

Mothers' Perceptions of the Role of Preschool in the Development of Self-Regulation Skills in Children

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Abstract

It is considered agreed upon that self-regulation is an important determinant of academic success. Studies suggest that self-regulation begins to develop early in childhood, that is, the pre-school years. This study attempts to find out if mothers of three-year-old children consider it necessary to send their children to preschool and if they consider preschools to be satisfactorily developing their children's self-regulation skills. Thus, 20 semi-structured qualitative interviews from mothers of preschoolers, belonging to the upper-middle class of Karachi were conducted. Findings indicate that mothers generally deem preschool to be a necessary activity based center for their children, where they could develop trusting relationships with their peers and teachers and learn to regulate their emotions, thereby developing the overall self-regulation skills in them. Interestingly, a major underlying source of this perception is the demographic changes including the prevalence of more nuclear families and the increasing trend of working mothers in Pakistani society.

Keywords: *demographic changes; emotional aspects; perception; preschool; self-regulation; social skills*

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INTRODUCTION

A child's early years are the most significant in the development of their major personality traits. Research suggests that environmental factors influence personality development, especially in early childhood (Bodrova & Leong, 2006). The role of mothers in a child's development has always been considered crucial in Pakistani society such that women have been discouraged from working and encouraged to sacrifice their careers for their family and children. Remarks such as, "It has also been observed that emotional development and attachment of infants suffer badly due to the employment of mothers. They should spend less time with others," (Almani, Abro, & Mugheri, 2012, p. 170) are often a part of the conversation in the Pakistani community. Such factors led Pakistani children to start school up to the age of six or seven. Nevertheless, the trends are now shifting as young mothers are realizing various benefits of pre-schools in the

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personality development of their children (Hussain & Sultan, 2010)

Self-Regulation is one such important personality trait that helps individuals perform tasks and function successfully. Self-regulation can be defined as the ability to manage one's emotions, thoughts, and actions to stay focused on the tasks at hand and accomplish the set goals (Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000). The development of self-regulation is one of the cornerstones of early childhood. Self-regulation helps a child become independent, manage stressful tasks, and adapt to his/her environment. It is only obvious that these attributes are not only important for children but also help individuals function successfully in all stages of life (Gillespie & Siebel, 2006).

For young children, it is extremely crucial to develop self-regulation skills as these have an immense impact on their school performance and peer relationships. Children and teenagers with well-developed self-regulation skills show positive outcomes, including academic achievement, healthy peer relationships, and avoidance of negative behavior as well as healthy eating patterns (Bandy & Moore, 2010). Adolescents with well-developed self-regulation skills are less prone to substance abuse and violence; the more the self-regulation skills are developed, the more competent an individual becomes (Bandy & Moore, 2010). Therefore, it is very important to provide young children with an environment that is conducive to the development of self-regulation skills. This raises the question as to what facilitates the development of self-regulation skills in early childhood.

The first five years of a child with regards to the development of self-regulation skills are crucial (Florez, 2011). These years being ones where children are mostly under the influence of their parents and teachers, make it safe to suggest that the development of self-regulation is greatly affected by the relationships children have with the adults in their lives. It is observed that the more the child is self-regulated, the more he/she is ready for school resulting in the prevalent trend of sending children to formal pre-schools as early as one to three years of age especially in Pakistan (Faraz, 2017; Khan, 2015; Qureshi, 2017). The questions arise, whether or not the children are ready for school at this age (Qureshi, 2017); do these early school starters have sufficient self-regulation skills by the age of one to three or will they develop self-regulation skills once they begin schooling.

Pre-school teachers generally work on developing self-regulatory skills of their students by making them follow classroom routines and instructions; however, the degree to which they work on the development of these skills varies (Cameron, Connor, & Morrison, 2005). Since teaching in pre-schools is based on the development of these skills, therefore, positive results are obtained for children (Bodrova & Leong, 2006). Conversely, according to Gray (2010), early childhood schooling shows adverse effects on the emotional well-being of children where some studies suggest a delay in starting school so that children can spend their early years in a stress-free environment involved in free play. This facilitates the development of cognitive skills such as emotional stability and self-regulation (Lockhart, 2010). Moreover, it is not just the schools and peer influences that affect the development of self-regulation in children but the parents' involvement with their children that influence their motivation and engagement in learning (Katz, Kaplan, & Buzukashvily, 2011). Various researches also indicate contradictory findings (Bodrova & Leong, 2006; Cameron, Connor, & Morrison, 2005; Lockhart, 2010). Further investigation needs to be done to find out whether or not preschools facilitate the development

of self-regulation skills in children. This study was conducted to answer the following research questions;

