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Collaboration between Parents and Kindergarten Teachers

Doctoral Thesis

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First – I would like to express my gratitude to the teachers and parents who participated in this study, and enabled me to explore their feelings and attitudes.

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Abstract

Educators frequently point out the critical role of the home and family environment in determining children's kindergarten success and it appears that the earlier this influence takes place, the greater the likelihood of higher child's achievement (Webster-Stratton, Gasper & Joao Seabra-Santos, 2012). In order for parents to get more involved with children's education a better communication must be established between parents and teachers in kindergarten. Effective communication between families and kindergarten is frequent and bi-directional, instills a sense of shared purpose, and works toward mutually advantageous solutions to problems (Epstein, 2001).

The aim of this study is to build and effective communication system between teachers and parents in the kindergarten. Therefore, current study will focus of collaboration between teachers and parents, which mainly holds two elements: (1) Partnership which presents the involved parties with special challenges that must be navigated unto agreement. (2) Communication which is defined as working level of partnership, e.g. activity of conveying information through the exchange of ideas, feelings, intentions, attitudes, expectations, perceptions or commands.

To examine these questions I used a mixed-methodology which will employ both quantitative and qualitative methods. I gathered data from 100 teachers in Israel and also from 200 parents in 10 kindergartens. I had interviewed them and also delivered closed questionnaires. Results show that an active and positive collaboration between teachers and parents in kindergarten is crucial by both sides. Results of current study have several implications. First, it is highly important to develop close relationship between parents and teachers in kindergarten based on attitudes and feelings of both parties as revealed in this study. Many teachers are not prepared to plan for and practice parent outreach. Hopefully teachers, particularly new teachers, who have limited experience regarding ways to encourage parental

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involvement will refer to the practices such as reaching out to parents and encourage their involvement.

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Introduction

Promoting family involvement in education may improve children's academic and social outcomes, both in early education and beyond (Castro, Bryant, Peisner-Feinberg & Skinner, 2004). Therefore, fostering family-kindergarten: partnerships has been considered as a priority for kindergarten personnel, including early childhood educators, who are often charged with facilitating parent involvement (Sandall, Hemmeter, Smith & McLean, 2005). Two dimensions of parent–kindergarten collaborations – parent involvement in kindergarten activities and perceived teacher responsiveness to children and parents – hold particular promise of enhancing pre-kindergarten effects on children and are the focus of the current study. Providing parental kindergarten-involvement opportunities is the most common way kindergartens attempt to facilitate relationships with parents, whereas the construct of teacher responsiveness reflects a more recent interest in how kindergartens embrace parents and children.

Most teachers think about having a good relationship with parents. However, just as images of teaching and learning environments vary, so do images of good parent-teacher relationships. At one end of the spectrum, the image of a good relationship is an effective separation of roles and functions between home and kindergarten, an optimal social distance combined with mutual respect. The family meets the kindergarten as expectations efficiently, and the kindergarten effectively educates the child without undue demands on the home. At the other end of the spectrum is the image of the kindergarten functioning as an extended family, a more open system. Family and kindergarten intersect around the life of the child (Swartz & Easterbrooks, 2014).

Looking more closely at the research, there are strong indications that the most effective forms of parent involvement are those which engage parents in working directly with their children on learning activities in the home. Programs which involve parents in reading with their children, supporting their work on homework assignments, or tutoring them using

materials and instructions provided by teachers, show particularly impressive results (De Carvalho, 2014).

Previous studies showed that the earlier in a child's educational process parent involvement begins, the more powerful the effects will be. Educators frequently point out the critical role of the home and family environment in determining children's kindergarten success, and it appears that the earlier this influence is "harnessed", the greater the likelihood of higher child's achievement. Early childhood education programs with strong parent involvement components have amply demonstrated the effectiveness of this approach (Webster-Stratton at al., 2012).

In addition, researchers have found that the more active forms of parent involvement produce greater achievement benefits than the more passive ones. Negative effects immediately influence, if parents receive phone calls, read and sign written communications from the kindergarten, and perhaps attend and listen during parent teacher conferences, greater achievement benefits accrue than would be the case with no parent involvement at all. However, considerably greater achievement benefits are noted when parent involvement is active--when parents work with their children at home, certainly, but also when they attend and actively support kindergarten activities and when they help out in classrooms or on field trips, and so on (De Carvalho, 2014).

The current study will focus of collaboration between teachers and parents, which mainly holds two elements: (1) Partnership which presents the involved parties with special challenges that must be navigated unto agreement. Overarching goals, levels of give-and-take, areas of responsibility, lines of authority and succession, how success is evaluated and distributed, and often a variety of other factors must all be negotiated. Partnerships exist within, and across, sectors. Non-profit, religious, and political organizations may partner together to increase the likelihood of each achieving their mission and to amplify their reach. In the context of this

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study, I will refer partnership as the way of teachers see, approach and treat parents and vice versa. (2) Communication which is defined as working level of partnership, e.g. activity of conveying information through the exchange of ideas, feelings, intentions, attitudes, expectations, perceptions or commands.

The subject and the aims of the research

The main purpose of the current study is to examine patterns of relationship between parents and kindergarten teachers. In addition, I will propose in my work a model which aims to improve the communication between teachers and parents in pre-school kindergartens.

The research problems

Specifically, the study will investigate the following questions:

1. In what dimensions parents and teachers are ready to accept the proposed system for communication?

Variable: Parents-teachers communication dimensions

2. What teachers and parents would like to change in the system and what they would like to add to the system?

Variable: Parents-teachers communication dimensions

3. In regard to teachers-parents relationship, on one hand, what do parents expect from teachers, and, on the other hand, what do teachers expect from parents?

Variable: Teachers-parents relationship

4. What are the associations between the psychological and educational aspects of the relationship?

Variable: Psychological and educational aspects teachers-parents relationship

5. What are the core concerns of parents in regard to the children? What are the core concerns of teachers in regard to the children?

Variable: Core concerns of parents and teachers

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Importance of the subject

The current study investigated the association between parent-school relationships and children's academic and social outcomes at kindergarten in teachers and parents' opinion. Two dimensions of parent–school relationships, parental school involvement and parents' perceptions of teacher responsiveness to children and parents will be examined as predictors of children's outcomes.

Kindergarten may be an optimal period to promote parent-school relationships. Parents may develop or refine knowledge and skills in how parents and school personnel can work collaboratively to support children's learning during this period and beyond (Epstein, 1995). Parent-school relationships may be especially beneficial in the early childhood years for promoting early academic and social skills that are predictive of later school success. For example, studies indicate that preschool literacy and language skills are key to subsequent reading ability and those kindergarten social competencies, including attention skills and behavioral regulation, are associated with early and subsequent school success (Miles & Stipek, 2006). Therefore, it is important to study the field of parent involvement in kindergarten, and establishing more productive and efficient ways in which teachers and parents can collaborate.

I believe that examining parent and teacher's relationship in kindergarten is with high theoretical and practical value for some reasons: First, as previous studies in the literature review showed, parent's involvement is critical for the academic and social achievements of children, especially in pre-school. Therefore, defining an appropriate model that will enhance the readiness and the competence of parents to be more involved in the children's education will create better results for the children themselves. In addition, teachers have also a great influence on children in kindergarten since they teach them a variety of skills which help them to make the future transition to school. Better communication between teachers and parents will assist the teachers to focus their interventions in more productive ways.

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This study is especially relevant in the current period, in which electronic media caused a flat knowledge pyramid. Nowadays, parents are more aware of many educational approaches in ways which they could actually promote and contribute to their children's education through focusing teachers.

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PART A

I. PARENTS INVOLVEMENT IN FORMAL EDUCATION

The need for parental involvement has been identified as critical to the child's functioning successfully during the early childhood years (Meyerhoff & White, 1986). Parental involvement has emerged as one of today's most important topics in educational circles. As the stability of the American family has declined during the past four decades, researchers have been increasingly concerned about the degree to which parents are involved (or uninvolved) in their children's education (Christian, Morrison & Bryant, 1998).

1. Importance of parents' involvement in children's education

Parental involvement has become one of the centerpieces of educational dialogue among educators, parents, and political leaders. The presence of more parents in the workforce, the fast pace of modern society as a whole, and the declining role of the family have all been reasons that some social scientists have pointed to explain an apparent decline in parental involvement in education (Coleman & Hoffer, 1987). Although many educators have highlighted the importance of parental involvement if children are to do well in school, the research that has been done on this issue has frequently been unable to give guidance regarding the extent to which parental involvement helps student achievement and just what kind of parental involvement is most important (Jeynes, 2001).

Research on parental involvement has increased during the past two decades. Social scientists are giving parental involvement a special place of importance in influencing the academic outcomes of the youth. Hara (1998) went so far as to claim that that increased parental involvement is the key to improving the academic achievement of children. Various studies indicate that parental involvement is salient in determining how well children do in school at both the elementary and secondary school levels (Christian at al., 1998). Research by Singh, Bickley, Trivette, Keith, Keith and Anderson (1995), suggests that the effects of parental

involvement may be greater at the elementary school level. Deslandes, Royer Turcott and Bertrand (1997), reported results that suggest the parenting style may determine how much of an effect the involvement of parents has at the secondary level. The impact of parental involvement emerges in mathematics achievement, reading achievement (Jeynes, 2001), and in other subjects as well (Jeynes, 2001).

Research indicates that the effects of parental involvement are broad. That is, they hold across a variety of different types of populations and situations. For example, the place of parental involvement in academic achievement holds no matter what level of parental education one examines (Bogenschneider, 1997) and at all levels of economic background (Shaver & Walls, 1998). Most relevant to this study, the research evidence also indicates that parental involvement positively affects the academic achievement of children no matter what the racial heritage is of the children being studied (Mau, 1997). However, those studies that have made this assertion have generally examined only one ethnic group and have defined parental involvement as having only one to three components. Muller's (1998) research indicates that parental involvement may help reduce the mathematics achievement gap between boys and girls. The willingness of parents to participate in the education of their children apparently also transcends the distinction between whether a school is from the inner city or the suburbs (Hampton, Mumford & Bond, 1998). Grolnick, Benjet, Kurowski and Apostoleris (1997) asserted that once the academic community knows what parental involvement consists of, it can predict what family and social attributes will contribute most too producing parents that participate in the educational experience of their children.

Several researches tried to understand which aspects of parental involvement are the most effective. There is still a great deal of research that needs to be undertaken regarding which aspects of parental involvement are most important. In the past few years, social scientists have attempted to become more specific in their studies regarding just what they mean by parental

involvement. Hoge, Smit and Crist (1997) attempted to define parental involvement as consisting of four components: parental expectations, parental interest, parental involvement in school, and family community. They found that of the four components, parental expectations were the most important. Other research either qualifies or disputes these findings. Mau's (1997) findings indicated that although parental expectations were important, parental supervision of homework was very important. Mau also noted some racial differences in the types of parental involvement that parents engaged in. Mau (1997) found that whereas White parents were more likely to attend school functions than Asian and Asian American parents, the latter parents had higher expectations, and their children did more homework. Since Asian and Asian American students generally academically outperformed White students, Mau (1997) questioned the importance of parents' attending school functions. Other research suggests that parental expectations may backfire if they are not maintained in the context of a positive parental style (Zellman & Waterman, 1998). In the context of a less supportive parenting style, high expectations may place an unmanageable degree of pressure on the child.

The effect of parental involvement on achievement and cognitive development has been explored in recent studies (Sylva, Melhuish, Sammons & Siraj-Blatchford, 1999; Melhuish, Sylva, Sammons, Siraj-Blatchford & Taggart, 2001). Sylva and colleagues (1999) ran a longitudinal study (The Effective Provision of Pre School Education Project, EPPE) to assess the attainment and development of children between the ages 3 to 7 years. More than three thousand children were recruited to the sample which investigated provision in more than 100 centres. A wide range of methods were used to explore the effects of provision on children's attainment and adjustment. For example Melhuish and colleagues (2001) concluded that higher home learning environment was associated with increased levels of cooperation and conformity, peer sociability and confidence.

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In addition to these outcomes, parental involvement has also been linked to psychological processes and attributes that support student achievement. These attributes support achievement across groups of students, including students at risk for poorer educational or developmental outcomes (Grolnick, Kurowski, Dunlap & Hevey, 2000). These student motivational, cognitive, social, and behavioral attributes are particularly important because they are susceptible to direct parent and teacher influence. They include student sense of personal competence and efficacy for learning ("I can do this work"; e.g., Bandura, Barbaranelli, Caprara & Pastorelli, 1996); mastery orientation (Gonzalez, Holbein & Quilter, 2002); perceptions of personal control over school outcomes (Trusty & Lampe, 1997); self-regulatory knowledge and skills ("I know how to do this work"; Xu & Corno, 2003); as well as attentive, adaptive school behavior, engagement in schoolwork, and beliefs about the importance of education ("I want to do this work"; Sheldon & Epstein, 2002). This evidence underscores the importance of continued attention to improvements in research in this area, including careful delineation of conceptual and theoretical foundations, thoughtful selection of design and methodology, and systematic attention to the derivation of implications for sound and effective educational practice.

Not all parents need encouragement to become involved; as explicated well in a literature focused primarily on social class, culture, and family-school relations, some parents are heavily involved in their children's education and need few incentives for still further involvement. This literature suggests that such involvement is often accompanied by beliefs that schools should give priority to one's own child as well as one's own views, needs, and social perspectives, often to the implicit or explicit exclusion of other families' needs and perspectives (Brantlinger, 2003). Such involvement can create substantial difficulties for members of the school community. For example, overly involved parents may diminish students' opportunities to learn personal responsibility and may create debilitating pressures on schools' abilities to meet the educational needs of all students (i.e., parents may control not only their own

children's educational choices and progress but the opportunities and choices available to all families served by the school (Wells & Serna, 1996).

Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's (1997) model suggests that parents' involvement is motivated by two belief systems: role construction for involvement, and sense of efficacy for helping the child succeed in school. Parental role construction is defined as parents' beliefs about what they are supposed to do in relation to their children's education and the patterns of parental behavior that follow those beliefs (Hoover-Dempsey, Walker, Sandler, Whetsel, Green, Wilkins & Closson, 2005). Role construction for involvement is influenced by parents' beliefs about how children develop, what parents should do to rear their children effectively, and what parents should do at home to help children succeed in school. Role construction is also shaped by the expectations of individuals and groups important to the parent about the parent's responsibilities relevant to the child's schooling. Because role construction is shaped by the expectations of pertinent social groups and relevant personal beliefs, it is constructed socially. It is created from parents' experiences over time with individuals and groups related to schooling. These often include the parent's personal experiences with schooling, prior experience with involvement, and ongoing experiences with others related to the child's schooling (e.g., teachers, other parents). Because it is socially constructed, parents' role construction for involvement is subject to change. It changes in response to variations in social conditions, and it may change in response to intentional efforts to alter role construction (Chrispeels & Rivero, 2001).

A second personal motivator of parental involvement is self-efficacy, or belief in one's abilities to act in ways that will produce desired outcomes (Bandura, 1997). Self-efficacy is a significant factor in decisions about the goals one chooses to pursue as well as effort and persistence in working toward the accomplishment of those goals. Self-efficacy theory thus suggests that parents make their decisions about involvement in part by thinking about the

outcomes likely to follow their actions (Bandura, 1997). It asserts also that parents develop behavioral goals for their involvement based on their appraisal of their capabilities in the situation. Thus, parents high in efficacy will tend to make positive decisions about active engagement in the child's education; further, they are likely to persist in the face of challenges or obstacles and work their way through difficulties to successful outcomes. Relatively weak self-efficacy for involvement is often associated with lower parental expectations about outcomes of efforts to help the child succeed in school and relatively low persistence in the face of challenges (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997).

Research has supported theoretically predicted relations between parental efficacy and several aspects of parental involvement. Bandura (1997), for example, reported that parents with stronger efficacy for managing and promoting middle schoolers' academic development were more likely than were lower-efficacy parents to support children's educational activities and develop students' self-management skills for effective learning. Shumow and Lomax (2002), reporting on a national sample of middle and high school students, found that a broad measure of parental efficacy predicted parental involvement and parental monitoring of students. Parents' involvement and monitoring of student progress, in turn, predicted measures of students' academic success, including grades; use of remedial, regular, or advanced courses; and school behavior. Grolnick and colleagues (1997), who examined elementary parents' perceptions of personal efficacy in relation to children's education, reported higher involvement among parents with stronger efficacy across all three domains of involvement: behavioral (participating in school activities and helping the student at home), cognitive-intellectual (parents' engagement with children in intellectually stimulating activities), and personal (monitoring the child's school progress).

Parents' motivational beliefs are associated with enhanced relationships with teachers from several reasons. First, when parents believe it is their role to be involved in their children's

learning, they may be more likely to align their educational goals with those of children's teachers (Christenson & Sheridan, 2001). Second, when parents feel efficacious, they may be more comfortable communicating and sharing their goals with teachers in a constructive way (Clarke, Sheridan & Woods, 2009). Third, parents who are highly motivated for involvement may participate more often in children's schooling, which may create additional opportunities to establish positive relationships with children's teachers (Kohl, Lengua & McMahon, 2000).

These potential implications for adopting active roles in children's educational activities enhance the relevance of attending to parents' beliefs when developing and implementing home-school programs.

2. Parental involvement during kindergarten period

Kindergarten constitutes children's first experience with formal schooling and the transition to kindergarten marks the beginning of a new relationship between families and schools. Families and schools vary in the extent to which they "share meaning" about the purpose of school, view their respective roles in children's school experience, and have knowledge about what actions either should take with regard to enhancing children's school success. Thus, although policy-makers, educators and researchers share views about the importance of family involvement in children's early educational experience (Kellaghan, Sloane, Alvarez & Bloom, 1993; Marcon, 1999), the nature of the transition to kindergarten poses unique challenges to family involvement.

Instead of focusing exclusively on the child as the school readiness indicator, new models encompass a transition to school or "ready schools" framework, seeing the child and his or her abilities as situated within and dependent on a broader contextual perspective (Ramey & Ramey, 1999). These recent models of school readiness emphasize the dynamic nature of relational and informational linkages that provide a web of support for children during a time of immense change (Serpell & Mashburn, 2012). Specifically, Rimm-Kaufman and Pianta (2005)

note that, in a developmental ecological model, child, family, school, peer, and community factors are interconnected and interdependent throughout the transition period and can be aligned in ways that support children's adjustment to early schooling. Coherent connections within and between these multiple contexts in a child's life leads to stability in relationships and consistency in information-sharing, particularly between pre-kindergarten and kindergarten teachers, and teachers and families, which may promote greater early school success. Efforts to create a continuous, seamless experience across settings through curriculum and policy-level issues are often referred to as alignment, whereas transitions practices are the actual intentional attempts to create support and familiarity across pre-kindergarten and kindergarten. Linkages can be forged in different ways, like district initiatives and federal transition policies that attempt to regulate development of school, family, and community connections. At a more proximal level, pre-kindergarten teachers' practices can create a bridge of support for children as they transition to kindergarten.

Hence, the transition from kindergarten to school occurs in the context of relationships among children, families, schools, preschool teachers, kindergarten teachers, peers, and neighborhoods. Each of these contexts may support or challenge children's transition into school, a process that can be best understood by measuring changes in children's relationships over time. Research that has examined changes in relationships over time shows the benefits of understanding the transition in this light (Rimm-Kaufman & Pianta, 1999).

A developmental ecological transition to kindergarten model implies that the use of transition practices will be most effective when aimed at enhancing the linkages between people and settings during early schooling. Specifically, Rimm-Kaufman and Pianta (2005) describe effective teacher-initiated transition practices as those that involve reaching out proactively to families and other teachers, and doing so with a high level of intensity, prior to the actual physical move into a new classroom. However, studies of teachers' use of transition

practices (Rathbun & Germino-Hausken, 2001) consistently find a very different reality; teachers' and schools' use of transition practices tend to take place after the start of school and/or involve low intensity, generic contact such as flyers, brochures, or group open-houses. On the whole, findings from teacher surveys suggest that the typical transition for children consists of contact with their new school that is too little, too late, and too impersonal – a conclusion that is highly consistent with what parents report about the kindergarten transition experience (Pianta & Kraft-Sayre, 2003).

Effective transition planning is expected to connect a child's support systems as a way to offer social and emotional support to the child during a potentially challenging time, as well as build coherence and consistency in curriculum, expectations and experiences across settings (Pianta & Cox, 1999). Specifically, children whose pre-kindergarten teachers use many of the transition practices will gain familiarity with their kindergarten classroom and teacher ahead of time, will have parents who understand what kindergarten will be like and can speak about it regularly in a positive manner, and will have kindergarten teachers who know something about them already from conversations with parents and pre-kindergarten teachers. These occurrences are expected to provide a comfortable, supportive adjustment period for children during the days leading up to kindergarten and through the first weeks of school, thus resulting in higher ratings of social and emotional competence at the beginning of the year than for children whose teachers did not use as many transition practices. Academic skills, in contrast, are not expected to be related to these types of transition practices at the beginning of kindergarten, because most of the practices are not focused on exposing children to academic learning opportunities that mirror kindergarten expectations. Instead, as could be the case in Schulting, Malone and Dodge's study (2005), it is more likely that transition practices facilitate quicker social and emotional adjustment to kindergarten, which then allows them to take better advantage of learning opportunities in the classroom. As a result, by the end of the kindergarten year they are

doing better academically than their peers who did not experience the benefits of transition practices. Pre-kindergarten transition practices are designed then, to increase a child's ability to function successfully within the classroom, a precursor for later school success that sets the stage for academic skill development (Burgess & Ladd, 1999; Ladd & Price, 1987).

