

Factors Influencing the Knowledge Parents/Caregivers have about School- readiness for Grade One Scholars

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requirements for the degree of Master of Science in Occupational therapy*

DECLARATION

I, Kirsten Jodi Du Toit, declare that this short report is my own work. It is being submitted for the degree of Master of Science in Occupational Therapy in the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any other degree or examination at this or any other university.

Signed.....

.....day of.....2017

DEDICATION

This research is dedicated to my family, in particular my parents Diane and Rian Du Toit who encouraged me and supported me throughout all my schooling, undergraduate and post graduate studies and Masters. They have always pushed me to be the best that I could be and nothing was ever too big or too extreme to be achieved.

A special dedication is given to my gran Joyce Joseph and aunt Wendy Fernandez who were always willing to assist and encouraged me to continue and persist through my Masters degree.

ABSTRACT

This cross sectional quantitative study aimed to examine the understanding parents/caregivers have of school readiness requirements for Grade 1 children in comparison to expected scholastic criteria in the Gauteng province and the demographic factors which may affect this. A questionnaire was specifically designed for this study based on CAPS (Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement) and IEB (Independent Education Board) and included looking at various area of development. Questionnaire content was validated by experts in a pilot study. Five hundred and ten questionnaires were circulated to parents/caregivers of Grade R and Grade 1 scholars in 2 urban and 1 private school. Two hundred and ten questionnaires were returned of which 180 were included in the data analysis. Overall results revealed that parents/caregivers had a better understanding of school readiness with respect to thinking and reasoning; motor ability; numerical skills and speaking abilities. They had moderate understanding of writing abilities; life skills and listening skills with the least knowledge about activities of daily living, reading and viewing skills and language structure and use. The only significant demographic factor that was identified was the level of education of the mother. This suggested that a higher level of education enabled the prediction of school readiness.

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NOMENCLATURE AND ABBREVIATIONS

The following is a list of terms and abbreviations that have been used throughout the short report.

NOMENCLATURE

'care-giver' means any person other than a parent or guardian, who factually cares for a child and includes-

- (a) a foster parent;
- (b) a person who cares for a child with the implied or express consent of a
- (c) parent or guardian of the child;
- (d) a person who cares for a child whilst the child is in temporary safe care;
- (e) the person at the head of a child and youth care centre where a child has been placed;
- (f) the person at the head of a shelter;
- (g) a child and youth care worker who cares for a child who is without appropriate family care in the community; and
- (h) the child at the head of a child-headed household;

(Department of Justice, 2005)

'parent' , in relation to a child, includes the adoptive parent of a child, but excludes-

- (a) the biological father of a child conceived through the rape of or incest with the child's mother;
- (b) any person who is biologically related to a child by reason only of being a gamete donor for purposes of artificial fertilisation; and
- (c) a parent whose parental responsibilities and rights in respect of a child have been terminated;

(Department of Justice, 2005)

School-readiness: Skills and abilities that renders a child able to successfully perform and participate in a regular formalised school curriculum (Carlton Latorre & Winsler, 1999).

Formal schooling: schooling from Grade 1 entry into a formal curriculum structure set out by a board and/or department, taught by a qualified teacher trained as a professional.

Developmental Criteria: Universal criteria in keeping with literature expressed in accordance with chronological age which children are expected to meet in accordance with development.

Therapeutic intervention: “A therapeutic intervention is an intentional interaction(s) or event(s) which is expected to contribute to a positive outcome for a child or young person, which is selected on the basis of his/her identified needs, and which is underpinned by an informed understanding of the potential impact and value of the interaction/event involved” (Children Acts Advisory Board, 2009) (page 10)

Expert: An expert is regarded as a proficient performer in a specific field and is recognized by their peers as such. (Dreyfus, 2004)

ABBREVIATIONS

RNCS: Revised National Curriculum Statement

NCS: National Curriculum Statement

CAPS: Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement

ECD: Early Childhood Development

IEB: Independent Education Board

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

American research states that children between the age of 0 and 5 years fall within a critical period of development (Baldwin, 2011). Thus, skill development and learning in this time period leading up to formal schooling is reported to support and/or hamper a child's preparedness for formal schooling, as it lays the foundation for success in later scholastic years (Walker & MacPhee, 2011). The transition from pre-school to the formal primary schooling level requires the attainment of a variety of complex skills. These skills include the ability to adapt to increased academic, physical and motor ability demands; demonstrate socio-emotional development; adapt to differing approaches of learning, language and cognitive ability, which include general knowledge as well as independence in the fundamental activities of daily living (ADL). The child is also required to take increased responsibilities within their own lives (Baldwin, 2011) (Welsh, Nix, Blair, Bierman, & Nelson, 2010) (McBryde, Ziviani, & Cuskelly, 2004) (Patrianakos-Hoobler, et al., 2010).

The South African Government criteria states that it is compulsory for all children aged 5 and who are turning 6 before June to enter into formal schooling. Government states that adults are responsible for ensuring that every child for whom they are responsible must attend school from the first day of Grade 1 through to the last day of Grade 12 and/or up until the age of 15 years, whichever may come first (South African Schools Act, 2011). Despite these aged-based entry criteria into formal schooling, there are no stipulated developmental requirements that are considered for school entry for children.

Occupational therapists regularly conduct assessments on pre-school children in order to determine if their occupational performance and development is in keeping with typical age band requirements. These assessments usually aim to determine if the child is 'school-ready' for formal education from an occupational performance perspective.

In order for an occupational therapist to undertake such an assessment or be called in to work with a child, an adult responsible for a child would need to be able to identify that an assessment is needed as a result of identifying some concern about

the child's development. This presumption assumes that the adult who refers the child to the occupational therapist has sufficient knowledge to be able to make an informed decision as to whether their child is functioning adequately relative to their chronological age. The adults most likely to be involved in these decisions would be the teacher and/or parent/caregiver of a child. Of these two key adult role players, most research to date has focused on a teacher's knowledge and view of childhood development. However, very limited research has focused on a parent/caregiver knowledge of a child.

Parents/caregivers are assumed to be the primary adults involved with the child on a daily basis. Therefore, parents/caregivers are assumed to be the best source of information with regards to a child's physical skills, social skills, emotionality, and engagement in tasks, all critical criteria in determining occupational performance. In addition parents/caregivers are expected to be knowledgeable about their child's general cognitive, sensory and physical interactions. In order for this knowledge to be in keeping with what is expected of a child, parents/caregivers knowledge and abilities needs to be compared to typical developmental age related criteria.

Parents/caregivers are assumed to understand the concept of school-readiness. Thus, it is generally believed that parents/caregivers have sufficient understanding of what is expected of their child in order for them to make a considered decision that their child is ready to enter into a Grade 1 level of education by objectively determining whether their child's abilities are meeting the requirements set out for adequate and scalable entry into the world of formal schooling.

Research by DeRousie and Durham (2008) suggest that the family is extremely important in the development of a child's school-readiness but found that differences exist in parents'/caregivers' knowledge and abilities to determine their children's' development and thus school-readiness. Additionally, external factors including demographic factors have been reported to affect parents'/caregivers' ability to determine adequate school-readiness (DeRousie & Durham, 2008). Frolek Clark & Schlabach (2013) reported that educated parents are more sensitive and aware of a child's needs and thus place increased emphasis on activities which stimulate their child's development and social interactions which in turn enhances a child's cognition.

1.2 Statement of the problem

It is compulsory for all children to attend formal schooling (South African Schools Act, 2011). Furthermore, the government states that school entry into Grade 1 is advised to be when a South African child is 5 years turning 6 years old before June of the admission year. However, these compulsory requirements and advised age-entries neglect to include typical developmental criteria and expectations of a child entering into formal schooling.

The South African Government has over the years set curriculum standards for each grade in order to make formal assessment and quantitative pass results easier to follow and to grade pupils. School-readiness requirements for entry into formal schooling are continuously changing, as a result of alterations to the curriculum set out by the South African National Department of Education. Despite having these standards no formal developmental requirements other than age are essential for school entry. Initially school-readiness was defined as a child's readiness to learn (Lewit & Baker, 1995). Over time however, this has not been found to be a successful definition as it does not guarantee success in schooling. The concept of school-readiness was then altered and moulded into a more academic/standardized definition which looks at readiness expected for learning standards of physical, intellectual and social development that would aid a child to be successful within formal schooling curriculum requirements (Lewit & Baker, 1995). Wesley & Buysse (2003) stated that concerns about the school-readiness definition still exists in that parents still perceive school-readiness to be consistent with the original definition in which parents/caregivers believe good physical and mental health, effective communication skills and a positive approach to learning is sufficient to enable adequate school entry, with less emphasis being placed on the qualities relating to academic readiness.

In saying this, parents/caregivers are not required to undergo any education on childhood development or child rearing practices before having a child of their own. Thus parents'/caregivers' knowledge with regards to bringing up a child is based on pre-existing individual knowledge, experience of other children in their social context, their willingness to learn and their interpretation of what is required in order to adequately raise a child. To date minimal research has focused on parents/caregivers acquiring knowledge of childhood development. Thus

parents/caregivers knowledge with regards to developmental milestones and the expected developmental criteria required for a child's smooth transition into formal schooling on an academic level is therefore not formally known.

Research by Pitt, Luger et. al. (2013) stated that teachers reported that parents are unaware and are ill-equipped to deal with challenges that may arise regarding their children's education. If this is true, the concern is then put forward, if parents are ill-equipped to deal with their children, who becomes the responsible adult left to make an informed decision on a child's entry into formal schooling.

Not all children are born healthy, free of disability and free of biological vulnerabilities, are nutritionally well fed within a good socio-economic environment with loving, caring parents (Meisels & Shonkoff, 2000). It is thus, a key focus of individuals working within the early childhood development field to intervene and assist families to thrive (Meisels & Shonkoff, 2000). Further, it is, an expert's role to step in and intervene for those at-risk of being vulnerable within our economy with respect to school-readiness (Meisels & Shonkoff, 2000).

From the researcher's private practice, clinical experience and engagement with various other experts working with children it has become evident that a considerable number of children are entering formal schooling without the necessary foundational knowledge, skills and educational prerequisites in place. This often results in children experiencing difficulty within the formal schooling environment resulting in them not meeting educational expectations and falling behind their peers in scholastic development (Patrianakos-Hoobler, et al., 2010). In turn, these educational developmental delays may result in failure in achieving of scholastic grades, emotional disturbance in the form of decreased self-esteem and motivation, as well as behavioural disruptions.

Meisels & Shonkoff (2000) stated that the "School of the Mother" is the most appropriate drive for development in the first six years of a child's life. This requires that the parent is the main advocate for the child and encourages the child to learn and grow (Meisels & Shonkoff, 2000). In addition parents/caregivers have the responsibility for making the critical decision as to whether a child is school-ready or not. An important concern is whether parents'/caregivers' perception of school-readiness is in keeping with the formalized standard expected of a child entering into

Grade1 level and subsequently whether parents'/caregivers' are able to adequately identify if their child is school-ready or not.

A growing number of parent/caregivers are unsure of their child's development and whether their child is school-ready or not. To find assistance and guidance they usually contact an expert in the field. The experts most frequently contacted are those within the therapeutic educational team which include the teachers (pre-school and/or formal schooling), and professionals who work with children, such as the occupational therapist.

In such instances an expert, be it teacher and/or an occupational therapist, is thus required to advise parents/caregivers on the child's development by comparing the child's abilities to the typical age related and formal school-readiness expectations. Thereafter, it is the expert's role to ensure that the parents/caregivers fully understand whether their child meets the specified criteria of school-readiness or not. If the child does not meet these standards, then the expert should provide the parents/caregivers with the steps or interventions that need to be taken to ensure school-readiness is attained.

Conversely, in instances where parents/caregivers do not seek advice, decisions regarding progression into formal schooling are made by accepting that the age of the child is adequate enough criteria for entry into formal schooling and that by this stipulated age, their child has reached all expected criteria.

Early intervention with regards to children's school-readiness challenges is therefore critical to future scholastic abilities (Walker & MacPhee, 2011). This intervention however, requires early identification of presenting difficulties in children and therefore once again assumes adequate parent/caregiver knowledge and critical judgement to recognise these difficulties and seek help if needed.

Experts, such as the occupational therapist, therefore require insight into a parents'/caregivers' knowledge with regards to the developmental criteria expected of a child for school-readiness. Furthermore, it would be useful to establish whether the parents'/caregivers' knowledge of school-readiness is affected by any specific external and/or demographic factors, thus allowing occupational therapists to target

education-based programs for parents/caregivers within specific demographic settings/contexts.

1.3 Research Question

To address this problem, this study attempted to answer two research questions:

- a. Do parents/caregivers living within Gauteng, have knowledge of the complex skills required of a child entering into Grade 1, in order to make an informed decision on whether their child is school-ready and will cope with formal schooling?
- b. Are there any specific demographic factors that may influence parent/caregivers knowledge regarding school-readiness that may influence this decision in the Gauteng Province?

1.4 Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study was to investigate the knowledge parents/caregivers have of school-readiness with regards to their children and, examine whether any demographic factors may be influencing parents/caregivers knowledge in this regard. The outcome of the study was to provide school-based occupational therapists with evidence of parents/caregivers knowledge with regards to school-readiness and to enable occupational therapists to:

- a. Provide parents/caregivers with targeted knowledge appropriate for parents'/caregivers' specific needs and understanding so that they can make a considered decision about their child's school-readiness as a preventative measure to allow smooth entry into formal schooling for all children (Wesley & Buysse, 2003).
- b. Promote actions that will encourage school-readiness of children (Wesley & Buysse, 2003) by the occupational therapist within early childhood development programs/intervention (Wesley & Buysse, 2003).

1.5 Aim of the study

This study aims to investigate whether parents'/caregivers' perceived knowledge of school-readiness is in keeping with formalized school-readiness criteria. Additionally, to explore if any demographic factors may affect parents/caregivers knowledge of school-readiness.

The ultimate goal of establishing this information is to assist school-based occupational therapists in understanding the need for school-readiness promotion and education programs and to assist in early identification of children with difficulties.

1.6 Objectives

Two objectives have been formulated to guide the study and answer the research questions:

- a. To determine the knowledge parents/caregivers have with regards to school-readiness of children.
- b. To determine if any demographic factors may influence parent/caregiver knowledge of school-readiness.

1.7 Assumption

A single assumption for this study was made, and that is that the parents/caregivers would answer truthfully with regards to their understanding of school readiness expectations.

1.8 Justification of the study

At a glance, school-readiness appears to be a simple concept, and thus the idea of being able to identify a child who has the necessary characteristics for school-readiness appears to be of minimal concern (Aiona, 2005). However, as noted earlier, school-readiness is more complex than meets the eye. Several conflicting views regarding school-readiness currently exist. (Wesley & Buysse, 2003). These conflicts exist between personal philosophies of teaching and learning abilities of children and the more recent learning academic standard that has been set by the state (Wesley & Buysse, 2003). More recent school-readiness criteria from an academic perspective have stated that school-readiness expects the integration of many different aspects of a child's development. The ultimate challenge of school-readiness is to ensure all aspects of a child meet the appropriate criteria for formal school entry, so that the child is able to successfully manage the occupational demands of Grade 1. All aspects of a child include motor/physical abilities, socio-emotional, learning abilities, language and communication as well as cognitive abilities.

Much research to date has focused on the classroom environment and teachers' engagement with children (Chien, et al., 2010). Minimal research has been focused on parents'/caregivers' knowledge with regards to school-readiness. Walker & MacPhee (2011) proposed that research which aims to investigate school-readiness should use both child and family indicators as they are equally essential building blocks of a holistic approach to early intervention programs. Recent research findings reinforce that parents/caregivers and the early childhood environment play a critical role in school-readiness (Baldwin, 2011). Parents/Caregivers are the main adults involved with the child on a daily basis and are thus considered to be the informed adult who can provide information about a child's abilities.

Research notes that children entering formal schooling who are not school-ready are associated with an increased need for intervention or remediation, are at risk of grade repetition and/or suffering from academic underachievement (Patrianakos-Hoobler, et al., 2010).

In order to be an effective professional in contributing to school-readiness, an occupational therapist needs to bridge the gap between perceived school-readiness and the new age related academic school-readiness level in order to enhance children's education, development and children's success in scholastic environment. It is essential that occupational therapists have a full understanding of potential factors which may be influencing and affecting a child's learning abilities when entering into formal schooling. A key component would be to determine parent/caregivers views and understanding of school-readiness as well as understanding their perceived judgment of what is required of their child in order to enter formal schooling. In doing so occupational therapists can ultimately identify whether parents'/caregivers' are able to determine if their child should enter formal main stream schooling or if their child would benefit from remediation or therapeutic intervention.

Occupational therapists will thus be able to focus interventions to encourage school-readiness to be in keeping with academic criteria, improve parent/caregiver knowledge of childhood development within set demographic areas and improve professional accountability of occupational therapists within the early childhood development (Wesley & Buysse, 2003). As stated by Peters and Ridgeway (2008),

developing high-quality early learning and family support systems will go a long way toward finally reaching the national goal of assuring that all children will enter primary school ready to learn and in doing so, ensuring that no child will be left behind in the long run.

1.9 Conclusion

School-readiness is thus the first step to ensuring success of academic development and progression for a child's future life. The decision that a child is ready to enter into formal schooling is largely made by the parent/caregiver but sometimes with guidance from the educational therapeutic team should they be approached. A parent/caregiver is assumed to have knowledge of school-readiness and be able to make an informed decision about their child's readiness to enter formal schooling; however this is not always the case.

Research shows that perception of school-readiness and formal academic requirements of school-readiness are two different issues (Wesley & Buysse, 2003). By determining whether parents' perceptions meet the formal academic criteria of school-readiness and establishing if any demographic factors may influence the level of knowledge would aid occupational therapists in assisting parents'/caregivers' to attain knowledge of typical development and promote action that will encourage and foster school-readiness of children and thus encourage early childhood intervention and development.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

When researching this topic google scholar and University of Witwatersrand Medical School Library were used to search for research articles and text books which contained information which would be useful to this research topic. Initially research was done on the school curriculum in South Africa, specifically for Gauteng, and for private schooling and government schooling. Specific research was searched to establish school processes, school going age requirements as well as the scholastic curriculum's required of Grade R and Grade 1 pupils. Thereafter school-readiness and the Grade R and Grade 1 curricula were reviewed extensively to establish what children are expected to already know and/or have learnt in Grade R versus what they are expected to learn in Grade 1. From there, topics of childhood development, essential learning tools, critical stages of learning, understanding school-readiness, parental perceived knowledge of school-readiness academic expectations of school-readiness and demographic factors which may affect knowledge-base as well as perception of parental views of their children's development were researched. Additionally literature which described occupational therapists' role in the assessment of school-readiness and early childhood development was reviewed. All research on google scholar was initially limited to a search from 2010 up until the latest research available. At times this date limitation was increased as minimal information was available on topics later than 2010, thus foundational, older knowledge was also sourced. This literature used to guide this study, has been divided into the following sections: Childhood development underpinning school entry; school-readiness; factors influencing school-readiness; the role of occupational therapists in early childhood development and school-readiness and parental views and perceptions of school-readiness. The key factors are then summarised in the conclusion.

2.2 Childhood development underpinning school entry

Research has shown that the first five years of a child's life are the building blocks to all motor, psychosocial, emotional and behavioural abilities. These first few years

are filled with events, relationships and numerous experiences which support or diminish a child's abilities (Sheridan, Knoche, Edwards, Bovaird, & Kupzyk, 2010).

The National Planning Commission (NPC) stipulates nine primary challenges facing South Africa since 1998. One of these challenges is education and the need for improvement of education (Lehohla, 2012). The plan described one of its main focuses to be childhood development (Lehohla, 2012).

The South African Government states that any child at the age of 7 years (latest) is expected to attend formal schooling (South African Schools Act, 2011). Formal schools in the Gauteng province are all provided with a set of curriculum criteria defined by either the Gauteng Department of Education or Independent Education Board (IEB), which the child is expected to learn within specific grade levels in order to advance him/her to the next level of education. This formal process when entering into Grade 1, expects and assumes that adequate foundational building blocks are in place before entering into the formal schooling system, in order to be able to expand one's knowledge in the Grade 1 year. Entry into formal schooling is more complex than mere academic criteria and ratings of intelligence quotients. It requires basic foundational skills of physical/motor, socio-emotional development, positive approaches to learning, good language ability and cognitive ability including adequate general knowledge (Baldwin, 2011) (Patrianakos-Hoobler, et al., 2010) (Walker & MacPhee, 2011).

Much research has been undertaken to determine what specific skills are implicit in school-readiness and what is necessary to predict adequate school outcomes (Cross & Conn-Powers, 2011). Poor school-readiness has been closely associated with academic drop out (Doyle, Cheevers, Finnegan, McEntee, & McNamara, 2009) and increased repetition of grades which increases the costs for schooling (Chien, et al., 2010). When children transition into formal schooling, they and their parents/caregivers face great challenges in expectations and demands, in keeping with formal curriculum and ruling within the scholastic environment (Walker & MacPhee, 2011). Successful negotiation and transitioning during this period has been noted to be indicative of positive future scholastic success (Walker & MacPhee, 2011).

In this research project, current school-readiness requirements within Gauteng, South Africa were reviewed. To date South Africa has undergone numerous changes with regards to their current curriculum.

In May 2012, it was announced that the progression from Curriculum 2005, the Revised National Curriculum Statement (RNCS) would be made from the National Curriculum Statement (NCS) to the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statements (CAPS). This is not a new curriculum but a mere amendment to the NCS for Grade R through to Grade 12. The aim of the adaptation was to ensure the curriculum be more accessible to teachers, by providing each subject of each grade with a comprehensive and concise Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS). This aimed to provide detailed content which teachers use for teaching and assessment of students in accordance with a grade-to-grade and subject-to-subject criteria (UNISA, 2012). The National Curriculum Statement of Grade R through to Grade 12 gives expression to what is regarded to be the knowledge, skills and values worth learning. Its purpose is to ensure that children acquire and apply knowledge and skills in ways that are meaningful (Wilson, 2011). However, currently in South Africa, Grade R is not a pre-requisite to formal schooling and thus some learners who enter into the Grade 1 level of education may never have attended a Grade R level of education and or play school or crèche, and thus were not exposed to learning outcomes laid out by a formal curriculum (Wilson, 2011).

In the foundation phase of learning, South Africa has delineated three specific learning areas. These areas are namely: language, mathematics and life skills (Wilson, 2011). In this foundational phase, specific learning outcomes for each learning area are listed and detailed. These specified learning outcomes provide the building blocks needed for all grades of the foundation phase level, with the lowest grade being Grade R.

The specific learning areas of language, mathematic and life skills within the foundation phase as stipulated by the CAPS curriculum is thus required to cover and expand knowledge over the prerequisites for school-readiness including physical and motor development, socio-emotional development, approaches to learning, language development and cognition including general knowledge (Baldwin, 2011) (Patrianakos-Hoobler, et al., 2010) (Walker & MacPhee, 2011). When considering

the CAPS curriculum the specified areas of learning are broken down into sections. Thus language was broken down into sections which included listening skills, speaking, reading and viewing, writing and language structure and use. These skills are considered as socio-emotional and language development prerequisites. Mathematics was broken down into numbers, thinking and reasoning. These skills are considered in cognition and general knowledge development in the form of understanding basic concepts as well as facilitating approaches to learning. Lastly Life Skills was divided into motor abilities, life skills, activities of daily living (ADL) and emotionality. These areas again aid cognition and general knowledge by considering integrated concepts and functional abilities in life, as well as motor and physical abilities.

School-readiness assumes that the foundational components for achieving the skills listed above are laid down prior to ensure school entry. Furthermore, school-readiness has been described as a health measureable and relevant outcome with long-term consequences which parents/caregivers should be aware (Janus & Offord, 2007). Major and minor problems in children need to be identified by parents/caregivers so that children are referred to relevant therapists and any problems are dealt with before they escalate later on in life, when abilities and expectations at school increase.

Statistics on children with scholastic problems in formal schooling within the South African population was not available. The percentage of children in the United Kingdom with impaired cognition and behaviour problems in primary schools has remained consistent at approximately 25% (Janus & Offord, 2007). In spite of an increasing awareness of the need for early intervention, children identified with minor deficits at a junior primary level are left untreated as their difficulties are being dismissed as 'minor' delays or deficits (Janus & Offord, 2007). These 'minor' deficits have been found to often spiral into greater difficulties as children progress into later stages of school life, increasing the complexity and depth of the initial problem (Janus & Offord, 2007).

2.3 School-readiness

As noted above, school-readiness is a complex concept and multifactorial in nature (Baldwin, 2011). Originally school-readiness was defined simply as a child's

preparedness to learn (Lewit & Baker, 1995). Wesley & Buysse (2003) however, emphasised that no formal definition of school-readiness exists. They noted that school-readiness can be considered from two perspectives: perceived personal philosophy of school-readiness (in keeping with the original belief of school-readiness) and the newly stated academic standards of school-readiness stipulated by the State (Wesley & Buysse, 2003). As a whole it has been found that school-readiness not only focuses on pre-academic skills that a child is typically able to perform in comparison to the general population, but also considers five main areas. These areas include firstly physical and motor, secondly social and thirdly emotional, approaches toward learning, fourthly language and communication, and fifthly cognitive ability along with general knowledge of a child (Patrianakos-Hoobler, et al., 2010). On an academic level school-readiness domains have been broken down into set criteria to allow for ease of academic evaluation and testing and subsequently allows for formalised assessment (Wesley & Buysse, 2003). These specified areas are ultimately used to assist in determining a child's functional independence in ADL, coping strategies, foundations for concepts, vocabulary (receptive and expressive ability), hearing ability as well as basic visual perceptual skills and sensory processing (Patrianakos-Hoobler, et al., 2010). Much research has also focused on early childhood development (ECD). According to the General Household Survey compiled by Statistics SA (2012), ECD refers to emotional, cognitive, sensory, spiritual, moral, physical, social and communication development of a child in the critical phases of their life. (Lehohla, South Africa's young children: their family and home environment, 2012, 2012).

Currently, there are a variety of rapidly emerging programs aimed at pre-school and crèche levels of education with the ultimate outcome of ensuring children are stimulated sufficiently to encourage optimal school-readiness (Welsh, Nix, Blair, Bierman, & Nelson, 2010). A shift is occurring to ensure crèches are adequately preparing children for formal schooling. This shift is expected to assist teachers with pre-school intervention in encouraging school-readiness.

2.4 Parents'/Caregivers' roles and views/perceptions of School-Readiness

Parent involvement is viewed as an essential component of promoting child learning and development (Dunst, Bruder, & Espe-Sherwindt, 2014). A primary goal of parent involvement is to strengthen family support and capacity to continue to provide their children with learning experiences and opportunities throughout a child's life (Dunst, Bruder, & Espe-Sherwindt, 2014). Family capacity building is a key focus in early childhood development as it encourages insight into development for parents and assist in enhancing identification of disability and subsequently assists with ensuring that appropriate intervention is sought (Dunst, Bruder, & Espe-Sherwindt, 2014).

Due to the parents'/caregivers' active involvement in a child's developmental interactions throughout their lifespan, parents/caregivers are therefore regarded as key role player in determining a child's abilities, identifying any possible delays in their child and seeking help/assistance to ensure the limitations do not cause long term problems.

Baldwin (2011) noted that the main advancement that has been made regarding school-readiness is the recognition of the influence of parental understanding of school-readiness in accordance with early childhood environments which tend to critically influence preparedness of children entering into formal schooling. De Rousie and Durham (2008) stated that the family is without a doubt an essential component in development and understanding of children's school-readiness.

Children with learning difficulties usually require intervention in order to assist with encouraging optimal performance within their scholastic years. Research reports that early intervention is key to successful outcomes in children (Baldwin, 2011). Developing high quality early learning and family support systems has been identified as essential to facilitate developmental goals, and thus insuring that children enter into primary school ready to learn. Additionally should this not be the case, early intervention will assist children to receive treatment and/or intervention to ensure their future scholastic potential is not hampered (Baldwin, 2011).

An adult's role in a child's life is to provide them with a child friendly, child-care environment containing rich materials and resources that promote child-initiated exploration (Chien, et al., 2010). Furthermore it is the parents/caregivers

responsibility to ensure frequent, sensitive and responsive social engagements with children in order to allow for an educational platform for interactive skills (Chien, et al., 2010). Environmental quality is noted to be of significant importance for a child. The context in which a child engages allows for detailed evaluation and understanding of a child's skill levels within a given context (Chien, et al., 2010). Differences in parents/caregivers however, do exist. These differences may be related to education level, parenting skills and abilities as well as variations in social and economic class.

Baldwin (2011) notes that when attempting to understand people's perceptions and views it is essential to determine the demographic factors which may affect one's knowledge and understanding with regards to school-readiness in order to determine where additional education and intervention may be needed and thus allows occupational therapists to tailor support and interventions.

2.5 Factors influencing school-readiness

Gauteng has the highest percentage of young children (aged 0-4 years) in South Africa (Lehohla, South Africa's young children: their family and home environment, 2012, 2012). Most (80.4%) of the children reside in urban formal areas, 16.9% live in urban informal areas, 1.7% live in traditional areas and 1.1% live in rural areas (Lehohla, South Africa's young children: their family and home environment, 2012, 2012). Due to the largest population of children being within the urban sector, this was the area where the research was focused.

Within this research children within mainstream schooling were examined. Thus all children were assumed to be within 'normal functional capacity' functioning in a mainstream schooling environment.

Statistics SA stated that most young children, spend their critical years within their home environment and thus it is essential to establish and consider the social and physical environment in which they are residing as these may influence the child's development in their early years of life (Lehohla, South Africa's young children: their family and home environment, 2012, 2012).

Numerous factors have been identified which may affect a child's readiness for school. These factors could be separated into two groups: Internal Factors and External Factors:

2.5.1 Internal Factors

Internal factors, as mentioned above, look at a child's independence and ability to perform within physical, psychosocial, emotional and cognitive realms. These factors consider the child's personal competence and abilities. School readiness criteria according to curriculum outlines are largely based on a child's internal factors. However, these are not the only factors that influence readiness of a child to enter formal schooling.

