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Early child school readiness

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Abstract

The school going status of children of Chepang and non-Chepang children, 51.1% children were started to go school whereas 48.9% were not going to school. In total 83.4% children can go toilet alone whereas 16.6% children needs support to go toilet. 98.2% children of Chitawan followed by 88.9% of Makawanpur district could wash their mouth by themselves. 93.6% children could say about their hunger whereas 6.4% could not say. 99% mothers replied that their children could play with their friends. 51.4% children could tell his/her name, age and address whereas 48.6% children could not tell. 62.5% children could say the name of parents. In school education also, teacher used to teach the name and address of parents, teacher and other friends and family members. School readiness of children of Makawanpur children was better than the Chitawan.

Keywords: Age, children, food, readiness, telling, toilet, wash, wear

Introduction

Early childhood is a time of remarkable for physical, cognitive, social, and emotional development. Infants enter the world with a limited range of skills and abilities. Watching a child's development of new motor, cognitive, language, and social skills is a source of wonder for parents and caregivers. During the early childhood years, such growth and changes happen at a rapid pace, so fast that adults often marvel at how quickly certain skills emerge. School readiness is currently defined by three interlinked dimensions: a) ready children; b) ready schools; and c) ready families. Children, schools and families are considered ready when they have gained the competencies and skills required to interface with the other dimensions and support smooth transitions (children, 2011) [3].

Studies have examined the definition of readiness among different stakeholders in the kindergarten transition process. A national survey of kindergarten teachers showed that teachers identified "ready" children as those who are physically healthy, well-rested and well-fed; able to communicate needs, wants and thoughts verbally; and curious and enthusiastic in approaching new activities. Surprisingly, teachers did not attach particular importance to specific numeracy and literacy skills. Another study found that teachers place greater emphasis on self-regulatory and interpersonal skills rather than academic competence. Parents, in contrast, typically define readiness in terms of academic abilities, such as the ability to count, name objects, or identify letters (Rimm-Kaufman & Sanilos, 2017) [11]. Many early childhood experts have called into question the very notion of "school readiness." Clearly, all children at all ages are "ready to learn." The meaningful question is not whether a child is ready to learn, but rather what a child is ready to learn. Even "reading readiness" – a concept with a long history in early childhood development – has little meaning in the context of current conceptualizations of emerging literacy, which includes general knowledge, language and vocabulary skills, and even early scribbling. Literacy, according to current experts, begins to develop long before children enter school (J.Stipek, 2009) [7]. The study of human development is a rich and varied subject. We all have personal experience with development, but it is sometimes difficult to understand exactly how and why people grow, learn, and change.

The study was conducted in rural area of Chitawan and Makawanpur districts of Nepal in the Chepang community of 3-5 years children.

Methodology: A research design is the arrangement of conditions for collection and analysis of data in a manner that aims to combine relevance to the research

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purpose with economy in procedure (Kothari, 2009)" [9]. A research design provides the framework for the collection and analysis of data. This research was an explorative based on mixed method. Through such research we can analyse the various factors which motivate people to behave in particular manner or which make people like or dislike in food intake in Chepang community of Chitawan and Makawanpur districts of Nepal. This study was non-experimental cross sectional.

Primary data were collected by using the structured questionnaires. Simple frequency distribution was applied to identify the nutrition status of 3-5 years children. Comparative study was conducted between the Chepang and Non-Chepang communities.

Quantitative, cross-sectional survey method has been used. A well-structured questionnaire and measurement of weight and height were used to determine the nutritional status of children of socio-economic, environmental, demographic and household deprivation on nutritional status of the 3-5 years children in rural areas of Chitawan and Makawanpur districts in Chepang communities. It was compared with Brahman/Chhetri of 3-5 years children. Census method was used for questionnaire survey from Chepang population 3-5 year children household for data collection. The key informants were 3-5 years children households.

