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An Exploration of Understanding Teaching Motor Skills Related to Self-Care Skills among Typical Preschool Children: Parents' and Teachers' Perspectives

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Abstract

Introduction: Self-care skills are integral to how children manage their daily lives without help. Without good motor skills, the children have difficulty achieving independence in self-care.

Objectives: This study aimed to explore the understanding on teaching of motor skills related to self-care skills, factors inhibit teaching self-care and interest to have module as guidance to preschool children from the parent's and teachers' perspectives.

Method: This was a qualitative study approach that recruited eight participants, which included both parents and teachers. Parents and teachers involved in providing care to preschool children aged four to five years were selected for this study. The data were collected and recorded through semi-structured interviews individually. All the transcribed data were analysed by using thematic analysis.

Results: Findings indicated five themes that appeared as follows: "Limited amount of knowledge", "Time constraints", "Needs guidance", "Child's factors", and "Non-standardised guidance".

Conclusion: Parents show limited understanding of children's needs and development. Parents and teachers lack awareness role of motor skills that could support self-care independence. Development motor skills module to support self-care skills as guidance is recommended, and further study could be considered to explore more on development of motor skill module to promote early self-care independent.

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Self-care skills; motor skills; occupational therapist; children; teachers; parents

Introduction

Children are entirely dependent on others in their first years, generally parents or guardians providing primary care. Self-care skills are those that must be mastered in order to live a meaningful life and fulfil one's own needs. The achievement of independence in self-care skills will have a positive impact on the child in terms of physical health and self-esteem (Alemdar & Polat, 2014). It can also make children aware of their abilities and physical capacity and, hence, play an important role in fostering self-confidence based on the ability to take care of themselves (Koksalan, Yayan, Emre, & Ulutas, 2020).

According to the 2020, self-care skills, also referred to as Activities of Daily Living (ADLs), is one of the categorized occupations that people do as everyday activities which bring meaning and purpose to their lives. Aspects of Self-care skills include toileting, feeding, dressing and personal hygiene (Pesau, Widyorini, & Sumijati, 2020). Having competent self-care skills gives an opportunity to children to participate in life activities at school, at home, and in the community (Burgess, Boyd, Ziviani, Ware, & Sakzewski, 2019). Children who do not develop self-care skills may face greater challenges and it may impact their self – esteem (Alemdar & Polat, 2014)

Children who attend preschool programs are generally between three and five years of age (Jantan, Bin Hamdan, Yahya, & Binti Saleh, 2015). Preschool children are vulnerable to the effects of parenting styles, especially if they are too pampered (Pesau et al., 2020) and would benefit greatly from an increased amount of time and opportunity to do self-care skills independently. Previously, a study reported that the self-care skills of children attending a nursery school were higher than those being cared for by parents and babysitters (Alemdar & Polat, 2014), which would indicate that trained care workers devote more time to teaching the necessary skills than parents or babysitters do. However, study done by Karabayır and Oğuz (2007) found that the physical well-being of children is affected due to being in crowded environment such as nursery. Children will not achieve independence when they grow up if they do not have the opportunity to repeat the skills as part of a daily routine and systematic education applied in their everyday life (Alemdar & Polat, 2014). Meanwhile, a study by Kim, Kang, and Jang (2017), carried out among children with limited mobility, found that parents tend to assist with self-care skills, although their children might still be able to manage some or part of the task themselves independently. This in turn may reduce the child's motivation to learn new skills; hence, it may limit the child's ability to achieve self-care skills independently.

Early independence in self-care skills is also influenced by cultural factors. For example, Japanese mothers seem to prefer giving responsibility to their children at earlier ages than do Turkish mothers, who seem to act more over-protectively and deem three to four years of age a more convenient time for the initiation of the development of self-care skills in their children (Ramazan & Sakai, 2017). Similarly, a previous study emphasized that mothers have earlier age expectations for their children in Australia than Malaysian caregivers (Winskel, Salehuddin, & Stanbury, 2013). Research demonstrates that different cultures have different developmental milestone expectation profiles, which are shaped by the cultural values held by parents (Salehuddin & Winskel, 2016).