2.5.2 External Factors

When considering a child holistically, additional influences include external factors. These include resources available to the child, engagement in educational tasks and stimulation activities which encourage learning, as well as everyday interactions (Ramery & Ramey, 2004). All these tasks would be expected to be encouraged by the adult individual involved in a child's life.

Additionally external factors identified include community supports, parenting styles, child-care as well as experiences the child is exposed to (Baldwin, 2011). An important recent research development has noted that parents'/caregivers' engagement with a child and early childhood environment are critical features in developing and ensuring school-readiness (Baldwin, 2011). The setting in which a child grows, develops and interacts encourages experiences which are important for baseline development of learning abilities (Walker & MacPhee, 2011).

Some factors which have been found to influence school-readiness, include a child's participation in arts and crafts, sports, educational trips, parental involvement, age of which the child enters schooling, number of books in the home and the presence of technology and or computers in the home environment (Baldwin, 2011).

Due to the research findings described above possible external factors of demographic origin need to be considered when assessing parents'/caregivers'

knowledge of school-readiness of the population. These factors would assist the researcher in determining any possible risk factors which may influence knowledge of parents/caregivers and may influence parents/caregivers abilities to provide educational stimulants for their child, which in turn will impact on the child's school readiness. It is therefore important to understand and establish factors which may mitigate risks of poor scholastic performance and possible risks of unidentified fallouts within children (McWayne, Hahs-Vaughn, Cheung, & Green Wright, 2012).

2.5.3 Demographic Factors

Overall demographic factors that have been determined to influence school-readiness can be considered in two groups. The first group would be factors which may influence parent/caregivers knowledge of school-readiness whilst the second group are external factors which influence a child's learning and exposure to developmental opportunities. Unfortunately, research relating to these topics within the South African context was limited, thus research from the United States and United Kingdom was heavily relied upon within this research study.

The first group of factors can be viewed as parent/caregiver exposure to resources and the time spent with children. Children in South Africa come from a widely unequal society, in which poverty is a large contributing factor to limitations in early development (Lehohla, South Africa's young children: their family and home environment, 2012, 2012). The challenge of poverty to development is further compounded by single parent households where the main caregiver is expected to provide financially for the family and thus is often at work (Lehohla, South Africa's young children: their family and home environment, 2012, 2012).

Research by Vandivere *et al.* (2004) elaborated on factors such as socioeconomic status, racial or ethnic minorities, parents/caregivers who spoke limited English and children who were disabled (Vandivere, Pitzer, Halle, & Hair, 2004). High numbers of individuals in the household have been found to impact on by several concomitant risk factors within poverty (e.g. Poor quality housing, family instability, poor parental education and under resourced environments) which lead to parents/caregivers having a lower awareness with regards to their children's' abilities (Sheridan, Knoche, Edwards, Bovaird, & Kupzyk, 2010) (McWayne, Hahs-Vaughn, Cheung, & Green Wright, 2012). Coley (2002) and Baldwin (2011) noted that socioeconomic

status and ethnicity were found to be moderators of parents' perceptions and behaviour in relation to school-readiness knowledge. This was supported by the work of McWayne et. al (2012) who noted that family factors most often cited as placing children at risk for negative trajectories when looking at school-readiness of children included parental/caregiver educational status, family composition, single parent households, low levels of material education and resources. Additional difficulties included were employment earnings and income, which affect children's ability to achieve within academic fields (Yoshikawa, Gassman-Pines, Morris, Gennetian, & Godfrey, 2010). Suggestions that personal characteristics of a child, parental characteristics and classroom factors were seen to be predictors in stability and change with regards to children but were found to be less influential on school-readiness as such (Baldwin, 2011). Campbell and von Stauffenberg (2008) noted children from single parent homes, having no parents/caregivers, socio economic status and educational status had a harder time understanding behavioural expectations and demands of schooling.

Vandivere et. al. (2004) stated that in the USA the main external factors influencing understanding of school-readiness included: socioeconomic status, racial or ethnic minorities, parents/caregivers who spoke limited English and children who were disabled (Vandivere, Pitzer, Halle, & Hair, 2004). In addition research shows that high percentages of individuals in the household impacted on by several concomitant risk factors within poverty (e.g. poor quality housing, family instability, poor parental education and under resourced environments) tend to have lower understanding of knowledge with regards to children (Sheridan, Knoche, Edwards, Bovaird, & Kupzyk, 2010) (McWayne, Hahs-Vaughn, Cheung, & Green Wright, 2012).

Coley (2002) and Baldwin (2011) noted that the socioeconomic status and ethnicity are also found to be a moderator of parents' perceptions and behaviour in relation to school-readiness knowledge.

McWayne et.al. (2012) noted that family factors most often cited as placing children at risk for negative trajectories when looking at school-readiness included parental/caregiver educational status, family composition, single parent households, low levels of material education and resources. Campbell and von Stauffenberg (2008) noted that factors such as single parents; having no parents/caregivers;

socioeconomic status and educational status contribute to limited understanding of behavioural expectations and demands of schooling.

The second group of factors are mostly external. These external influences that affect the school-readiness of a child relate to exposure as a result of the first group of factors. These often occur within the home or geographic environment and are directly dependent on resources and parents/caregivers preparedness and willingness to engage with their children directly. It is well established that one of the most influential relationships in a child's life is that of the parent-child in the first few years of life (McWayne, Hahs-Vaughn, Cheung, & Green Wright, 2012). Poor living conditions have been found to cause malnutrition, illness, lack of stimulation for development and compromised cognitive development which later affects scholastic performance (Lehohla, South Africa's young children: their family and home environment, 2012, 2012).

Lareau and Weininger (2008) conducted a study in which 88 families were interviewed using a qualitative approach to explore social class differences in family life. The researchers noted that middle-class families tended to have an increased pace of life, and revolved their daily schedules around their children who engaged in a variety of activities, however despite the high life pace, the children tended to have increased exposure to greater opportunities which positively influenced cognitive and social development (Lareau & Weininger, 2008). In contrast the researchers noted that families in lower socioeconomic status groups were found to live a more relaxed or slowed pace of life, these children typically spent increased time outdoors and/or watched more television (Lareau & Weininger, 2008). It was further noted the family schedules did not centre around the children's daily activities, the parents/caregivers thus tended to have increased time to themselves however spent minimal time focusing on enhancement of their children's skills through structured activities (Lareau & Weininger, 2008). Additionally Baldwin (2011) found that the number of resources within a community to support appropriate parenting influenced a child's readiness to learn, as well as a parents/caregivers knowledge of what is expected of the children. Factors such as attendance of an elementary school (Baldwin, 2011) (McWayne, Hahs-Vaughn, Cheung, & Green Wright, 2012), as well as the connection and involvement the pre-schools have with the parents/caregivers were reported to influence the learning experiences of the child (Baldwin, 2011).

It is therefore also important to understand and establish factors which may mitigate risks of poor scholastic performance and possible risks of unidentified fallouts with children (McWayne, Hahs-Vaughn, Cheung, & Green Wright, 2012)

It is essential to establish differences between attitudes and understandings of various demographic groups so that support can be tailored to each various groups going forward (Baldwin, 2011). By understanding influences that may create risk factors for children within given groups within a population we create a bridge in the gap to a better understanding of how best to assist children from different communities.

2.6 Role of the Occupational Therapist in ECD and School Readiness

Occupational therapists are regularly requested to perform school-readiness testing and/or developmental testing to determine whether a child is coping adequately for their age. When evaluating a child's abilities, the occupational therapist determines if a child's performance and skill is influenced by any possible impairment and consequently how the environment may support or hamper this performance and/or skill base (Case-Smith & O'Brien, 2015) The occupational therapist is expected to identify discrepancies between a child's performance and the demands expected of a task/activity (Case-Smith & O'Brien, 2015), or in this case their ability to meet school-readiness requirements.

Occupational therapists have a long history working with children who have developmental delays and/or disabilities. Some literature defining the role of occupational therapists in school based system dated back to 1988. Case-Smith (2013) stated that occupational therapists have a leadership role in providing interventions to children across a broad spectrum of settings. Occupational therapy focuses on core factors of a family centred approach, promoting play and education as the primary occupational areas of children and considers environmental factors, their role in early childhood development has become vital (Case-Smith, 2013).

However, in order for these school-readiness assessments to take place a child needs to have access to and/or have been referred to an occupational therapist. This referral is dependent on an adult's ability to identify difficulties and/or fallouts within a child's development. In order for this to occur, one needs to be able to

critically evaluate a child's abilities in accordance with expected developmental criteria, which assumes one has knowledge of developmental criteria.

Occupational therapists are expertly trained to ensure holistic intervention. The factors that would require consideration are the environment, occupation and person themselves in order to establish a "goodness of fit." (Case-Smith & O'Brien, 2015). A goodness of fit is usually achieved when all factors are compatible to promote positive development. When looking at school-readiness, it would be essential to include the parents/caregivers as key roles players in the child's life as without them referral for intervention, access to intervention and follow through of intervention into a child's daily life will not be possible. Research has found that family support highly influences the outcome of a child's performance and any intervention put in place (Case-Smith & O'Brien, 2015).

2.7 Conclusion

Most children spend their critical developmental years within their home environments (Lehohla, 2012). The NPC put together a plan in 1998 with a focus on improving education in childhood development (Lehohla, 2012).

An important consideration is knowledge about whether children are developing appropriately in their critical stages of learning to a level where they are school-ready. The question we need to ask is: are parents/caregivers perceived views in keeping with academic views with regards to school-readiness and thus are they aware of the need for these specific pre-school building blocks (internal factors) and what are parents/caregivers doing in order to ensure that their children have all necessary criteria in place before school entry.

Overall school-readiness does not have a formal definition but, it is noted to be a complex multifactorial concept. School-readiness criteria need to be in keeping with the curriculum detailed by the Gauteng Department of Education and/or IEB. These criteria are however ever changing. Parents'/caregivers' perceived views need to be on par with that of an academic view in order to make an informed decision as to whether their child is ready to enter into formal schooling or not. Early identification

of problems is crucial to ensuring therapeutic input in order to enhance long term success at school and limit possible fallouts.

The long term implications of children achieving success in education will positively influence education standards, increase the tertiary education level of children, allow for easier entry into working spheres as well as enhance economic growth, reduce poverty and improve social stability (Lehohla, 2012).

Children's physical home environments are an essential part of a child's world. This contributes to quality of life and early childhood development.

Children in South African come from a widely unequal society, in which poverty is a large contributing factor to limitations in early development (Lehohla, 2012).

Overall parents/caregivers need to understand the complexity of school-readiness and expectations required of children in order to make an informed decision as to whether their child is ready enter into formal schooling or not. Early identification of problems is crucial in ensuring long term success at school and limit possible fallouts, be it for minor or major problems. Demographic factors including education level, income bracket, single parent households, number of children and willingness to learn have been reported as influential factors which may affect one's knowledge of what their child is expected to know going into Grade 1. Having adequate knowledge of school-readiness is linked to a child having adequate resources and being exposed to learning rich environments.

Occupational therapists have been involved in paediatric and school settings as well as early childhood development for many years with some research on occupational therapy in schools dating back to 1988. Occupational therapists consider children from a holistic perspective which includes considerations of the child, the environment and the occupation at hand. When considering a child's environment key role players which affect this are seen to be the main parent/caregivers involved in the child's life.

If a parent/caregiver is familiar and educated with regards to school-readiness requirements, they will be expected to make informed decisions on whether their child is school ready or not. In saying this, this will also allow them to opt for intervention for the child should they display possible fallouts allowing referrals for

occupational therapy to be adequate and in turn encouraging early intervention for children. In doing so, early intervention and ensuring adequate building blocks are in place for child will in turn encourage and allow for probable long term goals of educational achievement, increased academic standards, increased potential to enter tertiary education, easier entry into the working work, increased economic growth and subsequently a reduction in poverty.

Thus, the larger questions still exists:

- Do parents'/caregivers' perceived understanding of school-readiness meet that of current formal school-readiness requirements?
- Do parents/caregivers understand what is expected of their children with regards to school-readiness on an academic level?
- Do they understand how to identify whether or not their child will cope in formal schooling?

One may say a parent/caregiver may be guided by a teacher and professional which may well be true. However, currently in South Africa, Grade R is not a pre-requisite to formal schooling and thus some learners who enter into the Grade 1 level of education may never have attended a Grade R level of education and or play school or crèche, and thus building blocks criteria and access to professional advice is limited.

Where children have not attended play school/crèche or Grade R prior to attending formal schooling, the onus is on the parents/caregivers alone to provide and ensure the child is exposed to and is meeting basic foundational skills required for entry into formal schooling. Should the child have attended crèche/pre-school and/or grade R, the parent may be assisted in understanding pre-requisites of schooling by educational experts. Despite having this guidance, contrary to popular beliefs, the teacher is not the formal decision maker in whether or not the child transitions into Grade 1 level of education or not. Government states that all children by the age of 7 must enter into formal school. Government further states that the onus for this rests on the parent/caregiver responsible for the child. Thus a parent/caregiver is the key decision maker when determining whether their child is school-ready.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

As described in their literature review in Chapter 2 all parents/caregivers are assumed to have an idea of what is expected of a child when developing chronologically through the developmental age bands. The first five years of a child's life are considered critical from a developmental perspective, moulding and advancing a child's foundational skills in order to be school-ready and/or at a level where formal schooling will benefit a child's further development.

In order for a parent/caregiver to understand the prerequisites of school-readiness, they would need to have knowledge of the expected outcome and abilities of their child at a school going level. Thus, this research was designed to explore whether parents/caregivers have an understanding about what is expected of a child when entering into formal schooling.

3.2 Research Design

A quantitative, descriptive, cross sectional correlation study design was used in this research. The quantitative nature of the design was appropriate for this study as the questionnaire designed to survey the parents/caregivers level of knowledge of school-readiness used categorical numerical data to record the description of expected knowledge (Creswell, 2002). The descriptive nature of the design was appropriate as the data collected reflected a description of the parents/caregivers knowledge of school-readiness and the school-readiness indicators. Finally, a correlation study was undertaken to determine if there was any association between key demographic factors described in the literature and the overall knowledge of parents/caregivers of school-readiness and the school-readiness indicators in this sample (Bartlett, Kotrlik, & Higgins, 2001).

3.3 Population

The population, from which the sample was drawn, consisted of the parents/caregivers of children admitted to the Grade R and Grade 1 level of schooling in 2015, within the Gauteng Province of South Africa.

3.4 Sample

Purposive sampling was used and was considered the most appropriate for this study (Tongco, 2007). Purposive sampling allowed the researcher to decide what needed to be known and set out to find individuals who (namely parents/caregivers) who were willing to participate in providing information by virtue of their knowledge/experience (Tongco, 2007). Thus purposive sampling allowed the researcher to select a variety of schools to ensure the demographic factors of parents/caregivers identified in the literature review, were adequately represented in the sample. Parents/caregivers of children attending urban schools in and around Johannesburg within the Gauteng Province were targeted with respect to: socio-economic status (one private school and two public schools were included). Since this is not an intervention study no power calculation was done. Instead Cochrane's formula to calculate a survey sample was used as described by Bartlett, Kotrlik, & Higgins (2001). This formula was used to estimate an appropriate sample size: if six schools were used, with approximately 20 children per class, and there was a minimum of three Grade 1 classes at each school. According to this calculation a minimum of 196 returned questionnaires would be required to make the sample representative of this population, if the margins of error used to decrease the chance of a Type I error were set at a significance of 0.05 for categorical data collected in this study (Bartlett, Kotrlik, & Higgins, 2001).

Only two inclusion criteria were set:

- a. All participants needed to be literate in English as the questionnaire was available in English only. This was to ensure consistency of information requested through the questionnaire and to eliminate the complication of translating of questions and answers.
- b. All participants needed to be 18 years or older and thus recognised as an adult acting as a parent/caregiver to a Grade 1/Grade R pupil.

3.5 Data Collection Tool

3.5.1 The Development of the questionnaire

The data was collected using a questionnaire that was specifically developed for this research study by the researcher. The questionnaire was developed based on the literature, with particular focus on the current Curriculum and Assessment Policy

Statements (CAPS) of Gauteng's Department of Education which forms part of the National Curriculum Statement Grades R-12. This is the policy statement for learning and teaching in South African public schools. Furthermore, cognisance was given to the Independent Education Board (IEB) for Foundational Learning Competence which describes the minimum competence required of learners to deal successfully with learning at National Qualification Framework (NQF) Level 2.

The draft questionnaire, designed specifically for this research, consisted of two sections:

- a. The first section (Section A) recorded demographic information. This section consisted of 14 questions which the literature had identified as potential demographic factors thought to influence parent/caregivers knowledge of school-readiness.
- b. The second section (Section B) of the questionnaire contained questions relating to school-readiness requirements of a child in a Grade 1 level of education. The questions used were taken from the developmental criteria provided by the Gauteng department of education and the IEB education board for Grade R and Grade 1 students.

This section of the data collection tool was designed as a self-report questionnaire. Overall there were 104 statements which were organised into 11 sections with between 5 and 14 questions in each section. Respondents were required to answer all questions on a four point rating scale that was quantitative in nature and designed to determine the knowledge of the parents/caregivers had with regards to school-readiness as well as the indicators of school-readiness. This scale consisted of 4 options: "My child will definitely be able to do this," "My child should be able to do this sometimes," "My child is expected to learn this while at school," or "Unsure."

3.5.2 The Scoring of the questionnaire

Each questionnaire variable on the questionnaire was scored according to the 4 optional answers:

- "My child will definitely be able to do it."
- "My child should be able to do this sometimes."
- "My child is expected to learn this while at school"

- “Unsure”

These answers were graded from fully capable to partially capable to being expected to master the skill in the future to being unsure of the expectation of the stipulated task.

The correct expectation was scored as the answer which the GDE/IEB standards would have expected for a school entry child in accordance with each question/skill set put forward.

Overall, for each section the percentages of all correct answers were added together and divided by the total number of questions per sections to establish the overall understanding of school readiness abilities for that specific subsection. This was included to assist in understanding the overall knowledge parents/caregivers know within each area/subsection. This also assisted to establish which areas of knowledge would need to be focused on in particular when educating parents/caregivers on school readiness criteria.

Over estimation and underestimation of a child’s abilities were calculated in accordance with the above graded system, with “unsure” being marked separately as incorrect. If the expected criteria was that *“My child should be able to do this sometimes”* the over estimation would be parents who marked *“my child will definitely be able to do it.”* While an underestimation would be *“My child is expected to learn this while at school.”* The same concept would apply to an expected answer of *“my child is expected to learn this while at school”* either of the other answers would then have be deemed an over estimation of their child’s abilities. Likewise if the expected answer was *“my child will definitely be able to do it.”* Any of the other two answers would be deemed an underestimation.

3.5.1 Content validity of the questionnaire

This was undertaken to establish the content validity and reliability of the questionnaire (Creswell, 2002). The questionnaire was sent to two occupational therapists who have expert knowledge in school readiness assessments. Both therapists were working in the private sector, however within different locations and thus with children from different contexts. Additionally the questionnaire was sent to a remedial teacher with 30 years of experience working within the junior primary phase of teaching in a mainstream school. All three professionals were chosen as they represented expert experience as well as were working in different fields and demographics to each other as recommended by Davis and Marrow (2004). The professionals were given an information sheet detailing the background to the research project and were provided with the aims and objectives of the research. Each expert was asked to critique both sections (the demographic sheet and the school readiness questionnaire). They were instructed to comment on the relevance of the questionnaire in relationship to the objectives of the research.

The experts' recommendations included:

- a. Some additional demographic factors to consider. i.e. Resources available to the children; the age that the child started Grade 1 and how many children in a household older than 7 years.
- b. They agreed that all questions were relevant to age expected norms for school-readiness.
- c. Adaptations were made to the manner in which some statements were formulated. i.e. "Interrupts others" was changed to "Does not interrupt others while speaking."
- d. Some suggestions to the wording of the scale were proposed. Changes from *"is expected... will be expected"* etc. was changed to: *"my child will definitely be able to... my child should be able to... and my child is expected to learn this later..."*

Changes to the questionnaire were then made in accordance with feedback given. This second draft was used in the pilot study.

3.5.2 Piloting of the questionnaire

Eight parents/caregivers with children in junior primary and crèche levels of education were recruited. These parents/caregivers agreed to complete the questionnaire as a trial run. They were asked to complete the questionnaire to determine the clarity and flow of the questions, the ease of answering all questions and to determine the time required to complete the questionnaire.

The parents/caregivers reported that despite the questionnaire being long and taking 20-30 minutes to complete, the questionnaire was easy to follow and complete. All questions were reported to be relevant.

The data collection tool/questionnaire was then finalised. (See Appendix A).

3.6 Research process

Initially six schools were purposely approached in the Gauteng region: two fee-paying, two non-fee-paying and two private schools. E-mails and/or phone calls were made to set up an appointment with the principals of the selected schools to explain the research and ask permission for the school to participate in the research. Of the 6 schools, only 2 public schools (fee paying) responded and only 1 private school responded. The principals of the responding schools were then approached to participate in the study. (see Appendix B for school permission letters) When permission had been obtained, the researcher handed over the relevant number of envelopes for the parents/caregivers of all Grade 1 learners.

The envelopes containing the information sheet (See Appendix C) and finalised questionnaire (See Appendix A) which was distributed to the parents/caregivers of all Grade 1 learners in accordance with the schools' letter-hand-out system. Two weeks after handing out of the questionnaires the researcher returned to the schools to collect the questionnaires as had been negotiated with each school. Thereafter the schools contacted the researcher to collect late return questionnaires as they were handed in.

At the start of the research the aim was to hand out questionnaires at the start (within term 1) of the scholastic year. This however was delayed as a result of time taken to receive ethical clearance from the Gauteng Department of Education and the school principals. The questionnaires were thus only handed out over the

second term of the school year when the scholastic learning had already begun. This may have affected results as parents/caregivers of Grade 1 learners had already been exposed to parts of the Grade 1 curriculum.

Initially it was decided that a population sample of 6 schools were going to be used, however due to the delayed response rate only 3 schools were used in the end. No other schools were approached. Additionally, initially only the Grade 1 classes were going to be used. However, two of the schools handed out the questionnaires to Grade R parents/caregivers as well as the Grade 1 parents/caregivers. Thus the sample of Grade R and Grade 1 parents/caregivers were combined. The number of responses was well in excess of that expected in accordance with only 3 schools being used.

3.7 Ethical considerations

The protocol for this research study was approved by the Graduate Studies Committee of the Faculty of Health Science and ethical approval was obtained from the University of Witwatersrand Human Research Ethics Committee: Medical (See Appendix D for Ethical clearance – Human Research Ethics Committee (Medical) letter). Once ethical approval was obtained from the University, permission was then obtained from the Gauteng Department of Education (GDE) (see Appendix E for GDE Research Approval Letter) to allow for the participation of public schools in the research project. Permission was further required from the school board/principal of the public and private schools being used as research sites in order for them to participate in the research.

The approved participant information sheet explaining the research was included with the envelope circulated to parents/caregivers of the learners. The information sheet detailed the research: purpose, objectives and how the data was to be collected; the time it would take to complete the questionnaire as well as confidentiality within the research procedure. No consent form was included as consent was assumed through participants (parents/caregivers) completing and returning the questionnaires. Confidentiality was ensured as no names or personal information was requested on the questionnaire, allowing for each participant to

remain anonymous. All questionnaires were returned in a sealed envelope provided by the researcher to ensure confidentiality was maintained.

3.8 Data Analysis

Once all the questionnaires had been received the following data analyses were performed on both the Demographic Questionnaire and the School-readiness Questionnaire:

Descriptive statistics were used to analyse the demographic characteristics of the sample (Section A of the questionnaire). Characteristics were described in frequencies and percentages. This was done to determine how representative this sample of participants was in comparison to the general population of Gauteng, a number of the variables were compared to the population statistics of the province

- The questionnaire responses were converted into a quantitative format as each of the four answer options was numbered 1,2,3 and 4 and the relevant number was recorded on an excel spread sheet for each question posed.
- Frequency calculations were then expressed as a percentage for each category.

The school-readiness questionnaire (section B) was further analysed:

- A marking sheet was created which described the correct expectations of school-readiness for a child entering into formal Grade 1 level of schooling. (see appendix F).
- Frequency calculations for each skill was compared with the marking sheet. Correct expectations vs incorrect expectations were established and captured graphically.

In order to answer the second objective of the study, demographic factors were obtained through the first section of the questionnaire and were compared to frequency of correct and incorrect answers in section B of the questionnaire. During the data analysis, two questions from Section A were eliminated from the results. The first question eliminated was Question 11: "How old was your child at the start of his Grade 1 level of education?" This question was eliminated as the Grade R

parents/caregivers did not complete this question as their child was not in Grade 1 yet.

The second question was Question 12: "Do you have access to and make use of any of the following resources:

- a. Reading books
- b. Puzzles
- c. Academic books
- d. Technologies (computers, iPad, iPod)
- e. Toys (dolls, blocks, ropes)
- f. Jungle gyms and/or trampolines

Majority of parents/caregivers failed to answer this question or answered both yes and no to the question. Thus this question was excluded..

Non parametric statistics were used as the sample was not normally distributed. The Kushkal Wallis (ANOVA) was used to determine a statistical difference between the demographic factors the school readiness expectations. These differences were demonstrated using box and whisker plot graphs.

3.9 Conclusion

A quantitative, descriptive, cross sectional correlation study design was used in this research. Parents/caregivers of Grade R and/or Grade 1 school-going children attending urban schools in and around Johannesburg within the Gauteng Province were targeted. Initially the aim was to use 6 schools. However, in the end only 3 schools responded (one private school and two public schools where included). A stratified sampling technique was used to select the schools in an effort to allow for all demographic factors as identified in the literature to be covered within the research.

There were only two inclusion criteria, these included participants to be English speaking as the questionnaires were only available in English. Additionally all participants needed to be 18 years or older in order to be considered an adult.

The data collection tool was developed specifically for this research by the researcher. The tool was created through using literature and developmental criteria

obtained from the CAPS curriculum standards as well as taking cognisance of the IEB for Foundational Learning Competency. The data collection tool was split into two sections: Section A considered the demographic information of each participant while Section B looked at the school entry criteria expected of a child entering formal schooling.

Validity and reliability of the questionnaire was obtained through three experts (2 occupational therapists and one remedial teacher) working with the field of paediatrics where given the objectives of the study and asked to critique the questionnaire in accordance with objectives. Changes were made in accordance with their feedback. Thereafter a pilot study was done with 8 parents completing the questionnaire to determine flow, ease of completion as well as time taken to complete the questionnaire.

All ethical clearance and permissions were obtained before the data collection was put into place. All research questionnaires were anonymous and did not require personal details of any participants.

Questionnaires were handed out to the three schools to be distributed to the parents/caregivers of the Grade 1 pupils. Some schools handed out the questionnaires to the Grade R parents/caregivers as well thus they were also included in the study. After the questionnaires had been returned to the researcher, data analysis was performed on section A and Section B of the questionnaire. Some questions were eliminated from the study due to limited detail and lack of specificity. Results were tabulated and recorded graphically. All information was then analysed and correlation studies were run to determine any influence demographic factors may have played on knowledge of school readiness.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

4.1 Introduction

Of the 510 questionnaires handed out, 210 questionnaires were returned. Only 180 questionnaires completed by the participants could be analysed. Thus the return rate was 35,29% (n=180). This number was slightly less than the 196 which was the target number. Three of the questionnaires were started but not completed and 27 of the returned questionnaires were not completed at all. Some participants did not fully complete all demographic information sheet (Section A) these however were still included in the analysis. However, only questionnaires which had a fully completed Section B were included in the results. The answers recorded in Section A of the questionnaire (the demographic questions) were captured in accordance with the response rate for each question. These have then been represented in a percentage in the results.

The results will be reported in three sections.

Section 1 (see 4.2) reported the demographic information of the sample.

Section 2 (see 4.3) recorded the parent/caregiver knowledge in comparison to the expected knowledge in accordance with literature criteria expected of school readiness. This section reported the findings in keeping with objective 1 of the research: To determine the knowledge parents/caregivers have with regards to school-readiness of children.

Section 3 (see 4.4) recorded the correlations between the demography and the parents/caregivers overall knowledge of school-readiness. This section reported the findings in keeping with objective 2 of the research. To determine if any demographic factors may influence parent/caregiver knowledge of school-readiness.

4.2 Section 1: Demography of the sample

4.2.1 Age of parents/caregivers

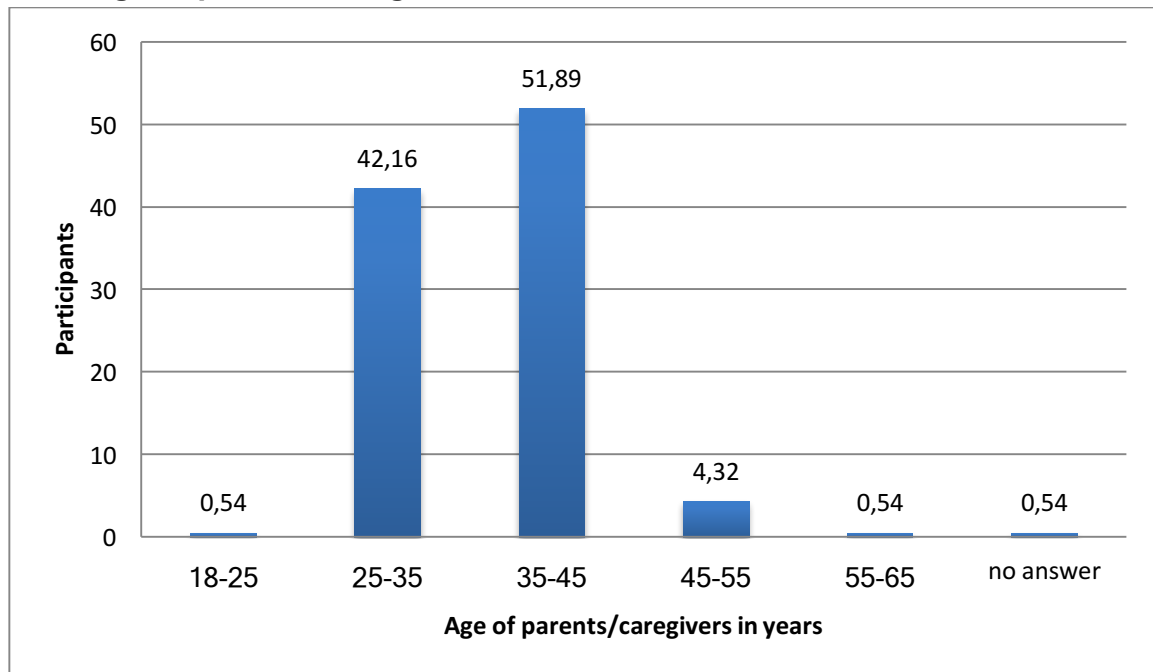


Figure 4.2.1: Ages of the participants

Five participants recorded two ages. Majority of parents/caregivers fell within 35-45 age group (51.89%) while the second largest group was the 25-35 age group (42.16%). A limitation was that the categories of age overlapped i.e. people aged 25, 35, 45 and 55 could mark either category.

