

## Parental Influence and Perceptions: A Five-Year Exploration of School Readiness

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### Abstract

*This study explores the influence of parental influence and perceptions on school readiness over the past five years. A systematic review of 720 items from Web of Science, Scopus, and ERIC databases yielded 13 relevant publications. The results highlight the impact of parental involvement, parenting style, and children's self-regulation skills on school readiness. Varied parental perspectives were found, with some prioritizing cognitive aspects and others emphasizing health, happiness, and social skills. Additionally, parents' perceptions were correlated with their level of independence and educational background influenced the perceived importance of cognitive skills. Emphasizing academic and behavioral skills before kindergarten correlated with higher academic achievement, self-regulation, and social skills in children. Negative influences on key competencies for school readiness included parental insensitivity, lack of warmth, maternal depression, children's negativity, insecure attachment, and parental incarceration. This recent research reinforces the importance of parental characteristics and perceptions in shaping school readiness activities with children.*

**Keywords:** *School Readiness, Transition to School, Parents' Influence, Parents' Perception.*

### Introduction

Getting into school is a momentous change in children and their families' life. Instead of play, learning becomes the main activity for children who also have to adjust to a new social and material environment (Szabó, 2005; Lim et al, 2021). In Hungary, school readiness has to be addressed in the context of kindergarten-school transition, with kindergarten having become mandatory for children 3–6 years old. Previous research has shown that both school readiness and the transition to school per se are determinants of children's performance in school (Clarke – Sharpe, 2003) and have an impact on their later academic and social performance as well (Tizard et al, 1988; Ramey–Campbell, 1991; Alexandrer–Entwisle, 1998; Dockett et al, 2007). Longitudinal research has shown that the development of certain skill areas at the time of school entry significantly influences later academic performance. According to Heckman's economic analysis and research results, supporting these years is not just beneficial from the children's development perspective, but these investments also lead to socio-economic benefits.

Although there is increasing research focus on successful school start, a universal definition of school readiness remains elusive. Opinions differ regarding the necessary skills in this regard, which is further complicated by the fact that elementary school children cross the threshold of school with different levels of skills, abilities, knowledge, and competence (Dockett et al, 2007). Although there is no professional consensus on the definition of school readiness, most definitions formulate school readiness as a multi-dimensional concept, identifying it with the presence of the skills necessary for sufficient school performance, which includes the child's physical condition and health, social and emotional competence, language and cognitive development, communication skills, general knowledge and attitude towards institutional learning and self-regulation in class (Domitrovich et al. 2012; Guhn et al. 2016; Miller and Kehl 2019).

With increased attention paid to the importance of school readiness, research interest has also increased with regard to the perspectives of teachers, parents, and children. According to Dockett et al (2007), children, parents, and teachers generally consider different elements important when starting school. Regardless of these differing views, the cooperation between parents, kindergarten teachers, and

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schoolteachers plays a key role in making the transition successful and reaching school maturity (Lim et al, 2021).

According to Landry and Smith (2008), parents are the most influential component of the children's environment. In addition to the child's abilities, the success of the transition and school readiness is shaped by the relationships and resources of the parents, the parental academic socialization, the parent's beliefs, mental health, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, their parenting style, the mother-child attachment style, parent-child interactions' quality, as well as the experiences and opportunities the child has at home (Jose et al 2022; Bronfenbrenner and Morris 2006; UNICEF, 2012; Tayler et al. 2015; OECD, 2016; Mistry et al, 2020; Pianta et al, 2020; Welsh et al, 2020; Brooks-Grunn – Markman, 2005; Kanammah, 2014; Hosokawa – Katsura, 2019; Belsky – Fearon, 2002; Puccioni, 2015; 2018).

As parents play an essential role in their children's school readiness, and therefore their later success at school, the aim of this systematic review was to assess the literature and provide a comprehensive overview in regard to parents' perceptions and their influence on school readiness.

## Materials and Methods

This systematic review was carried out considering the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analysis guidelines (Page et al., 2021). A literature search was conducted in the following databases: Institute of Web of Science, Education Resources Information Center, and Scopus. The literature search was concluded on January 31, 2023. Table 1 shows the searched databases with the respective search terms.

**Table 1.** Databases And Search Terms

Source	Search terms	Articles
Web of Science	TI=parents* AND (view* OR perspective*OR effect*) on AND school* AND readiness*	541
Scopus	ALL: (parents AND view AND effect AND on AND school AND readiness)	161
ERIC	title: parents* AND view* OR perspective* OR effect*) on AND school* AND readiness*	18

ERIC, Education Resources Information Center.

After removing duplicates, articles underwent title, abstract, and full text screening. The inclusion criteria were as follows: i) empirical studies that assess parents' attitudes and/or effect towards children's school readiness, ii) published between 2019 and 2023 following peer review, iii) available in English language. The exclusion criteria were as follows: i) studies focusing on online teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic, ii) studies focusing on minority, immigrant, or multilingual parents, iii) studies focusing on disabled, autistic, hospitalized, or post-traumatic children.

## Results

A total of 13 studies met the search and selection criteria. Figure 1 illustrates in detail the selection process and Table 2 describes the main characteristics of the publications selected in the literature review and analyzed according to the research questions.