Similarly, quantitative data were gathered by structured questions containing height, weight and mid-upper arms circumference (MUAC) measurement. The anthropometric measure as well as Department of Health and WHO standards were used for the determination of nutritional status of 3-5 years children. Standard deviation of score (Z-score) for weight-for-age (WAZ), height-for-age (HAZ) and weight-for-height (WHZ) were calculated.

Developmental models of school readiness and for early childhood education results revealed significant differences favouring children in the enriched intervention classrooms on measures of vocabulary, emergent literacy, emotional understanding, social problem solving, social behaviour, and learning engagement. Implications are its programs and policies (Karen, Celen, Rober, & Nelson, 2013) [8].

For most children, interior of the home and its immediate surroundings are the first environments they experience throughout their early years. Young children spend the majority of their time in the home. Home environment has been shown to be a major factor that influences the overall development of children. Within the home, children also have their early interactions with the members of their family, and availability and quality of resources for learning and playing largely determine the nature of these interactions (Iltus, 2007, p. 2) [6].

The term ECD (ECD) in the title of the paper and throughout the text is used advisedly. It is very important, at least to those working in the ECD field, that we try not to talk about preschool education. The latter term implies an emphasis on a formal institutional approach at the early childhood stage. This is only one form of intervention within the field of ECD. Reference to school introduces the major challenge of this paper, which is to present a view of education which goes beyond the narrow confines of "schooling" and sees education as a developmental process in each human being which begins at birth, or even before birth, and ends only with death (Torkington, 2015, p. 145) [12].

ECD programmes can have important effects on a child's primary school readiness, enrolment, progress, and performance. This review provides a critical examination of that evidence, within a framework positing an interactive effect between the readiness of children for schools and the readiness of schools for children. In this review, "readiness" refers to individual characteristics of children and schools as well as to family and community characteristics, values, expectations, structures, and organization (Myers & Landers, 1989, p. 2) [10].

Three interlinked dimensions currently define school readiness: a) ready children; b) ready schools; and c) ready families. Children, schools and families are considered ready when they have gained the competencies and skills required to interface with the other dimensions and support smooth transitions. For example, the child transitions to school, the school transitions to accepting new children into Grade 1, and the families transition to sending their children to school on time and interacting with the school (UNICEF, 2012, p. 3) [13].

The United Nations World Fit for Children (WFFC) mission statement of 2002 is an excellent example of more current concepts of school readiness, namely, a good start in life, in a nurturing and safe environment that enables children to survive and be physically healthy, mentally alert, emotionally secure, socially competent and able to learn.

School readiness is defined by two characteristic features on three dimensions. The characteristic features are 'transition' and 'gaining competencies', and the dimensions are children's readiness for school, schools' readiness for children, and families' and communities' readiness for school (Britto, 2012, p. 6) [2].

National Education Goals Panel, school readiness encompasses five dimensions: (1) physical well-being and motor development; (2) social and emotional development; (3) approaches to learning; (4) language development (including early literacy); and (5) cognition and general knowledge [6]. The school readiness indicator reported on here includes four skills related to early literacy and cognitive development: a child's ability to recognize letters, count to 20 or higher, write his or her first name, and read words in a book.

In conclusion, the findings from this large-scale Australian study show many consistencies with the international research into the type of factors found to be relevant to children's school readiness. Most factors applied similarly, to children from financially disadvantaged and non-financially disadvantaged households, although some distinct relationships were found for particular groups. The findings make clear that children from financially disadvantaged families are at greater risk of poor school readiness, due to the much higher rates of risk factors evident among this group and the accumulation of risks experienced. The implications drawn from the findings could be used to guide future interventions to reduce the gap between financially disadvantaged and non-financially disadvantaged children in school readiness and to assist in helping all children make a positive start to school (Edwards, Baxter, Smart, Sanson, & Hayes, 2009, p. 30) [4].

