection procedures and confidentiality of their responses. They were also informed that participation was voluntary, and that they could withdraw participation at any point of the study.

The interview data which were audio-recorded, were then transcribed verbatim, organised and coded manually and carefully. Personal information such as parents', children's and preschools' names (if mentioned during the interview) were coded and anonymised. For example, C1P1 means Centre 1 and Parent 1.

Data analysis

Following data collection, the data were analysed inductively and reflexively by the research team comprising the Principal Investigator (PI) and Research Assistant (RA) with extensive experience in the field of early childhood education (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1983; LeCompte & Preissle, 1983). Data analysis involved reading the interview transcripts multiple times to familiarise, examine and code the response of each parent (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Once the responses of all the parents were coded, they were organised and grouped by research question (Cohen et al., 2011). These groups were then reviewed, revised and re-grouped several times and further reduced and refined to identify clear themes, patterns, relationships and comparisons (Braun & Clarke, 2006; LeCompte & Preissle, 1983; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Nowell et al., 2017). The final key categories were then, organized and presented as results. Subsequently, the results were carefully analysed and interpreted constructively and reflexively by drawing on literature that was relevant to the study (Hamersley & Atkinson, 1983; Kiger & Varpio, 2020).

Results

The results from the study will be summarised and presented as key categories to understand Singapore parents' perceptions of play and holistic development as well as the factors that support or impede their support for play, the kinds of assistance they need to support their children's play, and the goals for their children's preschool education. Relevant and interesting quotes from parents (with little or no editing) will also be provided, whenever necessary or appropriate.

Perception of Play and Holistic Development

When asked about their perceptions of play and its role and importance in the early years, parents shared a variety of views. About half of the parents perceived play to be free play with children being given the choice to select their play activity or materials. They felt that play should be fun and enjoyable. For example, C1P7 shared that "Play for a child, is to have fun. It's something that they want to do, and they like to do". Another parent, C1P6 explained that play is "almost unstructured…children are free to explore whatever they want".

Parents also had different perceptions about play and learning and their connection/interconnection in the early years. Almost all parents felt that play and learning cannot take place simultaneously; and that play was for "fun" and "enjoyment", and learning was for acquiring knowledge, skills and dispositions. Only a few parents understood that learning can take place while children are at play. For example, C5P2 shared that "whenever they play, they learn something new. Maybe the rules and regulations, maybe what is right and what is wrong".

Parents were also divided about their expectations of what children would learn through play. Some parents wanted their children to learn academic skills (e.g., numeracy & language skills) and other parents wanted their children to acquire non-academic skills (e.g., social skills & good values). However, only a few parents believed that children would learn both academic and non-academic skills through play. It is interesting to note here that these results could be linked to the earlier results on parents' perceptions of play and learning, where play was for "fun" and "enjoyment" and learning was for acquiring knowledge, skills and dispositions. There were some parents who believed that play could help children relax and relieve stress, and that children should play in their early years as they would have less time to play when they go to school. For example, C5P2 observed that "There was lesser play time as children entered K1 and

K2, with more focus given towards learning and the academics". Similarly, C10P4 whose child was enrolled in phonics lessons, felt that her child should "concentrate on learning rather than playing…start to prepare for primary one".

Similar to play, parents had various perceptions of holistic development. While some parents perceived holistic development to be overall or all-rounded development, other parents felt that it involved development in either the academic/cognitive or non-academic/non--cognitive domains. There were also a few parents who did not know what holistic development meant or involved. For example, C8P3 shared that holistic development is "to grow up to be able to be resilient… to be able to accept setbacks and grow from that…to be able to deal and overcome challenges."

As all the parents were unaware of the NEL Framework, they could not make reference to the links between play, learning and holistic development in the framework.