- What perceptions do mothers hold about the benefits of a pre-school for their children?
- How do mothers perceive pre-schools to be developing their children's self-regulation skills?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theory of psychosocial development

Erikson (1950) contributed to the field of child psychoanalysis through his theory of psychosocial development on how children develop socially and emotionally. He presented eight stages of child development, stressing that adults need to be very careful in providing children with an environment that is conducive to the development of the different personality characteristics in all of these eight stages (Kivnick & Wells, 2014). The first three stages of Erikson's theory are the most relevant to understand for this study, as these stages correspond to the age level being looked at in this study. These three stages ranging from birth to five years of age. The first stage, ranging from birth to one year, is the time when the child develops a sense of trust and if successful in doing so the child develops attachment with the adults around (Kivnick & Wells, 2014; Syed & McLean, 2017). The second stage ranging from two to three years is when the child develops autonomy without shame or doubt (Kivnick & Wells, 2014; Syed & McLean, 2017). At this stage, adults should give clear choices and limits to the children. Finally, in the third stage ranging from four to five years, a child develops a sense of purpose thus becoming confident and competent (Kivnick & Wells, 2014; Syed & McLean, 2017).

Moreover, abundant evidence suggests that transitions between developmental stages are phases of psychological disequilibrium and may cause anxiety, frustration, etc. (Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000), children in the developmental years must be provided with an environment equipped with the necessary facilitation for healthy development in these stages.

In Erikson's view, if children are not given enough opportunities to play in early years or are prematurely taken out of this stage and placed under stress and external demand they may not become as self-regulated as other children who are given ample of time and opportunities to play in a stress-free environment (Damon, 1998; Syed & McLean, 2017). Independent play helps children become more autonomous by taking the risk of getting separated from their caregivers and develop self-efficacy skills by taking initiatives and decisions (Syed & McLean, 2017). Dramatic play, which by definition, plays which occur when children adopt make-believe roles and act them out (Christie, 1990), is strongly recommended by Elias and Berk (2002), as well, who concluded that the more the children engaged in dramatic play, the more self-regulation they exhibited at clean-up time. This suggests that pre-schools provide such an atmosphere that gives opportunities to children to involve themselves in play and hone their self-efficacy skills.

Pre-schools and self-efficacy skills

The Montessori Method by Montessori (1949) shows concern for the development of

self-regulation skills in children. It sees the important milestones in the development of a child such as walking, weaning, and talking as opportunities to increase self-regulation. Thus, this model provides a wide range of activities for various developmental stages to enhance the development of self-regulation skills in children (Damon, 1998).

However, research data has mixed findings in this regard, both supporting and opposing sending children to pre-school. A study conducted by Taylor, Gibbs, and Slate (2000), explored the relationship between preschool and performance in the elementary grades involving the development of self-regulation skills. This study was conducted with 171 kindergarten students. At the end of the year, students were divided into two groups, those that had attended preschool and those that had not. All the students were given an assessment developed by the education department to assess the readiness for grade one. This assessment looked at the communication, logical, physical, social, and personal development of students. It was observed that students who had attended preschool were able to score higher on the physical and personal sections of the assessments. It was concluded that attending preschool facilitates the personal development and regulation in children (Kivnick & Wells, 2014; Taylor, Gibbs & Slate, 2000). In another study, Bulotsky, Fantuzzo, and McDermott (2008) set out to investigate the relationship between classroom interactions and the development of self-regulation and social skills in pre-school children. This study focused on three main classroom situations which included the structured form of learning, peer relationships, and teacher instructions, and interactions. It was observed that children, particularly boys and younger children, showed problematic behavior in all three classroom situations which affected their social and learning outcomes. It was also noted that children with less developed self-regulation skills showed problems across all three domains of classroom situations and this further hindered the development of their relationships with their peers (Alexander & Entwisle, 1993; Bulotsky-Shearer, Fantuzzo, & McDermott, 2008). Thus, for such children, the preschool experience hinders the development of self-regulation skills.