Development, and specifically motor skills are also a key influencing factor. It was found that factors that inhibit children with intellectual disabilities from being independent in self-care skills can be divided into internal and external factors (Pesau et al., 2020). It is likely these factors are also true for children without disabilities. External factors were found in parental roles, self-care practising methods, and differences in parental attitudes, while internal factors include physical and motor problems among children. Although various factors are mentioned, it is noteworthy that motor skills play an essential role in enhancing self-care skills among children, specifically children who lack or struggle with motor skills. Motor skills are important to a child's ability to participate in self-care skills (Clark & Kingsley, 2020). Indeed, it was found that a good development of motor skills can increase self-care ability (Sezici & Akkaya, 2020).

Motor skills development can refer to the acquisition of gross and fine motor skills (Janke van der, Plastow, & Unger, 2020). Gross motor skills are activities that require muscular strength and bodily movements (Cempron, 2021). Fine motor skills refer to movement skills that involve a refined use of the small muscles controlling the hand, fingers, and thumb (Cempron, 2021). Self-care skills are supported by motor skills (gross motor and fine motor skills), such as a task requiring grasping, reaching, manipulating objects, and using tools during self-care (Clark & Kingsley, 2020). In Malaysia, a previous study reported that typical preschool children were delayed five months to nineteen months in mastering motor skills (Abdullah, Aziz, & Yusof, 2016). Thus, preschool children might have difficulty in specific or most of the tasks in self-care skills. Motor skills do not develop automatically and require structured activities or intervention to achieve advanced motor skills patterns (Battaglia, Alesi, Tabacchi, Palma, & Bellafiore, 2019). Health professionals such as occupational therapists play an important role by giving intervention to promote motor skills development to achieve independence in self-care skills (Clark & Kingsley, 2020).

Nevertheless, there was a lack of evidence on which to base the development of self-care intervention for children (Kirk et al., 2013) and the need for practice guidance as intervention such as modules to ensure that children have good motor skills (Kaur et al., 2015) to support self-care skills (Sezici & Akkaya, 2020). This study explores the multidimensional nature of factors that inhibit the teaching of motor skills related to self-care skills among preschool children from the parents' and teachers' perspectives. The present study was also undertaken to learn more about i) parents' understanding of child's overall development, ii) how parents and teachers perceive motor skills related to self-care skills, (iii) interest in having formal guidance such as a module

Method

A qualitative study design was used, and eight participants (teachers and parents) were recruited using the purposive sampling method. The samples were recruited based on thematic analysis guides to reach data saturation (Namey, Guest, McKenna, & Chen, 2016). This design was used because it can explore details to highlight issues and in-depth views through themes that emerged (Liamputtong & Press, 2009). The main author and research team are occupational therapists using client-centered practice when identifying client needs. Parents and teachers have the best knowledge about the children's needs because they spend more time with the children daily. By interviewing parents and teachers, the authors and research team believe that they were able to have an in-depth understanding of a child's development, self-care skills, motor skills and also module characteristic.

All participants were recruited based on fulfillment of the following inclusion criteria: i) Ability to speak and understand the Malay language ii) Is a Malaysian citizen iii) Possesses a good cognitive function (Score Mini Mental State Examination(MMSE) 25–30) iv) Possesses a stable/good emotional state (Score Depression Anxiety Stress Scales(DASS) less than 14). Participants who have or taking care children with physical disabilities such as the deaf, blind, and mute were excluded. The data collection started at private and public kindergartens to ensure that the participants recruited were parents or teachers who have the care of children in the age range four to five years. The study has been approved by the

ethical committee of the University Kebangsaan Malaysia and written consent was obtained from the participants.