4.2.2 Family home language

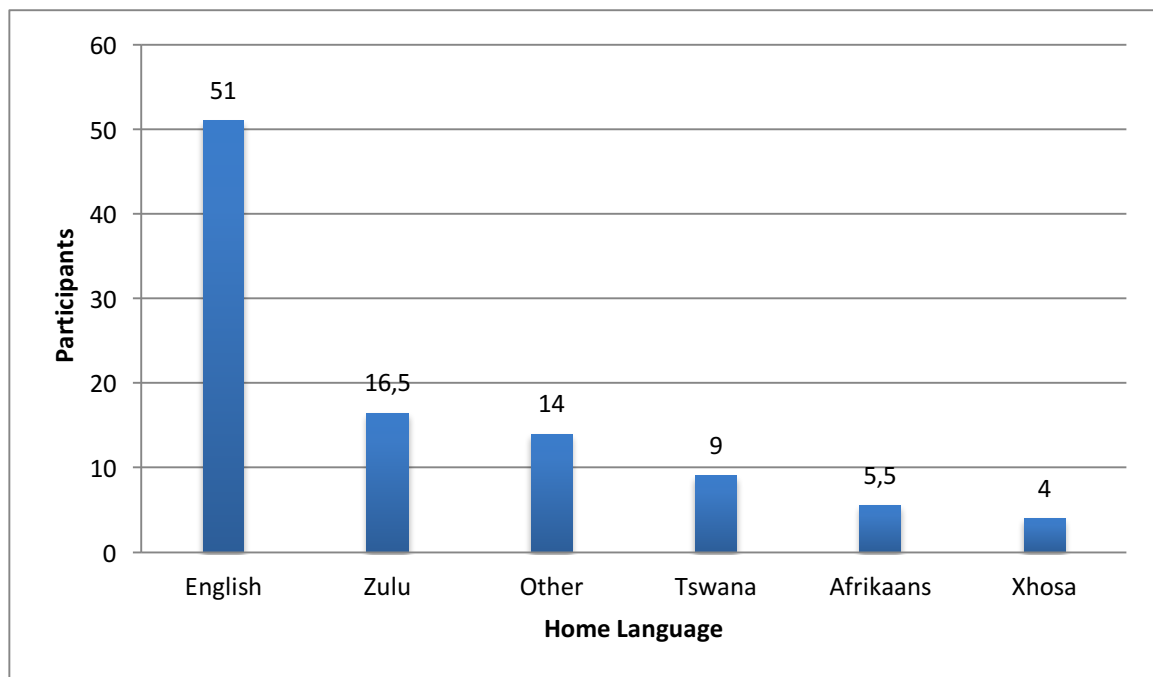
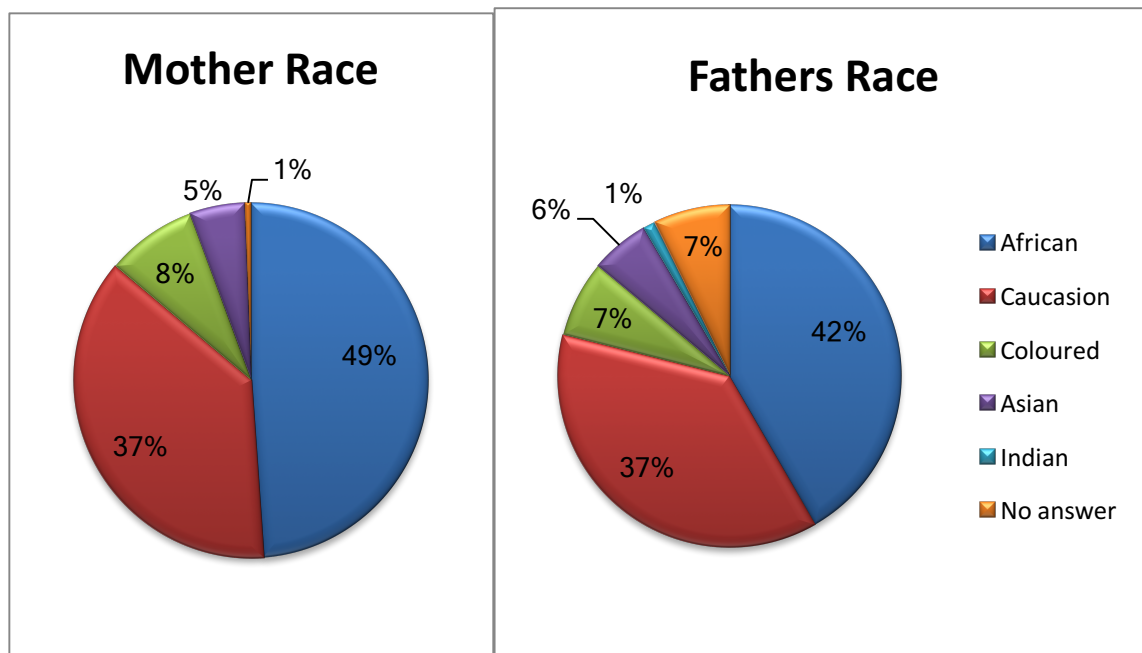


Figure 4.2.2: Home language of participants

Eighteen participants reported that they spoke two languages and 1 participant spoke three languages at home. Majority of participants were English speaking (51%), this was followed by Zulu speaking (16.5%).

4.2.3 Racial Distribution



4.2.3: Race of participants

Majority of mothers and fathers indicated that they belonged to the African racial groups (49%), followed by Caucasian racial group (37%). There was however differences in percentages between the mothers and fathers indicating mixed race families.

4.2.4 Parent/Caregiver education level

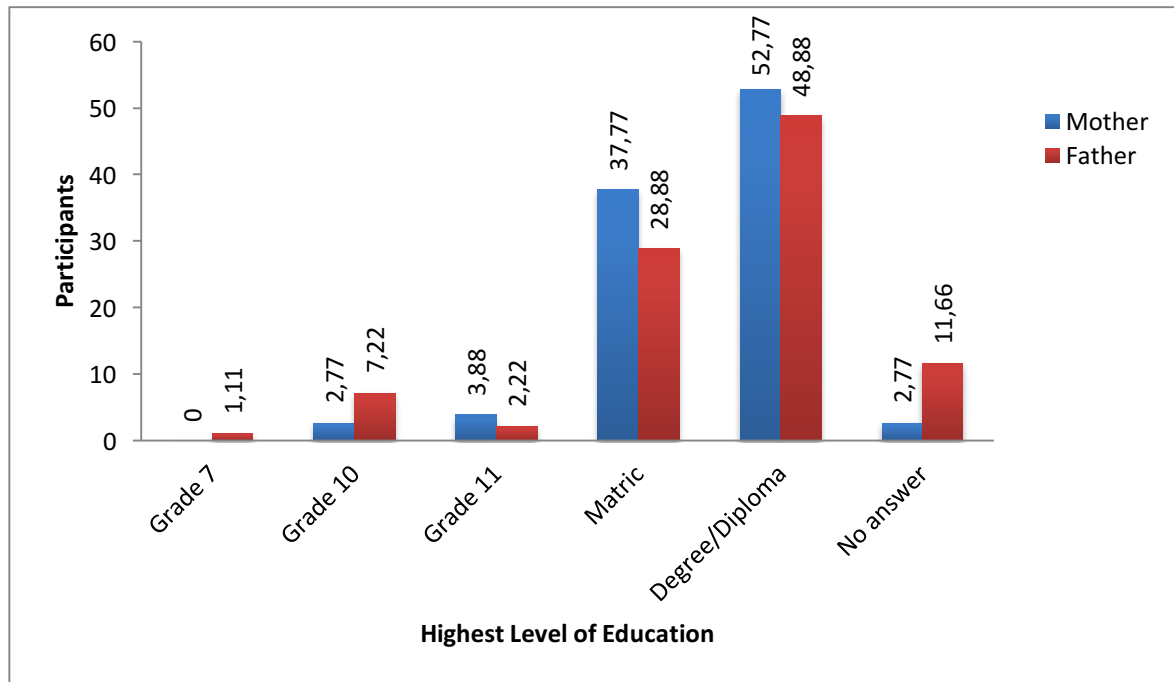


Figure 4.2.4 The level of education of the participants

Majority of the mothers and fathers had a degree and/or diploma (52.77% and 48.88% respectively). As can be seen from Figure 4.2.4 more mothers had a matric and/or a degree/diploma than fathers.

4.2.5 Participant level of income

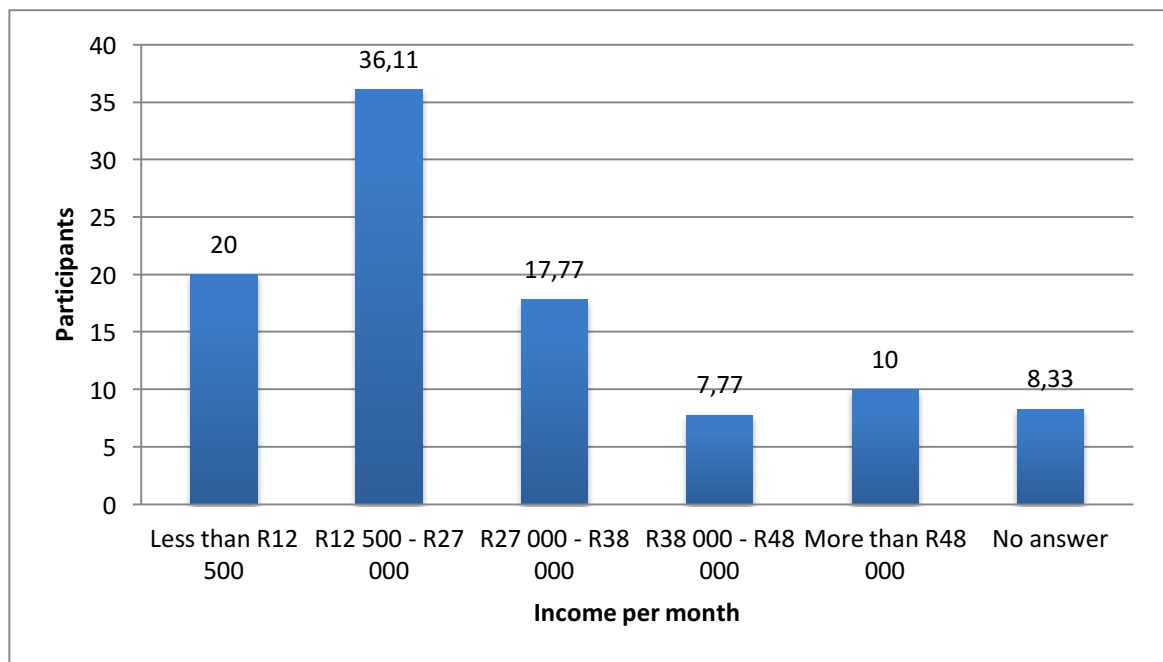


Figure 4.2.5: Level of income (per month) for participants

Figure 4.2.5 reports that the majority of participants earned a monthly income of between R12 500 and R27 000 (36.11%), this was followed by an income of less than R12 500 (20%), closely followed by income of R27 000– R38000 (17.77%).

4.2.6 Single parent household

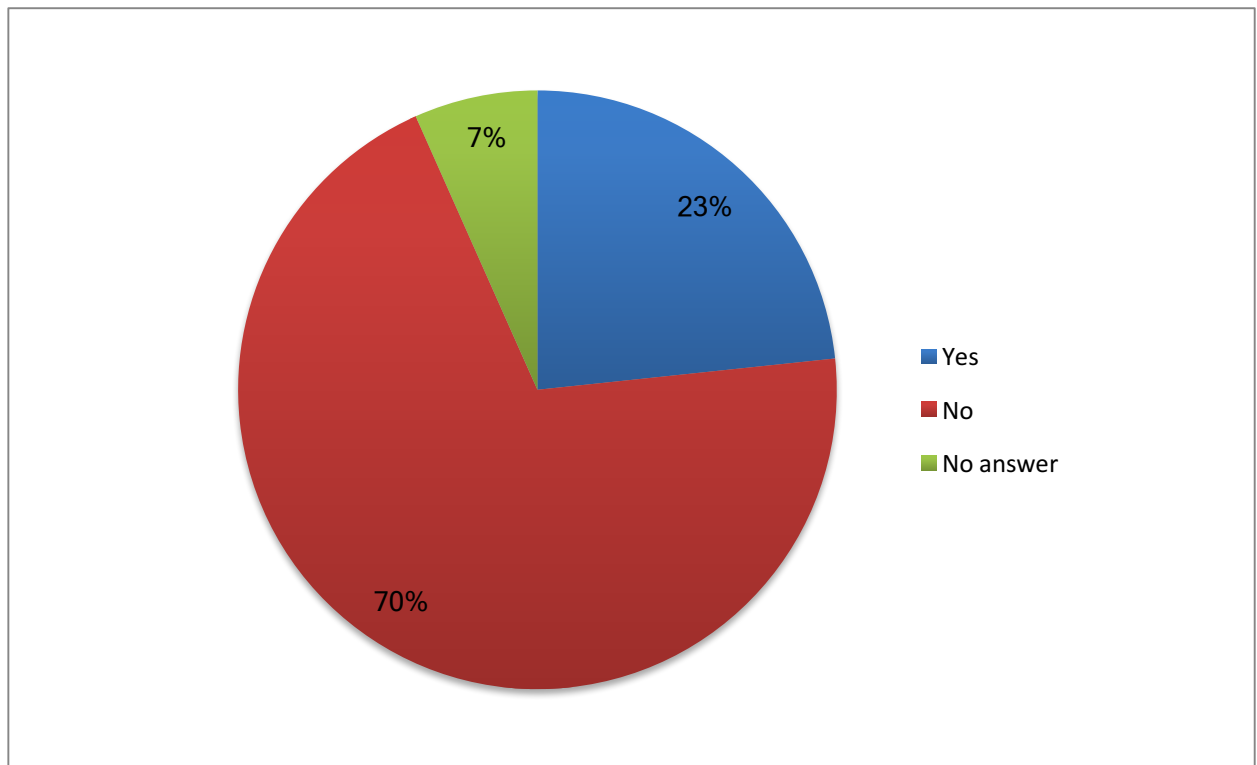


Figure 4.2.6: Single parent households

As can be seen from Figure 4.2.6 the majority of households where not single parent households (70%)

4.2.7 Number of children in the household

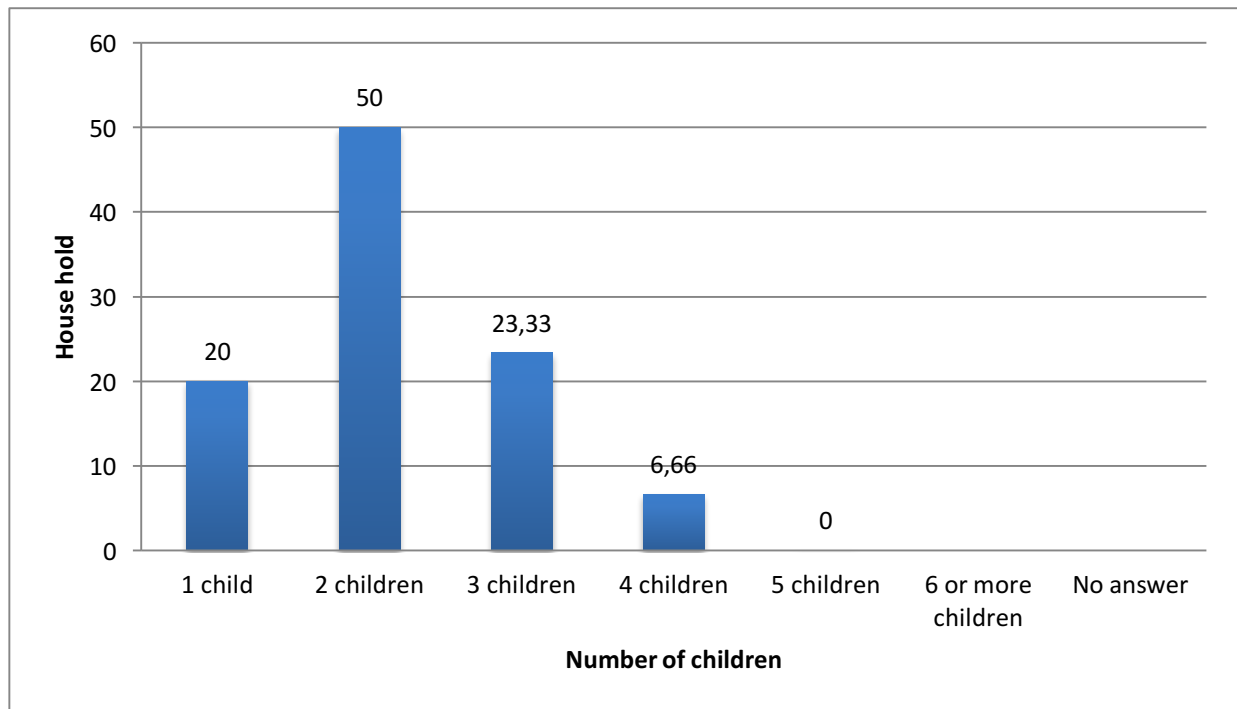


Figure 4.2.7: Number of children in participant households

Figure 4.2.7 reports that the majority of parents/caregivers had 2 children in their household (50%), followed by 3 children (23.33%).

4.2.8 Children in household over 7 years

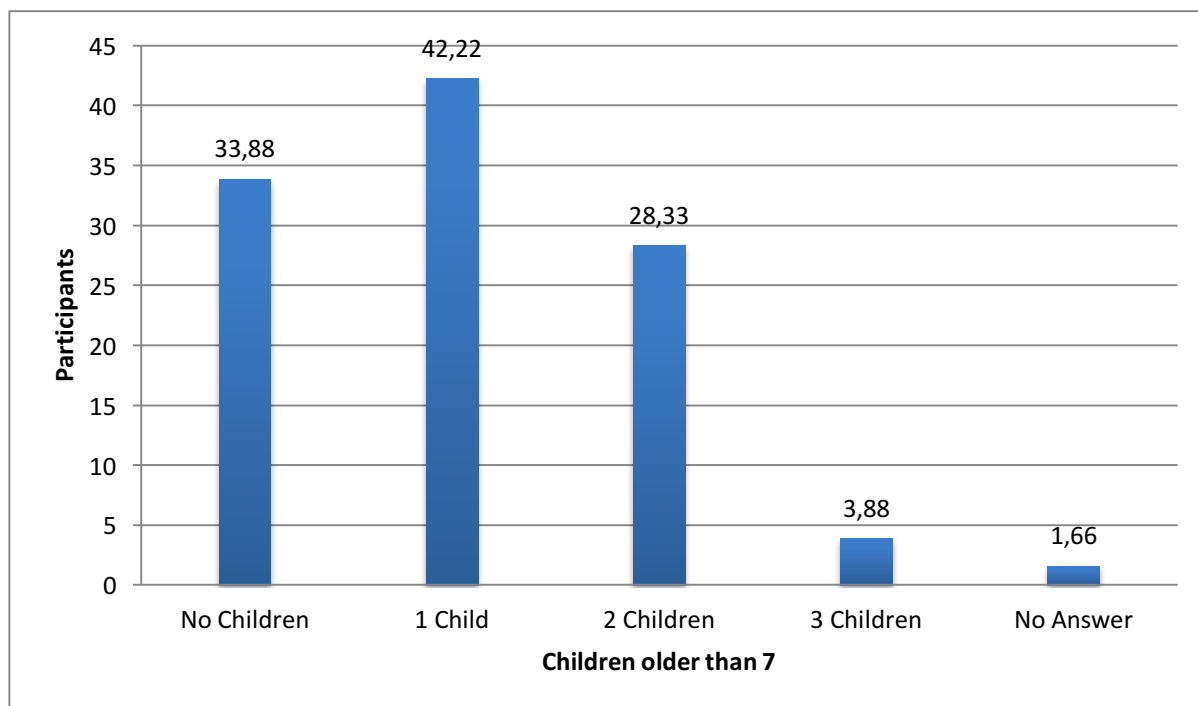


Figure 4.2.8 Number of children over 7 years within participant households

Majority of the households had 1 child older than 7 years (42.22%) as is indicated in Table 4.2.8. followed by no children older than 7 years (33.88%).

4.2.9 Child's attendance to preschool/crèche and/or nursery school

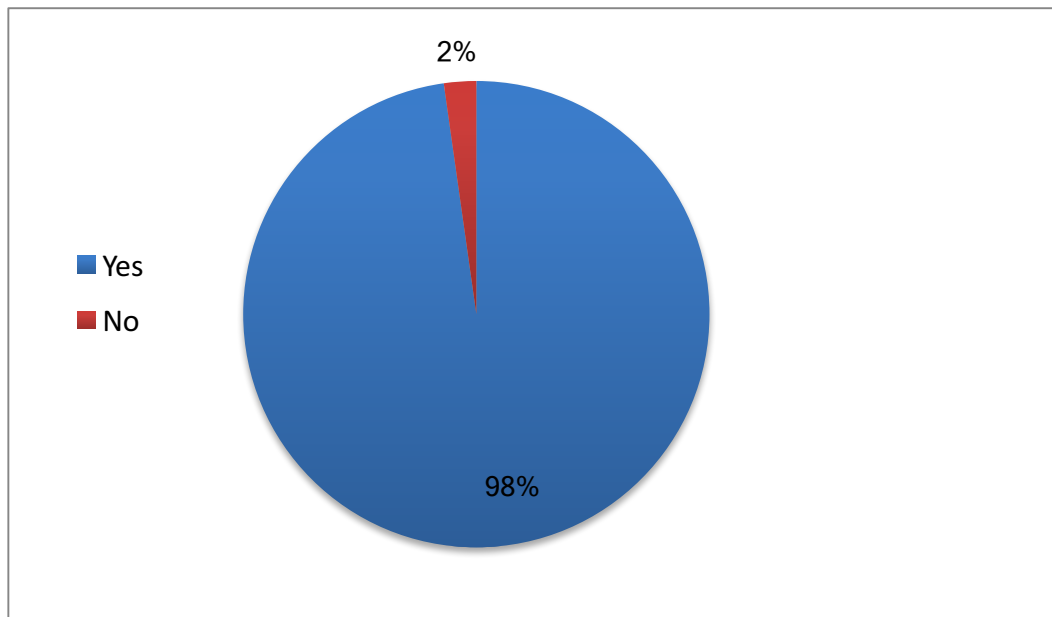


Figure 4.2.9 Children that attend preschool/crèche and/or nursery school

Figure 4.2.9 reports that the majority of the children (98%) had attended preschool/crèche and/or nursery school.

4.2.10 Is your child cared for by someone else on a daily basis?

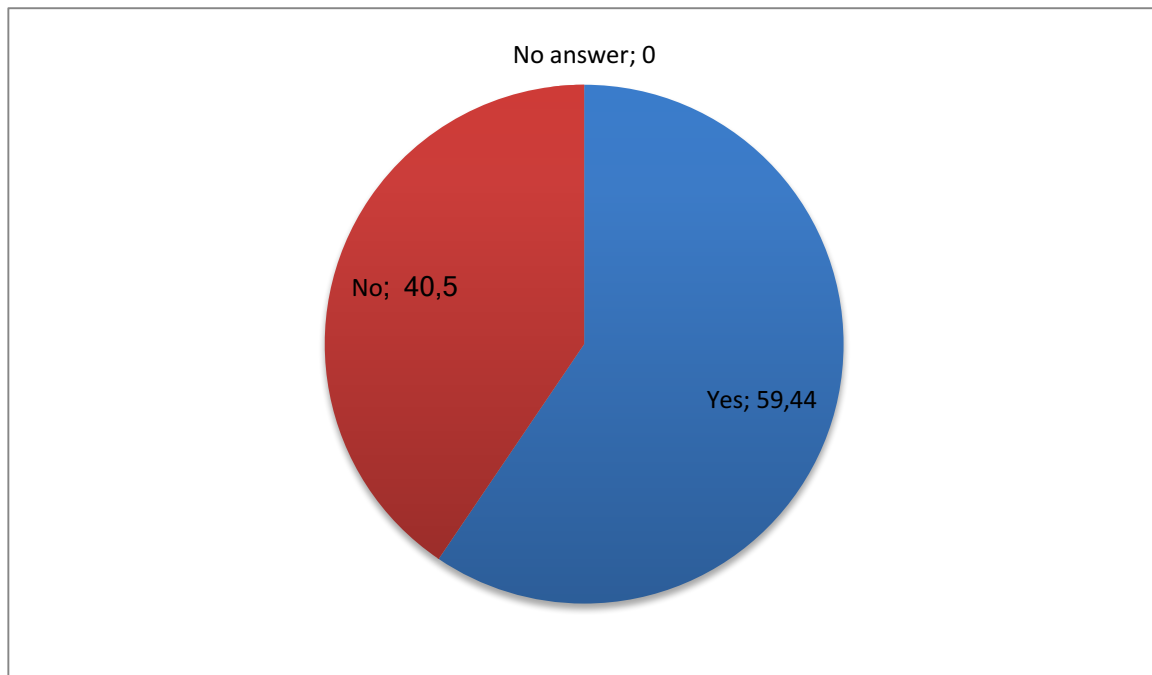


Figure 4.2.10.1: Children cared for by someone else during the day

Majority of children where cared for by another person(s) (59.44%) after school hours as can be seen in Figure 4.2.10.1. One participant who said their child is not cared for by someone after school marked a family member in 4.2.10.2.

4.2.11 Carer of child other than the parent/caregiver?

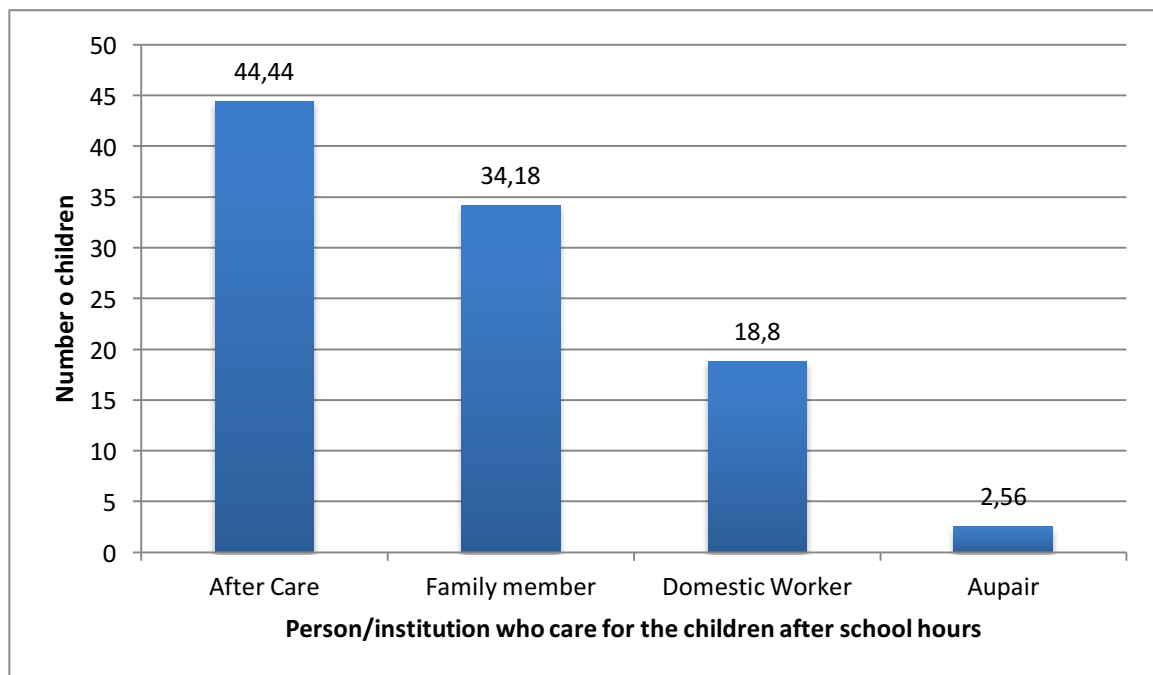


Figure 4.2.10.2: Carers of children after school hours

Figure 4.2.10.2 reports that the majority of children attended aftercare after school (44.44%). Of the responses three participants marked two answers as to who cares for their child after school, and 3 participants marked 3 answers as to who cares for their child after school. One participant who said their child is not cared for after school hours by someone else (see figure 4.2.10.1) stated that a family member looks after their child after school.

4.3 Section 2: Results of School-readiness Assessment

The results of this section were related to Objective 1: To determine the knowledge parents/caregivers have with regards to school-readiness of children.