Furthermore, according to a developmental-ecological perspective, the self-regulation and behavior problems in children can be seen as a result of the learning demands within the pre-school classrooms. This is a theoretical perspective that gives a model to examine both the child level and the influence of the close environment on the development of self-regulation and adaptive behavior as well as it recognizes the emotional problems in children, hindering the development of self-regulation in them, as a direct function of the pre-school classrooms interactions (Sameroff, 1975). Exposure to risk and stress factors at the critical time of development in early childhood increases the possibility of such children having difficulty in adjusting to their environment and facing emotional and behavioral challenges at school (Duncan & Brooks-Gunn, 1999; Tranter & Kerr, 2016).

Conversely, it is also observed that the pre-school classroom is a very important proximal environment that affects the development of skills and personality in children (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998), as different situations within the classroom and school demand that the children have different skills to deal with them. These may include following classroom rules, living up to teacher expectations, focusing on the tasks at hand, making friends, and playing appropriately (Feil & Severson, 1995). It has been observed that good quality early childhood education programs facilitate in catering to the development of self-regulation skills especially in children coming from low-income urban area families (Barnett & Boocock, 1998). Sanders (2014) is of the view that when parents are self-regulated themselves, it results in positive

nurturing and healthy development in their children. It may be that self-regulation skills of parents of children in poverty are lacking as compared to those that come from affluent backgrounds and the school provides such children with the opportunity to build their self-efficacy skills hence preschool education is conducive to the development of their self-regulation skills (Barnett & Boocock, 1998). The lack of the development of these skills starts appearing in early childhood and may lead to psychological disorders (Sanders, 2014).

Moreover, Recchia and Bentley (2013), carried out a study, using case study methodology to explore the perceptions of parents of six children in which parents reported that the preschool experience had prepared their children to manage academic as well as social aspects of kindergarten positively. They believed that the child-centered approach of the preschool had fostered habits of the mind in their children to competently complete tasks, process knowledge, and develop social bonds. Thus, the preschool experience prepared them to deal with the wide range of challenges and possibilities they were to face in kindergarten.

Perceptions of parents, such as mentioned above have led Pakistani parents to take such decisions as putting their children in school even before they are two years of age (Baber, 2016), especially with the increasing awareness of young mothers in this regard (Hussain & Sultan, 2010). This study was carried out to explore Pakistani mothers' perceptions regarding the role of preschools in the development of self-regulation skills in their children. It provides snapshots of how they view preschools to be facilitating the social and emotional development of their children.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The qualitative cross-sectional design of short interviews used as interviews provides researchers with data to understand the perceptions and experiences of participants and how they interpret those experiences (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). In addition, as Patton (2015) mentioned, "a researcher hopes to bring out answers that are meaningful and relevant to the understanding of the perspectives of the participants" (p. 471). Through this methodology, the researcher was able to understand how mothers of preschool children perceive preschools, the importance of sending children to preschools, and how they think preschools contribute to the development of self-regulation skills in children. To answer the research questions, short qualitative interviews (Appendix A), were conducted, as it was initial exploratory research, although the interviewer probed further, wherever needed, to get more detailed accounts. Mothers were asked to express their opinion on both positive and negative effects preschool had on their children. The data retrieved enabled the researcher to understand mothers' perspectives on the role of preschools in the development of self-regulation skills in their children.

According to Merriam (2009), for a qualitative study, the interviewer himself/herself is the data collection tool. Therefore, in this research also, the interviewer was the data collection tool, interviewing the participants. The interviewer made use of bracketing to mitigate any pre-conceived viewpoints that could affect the research data analysis. The interview questions were open-ended, as according to Merriam (2009), the interviewer is interested in collecting data that gives an insight into the interviewee's world. Once these interviews were transcribed, they were shared with the interviewees to validate the transcriptions. Thus, these interviews helped the researcher understand the different perspectives mothers of preschoolers have regarding the

role of preschools in the development of self-regulation skills in children.

The research participants were twenty young mothers between the ages of 24-29 with 2-3-year-old children who have been going to preschool for less than a year. All mothers were graduates while seven had a Masters degree and belonged to the upper-middle socio-economic class of Karachi. Five mothers were working full time but had the support of their husband's parents at home whereas fifteen were house wives. Out of these fifteen mothers, seven were living with their husband's parents; four were a part of a nuclear family structure whereas four were living in extended families.