A semi-structured interview was conducted and recorded through online meetings, Google Meet, individually. The interview session took about 45 minutes to 90 minutes for each participant. Participants were asked open-ended questions with child's developmental skills, motor skills development related to self-care skills independence and interest to have formal guidance such as a motor skills module as a question guide throughout the interview. The reflexive thematic analysis, previously known as the thematic analysis, was used to analyze and interpret data into a meaningful description (Braun & Clarke, 2019). Verbal interview data were transcribed into written form and analyzed using qualitative analysis guidelines by Braun and Clarke (2006) to establish trustworthiness in the data analysis process (Nowell, Norris, White, & Moules, 2017). Before proceeding to data analysis, the transcribed data went through a member-checking process, also known as participant validation, to explore data credibility. The main author returned the transcribed data to the participants to check for accuracy and resonance with their experiences. It allows participants to engage with and add to interview data after their semi-structured interview.

The six recursive and iterative steps are: 1) familiarization with the data, 2) generating initial codes, 3) Searching for appropriate themes, 4) reviewing themes 5) defining and naming themes 6) producing the report. Additionally, NVivo software was utilized to manage and organize the data (Castleberry & Nolen, 2018). The main author read and re-read the transcribed transcript, familiarized herself with the data, and then generated initial codes that appeared interesting to the analyst. Then continue searching themes, sorting the different codes into potential themes, and collating all the relevant coded data extracts within the identified themes to form an overarching theme. The main author developed an initial thematic map. The next phase involves two levels of reviewing and refining themes. Level one consists in reviewing the level of the coded data extracts. The author reads all the collated extracts for each theme and considers whether they appear to form a coherent. Then, level two is a similar process but with entire data set to determine whether the initial thematic map "accurately" reflects the meanings evident in the data set as a whole and also, the author codes any additional data within themes that have been missed in earlier coding stages. After that, the author moves to the next step defining and naming themes, which is to determine what aspect of the data each theme captures and to identify whether or not a theme contains any sub-themes. The main author has invited an expert with no interest in this study for peer debriefing. A peer debriefer evaluated the interpreted data (themes) and reviewed the coding process. It helps the main author to uncover errors, detect biases, and improve the quality of this study. To enhance the trustworthiness of the study, the main author also made an audit trail with all research team members, including during the coding process, descriptions of how the main author worked from individual codes to themes, and rationale for what codes were clustered together to form the basis of a theme. The main author also discussed with other team members which themes should be removed, added, and collapsed into each other or other themes might need to be broken down into separate themes. All the themes were developed after data analysis in relation to the research question and purposes of the study. In the final step, the author started producing the data analysis report.

Table 1. Characteristic of study participants.

| Participants | Occupation | Age (years) | Preschool Child's gender | Total of children in family or class (Number) |
|--------------|--------------------|-------------|--------------------------|---|
| P001(Ms F) | Customer services | 29 | Boy | 3 |
| P002(Ms M) | IT security bank | 44 | Girl | 4 |
| T003(Ms M) | Teacher | 30 | Boy and Girl | 26 |
| P004(Ms S) | Lecturer | 36 | Girl | 4 |
| P005(Ms H) | Executive officer | 40 | Boy | 3 |
| T006(Ms Y) | Teacher | 25 | Boy and Girl | 15 |
| P007(Mr L) | Technician Manager | 40 | Boy | 5 |
| P008(Mr Z) | Engineer | 31 | Girl | 4 |

Table 2. Themes and subthemes.

| Themes | Sub themes |
|-----------------------------|--|
| Limited amount of knowledge | Lack of knowledge Lack of awareness for motor skills related to self- care skills |
| Time Constraints | Working parents Lack of opportunity |
| Child's factors | Different approach for different children |
| Incompetence | No formal/proper guidance Lack of ideas to help child |
| Non-standardized guidance | No continuity between learning at school and at home |

Findings

The participants were working parents in different fields and teachers with different working experiences in private and public kindergartens. All the parents have more than one child. Teachers are teaching up to 26 children at one time in class every day. Participants were in the age range 25–44 years and coded with “P” to represent a parent while “T” represented a teacher. An anonymous name was also used to represent participants in each of the quotes to maintain confidentiality. Characteristics of study participants are shown in Table 1.