3. Importance of child-teacher relationship as a background in early childhood education

Teacher-child relationships in the primary grades have the potential to provide children with social support and emotional security. Children with more positive teacher-child relationships appear more able to exploit the learning opportunities available in classrooms (Howes & Smith, 1995), construct positive peer relationships (Howes, Matheson & Hamilton, 1994), and adjust to the demands of formal schooling.

According to *attachment theory* with an adaptation to teacher-child relationships (Pianta, Nimetz & Bennett, 1997), if children feel emotionally secure with the teacher, they can use her as a secure base and a resource for exploring the learning opportunities of the classroom. Attachment theory predicts that relationship quality with significant adults will be consistent over time. Within the theory, relationship quality is assumed to be coherent over time because internalized working models of relationships become less consciously accessible and more resistant to change with age (Bretherton, 1985). The child generally acts in a manner consistent with his or her working model of relationships, and if the child's partner, in turn, reacts consistently with this working model, then there is nothing to disconfirm the child's perception. Thus, for example, if the child has the expectation that the teacher will behave in a sensitive and responsive manner and acts accordingly, the harmonious interactions that result further strengthen the child's model. In a study conducted by Howes & Hamilton (1992) teacher–child attachment relationships were observed every six months beginning when the children were toddlers and continuing until the children were ready to enter kindergarten. Because of the high turn-over rates in community-based child care, children often experienced a new child-care

teacher. As the children grew older and experienced more child-care teacher changes, they tended to form relationships with new teachers that were similar in quality to their relationships with previous teachers. The current study expanded this earlier work by examining consistency in teacher-child relationships over the preschool-kindergarten transition.

The idea that close teacher-child relationships may buffer children against negative outcomes presupposes that some children with lower quality of attachment to their mothers are nevertheless capable of forming close relationships with their teachers. However, based on the early attachment relationship with the mother, children form internal working models that guide the interpretation of the behavior of other relational partners, and, consequently, children's future behavior toward those relational partners as well.

Within *attachment theory*, the caregiver's sensitivity is particularly assumed to be one of the most important determinants of a high-quality relationship between the caregiver and a specific child (e.g., Bowlby, 1973). In several studies, the link between maternal sensitivity and mother–child attachment quality has indeed been confirmed (Bakermans-Kranenburg, Van IJzendoorn & Juffer, 2003). In childcare also (group-level), sensitivity of caregivers has been found to foster the quality of dyadic caregiver-child relationships (Ahnert, Pinquart & Lamb, 2006).

Especially for children who are less securely attached to their mothers, sensitivity of the kindergarten teacher may be the crucial element in the development of a close teacher-child relationship. Sensitive teachers may have the potential to impact upon the quality of the internal working models these children develop concerning the behavior of others and the quality of their relationships with others (Zajac & Kobak, 2006), thereby mitigating their risk for developing relationship difficulties

Although children's preschool teacher-child relationship quality tends to be independent of their mother–child relationship quality (Howes & Hamilton, 1992), children do enter

kindergarten with five or so years of experience in constructing relationships with adults. Other work has found that mother–child relationships do influence kindergarten adjustment (Pianta at al., 1997).

Studies of teacher-child relationships have examined children's adjustment in classrooms in terms of how the relationship develops during typical classroom interactions, such as instruction, socialization, and management of activities and time (Brophy & Good, 1974). Classroom interactions have social and affective components for both child and teacher that influence the degree to which a classroom is a "good fit" for the child, depending on the child's strengths and needs (Pianta, 1999). One component of these interactive processes is the teacher's perceptions of, and feelings about, the child's behavior toward her. Assessments of these perceptions are one window into teacher-child relationships that can inform work related to improving relationships and interactions.

Both teacher and child attributes appear related to features of the teacher-child relationship. Teacher-perceived conflict is stable for the same children across different teachers (Pianta, Steinberg & Rollins, 1995) and teacher-perceived closeness has also been shown to be stable across teachers and from preschool to second grade. These findings suggest that at least some portion of variance in teacher perceptions is attributable to fairly stable features that children bring to their relationships with teachers.

Child attributes, such as age, ethnicity, and gender, are often identified as correlates of teacher ratings of children's classroom adjustment (Entwisle & Alexander, 1988), in addition to neutral observers' ratings of similar constructs (Harvey, 1991). For example, child gender is a predictor of teacher ratings of both conduct problems and academic achievement (Patterson, Kupersmidt & Vaden, 1990) and has been identified as an important element in teachers' other judgments about children. Boys are more often referred for remedial educational services and have higher levels of conflict with female teachers in nursery school (Brophy, 1985), whereas

girls are less likely to be criticized by teachers overall (Eccles & Blumenfeld, 1985). Girls tend to receive less teacher attention than boys (Morgan & Dunn, 1988). In a study of young preschoolers, teachers perceived their relationships with girls to have more closeness and dependency than those with boys (Howes & Hamilton, 1992). Furthermore, teachers' perceptions of relationships in kindergarten predict eighth-grade outcomes differently for boys than for girls (Hamre & Pianta, 2001). When teachers experienced more conflict in their relationships with kindergarten boys, this was reflected in more disciplinary referrals over time. This relation was not as strong for kindergarten girls. High dependency on a kindergarten teacher was also a stable predictor of poorer long-term academic outcomes for boys but not for girls, whereas more closeness in a relationship predicted better outcomes for girls, but not for boys (Hamre & Pianta, 2001). Thus, there is ample reason to consider child gender as a factor affecting teachers' perceptions of their relationships with students, although gender has yet to be examined in interaction with other child attributes, such as ethnicity and age.

Previous studies showed that effective practices in early childhood programs are congruent with those effective schooling research findings that have relevance for young children such as matching instructional resources and teaching activities to the developmental, monitoring student activities and providing help as needed, communicating warmth and caring to children, building good continuity across grade levels and making sure teachers know where their curriculum fits into the overall school curriculum levels of the children and also providing staff development opportunities with an emphasis upon skill building (Cotton & Conklin, 1989).

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II. THE DETERMINANTS FOR PARENTS INVOLVEMENT IN KINDERGARTEN CHILDREN EDUCATION

Attitudes of teachers and school have a lot to do with parental involvement. The most important invitations for parents to get involved come from two main sources: the school in general (school climate) and teachers. Invitations generated by positive school climate are significant because they suggest strongly that parents are welcome at school and that their involvement is important, expected, and supported. Invitations from teachers are important because they underscore the value of parents' engagement in the child's learning and the power of parental action to affect student learning.

1. School climate as a determinant of parental involvement

In regard to school environment, investigators have often suggested that the school environment, or school climate, influences parents' ideas about involvement (Griffith, 1998). Qualities of the school environment, including school structure and management practices, may enhance several aspects of parent-school relationships, including parents' knowledge that they are welcome in the school, that they are well informed about student learning and progress, and that school personnel respect them, their concerns, and their suggestions (Soodak & Erwin, 2000).

Positive school staff attitudes toward students' families and communities are particularly important to parental empowerment and involvement. School commitment to working effectively with families (e.g., engaging parents in meaningful roles; offering substantive, specific, and positive feedback on the importance of parents' contributions) was also identified as a critical component of effective school invitations. In an investigation of public elementary schools serving ethnically and socioeconomically diverse families, Griffith (1998) found school climate essential in enhancing involvement. For example, parents who consistently

characterized their children's schools as empowering and welcoming reported more involvement than did those in other schools.

Of particular note is the role of the school principal in developing, supporting, and maintaining a fully welcoming school climate. Griffith (2001) reported principal practices critical to a positive school climate: these included clear principal efforts to meet the needs of all school members (students, staff, and parents), regular visits to classrooms, and consistent public advocacy for school improvements. He noted that these practices appeared especially important in creating a positive climate in schools serving families from lower-socioeconomic circumstances and those whose children are enrolled in English-as-a-second-language programs. Sheldon (2003) offered additional evidence that a principal's practices are also linked to improvements in student learning, an ultimate goal of parental involvement in education.

2. Teachers' attitudes towards parents-teachers partnership as a determinant of parental involvement

Similar to school climate influence parents' decisions about involvement, so too do individual teachers' practices of parental involvement. Epstein and colleagues' considerable work on teacher invitations (Epstein & Van Voorhis, 2001), for example, has suggested strongly that teacher attitudes about parents and teacher invitations to involvement play a significant role in parents' decisions to become involved. Dauber and Epstein (1993) reported that teacher invitations and school programs to encourage involvement were the strongest predictors of home- and school-based involvement in the elementary and middle schools they studied. Of particular note is the strong suggestion that teacher invitations for parents' involvement encourage more student time on homework and improved student performance (Epstein & Van Voorhis, 2001).

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The child's teacher has been identified as the key to actualizing positive parental involvement in early childhood education programs (Souto-Manning & Swick, 2006). Swick and Duff (1978) have identified several roles that teachers enact by building strong parental involvement/education programs: teacher as learner, as trainer, as collaborator, as planner, and as model. The construct of the teacher as the key figure in fostering parental involvement implies that there are certain skills, attitudes, and behaviors that teachers must possess to carry out effectively the parental involvement paradigm such as knowledge about the critical role that parents perform; positive attitudes toward parents and the parental involvement process; knowledge, skills, and commitment to a developmentally appropriate education for children; knowledge and skills for enacting parental involvement activities; and continued involvement in professional development arenas such as active membership in a professional early childhood association (De Carvalho, 2014).

Teacher attitudes towards parents' involvement are especially powerful because they are responsive to many parents' expressed wishes to know more about how to support children's learning (Hoover-Dempsey, Bassler & Burow, 1995). Teacher invitations also enhance parents' sense of being welcome to participate in school processes, knowledge of their children's learning, and confidence that their involvement efforts are useful and valued (Soodak & Erwin, 2000). Invitations of teachers for parents to get involved also contribute to the development of trust in the parent-teacher relationship, a quality of effective parent-school partnerships (Adams & Christenson, 2000). Although trust and empowerment in the partnership require two-way communication across time, invitations offer an effective starting point for the creation of a partnership.

Teacher invitations to involvement are effective in supporting parental involvement across elementary, middle, and high school and with varied school populations. Kohl, Lengua and McMahon (2002), reporting on a sample of high-risk elementary students, found strong

positive links between consistent teacher contacts with parents and parents' decisions about involvement. Critical components of the invitation-involvement connection included parents' reports that they enjoyed talking with the teacher, were comfortable asking questions, and believed that the teacher really cared about their child and was interested in their suggestions and ideas about the child's learning. Closson, Wilkins, Sandler and Hoover-Dempsey (2004) studied parents of fourth through sixth graders and found that teacher invitations were particularly strong predictors of involvement among the Latino families in their sample. Simon (2004), who analyzed a national database on high school students, reported similarly positive connections between teacher invitations and parent involvement.

Hence, invitations-when specific, targeted, and within the range of activities that parents can reasonably manage-promote productive involvement. Balli, Wedman and Demo (1997), examined the effect of teacher invitations on parents' involvement in middle schoolers' homework. Basing their approach on an interactive homework program (Teachers Involve Parents in Schoolwork [TIPS]; Epstein, Salinas & Jackson, 1995), the researchers had middle school teachers invite parental involvement in one of two ways. Students whose parents received student prompts (requests for specific parental help or involvement) plus direct teacher requests for parental involvement reported notably higher completion rates than parents in the group that received student-prompts only (90% vs. 51%). Both groups recorded significantly more parental involvement than a control group.

Other studies have examined teachers' invitations offered in parent workshop formats. Starkey and Klein (2000), for example, reported that invitations to involvement through a series of family math classes for Head Start parents were positively related to levels of parental involvement and student knowledge gains. Shaver and Walls (1998) examined the effect of teacher-led invitational workshops for elementary and middle school parents.

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3. Some further factors influencing parents' involvement

There are a number of factors that affect teacher's ability to develop a smooth parent-teacher partnership. Some of these factors pose problems, and the challenge is how to develop an effective working relationship in spite of the problems that may be present. The factors include (1) the degree of match between teachers and parents cultures and values, (2) social forces at work on family and kindergarten, and (3) how teachers and parents view their roles (Goodall & Montgomery, 2013).

It is important to note that from a pedagogical perspective, collaboration between teachers and parents, guided by the aspiration of teachers for parents to become more involved, also emphasize the morality aspects of teaching. That is, when parents and teachers collaborate it delivers a message to children by which it is desired to cooperate in order to achieve a common goal.

Parents role construction may be described as parent focused, kindergarten focused, and/or partnership focused. In the parent-focused construct, parents consider that they have primary responsibility for their children's educational outcome. In the kindergarten-focused construct, parents feel the kindergarten is primarily responsible for the children's educational outcome, and in the partnership-focused construct, parents believe that teacher and parent working together are responsible (Reed, Jones, Walker & Hoover-Dempsey, 2000).

On of the teacher's side, teachers may view their role as parent focused, kindergarten focused, and/or partnership focused. The parent-focused view evolved out of the parent-cooperative movement. In that movement, teachers and parents worked side by side, empowering parents and giving parents teaching roles. This view is most prevalent in early childhood programs. The kindergarten-focused role reflects teachers who believe in an effective separation of roles and functions between home and kindergarten. This view is more typical in elementary kindergartens and intensifies the older the child gets. The partnership-

focus perspective, where family and kindergarten work cooperatively, is a more recent construct, evolving as the literature began to point to the significant benefits that accrue to children, parents, and teachers as a result of the partnership. As with parents, how the teachers interact will vary based upon the beliefs the teachers hold (Reed at al., 2000).

Teachers may contend with pragmatic, psychological, and cultural barriers to parental involvement (Griffith, 1996; Hoover-Dempsey, Walker, Jones & Reed, 1992; Huss-Keeler, 1997). Teachers may avoid involving parents because they lack practical support for the extra activities implied by active parental involvement programs. Teachers with limited experience or skills may reach out only to give up if initial efforts are not immediately successful. Experienced teachers may be reluctant to invite parents if negative encounters have cast a pall over the perceived likelihood of successful involvement. Further complicating prospects for effective parental involvement, teachers who feel uncertain of their skills in dealing with 'traditional' families may struggle even more as they consider trying to work productively with families perceived as 'different' from envisioned norms on a number of dimensions.

Given these barriers to regular positive interactions between home and school, communications between teacher and parent may emerge primarily in situations motivated by dissatisfaction, frustration, mistrust or anger from one or both parties. Unfortunately, interactions in such cases may work to create further separation and distance between parents and teachers rather than effective parental involvement. This perpetuates a quandary: teachers may not know how to invite or sustain involvement efforts; and parents whose involvement is not invited may perceive intentional exclusion or low regard for their involvement.

As teachers think about their work with parents and families, they often have mixed feelings. There are good feelings of shared efforts and mutually valued achievement with some parents; while with others, there is a sense of frustration, helplessness, or even anger over conflicting perceptions and understandings. The degree of success that teachers have in

developing a partnership with parents depends heavily on the fit between parental cares and concerns and those of the teacher. The parent-teacher pairing occurs by assignment rather than choice. The common interest is the schooling of a child. What all good parent-teacher relationships have in common is the absence of conflict, which is optimally, occurs due to the presence of mutual trust and respect (Iruka, Winn, Kingsley & Orthodoxou, 2011).

III. THE THEORETICAL BACKGROUND FOR COMMUNICATION AND COLLABORATION BETWEEN PARENTS AND TEACHERS IN KINDERGARTEN

In the current chapter, I will present models which will be used as the theoretical infrastructure of the investigation of current work. Specifically, I will present the field theory of Kurt Levin, together with current research regarding building cooperation and communication between teachers and parents.

1. The field theory of Kurt Levin and the theory of *community of practice* by Lave and Wanger as the main bases for communication and cooperation between teachers and parents

In order to get a better understanding of the factors influencing parent-teacher communication and collaboration, I chose to use the field theory of Kurt Levin (1943). Field theory is a psychological theory, which examines patterns of interaction between the individual and the total field, or environment. The concept first made its appearance in psychology with roots to the holistic perspective of Gestalt theories. Field theory is an approach to understanding group behaviour by mapping out the totality and complexity of the field in which the behaviour takes place (Back, 1992). Lewin stated that: ‘One should view the present situation-the status quo-as being maintained by certain conditions or forces’ (Lewin, 1943a, p. 172). Lewin (1947b) postulated that group behaviour is an intricate set of symbolic interactions and forces that affect

group structures and individual behaviour. Therefore, individual behaviour is a function of the group environment or 'field' as he termed it. Consequently, any changes in behaviour stem from changes, be they small or large, in the forces within the field (Lewin, 1947a). A field is 'a totality of coexisting facts which are conceived of as mutually interdependent…' (Lewin, 1946, p. 240). Lewin believed that a field was in a continuous state of adaptation, which he termed 'quasi-stationary equilibrium' (Lewin, 1943a), and that 'Change and constancy are relative concepts; group life is never without change, merely differences in the amount and type of change exist' (Lewin, 1947a, p. 199).

Lewin stressed in his theory the 'group dynamics' and the importance of the group in shaping the behaviour of its members (Bargal, Gold & Lewin, 1992). Group Dynamics stresses that group behaviour, rather than that of individuals, should be the main focus of change (Dent & Goldberg, 1999). Lewin (1947b) maintained that it is fruitless to concentrate on changing the behaviour of individuals because the individual in isolation is constrained by group pressures to conform. Consequently, the focus of change must be at the group level and should concentrate on factors such as group norms, roles, interactions and socialization processes to create 'disequilibrium' and change (Schein, 1988).

Lewin conceived of Action Research as an iterative, two-pronged process whereby research leads to action, and action leads to evaluation and further action (Bennett, 1985). Its theoretical foundations lie in Gestalt psychology, which stresses that change can only successfully be achieved by helping individuals to reflect on and gain new insights into the totality of their situation (Smith, 2001). Lewin (1946, p. 206) stated that Action Research '… proceeds in a spiral of steps each of which is composed of a circle of planning, action, and fact-finding about the results of the action'. As Schein (1996, p. 64) comments, it was Lewin's view that '…one cannot understand an organization without trying to change it…' Indeed, Lewin's view was very much that the understanding and learning which this process produces for the

individuals and groups concerned, which then feeds into changed behaviour, is more important than any resulting change as such (Lewin, 1946).

Action Research draws on both Field Theory, to identify the forces that focus on the group to which the individual belongs, and Group Dynamics, to understand why group members behave in the way they do when subjected to these forces. It stresses that for change to be effective, it must be a participative and collaborative process which involves all of those concerned (Bargal at al., 1992). According to Lewin, the model includes three steps.

Step 1: unfreezing: For Lewin, human behaviour was based on a quasi-stationary equilibrium supported by a complex field of forces. Before old behaviour can be discarded (unlearnt) and new behaviour successfully adopted, the equilibrium needs to be destabilized (unfrozen). Lewin did not believe that this would be easy or that the same techniques could be applied in all situations: The 'unfreezing' of the present level may involve quite different problems in different cases. Gordon Allport (in Lewin, 1947a), has described the 'catharsis' which seems necessary before prejudice can be removed. To break open the shell of complacency and self-righteousness it is sometimes necessary to bring about an emotional stir up (Lewin, 1947a, p. 229).

Step 2: moving: Unfreezing is not an end in itself; it '…creates motivation to learn but does not necessarily control or predict the direction'. It is necessary to take into account all the forces at work, and identify and evaluate, iteratively, the available options. This Action Research-based learning approach enables groups and individuals to move to a more acceptable set of behaviours (Schein, 1996).

Step 3: refreezing: This seeks to stabilize the group at a new quasi-stationary equilibrium in order to ensure that the new behaviours are relatively safe from regression. The new behaviour must be, to some degree, congruent with the rest of the behaviour, personality and environment of the learner or it will simply lead to a new round of disconfirmation. This is why

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Lewin saw successful change as a group activity, because unless group norms and routines are also transformed, changes to individual behaviour will not be sustained. In organizational terms, refreezing often requires changes to organizational culture, norms, policies According to the field theory, in order to establish between relationships between parents and teachers 3 steps must need to be done. First, it is necessary to unfreeze situation between teachers and parents. Then, it is important to move towards common goals, and finally to refreeze relationships (Schein, 1996).

To create this kind of process mutual learning must take place. *Situated learning* was first proposed as a model of learning in a *community of practice*. At its simplest, situated learning is learning that takes place in the same context in which it is applied. Lave and Wenger (1991) argued that learning should not be viewed as simply the transmission of abstract and decontextualised knowledge from one individual to another, but a social process whereby knowledge is co-constructed; they suggest that such learning is situated in a specific context and embedded within a particular social and physical environment.