4.3.1 Listening Skills

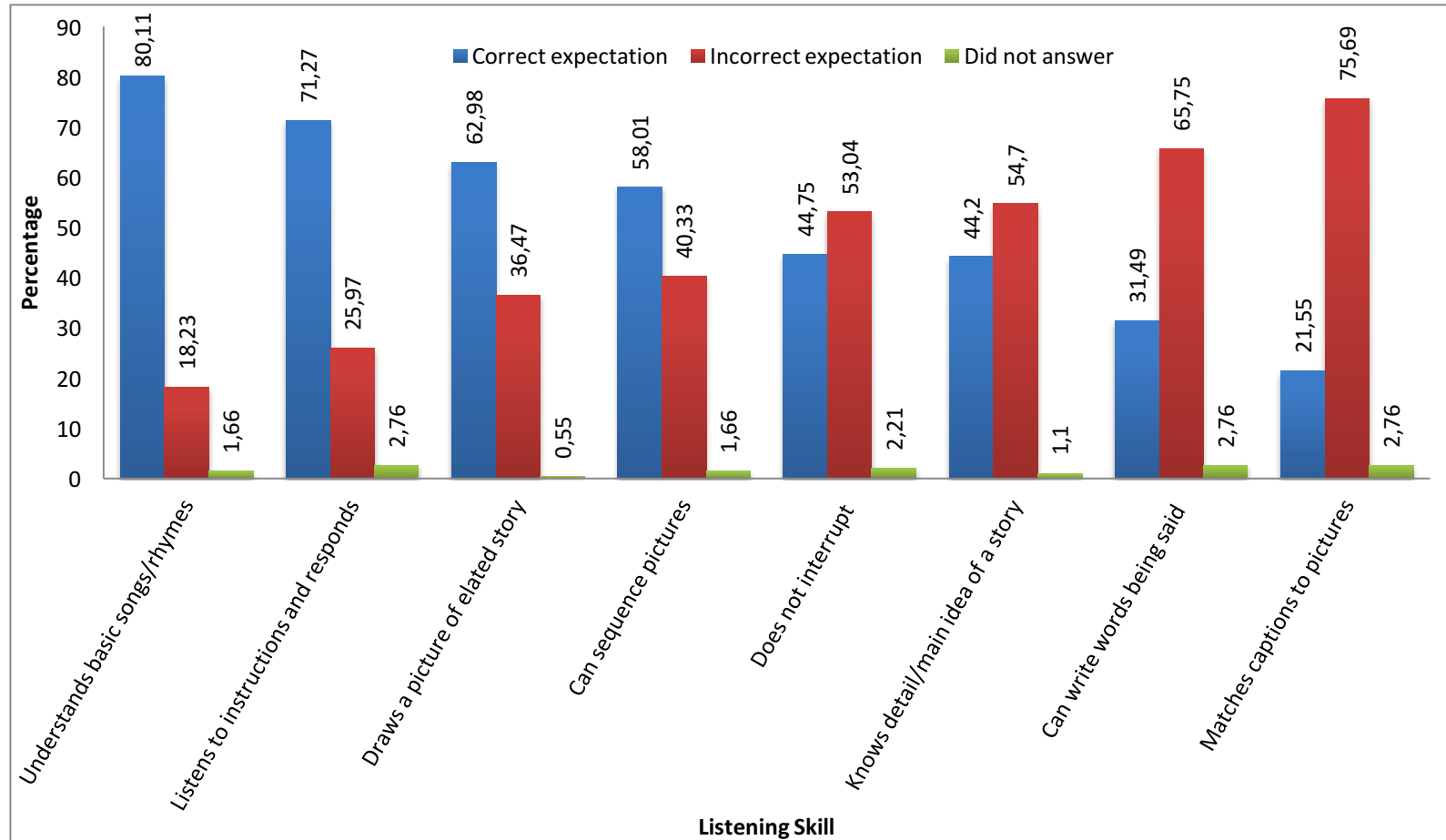


Figure 4.3.1: Parents/Caregivers expectations versus actual expectations of listening skills

Figure 4.3.1 reports participant ratings on the eight listening variables. The majority of parents rated four of the variables within the correct expectation of school-readiness (80.1%-58%). On the remaining four variables, the majority of parents' ratings were incorrect in relation to school-readiness expectation. Overall, 51.75% of participants had correct expectation of school-readiness expectations for listening skills.

The details of the incorrect expectations are reported in Table 4.3.1

Table 4.3.1: Over and under estimation of parents/caregivers expectations for listening skills (results displayed in percentage)

	Correct expectation	Over estimation	Under estimation	Unsure
Does not interrupt others	44,75 (n=81)		49,73 (n=90)	3,31 (n=6)
Knows details/main idea of a story	44,2 (n=80)		49,18 (n=89)	5,52 (n=10)
Can write words being said	31,49 (n=57)	61,88 (n=112)		3,87 (n=7)
Matches captions to pictures	21,55 (n=39)	72,93 (n=132)		2,76 (n=5)

Table 4.3.1 Majority of participants overestimated two of the variables and underestimated two of the variables.

4.3.2 Speaking Abilities

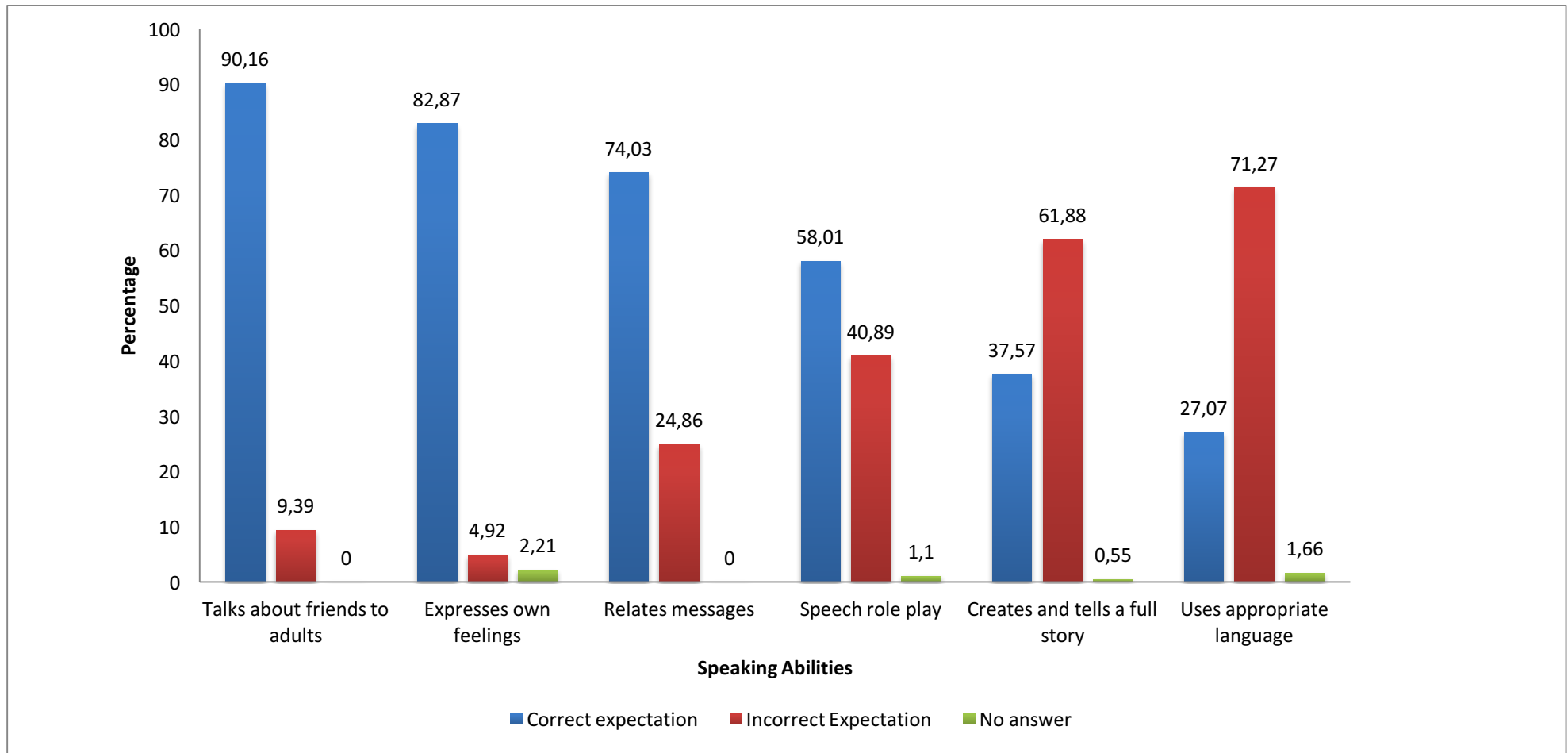


Figure 4.3.2: Parents/Caregivers expectations versus actual expectations of speaking abilities

Figure 4.3.2 shows that majority of participants marked the correct expectation on four of the speaking variables with regards to school-readiness with frequencies ranging from 90.16-58.01%. There were only two variables where majority of participants

incorrectly rated variables which were not in keeping with school-readiness expectations (61.8-71.29%). Overall, 61.69% of participants had correct expectation of school-readiness expectations for speaking abilities.

The incorrect expectations with regards to speaking variables as a school-readiness requirement are displayed in Figure 4.3.2:

Table 4.3.2: Over and under estimation of parents/caregivers expectations for speaking abilities (results displayed in percentage)

	Correct expectation	Over estimation	Underestimation	Unsure
Creates and tells a full story	37,57 (n=68)	49,17 (n=89)	11,05 (n=20)	1,66 (n=3)
Uses appropriate language	27,07 (n=49)	55,25 (n=100)	11,05 (n=20)	4,97 (n=9)

Table 4.3.2 reports on the two variables where participants reported an over estimation of their child's school-readiness abilities (49.17-55.25%) as well as 11.05% under estimation on the same two variables.

4.3.3 Reading and viewing skills

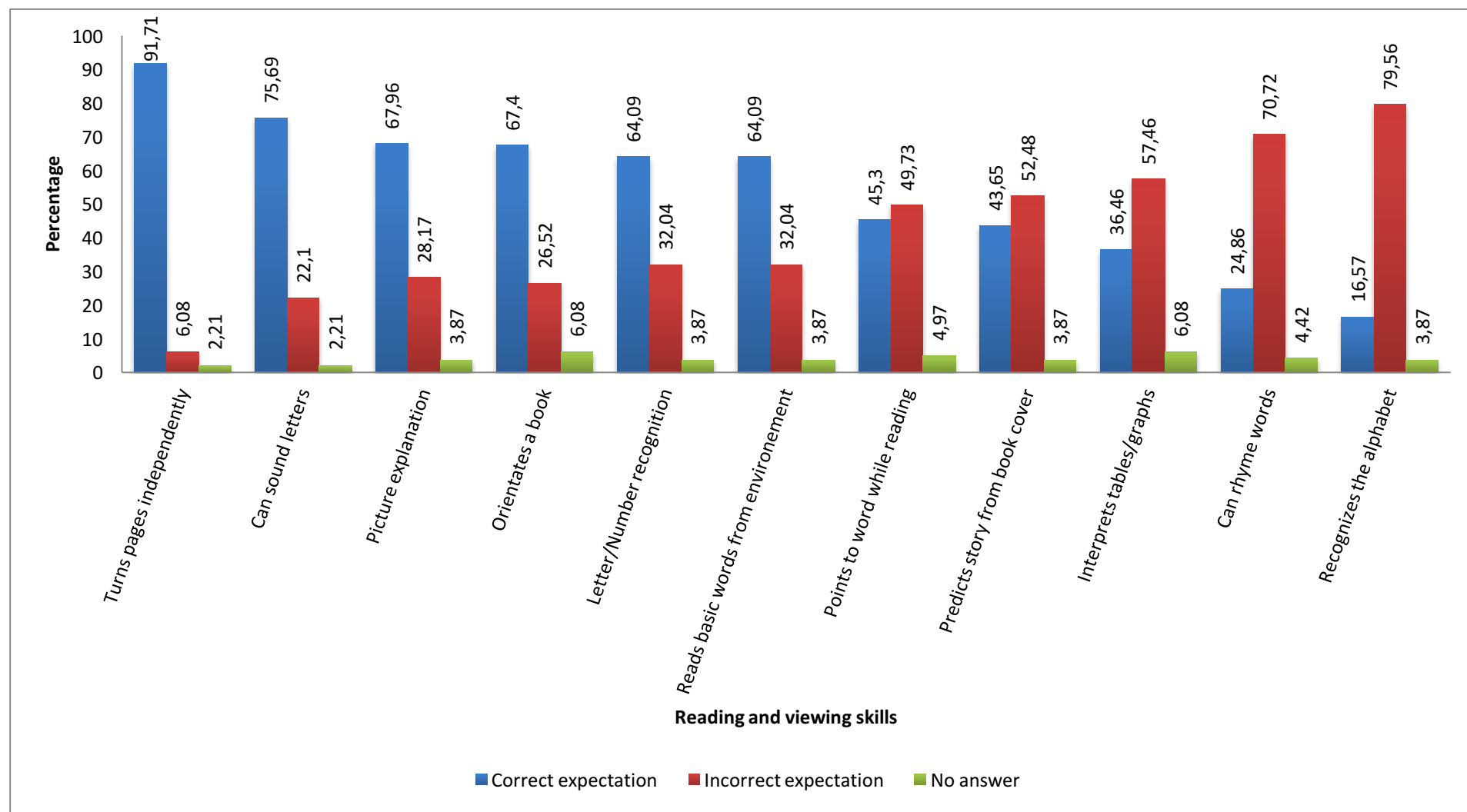


Figure 4.3.3: Parents/caregivers expectations versus actual expectations for reading and viewing skills

Figure 4.3.3 showed that the majority of participants displayed the correct expectation on six of the eleven variables for reading and viewing skills in keeping with school-readiness expectations, with frequencies ranging from 91.71–64.09%. There were five variables where majority of participants incorrectly rated variables for school-readiness expectations (49.73-79.56%). Overall, 48.21% of participants had correct expectation of school-readiness expectations for reading and viewing.

Table 4.3.3 records the details of the incorrect expectations for reading and viewing:

Table 4.3.3: Over and under estimation of parents/caregivers expectations for reading and viewing skills (results displayed in percentage).

	Correct expectation	Over estimation	Underestimation	Unsure
Points to words while reading	45,3 (n=82)		44,76 (n=81)	4,97 (n=9)
Predicts story from a book cover	43,65 (n=79)		48,61 (n=88)	3,87 (n=7)
Interprets graphs and tables	36,47 (n=66)	69,07 (n=85)		10,49 (n=19)
Can rhyme words	24,86 (n=45)	51,38 (n=93)	15,47 (n=28)	3,87 (n=7)
Recognizes the alphabet	16,57 (n=30)	71,82 (n=130)	7,73 (n=14)	

Table 4.3.3 reports on the three variables where participants reported an underestimation of their child's ability with regards to school-readiness (44.76–48.61%). Additionally there were three variables where the majority of parents over estimated a child's ability to do this when entering into formal schooling (51.38-71.82%).

4.3.4 Writing Abilities

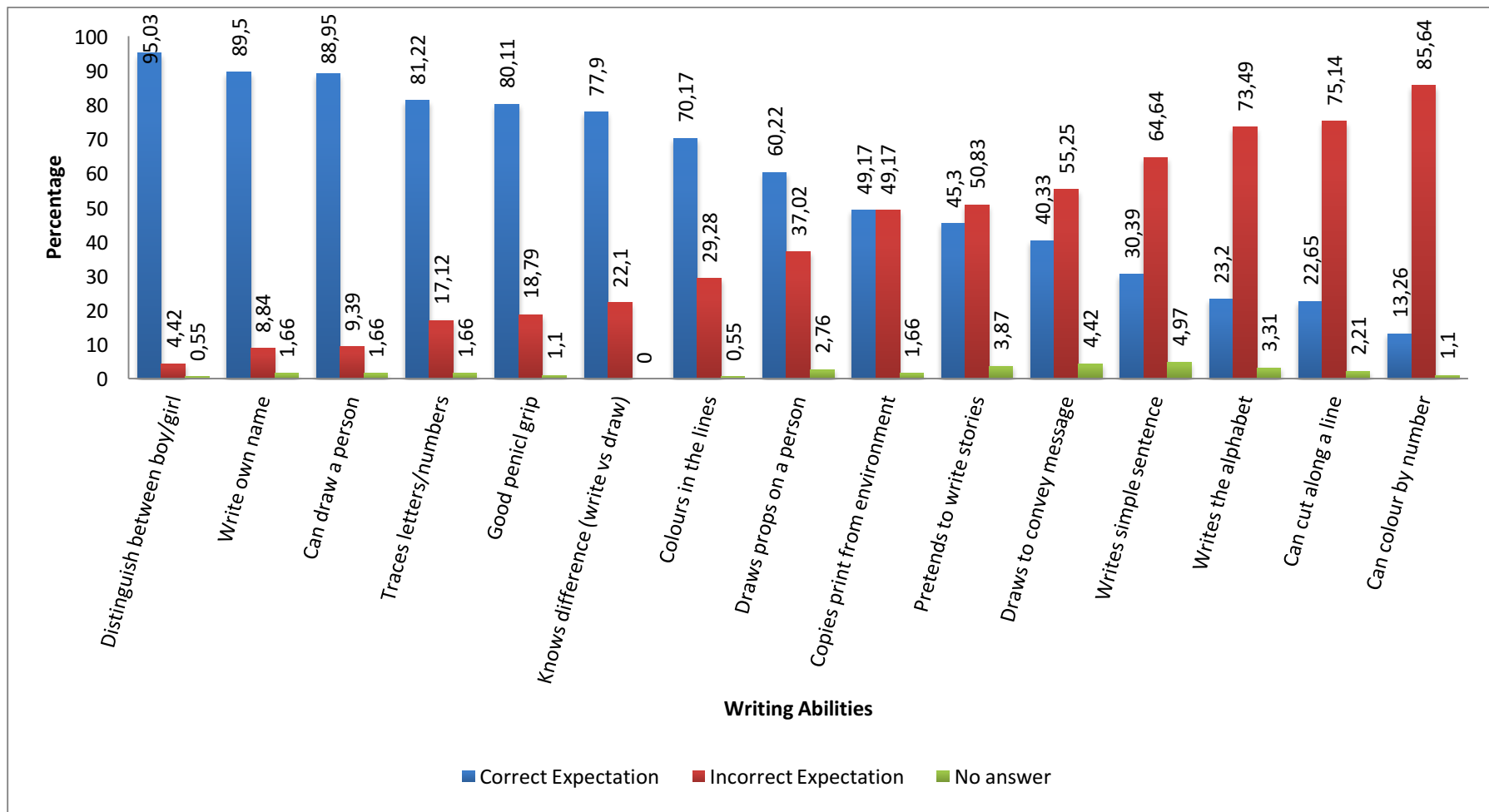


Figure 4.3.4: Parents/Caregiver expectation versus actual expectation for writing abilities.

Figure 4.3.4 reports that majority of participants accurately rated eight of the fifteen writing ability variables as an expectation of school-readiness (frequency 95.03-60.22%). There were seven variables which were rated inaccurately by participants as an

expectation of school-readiness. Overall, 57.82% of participants had correct expectation of school-readiness expectations for writing ability.

Table 4.3.3 displays the details of the incorrect expectations found for writing ability variables:

Table 4.3.4: Over and under estimation of parents/caregivers expectations for writing abilities (results displayed in percentage).

	Correct expectation	Over estimation	Underestimation	Unsure
Copies print from the environment	49,17 (n=89)		41,99 (n=76)	7,18 (n=13)
Pretends to write stories	45,3 (n=82)		33,15 (n=60)	17,68 (n=32)
Draws to convey a message	40,33 (n=73)		45,31 (n=82)	9,94 (n=18)
Writes simple sentences	30,39 (n=55)	59,12 (n=107)		5,52 (n=10)
Writes the alphabet	23,2 (n=42)	68,52 (n=124)		4,97 (n=9)
Can cut along a line	22,69 (n=41)	69,61 (n=126)	4,97 (n=9)	0,55 (n=1)
Can colour by number	13,26 (n=24)	82,88 (n=150)		2,76 (n=5)

Table 4.3.4 reports on the three items where participants reported an underestimation of a child's ability with regards to school-readiness (33.15–45.32%). as well as the four items where majority of parents over estimated a child's ability when entering into formal schooling (59.12–82.88%).

4.3.5 Numerical Skills

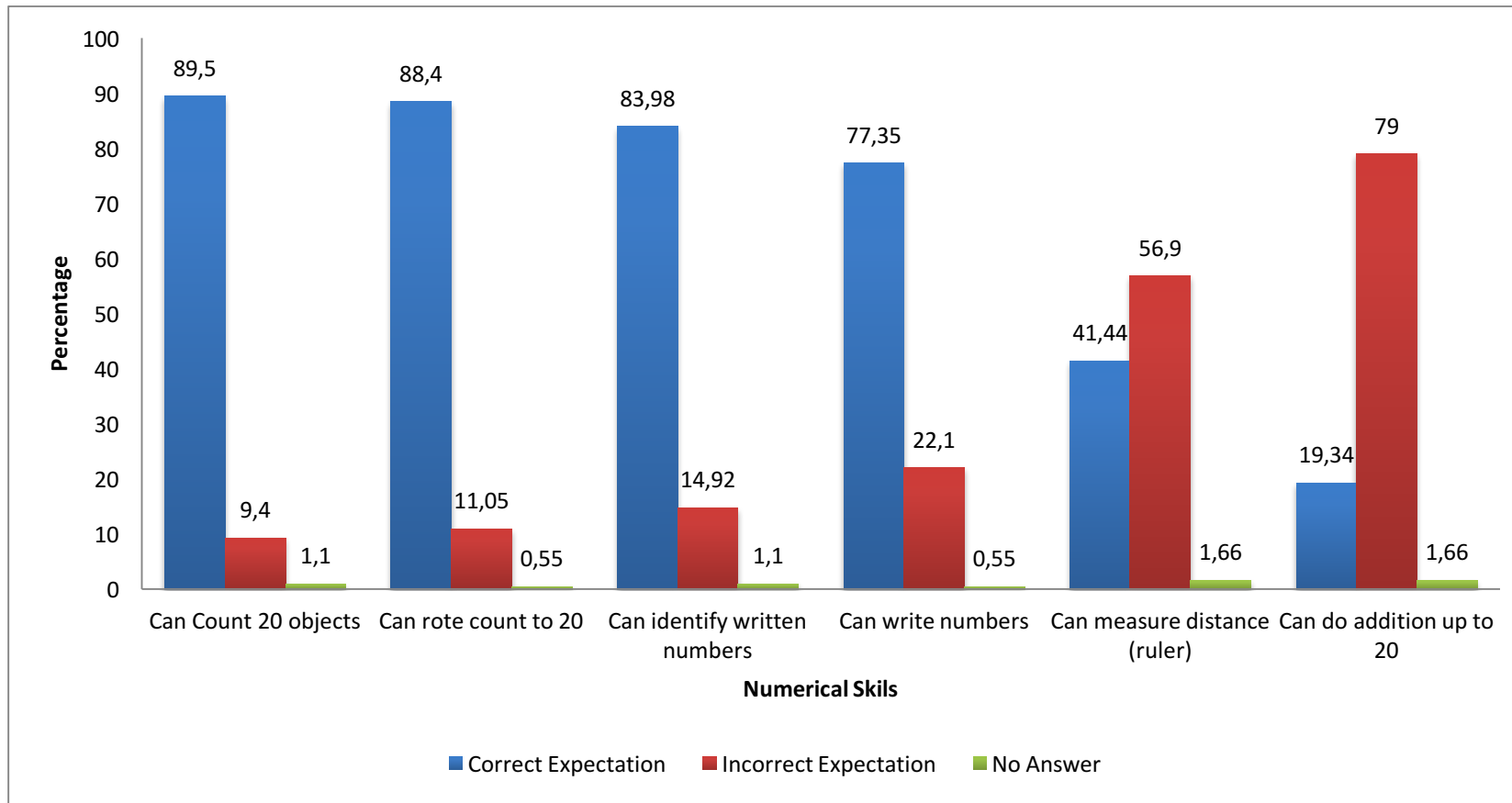


Figure 4.3.5: Parents/caregivers expectations versus actual expectation for numerical skills

Figure 4.3.5 shows there were only two variables where majority of participants incorrectly rated variables as an expectation for school-readiness (56.9 - 79%). Overall, 66.66% of participants had correct expectation of school-readiness expectations for numerical skills. Majority of participants displayed the correct expectation on four of the numerical skills with regards to school-readiness with frequencies ranging from 89.5–77.35%.

Table 4.3.5: Over and Under estimation of parents/caregivers expectations for numerical skills (results displayed in percentage).

	Correct expectation	Over estimation	Underestimation	Unsure
Can measure distance (ruler)	41,44 (n=75)	39,22 (n=71)		14,36 (n=32)
Can do addition up to 20	19,34 (n=35)	77,34 (n=140)		1,66 (n=3)

Table 4.3.5 reports on the two items where participants reported an over estimation of a child's ability with regards to school-readiness (77.34–39.22%).

4.3.6 Thinking and reasoning abilities

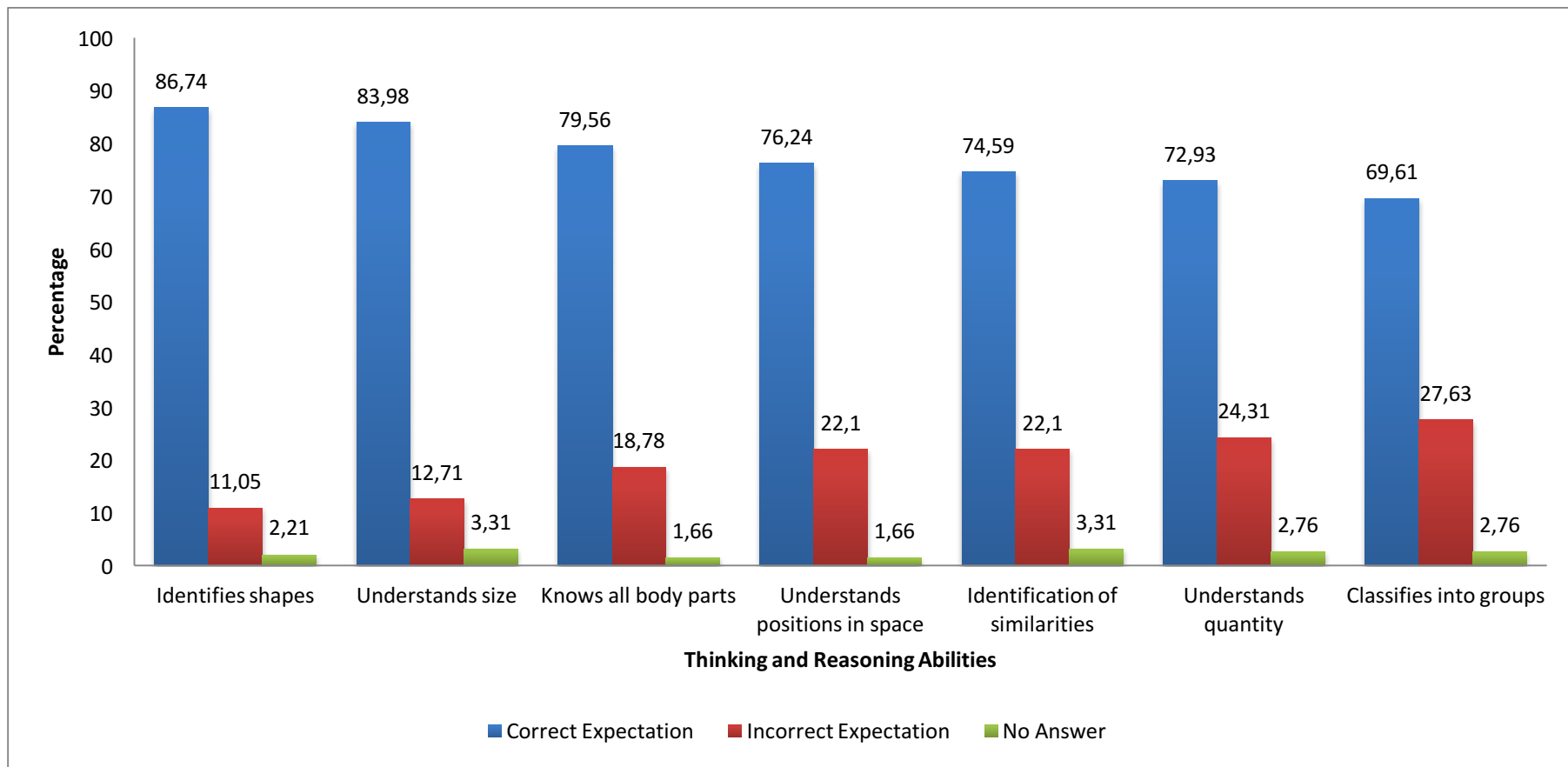


Figure 4.3.6: Parent/caregiver expectation versus actual expectation for thinking and reasoning abilities

Figure 4.3.6 shows that majority of participants displayed the correct expectation of all variables with regards to thinking and reasoning skills. Overall, 77.66% of participants had the correct expectation of school-readiness expectations for thinking and reasoning abilities.