The first three years of a child's life are the most crucial for a child's development, as the child grows rapidly than during this period (WHO, 2003). Healthy eating not only support growth, it is fundamental to brain development and has been linked to learning and school readiness. The effects of poor

nutrition early in life can lead to a variety challenges in children, such as:

- Delayed motor and cognitive development
- Social/emotional problems
- Attention difficulties
- Poor academic achievement (WHO, 2003).

Another significant concern is the growing problem of childhood obesity. In 2004, it was reported that 26% of Canadian children and youth aged 2 to 17 were either overweight or obese. Obesity has been linked to a number of illnesses such as diabetes, stroke, heart disease, hypertension, and certain cancers.

Parents are a child’s first educator. A child’s family and home environment has a strong impact on his/her language and literacy development and educational achievement. This impact is stronger during the child’s early years but continues throughout their school years. Many background variables affect the impact of the family and home environment (such as socio-economic status, level of parental education, family size, etc.) but parental attitudes and behaviour, especially parents’ involvement in home learning activities, can be crucial to children’s achievement and can overcome the influences of other factors (Bonci, 2011, p. 2) [1].

School readiness includes the readiness of the individual child, the school's readiness for children, and the ability of the family and community to support optimal early child development. It is the responsibility of schools to be ready for all children at all levels of readiness. Children's readiness for kindergarten should become an outcome measure for community-based programs, rather than an exclusion

criterion at the beginning of the formal educational experience. Our new knowledge of early brain and child development has revealed that modifiable factors in a child's early experience can greatly affect that child's learning trajectory. Many US children enter kindergarten with limitations in their social, emotional, cognitive, and physical development that might have been significantly diminished or eliminated through early identification of and attention to child and family needs. American Academy of paediatrics policy statements “Quality Early Education and Child Care from Birth to Kindergarten” and “The Inappropriate Use of School ‘Readiness’ Tests” (High, 2008) [5].

Objective

The specific objective of the study is to explore the level of school readiness among 3-5 years Children.

Result & Discussion

Recent research has redefined what it means for a child to “be ready” for kindergarten. This primary objective of Goals 2000 set by the National Education Goals Panel was “to insure that all children enter school ready to learn.” Historically, views on readiness have placed differing levels of priority on children’s social and academic preparedness.

School going status: The data of Table no. 1 give the school going status of children of Chepang and non-Chepang children. In total, 51.1% children were started to go school whereas 48.9% were not going to school. Similarly, on the basis of ethnicity, 72% non-Chepang children in comparison of 36.7% Chepang children were going school.

Table 1: School going status

District	Ethnicity		Yes	No	Total
			#		
Makawanpur	Non-Chepang	#	190	123	313
		%	60.7	39.3	100
	Chepang	#	59	216	275
		%	21.5	78.5	100
	Total	#	249	339	588
		%	42.3	57.7	1000
Chitawan	Non-Chepang	#	178	20	198
		%	89.9	10.1	100
	Chepang	#	212	252	464
		%	45.7	54.3	1000
	Total	#	390	272	662
		%	58.9	41.1	100
Total	Non-Chepang	#	368	143	511
		%	72.0	28.0	1000
	Chepang	#	271	468	739
		%	36.7	63.3	1000
	Total	#	639	611	1250
		%	51.1	48.9	100

58.9% children of Chitawan district were going school and 42.3% children of Makawanpur district. Similarly, district wise ethnicity shows that in Makawanpur district, 60.7% non-Chepang children followed by only 21.5% Chepang children were going schools. Whereas, 89.9% non-Chepang children of Chitawan district followed by 45.7% Chepang children were going school.

Use of toilet: The school readiness of children can be determined by their physical action also. Nearly many of the 3-4 years children cannot do much physical care which affects the regularity of school going children. Basically, in community level, there are no facilities of Montessori or baby care in schools.

