

# Parents and caregivers knowledge of school readiness for children admitted to Grade R and Grade I

\*Patricia, Ann De Witt, DOT (Pret), MSc OT (Wits), PhD(Wits). http://orcid.org/0000-0003-3612-0920 Sessional Adj Professor, Department of Occupational Therapy, School of Therapeutic Sciences, Faculty of Health Sciences, University of the Witwatersrand

#### Kirsten Du Toit, BSc OT (Wits), MSc OT (Wits). http://orcid.org/0000-0003-0314-9997

Occupational Therapist, Alison Crosbie Inc.

Postgraduate student, Department of Occupational Therapy, School of Therapeutic Sciences, Faculty of Health Sciences, University of the Witwatersrand

# Denise Franzsen, BSc OT (Wits), MSc OT (Wits), DHT (Pret) PhD (Wits). http://orcid.org/0000-0001-8295-6329

Sessional Senior Lecturer, Department of Occupational Therapy, School of Therapeutic Sciences, Faculty of Health Sciences, University of the Witwatersrand

**Introduction:** Children with scholastic difficulties, including failure to adapt to or thrive in formal schooling, are frequently referred to occupational therapists. Assessment of these children indicates that many of them have not attained the essential school-readiness skills. Concerns have been raised that parents/caregivers often only consider school-readiness with respect to age rather than other developmental milestones. Research has found that the parents' or caregivers' understanding and ability to determine their children's development in relation to school-readiness is important if the child is to succeed academically. The purpose of this study was to explore parents' or caregivers' knowledge of school-readiness as per the expectations for formal schooling as defined by the current National Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) and the Independent Schools Association of Southern Africa, (ISASA).

**Method:** This study used a quantitative, descriptive, cross sectional survey research design. Stratified sampling was used to select a sample of parents or caregivers of children admitted to Grade R and Grade I level at schools in the Gauteng Province. A self-report questionnaire, specifically designed from the literature was circulated to parents/caregivers by participating schools.

**Results:** There was a 41.2% return rate, but only 180 returned questionnaires could be analysed. The results found that that 57.9% of the participants had the correct expectation of school-readiness in ten learning areas within the questionnaire. Participants viewed school-readiness most correctly in the learning areas of Thinking and reasoning (78.9%) and Motor ability (76.8%), while the learning areas of Activities of daily living (ADL) (48.9%), Reading and viewing (48.2%) and Language structure and use (33.7%) were rated with less accuracy, with both under-estimations and over-estimations reported. The mother's level of education was the single demographic factor found to have significance with respect to knowledge of variables related to school-readiness.

**Conclusion**: The parents/caregivers in this study had a fair understanding of some of the variables included in school-readiness, but their ability to determine others, including ADL, was limited. Occupational therapists should be cognisant of the curriculum criteria for school-readiness and should play a role in raising awareness of school-readiness criteria among parents and caregivers wherever possible, to prevent scholastic under-achievement due to lack of school-readiness.

Key words: Awareness of school-readiness, activities of daily living, reading and viewing skills, language structure and use, mother's level of education

# INTRODUCTION

The South African Schools Act Amendment of 2011 dictates that it is compulsory for all children aged between 5 years and those who turn 6 years before June, to enter formal schooling<sup>1</sup>. Requirements for school-readiness are set out by the South African Department of Basic Education<sup>2</sup> in the curriculum, which has been changed several times since the advent of democracy in 1994. However, the concept of readiness for school was defined in the 1990's and is reported to include the child's readiness to learn the skills taught in formal schooling<sup>3</sup> and does not depend on age alone. This definition of school-readiness is aimed at a more holistic and standardised concept by including the standards of physical, intellectual and social development deemed necessary for a child to be successful within the formal schooling curriculum<sup>3</sup>. Thus, the attainment of a variety of complex skills is now specified for the transition from pre-school to the formal primary schooling level. These skills include the ability to adapt to increased academic, physical and motor demands; adequate socio-emotional development; ability to adapt to differing approaches of learning, language and cognitive ability. General knowledge, as well as independence in the fundamental activities of daily living (ADL) are also considered important for school-readiness<sup>4-7</sup>.