4.3.7 Language structure and use

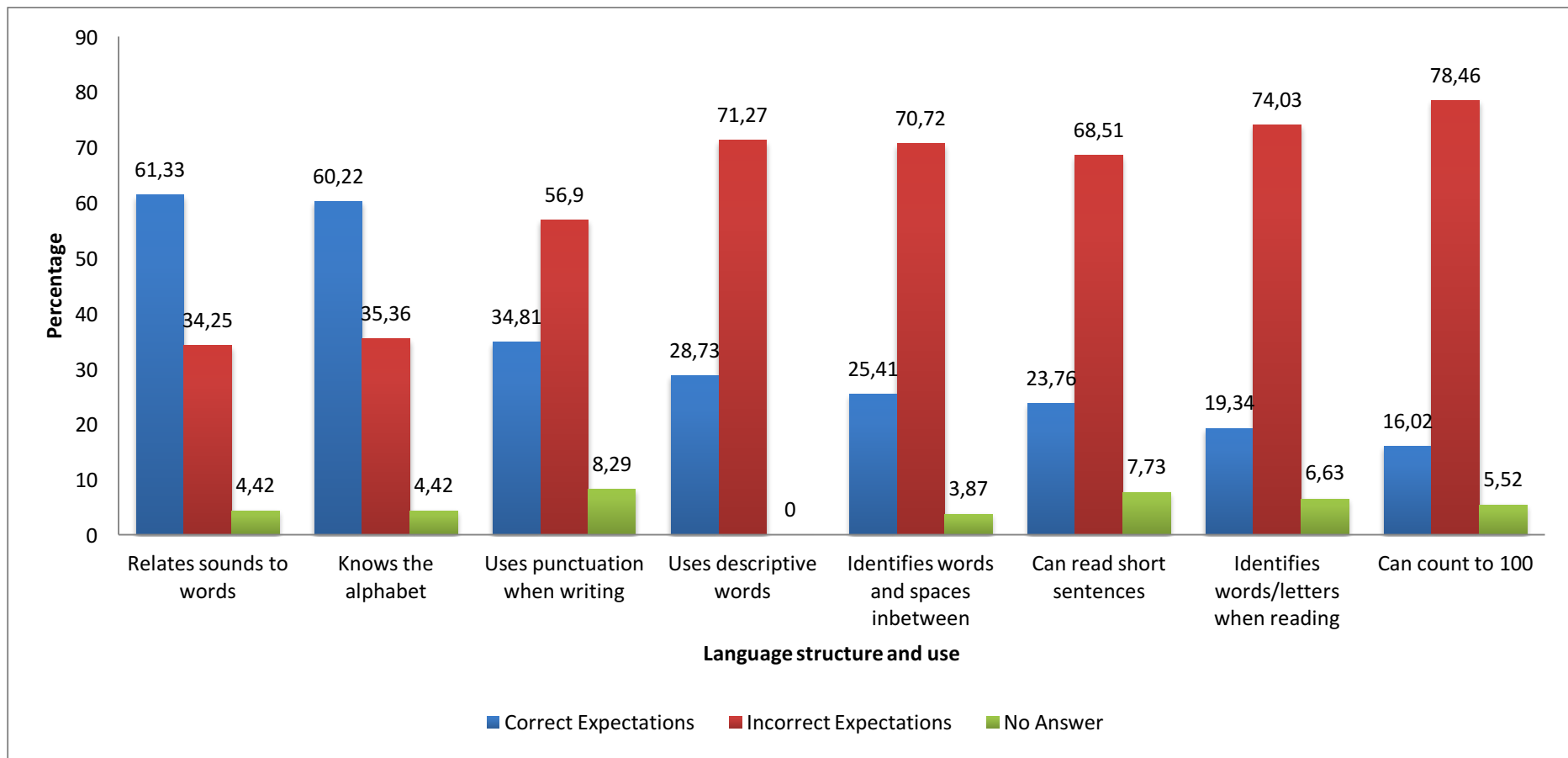


Figure 4.3.7: Parent/caregiver expectation versus actual expectation for language structure and use

Figure 4.3.7 shows that the majority of participants displayed the correct expectation on only two of the eight variables for language structure and use with regards to school-readiness with frequencies ranging from 60.22–61.33%. Majority of participants

incorrectly rated six of the variables as an expectation for school-readiness (56.9–78.46%). Overall, 33.7% of participants had correct expectation of school-readiness expectations for language structure and use.

Table 4.3.7: Over and under estimation of parents/caregivers expectations for language structure and use (results displayed in percentage).

	Correct expectation	Over estimation	Underestimation	Unsure
Uses punctuation when writing	34,81 (n=63)	44,75 (n=81)		12,15 (n=5)
Uses descriptive words	28,73 (n=52)	50,83 (n=92)	14,36 (n=26)	2,76 (n=5)
Identifies words and spaces in between	25,41 (n=46)	43,09 (n=78)	25,97 (n=47)	1,66 (n=3)
Can read short sentences	23,76 (n=43)	62,43 (n=113)		6,08 (n=11)
Identifies words/letters when reading	19,34 (n=35)	53,59 (n=97)	18,23 (n=33)	2,21 (n=4)
Can count to 100	16,02 (n=29)	72,38 (n=130)		6,08 (n=11)

Table 4.3.4 reports on the eight items where majority of participants reported an overestimation of a child's ability with regards to school-readiness (43.09–72.38%). Some parents displayed an underestimation of three of the items, with frequencies ranging from 14.36–25.97%.

4.3.8 Motor abilities

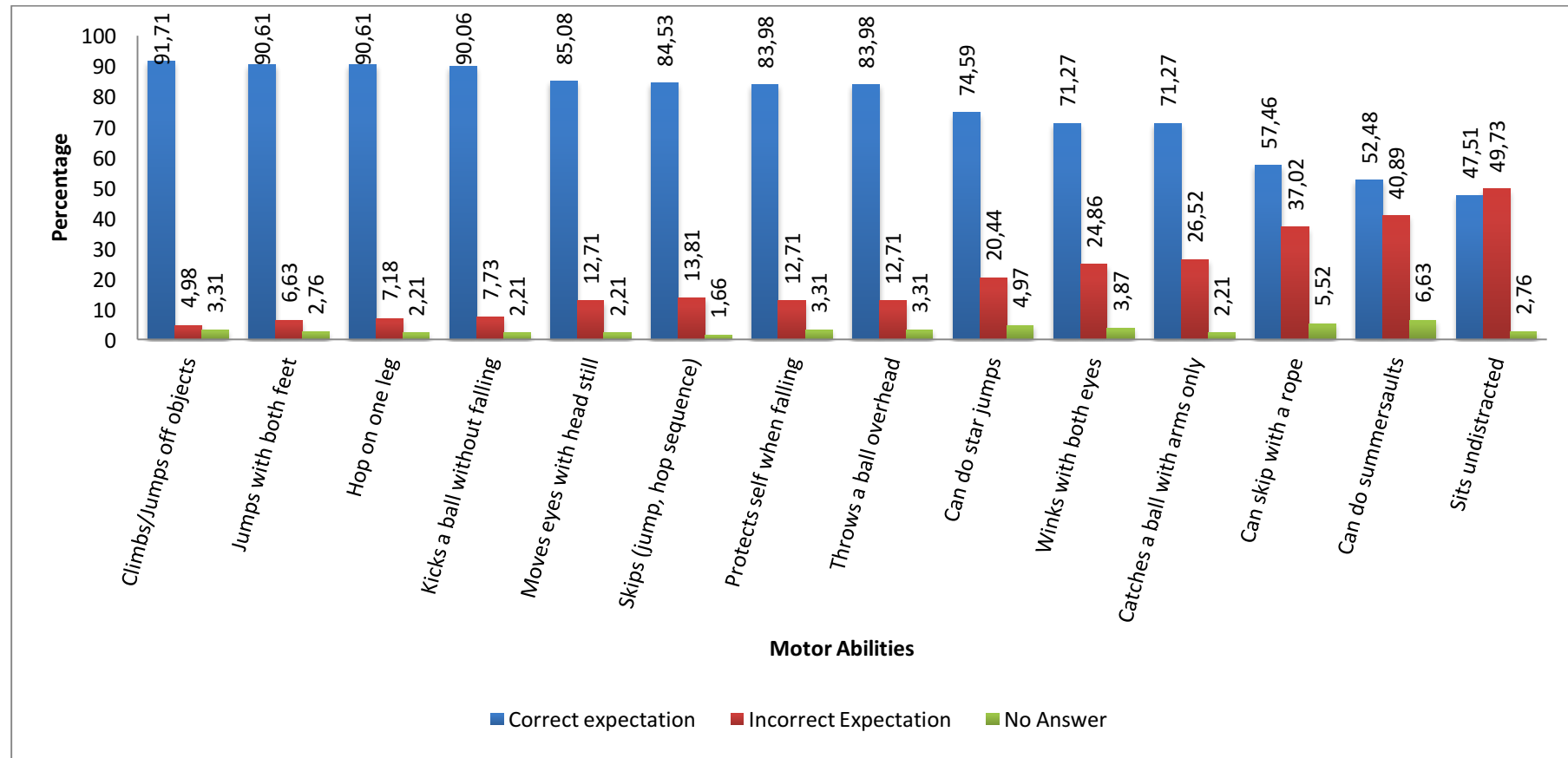


Figure 4.3.8: Parent/caregiver expectation versus actual expectations with regards to motor abilities

Figure 4.3.8 shows that majority of participants displayed correct expectation on thirteen of the fourteen variables for motor abilities with regards to school-readiness expectations, with frequencies ranging from 52.48–91.71%. Majority of participants incorrectly rated one of the variables as an expectation for school-readiness (49.73%). Overall, 76.79% of participants had correct expectation of school-readiness expectations for motor abilities.

Table 4.3.8. Over and under estimation of parents/caregivers expectations for motor abilities (results displayed in percentage).

	Correct expectation	Over estimation	Underestimation	Unsure
Sits undistracted	47,51 (n=86)		46,42 (n=84)	3,31 (n=6)

Table 4.3.8 reports that majority of participants showed underestimated a childs ability for one of the motor abilities variables (46.42%).

4.3.9 Life Skills

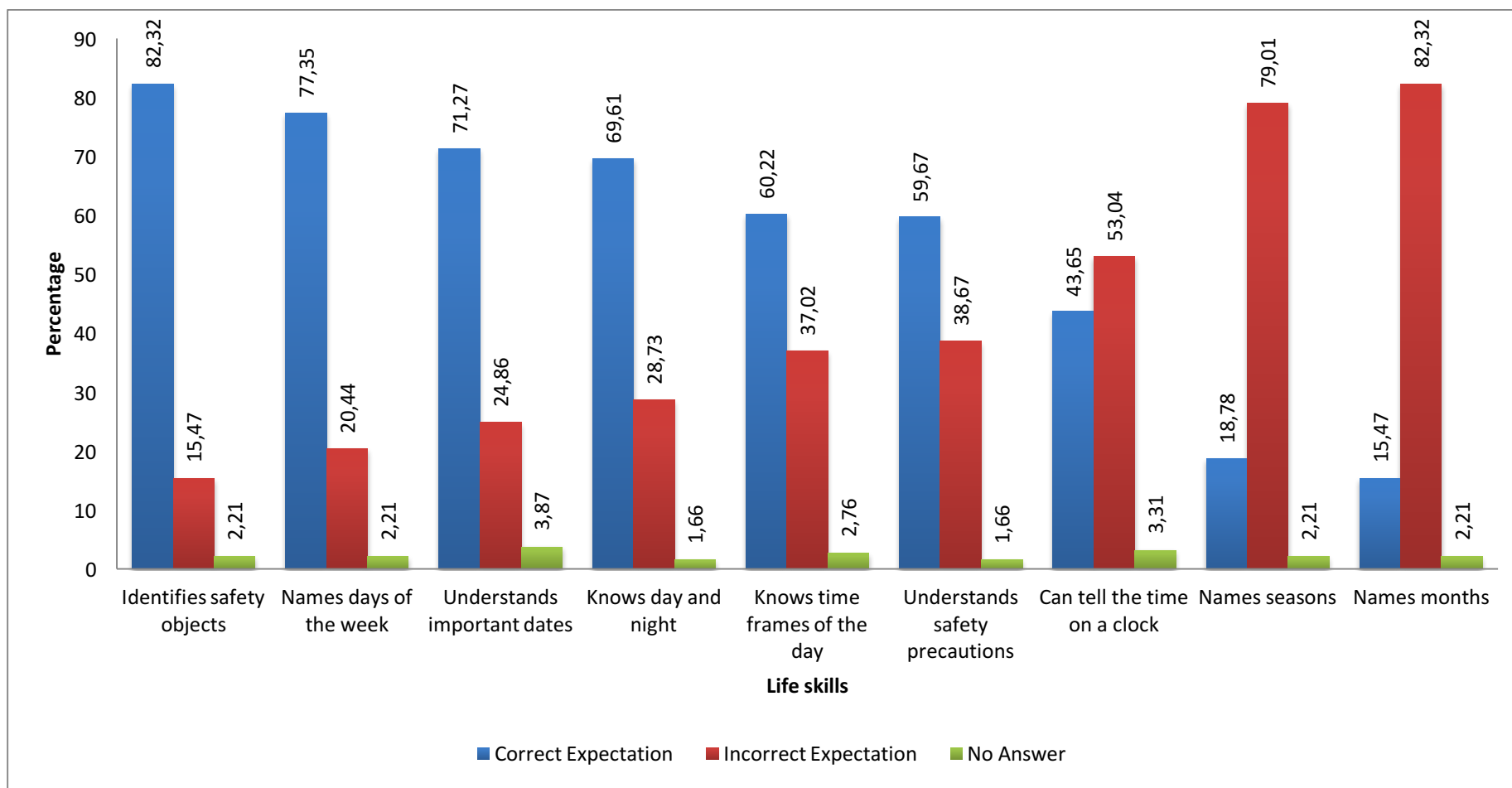


Figure 4.3.9: Parent/caregiver expectation versus actual expectation with regards to life skills

Figure 4.3.9 shows that majority of participants displayed the correct expectation on six of the nine variables for life skills with regards to school-readiness with frequencies ranging from 59.67–82.32%. Majority of participants incorrectly rated three of the

variables as an expectation for school-readiness (53.04–82.32%). Overall, 55.37% of participants had correct school-readiness expectations for life skills

Table 4.3.9 Over and under estimation of parents/caregivers expectations for life skills (results displayed in percentage).

	Correct expectation	Over estimation	Underestimation	Unsure
Can tell the time on a clock	43,65 (n=78)	38,68 (n=68)		14,36 (n=25)
Can name the seasons	18,78 (n=34)	75,14 (n=136)		3,87 (n=7)
Can name the months of the year	15,47 (n=28)	80,11 (n=145)		2,21 (n=4)

Table 4.3.9 reports on the three items where majority of participants reported an over estimation of a child's ability with regards to school-readiness (38.68–75.14%)

4.3.10 Activities of daily living

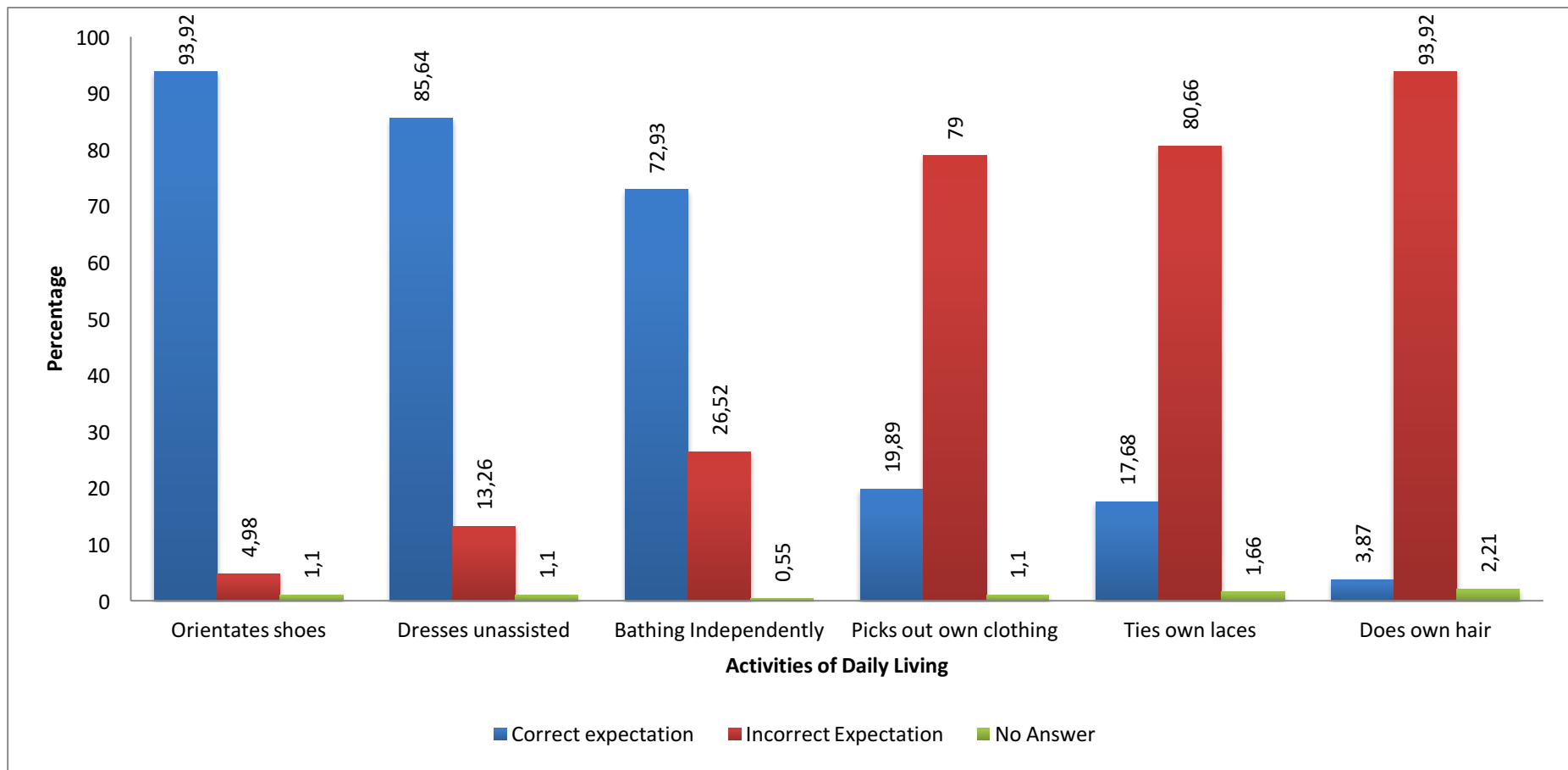


Figure 4.3.10: Parent/caregiver expectation versus actual expectation for activities of daily living

Figure 4.3.10 shows that majority of participants displayed correct expectation on three of the six variables for activities of daily living with regards to school-readiness with frequencies ranging from 72.93–93.92%. Majority of participants incorrectly rated three

of the variables as an expectation for school-readiness (79–93.92%). Overall, 48.98% of participants had correct expectation of school-readiness expectations for activities of daily living.

Table 4.3.10 Over and under estimation of parents/caregivers expectations for activities of daily living (results displayed in percentage).

	Correct expectation	Over estimation	Underestimation	Unsure
Picks out own clothing	19,89 (n=36)	77,9 (n=141)	0,55 (n=1)	0,55 (n=1)
Ties own laces	17,68 (n=32)	73,48 (n=133)	4,41 (n=8)	2,76 (n=5)
Does own hair	3,87 (n=7)	90,05 (n=163)		3,87 (n=7)

Table 4.3.10 reports on the three items where majority of participants reported an overestimation of a child's ability with regards to school-readiness (77.9 – 90.5%). Some parents displayed an underestimation of two of the items, with frequencies ranging from 0.55 – 4.41%.

4.3.11 Summary of Results

Table 4.4 Overall average correct expectation for each area assessed:

Area assessed	Correct Expectation
Thinking and reasoning abilities	77,66%
Motor abilities	76,79%
Numerical skills	66,66%
Speaking abilities	61,69%
Writing abilities	57,82%
Life Skills	55,37%
Listening skills	51,75%
Activities of daily living	48,98%
Reading and viewing skills	48,21%
Language structure and use	33,7%
TOTAL UNDERSTANDING	57,86%

Table 4.4 shows the overall correct expectation for each area assessed. If one considers sufficient expectation to be 60%, participants therefore had an sufficient expectation on four of the ten areas assessed (thinking and reasoning abilities, motor ability, numerical skills and speaking abilities). Participants displayed less than 60% overall correct expectation of school-readiness on six of the areas assessed with three areas being below 50% namely: activities of daily living; reading and viewing and language structure and use. Overall however, parents/caregivers displayed a 57,86% correct expectation of school-readiness in all areas together.

4.4 Section 3: Correlation studies

This section reports on objective 2: To determine if any demographic factors may influence parent/caregiver knowledge of school-readiness.

Only one of the correlations studies between demographic factors and parent/caregiver understanding of school-readiness expectations were significant.

The only statistical association found on the ANOVA chart was between the mother's highest level of education and the school-readiness variables. These graphs indicate the level of predictability for the correct answers within each subsection. The smaller the variation bar the more accurate the answer was, the larger the variation bar the less accurate the answers were. The box and whisker plots are reported for all correlations between mothers' highest level of education and all categories of school-readiness explored in the questionnaire.

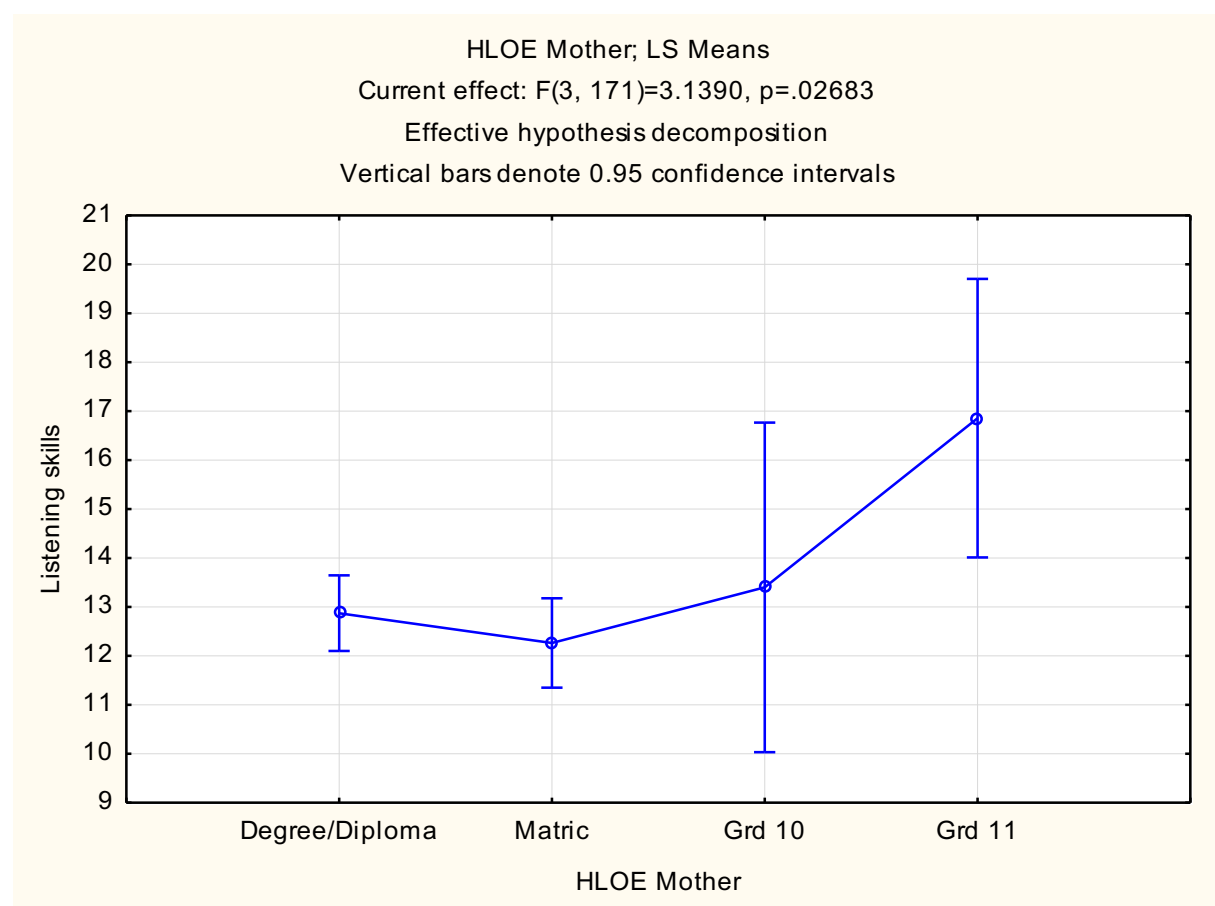


Figure 4.5.1: Correlation of mothers' level of education and listening skills

As the mothers highest level of education decreased, her accuracy in predicting listening skills in keeping with school-readiness expectations decreased, resulting in a wider range of fallout for the listening skills items.

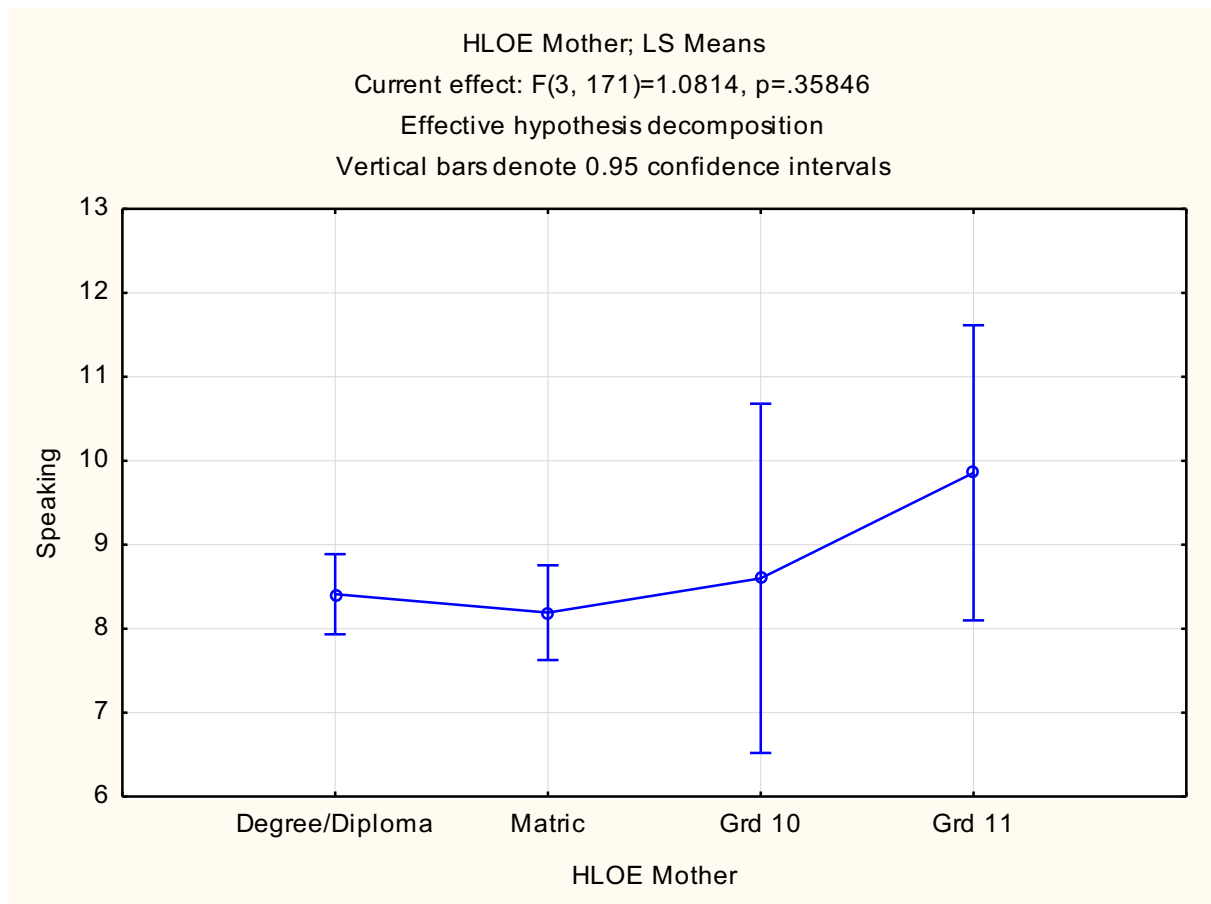


Figure 4.5.2: Correlation of mothers' level of education and speaking

As the mothers' highest level of education decreased, her accuracy in predicting speaking abilities in keeping with school-readiness expectations decreased, resulting in a wider range of fallout for speaking items.

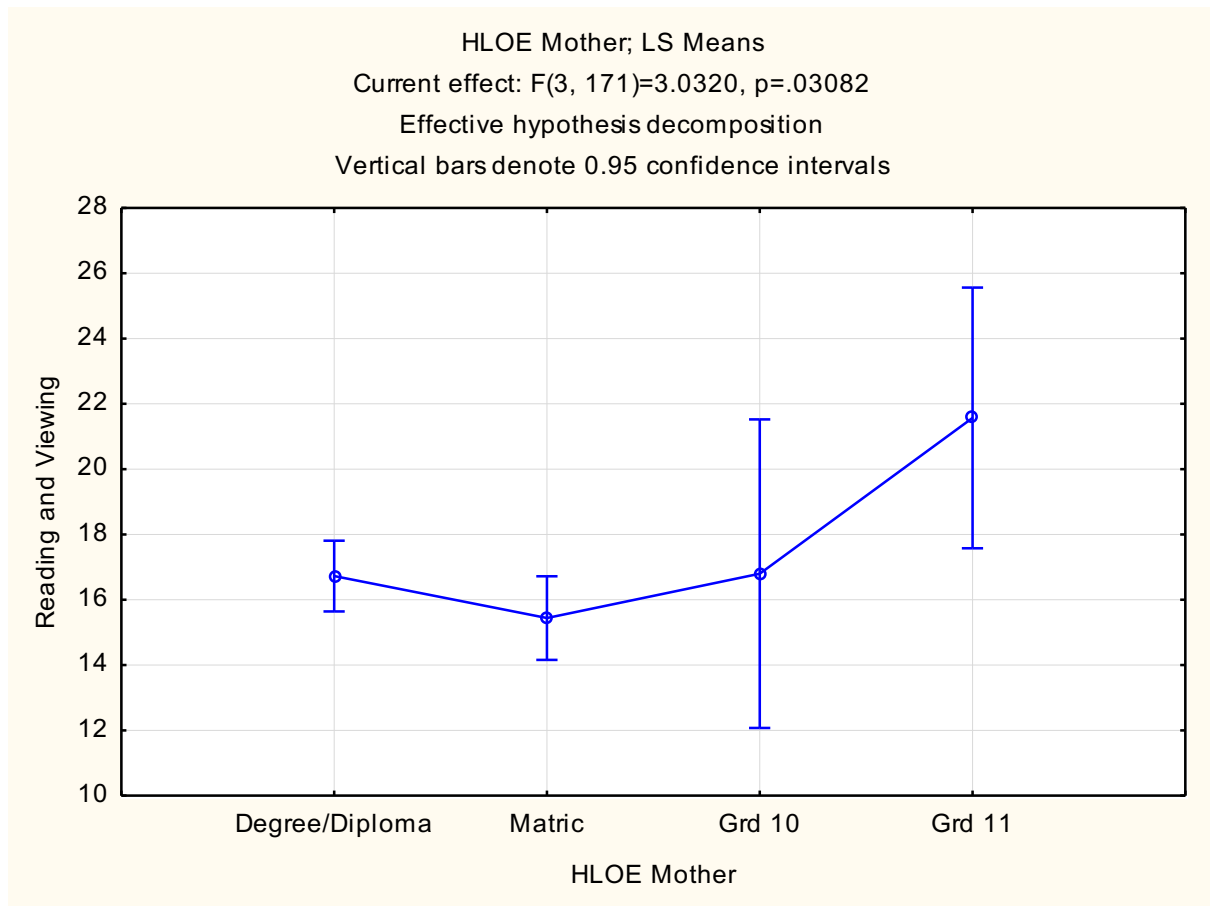


Figure 4.5.3: Correlation of mothers' level of education with reading and viewing

As the mothers highest level of education decreased, her accuracy in predicting reading and viewing skills in keeping with school-readiness expectations decreased, resulting in a wider range of fallout for reading and viewing items.