Table 2: Use of toilet

Use of toilet Cross tabulation					
			Child can go toilet		Total
			Yes	No	
District	Makawanpur	Count	390	198	588
		% within District	66.3%	33.7%	100.0%
	Chitawan	Count	653	9	662
		% within District	98.6%	1.4%	100.0%
Total		Count	1043	207	1250
		% within District	83.4%	16.6%	100.0%

As the data of Table 2 shows that in total 83.4% children can go toilet alone whereas 16.6% children needs support to go toilet. District wise, 98.6% children of Chitawan followed by 66.3% of Makawanpur district could go to toilet alone.

Self practice of mouth wash: From the health perspective, children should be cared for their sanitation. Teeth brushing and cleaning of mouth and face is necessary to be healthy. So, regarding this work, mothers were asked about the capacity of their children. In total, 93.8% mothers responded that their children could do teeth brushing and cleaning the face by themselves.

Table 3: Self practice of mouth wash

Self-practice of mouth wash Cross tabulation					
			Child can wash mouth		Total
			Yes	No	
District	Makawanpur	Count	523	65	588
		% within District	88.9%	11.1%	100.0%
	Chitawan	Count	650	12	662
		% within District	98.2%	1.8%	100.0%
Total		Count	1173	77	1250
		% within District	93.8%	6.2%	100.0%

The children who could do their basic work, such children could send the school. District wise, 98.2% children of Chitawan followed by 88.9% of Makawanpur district could wash their mouth by themselves.

Ask for food: Following the analysis of Table no. 4, the study had also collected the data related to the interaction capacity of children also. Respondents were asked that whether their children could ask about their hunger or not.

Table 4: Ask for food

Ask for food Cross tabulation					
			Child can say about hunger		Total
			Yes	No	
District	Makawanpur	Count	508	80	588
		% within District	86.4%	13.6%	100.0%
	Chitawan	Count	662	0	662
		% within District	100.0%	0.0%	100.0%
Total		Count	1170	80	1250
		% within District	93.6%	6.4%	100.0%

The data of Table 4 show that, 93.6% children could say about their hunger whereas 6.4% could not say. District wise, 100% children of Chitawan followed by 86.4% of Makawanpur district could say about the hunger.

Self-taken food: This is the very practical that basically up to 5 years children were used to feed by their parents or

other caretaker. However, such practices are found different in different social as well as economic groups. In Nepalese context, higher class family used to ask care takers to feed their children but in economic lower society had to work in field from the very morning so their children become habitual to eat by themselves.

Table 5: Self taken food

District * Self taken food Cross tabulation					
			Child can eat		Total
			Yes	No	
District	Makawanpur	Count	463	125	588
		% within District	78.7%	21.3%	100.0%
	Chitawan	Count	662	0	662
		% within District	100.0%	0.0%	100.0%
Total		Count	1125	125	1250
		% within District	90.0%	10.0%	100.0%

The data of Table 5 show that in total 90% children could eat by them whereas 10% could not eat. If schools going children could not eat by themselves and needed support of others then in such condition, children health cannot be well. Parents will be denied to send such small children to school. District wise, 100% children of Chitawan followed by 78.7% of Makawanpur district could eat food by themselves.

Self-wear on/off cloth: The study also collected the data related to the children's ability to wear cloth. Table no. 6 presented that in total only 44.4% children could wear the cloth. District wise, 56.8% of Makawanpur district followed by 33.4% children of Chitawan could wear their cloth. In this context, school readiness of children of Makawanpur children was better than the Chitawan.

Table 6: Self wear on/off cloth

District * Self wear on/off cloth Cross tabulation					
			Child can wear on/off cloth		Total
			Yes	No	
District	Makawanpur	Count	334	254	588
		% within District	56.8%	43.2%	100.0%
	Chitawan	Count	221	441	662
		% within District	33.4%	66.6%	100.0%
Total		Count	555	695	1250
		% within District	44.4%	55.6%	100.0%

Play with other children: Playing and enjoying is the common character of children. Children start to play immediately after birth; just nature of play becomes different with the age growth of children. Regarding the data

of Table 7, in total 99% mothers replied that their children could play with their friends. It is one good character of children, which makes easy to socialize the children.