Lave and Wenger (1991) emphasize in their theory that in order for effective learning take place, several principles must be considered. First, action is grounded in the concrete situation in which it occurs, i.e. action is situational grounded is surely the central claim of situated cognition. It means that the potentialities for teachers' educational action cannot be fully described independently of the specific situation; a statement with which we fully concur. However, the proper level of the knowledge on children's circumstance (*the specific situation*) they live and learn in may be gained first of all due to communication and cooperation between parents and teachers. Moreover, the claim is sometimes exaggerated to assert that all knowledge is specific to the situation in which the task is performed and that more general knowledge cannot and will not transfer to real-world situations. Even if these claims are valid and generalizable beyond these specific cases, they demonstrate at most that particular skills

practiced in real-life situations do not generalize to school situations. They assuredly do not demonstrate the converse. Such observations call for closer analyses of the task demands and the use of the analyses to devise teachable procedures that will achieve a balance between the advantages of generality and the advantages of incorporating enough situational contexts to make transfer likely. They also call for research on the feasibility of increasing the application and transfer of knowledge by including ability to transfer as a specific goal in instruction, a skill that is given little attention in most current instruction. By this principle, brain development depends on activating new synaptic connections related to the number and type of tasks being solved. This perspective emphasizes the importance of interaction of the child with rich educational environment in early stages.

Another principle related to the claim of situated cognition-of the failure of knowledge to transfer-can be seen as a corollary of the first. Meaning learning is usually happens in a certain context and it is difficult to move it to a different context. If knowledge is wholly tied to the context of its acquisition, it will not transfer to other contexts. However, even without assuming extreme contextual dependence, one could still claim that there is relatively little transfer beyond nearly identical tasks to different physical contexts. Indeed, Lave (1988) argues that there is no empirical evidence for such general transfers and asserts. Singley and Anderson (1989) showed that transfer between tasks is a function of the degree to which the tasks share cognitive elements.

Moreover, Training by abstraction is of little use. Nonetheless, one might argue for it even if one dismisses the others. (Collins, Brown & Newman, 1989). As Collins, Brown, and Newman assert: The differences between formal schooling and apprenticeship methods are many, but for our purposes, one is most important. Perhaps as a by-product of the relegation of learning to schools, skills and knowledge taught in schools have become abstracted from their uses in the world. In apprenticeship learning, on the other hand, target skills are not only

continually in use by skilled practitioners, but are instrumental to the accomplishment of meaningful tasks, (pp. 453-454) What is meant by advocacy of apprenticeship training can vary from advocacy of certain rather traditional pedagogical strategies such as modeling in traditional classrooms to the claim that the most effective training is real apprenticeship to workers in their real-world environments.

Finally, in order for effective learning takes place it is vital that instructions will be done in complex social environments and on complex problems. These two ideas are put together in the proposal that learning should take place in complex, social situations with varying emphasis on the "complex" and the "social." Although job training is only one function of education, this social + complex formula for learning situations is often justified with respect to preparing students for the workplace where it is argued they will need to display their skills in complex, social environments (Resnick, 1987) and practices (Cummings & Worley, 2001).

2. Parents-teachers' communication procedures

Communicating between parents and teachers can be defined as having effective forms of school-to-home and home-to-school communication about school programs and children's progress. Teachers can help parents to be involved in this way by providing conferences, phone calls, language interpreters, useful notices, memos, and newsletters on school policies, reforms, transitions, choice of schools, and available courses, programs, and activities within schools, as well as by sending home folders of students' work weekly or monthly for parents' comments (Miedel & Reynolds, 1999).

Communication sets the stage for "establishing shared goals and mutual decision-making, avoiding misunderstandings, and helping parents understand how to reinforce learning and kindergarten instruction in the home." (Christenson & Sheridan, 2001). Effective communication between families and kindergarten is frequent and bi-directional, instills a sense

of shared purpose, and works toward mutually advantageous solutions to problems (Epstein, 2001).

To get a better understating of building effective and constructive communication procedures, I will use *the knowledge layers* described by Schutz (1958). According to *Fundamental Interpersonal Relations Orientation* (FIRO) three dimensions of interpersonal relations are necessary and sufficient to explain most human interaction: Inclusion, Control and Affection. The theory is based on the belief that when people get together in a group, there are three main interpersonal needs they are looking to obtain – affection/openness, control and inclusion. Schutz (1958) developed a measuring instrument that contains six scales of nine-item questions that he called FIRO-B. This technique was created to measure or control how group members feel when it comes to inclusion, control, and affection/openness or to be able to get feedback from people in a group. Unlike many instruments used to examine human interaction behaviors, and needs, the FIRO-B is and was extremely valid internally and externally using inferential statistics.

FIRO Theory identifies three basic needs that all human beings share: the need to feel significant, competent and likable. It suggests these needs express themselves across three levels of human interaction: behavior, feelings and self-concept. Within each level there are three main areas of human concern: inclusion, control and openness. In order to achieve a satisfying self-concept people are always seeking to negotiate just the right amount of inclusion, control and openness that one desires in order to feel significant, competent and likable. People want these elements, in just the right amount, in order to feel good about themselves. The better people sincerely feel about themselves, the more they like and feel generous and appropriately flexible toward others. This enables people to work better with others and to achieve higher levels of satisfaction in all areas of our life and work. Therefore, FIRO theory provides the foundation for understanding how to develop sustainable, high-trust,

collaborative relationships. Behavior is motivated by self-concept, which develops at the very core of our being. Self-concept represents how people feel about themselves, and how they feel about themselves informs how they feel about others.

Appropriate communication between parents and teachers need to address the needs FIRO suggest by various communication procedures. Primary communication procedures include parent-teacher conferences, short conversations at drop-off or pick-up or over the phone, notes from kindergarten to home or home to kindergarten, and formal kindergarten events (back-to- kindergarten night, family pizza nights). Communication may be brief (containing just a few sentences as in notes home), or lengthy (lasting an entire day when a family member volunteers to help for a field trip.); kindergarten initiated (e.g., parent-teacher conferences) or home-initiated (e.g., a parent engaging a teacher in conversation about her child), and positive (e.g., the teacher feels the communication was effective) or other (e.g., the teacher feels the communication was neutral or strained). Incidental communication includes class newsletters, scheduling calls, or communication to the whole class with no specific reference to the study child. Although considered contact and viewed as an important part of the communication process, these incidental communications are less likely to influence the development of the child because of their low intensity. Based on the present formulation, communication is conceptualized (and operational zed as a process involving a wide and diverse set of components, the goal of which is to share information and create supportive relationship structures (Iruka at al., 2011).

Another theoretical frame which assists to conceptualize communication procedures between parents and teachers is Gordon Pask's (1975) *Conversation Theory* that describes interaction between two or more cognitive systems, such as a teacher and a student or distinct perspectives within one individual, and how they engage in a dialog over a given concept and identify differences in how they understand it.

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Conversation theory regards social systems as symbolic, language-oriented systems where responses depend on one person's interpretation of another person's behavior, and where meanings are agreed through conversations (Pask, 1975). But since meanings are agreed, and the agreements can be illusory and transient, scientific research requires stable reference points in human transactions to allow for reproducible results. Pask (1975) found these points to be the understandings which arise in the conversations between two participating individuals, and which he defined rigorously.

Conversation theory describes interaction between two or more cognitive systems, such as a teacher and a student or distinct perspectives within one individual, and how they engage in a dialog over a given concept and identify differences in how they understand it. Pask, Scott and Kallikourdis (1973) have developed methodologies for constructing models of the structure of bodies of knowledge. The basic idea is that a body of knowledge or subject matter consists of topics related one to another. Two basic forms of relations between topics are distinguished: entailment relations (hierarchical) and relations of analogy (hierarchical). A static representation of such relations is called an entailment structure. Entailment structures reveal the "why" of knowledge, the conceptual structure of definitions and justifications that relate topics one to another. For a full semantics, the content of topics, their "how", needs to be specified. This can be done operationally in the form of "task structures", defined with respect to a canonical modeling facility. Task structures may be represented in a variety of ways, for example, as a precedence chart showing order relations between the goals and sub-goals of a task or as a flow chart showing a sequence of operations, tests, branches and iterations.

Two aspects of communication, first meetings and teacher invitations, have significance because they influence how roles will be enacted as partnerships develop. First meetings with parents, often the first personal connection that is made, set the tone for the subsequent relation- ship, making it critical to be aware of issues of cultural styles in conversation, space,

and eye contact. Research suggests that the teacher's invitations to parents are also a critical factor in promoting more extensive parent involvement (Epstein, 1995).

Teachers demonstrate responsiveness to a parent by communicating openness to new information, suggestions, and other forms of feedback about the classroom, and maintain a welcoming, supportive stance toward parents (Powell, 2001). Teacher responsiveness to children, such as showing individualized interest in a child's experiences, helping a child feel valued and accepted, and engaging in emotionally warm and positive interactions, has long been considered a core feature of high-quality early childhood classrooms (Hyson, Copple & Jones, 2006).

Most of the communication between parents and teachers take place in a non-physical form, such as phone and texting, since both teachers and parents don't necessarily have enough time for long meetings. On the other hand, in order to keep a close relationship, teachers in kindergarten use to set periodic meetings which usually take place in the lobby of the kindergarten itself or in one of the parents' houses, when there are some relevant issues for all the parents. The lobby of the kindergarten is considered to be a relatively neutral place for these meetings since parents can speak and behave in a more open and freeway, without the fear for other people to judge them. In this environment, the relationship between teachers and parents could be improved (De Carvalho, 2014). Researches state three main types of communication between parents and teachers.

One-Way Communication. One-way communication occurs when teachers seek to inform parents about events, activities, or student progress through a variety of sources, such as an introductory letter at the beginning of the school year, classroom or school newsletters, report cards, communication books, radio announcements, school Web sites, and so on. One of the most prevalent ways for teacher to communicate parents is by written communication. Newsletters are commonly used to share written information with a parent community.

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Consistent application of several specific strategies can make classroom and school newsletters even more effective communication tools. Teachers should incorporate the same color, quality, and paper size for all newsletters to create a communication "set;" use everyday language and ensure grammar, spell checks, and proofing of the information (Aronson, 1995). Chambers (1998) further proposes that schools develop a descriptive brochure to provide helpful information for new families moving into the school community.

School-to-home notebooks are another commonly used written communication technique. Many teachers use daily communication books to share information with parents, particularly for children who have special learning needs. Several authors propose strategies to enhance the effectiveness of communication books (Davern, 2004). Initially, it is important to clearly establish what information will be communicated, by whom, and how often. Teachers should be sensitive to a balance of good and bad news contained in the message, and educational "jargon" should be avoided. The use of titles (such as Mr., Mrs., Ms.) establishes respect in the relationship. To maximize efficiency, alternate day or twice weekly notes may be adequate, as long as the communication is frequent enough to engage parents and to monitor student success. Finally, Davern (2004) notes that it is important to consider when a face-to-face meeting is more appropriate than a written exchange, depending on the issue.

Report cards are the traditional mode of conveying permanent, written evaluative information regarding student progress. Report cards should be clear and easy for parents to understand. These records should provide an analysis of academic development across content areas, information about student strengths and learning style, an assessment of the child's social development, specific goals for the student to work on, and associated suggestions for the parent (Aronson, 1995). Report cards also generally provide an invitation for the parent to respond, usually in written format. Teachers should review parental responses in a timely manner to determine any required follow-up. Carefully prepared report cards, coupled with

parent conferences as needed, provide effective communication regarding student learning. Significantly, teachers can prevent confrontations with parents by ensuring that the report card is not the first communication when concerns exist. Rather, frequent progress reports, phone calls, and/or e-mail messages should support and improve student performance prior to the traditional report card (Giannetti & Sagarese, 1998).

Teachers have used a range of other creative approaches to communicate with parents. Grande (2004), for example, created "literacy bags" which were sent home with first-grade students. These were developed to help parents understand grade-level expectations and to provide them with materials and specific activities to support literacy development in their child. Students took the bags home on a rotating basis, and parents were asked to contribute through a feedback journal. An independent survey of parents' understanding of grade-level expectations supported the effectiveness of this approach.

Two-Way Communication. Two-way communication involves interactive dialogue between teachers and parents. Conversations may occur during telephone calls, home visits, parent-teacher conferences, open houses, and various school-based community activities. Effective dialogue "develops out of a growing trust, a mutuality of concern, and an appreciation of contrasting perspectives" (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 2004). A teacher may contact parents to celebrate a child's successful school experience. However, more frequently, the contact is to share a concern about the child, which can be a source of significant tension for both teachers and parents alike. Teachers should strive to make these interactions as productive as possible.

One popular communication strategy is a phone call home. As the teacher of a multi-age class, Gustafson (1998) called the parents of each child in her class monthly to discuss concerns or to answer questions. She noted that these contacts provided her with valuable information about the lives of her students, including extracurricular activities, bullying experiences, and a death in the family. Gustafson concluded that the solid academic performance of her students

came, at least in part, from positive communication with parents by phone. Love (1996) advocates the use of "good news calls" to recognize the child for progress or a job well done as a way of promoting positive relations with parents. By keeping calls brief and leaving messages as needed, Ramirez (2002) developed an efficient way, during school hours, to contact all of his 160 high school students' parents. He notes that these initial positive phone calls set the stage for more collaborative interactions later if needed, because parents were already an "ally."

Another traditional occasion for dialogue is the parent-teacher conference. Effective parent-teacher conferences are an opportunity to create a successful partnership, but they may be anxiety provoking for both teachers and parents alike (Minke & Anderson, 2003). Indeed, Metcalf (2001) suggests that instead of viewing the conference as a reporting session for what is not working in school, teachers can construct an opportunity to discuss what is working with the student. Metcalf advocates a solution-focused approach based on past student successes in order to alleviate blame and move forward with an individualized intervention plan. Indeed, putting the child at the center of the parent-teacher conversation will allow for a focused discussion on the "whole child," including both strengths and weaknesses (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 2004).

In order for parent-teacher conferences be effective, they require thoughtful and well developed planning. Price and Marsh (1985) developed a series of practical suggestions to address all aspects of the still traditional parent-teacher conference. In planning for the conference, Price and Marsh encourage teachers to select an appropriate meeting time and location, advice participants in advance, review the student file in advance, develop a clear purpose for the meeting, and identify information to be discussed including positive aspects of the child's performance. Teachers are advised to begin the conference with a friendly comment and brief, informal conversation and then to explain the student's progress in a straightforward way, carefully listening to parent input and ensuring time to summarize the discussion and plan

recommendations. Establishing a specific time frame at the outset of the conference, followed by close adherence to the agenda, allows for more comfortable termination of the meeting. Lastly, teachers are encouraged to follow-up the meeting by preparing a written conference summary in line with school board policies. Additional follow-up activities might involve making appropriate referrals, discussions with relevant teachers, or planning specific instructions or strategies.

Effective parent-teacher conferences also require important interpersonal skills on the part of the teacher (Evans, 2004). Communicating a genuine caring for people, building rapport, conveying interest and empathy, reflecting affect, and using clarifying statements to ensure an accurate understanding of parental views are all highlighted. Use of everyday language and a non-threatening tone encourages conversation. Appropriate open- and closed-ended questions also help gather information and seek parental input. Use of the S-O-L-E-R technique (Square posture, Open position, Lean toward the other, Eye contact, and Relaxed position; Egan, 1990) can help teachers ensure good listening skills. Perhaps most importantly, Lindle (1989) reports that surveyed parents wanted to be treated with respect and as equals when communicating with educators. Parents are not looking for a cold, professional approach from school staff. Rather, teachers who develop a "personal touch" in their communication style achieve enhanced school relationships. Similarly, teachers need to convey a value for the "authority and wisdom" of parents (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 2004).

Parent-teacher conferences can also be a "prime situation for cross-cultural miscommunication" to occur (Quiroz, Greenfeld & Altchech, 1999). Child-led conferences with Latino immigrant parents, for example, appeared to be culturally incompatible and ineffective. Rather, a group conference model was far better attended and more positively received by the participants. Thus, teachers need to consider whether the traditional conference approach will meet the communication needs of the parent community served.

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Communication trough Technology. In recent years, educators have experimented with various technologies to communicate with parents in innovative and time-efficient ways. Integrating technology can help schools communicate quickly to a broad parent community (Ramirez, 2001). Classroom phones and voice mail, video technology, radio announcements, and school Web sites are all examples. Phones in each classroom permit teachers a flexible opportunity to contact parents from their classrooms when students are not present. Use of voice mail to augment phone communication has been specifically explored to enhance communication opportunities with parents. A possible use of technology is maintaining a daily one-minute voice mail message for parents and students to call at the end of each day (Clemens-Brower, 1997). The recorded message provides updates on homework assignments, classroom highlights, and also invited parents and children to respond with a message of their own.

Aronson (1995) further suggests that schools create a brief 10-minute video to welcome new families to the school including an introduction, tour of the school, portions of a "lesson in action," and an invitation to become involved. One school expanded this idea and developed 50 short videos to be circulated to families on a variety of topics (Clevenson, 1999). For example, one 12-minute video outlined how parents could help their Grade 8 child with a science research project. Clevenson (1999) noted that this particular video significantly impacted student success by dramatically increasing the number of projects completed.

The use of video technology has also proven effective as a communication tool for parents of students who have severe disabilities. Alberto, Mechling, Taber and Tompson (1995) utilized progress videos, "picture report cards," and video illustrations of procedures to encourage maintenance and generalization of new skills at home. Videos were also used for summer home programming activities, to demonstrate successful integration activities, and to

assist with transition planning. Parents reported the videos enhanced communication with teachers and understanding of their child's school program (Alberto at al., 1995).

Internet technology is the most recent tool used by schools to communicate to a parent community. Increasingly, school Web sites are used to convey a broad range of school information. Students often become involved with both the technology and the content of the Web site and may work together with teachers to create and maintain the site. Teachers trained to use the school Web site can provide updates easily accessed by parents regarding homework assignments, test schedules, resource links, and so on. In fact, use of the internet can serve as an "interactive tool for individualizing homework and supporting the involvement of families in the homework process" (Salend, Duhaney, Anderson & Gottschalk, 2004). They noted a homework Web site can start with a simple format providing basic information to parents and students, and gradually increase in sophistication to create electronic assignment logs and individualized homework modifications for students, incorporating appropriate password protection

Technology also holds promise to allow teachers communication opportunities "not limited by school hours or location" (Brewer & Kallick, 1996). Student performances can be videotaped and presented to a larger audience at convenient times. Students may create digital portfolios that can be shared with parents on an ongoing basis. Ultimately, student learning plans may be accessed online, enabling goals and progress to be shared with parents. Indeed, the capacity to link homes and schools with new technologies provides many novel opportunities to enhance communication with parents beyond the traditional formats.

3. The important factors for building an effective communication between teachers and parents

From my personal experience and former studies, within the partnership between parents and teachers, several main topics are more frequently discussed than others. Usually, parent-

teachers communications focus on promoting continuity from home to kindergarten (and vice versa), focusing on family strengths, tailoring practices to individual needs, and forming collaborative relationships. This communication is aimed to establish a smooth transition between home and kindergarten for the children and also to enable both parents and teachers to keep an open channel for any academic, emotional or developmental problems that children might encounter.

In order to achieve this kind of open communication kindergarten staff should take some measures such as an assessment of family needs, organization of opportunities for contact with families during the first few days of kindergarten, family participation in home learning experiences, family and the preschool teacher sharing information with the kindergarten teacher, and family meetings about transition issues prior to the beginning of kindergarten. Tailoring these practices given the resources available within the kindergarten and in relation to the needs of the community and the families at a particular kindergarten is an essential element of improving parent-teachers communication. The more combined practices teachers perform with parents, the better collaboration they have; during these practices teachers learn more about what's important to parents and how they can use their knowledge and experience in order to improve kindergarten experience for the children.

Eccles and Harold (1996) suggested there are five main issues in the communication between parents and teachers, defining the level of parent involvement: (a) monitoring homework - how parents respond to the teacher's requests for helping their children with school work such as checking homework or listening to them read); (b) volunteering - parents' level of participation in activities at school; (c) involvement - parents' involvement in their children's daily activities; (d) contacting the school about their children's progress; and (e) contacting the school to find out how to give extra help. The dimensions monitoring and involvement appear

to be two behaviors related to directly helping the child with homework, and may, therefore, be better conceptualized as one construct.

Another important issue which takes place in the communication between parents and teachers is adjusting to the environment in kindergarten. Teachers hold the responsibility to judge as accurate as they can symptoms of adjustment disorder for the children. It is important to note that these teacher judgments are multi-determined. First, judgments are indicators of the actual skills and competencies of children in their classroom that, in turn, reflect children's prior socialization experiences and contact with community-specific developmental resources, which may have increased their likelihood of success in kindergarten (National Education Goals Panel, 1998). Second, judgments reflect teachers' expectations for kindergarten children, their notion of what it means for children to have a smooth entrance into kindergarten, and their perception of the challenges they face in helping children prepare for first grade, all of which have lasting effects on teacher-child relationships and children's achievement. Third, judgments may reflect teachers' personal attributes, such as ethnicity. For example, some evidence indicates that teachers' subjective evaluations of children may be more favorable for children with whom they share the same ethnic background, presumably because the child's behavior and values match the teachers' expectations (Ehrenberg, Goldhaber & Brewer, 1995).