A study by Janse van Rensburg in 2015<sup>8</sup>, reported that 49% of children entering Grade I in Gauteng Province, were failing school-readiness assessments, with equal percentages in quintile I (lowest income) to quintile 5 (highest income) public schools. The lack of school-readiness results in them experiencing difficulties in scholastic achievement and not meeting educational expectations<sup>6</sup>. The children who fail to thrive in formal schooling are often referred to occupational therapy to assist with school-readiness preparation.

School-readiness should be viewed as a collective responsibility with schools, support structures in the community and parents/ caregivers working together to ensure the child's successful transi-



tion into, and achievement in, formal education. Parents/caregivers should be knowledgeable about their child's specific development. Since parents/caregivers are involved with the child on a daily basis, they are thought to be the best source of information regarding a child's physical skills, social skills, emotionality, and engagement in tasks - all critical in determining occupational performance at the school entry level. Associated with this is the assumption that parent/caregivers understand the concept of school-readiness based on the skills specified by the Department of Education<sup>2</sup> and the Independent Schools Association of South Africa (SASA)<sup>9</sup> in order to make a considered decision as to whether a child is ready to enter into a Grade I level of formal education.

Wesley & Buysse<sup>10</sup> raised concerns that parents/caregivers often only consider school-readiness with respect to age, with less emphasis placed on other development, which supports academic readiness. Research by DeRousie and Durham<sup>11</sup> suggests that although the family is extremely important in the development of a child's school-readiness, differences exist in parents'/caregivers' knowledge and abilities to determine their children's development in relation to school-readiness. This has been found to be related to a number of factors including demographic and socioeconomic factors<sup>11</sup>.

It is not known what knowledge parents/caregivers in the South African context have in terms of developmental milestones and the expected developmental criteria required for a child's smooth transition into formal schooling. Thus, the purpose of this study was to investigate the knowledge parents/caregivers of children in Grade R and Grade I in schools in Johannesburg, Gauteng Province, have of school-readiness and to determine if there was an association between parents/caregivers' knowledge and demographic factors.

# LITERATURE REVIEW

Research has shown that the first five years of a child's life are the building blocks to all motor, psychosocial, emotional and behavioural abilities. These first few years are filled with events, relationships and numerous experiences, which impact on a child's abilities<sup>12</sup> and thus their school-readiness.

Formal schools are provided with a set of curriculum criteria defined by the current National Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statements (CAPS)<sup>2</sup> and the ISASA<sup>9</sup>, which expects and assumes that adequate foundational building blocks are in place in order to be able to expand the child's knowledge in the Grade I year. These criteria based on international literature, dictate that entry into formal schooling is more complex than age and ratings of intelligence quotients. Children require basic foundational skills of physical and motor development, socio-emotional development, positive approaches to learning, good language ability and cognitive ability (including adequate general knowledge) and a certain level of independence in activities of daily living<sup>4,6,13</sup>.

Much research has been undertaken to determine what specific skills are implicit in school-readiness and what is necessary to predict adequate school outcomes<sup>14</sup>. In May 2012, the South African primary education curriculum was updated from the Revised National Curriculum Statement (RNCS) to the Curriculum and Assessment Policy (CAPS) with amendments for Grade R through to Grade 12<sup>2</sup>. The aim of the amendments was to ensure that the curriculum was better defined for teachers by providing each subject of each grade with a policy statement for comprehensive and concise curriculum and assessment<sup>2,15</sup>. In the foundation phase of learning, South Africa has delineated three specific learning areas which are language, mathematics and life skills<sup>15</sup>. These specific learning areas, as stipulated in the CAPS curriculum, are required to expand knowledge over the pre-requisites for school-readiness<sup>4,6,13</sup>. The areas of learning are inclusive of sub-sections which reflect the skills specified for school-readiness. In the Language learning area listening skills, speaking, reading and viewing, writing and language structure and use are associated with the socio-emotional and language development pre-requisites. Numbers, thinking and reasoning in the **Mathematics** learning area reflect the cognition and general knowledge pre-requisites in the form of understanding basic concepts as well as facilitating approaches to learning. Lastly, the **Life Skills** learning area is divided into *motor abilities*, *life skills*, *activities of daily living* (ADL) and *emotionality*. All these pre-requisites consider conceptual and functional abilities required in everyday life, as well as motor and physical abilities<sup>2</sup>.