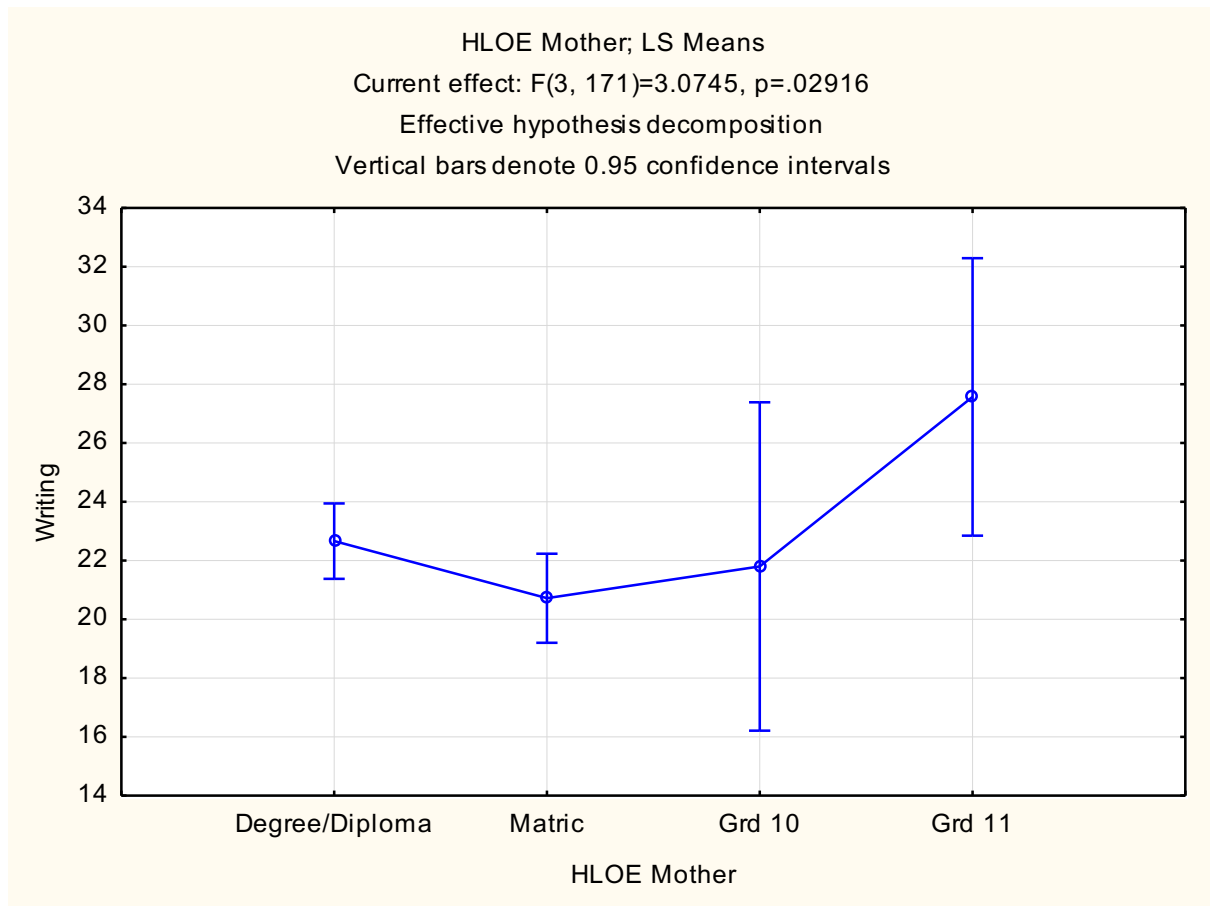


Figure 4.5.4: Correlation of mothers' level of education and writing ability

As the mothers highest level of education decreased, her accuracy in predicting writing abilities in keeping with school-readiness expectations decreased, resulting in a wider range of fallout for writing ability items.

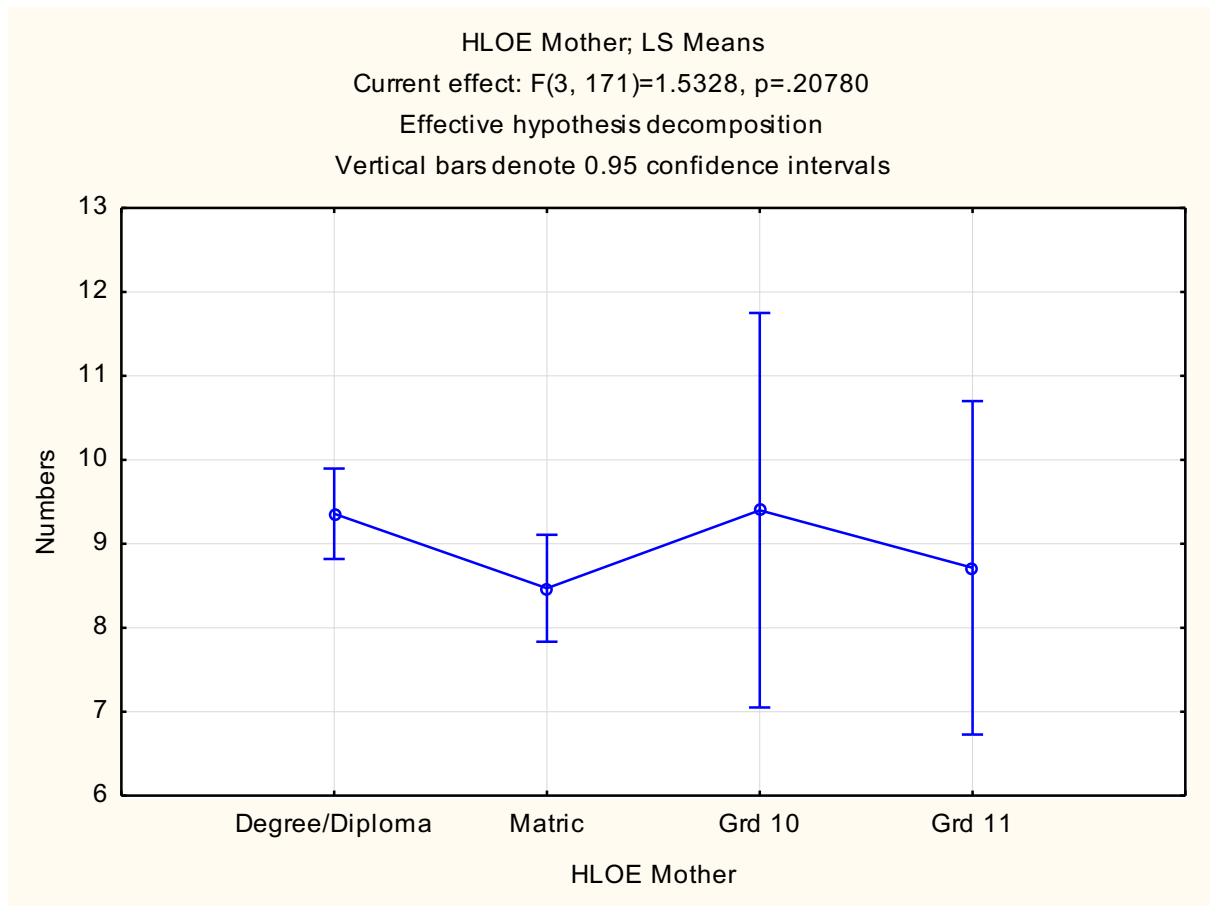


Figure 4.5.5: Correlation of mothers' level of education and numbers.

As the mothers highest level of education decreased, her accuracy in predicting numerical skills in keeping with school-readiness expectations decreased, resulting in a wider range of fallout for numbers items.

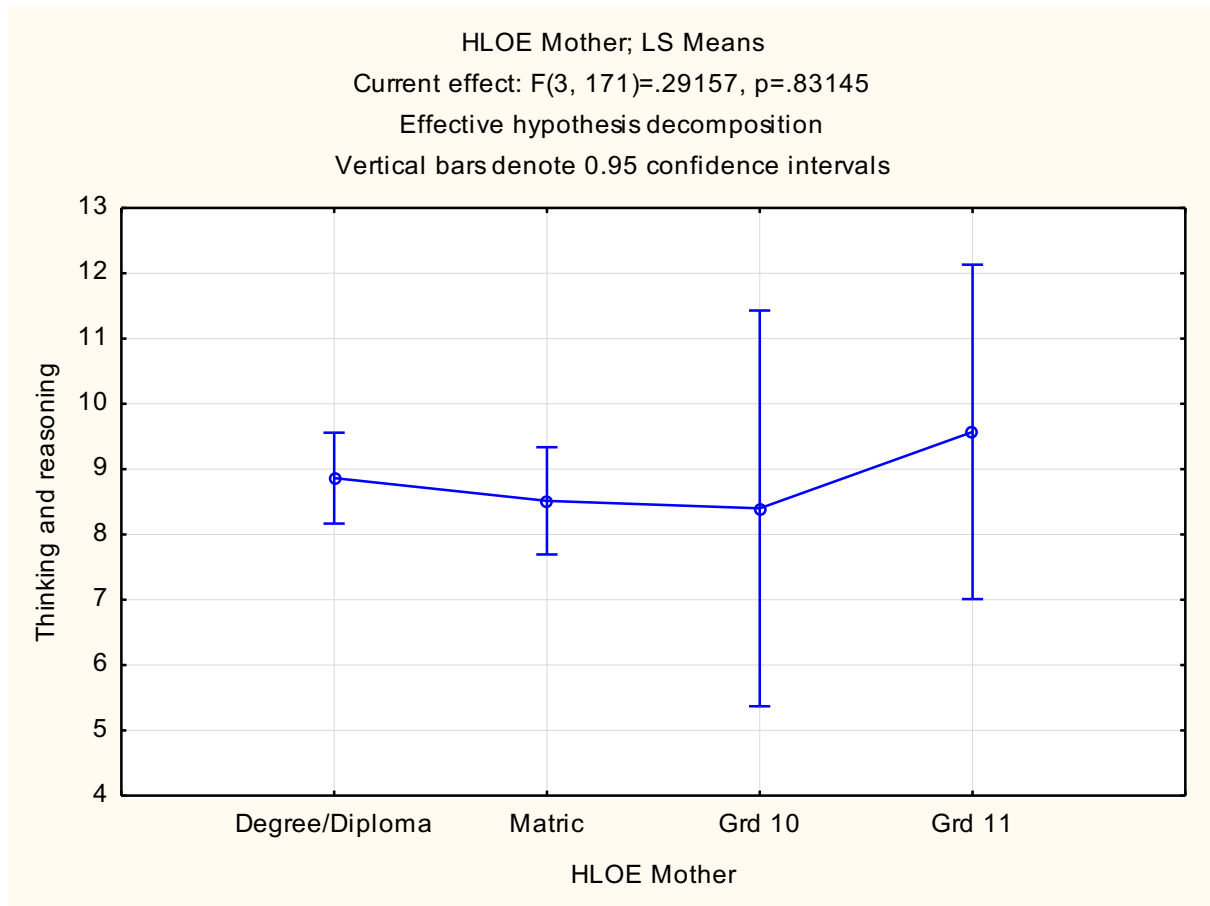


Figure 4.5.6: Correlation of mothers' level of education with thinking and reasoning.

As the mothers highest level of education decreased, her accuracy in predicting thinking & reasoning abilities in keeping with school-readiness expectations decreased, resulting in a wider range of fallout for thinking and reasoning items.

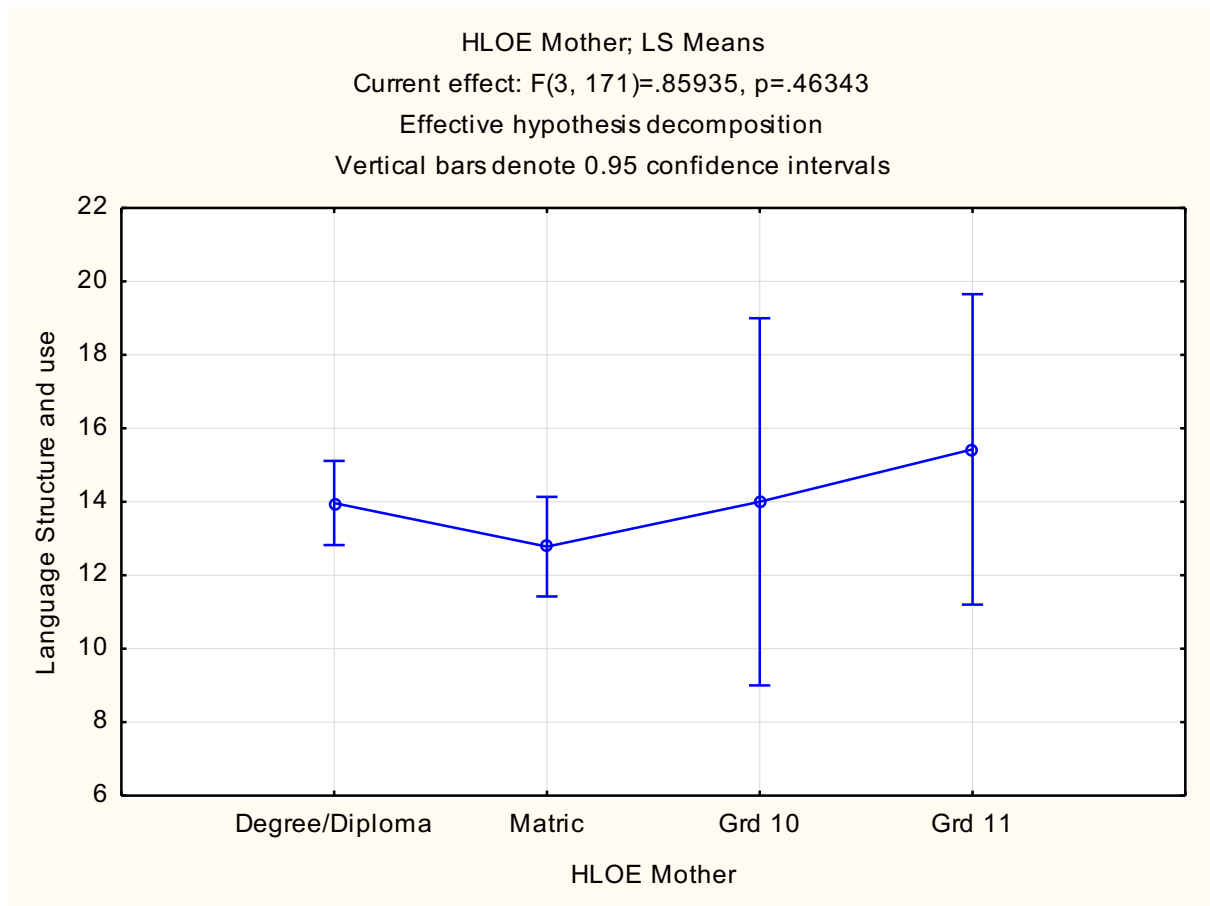


Figure 4.5.7: Correlation of mothers' level of education with language structure and use

As the mothers highest level of education decreased, her accuracy in predicting language structure and use in keeping with school-readiness expectations decreased, resulting in a wider range of fallout for language structure and use items.

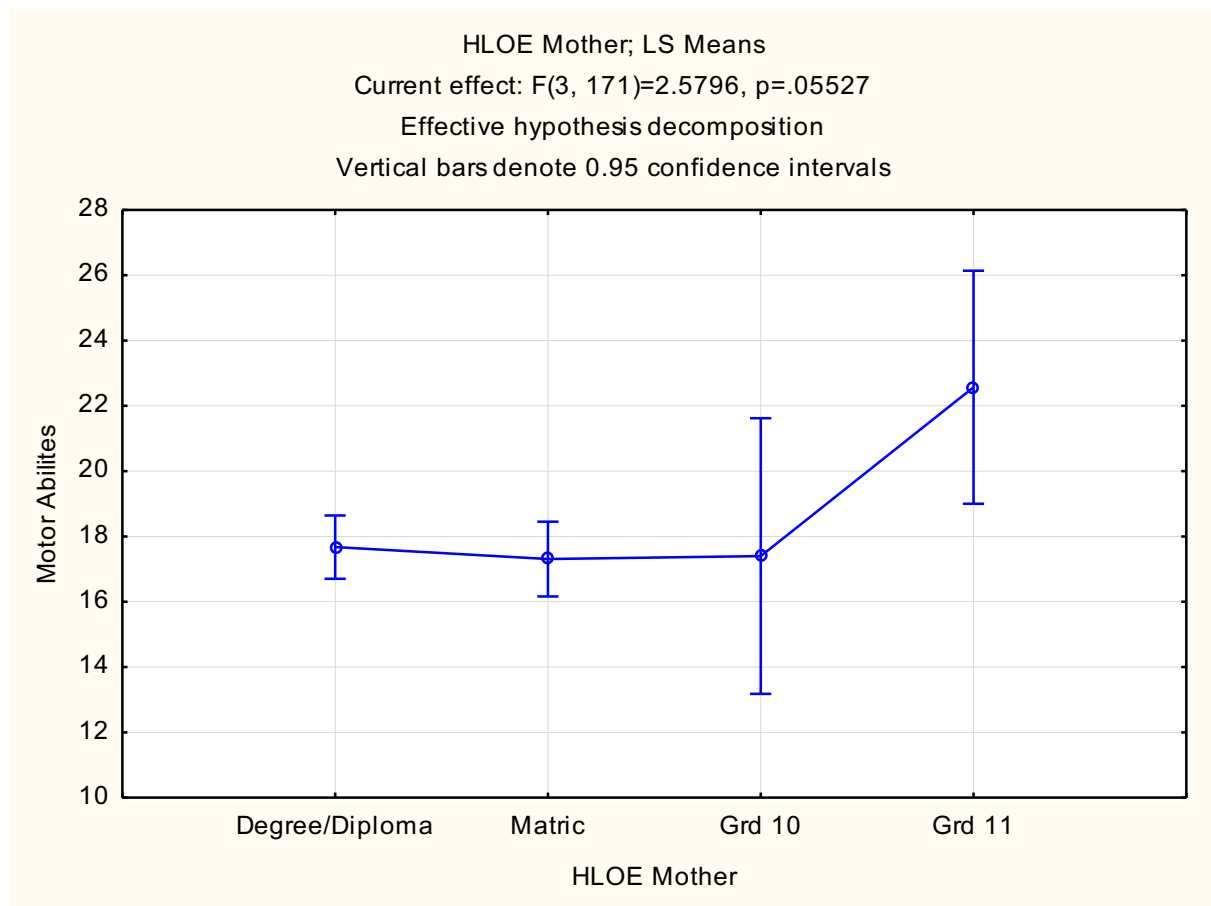


Figure 4.5.8: Correlation of mothers' level of education and motor ability

As the mothers highest level of education decreased, her accuracy in predicting motor ability in keeping with school-readiness expectations decreased, resulting in a wider range of fallout for motor ability items.

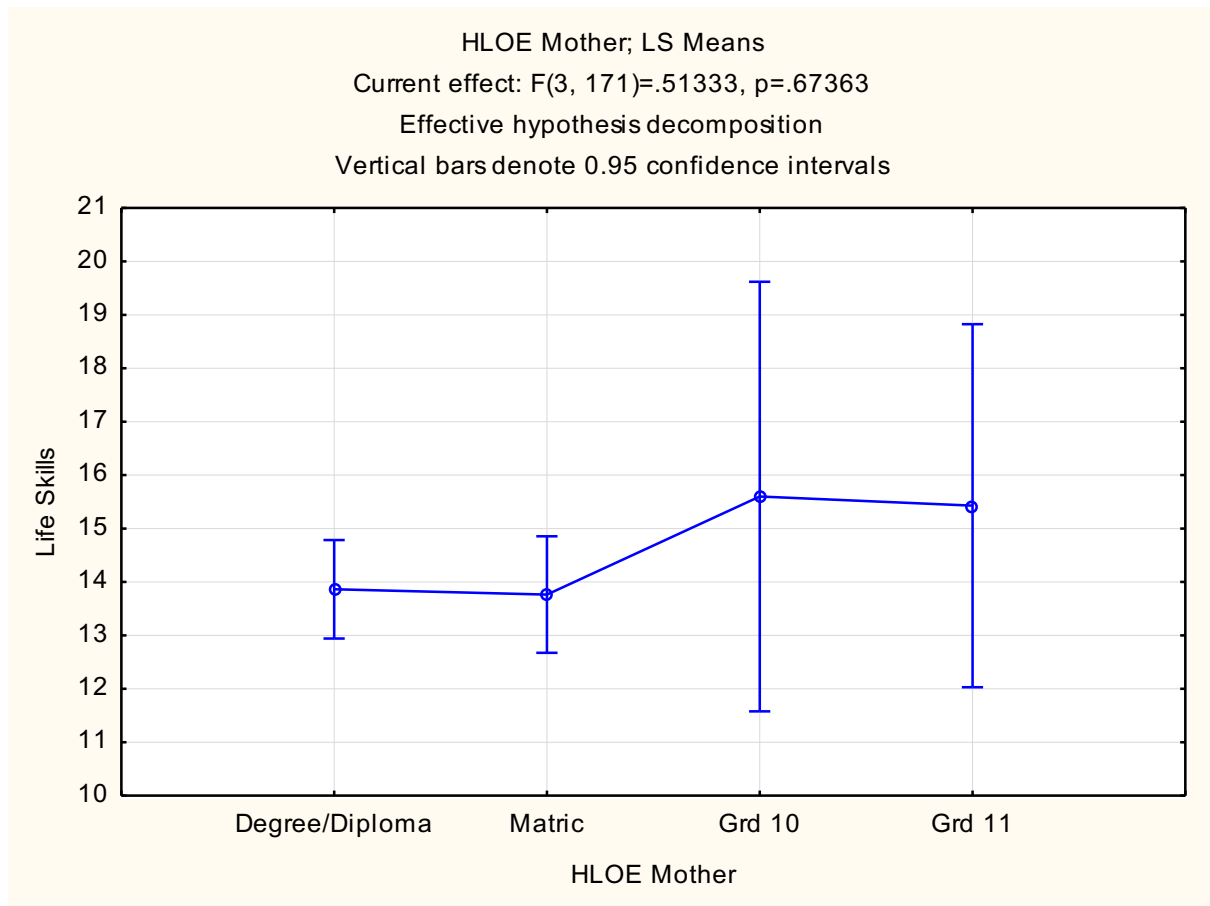


Figure 4.5.9: Correlation of mothers highest level of education and life skills.

As the mothers highest level of education decreased, her accuracy in predicting life skills in keeping with school-readiness expectations decreased, resulting in a wider range of fallout for life skills items.

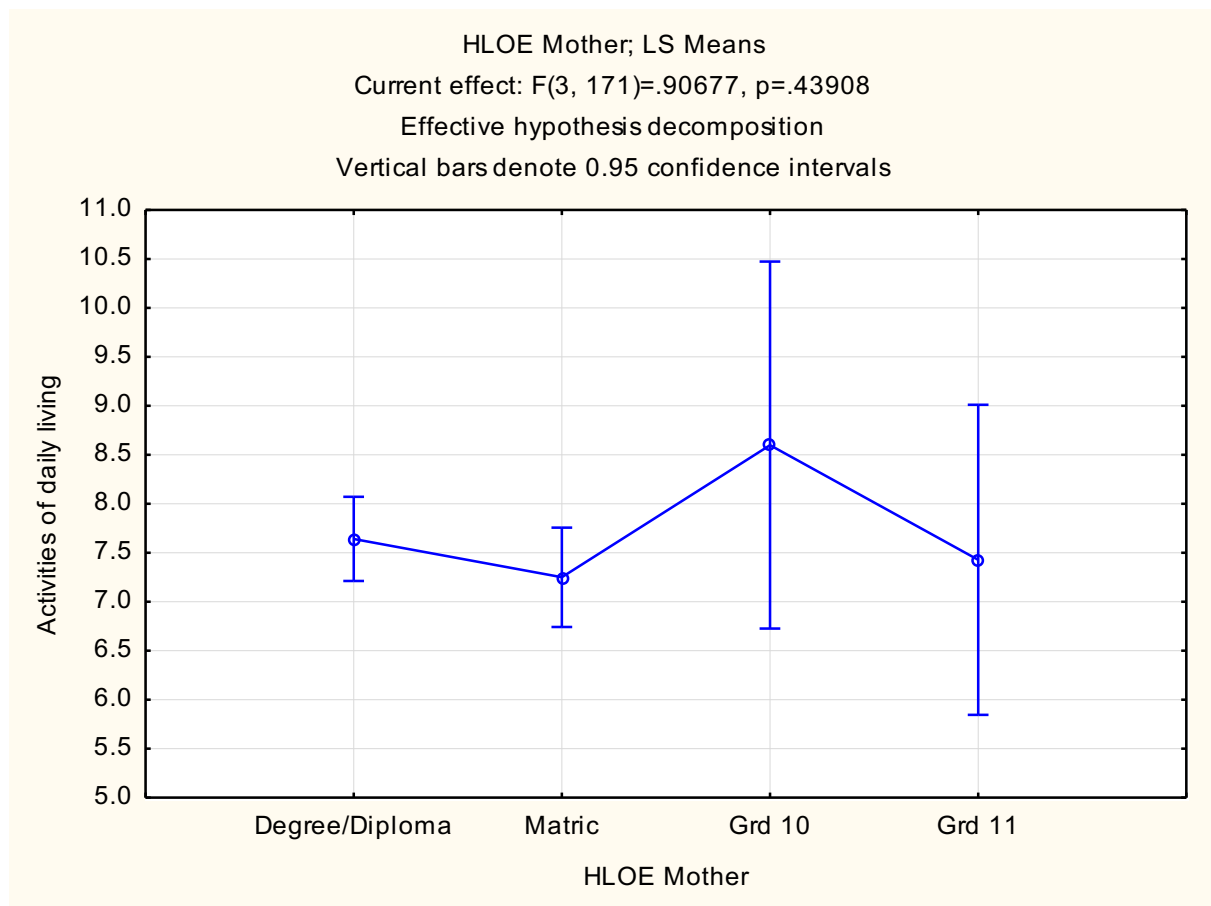


Figure 4.5.10: Correlation of mothers' level of education and activities of daily living.

As the mothers highest level of education decreased, her accuracy in predicting ADL's in keeping with school-readiness expectations decreased, resulting in a wider range of fallout for activities of daily living items.

4.5 Conclusion

Objective 1 of this research was to determine the knowledge parents/caregivers had of school-readiness. Parents/caregiver's knowledge of school-readiness varied. The summing of all school-readiness requirement variables indicated that overall participants rated the variables within each requirement with an accurate understanding of school-readiness averaging at 57.86%. Participants rated the variables in the requirement of thinking and reasoning abilities (77.6%), motor ability (76.79%) and numeracy skills (66.6%) and speaking abilities (61.69%) most accurately. The requirements where participants had the least accurate rating were related to ADL (48.89%), reading and viewing (48.21%) and language and use (33.7%).

The second objective of this study was to determine if any demographic factors influenced or was associated with parents/caregivers knowledge of school-readiness. The results revealed that the mothers highest level of education was the only significant variable that influenced knowledge of school-readiness. As the level of education of mothers decreased so did her ability to predict school-readiness skills accurately.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

5.1 Introduction

As reported in Chapter 1 and 2 occupational therapists are key role players in early childhood development and involvement in paediatric intervention in schooling and development is well established. Occupational therapists are expertly trained to consider all factors when assisting with holistic intervention of a child. These factors include the child/person, environment and occupation. As part of the consideration of environment in a child's life, occupational therapists need to consider the role parents/caregivers play in childhood development. In the researcher's private practice discussions with parents/caregivers about the results of school-readiness assessments and frequency of children being referred for therapy after entry into formal schooling has raised concerns about the extent of parents/caregivers knowledge and understandings about the criteria that children need to comply with to successfully negotiate the transition to formal schooling. This research aimed to examine the knowledge parents/caregivers have about the academic criteria for school-readiness for Grade 1 scholars and subsequently their ability to make an informed decision on the school-readiness of their children. Furthermore this research aimed to determine if any of the demographic factors reported in the literature may influence parents/caregivers knowledge of school-readiness in an urban context in South Africa. This is a topic about which little is known and research is limited.

This discussion will be presented in five sections. Section 1 and 2 will discuss the participants and their demographic characteristics and the questionnaire used to collect the data. Section 3 and 4 will be presented according to the two objectives of the study: 1) To determine the knowledge parents/caregivers have with regards to school-readiness of children; 2) To determine if any demographic factors may influence parent/caregiver knowledge of school-readiness. Section 5 will discuss the implication of the results for occupational therapists working in this field of practice.

5.2 Section 1: Participants of the study

5.2.1 Size of the sample

Although 510 questionnaires were distributed only one hundred and eighty participants took part in this survey. This represented a return rate of 35.3%.