Factors that Support or Impede Play

Parents were divided on the factors which contribute or impede their support for play. Many parents felt that they were well supported at the home and preschool, and in Singapore. Reasons cited included having more time during the weekends, seeing the child happy and having siblings to play with. The remaining parents shared that they were not supported at home and the preschool, and in Singapore. Reasons cited included lack of time, lack of resources, lack of play ideas, messiness of play, societal pressure on academic learning and academic expectations of primary school. For example, C1P3 shared that "I can play with my children whenever they want me to but for those working mums, I don't think they will have time to play with their children or teach them".

Assistance and Support

When asked what sort of assistance and support parents needed for them to support play, they listed the following areas: 1) childcare expenses, 2) more time, 3) more resources, 4) talks and workshops, 5) less academic pressure in education, and 6) better facilities in neighbourhood playgrounds. Additionally, parents also requested for preschools to provide assistance and support especially, in the following areas: 1) greater home-school partnership, 2) parent education on play and learning, 3) more play in preschool, and 4) more non-academic enrichment activities. For example, C1P7 requested that "it is good if you have more talks for parents".

Goals for Preschool and Overall Education

Parents were again divided between non-academic and academic goals for their children's preschool education. While some of parents listed non-academic areas such as social and communication skills, good values and character, curiosity and enjoy school and learning; other parents listed academic areas such numeracy, language and other school readiness skills. For example, C9P3 explained that "academic goals like basic numeracy and phonetic skills…quite essential because when children enter primary school, they are required to read and write some sentences…will actually help them be more prepared".

Discussion and Conclusion

Incidentally, parents' perception of play seems to be in line with the literature on free play which states that play should be fun and enjoyable, and that children should be given the choice to select their play activity or materials (Bergen & Fromberg, 2010; Bullard, 2017; Fisher, 2008; Howard, 2010). However, parents did not mention other possible types of play and their importance in the early years, and their role in children's play (Howard, 2010; Peterson et al., 2017; Pyle et al., 2018). For example, these parents could either be unaware of guided play, or misconstrued guided play to be drill-and-practice or rote-learning (Bubikova-Moan et al., 2019). Hence, it is important to provide programmes (such as talks, workshops, print or online resources, etc.) for parents to help them understand and appreciate the different types of play and their importance in the early years, and their role during children's play.

Interestingly, the perception that play and learning are dichotomous (i.e., play versus learning instead of play and learning) seems to be in line with the findings of some international and local studies (e.g., Berthelsen et al., 2011; Brownlee et al., 2009). These studies found that teachers with higher professional training in early childhood care and education (ECCE) were able to perceive play and learning occurring simultaneously. Hence, it is possible that parents without professional training in ECCE could lack an understanding or possess a misconception about play and learning in the early years (Howard, 2010; IPA, 2010; Peterson et al., 2017, Pyle et al., 2020). Hence, as mentioned previously, it is vital to organise a variety of appropriate programmes for parents to help them understand the relationship between play and learning in the early years.

It appears that while many parents supported play and understood its importance in the early years, some of them wanted preschools to prepare their children in the academic areas for primary school. As indicated in the local studies, parents in Singapore seemed to be generally concerned and anxious about their children being able to cope with the academic rigours of primary school (Bach & Christensen, 2017; Berthelsen et al., 2015; Ebbeck & Warrior, 2008; Lim-Ratnam, 2013; Yongbeon & Fung, 2021). They did not seem to be aware of the non-academic or soft skills which are also important for school, work and life (Bach & Christensen, 2017; Weisberg et al., 2004; Yongbeon & Fung, 2021). They also did not seem to be aware that children could learn academic skills (e.g., numeracy & language) through play more effectively than drill-and-practice or rote-learning in the early years (Gunnersdottir, 2004; Keung & Cheung, 2019; Weisberg et al., 2013). Hence, it is necessary to engage parents to help them understand the importance of equipping young children with both academic and non-academic skills, and that these skills could be learnt through play and are not only for school but beyond school as well (Clouder, 2004; Weisberg et al., 2013).