Thus, when children transition into formal schooling, they and their parents/caregivers face a challenging range of expectations and demands, in keeping with formal curriculum within the scholastic environment<sup>13</sup>. Successful negotiation and transitioning during this period has been noted to be indicative of positive future scholastic success<sup>13</sup>. Poor school-readiness has been closely associated with educational developmental delays, which may result in failure in achieving scholastic grades with increased costs of schooling<sup>16</sup>, emotional disturbance in the form of decreased self-esteem and motivation, as well as behavioural disruptions<sup>17</sup>.

Baldwin<sup>4</sup> noted that the main advancements in school-readiness research is recognition of the influence of parental understanding of school-readiness and the importance of early childhood environments, which tend to critically influence preparedness of children entering into formal schooling. High quality early learning and family support systems have been identified as essential to ensuring that children entering primary schools are ready to learn. An adult's role in a child's life is to provide a child-friendly, child-care environment containing varied resources that promote child-initiated exploration<sup>16</sup>. Furthermore, it is the parent or caregiver's responsibility to ensure frequent sensitive and responsive social engagements with children in order to allow for an educational platform for interactive skills<sup>16</sup>.

School-readiness is therefore a relevant outcome with longterm consequences that parents/caregivers should be made aware of<sup>18</sup>. This will allow them to identify major or minor problems before a child enters school, so that referral to relevant services and therapists will ensure that the issues are dealt with before expectations at school increase. Early intervention ensures that their future scholastic potential is not hampered once the child starts school.

Differences in parents' or caregivers' knowledge and awareness of criteria for school-readiness do exist in related to their level of education, parenting skills, abilities, and variations in social and economic class<sup>4</sup>. In attempting to understand people's knowledge and understanding of school-readiness it is essential to determine any demographic factors which may affect this. The importance of this is to determine where additional education and intervention may be needed which would allow occupational therapists to tailor support and interventions in ensuring children are school ready before entering Grade 1. Research examining parents' school-readiness beliefs and how this influences children's outcomes in school has received little attention<sup>19</sup>.

# **RESEARCH METHOD**

This study used a quantitative, descriptive, cross sectional survey design. This design was appropriate as the data were collected at a single point in time and a questionnaire used to survey the parents'/ caregivers' level of knowledge of school-readiness utilised categorical numerical data to record a description of participants' knowledge of school-readiness indicators<sup>20</sup>.

Stratified sampling which is a non-probability sampling technique, was used to select a sample from a population of parents/ caregivers of children admitted to the Grade R and Grade I level of schooling, within the Gauteng Province of South Africa<sup>20</sup>. This sampling technique selected participants from a variety of quintile public and private schools to ensure socioeconomic diversity in the sample. Six schools were selected to participate in the study: two quintile 2 and 3 schools, two quintile 4 and 5 schools and two private schools. The principals of the quintile 2 and 3 schools and one private school gave permission for the research to be carried out at their schools.



Cochrane's formula was used to determine the sample size based on a population of 300 learners at the three schools. A sample of 196 returned questionnaires was required to be representative of the population, if the margin of error was set at  $5\%^{21}$ .

Adults who were parents or caregivers of a Grade 1 or Grade R pupil were included in the study if they were literate in English and were 18 years or older.

#### **Research instrument**

A questionnaire was specifically developed for this research based on literature related to criteria for school-readiness in South Africa<sup>2,9</sup>. The questionnaire consisted of two sections: The first section recorded demographic information of the sample, while the second included questions relating to school-readiness requirements for a child entering into a Grade I level of education. Section 2 had a self-report design with IO4 statements related to schoolreadiness, which were organised into IO sub-sections: Listening skills; Reading and viewing skills; Numerical skills; Thinking and Reasoning; Language structure and use; Motor abilities, Life Skills and Activities of Daily Living. Participants were required to answer all questions using a four-point rating scale: To be school-ready: "My child should definitely be able to do this," "My child should be able to do this sometimes," "My child is expected to learn this at school," or "Unsure."