The result revealed that five main themes were identified with several subthemes within each – see Table 2.

Theme 1: Limited Amount of Knowledge

Lack of Knowledge

Participants were asked to explain their understanding of preschool children development and their needs. A lack of knowledge theme emerged as a prominent theme that parent repeatedly expressed because motor skills or self-care skills development is not one of the skills that parents will mention. Their understanding is limited and concerned more with social and communication skills rather than motor skills development or independent in self-care skills. One of the mothers revealed:

“Firstly, I don’t have a good grasp of children’s education. But generally, I want to see my five years old child . . . I would like to see her with the ability to communicate with others, able to make friends, as this means she can communicate without fear. That’s it.” (P002) (L:3–6) Ms. M, work as Information Technology Bank Security, 44 years old

When discussing a child's development, parents demonstrate uncertainty about child's development. Another mother also mentioned that she is unsure what to focus on and is concerned about her children's development and their needs. They have relatively limited knowledge about child's development. Ms F, aged 29, who works in customer services, said:

"For me, during preschool, maybe in terms of reading, I also don't know but like reading, social skills. I think that's it." (P001) (L:9–10)

Parents most likely would focus on development skills that the children can get specifically from school. One father has indicated that academic skill through play becomes the primary concern instead of other skills for preschool children. Mr L, aged 40, works as technician manager.

"If I'm not mistaken, skills needed are 3 M skills, reading, writing, and calculating. That needs to be emphasized for children between four to five years in a play environment. We cannot teach like at home; we want to teach direct learning that they are not interested in. So, we take that with play." (P007) (L:15–19)

Lack of Awareness for Motor Skills Related to Self- Care Skills

Teachers shared their understanding that self-care is a crucial skill for preschool children. Nevertheless, the two teachers in this study are still unaware of how motor skills could relate to and support self-care skills. Teacher M, aged 30, with seven years of experience teaching preschool children, shared that she does not think motor skills are related to self-care skills. She shows a lack of awareness that motor skills could be essential to achieving self-care skills. She stated as follows:

"Actually, motor skills development is not affected by self-care skills. Because motor skills follow its development . . . child's development itself." (T003)(L:87–89).

Ms H, aged 40, who is working as an executive officer at a public university, also shared the same view that she had no idea how motor skills development could support self-care skills. She seems to understand that motor skills related with the ability of children can move well with activity such as doing marching. She stated as follows:

"Oh, if you ask me, I don't know how many types everything whatsoever, motor development. What I know is, as long as he can move as usual for his leg movement and arms to be in balance, because my husband is a soldier and sometimes has to do parade, sometimes has to do marching, sometimes gets held, if he got held then he need to do push-ups and squats."(P005) (L: 25–32).

Another mother expressed that she did not know term "motor skill" which is she only knows that the step or task that children should be able to do it by themselves. So, it seems the mother has difficulty to relate with self-care.

"I don't know the correct terms for that things (motor skills) so I talk in general only. I don't know much about child's development. Like you(interviewer) mention about motor or what I don't know about it. Generally, after eating what she should do, after play what next, she supposed to do." (P002)(L:14–18)

Based on the result, most of the mothers highlighted that they did not have good knowledge of, or had limited knowledge of, child's development. They are more concerned with the skills they see the children should perform when they are away from home, such as social skills with friends, communication skills, and academic skills. One teacher and mother shared similar

views regarding the lack of awareness about motor skills related to self-care skills to achieve independence among preschool children. Neither seemed to expect to focus on motor skills when talking about achieving self-care skills independently.

Theme 2: Time Constraints

Working Parents

Since all the participants are working parents, time constraints become one of the barriers to parents teaching their children at home. They also did not have enough time to monitor a child's development in self-care skills and other skills.