There also seems to be a lack of understanding or a misunderstanding that holistic development involved either cognitive or non-cognitive (physical, social & emotional) domains (Bullard, 2017; Clouder, 2004; IPA, 2010). Hence, it would be good to share information with parents to help them understand and appreciate the notion of play, learning and holistic development, and how they are related to each other in the early years. As all the parents were unaware of the NEL Framework, they could not make the links between play, learning and holistic development to the framework. Hence, preschools could consider sharing and disseminating information (through newsletters & circulars) about their preschool programme (such as curriculum, child development & learning) as well as to involve parents in the care and education of their children (Preston et al., 2018).

Parents seem to be divided on the factors which contribute or impede their support for play. For parents who need preschools to assist them in supporting their children's play but have busy work schedules, preschools could consider planning a variety of parent involvement programmes to meet the different needs of parents (Preston et al., 2018). These programmes could include talks on play ideas and transition from preschool to primary school; or workshops on making simple resources for play and how to use puppets and props for story-telling. Additionally, employers could consider providing assistance and support for these parent involvement programmes in the preschools by providing time off for parents to participate in their child's preschool activities, building partnerships/relationships with preschools in the vicinity or setting up workplace preschools (Epstein, 2008).

There seems to be an overlap in the list of goals mentioned by parents for both the preschool education and overall education of their children. Parents seem to see preschool as preparation for formal schooling, and not on its own or beyond schooling. As indicated in the literature, parents in Singapore seem to be generally anxious and concerned about their children being prepared academically for primary school (e.g., Bach & Christensen, 2017; Ebbeck & Warrior, 2008; Lim-Ratnam, 2013). They also did not seem to be aware of the non-academic or soft skills which are important for school and beyond (Clouder, 2004; Weisberg et al., 2013). Research shows that when parents support their children's education, these children perform better in school (Jeynes, 2012; Nunez et al., 2015), and have a positive attitude toward school (McNeal, 2014). Research also shows that parent involvement in preschools can improve parent-teacher relationships, which is important in the education of young children (Winton et al., 2008). Through parent

involvement programmes, parents can also become more aware of the resources and opportunities which are available both in the preschool and community (Coleman, 1988).

Parents seem to look to preschools for advice, support and assistance which could indicate that they value the professionalism of the teachers and leaders. As parents require different types of assistance for supporting their children's play, preschools could consider strengthening their partnership and relationship with parents through better sharing and dissemination of information as well as planning more creative and meaningful programmes for parents (Preston et al., 2018). Employers and policymakers could also consider adopting a more comprehensive, targeted and holistic approach in providing support and assistance to parents with young children (Epstein, 2008). Hence, it would appear that Joyce Epstein's School-Family-Community Partnership Model could be adopted constructively to support and guide the development of effective parent involvement and engagement programmes in the Singapore preschools.

Limitations

The sample size for this study is small which could make generalizations challenging. However, sampling decisions were made within the constraints of ethics and fitness for purpose (Cohen et al., 2011). Information on data collection, analysis, interpretation and reporting of the data were also provided. Hence, the 'burden of transferability' is left to the reader or user of this research to determine the degree of similarity between the setting of this study and the setting of the intended study (Mertens, 1998, p. 183). The other limitation of this study would be researcher-bias in the interpretation, analysis and reporting of the data. However, all efforts were undertaken by the research team to keep researcher-bias to a minimum by being as reflexive and objective as possible and constantly referring to the literature when analysing, interpreting and reporting (Hamersley & Atkinson, 1983). Hence, despite the aforesaid limitations, this study is a good start in capturing and documenting parents' voice in research on preschool education in Singapore as well as recognising parents as an important partner in the education of young children (Epstein, 2008).

Implications and Future Research

Findings from this study could be used to inform preschool education, parent education and teacher education programmes. Findings from this study could also be used to inform future research. For example, follow-up research could be conducted to track children's performance and well-being in the primary years and beyond. The study could also ascertain if parents' views about play and holistic development in the early years as well as their goals of preschool education and overall education change when their preschool children move on to primary school.

Declarations

Authors' Declarations

Publisher's Declarations

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