Manual thematic analysis, an approach enabling the researchers to explore the participants' perceptions and draw similarities and differences (Braun & Clarke, 2006), was conducted to draw out themes from the collected data. To ensure a systematic and thorough analysis of qualitative data, the analysis is done in five basic steps; compiling, disassembling, reassembling, interpreting, and concluding (Castleberry & Nolen, 2018). Hence, following these five steps, the interviews were transcribed and coded to achieve the various themes. This led to the generation of three main themes; the need for pre-schools, change in children's social behavior, and the observed psychological effects of pre-school attendance on the children. The next section discusses these themes in detail.

Limitations: the sample comprised of mothers of children belonging to a certain financial and social class and attending pre-schools following modern pedagogical practices. This was due to the limited time in which the study was carried out, therefore, a small sample with common features was interviewed

FINDINGS

All mothers believed that admission to a good preschool will lead to admission to a good school and that preschools were necessary to prepare children to enter formal schooling. Three major themes were generated from the collected data: Need for preschools, change in social behavior, and psychological effects. These findings address the research questions of this study as follows

Research Question 1:

What perceptions do mothers hold about the benefits of a pre-school for their children?

Mothers interviewed, generally considered pre-school to be beneficial for children. The data analyzed, generated the following theme and its sub-themes in this regard;

Need for preschools

Preparation for primary school: All the interviewed mothers believed that admission to a good preschool would lead their children to get admission into a good primary school. They believed that attending preschool is necessary to prepare children for primary school grades. As one of the interviewed mothers stated,

“..... cognitive and literacy skills are developed.....it is important as it helps them take their initial steps and develop a habit of going to school”

and another one expressed,

"It is important as it prepares the child for the coming years.."

A creative outlet for children's energy: One opinion that was generally seen across almost all the interviews was that mothers believed preschools to be an environment where children got an opportunity to be independent. They thought that even if children did not go to preschool regularly, it would be nice if they went at least twice a week, as it would be a creative outlet for them to release their energies. As one mother suggested,

"Children need a place where they can release the high amounts of energy they have and be able to direct their creativity in a beneficial direction."

Another one exclaimed,

"What will she do alone all day?"

Yet another one stated,

"They need to interact with people other than their parents."

Mothers realized that their children needed to mingle with other children and dispense off their energies in a more congenial environment.

"He wants the maid to play with him."

Moreover, according to a mother,

"Preschools help children overcome their shyness and they can interact with other children of their age group."

It was felt that a nuclear family setup and a smaller number of kids added to the need for a preschool where children could safely play with other children of their age. As according to a mother,

"Preschool provides an opportunity for children to engage outside of their families, most of us have nuclear families these days so children don't have that exposure to meeting with or interacting with different people."

Interestingly, mothers also mentioned how adults benefit from sending children to preschool
Adults' needs: Moreover, where there were joint family set-ups, the need for a break for the grandparents, caring for the children, (as well as the parents) was also mentioned. Therefore, phrases and sentences such as these were heard:

"Aunt and uncle (husband's parents) also get a bit of peace when he goes to school, even though the pick and drop becomes a big responsibility for them."

"It's either the TV or my shirt that he's pulling on to."

Nonetheless, all the statements above reveal that mothers consider preschool an important environment for their children other than their homes where they can interact with people

independently. Mothers stressed on the importance of an interactive and safe environment for the outlet of their children's energies in a creative manner, where they could learn adaptation skills early on in and be prepared for primary school. They believed children needed a safe place for developing these skills and preschools fulfilled this requirement.

Research Question 2

How do mothers perceive pre-schools to be developing their children's self-regulation skills?

As discussed earlier, self-regulation skills include being able to manage one's emotions and develop trusting bonds, focus on tasks (Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000), to be able to follow instructions and remember things (Boekaerts, Pintrich, & Zeidner, 2005). Thus the research data generated the following findings in this regard.

Change in social behavior

The data collected revealed that mothers believed preschools to be facilitating the social development of their children. They believed that preschools not only made their children more social and confident in meeting with new people that is, they were able to manage their emotions better, and also made them more responsible; all aspects of self-regulation.

Social Development: *the social development of children was reported by all the mothers unanimously in their interviews, as they reflected on the changes appearing in their child's behavior after joining pre-school. For instance, one mother reported about her son,*

"There was a lot of improvement in his social interaction."