Table 7: Play with other children

District * Play with other children Cross tabulation					
			Child can play with other children		Total
			Yes	No	
District	Makawanpur	Count	575	13	588
		% within District	97.8%	2.2%	100.0%
	Chitawan	Count	662	0	662
		% within District	100.0%	0.0%	100.0%
Total		Count	1237	13	1250
		% within District	99.0%	1.0%	100.0%

The data show that 100% children of Chitawan followed by 97.8% of Makawanpur district could play with other children.

address whereas 48.6% children could not tell. The children who can say their name and address, such children could be safe from the security perspective also because they can take support from other person by saying their own address in the case of missing also.

Telling his/her name, age and address: Table 8 presented that in total 51.4% children could tell his/her name, age and

Table 8: Telling his/her name, age and address

District * Telling his/her name, age and address Cross tabulation					
			Child can tell his/her name, age and address		Total
			Yes	No	
District	Makawanpur	Count	407	181	588
		% within District	69.2%	30.8%	100.0%
	Chitawan	Count	236	426	662
		% within District	35.6%	64.4%	100.0%
Total		Count	643	607	1250
		% within District	51.4%	48.6%	100.0%

The above table shows that 69.2% children of Makawanpur followed by 35.6% of Chitawan district could tell their own name, age and address.

to say the name and parents. Mostly, 5 years children can say the name of their parents also. In data of table no. 7, in total 62.5% children could say the name of parents. In school education also, teacher used to teach the name and address of parents, teacher and other friends and family members.

Can tell parents name: Following the analysis of Table no 9, study also asked respondents about the ability of children

Table 9: Can tell parents' names

District * Can tell parents names Cross tabulation					
			Child can tell parents names		Total
			Yes	No	
District	Makawanpur	Count	396	192	588
		% within District	67.3%	32.7%	100.0%
	Chitawan	Count	385	277	662
		% within District	58.2%	41.8%	100.0%
Total		Count	781	469	1250
		% within District	62.5%	37.5%	100.0%

Table 9 shows that 67.3% children of Makawanpur followed by 58.2% children of Chitawan district could say the name of parents.

From the analysis of 2 to 9, it is known that the school readiness of children can be affected from the physical ability of children; whether children can go toilet alone or not, their ability to wash their body, can say their health status, can say their own name, parents' name. If the children could be able to handle the basic physical care then parents can be confidence to send their children to school, otherwise school has to develop the child friendly space and need to mobilize some care taker so that parents can be encouraged to send their children to school. As the district wise data, physical readiness of children of Chitawan district was observed better than the Makawanpur district in whole which support the data of school going status of 1 too.

Because of socio cultural and socio economic aspects, children from different ethnic groups would have variation in school readiness. Thus, Brahmin/Chhetri children have more privilege than Chepang (marginalized ethnic group) children.

Conclusion: The school going status of children of Chepang and non-Chepang children was found mixed. In total, 51.1% children were started to go school whereas 48.9% were not going to school. Similarly, on the basis of ethnicity, 72% non-Chepang children in comparison of 36.7% Chepang children were going to school. In total 83.4% children can go to toilet alone whereas 16.6% children need support to go toilet. 98.2% children of Chitawan followed by 88.9% of Makawanpur district could wash their mouth by themselves. 93.6% children could say about their hunger whereas 6.4% could not say. School readiness of children of Makawanpur children was better than the Chitawan. In total 99% mothers replied that their children could play with their friends. It is one good character of children, which makes easy to socialize the children. Total 51.4% children could tell his/her name, age and address whereas 48.6% children could not tell. 62.5% children could say the name of parents. In school education also, teacher used to teach the name and address of parents, teacher and other friends and family members.

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