"This is the real story that I told you ya. I'm busy. Even though I'm working from home now, I'm from the IT department and I'm quite busy with my role at the office and I don't have time to monitor all of the things at all times, but I'm aware aahh . . ." (P002) (L:66-70)

One of the parents, a father, Mr L, aged 40, works as a technician manager. He expressed the feeling that he and his wife did not have enough time with their children in everyday life. The children spend most of their time at school compared to home.

"It depends on the environment; in our case my wife and I will only see our children in the evening. They are back home in the evening around 7.00 pm. I send my kids off in the morning and see them again in the evening. So, the environment with kids is not so long between 7.00 p.m. and 9.00 p.m., which is when we want to bath and solat. So, we only have a few hours. By comparison, kids who are taken care of by their non-working parents, may be back home at 12.00 p.m." (P007) (L:201-207)

Despite working from home due to the movement control order (MCO), parents still cannot have enough time with their children. They have much work to be managed. Sometimes, they use the weekend to monitor a child's development and ask the elder daughter or son to help their preschool child do a task. One of the mothers shared the following:

"I have lots of time at home, so during MCO la. . . I'm busy because I'm staff PPV. I'm on duty on campus everything, so I can't focus 100%, but, once a week for two days, I will look at what they are doing and check the book (activity book). Basically, that is the only thing I did with them because, if his sister has a problem, so he needs to follow X (her son). He can do it, if his sister can do it; if not, he cannot do it alone." (P005)(L:131-137)

Lack of Opportunity

Teachers shared her experience that the children lack the opportunity to learn more about self-care skills due to the pandemic time, and COVID-19 virus infection. The infection meant that the children had to stay at home and were not allowed go to school for quite a long period of time. Even though the children got to learn from home via online learning, most children could not focus and understand the learning content. It also limits the children from practicing skills with the teacher's guidance. One of the teachers, Ms Y, aged 25, said:

"Especially now we are in a pandemic time where, we already know that our school is not stable in terms of our school schedule. So aa . . . maybe there are children not really getting input that they should get when we are doing PDPR. It is teaching and learning from home. Maybe some children are okay; they can catch up even without face-to-face teachers. Maybe children quickly get distracted and focus on other things during learning at home. So, all those things we should give attention." (T006) (L:13-20)

Theme 3: Child's Factors

Different Approach for Different Children

Another factor is that of the individual child contributing to barriers to parents and teachers teaching self-care skills. Parents and teachers agree that children have different attitudes and require different approaches. One of the teachers expressed the need for help from any sources such as modules to help them approach and correct the child's problem. One of the teachers said:

"I feel helpful(having module). Because sometimes different children require different ways we can handle them. So, when we have that kind of module, maybe we can have some people provide . . . ideas or knowledge for teachers who will engage with children. What is lacking in self-care skills like that?" (T006)(L:163–167)

Similarly, one of the mothers shared her barriers that children prefer to listen to teachers than to parents, even though mothers are trying to teach the same topic, skills or facts. The mother feels that children are more comfortable and trust their teacher in learning new things or skills. Hence, that mother also agrees it would be good to have sources like a module to help them approach the child and teach them effectively.

If we have modules and their related focus is on self-care skills for children and everything. All of that to improve their life skills. So, because he is more obedient to his teacher than when we talk to them at home when in a car, we asked him what he learned today. "Today teacher said ta ta . . . so we can't ta ta." "did you do that?" "I did that, or else you will get angry, 'if mom said the same thing, you did not do that; if the teacher said, then okay. Somehow, for me, teachers are closer to preschool children even though we informally teach them at home. They are more inclined to believe what the teacher said. Indeed, there is more trust in teachers than in parents at home. Even we are saying the same thing. Yes. If we have that kind of thing, it's good to improve their lifestyle. (P005)(L:195-205).