Response rate of surveys is very important as it directly influences the non-response bias of a survey (Fincham, 2008). The expected response rate for a self-report questionnaire of a “postal” nature is usually low at 20%, and is largely dependent on the length of the survey and the content (Kelley, Clark, Brown, & Sitzia, 2003). Thus the return rate of 35.3% is above the generalized low response rate expected for “postal delivery” surveys. This number may have been the result of the reduction in number of schools which were ultimately included in the study. It was planned that six schools would be included in the study. However, due to time taken to gain permission for the research and the refusal of three schools to participate, it was decided to collect data in three schools only as the time allocated for the data collection process had past. Thus the questionnaires were handed out at three different schools: two urban schools in middle to lower income areas and one private school. This limited the population from which an adequate sample could be drawn and thus was a limitation to the study as the sample did not include the range of demographic factors that were planned in the protocol. Furthermore, it should be noted that the lowest return rate was that of the private school. However, with such a low response rate non-response bias has to be a consideration and may have influenced the diversity of participants as well as the scores for some variables being under or over represented (Kielhofner, 2006).

The initial proposed sample was limited to the parents of Grade R pupils entering into a Grade 1 level of education the following year. During the data collection process it was realised that this was a limiting criterion as children who did not attend Grade R could not be considered within the sample. Therefore, it was decided that questionnaires would be handed out to the Grade 1 group whether they had attended Grade R or not at the beginning of the Grade 1 year (within the first term of schooling) for their parents/caregivers to complete. Due to the time taken for the ethical clearance, the research questionnaires were only handed out in the second term of school. It should be noted that some schools also handed out the questionnaires to the Grade R group and not only the Grade 1 pupils and thus the research population was increased to include questionnaire responses from parents/caregivers of Grade R and Grade 1 population. This inclusion may have affected the studies as the two groups were now parents with experience as their

child had just entered Grade 1 and parents who had not yet been exposed to their child entering into Grade 1.

The timing of the distribution of the questionnaire may also be considered as a limitation of the study as the parents/caregivers had already been exposed to the beginning of the Grade 1 syllabus and thus their knowledge of school-readiness may have been advantaged by exposure to what their children were learning at that stage. The parents/caregivers of the Grade R children may also have been advantaged in their view of school-readiness by their knowledge of what their children were being taught in preparation for Grade 1.

5.2.2 Representivity of the sample to the research context

This study was conducted in a cross-section of urban area of Johannesburg, Gauteng which was not as extensive as was originally planned. The results of demographic factors were compared to the demographics of the Gauteng Province to determine if the sample was typical for the context. It should be remembered that due to this being limited to urban areas. Not all demographic factors correlated adequate, thus the population was not large and extensive enough to be in keeping with the general Gauteng Province.

5.2.2.1 Age of Parents:

This research was based on the parents/caregivers age at the time the child enters into Grade R/Grade 1 level of schooling, thus looking at the parents/caregivers age six years after the birth of the child. In the demographic questionnaire the age of the parents/caregivers were grouped into categories of ages including 18-25; 25-35; 35-45; 45-55; 55-65; >65. Additionally there was no distinction between mothers' and fathers' ages. However, South African statistics record parents age from the date of birth of the child and distinguish between the ages of both mothers and fathers (Lehohla, South Africa's young children: their family and home environment, 2012, 2012).

Thus in order to compare the ages of the sample to that of South African Statistics, an average age was taken from the SA statistics data and six year was added to this

average age from the SA statistical sample so as to compare ages of the sample in the current study.

Following the above calculations, according to South African Statistics at the age of their child school entry (6 years) most parents/caregivers average age would be 35-44 years, followed by parents/caregivers aged 25—34. The third age group of parents/caregivers was 45-55 and the lowest age group was 15-24 years. This was in keeping with the ages of the sample population in this study as noted in Figure 4.2.1.

5.2.2.2 Family Home Language

Thirteen different home languages have been recorded for the Gauteng province when individuals were asked to state their first language only (Lehohla, Income and Expenditure of Households 2010/2011, 2012). According to Statics SA, the majority of individuals speak Zulu in Gauteng, followed by English then Afrikaans (Lehohla, Income and Expenditure of Households 2010/2011, 2012). In this study, as seen in Figure 4.2.2, the majority of participants reported English as their home language followed by Zulu, then others. The predominance of English being reported as the home language is possibly due to the questionnaire being distributed to three English medium schools. A limitation to this study was that the questionnaire was designed in English only and thus a bias does exist with regards to home language, as non-English speaking parents/caregivers would not have participated in the research or been disadvantaged if their command of English was limited. Eight participants recorded two home languages and 1 participant marked 3 home languages. While this number is small it is consistent with the diverse multi-lingual society in South Africa. The population sample was thus not absolutely consistent with the overall Gauteng population.

5.2.2.3 Parents/Caregivers Ethnicity

According to South African Statistics, the population for the Gauteng province is reported to be predominantly Black African (77,4%) followed by white (15,6%) followed by coloured (3,5%) with lowest percentages being Indian/Asian (2,9%) and 0,7% of other populations. In this study it was noted that parents on occasion reported different racial groups of the father to the mother, so the race of mother and father were reported separately. The sample population was consistent with the Gauteng province statistics in accordance with overall participants being largely

Black African followed by Caucasian/white, followed by coloured. This however was not consistent in terms of percentage ratio.

5.2.2.4 Parents/Caregivers Educational background:

In Gauteng province South African Statistics reports that, 46,8% of mothers had obtained a secondary education followed by 29,3% of mothers having completed Grade 12 (Lehohla, South Africa's young children: their family and home environment, 2012, 2012). In this study the majority of the mothers (52,77%) had completed a degree and/or diploma while 37,77% had a Matric level of education. Therefore, the mothers in this study had a higher educational status than the general population of Gauteng. This finding may be due to the fact that the schools used in the study were in the urban areas of Johannesburg considered to be in the economic hub of the province, ultimately encouraging education of parents.

When considering the fathers' level of education, according to South African Statistics 34,3% of fathers had a secondary education level, whilst 31.8% had Grade 12 in Gauteng province (Lehohla, South Africa's young children: their family and home environment, 2012, 2012). In this study 48,88% of the sample had a degree/diploma (secondary education level) whilst 28,88% had only a matriculation level of education. Consistent with this study South African Statistics reported that generally the proportion of mothers with some secondary level of education was higher than fathers, while more fathers had matriculation only level of education than mothers (Lehohla, South Africa's young children: their family and home environment, 2012, 2012). However, in the current study less fathers had matriculation level of education than mothers, which was not in keeping with the South African Statistics findings.

5.2.2.5 Parent/Caregiver level of income:

Statistics South Africa noted the average yearly income in 2010/2011 was R119 542 this equates to R9 961 per month for the head of the household (Lehohla, Income and Expenditure of Households 2010/2011, 2012). Participants in this study reported earning more than the provincial average as can be seen in Figure 4.2.5, with the majority of families earning R12 500 – R27 000 per month (36.11%). Some families reported earning less than R12 500 (20%), while a smaller number earned more: R27 000 R38 000 (17.77%). It should be noted that the South African Statistics results are the income levels for 2010/2011, this being 4 years prior to the

data capturing for this research. Furthermore, the questionnaire used in this research did not specify whether the level of income (per month) was for the head of the household and/or for both parents/caregivers, and/or for all individuals living in the household, thus the level of income may not be a true reflection of the total income bracket of the sample population.

5.2.2.6 Single parent household and living arrangements:

According to Statistics South Africa, 42.5% of children aged below five years lived with their biological mother only. A smaller number (36.4%) lived with both parents/caregivers and 2% lived with their biological father only. While a percentage (18.7%) lived with neither parent (Lehohla, South Africa's young children: their family and home environment, 2012, 2012).

Although South African Statistics reported some variation between the racial groups the majority of young white children (86.5%) and Indian/Asian (77.5%) populations reside with both biological parents/caregivers. Over half (53.5%) of Coloured children reside with both biological parents/caregivers and only 31% of black African children live with their biological parents/caregivers (Lehohla, South Africa's young children: their family and home environment, 2012, 2012). According to South African Statistics, 31,1% of mothers lived with partners of which 18,3% were legally married (Lehohla, South Africa's young children: their family and home environment, 2012, 2012) while 59,7% for fathers were living with a partner but only 35% were married (Lehohla, South Africa's young children: their family and home environment, 2012, 2012). In the demographic questionnaire, the question put to the participants was whether they reside in a single parent household or not. This did not specify whether they were married or not and did not specify whether the adults in the house were biological parents or not. In this study Figure 4.2.6 shows majority of participants (70%) did not reside in single parent households, this is in keeping with South African Statistics in which the majority of females and males were residing with a partner.

5.2.2.7 Number of children in the household:

South African Statistics reported that more families reside with one biological child of the mother than biological children of the father. (Lehohla, South Africa's young children: their family and home environment, 2012, 2012).

In this study participants were asked about the number of children in the household but did not consider whether the children were the biological siblings. The majority of participants reported having 2 children in the household (50%), followed by 3 children (23.33%) and 1 child (20%). Only 6,66% had 4 or more children. No one stated having more than 5 children. Due to South African statistics having classified number of children in accordance with biological children and not the overall number of children in a house hold, the researcher was unable to compare results on this variable to that of South African population.

5.2.2.8 Children in household over the age of 7 years:

As can be seen in Figure 4.2.8, in this study the majority of households had only 1 child over the age of 7, followed by 33,88% of households having no children older than 7 and only 8,33% of households having 2 children over the age of 7. There was no formal statistic to which this could be compared. This specific question was asked as it was assumed that having other children in the household over the age of 7 would have exposed parents/caregivers to school-readiness requirements as a result of their older child.

5.2.2.9 Did your child attend preschool/crèche and/or nursery school:

The South African Statistics survey consistent with the Gauteng specific statistics, found that only 45% of children less than 5 years attended ECD centres (Lehohla, South Africa's young children: their family and home environment, 2012, 2012). In urban areas 42.4% of children aged 0-4 are reported to have attended ECD centres while in the rural areas this figure is only 26.3% (Lehohla, South Africa's young children: their family and home environment, 2012, 2012).

In this study participants reported that 98% of children had attended a preschool/crèche and/or nursery school. This figure is much higher than reported by South African Statistics and the Gauteng statistics. This may be as a result of the participants living in an urban area of Johannesburg and thus parents were probably working and required their children to be in school during the day. Additionally, as parents in this sample were better educated it is possible that they had an understanding of the necessities of children attending crèche before entering into formal schooling. Additionally the research sample was largely based in an urban area and participants may also have been working. If they were working it is possible that they had the financial resources to send their child for some kind of pre-

school education centre. It should be noted that South African Statistics did not specify what they considered an ECD centre.

5.2.2.10 Is your child cared for by someone else on a daily basis?

It should be noted that there was limited research with which to correlate aftercare and/or additional care services of children after school. This sample population revealed that 59,44% of children had after school care takers/facilitates for their child.

Of these services, as noted in Figure 4.2.11, 44,44% of children attended aftercare services, 34,18% of children were cared for by a family member and 18,8% were cared for by a domestic worker.

5.2.3 Summary.

To determine the representation of the sample the demographic data from this study were compared to that of the South African National Statistics and Gauteng Provincial Statistics as there are no similar studies with this research focus could be found. Although comparisons for demographic variables were found there were some which were difficult and this was mainly due to differences in the demographic classifications and descriptions. Overall the participants in this study appeared to be a reasonable representative of the urban Gauteng population of parents/caregivers with children entering Grade 1. While a number of demographic variables affecting a parents/caregivers understanding of school-readiness had been reported in literature only one variable was evident in this sample. This may be mainly due to the location and nature of the context and population from which the data was drawn.

However, in the Gauteng Province, most occupational therapists in private practice, work with children in urban settings similar to that of this study. Thus it is of clinical significance for a service provider to understand the demographic characteristics of population that one services particularly the demographic characteristics which impact on the parents'/caregivers' understanding of school-readiness as a critical concept for successful education. This understanding highlights the need for health promotion campaigns to include school-readiness as a topic which may need to be tailored to meet the specific needs of different groups of parents and caregivers, to assist parents/caregivers faced with this critical decision. This may be preferable to screening children before entering into formal schooling as it may raise

parents/caregivers awareness of the contribution they can make to the seamless transition of their children into formal education, in both the short and long term.

5.3 Section 2: Questionnaire

The data collection tool, the school readiness questionnaire and demographic information was designed specifically for this research as no specific tool could be found to collect the data. The questionnaire was designed using the Gauteng Department of Education curriculum (CAPS) set out for Grade R and Grade 1 individuals with cognisance given to the IEB curriculum which listed the range of skills a child needs to achieve in a variety of domains namely listening skills; speaking abilities; reading and viewing; writing; numbers; thinking and reasoning; language structure and use; motor abilities; life skills; activities of daily living and emotionality. The tool was critiqued by a panel of experts to confirm the content validity. It is likely that the advice was not adequate and that the questionnaire could have been critiqued further to ensure it was succinct and detailed. Additional experts could have been approached to assist with critique to allow for thorough investigation of the tool. A pilot study was also conducted to ensure the questions were clear and succinct and the questionnaire was easy to answer and time efficient. It should be noted that there are some advantages as well as disadvantages to the use of Self-reported questionnaire. Advantages of survey research is that it provides an opportunity to obtain a data base on a representable sample and can therefore be generalizable in a population (Kelley, Clark, Brown, & Sitzia, 2003). Disadvantages may be that the data obtained may lack details or depth on a topic (Kelley, Clark, Brown, & Sitzia, 2003) and results of self-report questionnaires tend to be highly dependent on the wording of items, salience of the questionnaire and organization of the instrument (Prus & Johnson, 1994). The questionnaire response is reliant on a volunteer samples which tend to be a bias (Prus & Johnson, 1994). In this instance the bias is limited to the population who participated in the questionnaire. In terms of the area, as well as the education level for example more education and efficient individuals will take time to answer questionnaires while parents/caregivers who are disinterested would not have participated.

Additionally a high response rate may be difficult to obtain and outside of one's control (Kelley, Clark, Brown, & Sitzia, 2003). The response rate of "postal questionnaires" is usually 20% depending on the content and length of the questionnaire (Kelley, Clark, Brown, & Sitzia, 2003). In this research we had a response rate of 35.29% which was significantly higher than that usually obtained from a self-reported "postal" questionnaire. The larger response rate is thus assists in the need to ensure that the demographic profile of the population is correct and that there are enough responses for data analysis (Kelley, Clark, Brown, & Sitzia, 2003)

Additionally the self-report nature of this questionnaire required that parents/caregivers rate their perception of the knowledge and skills attributed to school-readiness. Rating the perception of knowledge is difficult as defining the exact level of knowledge in a brief question can be complex, thus it is easy for participants to assume they have knowledge when it is not explicitly stated. The value of information in accordance with performance depends partially on the physical characteristics of the evaluation as well as the evaluation process. (Landy, Barnes, & Murphy, 1987)

As typically seen in self report questionnaires not all participants ticked responses to all questions, deliberately or selectively not answering some of the questions, presumably because they were difficult to answer or they were difficult to understand. These items were not raised as difficult in the pilot study so it is hard to determine why they were not answered. It should however be noted that a survey questionnaire is required to have succinct clear questions and answers that are not difficult to interpret as the researcher is not there to clarify any misunderstandings. In Appendix A (School-readiness Questionnaire) it was found that some of the questions were not specific enough i.e. *"points to words rather than pictures while reading."* This question assumes that the child is able to read and does not specify that there could be an adult reading with the child. A question that was eliminated due to the vagueness of the question was: *"Reads with a teacher or parent"* as this question does not specify what is meant by reading with someone. This interpretation could vary from merely looking at the pages while an adult reads, to saying some words while the adult reads, or reading the entire page with prompting from an adult. This may have resulted in inconsistent answers to this question. The

question was thus eliminated. Additionally the headings of *“my child will definitely be able to do this”*, *“my child should be able to do this sometimes”* and *“My child is expected to learn this while at school”* were not always an easy descriptive answer to use in accordance with the questions being asked, in particular with regards to the emotionality section i.e. *“Engages well socially, makes friends easily.”*; *“cries when parents drop them off at school”*; *“constantly moving and active (cannot sit still)”*; *“is happy and cheerful.”* These questions are difficult to answer in accordance with the scale provided and thus some parents left it out, while others resorted to answering in yes/no answers. Thus the entire section was eliminated. This was unfortunate as emotionality is one of the key factors influencing school entry. (Baldwin, 2011) (Patrianakos-Hoobler, et al., 2010). (McBryde, Ziviani, & Cuskelly, 2004). (Welsh, Nix, Blair, Bierman, & Nelson, 2010) Specification of some questions in future would thus need to be considered.

Furthermore, it is possible that parents/caregivers may not have fully read or understand the instructions for completing the questionnaire. In the instructions it was clearly stated that parents/caregivers were expected to rate what they think school readiness requirements of a child would be. It is possible that parents/caregivers rather answered the questions in accordance with what their own child is currently able to do instead of what is expected of a school ready child when entering into the Grade 1 level. This is a further problem associated with self-report questionnaires where the researcher cannot explain instructions if participants are not entirely clear about what was written. There was further limited information given to the parents regarding the questionnaire. The way in which the questions were asked and the response of *“my child...”* may have been misleading.”

Despite this, all items were still included in the data analysis and reflected in the results however, this resulted in items having varying number of responses.

5.4 Section 3: Objective 1

Understanding Parent/Caregivers knowledge of School-readiness

According to the research parents/caregivers were calculated to have an overall understanding of 57.86% of school readiness. This conversely means that parents/caregivers did not understand 42.14% of school readiness. Surprisingly from my personal experience I found the parents/caregivers overall understanding of

school readiness to be higher than I had initially thought. There may be several reasons for the above results. This may include the mere fact that the definition of school-readiness is so multi-complex and diverse, with two varying schools of thought, that there is no definitive definition to the theory. Due to the complex nature of school readiness and the vast variety of definitions available as well as the difference in expected criteria between schools (Government and Private schooling), school-readiness could actually be considered to be on a continuum. This meaning that despite there being some prerequisites, not all criteria is definitively needed for entry into school. This implies that when considering school-readiness, skills will vary in level of ability and will range from foundational (basic) skills to more occupational performance (acquired), skill based tasks, and thus encouraging the transition from foundational skills and individual skills to occupational performance outcomes and skill acquisition. When using the CAPS curriculum to draw up the questionnaire of school-readiness requirements a consideration that needed to be made is that some requirements were more foundational (client factors) and some requirements were more occupational performance based (skill based) tasks. When looking at the findings, we considered the difference between foundational and occupational performance based skills to see if there was any difference between the two when looking at overall parent/caregiver understanding.

5.4.1 Overall best understanding:

In the sample, parents/caregivers scored a mean understanding score of 57.86% of knowledge with regards to school-readiness. Of this parents/caregivers appeared to show the greatest understanding of knowledge for the following categories: thinking and reasoning (77.66%); motor ability (76.79%); numbers (66.66%); and speaking (61.69%). When considering these higher scores, it was found that parents/caregivers appeared to have a better understanding of what was expected of a children when considering tasks/milestones that are globally mentioned and known to parents/caregivers in areas that are commonly advertised and/or expressed by teachers, experts and programs. These areas generally include foundational building blocks (client factors) for school going children. These tasks are easy to assess in isolation and are not a skill based task as such. For example: tasks such as thinking and reasoning and numeracy included foundational skills of basic concepts (counting, number concepts colour concept, shapes etc.) and motor abilities

(climbing/jumping, hopping, kicking, throwing and catching a ball, skipping and winking etc.) are often mentioned as main developmental milestones expected of children. These tasks/skills are also seen as foundational skills which are commonly known to development and are isolated factors which can be viewed daily, thus parents/caregivers appeared to have good understanding of the foundational tasks required for school readiness.

5.4.2 Overall moderate understanding

Parents/Caregivers displayed moderate understanding (more than 50% understanding) for writing ability (57.82%); life skills (55.37%) and listening skills (51.75%). These areas of development appeared to have a combination of foundational skills and more occupational performance (skill based) tasks. For example in these section options ranged from basic skills of: *"listening to instructions"*, *"knows details of the main story"* and *"matching captions to pictures"*, *"good pencil grip"* to more complex skills of: *"writes simple sentences"*, *"knowing day and night"* and *"telling the time on a clock."* Parents caregivers appeared to score higher in the areas of basic foundational skills expected, however they appeared to have more difficulty expressing whether more complex occupational performance based skills were a school readiness requirement or not.

5.4.3 Overall poor understanding

The areas in which parents/caregivers showed poorest understanding (less than 50% understanding) were reading and viewing (48.21%), activities of daily living (48.98%) and language structure and use (33.7%). These areas when considering their questions looked largely at occupational performance areas (skill based tasks) and less so at foundational skills i.e. *"picks out own clothing"*; *"ties own laces"*; *"uses descriptive words"*; *"identifies words and letters when reading"*; *"rhyming words"* and *"interprets tables and graphs."*

Despite this concept of foundational (client factors) vs occupational performance (skill based tasks) it was interesting to note that parents/caregivers displayed less understanding of tasks such as activities of daily living (ADL) which would be an everyday task that one would expect a parent/caregiver to know and/or be aware of as it is generally assumed that parents/caregivers are directly involved in performing these tasks with the children on a daily basis. However, given that the questionnaire was based on school readiness requirements, parents/caregivers may

not have understood ADL tasks to be a specific requirement for school readiness, and thus did not fully associated home based tasks with school expectations. There is limited research looking into parents'/caregivers' understanding of a child's ability to perform ADL tasks within the home environment thus there was no statistical information to compare these findings to.

In some of the areas, it was found that parents/caregivers over estimated a Grade 1 child's expectations for school readiness. This may have been influenced by the fact that some parents/caregivers (from the Grade 1 population) may have already seen their children learn some of these skills as the questionnaire was only handed out in the second term of the Grade 1 school year. This would result in parents/caregivers stating that their child is capable of performing these task instead of referring back to what would have been expected of a child when entering the Grade 1 formal schooling level of education. Additionally, despite this, in a study done by Pezdek, Berry and Renno (2002) it was found that parents over estimated their children's mathematical abilities. Although parents predictions of their children's performance is generally positively correlated with actual task performance, consistently overestimated their children's ability to perform tasks (Pezdek, Berry, & Renno, 2002) Dizon-Ross (2014) found that parents' belief about their children's most recent achievements were often largely different from the true level of achievement. Since parents have been found to be the key adult influence in a child's life, parental beliefs and behaviours are thus extremely relevant to understanding childhood development (Porter, 1997) The complex relationship between parental beliefs and values and children's behaviour have been found to not be linear but to be multidirectional in nature (Porter, 1997). Some theorists argue that parents do not construct beliefs but adopt them from their culture. (Porter, 1997)

5.5 Section 4: Objective 2

Demographic factors influencing Parents/Caregivers knowledge of School-readiness

Baldwin (2011) stated that when examining individual perceptions and views it is important to determine demographic factors which may affect one's views and understanding of the topic at hand. Overall, the demographic population in the

sample was largely correlated with urban settlement, middle class individuals within the region of Gauteng. This population would eliminate the ability to cross correlate findings with rural individuals as well as upper class individuals. However, despite this, a large population of individuals seen by occupational therapists in the school entry level are those originating from the middle class urban areas. Thus, the research may be better guided for therapists working within this area.

In accordance with the literature review, many external demographic factors were identified as being influential

on a parents/caregivers perception of school-readiness. These included factors such as socio-economic status (Baldwin, 2011) (Coley, 2002) (Campbell & von Stauffenberg, 2008), ethnicity (Baldwin, 2011) (Coley, 2002), single parent households (Campbell & von Stauffenberg, 2008) and educational status of parents (Campbell & von Stauffenberg, 2008). Another factor which was seen to influence knowledge would be that of children having attended pre-school and/or crèche (Baldwin, 2011) (McWayne, Hahs-Vaughn, Cheung, & Green Wright, 2012).

In this research the only demographic factor with significant influence on findings which appeared to influence parent/caregiver school readiness was the mothers' highest level of education. This was in keeping with findings by Campbell & von Stauffenberg (2008). This research found that the higher the mothers level of education the less margin of error for predictability of school readiness expectation.

Research by Eccles (2005) found that the most prominent link between parents' level of education and their children's academic achievement relied solely on the assumption that parents learnt parental skills and/or skills that would impact their parenting abilities during their school education. This assumption worked on the premise that educated parents are expected to have increased parental skills, values and knowledge of educational systems and criteria; which in turn directly influence their engagement, stimulation and encouragement of skill development of their children at home, as well as the parents awareness of educational systems in place. (Eccles, 2005). Most research in this field looks closely at early language and reading skills influenced by parents on children (Eccles, 2005). Eccles (2005) stated

that parents with a greater educational base use more complex language skills including speech and reading abilities. They further have a higher expectation for their children's academic performance (Eccles, 2005). In accordance with research findings, mothers with higher level of education (Degree/Diploma and Matric) appeared to have better level of predictability of skills in speaking and reading and viewing than less educated mothers (highest level of education: Grade 11/10). This however fared true for all areas not only reading and viewing and speaking abilities. Eccles (2005) further stated the education level of parents will influence the area in which families reside, the income of the family, the type of school the children attend and the opportunities provided to the children which in turn should influence the child's educational achievements and abilities (Eccles, 2005).

Despite this finding, it should further be noted that in this research demographic factors of socioeconomic status, ethnicity, single parent households and whether the children attended crèche and/or playschool did not have a significant influence on the knowledge parents/caregivers have of school readiness. This may be due to the sample being limited to schools within an urban setting, with limited consideration for rural individuals and school going children. As well as the limited response rate received from the private school (higher socioeconomic status) individuals. Thus the population sample was limited to a urban, middle class population which provided a distinct knowledge base within that specific population sample and not considering other socioeconomic areas.

However, despite demographic factors not showing a significant difference in overall knowledge of school readiness for all areas it cannot be dismissed that these demographic factors may be directly influencing knowledge base in specific school readiness areas. When giving cognizance and analysis to the demographic factors and school readiness results, it should be noted that majority of participants in this research were African and most were bilingual individuals. If one considers this, we may find that the reason parents/caregivers scored moderate to poorly in areas of writing abilities, listening skills, reading and viewing and language structure and use, is purely due to the fact that English may not be their first and/or only language, albeit being one of their home language choices. Additionally, it should be considered that culturally there are a variety of acceptable language and speaking skills that may be interpreted differently and/or difficult to interpret in accordance with

the criteria portrayed on the questionnaire i.e. “*uses appropriate language*” and “*creates and tells a full story.*” Things to consider when understanding why parents/caregivers understanding of the language areas of school readiness would be that dual language speakers are often slower to learn languages than mono language speakers. Monolingual developing children were found in research to be significantly advanced in comparison to bilingually developing children in both vocabulary and grammar (Hoff, et al., 2012).

Other considerations would need to be that of the complex relationship between parental perceptions, beliefs and values and children’s behaviour. This relationship has been found to be multidirectional in nature (Porter, 1997). Some theorists argue that parent’s beliefs are not individually based but are adopted from their culture. (Porter, 1997) It would be an important consideration to establish the cultural differences and understandings, if any, in school readiness and whether the generalized CAPS view is in keeping with cultural understandings or not across our multicultural country.

5.6 Section 5: Implications for Occupational Therapists

Research has shown that the first five years of a child’s life are seen to be the essential building blocks for all developmental abilities (Sheridan, Knoche, Edwards, Bovaird, & Kupzyk, 2010). School-readiness assumes that the foundational components for achieving the skills are laid down prior to school entry. Furthermore, school-readiness has been described as a health measureable and relevant outcome with long-term consequences which parents/caregivers should be aware of (Janus & Offord, 2007). Major and minor problems in children need to be identified by parents/caregivers in order for children to be referred to relevant therapists and any problems are dealt with before they escalate later on in life, when abilities and expectations at formal school increase.

Over the past few decades the role and practice of occupational therapists in schools has flourished (Powell, 1993). In Powell (1993) it was found that 18.6% of occupational therapists worked in school environments with likelihood of increased hiring being noted. Up to date, relevant, educational preparedness is thus needed for the growing area of occupational therapy in school based settings (Powell, 1993).

From this information and guidelines for educational programs can be developed that are comprehensive, relevant and in response to growing community needs (Powell, 1993). Professional education programs are needed to offer content in areas that are problematic to the practice of Occupational Therapy and that are limiting functional outcomes (Powell, 1993) of therapy for children.

In occupational science we are interested in how people become independent, adapt to environmental demands and achieve competency. (Clark, 1993) A crucial role of the occupational therapist is thus to assist individuals to define their problems and find solutions (Clark, 1993).

A unique characteristic of Occupational Therapy in schools would include building up foundational skills for automatic function and execution of skills and the attainment of educational readiness (Rooyen & Marsh, 1988). Occupational therapists are uniquely equipped to understand and explain the internal environment of the child (client factors), the correlation between the client factors and the environment in which the child is learning, and the influences of the internal and external environment on the child's ability to learn and develop skills (occupational performance) needed for school readiness (Rooyen & Marsh, 1988).

Due to occupational therapists considering internal as well as external factors in one's life, school based occupational therapists would not be able to work holistically with a child without understanding and considering environmental settings and influences. In accordance with research findings, it is clear to note that within the urban setting of middle class individuals, parents/caregivers were seen to understand 57.86% of school readiness criteria. This means that 42.14% of school readiness criteria was not understood by parents/caregivers. This is a significantly high rate of poor understanding. As occupational therapists we are dependent on parents/caregivers to refer their children for early childhood intervention, preferably before school going age, in order to enhance development and limit educational shortfalls before entry into formal schooling setting. However, given that parents/caregivers have a significantly poor understanding of school readiness concepts, it is likely that children will not be referred and may be entering into school before they are ready and/or entering school with deficits present.

Additional consideration needs to be made in that from the findings it was deduced that parents/caregiver understanding of foundational criteria (client factors) appeared to be better than that of occupational performance (skill based tasks). This is concerning as the resultant occupational performance tasks are ultimately what is expected of school going children.

Additional considerations to be made, in keeping with the research, is that level of education of the mothers was found to significantly impact the knowledge of school readiness of the children. When drawing up and/or creating health promotion and prevention programs in the form of parental education within urban school setting, it would be helpful to target parents who exhibit lower levels of education. This refers to education levels lower than matric.