Teachers' expectations of children at kindergarten entry influence their judgments of children's problems. These expectations prior children's entry, shape the way they perceive children's behavior and actions in kindergarten and therefore it is important to deeply explore these expectations. Descriptions of kindergarten curricula point to explicit goals for literacy, numeracy, and socialization that are not formally stated goals of preschool classrooms. However, the expectations of kindergarten teachers when the children enter kindergarten do not illustrate these higher demands. In fact, preschool teachers tend to expect more from children entering kindergarten than do kindergarten teachers (Baughan, 2012). For example, a national

survey of kindergarten teachers indicated that very few consider specific skills such as knowing the alphabet or being able to count to 20 critical for kindergarten entry. Instead, the majorities of kindergarten teachers consider children ready for kindergarten if they are well-nourished and rested, can communicate their needs verbally, will show enthusiasm and curiosity about approaching new activities, and can take turns and share with others (Powell, 2012).

There is a wide variety of reasons underlying lack of family kindergarten communication. Inflexible work schedules, lack of child care, language differences, lack of income, and transportation problems make it difficult for parents to participate more in their child's schooling (McWayne, Fantuzzo, Cohen & Sekino, 2004). Undereducated and minority parents face additional challenges that may hinder their decision to initiate contact with kindergartens. Some parents have experienced educational failure themselves and do not trust that teachers have their children's best interests at heart. Parents may also fear that they are not educated enough to be helpful in the classroom or to their own children (Rimm-Kaufman & Pianta, 2005).

Parents' perception of teacher responsiveness may contribute to the frequency and flow of information in parent–teacher interactions that affect the child. For example, the perception of a teacher as minimally responsive may prompt a parent to refrain from communicating a request or concern because they won't succeed anyway (Pianta & Walsh, 1996). In addition, this kind of communication might lead into the idea that parent's perception of a teacher's responsiveness is communicated to the child in ways that enhance a child's engagement in the classroom. Both interpretations of a possible relation between parents' perception of teacher responsiveness and child outcomes conceptualize perceived responsiveness as a relationship variable, consistent with the idea that perceptions are a unique dimension of relationships (Hinde, 1997). Alternately, parents' perception of teacher responsiveness may be an indicator of the quality of teacher interactions with children based on direct observation of teacher behaviors in the

classroom and/or indirect information sources such as child reports of teacher actions or views of a teacher communicated by other parents. In the latter interpretation, a parent's perception of teacher responsiveness functions as a proxy measure of teacher sensitivity to children. Accordingly, perceived teacher responsiveness may be linked to child outcomes through the quality of teacher interactions with children in the classroom. To determine the extent to which parents' perception of teacher responsiveness is an attribute of parent-kindergarten relationships, it is useful to include an independent measure of teacher interactions with children as a control variable to more precisely estimate the contribution of teacher responsiveness to child outcomes.

One of the most important factors which could promote communication between parents and teachers is empowering teachers for parental involvement. Many teachers hold generally positive attitudes about involving families in students' education (Lawson, 2003), but few receive training in how to develop collaborative, family-responsive involvement practices (Graue & Brown, 2003). School in-service support for teachers' development of parental involvement skills thus is an important strategy for enhancing the incidence and effectiveness of involvement.

One key contributor to effective teacher invitations is teachers' sense of efficacy for involving parents (Garcia, 2004), which can be enhanced by dynamic, school-based in-service programs. Particularly effective are in-service programs offering experiences related to involvement practices, including open discussion of positive and negative experiences with involvement, sharing suggestions for improved parental involvement, collaboration with colleagues in developing and implementing school-specific involvement plans, and ongoing group evaluation and improvement of involvement practices.

Schools may also empower teachers for involvement by making parental involvement a routine part of staff thinking and planning. Regular school attention to involvement is enhanced

by a welcoming school climate (Sanders & Epstein, 2000), in large part because an inviting school climate increases parental presence in the school, which in turn generates more opportunities for parent-teacher conversation. Attention to involvement may also be enhanced by regular discussion of identified issues, resources, plans, and ideas that work during faculty and department meetings.

Moreover, Schools and kindergartens have a large responsibility in promoting parents to get more involved. When parents know, as a function of their own experiences and their interactions with the school, that their involvement is expected and valued, they are more motivated to assume an active role in helping their children succeed in school (Lawson, 2003; Sanders & Epstein, 2000). This motivation should be paired with ready access to appropriate and specific invitations to parents.

Schools and teachers convey the value of parents' active support of child learning when they invite involvement, support skills that enable effective involvement, and respect life-context variables that may influence parents' abilities to be involved. Well-developed invitations targeted to all parents must include a full range of involvement suggestions such as suggestions for parents whose own education and skills may lead them to conclude that their influence is minimal, especially as their children move into higher grades. School invitations that offer empowering information are particularly critical in supporting more active role construction. They also support a positive sense of efficacy about the value of one's involvement for children's school success (Shumow & Lomax, 2002). In order to enhance parents, schools should use multiple approaches to offering invitations (e.g., written invitations in appropriate languages sent home with students; information about home- and school-based involvement opportunities distributed at orientation sessions, mailed home, or perhaps advertised in local media; follow-up invitations and requests by phone, e-mail, or home visits: Hoover-Dempsey & Walker, 2002).

Data

There are several types of constructive collaboration between parents and teachers. One of the types of parental involvement is volunteering, i.e., parents' help and support in the school. Teachers can encourage parents to participate in this type of parental involvement by sending home an annual postcard survey to identify available talents, times, and locations of volunteers; maintaining a dedicated space for families involved in volunteer work to share resources and hold meetings; and establishing classroom volunteer programs, parent patrols, classroom parents, and a telephone tree. Parental participation of this type in children's early school years has been related to the children's improved reading achievement one year later (Miedel & Reynolds, 2000) and academic achievement and reduced behavior problems four years later (Domina, 2005). Low- to middle-income African American parents' participation in their children's school activities was found to be positively related to their children's improved reading achievement, better teacher ratings of their children's academic behavior skills, better maternal ratings of their children's emotional regulation, and more parental involvement at home (Hill & Craft, 2003).

Another type of parental involvement, learning at home, can be defined as parents helping students at home with homework and other curriculum-related activities, decisions, and planning. Teachers can help parents to become involved in this way by providing information on homework policies, skills required for students in all subjects at each grade level, how to monitor schoolwork at home, and how to assist students in improving skills on various school assessments; regular scheduling of homework that requires students to discuss with their families what they are learning in class; calendars with activities for parents and students to complete at home. Parents' engagement in homework has been reported to be related to children's improved reading achievement (Epstein, 1991); increased positive attitude toward homework, personal competence, and self-regulation (Hoover-Dempsey at al., 2001); and reduced behavioral problems (Domina, 2005).

In addition, parents can get involved by decision making through becoming leaders and representatives. Teachers can help parents to become involved in this way by supporting parents' involvement in the Parent Teacher Association (PTA) or Parent Teacher Organization (PTO), advisory councils, and committees; by organizing independent advocacy groups to lobby for school reform and improvement; by supporting parents in becoming part of district-level councils and committees; by providing information on school or local elections for school representatives; and by developing a network to link all families with parent representatives. When parents become involved in these ways, their children seem to receive fewer detentions (Epstein & Sheldon, 2002).

A more broader type of collaboration between parents and teachers is collaborating with the community, which can be defined as parents' connection with the resources and services in the community to strengthen school programs, family practices, and student learning and development. Teachers can help parents to become involved in this way by providing them with information on health fairs, cultural events, recreational events, social support networks, and summer programs that are available in the community; by integrating school partnerships with other service organizations and businesses; by organizing community service opportunities for students and families; and by encouraging alumni to participate in school programs for students and families. When elementary school teachers gave out information or referrals for health and social services needs for their students, the students perceived that their parents have higher academic and vocational aspirations for them and would provide more help with homework (Seitsinger, Felner, Brand & Burns, 2008). Inner-city children whose parents explicitly used community resources for their extracurricular and religious activities were high achievers (Gutman & Mcloyd, 2000). When community volunteers became more involved in schools, students engaged in fewer disruptive behaviors (Sheldon & Epstein, 2002).

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4. Parents-teachers collaboration procedure – some influencing factors

According to field theory, in order to create a positive change in communication between parents and teachers in kindergarten, one need to understand what are the factors that motivate this kind of change and also what are the factors that might block or prevent this kind of change.

According to the research, several characteristics appear to positively influence parent-teacher partnerships. The relationships are enhanced when teacher's personal attributes include warmth, openness, sensitivity, flexibility, reliability, and accessibility. The partnerships are positively influenced when parent's personal attributes include warmth, sensitivity, nurturance, the ability to listen, consistency, a positive self-image, personal confidence, and effective interpersonal skills. While neither teachers nor parents may have all these positive personal attributes, teachers, who are armed with this knowledge, may be more effective at bridging (Swick, 1992).

Research has shown us that teachers and parents with high efficacy levels are more likely to succeed in parent-teacher relationships (Greenwood & Hickman, 1991). On the one hand, teachers and parents who have had successful interactions with each other, observed or heard about others successes, and/or felt that efforts were worthwhile are more likely to have that personal sense of efficacy. On the other hand, teachers and parents may have leftover anxieties from earlier experiences with kindergartens that influence how effective they are likely to feel. Rebuilding the bridge for effective parent-teacher relationships may require different supports for those individuals (Garcia, 2000).

High-quality parent–teacher relationships are related to multiple aspects of children's functioning. First, parent–teacher relationship quality is associated with children's academic functioning, including academic competence (Hauser-Cram, Sirin & Stipek, 2003), academic progress, grade point averages (Adams & Christenson, 2000), and achievement test scores

(Rimm-Kaufman at al., 2003). Second, such relationships are associated with children's social skills as reflected in heightened functioning in the peer group (Rimm-Kaufman at al., 2003) as well as social competence (Serpell & Mashburn, 2012). Third, high-quality relationships are associated with children's diminished behavioral and social concerns, including fewer behavioral problems (Serpell & Mashburn, 2012) and socio-emotional difficulties such as shyness and anxiety (Izzo, Weissberg, Kasprow & Fendrich, 1999). Importantly, such effects on children's functioning are present across time even after adjusting for children's earlier functioning (Hughes & Kwok, 2007), socioeconomic status and parental sensitivity toward children (Rimm-Kaufman & Pianta, 2005), and parents' academic involvement (Izzo at al., 1999).

The benefits of enhanced parent–teacher relationship quality may be particularly pronounced for families of children experiencing behavioral problems. Behavioral problems are a concern for both parents and teachers and are associated with children's later behavioral and academic difficulties (Reinke, Herman, Petras & Ialongo, 2008). In the context of children's behavioral concerns, relationships between parents and teachers may become strained (Sheridan, Bovaird, Glover, Garbacz, Witte & Kwon, 2012). However, high-quality parent–teacher relationships appear to enhance the functioning of children with behavior problems across the school year (Serpell & Mashburn, 2012), and improvements in parent–teacher relationships have been shown to mediate the effects of consultation interventions on students with behavioral problems (Sheridan at al., 2012). Thus, determining factors that promote high quality parent-teacher relationships may be particularly important for this group.

Several factors were found to predict better teachers' communication patterns with parents. From **teacher's** point of view, teachers with more experience have been found to have both more positive and less positive perceptions of parents (Sumsion, 1999); similarly, there is evidence that greater teachers experience is associated with either more or less frequent

communication with parents (Rimm-Kaufman & Pianta, 1999). It may be that some teachers with more experience have become burned out and frustrated with dealing with parents, whereas others have become increasingly comfortable sharing information with them. Similarly, new teachers may be enthusiastic about sharing information with parents but also may feel unprepared to do so. Teacher job satisfaction also may be associated with parent–teacher's relationships: Teachers who are more satisfied with their jobs have better interactions with parents (Joshi & Taylor, 2005). However, it is important to note the bidirectional nature of parent–provider relations. For example, teachers may be more satisfied with their jobs because they have better interactions with parents. Other studies suggest that teachers have more personal relationships with mothers who they feel are doing a good job as parents and that low-esteemed mothers report fewer teacher–parent conversations and are less likely to see child care as a source of information about children or parenting. Thus, most of the research indicates that teachers' attitudes toward parents may be an important determining factor in the quality of parent–teacher relationships and, in turn, in parents' experiences with child care (Susman-Stillman, Pleuss & Englund, 2013).

Teachers often lack the knowledge and skills needed to collaborate with parents and families effectively. This may be partly attributed to the absence of preparation in this area in many teacher education programs (De Acosta, 1996). Because of the lack of initial training in parent involvement, most teachers are forced to rely on their accumulated life experiences in dealing with parents, which often does not provide them with the special skills they need to be effective (Moles, 1993). Parents may also lack the knowledge and skills needed to work effectively with teachers. For example, parents may have educational backgrounds which lack fluency in English, and they may not understand their children's schoolwork and therefore are unable to assist them at home with academic tasks.

Data

Another barrier that effect parent-teacher relations is restricted opportunities for interaction (Moles, 1993). For example, administrative policies that limit the scheduling of conferences and meetings only during the day, discourage parent-teacher contact. Also, parents may have difficulties in attending meetings and conferences because of a lack of social support networks to meet babysitting and transportation needs. Teachers may also be overwhelmed with their own personal responsibilities at home, in addition to the responsibilities of teaching (Gestwicki, 1992).

In regard to factors which influence **parents'** intensity of involvement in this communication - both in a positive or in a negative manners, from parent's point of view, several factors were found.

Education of parents. First, Dauber and Epstein (1989) found that better educated parents are more involved at kindergarten and at home. The U.S. Department of Education found that parents with higher levels of education report less satisfaction with kindergarten practices than parents with lower levels of education, suggesting that more highly educated parents feel more comfortable criticizing the kindergarten. Grolnick, Benjet, Kurowski, and Apostoleris (1997) found that parents who see themselves as teachers and feel effective in helping their children in kindergarten are more likely to be involved. Parents' view of their role as teacher and their comfort level communicating with teachers and helping their children with kindergarten work may, in part, be a result of their own educational experience.

Socioeconomic status. A number of studies suggest that **socioeconomic status (SES),** of which parental education is a component, is a factor for parent involvement. Using teacher report, Reynolds (1992) found less involvement by families with high mobility, low SES, and minority status. Entwisle and Alexander (1988) showed that a disparity in kindergarten readiness (e.g., cognitive skills, behavioral expectations, and investment in kindergarten) exists between children from low-versus high-SES families as early as first grade. The gap in

achievement between these two groups continues to widen as the years progress. Although most studies of SES combine income, occupation, and educational level, there is increasing recognition of the need to investigate these factors separately (e.g., Greenberg, Lengua, Coie, Pinderhughes & Conduct Problems Prevention Research Group, 1999). In the present study, parental education was examined alone to determine its specific role as a risk factor for parent involvement.

Marital status of parent. Another factor was **single-parent status**. In several studies, teachers reported lower levels of kindergarten involvement for single parents (Kohl, Kamkin, Kiseleva & Noble, 1994; Reynolds, 1992). With the increasing number of single parents, this risk factor is important to study in the context of family– kindergarten relations. Children of single parents have more academic and behavior problems than do those of intact two-parent families. Single parents naturally have fewer resources such as money, social support, and time to invest in their child's education and development. Therefore, single-parent status is a marker of multiple risks that may influence a parent's likelihood of being involved in kindergarten or with the child directly.

Mental competence of the parent and especially maternal depression were found to be associated with level of involvement. Much research suggests that maternal depression is a risk factor for many child problems including both internalizing and externalizing behavior (e.g., Cummings & Davies, 1994; Downey & Coyne, 1990) and social and academic competence (e.g., Downey & Coyne, 1990). Along with the direct effects of maternal depression on children's academic success, parent involvement in kindergarten may be a mediating factor between maternal depression and children's academic success. Depressed mothers often view their parenting roles less positively and may have less energy, motivation, and confidence to be involved either with their children directly or with kindergarten personnel (see review, Downey & Coyne, 1990). In addition, because depressed individuals have been shown to elicit negative

responses from others, depressed mothers might have more trouble developing positive relationships with teachers.

Ethnic status. Previous studies found that **ethnic or racial minority status**, which relates to lower levels of parent involvement. Kohl and colleagues (1994) found that minority status was associated with a decrease in the amount and quality of parent involvement by teacher report. Moles (1993) wrote of "disadvantaged parents" – those with low income and minority status – having less involvement in kindergarten by teacher report. Lynch and Stein (1987) reported that Hispanic and African American parents offered fewer suggestions at special education meetings and knew significantly less about their children's special services than did Caucasian parents. Although minority status has been identified as a risk factor for parent involvement, little research has examined the different pattern of relations among other family and demographic risk factors and parent involvement within the context of separate minority groups. Eccles and Harold (1996) suggested that understanding the relations between risk factors and PI within the context of a given ethnic group may sharpen the focus of interventions. Identifying risk factors and dimensions of parent involvement that are relevant for specific ethnic or racial groups facilitates the development of culturally sensitive interventions. Therefore, instead of viewing minority status as a risk factor in this study, we chose to examine ethnicity as a moderator of the relations between family and demographic variables and PI.

Cultural aspects were also found to be correlated. This is perhaps particularly important in seeking the enhanced school outcomes often associated with parental involvement among families who are first- or second-generation immigrants or families who are marginalized with reference to mainstream society. Families in these circumstances often experience the resource limitations associated with lower SES (e.g., limited parental education, multiple jobs and family responsibilities. Many parents, across cultural backgrounds and family circumstances,

can be and are effectively involved in supporting students' school learning. Many seen by schools as uninvolved are in fact involved, but in ways that schools do not notice or recognize (Trevino, Yin, Hernandez, Hale, Garcia & Mobley, 2004).

To address this potential disconnect, teachers need to seek out information to understand the cultural and linguistic diversity reflected in the families of their students. This knowledge and appreciation can be demonstrated by celebrating the various cultural traditions of their students, by incorporating speakers from the community, by appreciating the difficulties faced by immigrant parents, and by seeking out interpreter services as needed (Lai & Ishiyama, 2004). Similarly, teachers can incorporate the faces of diversity into children's literature in the classroom (Molland, 2004). Bilingual hotlines, as well as a bilingual phone tree, have been suggested as creative ways to enhance communication with culturally diverse families regarding upcoming events (Ramirez, 2001). Similarly, it may be appropriate to provide written communication in several languages to ensure the greatest access to the parent community.

However, knowledge regarding a culture is not sufficient. Kasahara and Turnbull (2005) noted that professionals must also to seek to understand the uniqueness of each family based on their own reality within their cultural milieu. For example, through the Building Cultures Project (Trumbull, Rothstein-Fisch & Hernandez, 2003), teachers provided with professional development on cultural value systems made innovative changes to their communication practices with Latino families (such as increased ability to take parents' perspectives, altering schedules to accommodate parents and families, and providing more explicit information to parents regarding school culture). In addition, most teachers involved in the project subsequently provided professional development to other educators, thereby expanding the opportunity for cross-cultural understanding even further. The time and effort invested by teachers to research and better understand the cultures reflected in their school community can only serve to enhance partnership opportunities.

Data

Families use of pre-academic home activities. Family involvement in home-based activities (e.g., homework, reading to the child) has been linked to improved academic performance (Connors & Epstein, 1995). Many studies differentiate between home- and school-based support for children's learning, and research generally supports a high, positive correlation in their prevalence (Kohl at al., 2000).

Families' perception of the kindergarten. Families' perception of the kindergarten as supportive has been viewed as factor predicting family- kindergarten involvement. For example, parents who report having greater trust for their children's teachers were more likely to be actively involved in their children's kindergarten (Adams & Christenson, 2000). Families who report experiencing barriers have been shown to be less involved in their children's kindergarten. For example, research on parents of children enrolled in Head Start describe the most prevalent barriers as schedule conflicts, having babies at home, and moving; all of which were associated with teachers' ratings of low family involvement.

Children's behavior problems. Many studies point to the positive link between family involvement and children's social functioning, especially in the early years of school. In a sample of low-income preschool children, Marcon (1999) found more active forms of parent involvement (parent initiated) were associated with positive development in adaptive skills and greater mastery of early basic school skills. Others have shown that parents who more frequently participate in their children's education and who regularly monitor their progress, have children who exhibit higher levels of self-regulation in their peer play interactions (McWayne at al., 2004). Taylor and Machida (1994) found teacher-rated parent involvement in schools to be predictive of improved classroom behavior as well as early academic achievement in children from families with low income. Likewise, Reynolds (1992) found that teacher-rated parental involvement was predictive of social maturity in a comparable group of children "at risk" for school failure.

Data

Perceived teacher's responsiveness. Parents' perceptions of the extent to which their child's teacher is responsive to children and parents may be a salient expectation that functions as a unique dimension of parent-school relationships. In general, teachers show responsiveness to children and parents when they "meet families where they are" (Christenson, 2004). Teachers demonstrate responsiveness to a parent by communicating openness to new information, suggestions, and other forms of feedback about the classroom, and maintain a welcoming, supportive stance toward parents (Powell, 2001). Teacher responsiveness to children, such as showing individualized interest in a child's experiences, helping a child feel valued and accepted, and engaging in emotionally warm and positive interactions, has long been considered a core feature of high-quality early childhood classrooms (Hyson at al., 2006). Parents' perceptions of the extent to which their child's teacher is responsive to their child has received far less attention in the literature, however. Perceptions of teacher responsiveness may be viewed as a component of relationship quality, which is a broader construct comprised of related, yet distinct, elements of interpersonal relationships such as ease of communication.