Theme 4: Needs Guidance

No Formal/Proper Guidance

Participants were asked about interest of having guidance such as module. Teachers expressed the feeling they have no proper or formal guidance focusing on motor and self-care skills. Sometimes, they feel guilty when they cannot meet the demands of the children. They are looking for some help and show interest in practice guidance, such as a module that could guide them to solve the problem.

"I work in this field, and sometimes we are faced with children who cannot do what other people can do. We face that kind of child, so how can we help him or her? So, the idea must come from a module. When we already have an idea, we can just refer to that. So, if he cannot do it, we must do this for this child." (T006) (L:350-357)

One of the parents, a father, 31 years old, who works as an engineer in a private company, expressed the feeling that they do not know what to refer to when they need guidance, especially when they are parents of the first child.

"Yes, I really need it (module as guidance). Because some parents are like me. I have our first child who must go to school and is growing up. Sometimes we don't have enough material or resources

to refer to. If there is a module for guidance, it might help and it's not only a help, but very helpful to manage children before they go to primary school later." (P008) (L:111-115).

Lack of Ideas to Help Child

A lack of ideas to help children is another point of view that teacher shows her interest to have formal guidance. Some children are too advanced and avoid being helped by teachers, while the others are too slow and difficult to help. The teacher lacks ideas to help the children since each child has different demands. The teacher also mentioned that having guidance such as a module would be better. Ms Y, a teacher 25 years old, said:

"How can we engage a child if the child lacks ability in self-care skills? What if the child is too independent and believes he or she can take care of themselves? He or she doesn't want us to help. When we asked them, they felt that they were already good enough. Some children are over-confident about doing it by themselves: 'I don't need your help' (imitate what child said). There are some children like that. Some children can't do everything. Can't dress and undress, can't comb their hair. How can we face that kind of situation for a few stages. I want a self-care module that can help teachers solve any possibility that can happen. For instance, all the notes I had mentioned earlier." (T006) (L:211-221)

Theme 5: Non-Standardized Guidance

No Continuity Between Learning at School and at Home

On the other hand, parents and teachers also share the interest to have standardized guidance. Different schools have different approaches used in teaching children. Even though they use a specific approach such as Montessori, some schools might not use it correctly due to nonspecific guidance for applying it. Therefore, it is not easy to monitor or measure the effectiveness of the school's approach to children. One of the teacher shared as follows:

"Actually, it is like the one brand (Montessori), which depends on the school and how far they want to use the Montessori apparatuses in their teaching of children, including things related to self-care skills. So, there are even schools who use the word 'Montessori' but when we see the apparatuses, there are so many(apparatuses) but not sufficient or not complete (center not use it correctly). We can see they are not applying and practising that, hands on. Actually, practical hands-on will greatly help children with self-care skills." (T006)(L:179-185)

Mothers also feel that they do not have proper or standard guidance that they can refer to in teaching their children. They feel it is challenging to teach because they do not know whether they are teaching the same thing or the same way as teachers are doing at school. They are afraid that the children might be confused if there is no continuity. Hence, one mother expressed the feeling that, if they have sources such as applications or online guidance, they will have some guidance that is also used by teachers at school.

"Maybe develop one application for parents to use at home. For example, if we do tasks at preschool, then, when he needs to revise, we can open the same application which parents would know teachers use at school." (P002)(L:124-127)

Discussion

Five major themes emerged from the interviews, each representing based on the study's aim. One major theme, "Limited amount of knowledge," represents parents' understanding of a child's overall development and how parents and teachers perceive motor skills related to self-care. Another two themes emerged, "Time constraints" and "Child's factors," representing factors that inhibit them when teaching motor skills related to self-care skills among preschool children. Another two themes: "Needs guidance" and "Non-standardized guidance," represent an interest in having formal guidance such as module.