# **Pilot study**

A pilot study was undertaken to determine the content validity of the first draft of the questionnaire<sup>22</sup>. Firstly, subject matter experts (SMEs) reviewed the questionnaire. Two occupational therapists with more than 15 years' experience in the paediatric field of practice and a remedial teacher with 30 years of experience in the junior primary phase in a mainstream school were asked to comment on the relevance of the questionnaire in relationship to the objectives of the research. Changes to the questionnaire were then made based on the feedback given by the experts.

End-users were then asked to evaluate the questionnaire. Eight parents or caregivers with children in junior primary level of education were recruited and were asked to complete the questionnaire to determine the clarity and flow of the questions, the ease of answering all questions and the time required to complete the questionnaire<sup>22</sup>. The parents/caregivers reported that despite being long and taking 20-30 minutes to complete, all questions were relevant, easy to follow and to complete.

#### **Research procedure**

The researcher gave the principals at the three schools envelopes containing an information sheet and a questionnaire to be distributed to the parents/caregivers of all Grade R and Grade I learners in each school. The envelopes were distributed to parent/caregivers according to the schools' letter-hand-out system in the early part of the second term of the school year. The questionnaires were collected two weeks later.

#### **Ethical considerations**

The Graduate Studies Committee of the Faculty of Health Science approved the protocol for this research study and ethical approval was obtained from the University of Witwatersrand Human Research Ethics Committee (MI 30349). The Gauteng Department of Education, the School boards and principals of the public and private schools gave written permission for the research. The information sheet circulated with the questionnaire to parents/caregivers detailed the research: purpose, objectives, how the data were to be collected; the time it would take to complete the questionnaire as well as confidentiality within the research procedure. No consent form was included, as consent was assumed through participants (parents or caregivers) completing and returning the questionnaires. Confidentiality was ensured as no names or personal information was requested on the questionnaire, ensuring the anonymity of all participants. All questionnaires were returned in a sealed envelope to ensure that confidentiality was maintained.

# **Data Analysis**

Data from both the demographic (Section 1) and the schoolreadiness (Section 2) parts of the questionnaire were analysed descriptively. The school-readiness factors were scored as correct or incorrect expectations (under or over estimation) based on the criteria set in the literature as a percentage of the sample. 'Unsure' or 'did not answer' were also recorded as a percentage of the sample. The effect of the demographic factors on the schoolreadiness expectations of parents/caregivers was analysed using a Kushkal Wallis ANOVA using Staistica v 13.2 software.

# RESULTS

Only 210 of the 510 questionnaires distributed were returned. Thus, the return rate was 41.2%. However only 180 questionnaires could be analysed. Some participants did not complete all demographic information (Section 1) but these were still included in the data analysis. However, only questionnaires where Section 2 was fully completed were included in the results.

#### **Demographic of participants**

The ages of the just over half (52%) of parents/caregivers fell within 35-45 age group while 42% fell in the 25-35 age group, 5% were over the age of 45 years and 1% younger than 25years. The majority of participants were English speaking (51%), and the least were Zulu speaking (16.5%). Nineteen participants reported that they spoke two or more languages at home. Most participants indicated that they belonged to the African racial groups (49%), followed by the Caucasian group (37%).

Half of the mothers and fathers (53% and 49% respectively) had a degree and/or diploma. The monthly income of households varied between R12 500 and R27 000 (36%), below R12 500 (20%), and an income of R27 000– R38000 (17%). Only thirty percent reported being single parent households. Households were reported having two children (50%) or three children (23%). The majority of the children (98%) had attended preschool, crèche and/ or nursery school.

#### School-readiness learning areas

Table 1 below indicates the percentages of participants who selected the correct expectation in ten categories within the questionnaire indicating that that 57.9% of the participants had the correct expectation of school-readiness.

# Table 1: Overall average correct expectation for each area assessed (n=180)

Learning Areas	Correct Expectation
Thinking and reasoning abilities	77,7%
Motor ability	76,8%
Numerical skills	66,7%
Speaking abilities	61,7%
Writing abilities	57,8%
Life Skills	55,3%
Listening skills	51,7%
Activities of daily living	48,9%
Reading and viewing skills	48,2%
Language structure and use	33,7%
TOTAL UNDERSTANDING	57,9%

Only the three school-readiness learning areas that fell under the 50% correct answers are considered further in the results.

# Activities of daily living

There were six variables listed under the activities of daily living learning area. Figure 1 on page 31 shows that majority of partici-



pants had correct expectations on three variables (72.9%–93.9%) and incorrect expectations for the other three of the variables (79%–93.9%).