The construct of responsiveness is integral to a conceptualization of parent–teachers relationships as a bidirectional flow of influence between parents and kindergartens (Epstein & Sanders, 2002). This perspective emerged in the late 1970s partly in response to concerns that parent– kindergarten relationships, including parental kindergarten involvement, may emphasize kindergarten-to-parent directionality. Especially influential was Bronfenbrenner's (1979) theoretical perspective on family-kindergarten relationships as a system that enhances child development when there is two-way communication, a balance of power, and multiple linkages (i.e., more than one person who is active in both settings). Eventually the practice standards in early education adopted this view by recommending that teachers establish "reciprocal relationships with families" (Copple & Bredekamp, 2009, p. 22). The rationale for reciprocity as a desirable feature of parent-kindergarten relationships also stems from mandates

for parents of children with special needs to contribute to decisions about a child's educational program (e.g., Sandall at al., 2005).

Parents' perception of teacher responsiveness may contribute to the frequency and flow of information in parent-teacher interactions that affect the child. For example, the perception of a teacher as minimally responsive may prompt a parent to refrain from communicating a request or concern because “it won't do any good anyway” (Pianta & Walsh, 1996). Another possible explanation is that a parent's perception of a teacher's responsiveness is communicated to the child in ways that enhance a child's engagement in the classroom.

In addition, parents' perception of teacher responsiveness may be an indicator of the quality of teacher interactions with children based on direct observation of teacher behaviors in the classroom and/or indirect information sources such as child reports of teacher actions or views of a teacher communicated by other parents. In the latter interpretation, a parent's perception of teacher responsiveness functions as a proxy measure of teacher sensitivity to children. Accordingly, perceived teacher responsiveness may be linked to child outcomes through the quality of teacher interactions with children in the classroom. To determine the extent to which parents' perception of teacher responsiveness is an attribute of parent‐school relationships, it is useful to include an independent measure of teacher interactions with children as a control variable to more precisely estimate the contribution of teacher responsiveness to child outcomes (Hinde, 1997; Pianta & Walsh, 1996).

Economic and time constraints may also be primary obstacles to effective communication (Finders & Lewis, 1994). To address this, teachers can survey parents at the beginning of the school year to determine parent schedules and availability, and also to provide parents with information regarding how and when to contact the teacher. Meeting times need to be somewhat flexible to accommodate working parents, including those working shifts and those who commute. Reaching out in the form of home visits may also be needed to connect with

some families (Molland, 2004). Logistical constraints such as childcare and transportation create challenges for many parents (Geenen, Powers & Lopez-Vasquez, 2001). Providing childcare options in the school building while parents attend meetings can make all the difference for some families.

In addition, lack of technology also limits communication opportunities for many families. Teachers should never assume that students have access to technology at home (Ramirez, 2001). They should survey parents regarding access to voice mail, computers, and the internet. In addition, many teachers and parents are still uncomfortable with the use of technology. Thus, Ramirez noted that "paper-based" communication should still have a fundamental place in the overall communication strategy of the school, despite extensive technology use. Importantly, the rules to written communication also apply to e-mail and web based content, and confidentiality of personal information must be ensured.

On school level, the use of educational jargon with parents is a common communication roadblock. Teachers should monitor their conversation and written communications to ensure jargon is avoided. If technical terms or acronyms must be used, these should be carefully explained. Audio messages may be appropriate to communicate with parents who have reduced literacy levels (Williams & Cartledge, 1997).

Finally, a significant barrier may be the still traditional 5-15 minute parent conference that offers little time for meaningful communication regarding a child's academic and social progress. The perception that the teacher holds the "official evidence" of student achievement may further hinder a parent's active participation (Nichols & Read, 2002). To address this, Nichols and Read suggest that teachers set the stage for an effective interview by providing parents with work samples in the weeks preceding the conference; these samples should be accompanied by information explaining the task and any assistance or accommodations the student received. The parent-teacher meeting can also become a more effective interchange

when parents feel invited and encouraged to attend, when conferences are well planned, and when teachers have identified the main points to be discussed with samples of the child's work at hand (Stevens & Tollafield, 2003). Effective use of communications skills, inviting the valuable insights of parents, and developing a reasonable plan reflecting the perspectives of the various participants all serve to make conferences as comfortable and productive as possible.

5. Teacher-parent collaboration's PROGRAMS

The main theoretical approaches underlie establishing collaboration programs moves beyond a focus on the child's individual skills as the keys to transition success. Instead, it emphasizes relationships among an array of contexts and continuity (or discontinuity) in these relationships over time. In this view, children's adjustment in the transition to school is a product of relationships among a wide array of contexts and persons, including the child, their family, schools and teachers, peers, preschools and preschool teachers, and the wider community. Interactions among these contexts and persons can be important sources of support that foster early school success, particularly for children for whom transition to school may be a challenge. These ideas and this approach are very similar to those used by other investigators interested in transition in the emphasis on interactions among settings over time and the view that readiness for school is not solely a function of a child's skills (Ramey & Ramey, 1999).

The literature points to a number of key elements of the collaborative approach (Denner, Cooper, Lopez & Dunbar, 1999), including theoretical and social relevance, and the need for explicit goals among all of the participants. These common goals are best developed in the context of articulating a shared mission that benefits the program, researchers and policy makers. The roles of the participants should be clearly defined, in terms of leadership and data collection, and relationships among collaborators developed with a sense of trust and mutual respect. For example, Groark and McCall (1996) found that employing a project coordinator who has a practitioner perspective can be beneficial. Finally, results and products pertaining to

the research process should be accessible to all participants, both in terms of physical access as well as insuring that products communicate well to diverse audiences (Denner at al., 1999).

Because parental involvement in their children's education is a product of the interrelationship between individual barriers and school barriers (Peña, 2000), it is necessary to improve teachers' practices as well as identify parental obstacles to involvement in their children's education. However, it may be more effective to focus on improving teacher practices rather than on parental variables because schools have more resources than parents in terms of educated teachers, established in-service programs, and funding for programs (Moles, 1993). Improving school practices to encourage active parental participation may be less of a challenge than improving the demographic status of low-SES and single parents would be (Pryor, 2001).

Muijs, Harris, Chapman, Stoll and Russ (2004) stated that Achieving parental involvement is one the most difficult areas of school improvement in economically disadvantaged areas. One of the reasons for the difficulty may be related to the lack of pre- and in-service education (Hoover-Dempsey at al., 2002) for teachers on ways to initiate and practice parental involvement in the classroom. As a result, many teachers have reported a lack of relevant knowledge and have experienced uncertainty regarding ways to encourage parent involvement (Dauber & Epstein, 1993).

Teachers hold an important role in recruiting parents to collaboration with schools and kindergartens. In order to alleviate the barriers to effective parent-teacher collaboration, teacher preparation programs provide course work that includes developing teachers' special knowledge, attitudes, skills, and strategies to work effectively with families (Foster & Loven, 1992; Houston & Houston, 1992). De Acosta (1996) recommends several themes for inclusion in foundation courses designed to enhance the prospective teacher's ability to collaborate with families: family and schools, community and schools, and the context of teaching. These

themes, along with reflections on practicum experiences with families and community agencies, are consistent with recommendations made by other educators and researchers (Foster & Loven, 1992).

The National Center for Early Development and Learning (NCEDL) developed a program which aims to improve collaboration between parents and teachers when children enter kindergarten. This program was designed to improve the quality and frequency of relationships among peers, preschool and kindergarten teachers, and especially, families and schools (Pianta & Kraft-Sayre, 2003). The intervention was designed to begin early, during the preschool year, and extend well into the kindergarten year, acknowledging that the transition to kindergarten is a process that spans over a period of two years. The NCEDL intervention consists of a set of practices organized around key principles. These principles include fostering relationships and resources, promoting continuity from preschool to kindergarten, focusing on family strengths, tailoring practices to individual needs, and forming collaborative relationships. The intervention offers recommendations on how to establish a transition team and create a timeline for intervention. Further, the intervention offers a set of practices from which the transition team and schools can choose. Examples of practices most relevant to family-school communication include assessment of family needs, organization of opportunities for contact with families during the first few days of school, family participation in home learning experiences, family and the preschool teacher sharing information with the kindergarten teacher, and family meetings about transition issues prior to the beginning of school. Tailoring the transition practices given the resources available within the school and in relation to the needs of the community and the families at a particular school is an essential element of this intervention (Kraft-Sayre & Pianta, 2000).

They established a Collaborative Design Team (CDT) composed of preschool teachers, family workers, kindergarten teachers, principals and NCEDL staff. Before any intervention or

data collection protocol was designed, members of the CDT met monthly to determine the needs of the community around transition to kindergarten, interact in data collection decisions, design the intervention, and oversee its implementation. These discussions used an ecological model to focus on existing practices, gaps in services, ideal practices and barriers to these practices. The results of a national survey of transition practices (Pianta, Cox, Taylor & Early, 1999) and informal local parent surveys were also incorporated into these discussions, as well as results from a detailed study of parent-school contacts (Rimm-Kaufman & Pianta, 1999). The CDT then proposed programmatic changes to better serve children and their families. The discussions in the CDT resulted in an approach to intervention that was partnership-based and in which building partnerships was viewed as the essential means of supporting good transition outcomes. A key aspect or conclusion of these discussions was the fact that every family's needs are different and that a "one-size fits all" intervention program was bound to be a failure. Instead, the CDT chose a different route, a route that challenged conventions of research design, but would, in the estimation of the CDT, yield a higher likelihood of success and a much richer descriptive database.

The CDT advocated a menu-based approach to implementing good transition practices. It directed the creation of an open-ended document that described a variety of practices designed to enhance relationships among children, peers, families and schools. These practices followed from the ecological conceptualization of transition that had been embraced by the CDT (Rimm-Kaufman & Pianta, 1999). The practices focused on relationships among key contexts and persons, they emphasized the importance of continuity over time starting well before entry into kindergarten, and they embraced the principle that interactions had to be based upon mutual respect and support for the child. Collaboration was evident throughout the intervention. Teachers, family workers, and researchers all played critical roles in the intervention implementation and data collection. For example, in developing the family interview, questions

were carefully devised so that they were culturally relevant to the population being served, sensitive to families' needs, and in line with research methodology standards.

Results from preliminary analyses of data indicate that this collaborative effort is characterized by three themes: (1) that participants in the transition process differ in their views of transition practices; (2) that parents and teachers in the preschool year share mutually positive views of one another in relation to a range of activities and roles, and (3) that preschool staff increasingly are seen as an important and helpful source of support for parents. Narrative impressions from collaborators on the process of conducting this research confirm the importance of a shared mission, communication, and mutual respect, and highlight the value of collaboration for all involved (Pianta, Kraft-Sayre, Rimm-Kaufman, Gercke & Higgins, 2001).

Teachers Involving Parents (TIP) program was originally designed to enhance teacher beliefs considered critical to the development of teacher behaviors inviting parental involvement (Hoover-Dempsey, Bassler & Brissie, 1992). This program was based on the theoretical links between beliefs and behaviors. Personal beliefs shape behavior because they influence individual perceptions and understandings of events in the environment, orient individuals toward particular tasks and action alternatives in varied situations, influence multiple individual decisions related to goal-setting and goal attainment and influence personal development of commitment and skills related to goals and activities at issue (Schunk & Zimmerman, 1997). Hence, the program assumes that teachers' beliefs in four specific areas would influence their perceptions of parent involvement, their orientation toward inviting parent involvement, and their goals, commitments, and skills related to inviting parental involvement. These belief systems included personal sense of teaching efficacy, beliefs about parents' efficacy for helping their children learn, beliefs about parent involvement in general, and beliefs about the importance of specific parent involvement practices (Bandura, 1997; Dauber & Epstein, 1993).

Data

Personal sense of teaching efficacy has been related to stronger confidence in one's efforts, greater goal-related behavior, and greater persistence in overcoming obstacles (Bandura, 1997; Woolfolk, Rosoff & Hoy, 1990). These links suggest that stronger sense of teaching efficacy will support higher levels of teacher invitations to involvement. Teacher beliefs about parents' efficacy for helping children learn were included because teachers who believe that parents are capable of contributing to their children's educational success are more likely to act in ways that will secure parents' involvement than those holding less positive views (Bandura, 1997; Hoover-Dempsey at al., 1992). Positive teacher beliefs about parental involvement in general were included because teachers who believe more strongly that parental involvement is an important contributor to children's educational success are more likely than those holding less positive beliefs to act in ways that enable or increase parental involvement (Epstein, 1992). Teachers' beliefs about the importance of specific involvement strategies were included because teachers who know of and are committed to a wide range of involvement strategies have more options available for implementation-across a variety of circumstances, contexts, and parent preferences-once the decision to invite involvement has been made.

The fundamental goal of the program was to offer groups of knowledgeable professionals a forum for building and sustaining personal and interpersonal or organizational frameworks essential to creating more effective parental involvement in the school. The program focused on creating opportunities for collegial interaction among peers, assuming that learning is best fostered in contexts that enhance both trust and critique. The program was also grounded in support for participants' construction of new knowledge and belief systems, processes that require active personal exploration of belief-behavior systems. Finally, the program was explicitly grounded in the assumption that collective generation and evaluation of ideas underlie a group's ability to continue the development of beliefs, skills, and practices beyond the confines of a time-limited intervention.

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Results of an initial test of the program in two US public schools serving predominantly high-risk populations suggested that participation increased teachers' sense of efficacy, and enhanced beliefs about parents' efficacy for helping children learn as well as invitations to involvement (Hoover-Dempsey at al., 2002).

It is important to realize that even in the context of these partnership models, programs place different priorities on family involvement. Schools differ with respect to their invitations and attitudes, and teachers are variable in the degree to which they invite family-school communication (Swick & McKnight, 1989). In particular, preschool and kindergarten programs are likely to prioritize family-school communication differently. Most preschool programs are designed to support children's social and emotional development to prepare them for school. In contrast, most kindergarten programs are designed to provide children with academic skills and prepare them for future schooling (Shipley & Oborn, 1996). Further, kindergarten classrooms are more likely to emphasize teacher professionalism than preschool classrooms, and some families may feel less comfortable being involved (Kagan & Neville, 1996). The academic emphasis of the kindergarten environment is apparent, and therefore, families who may have had less positive experiences with school may be less inclined to get involved (Moles, 1993). These factors, taken together, may result in a shift in home-school communication between preschool and kindergarten.

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PART B

I. METHODOLOGY OF THE CURRENT RESEARCH

In the current chapter, I will present the primary objectives of this study, and the methodology I used to examine study's model and hypotheses.

1. The subject and the aims/goals of the planned research

The current study will focus of collaboration between teachers and parents, which mainly holds two elements: (1) Partnership which presents the involved parties with special challenges that must be navigated unto agreement. Overarching goals, levels of give-and-take, areas of responsibility, lines of authority and succession, how success is evaluated and distributed, and often a variety of other factors must all be negotiated. Partnerships exist within, and across, sectors. Non-profit, religious, and political organizations may partner together to increase the likelihood of each achieving their mission and to amplify their reach. In the context of this study, I will refer partnership as the way of teachers see, approach and treat parents and vice versa. (2) Communication which is defined as working level of partnership, e.g. activity of conveying information through the exchange of ideas, feelings, intentions, attitudes, expectations, perceptions or commands.

Specifically, I will examine the following topics:

- Parents attitudes towards kindergarten students and their education.
- Parents attitudes towards parent-teacher communication.
- Teachers' attitudes towards parents' involvement.
- Parents' opinion about teachers-parents collaboration.

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The main purpose of the current study is to examine patterns of relationship between parents and kindergarten teachers. In addition, I will propose in my work a model which aims to improve the communication between teachers and parents in pre-school kindergartens.

The main goal of the study was to examine the causal relationships between educational partnerships between parents and teachers (the independent variable) and parents' attitudes towards the status of teachers (the dependent variable). The integrated paradigm enables complementarity-investigation of various aspects and dimensions of the phenomenon. Another goal of the study was to try to develop a model of optimal educational partnership. Here, too, a combination of the paradigms enabled the deepening and development of the research findings. Using quantitative research enabled to examine the relationship and its orientation (according to the research questions, correlation and causal link) between educational partnerships and parents' attitudes towards the status of teachers and the teaching profession. Hence, I measured the main variables in the research by using validated and reliable questionnaires filled in both by parents and teachers. By using quantitative approach, I can get a better understanding of the relationships between teachers and parents in kindergarten and which factors influence these relationships.

2. The research questions, variables and indicators

Specifically, the study will investigate the following questions:

1. In what dimensions parents and teachers are ready to accept the proposed system for communication?
2. What teachers and parents would like to change in the system and what they would like to add to the system?
3. In regard to teachers-parents relationship, on one hand, what do parents expect from teachers, and, on the other hand, what do teachers expect from parents?

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4. What are the associations between the psychological and educational aspects of the relationship?

5. What are the core concerns of parents in regard to the children? What are the core concerns of teachers in regard to the children?

Parents

- What are the parents' attitude towards kindergarten children and education?
- What are parents' attitudes towards parents' communication?

Teachers

- What are teachers' attitudes towards parents-teachers collaboration?
- What are teachers' attitudes towards parental involvement in the kindergarten children education?
- What are teachers' attitudes towards importance of parents' involvement practices?
- W\hat are teachers' declaration (reports) about parents' involvement?
- To what level parents and teachers accept the proposed system for collaboration between parents and kindergarten teachers?

Variables

- Parents' attitudes towards involvement
- Parent-teacher communication
- Parent-child communication
- Teacher Beliefs about the Importance of Parent Involvement Practices
- Teacher reports of parent involvement
- Teacher report of invitations to parental involvement

The study included 79 parents and 79 kindergarten teachers (a total of 158 participants).

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3. Methodological approaches in the social research and the method used in the current study

There are two main methodological approaches for research – qualitative and quantitative methods. In the following sections I will present theoretical and practical point of view of both methods.

Qualitative Approach. The main way of qualitative method is exploring issues, understanding phenomenon and processes and answering several questions. The qualitative research differs from the quantitative research mainly since it focuses on people and processes rather than on quantitative data. The aim is not necessarily to quantify the data or to get a statistical significance and to generalize the result. The qualitative focus on the process themselves, on the person's feelings and thoughts, mainly by interviewing subjects (Creswell, Hanson, Clark Plano & Morales, 2007). Seidman (2006) describes the purpose of such interviews by saying that the purpose is neither to obtain answers to questions nor to test hypotheses, or to evaluate the frequency the term is used.

Data gathering in qualitative methodology

Researchers design their research by exploring the problem they address (Shkedi, 2010). Research design involves awareness of the significance of the paradigm pertaining for the research, presentation of the problem, phrasing questions, data collection, data analysis, answering the questions. The research's progress is rather flexible, and is a two-way process. All research stages are interconnected, one depending on another, and alterations in one stage will affect the others. The role of research questions in a qualitative constructivist research is to guide the researchers while providing them freedom and flexibility in favor of exploring the phenomenon in depth.

An interest in understanding the experience of other people and how they interpret that experience lies at the core of in-depth interviewing. In consideration of literature on structured,

semi-structured, and unstructured interviews, I deemed semi-structured interviewing to be the best method of collection. The reason for this choice is that researcher is attached to some predetermined questions, but he is allowed to change their place and add other questions according to the development of the interview. The advantage of the semi-structured interview is that it combines the flexibility of open-unstructured interview with the framing of the structured interview. However, structured interviews appeared to be restrictive and pertinent to the vast volumes of data, as opposed the unstructured interview did not provide with the set parameters to answer the research questions (Silverman, 2006).

Semi-structured interviewing, as noted by Cohen and Crabtree (2006) is the most favored method, since it allows achieving depth by providing the opportunity to the interviewer to probe and expand on the respondents' responses. The reason is that while a structured interview has a formalized, limited set of questions, a semi-structured interview is flexible, allows reducing questions, to add questions that are derived from interviewee's answers during the interview as a result of what the interviewee says. The interviewer in a semi-structured interview generally has a framework of themes to be explored. The interviewer can explore specific topic during the interviews by asking participants in different ways. Generally, researchers begin with broad, primary questions, which are narrowed to become more focused in the course of the research. The primary questions are widely re-arranged, and might even focus on new issues in the course of the research. Shkedi (2010) argues that there are several types of questions; exploratory questions, first order questions, and second order questions.

Exploratory Questions. Relevant for the revealing of important elements of the studied phenomenon and for clarifying prospective research premises. This type of questions is most suitable for a situation where there is knowledge or understanding in studying the phenomenon. Sometimes, the knowledge on the researcher's hand is insufficient for determining the focus of the research. This is a situation where an exploratory research may assist the researchers in

focusing and planning their research. Upon establishing the research question and design, with or without the assistance of an exploratory research, researchers are to select the research population. The selected informers should correspond to the research goal.

First Order Questions. Focus upon the portrayal and clarification of the phenomenon's exploration. They may yield a set of simple knowledge portrayals, as well as more complex information, such as human relations or special relations, and even a causal explanation. When the subjects realize that, the emphasis is the information received from those individuals studied in association with a studied phenomenon; information collection which will facilitate the researcher in approaching and understanding his viewpoint of the phenomenon.

Second Order Questions concern the information which the researcher failed to directly collect from the informers, whether because it is a hidden knowledge or because that knowledge did not surface during the interviews or other stories related by the sources. In order to complement for the knowledge the researcher failed to obtain through the informers' descriptions and explanations, he will search for other sources of knowledge, such as documents, observations, etc.