One mother stated about her daughter,

"She became a bit more social and extremely talkative."

"Since she was the only child, sharing was a new concept for her, she is learning to share."

Another mother revealed,

"I saw a change in the way my son behaved with people...uh... I mean he became more confident in doing things in front of people...uh...he was more confident in greeting people.....yes I saw confidence developing in him and...aaa... he became more social."

This mother gave credit to her child's preschool in developing him socially.

Another mother reported,

"She continuously talks about how she played with her friends at school and tells me all sorts of stories."

A mother who was a part of the extended family revealed,

"All the children at my in-laws are older than her and used to give her what she wanted, now she is learning to play and share with children her age.

The mothers saw a positive change in the social behavior of their children. It was noted that sharing and caring were developed in children through their interaction with other children of their age.

Sense of responsibility: mothers reported that they saw their children displaying a sense of responsibility after joining pre-school. For instance, a mother talking about her daughter stated,

"I noticed that she started taking care of her things, especially her lunch bag, box, water bottle..... She had become very responsible with these little things of hers."

According to another, her son had remembered things responsibly, she stated,

"he wants to set his bag himself and always remembers what his teacher has asked him to think on or draw."

Yet another mother reported about her son, in terms of his sense of responsibility, "I think he became more responsible... he would be worried about completing his homework, not forgetting worksheets.... yeah, I guess he did show more responsibility."

Psychological effects

Another prominent theme that emerged from the data was the psychological effects mothers believed preschools had on their children. As developmental transitions are phases of psychological disequilibrium and may give rise to the development of anxiety and frustration, (Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000), it was interesting to see that mothers had mixed responses about the psychological effect going to preschool had on their children. On the one hand, the children were better able to control their temper and became more tolerant; on the other hand, they started to show signs of anxiety and frustration. The positive insights shared by the mothers were:

"He became more tolerant after spending time with children of his age. Before going to preschool he wouldn't share his snacks or toys with other children. He used to get into fights while playing with other kids; which is not the case anymore.

Another mother showed contentment with her child's preschool experience in terms of the psychological aspect. She stated, *"The preschool taught him a sense of patience and waiting for his turn; so I feel that going to school further embedded a sense of patience and calm in him."*

Yet another mother stated that she believed going to preschool had taught her child to control her temper, *"One big change in her is that she has more control over her temper."*

However, some mothers did seem concerned and not very pleased with the psychological effect preschool had on their children.

"He started being anxious about really tiny day to day matters related to his friends or teacher and this has resulted in frustration developing in my child."

“I guess she became a little anxious or frustrated after joining preschool; she complains and cries a lot.”

“I have sensed stress and anxiousness over the school. Burnout as well.”

“After joining preschool there has been a greater display of anxiety and frustration.”

Thus, there were mixed reactions from mothers of preschoolers about the psychological effects preschools had on their children. Where children were able to manage their emotions, on the other hand, it could be that the fear of parent separation was causing stress and anxiety in them.

DISCUSSION

Research Question 1:

What perceptions do mothers hold about the benefits of a pre-school for their children?

According to the results obtained, most mothers were supportive of the concept of preschools. They considered preschools very important in terms of providing opportunities for their children to spend time away from their homes and step out of their comfort zones. This change in perception of young Pakistani mothers from the earlier generation of mothers, who preferred a delay in starting children's school till the age of five, maybe due to many factors, such as the existence of more nuclear families (Khan, 2015), more working mothers (Almani, Abro, & Mugheri, 2012; Khan, 2015) and the mindset that a good preschool is a gateway to a good school (Faraz, 2017; Khan, 2015). In this study also, one of the major factors that contributed to mothers' decision to put their children in a preschool was their belief in later acquiring admissions in well-known schools for their children. This study showed that the young mothers approved of the presence of preschools and were mostly satisfied by their decision of putting their children there. As stated by most mothers, preschools enable children to develop trusting relationships outside the family. As a good quality, preschools are beneficial for the personality development in children (Barnett & Boocock, 1998) as each situation in a pre-school setting demands a particular set of cognitive and social skills (Bulotsky-Shearer, Fantuzzo, & McDermott, 2008). The pre-schools help children acquire these skills so that they are prepared to move on in a more formal school setting. These programs “are supposed to bridge gaps between home and school, leading to better adjustment to and performance in primary school (Woodhead & Moss, 2007 p. 25).”