Parents limit their knowledge in understanding a child's development to academic, communication and other skills rather than self-care skills. It might be because this study population focuses on typical children with little or no issue with self-care skills. Additionally, the parenting style could be too pampering, which means a willingness to help with self-care skills, even if a child might not need it (Kim et al., 2017). Parents from a Malaysian background strongly emphasize parenting practices connected to family interdependence and delay of autonomy in their children (Winskel et al., 2013). For instance, Australian caregivers had earlier age expectations than Malaysian caregivers for children using the toilet without help (Winskel et al., 2013). Parents also pay less attention to other skills because they are more concerned with the child's academic performance (Grammatikopoulos, Gregoriadis, Tsigilis, & Zachopoulou, 2018; Luo, Tamis-LeMonda, & Song, 2013). This is in line with the high value placed on education and early mastery of academic skills by Malaysian parents (Winskel et al., 2013). Focusing on academic achievement might be due to contextual factors such as future scarce educational opportunities (Luo et al., 2013). In contrast, it is vital to encourage parents to have more knowledge about a child's development related to self-care because it is one of the essential skills that need to be mastered during the preschool period (Sezici & Akkaya, 2020). It is agreed that having good motor and self-care skills give opportunity and a sense of competence to participate in daily activities, play, education and community events (Burgess et al., 2019).

Furthermore, this study also highlighted how participants perceived motor skills related to self-care skills performance and that most participants showed a lack of awareness in that area. Even physical development emphasized in the Standard National Pre-school Curriculum 2017 was designed to provide children with motor skills (Aquino, Mamat, & Che Mustafa, 2017). Nevertheless, there is limited exposure to teachers and parents about the importance of motor skills in enabling children to be independent in self-care skills (Adhe, Maulidya, Al Ardha, Rachmadyanti, & Faeruz, 2020). Teachers and parents might not have a clear role in motor skills in a child's life. One of the factors could be that parents might not be familiar with the term "motor skills" too, while teachers might not fully understand the role of motor skills. Motor skills are considered essential to enable children to achieve an optimum level of independence in self-care skills (Clark & Kingsley, 2020). Previous studies found that difficulties in motor skills will impact children's independence in self-care (Clark & Kingsley, 2020; Sezici & Akkaya, 2020). Teachers and parents should be exposed to the importance of good motor skills to enhance a child's self-care. Hence, parents and teacher's understanding with support from the expert such as occupational therapists (Case-Smith, 2000; Lin, Lin, & Yu, 2018) will improve child's independence (Pekdogan & Akgul, 2016) and improve parents' knowledge, which can positively impact self-care abilities (Lin et al., 2018).

Theme “Time constraints” is one of the factors that inhibit teaching motor and self-care skills which represents both fathers and mothers in this study agree that they did not have much time to teach their children due to working and children spend most of their time at school compared to home. In line with this, teaching self-care skills is demanding when extra demands require complex tasks that will take more time to teach children (Hwang, Chao, & Liu, 2013). As a result, parents may rely on teachers to teach their children motor and self-care skills. Consistently, children do not show a good pattern of motor skills development according to chronological age (Abdullah et al., 2016; Baharom, Hashim, & Mansor, 2014; Noordin et al., 2019). At the same time, teachers also mentioned that children lack the opportunity to learn correctly, especially those affected by the pandemic. However, based on the standard preschool curriculum, there are many other domains that teachers need to cover for each child regardless of any situation (Aquino et al., 2017; Taha et al., 2020). Hence, teachers and parents must collaborate with occupational therapists to support them to ensure that motor skills and self-care skills training is embedded in a child’s daily routine.