*Table II* below indicates that participants overestimated what their child should be able to achieve in relation to the activities of daily living criteria for school-readiness with very little underestimating what was required.

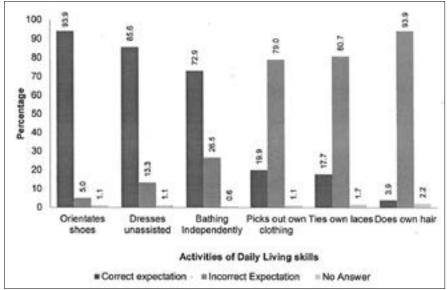


Figure 1: Parents/caregivers expectations for activities of daily living (n=180)

Table II: Over- and under-estimation of parents'/caregivers' expectations for activities of daily living (n=180)

	Correct expectation (%)	Over- estimation (%)	Under- estimation (%)	Unsure (%)
Picks out own clothing	19.9 (n=36)	77.9 (n=141)	0.6 (n=I)	0.6 (n=1)
Ties own laces	17.7 (n=32)	73.5 (n=133)	4.4 (n=8)	2.8 (n=5)
Does own hair	3.9 (n=7)	90.05 (n=163)		3.9 (n=7)

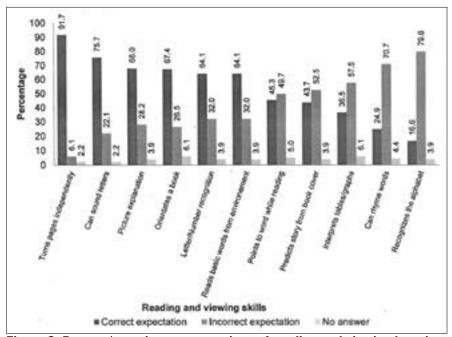


Figure 2: Parents/caregivers expectations of reading and viewing learning area within school readiness (n=180)

There were eleven variables in the reading and viewing learning area category. Figure 2 (below left) indicates that the majority of participants displayed the correct expectation on six of the eleven variables in this category of school-readiness expectations, (91.7%-64.1%) with incorrect expectations for five variables (49.7%-79.5%).

Variables within the Reading and viewing learning area where participants underestimated (44.8%–48.6%) and overestimated (51.3%-71.8%) their child's ability with regards to school-readiness are reported in *Table III* on page 32. For "can rhyme words" and "recognises alphabet" participants both over and underestimated the criteria their child should achieve with more participants overestimating what the child should be able to do.

# Learning area of language structure and use

There were eight variables in the language structure and use learning area, and the participants displayed the correct expectation on only two variables (60.2%–61.3%). The participants incorrectly rated six variables (56.9%–78.56%). Overall, 33.7% of participants had correct expectation of school-readiness expectations for language structure and use. (*Figure 3* on page 32)

The majority of participants reported an overestimation of a child's ability with regards to school-readiness in language structure and use (43.1%-72.4%) while some participants underestimated the "use of descriptive words", "identifies words and spaces between" and "identifies words and letters when reading" (14.4%-26%) (*Table IV* on page 32).

# Demographic factors and the estimation of criteria for school-readiness by of parent or caregivers

The only statistically significant difference found in this sample for the demographic factors and the incorrect estimation of school-readiness variables was between the mother's highest level of education and the Listening skills (p=0.026), reading and viewing (p=0.030) and writing (p=0.029) school-readiness learning categories (*Figure 4* on page 33).

# DISCUSSION

The sample in this study represented parents/ caregivers of children attending quintile 2 and 3 fee paying schools and a private school. Approximately half the mothers and fathers in this sample had post matric education and according to Eccles<sup>23</sup> this influences the area in which families reside, the income of the family, the type of school the children attend and the opportunities provided to the children, which in turn should influence the child's educational achievements and abilities. The results of the study must be viewed with caution, as the sample does not reflect the profile of the population of South Africa, but rather those who can afford to pay for their children to attend school, which according to the United Nations Children's Fund is limited to approximately 35% of children in this province<sup>24</sup>.