Even though there are many researches (Collings et al., 2013; Howie, Brown, Dowda, McIver, & Pate, 2013; Tandon, Saelens, & Christakis, 2015) that point towards the lack of physical activity offered by preschools, yet mothers in this study considered preschools important for children as they provided an outlet for their children's energies. Children especially boys need outlets that are healthy and guided for the release of their natural energies (Charren, 2000; Lahey, 2013) and this is beneficial for their competitiveness

Mothers also stressed the preschool environments to be important for their children as they shared the fact that more and more families are becoming nuclear and in a number of households, both parents are working, (Georgas, 2003; Khan, 2015) therefore this makes it

even more important for children to have more adults in the form of teachers at preschool to develop trusting bonds with. Some mothers shared that their children had become extremely attached to them, so much so that they would not go to or speak to anyone else. However, it was interesting to note that these were mothers of children belonging to both joint and nuclear family systems.

Research Question 2

How do mothers perceive pre-schools to be developing their children's self-regulation skills?

As discussed earlier, self-regulation skills incorporate the ability to manage emotions which enables developing trusting bonds, focusing attention (Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000), and remembering and following instructions (Boekaerts, Pintrich, & Zeidner, 2005), the findings of this study point out to these very skills developing in children after joining pre-school, according to their mothers. As discussed in the literature review, being able to manage emotions and develop trusting bonds, focusing attention and becoming responsible and the development of self-confidence are all aspects of self-regulation, the interview data generated the following aspects of self-regulation in children according to their mothers, thus answering the above research question.

Social Development

Confidence & interactive skills: An important theme generated from the results was the positive change in the children's social behavior. According to Arslan, Lu-saltali, and Yilmaz, (2011) the preschool period is the most appropriate and important time for learning social skills because this is the time when the child is developing most rapidly and is most affected by his/ her environment. It is evident from the findings that preschools are viewed as positively influencing children's social skills. Mothers stated that their children's preschools were developing their social skills positively. They reported their children to have become much more talkative and confident after having joined preschool. They gave credit to the preschools for this positive change in the social behavior of their children. This corresponds with the findings from a previous study that teachers develop pro-social behaviors in children, understanding the importance of positive interactions and supportive relationships at the core of working with children (Kostelnik, Whiren, Soderman, Rupiper, & Gregory, 2014).

Another important aspect of social development as evident from the results is the development of a sense of responsibility in children because of going to preschools. Mothers stated that preschools had inculcated a sense of responsibility in their children such that they were always conscious of completing their homework in time and would be worried about not forgetting worksheets at home. Children would also show concern about reaching school in time, setting their bags themselves, and keeping their pencils sharpened. Interestingly, one mother insisted that this sense of responsibility was only when it came to matters pertaining to school. At home, her daughter would always leave everything to be done by her mother. However, this may have been because this was an only child who had always been pampered and over-protected by both her parents. Thus, family dynamics also play a role in this regard.

Empathy: Children's learning to share was one major aspect of social development that

all mothers happily reported as a contribution of preschools. Most mothers confessed that teaching children to share was not an easy task for them. It was only after they started going to preschool that these children learned to share their belongings. Preschools instill empathy in children and encourage sharing behavior with rewards. For instance, when a child shares his pencils or some toy, teachers reward him with praise or a smiley sticker, etc. Again, as according to Thompson (2007), children generally do not understand the concept of sharing but as they grow, they do take it from their environment, parents, etc. as social development occurs because of both the environmental influences as well as biological maturation. Preschools may not necessarily be the best source of instilling the concept of sharing in children though mothers generally gave credit for this to their children's preschools.

Psychological effects: It was also evident from the results that the mothers noted a variety of psychological effects like anxiety, frustration or increasing self-esteem, etc, their children displayed after joining preschool

All the mothers involved in this research had different responses about the psychological effects on their children after attending preschool. Around half of them were of the viewpoint that these preschools had a very positive psychological effect on their children. They believed that these preschools had drastically improved their children's level of confidence and boosted their self-esteem. According to Edwards (2009), children already have developed the foundation of their self-esteem by the time their preschool years begin as self-esteem starts developing in infancy. However, it is very important that the adults i.e. parents, teachers, etc. carefully work on building on this foundation so that children retain and develop this sense of self-esteem (Edwards, 2009). Thus, most mothers believed that their children's preschool teachers were doing a sincere job in building their children's self-esteem.