Data analysis in qualitative methodology

Data analysis in the qualitative research is characterized as an analytical process, usually not statistical bearing intuitive elements or characteristics, whose goal is to provide the studied phenomenon with significance, interpretation, and generalization. Data analysis expands beyond the definition above when serving the researcher to decide the research's further course and proceeding (Shkedi, 2010). Because of the transition from data analysis, to data collection and the conceptual framework, analysis becomes a research component. Analysis is not limited to a certain spot on the research sequence, and some even perceive it as the core of the qualitative research (Gibton, 2001).

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Analysis constitutes a dimension of the qualitative research. The interpretative research has been founded as a synonym for qualitative research (Shkedi, 2010). At the beginning of the 1990's, it was mainly the naturalistic science which served as parallel to the qualitative research. The "evidence based theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) was, to a great extent, the threshold. It is based upon principles and rules which regulate the interpretation. The analysis process it offers is inductive, structured, and developing. Ever increasing abstraction degrees establish a relationship based upon the data. The enhancement of qualitative research's stand in the academic world, as well as the development of its pragmatic foundations allowed placing the interpretative essence at the front, taking over the naturalistic characterization. Data analysis is no longer bound by the systematic and meticulous break down and coding of the evidence based theory.

The qualitative-interpretative research allows the celebration of subjectivity, playfulness, and freedom of creation throughout the analysis process. Through the analysis, the researcher forms "a version of reality". This version represents the researcher's point of view regarding "reality version", which was yielded by the encounter with the subjects. The researcher is free to bring himself into the analysis portrays a cross-checking of the researcher's and subjects' insights. The researcher may rely upon interpersonal and personal skills in order to communicate with others and provide meaning to his surroundings. He may even turn to a variety of inspiration sources in order to attain a richer, more complex understanding than he owned before. While the qualitative-interpretative research encourages freedom of creation throughout analysis, it obligates to acknowledge the limitations of that process. It demonstrates a realistic view of human ability to understand others (MacDonald & Schriber, 2001). The analysis is necessarily limited at the context it is performed. Researcher's understanding, as well as that of the subjects is imprinted within the social-cultural context. Researcher's re-

creation is constructed upon the subjects' re-creation. It is offered to the reader, who, in turn, will construct his own re-creation.

Qualitative analysis relies on several principles: (1) **Proximity.** The "constant comparison" is the key analysis strategy of the "evidence based theory" (MacDonald & Schreiber, 2001). Text parts are coded into categories through comparison of one item of data to another, and identification of significances and patterns. Researches stemming from the structuring paradigm, particularly from the narrative approach, tend to support holistic analysis strategies. (2) **Theoretical Sensitivity.** "Evidence based theory" characterizes the researcher by a quality or tendency of theoretical sensitivity (Charmaz, 2000). The researcher brings into the analysis interpretative frameworks, concepts, knowledge, and experience, which are part of his professional positioning. Theoretical sensitivity also develops throughout the research, throughout the encounter with the subjects and while examining the data and reading the literature relevant for the research, upon the basis of which, significances and concepts are offered and examined. Conceptualization and theory development are not always presented within the framework of the qualitative research's goal. However, theoretical sensitivity may suffice in order to distinguish researcher's interpretation from the interpretation of a non-researcher. Researcher's perspective and his scopes of understanding must also stem from the content areas relevant for the research, form the interpretative frameworks, and the conceptualization offered by the scientific world. (3) **Continuation and Multiplicity.** "Evidence based theory" modifies a continuous analysis process. It is an ever-evolving process, where in each stage the intensity of interpretation and abstraction increases (Gibton, 2001). The process allows re-examining the analytical product in order to enhance it. Other data collected, significances revealed, and ideas for conceptualization return the researcher to previous stages of the process, or further advance him. Whilst doing so, the variance among subjects is emphasized (Strauss & Corbin, 1994). The qualitative analysis should be characterized by

recurrent processes of reading and significance attribution. The course and evolution of analysis may not necessarily be controlled, and following stages and a certain hierarchy to satiation is not necessary. The interpretative multiplicity requires preserving the variety of subjects' voice throughout the process of analysis. The researcher is required to establish his interpretation based upon a variety of interpretative frameworks and theories. (4) **Reflectiveness.** The qualitative researcher is required to be conscious of the analysis process (Anfara, Brown & Mangione, 2002). He is to thoroughly clarify from what perspective he shall read the texts; what his positioning his while facing the explored reality; which part of his own baggage affects the analysis.

Quantitative Approach to Research. The main methodology in the current research is based on quantitative approach. Quantitative methodology for research is largely relied on the term “Positivism” which was coined as early as the 1830's by the French philosopher Auguste Comte (1798-1857) (Shkedi, 2010). It was a synonym of science, namely, observable facts and evidences. Comte believes that the world's knowledge stems from observation, and hat science's goal is prediction. He believed that occurrences may be justified by their generalization under the rules of sequence, criticized the metaphysics as baseless speculation. He believed that in due course, historians will reveal the so-called rules of historical development. According to Comte, the role of scientists is to identify correlations between phenomena, while the positivist thinker will attempt to determine, through rationalism based upon assumption derived from observations, phenomena's co-existence modes and unchanging continuity. Comte believed that all sciences go through those three stages, such as astronomy, which was evolved from the sun worship and astrology, and chemistry, which was evolved from alchemy. Comte assumed there would come times when human society would be studied through positivist methods. He titled that positivist science "sociology", and sought to lay its foundations in his essay "Courses on the Positivist Philosophy" (1830-1842), and in later works

of his. He believed that social forms and social viewpoints correspond to each of the three stages of development; the theological, the metaphysical, and the positivist.

Hence, Positivism is an approach referred to as "phenomenological", relying upon empiricism, knowledge collected through one's senses, and may be reinforced or refuted. As for the objectivity issue, the "hard core" scientists claim for absolute objectivity. In sociology and social sciences, on the other hand, values are part of the research-related considerations. The positivist approach requires the researcher to find instruments which will facilitate him in subduing his values while conducting a research. His instruments should be very powerful and accurate, so that the researcher's moral perception will not affect the results. The positivist approach believes in empiricism, maintaining that observation and measurement are the core of the scientist practice (Schwandt, 1994).

Scientific method's core approach is the experiment, the attempt to identify natural laws by means of direct manipulation and observation. The positivist approach supposes that objectivity as such is possible, and researches which will yield identical conclusions if another person were to repeat the same research design, are to be conducted. Therefore, Positivism's is based on four main aspects: (1) The scientific research of a society should be limited to collection of information concerning phenomena which may be objectively observed. (2) Relying upon statistical data. The positivists believed the social world may be objectively categorized. The employment of those categorizations will allow counting sets of observed social facts, thus establishing a statistics. Durkheim's study concerning suicide (1897), which collected data regarding social facts such as suicides rates, as well as rates of membership in various religions. (3) Searching for empirical consistencies, which are correlations between various social facts. Correlation is defined as the tendency of two items or more, which may be found to be simultaneously, referring to their relationship's intensity. (4) Search for causal connection if a strong correlation between two types or more of social phenomena exists. In

this case, the positivist sociologist might suspect that one of the phenomena causes all others occur. Positivists believe that a multi-variate analysis may establish causal relationships between two variables or more. If those variables have been examined at a variety of contexts, then researchers may be assured they have achieved positivism's ultimate goal, namely, portraying human behavior constancy.

To sum, positivism aims to establish general rules indicating connections between social phenomena, to reveal, through observation and experiment, those social phenomena, which correspond or do not correspond to a certain hypothesis, and finally to employ measurable data in order to construct justifications examining the influence of social structures on human behavior.

To serve these rules, quantitative methodology uses numerical data and also statistical analyses in order to examine certain research hypotheses. In quantitative methodology there is a robust definition of the variables that are examined and specifically two types of variables: (1) Dependent Variable–DV: Variables whose change the researcher wishes to explain. (2) Independent Variable–IV: Variables that help explain the change in the dependent variable. The main goal of quantitative methodology is to examine the validity of a *hypothesis*, that is, an empirical statement which seeks to test the relationship between at least two variables.

Quantitative methodology gains several advantages (Frankfort-Nachmias & Nachmias, 1992): First, in this line of method, both dependent and independent variables are clearly and exactly studied. Second, surveillance of the original research goals set, drawing more objective conclusions, examining hypotheses and determining causality issues. Moreover, it enables to achieve high reliability degrees of data collecting through controlled observations, laboratory experiments, mass surveys, or any other forms of research manipulations.

However, quantitative methodology also holds several disadvantages. First, no information may be provided to the researcher regarding the context of the situation at which

the studied phenomenon occurs. Second, in this line of method results are limited to the original outline of research proposal due to employing closed-ended questions, and a structured format. Finally, it encourages no developing, continuous exploration of the research phenomenon (Hopson & Steiker, 2008).

Comparison between quantitative and qualitative methods. The following table summarizes features of the two main paradigms (Creswell et al., 2007).

Table 1: A summary of the features of the two main paradigms

Quantitative approach	Qualitative approach
Uses large samples	Uses small samples
Data is highly specific and precise	Data is rich and subjective
Produces quantitative data	Produces qualitative data
Concerned with hypotheses testing	Concerned with generating theories
Generalizes from sample to population	Generalizes from one setting to another
Examines the correlations between two variables and their strength	Examines what a phenomenon is
Seeks to forecast reality	Seeks to describe reality
Maximal control of research	Flexible control

The principal reason for sampling in quantitative research is to select individuals that are representative of the population, and this is best achieved through the use of larger sample sizes and random sampling procedures so that the researcher can estimate the representativeness of the sample to facilitate generalizability (Creswell, 2014). In contrast, the primary rationale for sampling in qualitative research is to select "information-rich cases for study in-depth" so that the researcher can learn about the issues of central importance to the purpose of the research (Creswell, 2014). This is best achieved through purposive or theoretical sampling, and the sample size is determined when the point of saturation is reached as marked by redundancy in participants' responses. Consistent with the varying logic between qualitative and quantitative sampling, mixed methods sampling honors the two parallels of representativeness and

Data

information-rich cases, and the sample size varies depending on the research strand and questions.

Assumed research results model. Current study will suggest a model/way for improving communication between parents and teachers. The model will consider both sides (teachers and parents) and will find ways to close gaps between expectations and demands of both sides.

a) This model would present a platform in which parents and teachers will feel comfortable to communicate for every issue regarding children's education.

b) The model will hold an organized system of communication between parents and teachers for children's success. Children could meet the staff according to their needs. In addition, parents will have the opportunity to meet teachers every time they will feel to.

c) Parents involvement in the kindergarten activities will consist of a place that parents could inform the staff in what they would like to and to get professional support. In this vein, parents would participate in organizing events, travels, solving problems and so on. I call this model: System Use for Communication Collaboration for Educational Success – SUCCESS.

4. The methods used in the current study

As part of quantitative approach, I will conduct a diagnostic research in which I will explore the relationships between teachers and parents as they appear to be in the reality. Specifically, I will use cross-sectional research design, in which I will quantify and measure variables using self-reported questionnaires for parents and teachers to fill-in.

This quantitative method will enable me to draw statistical correlations between main variables.

In addition, as part of qualitative approach, I will ask both teachers and parents several open questions by which I will try to understand the communication styles between them in an open way. This approach will enable me to figure out type of relationship between them including emotions, thoughts and positions.

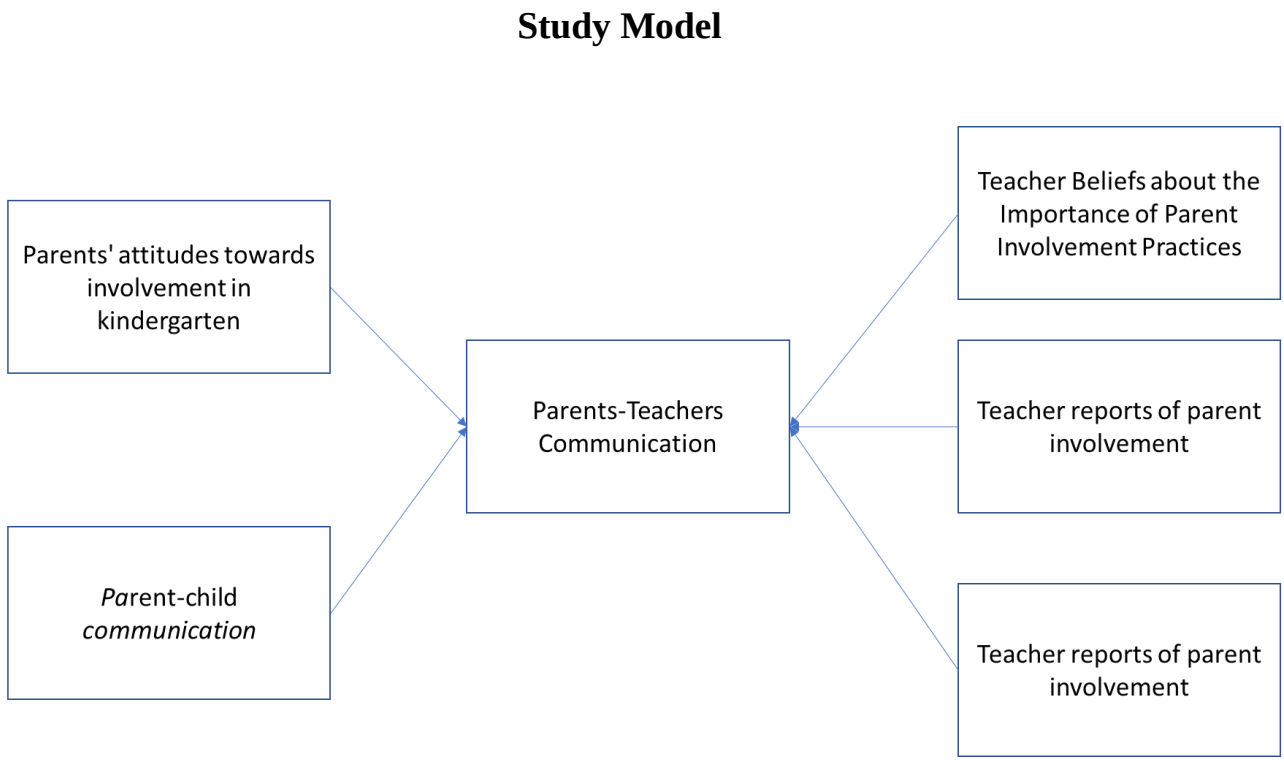

Figure 1: Study Model

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PART C

I. Research Finding

In this section I will elaborate the statistical analyses and results of the study.

1. Participants of the research

The study included 79 parents and 79 kindergarten teachers (a total of 158 participants).

Parents

Of the 79 parents who participated in the study, 72.2% (N=57) were women. The age of the parents that participated in the study ranged from 26 to 55, with an average of 42.54 (SD=6.23). More than a third of the parents (N=29, 36.7%) had two children, 22.8% (N=18) had only one child, and 2.5% (N=2) reported about more than 2 children. In addition, the prevalence of parents for three and four children in the current study was identical and was 19% (N=15) for each.

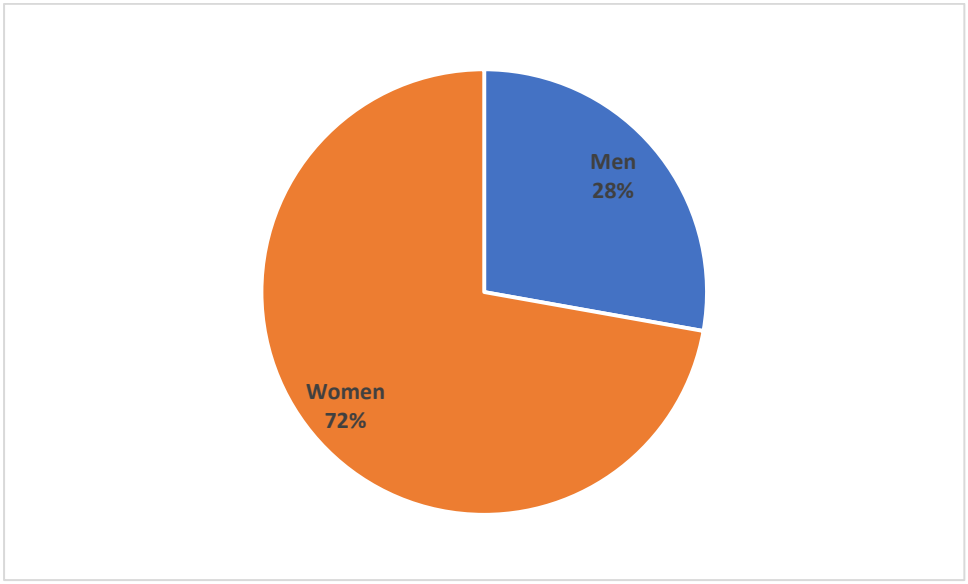

Figure 2: Gender distribution of parents in the sample

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Kindergarten teachers

Of the 79 kindergarten teachers who participated in the study, 77.2% (N=61) were women. The age of the kindergarten teachers that participated in the study ranged from 33 to 55, with an average of 42.96 (SD=6.19).

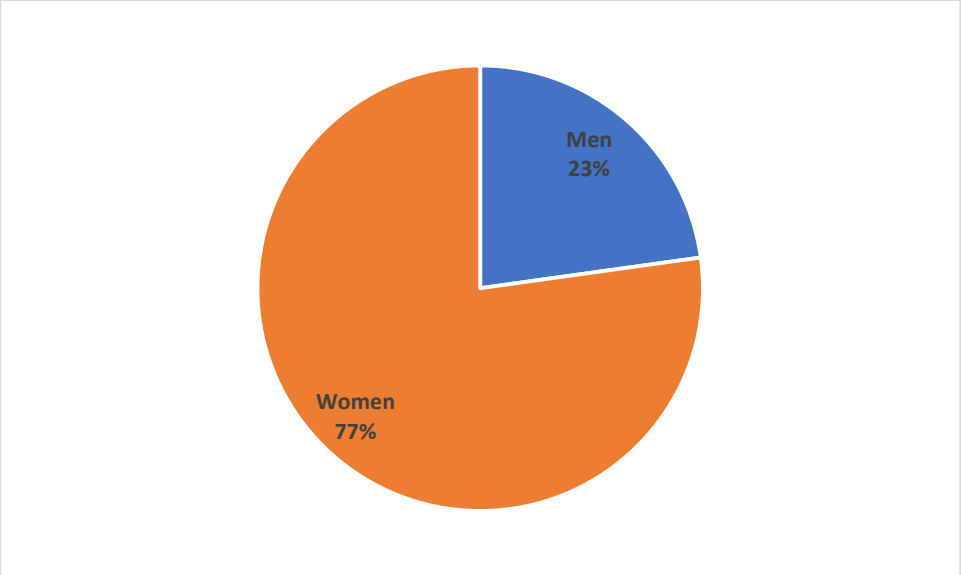

Figure 3: Gender distribution of teachers in the sample

2. Measures and data collecting

Quantitative Measures

- *Parent's questionnaire*- The questionnaire contained 21 items for self-reporting, each presenting a statement about the involvement of parents in their children's education; for example: "*I feel successful about my efforts to help my child learn*". For each statement, participants were asked to rate their agreement with the above on a scale ranges from 1 (*not agree at all*) to 7 (*absolutely agree*). The index was calculated as the average rank of its 21 component items, so that a high score indicated a positive attitude toward parental involvement in preschool education. Alpha reliability of the index was examined in the current study and was found to be sufficient (α=0.69). In addition, this index consisted of three subscales:

Data

- *Parents' attitudes towards involvement in kindergarten*- This sub-scale contain 11 items regarding parents' attitudes towards intervention in preschool education. Reliability as internal consistency was examined for this subclass in the current study and was found to be 0.81.
- *Parent-teacher communication*- This sub-scale contains 6 items regarding. Reliability as internal consistency was examined for this subclass in the current study and was found to be sufficient (α=0.70).
- *Parent-child communication*- This sub-scale contains 4 items regarding the communication between parents and their children. Reliability as internal consistency was examined for this subclass in the current study and was found to be 0.84.

- *Kindergarten teachers*- This part consisted of three sub-sections:
  - *Teacher Beliefs about the Importance of Parent Involvement Practices*- This section included 23 items for self-reporting, each presenting a statement, for example: "*Most parents know how to help their children with kindergarten work at home*". For each statement, participants were asked to rate their agreement with the above on a scale ranges from 1 (*not agree at all*) to 7 (*absolutely agree*). The index was calculated as the average rank of its 24 component items, so that a high score represents a high score indicated a positive attitude toward parental involvement in preschool education. Alpha reliability of the index was examined in the current study and was found to be sufficient (α=0.85).
  - *Teacher reports of parent involvement*- This section included 14 items for self-reporting, each presenting a statement regarding parents' behavior, for example: "*Attend scheduled parent-teacher conferences*". For each statement, participants were asked to rate their agreement with the above on a scale ranges from 1 (*not agree at all*) to 7 (*absolutely agree*). The index was calculated as the average rank of its 14 component items. Alpha

Data

reliability of the index was examined in the current study and was found to be sufficient (α=0.89).