Another theme, “Child’s factors,” represent that children in this study were reported to have different attitudes and characteristics that require parents and teachers to approach them differently. Teachers’ early identification of children’s interaction patterns will allow teachers to focus on and plan effective activities that will actively encourage and increase children’s engagement (Noor, Bt, Rahim, Suryani, & Abd, 2013). Similarly, a good parent will always look for adequate source information on how to help children in self-care activities, provide facilities and always provide the opportunity to enable the child to independently perform self-care activities (Ningsih, Purwanta, & Hartini, 2018). Parents’ and teachers’ cooperation was crucial to helping children develop motor skills (Iivonen, Sääkslahtia, & Nissinenb, 2011) and self-care skills (Pesau et al., 2020). Conversely, some children in this study also reported that they prefer to learn from teachers since they might have spent most of the time with teachers. Besides, in recent trends, most Malaysian parents are working, and children spend longer at school with teachers, mainly in private preschools (Mustafa, Nor, & Azman, 2013). It shows that teachers and parents need a good strategy and approach to ensure that children receive the learning effectively. A supported study by Alemдар and Polat (2014) showed that different individual giving care to preschool children affects child’s self-care skills development. An occupational therapist who is an expert in motor skills and self-care areas (Gronski & Doherty, 2020) could assist such as producing formal guidance that both teacher and parents could benefit from.

Theme “Needs guidance” represent that parents and teachers showed a lack of teaching ideas, while teachers mentioned that they do not have proper guidance for teaching self-care skills to children. The emerging themes show the parent’s and teachers’ interests in having formal and specific guidance such as developed modules. Some children have different demands, requiring parents and teachers to seek guidance or help, such as modules. It is especially true of parents who are raising their first child. Malaysia’s Early Childcare and Childhood Education (ECCE) curriculum uphold holistic child development as the core principle, including cognitive, socio-emotion, physical, and language development (Taha et al., 2020). Nevertheless, the practice still lacks the effort to ensure children’s optimum skill development and focuses primarily on achieving quantitative academic target figures rather than other essential skills (Taha et al., 2020). The preschool teachers and experts with more than five years’ experience in preschool education suggested that preschools should

promote total and holistic skills development to prepare children for a better future (Rohaty Mohd Majzub, 2013). Correspondingly, the best approaches focus on providing teachers with proper guidance, such as relevant skill target information, and effectively implementing the curricula (Pianta, Barnett, Burchinal, & Thornburg, 2009). Indeed, preschool teachers are still not up to the mark in academic qualifications and require more professional development training (Rohaty Mohd Majzub, 2013; Taha et al., 2020). Therefore, this study suggested that proper guidance, such as specific motor skills and self-care skills modules, should be provided to teachers to promote that all preschool children can achieve independence in self-care skills.

The “Non-standardized guidance” theme emerged to represent the interest of having developed a module in which the parents and teachers in this study also agree that they have no authoritative guidance regarding self-care skills. They hoped to have easy access to guidance that they could practice at school and home. They are looking forward to synchronizing the child’s learning even in different environments. Although the government stipulated the need to implement the National Standard Preschool Curriculum as the guidelines, public and private preschools may be differentiated based on the curriculum approach (Mustafa et al., 2013). The variety of curriculum approaches used in preschool gives children different qualities of teaching and learning, which is also difficult to monitor (Rohaty Mohd Majzub, 2013). Therefore, it is beneficial if a self-care module can be developed to ensure that the teaching and learning skills are more objective and achievable.

Limitations

This study involves a relatively small sample size, but excellent examples of data are selected to provide a rich, contextualized understanding of the concepts of interest (Morse, 2015). The study is also limited as it was only conducted in one urban area in Malaysia. However, the study’s strengths were that the participants were of a range of ages, from different educational backgrounds, and whose children were from private and public preschools, which ensured a diversity of perspectives were represented.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study highlights prominent barriers to parents and teachers that inhibit them from teaching motor and self-care skills. Further, parents also show limited understanding of children’s needs and development, and parents and teachers lack awareness role of motor skills that could support self-care independence. Parents could be unaware that some other skills and areas should be concerned instead of academic skills only. However, parents and teachers show interest in having formal guidance such as a module that could assist them with better ideas, approaches and strategies. The most important thing is effective guidance in achieving good motor skills development and self-care. This study also emphasized that there was a collaboration between teachers and parents with support from health professionals such as occupational therapists, as it takes a village to raise a child. It is recommended that tailored and formal guidance such as modules be designed to help children receive formal learning motor skills related to self-care skills.

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