Another positive psychological effect reported by mothers was the development of patience in children. Mothers reported that after joining preschool, their children had learned to wait patiently. In preschools, children learn to wait for their turn for everything they do. Moreover, when they learn to be patient, it gives them a sense of accomplishment, which in turn again enhances their self-esteem (Stewart, 2013). It was a common belief in mothers that these positive developments in their children will help them secure a position in one of the best schools of the city and that these attributes were not possible to be instilled if the children stayed at home till their formal education.

Conversely, some mothers also reported negative psychological effects of sending their children to preschools. The most common negative effects reported were anxiety and frustration in children. Mothers reported that children displayed anxiety over little things and would start crying. They believed that sending them off to school at such a tender age and exposing them to separation anxiety was overwhelming for the children. Qureshi (2017) quotes a study conducted by the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, which advised the children to be at least 4 years old before being enrolled in a school and that children develop best when they are cared for by someone who genuinely loves them. Likewise, mothers reported frustration in their children after joining preschool. Frustration tolerance is something young children struggle with (Hurley, 2016). Since this is a powerful emotion, children, as a result, react in intense ways. There is screaming, shouting, unwelcome disruptions, and meltdown. As one mother reported that after joining preschool her child had become very easily irritable and

would get frustrated over small day-to-day things. However, in this case, this child was an only child, therefore, the reason for this behavior could be a sudden exposure to other children his age and this is something that he may overcome with time.

Even with a few negative aspects mentioned by the mothers about preschool, mothers generally believed that this was something that their children would get over given some time. It seemed that the young mothers were trying to point out only the positive aspects of preschools as their lifestyle that is both parents working and being a nuclear family, depends upon it and it is always better to leave their children in a proper institution which provides a safe, secure and educational environment where a child can grow and also play with other children (Khan, 2015). As the traditional role of women as a homemaker is changing where more and more mothers are opting to work and the joint families are converting into nuclear families (Georgas, 2003) the schools have replaced the range of experiences at home that supported children's learning (Newman, Arthur, Staples, & Woodrow, 2016). More than ever, it seems that the mothers interviewed are keen to get their children enrolled in good preschools for them to get admission in the city's well-known schools; this has led mothers to opt for a preschool for their children at an age as young as 1.5 years (Faraz, 2017; Khan, 2015; Qureshi, 2017). The findings of this study open up new dimensions to study in this domain where further research needs to be carried out comparing the self-regulation skills of children having attended preschools for over a year to children the same age not having attended preschools at all, where data is collected by observations as well as reports from careers.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study thus concludes that mothers, as far as the sample population is concerned, generally have a positive opinion regarding the role of preschools in the development of self-regulation skills in children. Preschools in Pakistani society are welcomed by young mothers due to a demographic shift in the society where mothers are now either working or live in a nuclear family system or want their children to secure a seat in a well-known school. The findings highlight traits like social development, self-esteem, and sense of responsibility in children as well as the development of anxiety and frustration developing associated with going to preschool.

To reduce the negative impact of and to enhance the positive effects of preschools on children, parents, teachers and school administrators should work collaboratively. It is recommended that preschools incorporate dramatic play in the classrooms as it provides opportunities for children to learn how to deal with real-life situations. This then is hoped to enhance the development of self-regulation in them (Christie, 1990). Moreover, teaching pedagogies for preschool teachers should focus more on strategies of modeling, scaffolding, and then gradually withdrawing help, as this is conducive to the development of self-regulation skills in children (Florez, 2011)

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APPENDIX A

Interview questions

- 1 To what extent do you think sending children to pre-school is important?
- 2 What (if any) change did you notice in your child's behavior when he/she first started going to school?
- 3 How has your child's sense of responsibility been affected after joining pre-school?
- 4 How has your child's display of anxiety and frustration (if any) changed after joining pre-school?
- 5 How has your child's focus and attention span changed after joining pre-school?
- 6 What do you think is the role of pre-school in motivating your child to not give up on tasks? How has pre-school benefitted your child in this regard?
- 7 What is your opinion on the role of pre-school in the development of self-regulation skills in children?