5.7 Conclusion

Overall parents appeared to present with 57.86% understanding of school readiness expectations. The converse to this meaning that 42.14% of school readiness requirements were not fully understood. According to findings parents/caregivers showed the greatest understanding of knowledge for the following categories: thinking and reasoning (77.66%); motor ability (76.79%); numbers (66.66%); and speaking (61.69%). Parents/Caregivers displayed moderate understanding (more than 50% understanding) for writing ability (57.82%); life skills (55.37%) and listening skills (51.75%). The areas in which parents/caregivers showed poorest understanding (less than 50% understanding) were reading and viewing (48.21%), activities of daily living (48.98%) and language structure and use (33.7%). Overall it was deduced that parents/caregivers appeared to have better understanding of foundational skills including basic concepts and generally known developmental milestones, however, they appeared to have more difficulty identify occupational performance (skill based) tasks which required integration of foundational skills.

When considering this as well as giving cognizance to the fact that school readiness is difficult to define with two distinguishable schools of thought looking at the concept from different views, I am of the opinion that school-readiness may be best described as a continuum in which basic foundational skills are needed with additional occupational performance skills (tasks) not necessarily needing to be prerequisites

but allowing for room for more gifted children which would merely aid their development and transition into school. It was easy to note that school readiness requirements vary in accordance with the level of expectation and the type of program a child is entering into i.e. CAPS (Government Curriculum) vs Private Schooling IEB program. This in itself explains that school readiness is not set in stone.

In the research it was found that parents appeared to generally overestimate their children's ability. The reason for this may be due to the fact that the questionnaires were only handed out in the 2nd term of schooling and thus parents had already been exposed to a set Grade 1 curriculum. However, research has shown that parents have a habit of over estimating their child's abilities (Dizon-Ross, 2014) (Pezdek, Berry, & Renno, 2002).

A cross correlational study was then run between the demographic factors found and the overall understanding of school-readiness for each skill area. Of all the demographics the only factor that demonstrated a significant difference was the mothers level of education. As the mothers highest level of education decreased, her accuracy of predicting a child's ability in keeping with school-readiness expectations decreased, resulting in a wider range of fallout for each skill items. This finding correlates with research (Sheridan, Knoche, Edwards, Bovaird, & Kupzyk, 2010) (McWayne, Hahs-Vaughn, Cheung, & Green Wright, 2012). There was no significant difference noted when correlating any of the other demographic factors. This may largely be due to the limited population of the sample. Due to the schools used and the response rate of questionnaires, the population sample ended up being indicative of a Urban setting with Middle class individuals. Despite this not impacting school readiness outcomes, it did however give us a good idea of school readiness understanding within this population setting. Additionally when considering factors of race and language, it could be deduced that the reason for shortfalls and understandings of language based areas i.e. writing abilities, listening skills, language structure and use and reading and viewing could be due to the fact that these individuals' culture and first language was not always English and that most individuals were bilingual or spoke dual languages which is often associated with a delay in language development in comparison to monolingual speakers (Hoff, et al., 2012).

Overall, the sample population and findings gave us a good understanding of the school readiness expectations parents have within an Urban middle class setting. This research aims to aid occupational therapists working within these settings to consider the generalized parental perceptions and views of school readiness and create an educational program for prevention of learning disabilities and promotion of school readiness criteria. This will assist parents/caregivers to ensure early developmental intervention and aid school entry for children going forward.

CHAPTER 6: RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

6.1 Limitations

As school based occupational therapists we strive to consider all individuals from a holistic point of view. This includes consideration of the parents, teachers, schools and home environments. This research merely looked at one aspect of the external environment when considering school going children. As stated above, this research landed up being isolated to a population of urban, middle class individuals, aiding therapists working within this population to have a better understanding of parents/caregivers understanding of school readiness in accordance with the CAPS curriculum criteria.

6.2 Suggestions for further research

It would however be helpful to expand and include research of parents/caregivers understanding of school readiness when considering rural, lower socioeconomic environment and upper class, higher socioeconomic environments. Additionally focus groups for teachers and/or parents could be helpful to encourage and further understand school readiness expectations of children.

In this study, parents/caregivers of Grade R and Grade 1 individuals were used. It may have been helpful to determine the difference in views between Grade R parents/caregivers and Grade 1 parents/caregivers and see if parents with older, school going children (Grade 1) have a better understanding of school readiness than the parents/caregivers with children in Grade R.

An additional study would be to consider that the CAPS curriculum standards are not set in stone and that with school readiness being so multi-complex and possibly more of a continuum basis, it would be ideal to have a study done to determine the

minimum requirements of school readiness that a child would need for successful school entry in Gauteng, South Africa. Additionally in this research the area of emotionality was eliminated due to the poor clarity of the question and the reduced response rate as a result. It is important to note that emotionality and emotional maturity of children is highly essential for school entry, thus I would encourage that any future research looking at school readiness requirements would need to include and consider children's emotional maturity.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A – QUESTIONNAIRE

APPENDIX A

DRAFT QUESTIONNAIRE

The following section of the questionnaire involves basic demographics and external factors regarding your lifestyle. Please note all answers are confidential.

Circle/tick or cross the appropriate answers:

1. Age of parent/caregiver participating in this research:

18-25	25-35	35-45	45-55	55-65	>65
-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-----

2. Family's home language:

English	Afrikaans	Zulu	Tswana	Xhosa	Other:
---------	-----------	------	--------	-------	--------

3. Parents/caregivers race:

	White	Black	Coloured	Indian	Asian	Other:
Mother						
Father						

4. Single parent/caregiver household:

Yes	No
-----	----

5. Parent/caregiver educational level

	None	Stopped school before Grade 7 (Primary School)	Completed Grade 7 (Primary school)	Completed Grade 10	Completed Grade 11	Completed Matric	Degree/ Diploma
Mother							
Father							
Caregiver							

6. Level of income (per month):

Less than R12 500	R12 500 – R27 000	R12 500 – R19 000	R27 000 – R38 000	R38 000 – R48 000	More than R48 000
-------------------	-------------------	-------------------	-------------------	-------------------	-------------------

7. Number of children in the family:

1	2	3	4	5	6 or more
---	---	---	---	---	-----------

8. Number of children older than 7 years:

0	1	2	3	4	5 or more
---	---	---	---	---	-----------

9. Is your child who is in Grade 1 disabled (physically and/or mentally)?

Unsure	Yes	No
--------	-----	----

10. Did your child attend preschool, crèche or nursery school?

Yes	No
-----	----

11. How old was your child at the start of his/her Grade 1 level of education?

4-5 years	5-6 years	6-7 years	7-8 years	8-9 years
-----------	-----------	-----------	-----------	-----------

12. Do you have access to and make use of any of the following resources?

Resource	Access		Use	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
Reading Books				
Puzzles				
Academic books				
Technologies (computer, ipad, ipod)				
Toys (dolls, blocks, ropes)				
Jungle gyms and/or trampolines				

13. Is your child cared for by someone else on a daily basis?

Yes	No
-----	----

13.a If yes please tick who your child is cared for by?

Domestic worker		Aftercare	
Aupair		Other: (explain)	
Family member			

Please continue on to Appendix B on the next page

School Readiness Assessment (Appendix B):

This is a list of skills children learn at informal and formal schooling levels. Rate what you believe your Grade 1 child should be able to do at a Grade 1 level of education.

The following questions are rated on a scale system. Tick or cross the appropriate box according to what you believe your child should be able to do and should still be expected to learn at a grade 1 level of education.

Listening skills	My child will definitely be able to do it.	My child should be able to do this sometimes	My child is expected to learn this while at school	Unsure
Listens attentively to instructions and announcements and respond adequately				
Does not interrupt while others are speaking				
Listens and understand simple songs, rhymes and short poems				
Draws a picture of a story that was told to him/her				
Notes detail and give the main idea of the story back to the reader				
Can write words being said to them				
Can sequence pictures without assistance				
Matches captions and words to sequenced pictures				
Speaking	My child will definitely be able to do it.	My child should be able to do this sometimes	My child is expected to learn this while at school	Unsure
Talks about friends to an adult				
Creates and tells stories with a beginning middle and end				
Passes on messages between adults				
Expresses their own feelings				
Role-plays different kinds of speech (telephonic conversations)				
Uses appropriate language for different occasions and different people				

Reading and Viewing	My child will definitely be able to do it.	My child should be able to do this sometimes	My child is expected to learn this while at school	Unsure
Predicts from the cover of the book what the story is about				
Makes sense of pictures by being able to explain them				
Interprets information including tables and graphs to his/her teacher				
Orientates a book the right way around				
Points to words rather than pictures while reading				
Turns pages independently				
Reads with a teacher or parent				
Recognizes letters and numbers				
Reads name and words like 'STOP' from the environment				
Recognize and names letters of the alphabet				
Is able to rhyme words				
Can identify sounds of letters eg. 'd' for 'dog'				
Writing	My child will definitely be able to do it.	My child should be able to do this sometimes	My child is expected to learn this while at school	Unsure
Draws to convey a message to an adult				
Understands the difference between writing and drawing				
Writes simple sentences				
Holds a pencil in an appropriate manner				
Pretends to write and asks others to read it				
Writes all letters of the alphabet unassisted				
Copies prints from environment				
Can write own name				
Can draw a person				
Distinguishing between a boy and girl				

Writing	My child will definitely be able to do it.	My child should be able to do this sometimes	My child is expected to learn this while at school	Unsure
Can draw a person indicating all body parts and includes additional props like a hat, make-up and high-heels				
Colours in within the lines without difficulty				
Can do colour by numbers without assistance (ie. Blue = 2)				
Can trace letters and number written for him/her				
Is able to cut out pictures along the lines				
Numbers	My child will definitely be able to do it.	My child should be able to do this sometimes	My child is expected to learn this while at school	Unsure
Can write numbers independently				
Can identify numbers written for them				
Can measure distance using a ruler				
Can rote count to 20 (1,2,3,...)				
Can count 20 objects				
Can do basic addition up to 20				
Thinking and reasoning	My child will definitely be able to do it.	My child should be able to do this sometimes	My child is expected to learn this while at school	Unsure
Understands sizes (big small, long and short)				
Understands quantity (larger, smaller, more or less)				
Identifies and knows shapes				
Can identify similarities in two pictures				
Classifies objects into groups eg. Dog, cat, fish = pets				
Understands positioning (eg. In front, on top, behind etc)				
Names and identifies all body parts				

Language structure and use	My child will definitely be able to do it.	My child should be able to do this sometimes	My child is expected to learn this while at school	Unsure
Relates sounds and words				
Knows where written words begin and end and leaves spaces between them				
Knows the full alphabet				
Identifies a word or a letter when reading				
Can count to 100				
Can read short sentences				
Uses description words such as 'that ball is <u>colourful</u> '				
Uses punctuation adequately when writing				
Motor abilities	My child will definitely be able to do it.	My child should be able to do this sometimes	My child is expected to learn this while at school	Unsure
Winks with both eyes alternatively				
Moves eyes in all directions when keeping his/her head still				
Climbs on and jumps off objects				
Protects themselves when falling (i.e. putting feet and arms out)				
Sits and focuses undistracted				
Jumps with both feet lifting off the floor				
Hops on one leg				
Skips (step hop pattern, alternating feet)				
Can do star jumps without difficulty				
Can skip using a rope				
Throws a ball over head				
Catches a ball using arms only, without using chest				
Kick a ball without falling over				
Can do summersaults unassisted				

Life skills	My child will definitely be able to do it.	My child should be able to do this sometimes	My child is expected to learn this while at school	Unsure
Can name seasons of the year				
Can name the month				
Can name days of the week				
Understands time frames of the day and night				
Understands time frames of the day (morning, lunch, afternoon, evening)				
Can tell the time on a clock				
Understands and can identify safety objects (ie. Ambulance, hospital, doctor, police)				
Understands safety precautions (road safety and swimming safety)				
Understands important dates (ie. Birthdays and Christmas)				
Activities of daily living	My child will definitely be able to do it.	My child should be able to do this sometimes	My child is expected to learn this while at school	Unsure
Dresses himself/herself without assistance				
Orientates shoes onto the correct feet				
Ties own shoe laces				
Does own hair				
Picks out his/her own clothing				
Bathing without assistance (good quality)				
Emotionality	My child will definitely be able to do it.	My child should be able to do this sometimes	My child is expected to learn this while at school	Unsure
Can adapt to new situations and environments				
Engages well socially, makes friends easily				
Cries when parents drop them off at school				
Constantly moving and active (cannot sit still)				
Is happy and cheerful				

Emotionality	My child will definitely be able to do it.	My child should be able to do this sometimes	My child is expected to learn this while at school	Unsure
Isolated and withdrawn				
Enjoys challenges				
Gets excited about learning new things				
Eager to impress parents/caregivers or teacher				
Eager to impress friends				
Plays in isolation				
Takes turns with other children when playing				
Engages in games/sports with basic rules				
Enjoys social engagement with children of the same age				

(Goverment, 2012; Wilson, 2011)

Thank you for taking time to complete this questionnaire. Your participation is greatly appreciated.

APPENDIX B – SCHOOL PERMISSION LETTER

Occupational Therapy

School of Therapeutic Sciences • Faculty of Health Sciences • 7 York Road, Parktown 2192, South Africa
Tel: +27 11 717-3701 • Fax: +27 11 717-3709 • E-mail: denise.franzen@wits.ac.za



PERMISSION LETTER TO SCHOOLS:

Title of Study: **Factors Influencing the knowledge parents/caregiver have regarding school readiness for Grade 1 scholars.**
Principal Investigator: **Kirsten Du Toit**
Institution: **University of Witwatersrand – Occupational Therapy**
Delegation: **Masters in Occupational Therapy**

Principal of

Dear Sir/Madam

I am a student registered for my Masters in the Occupational Therapy at the University of Witwatersrand. I am conducting a research project on determining the extent of knowledge parents/caregivers have with regards to school readiness and in doing so identifying factors which may influence parents/caregivers knowledge in this regard. I request permission for your participation in my study.

The study consists of handing out of questionnaires to Grade 1 parents via child mail. These questionnaires contain two separate sections. The first section will require the parents to answer questions relating to general factors including demographics as well as additional personal factors with regards to their lifestyles. The second section will require the parents to fill in a questionnaire asking questions regarding what is required of their children with regards to school readiness. Only I will have access to information completed in the forms. All information remains anonymous and does not require you to put down any personal details.

At the conclusion of the study, overall results will be written up in a research report and will be available to you through contact of the University of Witwatersrand, Occupational Therapy department. The result will be available after November 2013.

Participation in this study is voluntary. Parent's decision as to whether or not to participate will not affect their child in anyway. Their participation in this study will not lead to the loss of any benefits to which they are entitled. If they agree to participate, they are free to end participation at any time. The parents are not waiving any legal claims, rights, or remedies because of their participation in this research study.

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with the school and parental permission or as required by law. Confidentiality will be maintained by means of no names or personal information being requested on the questionnaire thus allowing for each participant to remain anonymous. All questionnaires will be expected to be returned in a closed envelope provided by the research to ensure confidentiality is maintained.

Should you have any questions or desire further information, please call me or email me on: 082 467 0986 or kjdutoit@hotmail.com

Sincerely,

Kirsten Du Toit (Msc OT)



APPENDIX C – INFORMATION SHEET

Occupational Therapy

School of Therapeutic Sciences • Faculty of Health Sciences • 7 York Road, Parktown 2192, South Africa
Tel: +27 11 717-3701 • Fax: +27 11 717-3709 • E-mail: denise.franzsen@wits.ac.za



PARENT INFORMATION SHEET

Dear Parent/Caregiver:

I am a Masters student in the Occupational Therapy department at the University of Witwatersrand. I am conducting a research project on determining the extent of knowledge parents/caregivers have with regards to school readiness and in doing so identifying factors which may influence parents/caregivers knowledge in this regard. I request permission for your participation in my study.

The study consists of a questionnaire containing two separate sections. The first section will require you to answer questions relating to general factors including demographics as well as additional personal factors with regards to your life. The second section will require you to fill in a questionnaire asking questions regarding what is required of children with regards to school readiness. All questions will be asked using basic understanding. You are only requested to participate should you feel willing to do so. Only I will have access to information completed in the forms. All information remains anonymous and does not require you to put down any personal details.

At the conclusion of the study, overall results will be written up in a research report and will be available to you through contacting of the University of Witwatersrand, Occupational Therapy department. The result will be available after November 2013.

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect you or your child in anyway. Your participation in this study will not lead to the loss of any benefits to which you are entitled. If you agree to participate, you are free to end participation at any time. You and your child are not waiving any legal claims, rights, or remedies because of your participation in this research study.

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law. Confidentiality will be maintained by means of no names or personal information being requested on the questionnaire thus allowing for each participant to remain anonymous. All questionnaires will be expected to be returned in a closed envelope provided by the research to ensure confidentiality is maintained.

Should you have any questions or desire further information, please call me or email me on: 082 467 0986 or kidutoit@hotmail.com. Any ethical queries or reporting of study-related adverse events should be made to the chairperson of the Wits Ethics Human Research Committee, Prof. P. Cleaton-Jones at 011 717 1234.

Sincerely,

Kirsten Du Toit (Msc OT)

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'K. Du Toit'.



APPENDIX D – ETHICAL CLEARANCE – HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (MEDICAL)



R14/49 Miss Kirsten Du Toit

HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (MEDICAL)

CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE NO. M130349

NAME: Miss Kirsten Du Toit
(Principal Investigator)

DEPARTMENT: Department of Occupational Therapy
Medical School

PROJECT TITLE: Investigate the Factors Influencing the
Knowledge Parents/Caregivers have regarding
School Readiness for Grade 1

DATE CONSIDERED: 05/04/2013

DECISION: Approved unconditionally

CONDITIONS:

SUPERVISOR: Prof Pat De Wit

APPROVED BY: 
Professor PE Cleaton-Jones, Chairperson, HREC (Medical)

DATE OF APPROVAL: 26/04/2013

This clearance certificate is valid for 5 years from date of approval. Extension may be applied for.

DECLARATION OF INVESTIGATORS

To be completed in duplicate and **ONE COPY** returned to the Secretary in Room 10004, 10th floor, Senate House, University.

I/we fully understand the conditions under which I am/we are authorized to carry out the above-mentioned research and I/we undertake to ensure compliance with these conditions. Should any departure be contemplated, from the research protocol as approved, I/we undertake to resubmit the application to the Committee. I agree to submit a yearly progress report.

Principal Investigator Signature

Date

PLEASE QUOTE THE PROTOCOL NUMBER IN ALL ENQUIRIES

APPENDIX E – GDE RESEARCH APPROVAL LETTER



GAUTENG PROVINCE

Department: Education
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

For administrative use:
Reference no: D2014/327

GDE RESEARCH APPROVAL LETTER

Date:	22 January 2014
Validity of Research Approval:	10 February to 3 October 2014
Name of Researcher:	Du Toit K.J.
Address of Researcher:	486 Ontdekkers Road
	Florida Hills
	Roodepoort
	1709
Telephone Number:	011 472 5502 / 082 467 0986
Email address:	kjdutoit@hotmail.com
Research Topic:	The factors affecting the knowledge parents/caregivers have regarding school readiness for Grade 1
Number and type of schools:	FOUR Primary schools
District/s/HO	Gauteng East and Gauteng West

Re: Approval in Respect of Request to Conduct Research

This letter serves to indicate that approval is hereby granted to the above-mentioned researcher to proceed with research in respect of the study indicated above. The onus rests with the researcher to negotiate appropriate and relevant time schedules with the school/s and/or offices involved to conduct the research. A separate copy of this letter must be presented to both the School (both Principal and SGB) and the District/Head Office Senior Manager confirming that permission has been granted for the research to be conducted.

The following conditions apply to GDE research. The researcher may proceed with the above study subject to the conditions listed below being met. Approval may be withdrawn should any of the conditions listed below be flouted:

Makhado
2014/01/22

1

Making education a societal priority

Office of the Director: Knowledge Management and Research

9th Floor, 111 Commissioner Street, Johannesburg, 2001
P.O. Box 7710, Johannesburg, 2000 Tel: (011) 355 0505
Email: David.Makhado@gauteng.gov.za
Website: www.education.gpg.gov.za

1. The District/Head Office Senior Manager/s concerned must be presented with a copy of this letter that would indicate that the said researcher/s has/have been granted permission from the Gauteng Department of Education to conduct the research study.
2. The District/Head Office Senior Manager/s must be approached separately, and in writing, for permission to involve District/Head Office Officials in the project.
3. A copy of this letter must be forwarded to the school principal and the chairperson of the School Governing Body (SGB) that would indicate that the researcher/s have been granted permission from the Gauteng Department of Education to conduct the research study.
4. A letter / document that outlines the purpose of the research and the anticipated outcomes of such research must be made available to the principals, SGBs and District/Head Office Senior Managers of the schools and districts/offices concerned, respectively.
5. The Researcher will make every effort obtain the goodwill and co-operation of all the GDE officials, principals, and chairpersons of the SGBs, teachers and learners involved. Persons who offer their co-operation will not receive additional remuneration from the Department while those that opt not to participate will not be penalised in any way.
6. Research may only be conducted after school hours so that the normal school programme is not interrupted. The Principal (if at a school) and/or Director (if at a district/head office) must be consulted about an appropriate time when the researcher/s may carry out their research at the sites that they manage.
7. Research may only commence from the second week of February and must be concluded before the beginning of the last quarter of the academic year. If incomplete, an amended Research Approval letter may be requested to conduct research in the following year.
8. Items 6 and 7 will not apply to any research effort being undertaken on behalf of the GDE. Such research will have been commissioned and be paid for by the Gauteng Department of Education.
9. It is the researcher's responsibility to obtain written parental consent of all learners that are expected to participate in the study.
10. The researcher is responsible for supplying and utilising his/her own research resources, such as stationery, photocopies, transport, faxes and telephones and should not depend on the goodwill of the institutions and/or the offices visited for supplying such resources.
11. The names of the GDE officials, schools, principals, parents, teachers and learners that participate in the study may not appear in the research report without the written consent of each of these individuals and/or organisations.
12. On completion of the study the researcher/s must supply the Director: Knowledge Management & Research with one Hard Cover bound and an electronic copy of the research.
13. The researcher may be expected to provide short presentations on the purpose, findings and recommendations of his/her research to both GDE officials and the schools concerned.
14. Should the researcher have been involved with research at a school and/or a district/head office level, the Director concerned must also be supplied with a brief summary of the purpose, findings and recommendations of the research study.

The Gauteng Department of Education wishes you well in this important undertaking and looks forward to examining the findings of your research study.

Kind regards



Dr David Makhado
Director: Education Research and Knowledge Management

DATE: 2014/01/22

Office of the Director: Knowledge Management and Research

9th Floor, 111 Commissioner Street, Johannesburg, 2001
P.O. Box 7710, Johannesburg, 2000 Tel: (011) 355 0506
Email: David.Makhado@gauteng.gov.za
Website: www.education.gpg.gov.za

APPENDIX G – TURN IT IN REPORT

Kirsten due Toit Final document

ORIGINALITY REPORT

% 7	% 5	% 2	% 3
SIMILARITY INDEX	INTERNET SOURCES	PUBLICATIONS	STUDENT PAPERS

PRIMARY SOURCES

1	digitalcommons.wku.edu Internet Source	% 1
2	Submitted to University of Witwatersrand Student Paper	<% 1
3	www.nwc.gov.au Internet Source	<% 1
4	pubs.drdc-rddc.gc.ca Internet Source	<% 1
5	espace.curtin.edu.au Internet Source	<% 1
6	Terrien Church, Paige, Maureen Luther, and Elizabeth Asztalos. "The Perfect Storm: The High Prevalence Low Severity Outcomes of the Preterm Survivors", Current Pediatric Reviews, 2012. Publication	<% 1
7	eprints.utar.edu.my Internet Source	<% 1
8	Submitted to University of South Africa Student Paper	<% 1

9	McWayne, Christine M., Debbie L. Hahs-Vaughn, Katherine Cheung, and Linnie E. Green Wright. "National profiles of school readiness skills for Head Start children: An investigation of stability and change", Early Childhood Research Quarterly, 2012. Publication	<% 1
10	dspace.lib.cranfield.ac.uk Internet Source	<% 1
11	www.incrementalrecycledwaterprogram.com Internet Source	<% 1
12	run.unl.pt Internet Source	<% 1
13	scholar.lib.vt.edu Internet Source	<% 1
14	Submitted to Northcentral Student Paper	<% 1
15	Submitted to Alliant International University Student Paper	<% 1
16	www.aprioriresearch.com Internet Source	<% 1
17	Dillon, Susan A.. "Healing the sacred yoni in the land of Isis: female genital mutilation is banned (again) in Egypt.", Houston Journal of International Law, Wntr 2000 Issue Publication	<% 1

18	eprints.usq.edu.au Internet Source	<% 1
19	Clark, F.. "Occupation Embedded in a Real Life: Interweaving Occupational Science and Occupational Therapy", American Journal of Occupational Therapy, 1993. Publication	<% 1
20	ul.netd.ac.za Internet Source	<% 1
21	Submitted to Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology Student Paper	<% 1
22	Submitted to Cranfield University Student Paper	<% 1
23	Halle, Tamara G., Elizabeth C. Hair, Laura D. Wandner, and Nina C. Chien. "Profiles of school readiness among four-year-old Head Start children", Early Childhood Research Quarterly, 2012. Publication	<% 1
24	Kathy Pezdek. "Children's mathematics achievement: The role of parents' perceptions and their involvement in homework.", Journal of Educational Psychology, 2002 Publication	<% 1
25	www.unicef.org Internet Source	<% 1

26	Submitted to Mancosa Student Paper	<% 1
27	Case-Smith, J.. "Systematic Reviews of the Effectiveness of Interventions Used in Occupational Therapy Early Childhood Services", American Journal of Occupational Therapy, 2013. Publication	<% 1
28	ajot.aota.org Internet Source	<% 1
29	"Elderly Care in India", Springer Nature, 2017 Publication	<% 1
30	p16abilene.org Internet Source	<% 1
31	ehlt.flinders.edu.au Internet Source	<% 1
32	"Fathers Have a Role to Play in Childhood Education.", Africa News Service, Jan 29 2016 Issue Publication	<% 1
33	libres.uncg.edu Internet Source	<% 1
34	www.childlinesa.org.za Internet Source	<% 1
35	www.samf.ac.za Internet Source	<% 1

36	ATHENA I PATRIANAKOS-HOOBLER. "Predicting school readiness from neurodevelopmental assessments at age 2 years after respiratory distress syndrome in infants born preterm", Developmental Medicine & Child Neurology, 04/2010 Publication	<% 1
37	Submitted to University of Newcastle Student Paper	<% 1
38	www.osha.gov Internet Source	<% 1
39	Ranganathan, Meghna Heise, Lori Pettifor. "Transactional sex among young women in rural South Africa: prevalence, mediators and association wit", Journal of the International AIDS Societ, Sept 2016 Issue Publication	<% 1
40	J. Hibel. "roots of assimilation: generational status differentials in ethnic minority children's school readiness", Journal of Early Childhood Research, 06/01/2009 Publication	<% 1
41	Submitted to Grand Canyon University Student Paper	<% 1
42	winslerlab.gmu.edu Internet Source	<% 1
43	Child Maltreatment, 2015. Publication	<% 1

44	www.wisis.unam.na Internet Source	<% 1
45	www.thetollroads.com Internet Source	<% 1
46	scottishjournal.co.uk Internet Source	<% 1
47	www.erint.savap.org.pk Internet Source	<% 1
48	DuPaul, George J. Kern, Lee Caskie, Grac. "Early intervention for young children with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder: prediction of a", School Psychology Review, March 2015 Issue Publication	<% 1
49	dspace.siu.ac.th Internet Source	<% 1
50	www.biomedcentral.com Internet Source	<% 1
51	www.earlyyearsinfo.ca Internet Source	<% 1
52	www.afrikanergeskiedenis.co.za Internet Source	<% 1
53	"Sustainable Governance", Encyclopedia of Quality of Life and Well-Being Research, 2014. Publication	<% 1

54	www.elsensa.co.za Internet Source	<% 1
55	Commodari, Elena. "'School Readiness' and Socio-demographic Variables: The Role of the Cultural Status of the Family on the Prerequisites of Scholastic Learning", Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences, 2016. Publication	<% 1
56	www.familyschool.org.au Internet Source	<% 1
57	www.upcsa.org.za Internet Source	<% 1
58	Lisa L. Knoche. "Getting ready: Results of a randomized trial of a relationship-focused intervention on the parent-infant relationship in rural early head start", Infant Mental Health Journal, 2012 Publication	<% 1
59	bura.brunel.ac.uk Internet Source	<% 1
60	www.crtc.gc.ca Internet Source	<% 1
61	documents.mx Internet Source	<% 1
62	uir.unisa.ac.za Internet Source	<% 1

63	erepo.usiu.ac.ke Internet Source	<% 1
64	www.pollresults.net Internet Source	<% 1
65	nccuir.lib.nccu.edu.tw Internet Source	<% 1
66	eprints.lancs.ac.uk Internet Source	<% 1
67	Handbook of Early Childhood Special Education, 2016. Publication	<% 1
68	Pratt, Megan E., Megan M. McClelland, Jodi Swanson, and Shannon T. Lipscomb. "Family risk profiles and school readiness: A person-centered approach", Early Childhood Research Quarterly, 2016. Publication	<% 1
69	www.ncte.org Internet Source	<% 1
70	uu.diva-portal.org Internet Source	<% 1
71	Autism and Child Psychopathology Series, 2014. Publication	<% 1
72	www.eduweb.vic.gov.au Internet Source	<% 1

73	41.89.160.13:8080 Internet Source	<%1
74	Kardos, M., and B. P. White. "The Role of the School-Based Occupational Therapist in Secondary Education Transition Planning: A Pilot Survey Study", American Journal of Occupational Therapy, 2005. Publication	<%1
75	www.thesis.bilkent.edu.tr Internet Source	<%1
76	Rubinic, D., and H. Schwickrath. "Test Review: Kamphaus, R. W., & Reynolds, C. R. (2006). Parenting Relationship Questionnaire. Minneapolis, MN: NCS Pearson", Journal of Psychoeducational Assessment, 2010. Publication	<%1
77	www.wavetrust.org Internet Source	<%1
78	ir.lib.uwo.ca Internet Source	<%1
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