- *Teacher report of invitations to parental involvement*- This section included 17 items for self-reporting, each presenting a statement regarding the teacher's conduct in relation to mixing parents in education; for example: "*Contact a parent if the child has problems or experiences failure*". For each statement, participants were asked to rate their agreement with the above on a scale ranges from 1 (*not agree at all*) to 7 (*absolutely agree*). The index was calculated as the average rank of its 17 component items. Alpha reliability of the index was examined in the current study and was found to be sufficient (α=0.91).

3. Data analysis

Data analysis was conducted using SPSS version 23. Alpha reliability was used for reliability analysis. Correlations between the main measures and demographic variables tested using Pearson correlations for scale variables, Spearman correlation for ordinal variables, and independent samples T-tests for nominal variables.

For all tests, the significance level (α) was 5%.

Data

1. What are the parent's attitude towards kindergarten children and education?

Parents

Table 2. Ranges, averages, and standard deviations of the research measures for parents

	Range	Mean	SD
Parents' attitudes towards involvement	1.45 – 3.64	2.68	0.50
Parent-teacher communication	1.00 – 3.67	2.11	0.75
Parent-child communication	1.00 – 6.00	2.56	0.96

N=79

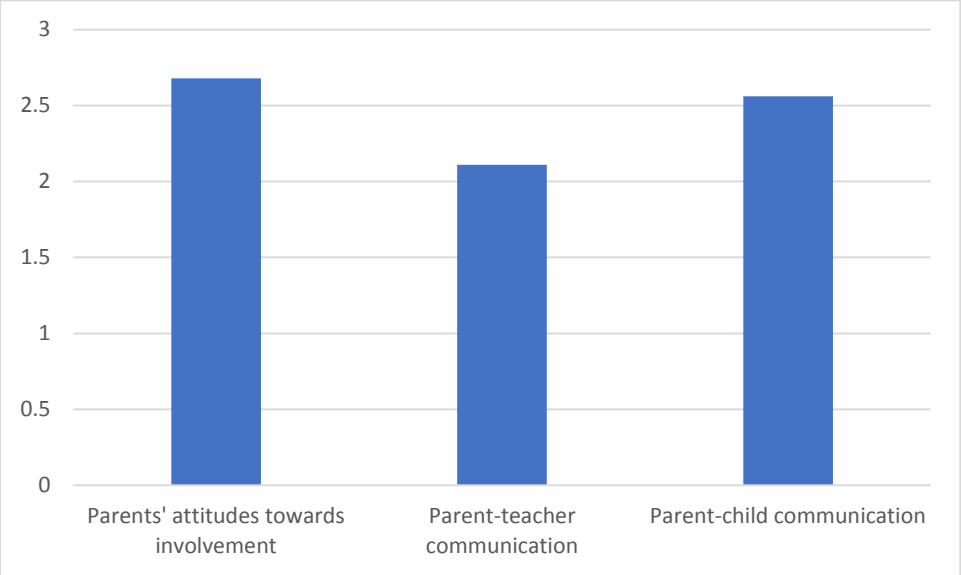

Figure 4: Descriptive statistics of main variables

As can be seen in Table 2, the averages of the three indices are very close to one another. However, it seems that the range of values of the parent-child communication index is broader than the other two. It seems that parents' attitudes towards involvement in relatively low (2.56

Data

out of 1-7 scale) while parents' attitudes towards Parent-teacher communication is the lowest in this study (2.11 out of 1-7 scale).

This result indicates the importance of current study since it shows lack of beneficial and efficacious communication between parents and teachers. Specifically, it seems that despite the willingness of parents to be involved and of teachers to enable this involvement, it is hard for both parties to create an environment which will facilitate good communication between parents and teachers.

Parents' attitudes towards parent-teachers communication is lowest. That is, parents rather improve their involvement but avoiding cooperating with teachers.

2. What are parents' attitudes towards parents' communication?

As shown in Table 2, parent's attitudes towards involvement ranges between 1.45 and 3.64, while average was 2.68 (SD=0.50). The meaning of this result is that parents have moderate level of intention to be educationally involved in kindergarten, that is, they want to take part in children's education and to have open channel with teachers.

To explore this question, Pearson correlations were conducted.

Table 3. Correlations between parents' research variables

		1.	2.
1.	Parents' attitudes towards involvement		
2.	Parent-teacher communication	.472***	
3.	Parent-child communication	.280*	.429***

**p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001 (2-tailed)*

Data

As shown in Table 3, there are significant positive relationships between all three parents' research variables. That is, high parents' attitudes towards involvement are related to high Parent-teacher communication and also to Parent-child communication.

The meaning of this result is that parents that intend to be more involved in are willing also to invest more time and effort in creating positive environment that will facilitate good communication with teachers. This is a very important conclusion since it focuses the profile of parents that could bring a better communication platform with teachers – the parents that educational involvement is more important for them.

Kindergarten teachers

3. What are teachers attitudes towards parents-teachers collaboration?

First, in order to understand the teachers' attitudes towards collaboration, table 4 presents averages and standard deviations of the items relating to the teachers' reports.

Table 4. Teacher Beliefs about the Importance of Parent Involvement Practices

	Mean	**SD**
Parent involvement is important for a good kindergarten	2.15	1.27
Most parents know how to help their children with kindergarten work at home	3.35	1.58
Every family has some strengths that can be tapped to increase student success in kindergarten	4.19	1.36
All parents could learn ways to help their children with kindergarten work at home, if shown how	4.42	1.35
Parent involvement can help teachers be more effective with more students.	4.22	1.41
Parents of children at this kindergarten want to be involved more than they are.	3.99	1.38
Parent involvement is important for student success in kindergarten	4.00	1.36
This kindergarten views parents as important partners	4.08	1.45
Having a conference with each of my students' parents at least once a year	3.84	1.81
Contacting parents about their children's problems or failures	3.29	1.66
Contacting parents when their children do something well or improve	3.72	2.12
Involving parents as volunteers in my classroom	3.39	2.00

Data

Telling parents about the skills their children must learn in each subject I teach	3.18	1.97
Providing specific activities for parents to do with their children in order to improve their grades (R)	3.48	2.14
Giving parents ideas about discussing specific TV shows with their children	3.53	2.22
Assigning assignments that requires parents to interact with their children.	3.39	2.05
Suggesting ways to practice spelling or other skills at home before a test	3.87	2.19
Asking parents to listen to their children read	3.61	2.00
Asking my students' parents to help the child with assignments	3.58	2.09
Inviting my students' parents to visit my classroom	3.95	2.01
Asking my students' parents to take the child to the library or community events	4.67	1.70
Giving parents ideas to help them become effective advocates for their children	4.81	1.63
Sending home 'letters' telling parents what the children have been learning and doing in class	4.59	1.68

As can be seen, the statements ranked highest by the teachers, regarding teacher beliefs about the Importance of parent involvement practices were "*Giving parents ideas to help them become effective advocates for their children*" (M=4.81, SD=1.63) and "*Asking my students' parents to take the child to the library or community events*" (M=4.67, SD=1.70). In addition, the statement with the lowest average rating was "*Parent involvement is important for a good kindergarten*" (M=2.15, SD=1.27).

These results indicate that teachers have general positive attitudes towards enabling parents to participate in kindergarten. It seems teachers hold a positive perspective regarding parental involvement and want them to have some impact on children's education decisions. However, several items in the scale had lower scores, which indicate that teachers' beliefs regarding parental involvement are not homogenous and it is more complicate for some teachers. Probably teachers that feel threaten from parental involvement hesitate to have parents become highly involved in educational decisions.

This result is aligning with previous studies that draw the main issues for collaborating between teachers and parents. For example, Eccles & Harold (1996) suggested there are five main issues in the communication between parents and teachers, defining the level of parent

Data

involvement: (a) monitoring homework - how parents respond to the teacher's requests for helping their children with school work such as checking homework or listening to them read); (b) volunteering - parents' level of participation in activities at school; (c) involvement - parents' involvement in their children's daily activities; (d) contacting the school about their children's progress; and (e) contacting the school to find out how to give extra help. My results strength the main issues described by Eccles & Harold (1996) as important issues to be taken care of in order for communication between teachers and parents will be successful.

4. What are teacher's attitudes towards parental involvement in the kindergarten children education?

Table 5. Teacher reports of parent involvement

	Mean	**SD**
Attend scheduled parent-teacher conferences	4.37	1.85
Attend meetings or workshops at kindergarten	4.52	1.75
Contact me when their children are having a problem with learning	3.89	1.87
Contact me when they have something really good to report about their child's learning	3.72	2.12
Volunteer in my classroom or in the kindergarten	3.39	2.00
Ask me for specific activities they can do at home with the child.	3.18	1.97
Discuss TV programs with the child	3.48	2.14
Help the child with assignments	3.53	2.22
Listen to the child read	3.39	2.05
Give me information about the child's needs interests, or talents	3.87	2.19
Talk to the child about the kindergarten day	3.61	2.00
Visit my classroom at kindergarten	3.58	2.09
Take the child to the library or community events	3.95	2.01
Attend children's performances at kindergarten	4.11	1.90

As can be seen in Table 5, the statements ranked highest by the teachers, regarding the subject of teacher`s reports of parent involvement were "*Attend meetings or workshops at*

kindergarten" (M=4.52, SD=1.75) and "*Attend scheduled parent-teacher conferences*" (M=4.37, SD=1.85). The average ratings of the other statements were quite close together.

I believe these results indicate that teacher's attitudes towards parental involvement are generally positive, and that teachers agree and intend for parents to be involved in kindergarten. Specifically, teachers participate in activities that aim to create to more collaborating environment between teachers and parents such as attending scheduled parent-teacher conferences, attending meetings or workshops at kindergarten, contacting teachers when their children are having a problem with learning, contacting teachers when parents have something really good to report about their child's learning and also to volunteer in classroom or in the kindergarten.

These results are consistent with previous studies on constructive collaboration between parents and teachers. Previous studies showed that parents-teachers collaboration can create a growing community, which can be defined as parents' connection with the resources and services in the community to strengthen school programs, family practices, and student learning and development. Teachers can help parents to become involved in this way by providing them with information on health fairs, cultural events, recreational events, social support networks, and summer programs that are available in the community; by integrating school partnerships with other service organizations and businesses; by organizing community service opportunities for students and families; and by encouraging alumni to participate in school programs for students and families (Seitsinger at al., 2008; Gutman & Mcloyd, 2000; Sheldon & Epstein, 2002).

Data

5. What are teachers' attitudes towards importance of parents involvement practices?

Table 6 shows teachers' attitudes towards importance of parent's involvement.

Table 6. Teacher report of invitations to parental involvement

	Mean	SD
Have a conference with a parent	4.67	1.70
Contact a parent if the child has problems or experiences failure	4.81	1.63
Contact a parent if the child does something well or improves	4.59	1.68
Involve a parent as a volunteer in my classroom	4.47	1.68
Tell a parent about the skills the child must learn in each subject I teach.	4.58	1.69
Provide specific activities for a parent to do with the child in order to improve the child's grades.	4.58	1.79
Give the parents ideas about discussing specific TV shows with the children.	4.46	1.82
Give a parent ideas about discussing specific TV shows with the children	4.62	1.79
Assign assignments that require a parent to interact with the child.	4.80	1.68
Suggest ways to practice spelling or other skills at home before a test.	4.67	1.67
Ask a parent to listen to the child read	3.85	1.86
Ask a parent to help the child with assignments	3.72	2.12
Encourage a parent to ask the child about the kindergarten day	3.39	2.00
Ask a parent to visit my classroom	3.18	1.97
Ask a parent to take the child to the library or community events	3.48	2.14
Give a parent ideas to help him or her become an effective advocate for the child	3.53	2.22
Send home 'letters' telling parents what the children have been learning and doing in class	3.39	2.05

As can be seen in Table 6, the statements ranked highest by the teachers, regarding the subject of teacher`s reports of invitations to parental involvement were "*Attend meetings or workshops at kindergarten"* (M=4.81, SD=1.63) and "*Assign assignments that requires a parent to interact with the child"* (M=4.80, SD=1.68). The average ratings of the other statements were quite close together.

These results indicate that teachers view moderate to high importance of parents to be involved in kindergarten activities, especially in educational activities. In order to create a positive and facilitating environment that will strength relationships between parents and

teachers, teachers take several steps such as having a conference with a parents, contacting parents if children have problems or experience failures, contacting parents if children do something well or improve, involving parents as volunteers in classroom and other activities. The main purpose of these activities is for teachers to bring parents as partners in the kindergarten.

These results are consistent with definition of effective communication between families and kindergarten that is deliberately should be bi-directional, instills a sense of shared purpose, and works toward mutually advantageous solutions to problems (Epstein, 2001).

6. What are teachers' declarations (reports) about parents' involvement?

Table 7. Correlations between the research variables regarding the kindergarten teachers

	1.	2.
1. Teacher Beliefs about the Importance of Parent Involvement Practices		
2. Teacher reports of parent involvement	.912***	
3. Teacher report of invitations to parental involvement	.812***	.870***

**p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001 (2-tailed)*

As shown in Table 7, there are significant positive relationships between all three parents' research variables.

These results mean that the stronger beliefs of teachers that it is important for parents to be involved in kindergarten, the more teachers report on actual parent involvement. It seems that teachers that understand the importance of parental involvement, they also take actions for these procedures to happen, In addition, the stronger beliefs of teachers that it is important for parents to be involved in kindergarten then more teachers report they actually invite parents to become involved in kindergarten.

Data

7. To what level parents and teachers accept the proposed system for collaboration between parents and kindergarten teachers?

Table 8. Correlations between the research variables regarding the parents and those regarding the kindergarten teachers

kindergarten teachers / parents	Teacher Beliefs about the Importance of Parent Involvement Practices	Teacher reports of parent involvement	Teacher report of invitations to parental involvement
Parents' attitudes towards involvement	.624***	.599***	.513***
Parent-teacher communication	.587***	.615***	.560***
Parent-child communication	.428***	.481***	.389***

****p<.001 (2-tailed)*

As can be seen in Table 8, significant and positive relationships have been found between all the parent`s research variables and all the research variables regarding the kindergarten teachers; it was found that parents tend to be more in favor of intervention in their children's education in situations where teachers encourage this behavior.

Specifically it was found that the more parents hold positive attitudes towards involvement, the more teachers beliefs about the importance of parent involvement is positive, they have more practices of parent involvement and more teachers' report of invitations to parental involvement.

In addition, it was found that the better communication parents have with teachers, the more teachers encourage relationships with parents. My interpretation of these results is that better communication practices between teachers and parents can lead into better involvement of both parents and teachers in kindergarten. In an open and non-judgmental environment, parents and teachers feel more free and positive to become more engaged with activities to promote children’s well-being and achievements.

Data

I. Correlations of Teachers-Parents collaboration and demographic variables

1. Gender differences would be found in relation to the parents' research variables

In order to examine this hypothesis, three t-tests for independent samples were performed, one for each of the research measures for parents. In each of the models, the independent variable was gender. The results are presented in the following table.

Table 9. Gender differences regarding parents' research variables

	Gender	Mean (SD)	t(df)	p-value
Parents' attitudes towards involvement	Male	2.74 (0.51)	t(77)=0.630	.531
	Female	2.66 (0.50)		
Parent-teacher communication	Male	2.07 (0.65)	t(77)=-0.275	.784
	Female	2.12 (0.78)		
Parent-child communication	Male	2.57 (0.85)	t(77)=0.064	.949
	Female	2.55 (1.01)		

As can be seen, no significant differences have been found between male and female regarding the parents' research variables. Therefore, the hypothesis tested was found to be incorrect. The following graphs show the results obtained.

The meaning of these results is that both males and females teachers hold similar opinions and approaches regarding having parents involved in kindergarten.

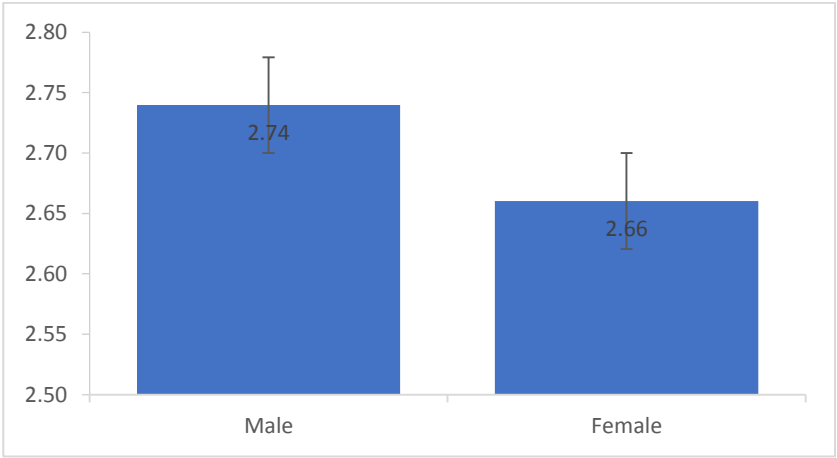

Figure 5. Gender differences regarding Parents' attitudes towards involvement

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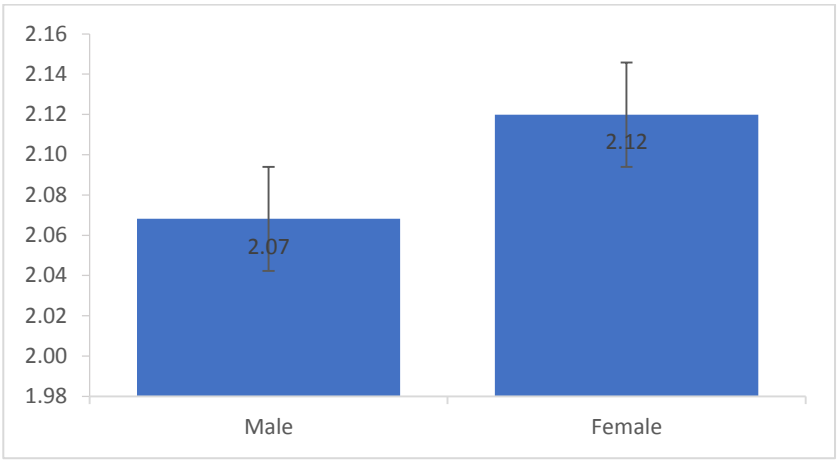

Figure 6. Gender differences regarding Parent-teacher communication

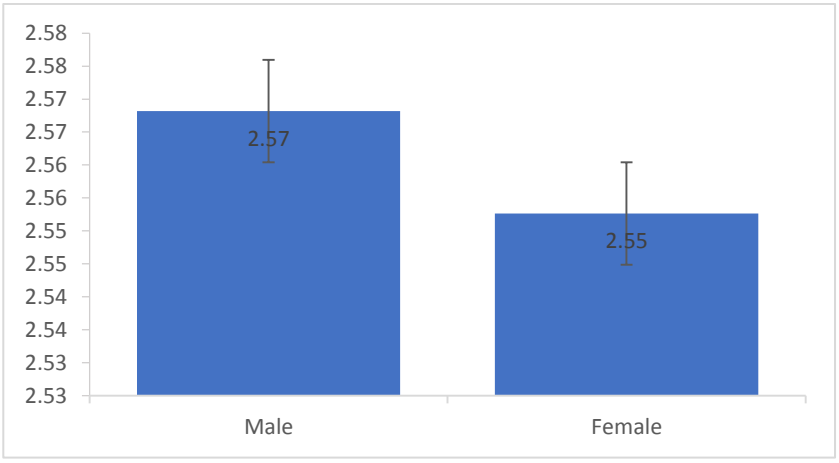

Figure 7. Gender differences regarding Parent-child communication

2. Relationships would be found between parents' age and the parents' research variables

In order to examine this hypothesis, Pearson correlation between the parent`s age and the ratings of each of the parents' scales were examined.

Table 10. Pierson correlations between age and the parents' research variables

	Age
Parents' attitudes towards involvement	.178
Parent-teacher communication	.034
Parent-child communication	.057

Data

As shown in Table 10, no significant correlations were found between the age of the parent and his ratings in the various scales. Therefore, the hypothesis tested was found to be incorrect.

The meaning of this result is that both old and young parents share similar positions towards involvement, parent-child communication and parent-teacher communication. Hence intervention to increase involvement of parents should be similar for both old and young parents.

3. Relationships would be found between the number of children and the parents' research variables.

In order to examine this hypothesis, Pierson correlations between the number of children and the parents' ratings in the three scales were examined.

Table 11. Pearson correlations between the number of children and the parents' research variables

	Number of children
Parents' attitudes towards involvement	-.125
Parent-teacher communication	-.051
Parent-child communication	.037

As can be seen, no significant correlations were found between the number of children and the parents' ratings in the three scales. Therefore, the hypothesis tested was found to be incorrect.

The meaning of this result is that both parents with few and many children share similar positions towards involvement, parent-child communication and parent-teacher communication.

Data

4. Gender differences would be found among the research variables regarding the kindergarten teachers

In order to test this hypothesis, three t-tests for independent samples were performed, one for each of the research measures for kindergarten teachers. In each of the models, the independent variable was gender. The results are presented in the following table.