Belfield and Garcia<sup>25</sup> stated that due to the change in the education department's curricula, the percentage of parents who believe skills like knowing the alphabet, being able to use a pencil and count, as well as taking turns are essential before a child starts school has increased. These heightened parental expectations are based on experiences of the child being more commonly in a preschool setting<sup>25</sup> which, applied to the majority of participants in the current study. Thus, it was noted that the participants in this study had a good understanding of what was expected of their children in tasks involving basic concepts (counting, colour concept, shapes etc.) and motor abilities (sit, walk, crawl, stand, run, hop, jump and ball skills etc.) which are often presented as the most important developmental milestones expected of children when starting school.

Participants made errors in the learning areas of school-readiness and development that were perhaps not as familiar to them. Most overestimated the milestones and skills related to language, reading and activities of daily living that their child needed in relation to school-readiness. Interestingly their expectations in terms of what activities of daily living their child should achieve when starting school were incorrect and overestimated for half the variables in this category of school-readiness. Parents/caregivers are generally directly involved in performing tasks such as tying shoe laces, doing one's own hair and picking out one's own clothing with the children on a daily basis and should be aware of what a child, who is about

Table III: Over and under estimation of parents/caregiver's expectations for	
reading and viewing learning area (n=180)	

	Correct expectation (%)	Over estimation (%)	Under- estimation (%)	Unsure (%)
Points to words while reading	45.3 (n=82)		44.8 (n=81)	4.9 (n=9)
Predicts story from a book cover	43.7 (n=79)		48.6 (n=88)	3.9 (n=7)
Interprets graphs and tables	36.5 (n=66)	69.1 (n=85)		10.5 (n=19)
Can rhyme words	24.9 (n=45)	51.4 (n=93)	15.5 (n=28)	3.9 (n=7)
Recognizes the alphabet	16.6 (n=30)	71.8 (n=130)	7.7 (n=14)	

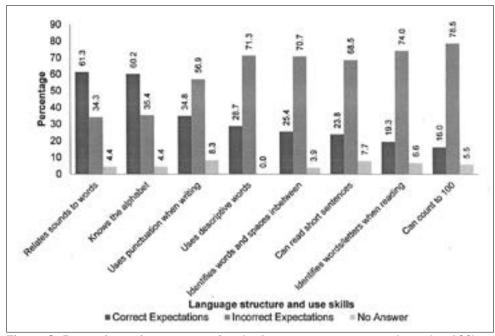


Figure 3: Parent/caregiver expectation for language structure and use (n=180)

Table IV: Over and under estimation of parents/cares	vers expectations for
language structure and use (n=180)	

	Correct expectation (%)	Over- estimation (%)	Under- estimation (%)	Unsure (%)
Uses punctuation when writing	34.8 (n=63)	44.7 (n=81)		I 2.2 (n=5)
Uses descriptive words	28.7 (n=52)	50.8 (n=92)	14.3 (n=26)	2.7 (n=5)
Identifies words and spaces in between	25.4 (n=46)	43.1 (n=78)	25.9 (n=47)	I.7 (n=3)
Can read short sentences	23.8 (n=43)	62.4 (n=113)		6.1 (n=11)
Identifies words/letters when reading	19.3 (n=35)	53.6 (n=97)	18.2 (n=33)	2.2 (n=4)
Can count to 100	16.0 (n=29)	72.4 (n=130)		6.1 (n=11)

to start formal education, can achieve. The findings of the current study are in line with a study by Zhang et al<sup>26</sup>, which found that parents considered language use, the ability to read a few words and independence as the most important skills required for schoolreadiness. This may have resulted in their expectations of the skills their child needed to be school-ready being too high and higher than the curriculum criteria on which the current study is based<sup>2,9</sup>. The high expectations of parents were supported by Piotrkowski et al.<sup>27</sup> who found parents rated all schoolreadiness skills as more essential than preschool teachers, including self-care, communication and knowledge.

The participants' overestimation of the language and reading skills required by their children may also be influenced by the preschool environment, since an overall increase in preschool teachers' beliefs about the importance of academic skills in recent years has been reported<sup>28</sup>. The increased emphasis on admission criteria and academic skills in the school classroom with the introduction of Grade 000, Grade 00 and Grade 0 means that parents may have the impression that their child needs to have better reading and language structure skills than is actually expected<sup>29</sup>.

Although the percentage was lower, the underestimation of abilities required for school were related to "pointing to words" and "predicting the story" as well as "spatial recognition in relation to words". This is of concern as Puccioni<sup>30</sup> found that when parents perceived school-readiness as important and understood the concept, their children achieved higher average reading scores and demonstrated better progress. Previous research by Baldwin<sup>4</sup> proposed that when examining individual perceptions and views it was important to determine the influence of demographics on a parents'/caregivers' perception of school-readiness. These included factors such as socioeconomic status<sup>4,31,32</sup>, ethnicity<sup>4,31</sup> single parent households<sup>32</sup>, educational status of parents<sup>32</sup> and the child's attendance at a pre-school facility<sup>4,33</sup>.



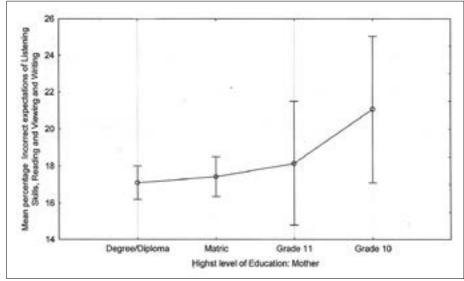


Figure 4: Mean percentage of participants with incorrect expectations of school readiness learning areas according to mother's level of education

#### In the current research, only the mothers' highest level of education had a significant influence on parent or caregiver knowledge of school-readiness. The higher the mothers' level of education the smaller the margin of error for school-readiness expectations. This finding is consistent with research by Eccles<sup>23</sup> who found a strong link between parents' level of education and their children's academic achievement and assumed educated parents have increased parental skills, values and knowledge of educational systems and criteria; which in turn directly influence their engagement, stimulation and encouragement of skill development of their children at home. Most research in this field has considered early language and reading skills to be influenced by parent's education level and these parents commonly have an appropriate expectation for their children's language skills including speech and reading abilities<sup>23</sup>.

#### Limitation of the study

The 180 participants who took part in this survey fell short of the 196, which would have formed a representative sample for this study<sup>34</sup> which may affect the generalisability of the results.

The self-report nature of this questionnaire demanded that parents/caregivers rate their perception of the knowledge and skills attributed to school-readiness. Rating the perception of knowledge is difficult, as defining the exact level of knowledge in relation to a brief question is complex, thus it is easy for participants to assume they have knowledge when it is not explicitly stated. Not all participants ticked all questions, deliberately or selectively not answering some of the questions. Thus, the level of knowledge of parents/caregivers about school readiness may not be reflected for those who did not answer presumably because the questions were difficult to answer or difficult to understand. Percentages of those who did not answer have been reflected separately to prevent an overestimation of parents/caregivers knowledge about school readiness.

# Implications for clinical practice

In this study the participants understood 57.86% of-school-readiness criteria. Therefore, there is a role in increasing awareness of school-readiness criteria at a Grade R level so that parents/ caregivers can refer their children for early childhood intervention, preferably before they start Grade I if they are concerned about their school-readiness. It is also important in view of the overestimation of participants in the current study that therapists are aware, that parents/caregivers may set their expectations too high, so over referral due to these unrealistic expectations is avoided. Therefore, occupational therapists should be cognisant with the curriculum criteria for school-readiness as set out for public and private schools in South Africa.

# CONCLUSION

The parents/caregivers in this study had a good understanding school-readiness and appeared to have a better understanding of developmental milestones related to motor skills, counting and speaking. In the learning areas of school-readiness where participants had poor understanding, they generally overestimated the ability their child required. Independence, reading and language use have been reported as skills that parents believe are important for school-readiness, which may account for their over-estimation of what the child should achieve prior to starting school. Some parents under-estimated the level of ability their children needed in relation to words in reading and language use. In the current study the sample which was relatively homogeneous in terms of the participant's socioeconomic status and the type of school the child attended, only the mother's

level of education influenced understanding of school-readiness.

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# **AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS**

P de Witt — supervisor of project and wrote article.

K du Toit — postgraduate student — conceptualised and completed research for project

D Franzsen — data analysis and co-wrote article.

**Corresponding Author** 

\***PA de Witt** Email: PatriciaDeWitt@wits.ac.za