Table 12. Gender differences among the research variables regarding the kindergarten teachers

	Gender	Mean (SD)	t(df)	p-value
Teacher Beliefs about the Importance of Parent Involvement Practices	Male	3.74 (0.80)	t(77)=-0.360	.720
	Female	3.82 (0.89)		
Teacher reports of parent involvement	Male	3.68 (1.27)	t(77)=-0.315	.753
	Female	3.79 (1.27)		
Teacher report of invitations to parental involvement	Male	4.25 (0.98)	t(77)=0.378	.706
	Female	4.13 (1.26)		

As can be seen, no significant differences have been found between male and female among the research variables regarding the kindergarten teachers. Therefore, the hypothesis tested was found to be incorrect.

The meaning of this result is that both males and females share similar positions towards involvement of parents in kindergarten.

PART D

DISCUSSION of the research results

Kindergarten is one of the most crucial environments for developing among children. In this period, children gain important cognitive, emotional and social skills which will assist them to integrate in school. Hence, in order for children to gain the best out of this period, a cooperation between parents and teachers is essential. Parents may develop or refine knowledge and skills in how parents and school personnel can work collaboratively to support children's learning during this period and beyond (Epstein, 1995). Parent–school relationships may be especially beneficial in the early childhood years for promoting early academic and social skills that are predictive of later school success. Therefore, it is important to study the field of parent involvement in kindergarten, and establishing more productive and efficient ways in which teachers and parents can collaborate.

The main purpose of the current study was to examine patterns of relationship between parents and kindergarten teachers. In addition, current research was aimed to propose a model for which improve the communication in regard to the main issues and concerns of both teachers and parents in pre-school.

To explore these goals, a qualitative methodology was obtained using questionnaires which were filled in by both parents and teachers.

First, this study explored the question - what are the parents' attitude towards kindergarten children and education? Results showed that parents' attitudes towards involvement in kindergarten in relatively low while parents' attitudes towards Parent-teacher communication is the lowest in this study. These results indicate that in kindergarten, parents relatively avoid active involvement in activities. This pattern could be explained in several ways. First, parents tend to avoid creating long term and good relationships with teachers since they trust teachers to prepare their children to school. Second, parents might believe that

teachers themselves do not feel comfortable to engage with parents on regular basis. Another explanation might relate to separation between “home” and “kindergarten” in parents’ perception. Due to this approach, parents perceive kindergarten as a separate realm in which they do not have any mandate of being involved. This finding empathize the importance of changing parents’ attitudes towards involvement in kindergarten. Facilitation of parent involvement and the development of supportive relationships and respectful communication with families are key features of quality early childhood services and schools. Hence, teachers must recognize the different communication preferences of families and utilize a variety of strategies to facilitate communication with parents (Knopf & Swick, 2007). Teachers have to support parent involvement through regular ‘teacher outreach’, which has been identified as strongly related to parental engagement in family–school partnerships (Daniel, 2016). Regular communication about the child’s learning, behaviour, play and interactions with others can help keep parents informed about their child’s well-being and, by gaining insight from parents, such communication can assist educators to better understand children. Verbal communication can be used at drop-off and pick-up times, at parent–educator conferences, home visits or via the telephone (Epstein, 2015). Written communication in the form of newsletters, daily journals, parent letters and notice boards can also be used. Additionally, some parents may prefer electronic communication in the form of email, websites and digital portfolios. Effective strategies for enhancing teacher– family communication require both one-way and two-way communication opportunities (Diaz et al., 2017). In this vein, it is important to understand that there is no single approach to facilitating parent involvement. Knopf and Swick (2007) suggest that three considerations need to be given when providing opportunities for involvement to families. First, opportunities for involvement should be accessible for families, rather than cumbersome. Secondly, a viable set of supports should be in place to encourage parent involvement. Finally, various involvement opportunities should exist that allow families to use

their strengths and talents. Indeed, maintaining a welcoming classroom environment will implicitly and explicitly convey the message that families are valued (Christian, 2007).

Second research question referred to what are parents' attitudes towards parents' communication? Results showed that high parents' attitudes towards involvement are related to high Parent-teacher communication and also to Parent-child communication. That is, the more parents' attitudes are positive towards involvement, Parent-teacher communication and also to Parent-child communication are stronger. This finding is aligned with previous educational theories about what makes parents to increase their involvement in kindergarten. According to social capital theory (Castro et al., 2015) posits that parents who are more involved in their children's early education gain more access to social networks and information related to their child's education and learn more about the practices and policies of the school (Castro et al., 2015). This can involve meeting other parents who can offer insight about the school's expectations, and parental monitoring of their children's engagement with school-related tasks. When parents engage their children in conversations about their schooling, it conveys an interest in the importance of education (Pomerantz, Moorman & Litwack, 2007).

Another explanation for the association between Parent-teacher communication and Parent-child communication is cultural capital theory, which asserts that there are inequalities in the amount of cultural capital that people can access (Gao & Ng, 2017). When people are able to access relevant resources over a period of time, they are better able to access additional capital that may be useful to them. In applying this theory to parent involvement in children's early education, it would be expected that parents who have completed school, or higher education, are likely to have a greater knowledge of educational systems compared to parents who have fewer years of schooling. It has also been argued that schools typically operate according to middle-class values and are better able to facilitate communication with parents who share these values and beliefs (Berthelson & Walker, 2008). Hence, it may be more

difficult to engage parents who hold a different set of values related to education, or who differ in cultural or economic backgrounds.

Third question was what are teachers' attitudes towards parents-teachers collaboration? Results of analyzing this question showed that teachers generally believe that parents should be involved to some degree in the kindergarten activities. Moreover, teachers believe that the involvement in kindergarten is important for psychological and academic development of children. These findings shed light about teachers' understanding for the importance of parental involvement at kindergartens. This pattern is aligned with previous research on teachers' attitudes of parental involvement. Teachers' propensity to interact with parents and attitudes toward parent involvement can be attributed to the organizational characteristics of the kindergarten in which they work. Based on a review of studies conducted by Seginer (2006), it has been indicated that school factors (e.g., size, culture) affect the amount and quality of parent–teacher interactions. By adopting this perspective, in the present study we focus on school governance as a factor that can shape and affect teachers' relations with parents. Several studies have already shown that school governance reshapes teachers' and parents' roles and influences teachers' work and behaviour (Rosenblatt & Shirom, 2006). School governance can create opportunities for new and different patterns of teachers' interactions with others, including parents (York-Barr & Duke, 2004). For example, Lewis and Forman (2002) showed that the extent of teachers' empowerment affected the nature of relations that teachers wanted and were able to develop with parents. It was found that when teachers felt empowered enough, they could establish better relations with parents and believed that they can work well with them.

According these results, Bauch and Goldring (1998) suggested a classification of four types of school governance based on parents' and teachers' empowerment: (1) Bureaucratic: low teacher and parent participation; in this traditional mode of governance, the parents' role in

schools is passive while teachers maintain classroom autonomy. (2) Teacher's professionalism: high teacher empowerment and low parent participation; in this type of school governance, teachers' power is based on their expertise, and they are perceived as knowing what is best for students. This type of school governance may corroborate with the protective model in which parents delegate the responsibility for educating their children to schools (Epstein & Sanders, 2002). However, as teachers and parents hold different attitudes, positions and responsibilities with regard to the children, this mode may be a source of conflict. Teachers tend not to attempt to involve parents, as they fear that it might decrease their professional status (Sanders & Epstein, 2005). Thus, they have neither the time to deal with parents nor the willingness to involve them in decision-making. However, parents' lack of involvement in schools may also reflect their trust on teachers' professionals work (Addi-Raccah & Arviv-Elyashiv, 2008). (3) Parent empowerment is defined as active parental involvement in school and low teacher empowerment. As under this mode of governance parents challenge school practice, teachers may lose respectability and credibility, thus weakening their position in school. When teachers are disempowered, parent–teacher relations are ambivalent, and full of competing demands. In this case, teachers strive to keep parents away (Lewis & Forman, 2002). (4) Partnership: parents and teachers are both highly empowered. This last mode is assumed to contribute to school effectiveness and quality. This mode has been found to contribute to teachers and students alike (Ramasy, 1992 in Sanders & Epstein, 2005) and improve school attainments (Hofman, Hofman & Guldemond, 2002). According to several researchers (e.g. Lewis & Forman, 2002), dual empowerment is perceived as a new type of teachers' professionalism that is based on collaboration with parents, colleagues, and students. It is part of building a school community and establishing partnership with parents.

In addition, current research examined the question - What are teachers' attitudes towards parental involvement in the kindergarten children education? Results showed that teachers

believe parents should be practically involved in schedule of kindergarten such as meetings and conferences attending. These findings strength the previous results about high importance that teachers assert to parental involvement in kindergarten, despite relative avoidance among parents in this study. Teachers attitude in this matter is aligned with previous empirical evidence that shows that parental engagement is one of the key factors in securing higher student achievement and school improvement (Desforges & Abouchaar, 2003; Harris & Chrispeels, 2006; Sylva, Melhuish, Sammons, Siraj-Blatchford & Taggart, 2004). These findings show that engaging parents in schooling at an early stage leads to more positive engagement in learning processes. The importance of parents' educational attitudes and behaviours on young people's educational attainment has also been well documented, especially in the developmental psychology literature (Catsambis, 2001; Spera, 2005).

Research concerning the impact of parental engagement on achievement and attainment is complex due to the interaction and influence of many factors and variables. There are multiple characteristics or correlates that influence the levels of student achievement and the attainment of educational outcomes. However, the contemporary empirical evidence points towards a powerful association between parental engagement and student achievement. It highlights that parental engagement in learning at home throughout the age range has a significant influence on subsequent educational achievement (Desforges & Abouchaar, 2003). The research evidence also acknowledges that parental engagement is only one of many factors which influences educational achievement but highlights that its influence is particularly significant (Fan & Chen, 2001).

Longitudinal studies provide the most recent research evidence about parental engagement. These studies reinforce the link between parental engagements in young people's learning in school with better cognitive achievement, particularly in the early years. In contrast, parental engagement in general school activities confers little or no real benefit on the

individual child (Okpala, Okpala & Smith, 2001). Simply being in the school has little effect on individual attainment unless there are direct and explicit connections to learning (Ho Sui-Chu & Willms, 1996).

Current study also explored what are teachers' declarations (reports) about parents' involvement? Results showed that teacher beliefs about the importance of parent involvement practices are positively related with teacher reports of parent involvement, and also with teacher report of invitations to parental involvement. Another question in the current research was to what level parents and teachers accept the proposed system for collaboration between parents and kindergarten teachers? Significant and positive relationships have been found between all the parent`s research variables and all the research variables regarding the kindergarten teachers; it was found that parents tend to be more in favor of intervention in their children's education in situations where teachers encourage this behavior. In addition, it was found that the more parents hold positive attitudes towards involvement, the more teachers beliefs about the importance of parent involvement is positive, they have more practices of parent involvement and more teachers' report of invitations to parental involvement.

These patterns show that teachers' and parents' attitudes towards collaboration are related to practical solutions that both populations implement in kindergarten. There are several effective teacher and school practices that lead to increasing levels of desirable parent involvement in the schooling of their children. These include being specific in defining what is meant by parent involvement; about which elements of parent-student-schooling engagement and outcomes are targeted; and being able to provide for a sufficiently broad, extensive, and representative approach that will allow for understanding of practices that may be differentially effective at different developmental levels and across and within very diverse populations of students that schools seek to ensure.

Data

Teachers should not only reach out to the parents but also to develop relationships with the parents in an effort to encourage their participation in their children's education. To develop positive relationships with parents, the teachers should show respect for the parents' knowledge and skills, provided instructional demonstrations for parents who asked for this kind of help, encouraged parents to realize their role in promoting children's social and academic development, provided after school tutoring, and offered occasional monetary assistance for classroom outings. In these ways, the parents and the teachers come to respect each other. These teachers consider parents to be educators who can contribute valuable knowledge and skills to their children's education. They should not view them merely as helpers who follow the teacher's directions (Souto-Manning & Swick, 2006; Tett, 2001). They have also hear parents' comments that teachers need to value the parents' talent to establish meaningful teacher-parent relationships (Smrekar & Cohen-Vogel, 2001).

To enhance involvement practices between teachers and parents, teachers should employ a developmentally appropriate philosophy (Copple & Bredekamp, 1997) reflected by their adoption of a role as caring teachers, the display of culturally relevant instructional materials in the classroom, the development of learner-centered approaches indicated by their consistent and democratic teaching procedures, and the adoption of a family centered open-door policy. Researchers have reported that parents respond positively to teachers' efforts regarding parental involvement when the teachers adopted a teacher-as-parent role by focusing on a caring attitude (Smrekar & Cohen-Vogel, 2001); culturally relevant teaching materials (Moosa, Karabenick & Adams, 2001); and child-centered teaching styles. These positive classroom climates may provide parents and children with security, identity, responsibility, dignity, and community (Gareau & Sawatzky, 1995). Thus, parents may respond to a welcoming classroom climate and increase their parental involvement (Rasmussen, 1998). Parents' input may be maximized when

parents feel comfortable communicating with teachers, which may be the result of or be supported by a positive classroom environment that is child and family centered.

To note, no significant associations were found between demographic variables and parents or teachers attitudes towards collaboration.

To conclude, results of current study propose that an active and positive collaboration between teachers and parents in kindergarten is crucial by both sides. Results of current study have several implications. First, it is highly important to develop close relationship between parents and teachers in kindergarten based on attitudes and feelings of both parties as revealed in this study. Many teachers are not prepared to plan for and practice parent outreach. Hopefully teachers, particularly new teachers, who have limited experience regarding ways to encourage parental involvement will refer to the practices such as reaching out to parents and encourage their involvement. This study suggested that to reach out to parents, teachers may consider sending personal notes and classroom newsletters; making telephone calls and doing home visits; and using children and other parents as messengers. To empower parents, teachers need to value the parents' way of teaching the subject matter, invite parents into the school, model their methods of teaching for the parents, utilize the parents as volunteers in the classroom, and create opportunities for the parents to be motivated to participate in their children's education. To utilize indigenous resources, teachers may call upon social workers, parents, other teachers, and community resources.

The parental involvement practices can be easily transferred to a model parental involvement program; thus, it can be said that the teachers in this study effectively used these practices to encourage parental participation in their children's education.

Ending

Current research has several limitations. First, sample size is relatively small (159 participants). Despite several significant results, the statistical power which is required to establish the full model of this research is low. Hence, it is important for future studies to gather larger sample size in order to replicate and validate results in the current study. Second, to gather data, sampling method of the study was a convenience sampling, that is participants were not randomly assigned for this research. Hence, sample is not necessarily representative of parents and teachers at kindergarten in Israel. Future studies should use a proportionate sampling method and hence to in a way study population will represent the appropriate population in Israel. Third, all variables were filled-in by participants, so this study suffers from mono-method bias, that is a single data source for all data. It is recommended that studies will use additional data sources to validate patterns achieved in this study. Finally, current study was a correlational study, and did not examine the efficacy of a well-based intervention which aims to improve teachers-parents relationships. It is important that further studies will elaborate current findings in a way, they will be used as empirical basis of building intervention plan.

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Appendix

Questions for the interview for parents

1. Please describe your relationship with the kindergarten teacher.
2. To what extent, do you believe that parents-teachers relationship could affect child's adjustment to kindergarten.
3. What are the main dimensions for collaboration between parents and teachers in kindergarten?
4. What are the main barriers of collaboration and communication between parents and teachers?
5. What are the main measures teachers can take in order to improve collaboration with parents?

Questions for the interview for teachers

1. Please describe your relationship with the parents in your kindergarten.
2. To what extent, do you believe that parents-teachers relationship could affect child's adjustment to kindergarten.
3. What are the main dimensions for collaboration between parents and teachers in kindergarten?
4. What are the main barriers of collaboration and communication between parents and teachers?
5. What are the main measures teachers can take in order to improve collaboration with parents?

The questionnaire for parents

A. Parents-Teachers Collaboration

The following are statements in regard to parents' involvement in kindergarten. Read every statement and rate level of agreement between 1 (not agree at all) and 7 (absolutely agree).

(1) Parents' attitudes towards involvement in kindergarten

I know how to help my child do well in kindergarten. _____

Data

I don't know if I'm getting through to my child *(reverse scored).* _____

I don't know how to help my child make good. _____

If I try hard, I can get through to my child, even when s/he has difficulty understanding something. _____

A student's motivation to do well in kindergarten depends on the parents. _____

I feel successful about my efforts to help my child learn. _____

Other children have more influence on my child's *(reverse scored)* grades than I do. _____

I don't know how to help my child learn (reverse scored). _____

I make a significant difference in my child's kindergarten performance. _____

Other children have more influence on my child's *(reverse scored).*_____

My efforts to help my child learn are successful. _____

B. Parent-teacher communication

Communicating with the teacher about the child's kindergarten results

Communicating with the teacher about the child's behaviour. _____

Communicating with the teacher about how the child feels at kindergarten. _____

Parent-teacher communication

Being member of the parent committee or an other board at kindergarten. _____

Being present at activities organised by kindergarten. _____

Being volunteer on activities organised by kindergarten. _____

Parent-child communication

Talking with the child about activities he/she has done at kindergarten. _____

Talking with the child about other things happened at kindergarten (for example: contact with classmates, incidents on the playground) . _____

Trying to find out what the child likes doing at kindergarten. _____

Talking with the child about his/her behaviour. _____

Data

The questionnaire for teachers

1. Teacher Beliefs about Parental Involvement Scale

Directions to teachers: In this section, please indicate HOW MUCH YOU AGREE OR DISAGREE with each of the statements between 1 (not agree at all) and 6 (absolutely agree);

1. Parent involvement is important for a good kindergarten. _____
2. Most parents know how to help their children with kindergarten work at home. _____
3. Every family has some strengths that can be tapped to increase student success in kindergarten. _____
4. All parents could learn ways to help their children with kindergarten work at home, if shown how. _____
5. Parent involvement can help teachers be more effective with more students. _____
6. Parents of children at this kindergarten want to be involved more than they are. _____
7. Parent involvement is important for student success in kindergarten. _____
8. This kindergarten views parents as important partners. _____

Demographics:

Gender: Male / Female Age: _____

Number of children: _____

2. **Teacher Beliefs about the Importance of Parent Involvement Practices**

Directions to teachers: In this section, please indicate HOW IMPORTANT you believe each of the following is in your own teaching and parent-involvement practices.

Data

1. Having a conference with each of my students' parents at least once a year. _____

2. Contacting parents about their children's problems or failures. _____

3. Contacting parents when their children do something well or improve. _____

4. Involving parents as volunteers in my classroom. _____

5. Telling parents about the skills their children must learn in each subject I teach. _____

6. Providing specific activities for parents to do with their children in order to improve their grades (revised). _____

7. Giving parents ideas about discussing specific TV shows with their children. _____

8. Assigning assignments that requires parents to interact with their children. _____

9. Suggesting ways to practice spelling or other skills at home before a test. _____

10. Asking parents to listen to their children read. _____

11. Asking my students' parents to help the child with assignments. _____

12. Asking my students' parents to ask the child about the kindergarten day. _____

13. Inviting my students' parents to visit my classroom. _____

14. Asking my students' parents to take the child to the library or community events. _____

15. Giving parents ideas to help them become effective advocates for their children. _____

16. Sending home 'letters' telling parents what the children have been learning and doing in class. _____

Data

3. Teacher reports of parent involvement

Directions to teachers: In this section, please indicate HOW MANY OF YOUR STUDENTS' PARENTS have participated in the following activities this year. Please record your best estimate for each item, and then respond to the 'overall confidence rating' at the end of this section.

1. Attend scheduled parent-teacher conferences. _____

2. Attend meetings or workshops at kindergarten. _____

3. Contact me when their children are having a problem with learning. _____

4. Contact me when they have something really good to report about their child's learning. _____

5. Volunteer in my classroom or in the kindergarten. _____

6. Ask me for specific activities they can do at home with the child. _____

7. Discuss TV programs with the child. _____

8. Help the child with assignments. _____

9. Listen to the child read. _____

10. Give me information about the child's needs, interests, or talents. _____

11. Talk to the child about the kindergarten day. _____

12. Visit my classroom at kindergarten. _____

13. Take the child to the library or community events. _____

14. Attend children's performances at kindergarten. _____

Teacher Report of Invitations to Parental Involvement

Directions to teachers: In this section, please indicate HOW OFTEN *YOU* have done each of the following this year.

1. Have a conference with a parent. _____

2. Contact a parent if the child has problems or experiences failure. _____

3. Contact a parent if the child does something well or improves. _____

Data

4. Involve a parent as a volunteer in my classroom. _____

5. Tell a parent about the skills the child must learn in each subject I teach. _____

6. Provide specific activities for a parent to do with the child in order to improve the child's grades. _____

7. Give a parent ideas about discussing specific TV shows with the children. _____

8. Assign assignments that requires a parent to interact with the child. _____

9. Suggest ways to practice spelling or other skills at home before a test. _____

10. Ask a parent to listen to the child read. _____

11. Ask a parent to help the child with assignments. _____

12. Encourage a parent to ask the child about the kindergarten day. _____

13. Ask a parent to visit my classroom. _____

14. Ask a parent to take the child to the library or community events. _____

15. Give a parent ideas to help him or her become an effective advocate for the child. _____

16. Send home 'letters' telling parents what the children have been learning and doing in class. _____