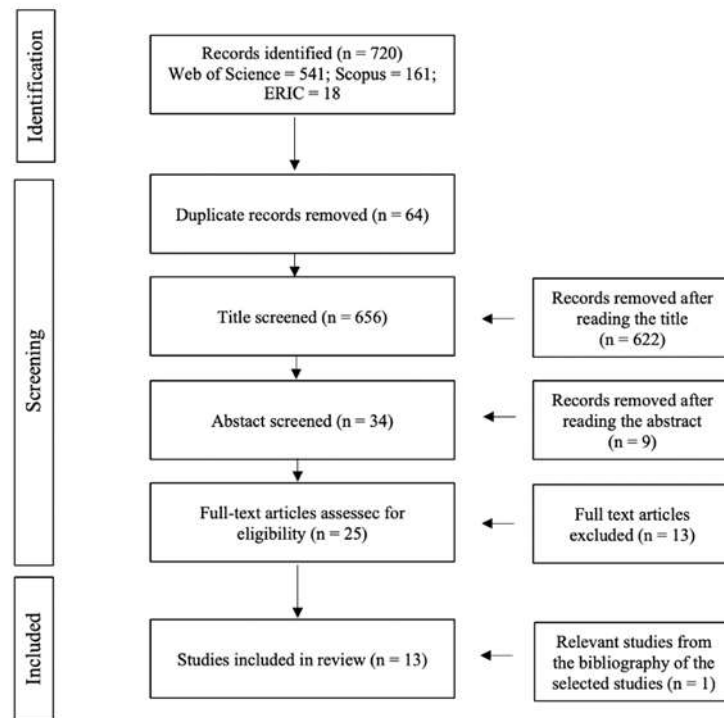


Figure 1. PRISMA Flow Diagram

Table 2. Included articles

Lead author, year	Country	Sample size	Aims	Methods	Results
Yong, N.H., Abdullah, M.N.L.Y. (2022)	Malaysia	113	Identify: -the level of school readiness among elementary students with behavioral problems -the influences of self-regulation skills and parenting style on school readiness	Quantitative: data analysis, descriptive correlational research design, structural equation modeling	Self-regulation skills and parenting style were revealed to be two major variables that impact school preparation and behavioral difficulties.
Shim, S.Y., Lim, S.A. (2022).	South-Korea	175	Examine the longitudinal association among mother-infant attachment security, peer play interactions, and school readiness as well as analyze the mediating effects of peer play interactions in this association from	Quantitative: secondary data analysis	Attachment security at 17 months had a direct effect on social and emotional development, a domain of school readiness, at age 7. Central role of the quality of early attachment relationships and the type of peer

			infancy to the transition to school age		interactions on the development of school readiness from infancy into school years.
Polat, Z., & Bayındır, D. (2020).	Turkey	277	This study investigates the relations between school readiness and self-regulation skills of preschool children and parental involvement towards education of their preschool children.	Quantitative: A structural equation model	It is shown that the parental involvement and self-regulation skills are significantly related to children's school readiness.
Lohndorf, R. T., Vermeer, H. J., Harpe, C. D. L., & Mesman, J. (2021).	Chile	70	This study examined the role of socioeconomic status (SES), ethnicity, maternal self-competence, parental cognitive stimulation, and maternal supportive discipline as predictors of five-year-old preschoolers' school readiness	Mixed method: observation and questionnaire	Results show that maternal supportive discipline predicted school readiness above and beyond socioeconomic status and ethnicity.  Children who received higher levels of maternal supportive discipline at 3 1/2 years showed more school readiness abilities at age 5.
Testa, A., & Jackson, D. B. (2021).	USA	15402	This study examines the relationship between parental incarceration and school readiness among 3- to 5-year-old children in the United States.	Quantitative: secondary data analysis	Children who have had experienced parental incarceration are worse off in terms of school readiness compared to their peers who have not experienced parental incarceration. Children exposed to parental incarceration are at significantly greater risk at early learning skills, self-regulation, social-emotional development, and

					physical health & motor development.
Han, S., & Ko, K. (2021).	South-Korea	399	This study examined how the longitudinal associations among children's negative emotionality, mothers' depressive symptoms, parental warmth, and children's school readiness and whether the associations vary as a function of fathers' positive involvement in low-income South Korean families.	quantitative: secondary data analysis	Children's negative emotionality was indirectly associated with their school readiness three years later, through its association with mothers' depressive symptoms and warmth. Mothers' warmth mediated the association between mothers' depressive symptoms and children's school readiness, and fathers' warmth mediated the association between fathers' positive involvement and children's school readiness.
Öngören, S. (2021).	Turkey	25	The aim of this research was to examine parental practices aimed at supporting children's school readiness in social, emotional, cognitive, linguistic and self-care domains.	Qualitative: interview	Parental practises for supporting children's school readiness: Social terms: friend relationships, social activities, educational activities, family interaction and giving responsibility Emotional support: oral communication, emotional support, spending time and doing activities. Cognitive: number activities, book reading, games and oral activities Language support: conversation, book reading, games and feedback

					Self-care, practices: fostering habits, giving responsibility and being a role model were carried out.
Miller, M. M., & Kehl, L. M. (2019).	USA	81; 26	In the current study, we examined which characteristics of early school readiness were deemed most and least important according to parents and teachers of 30–42 months old children	Quantitative: questionnaire	Teachers and parents generally agreed upon the relative importance of early school readiness characteristics: being healthy, happy, and socially skilled were generally ranked as more important than cognitive abilities Parents with higher levels of education place less importance on cognitive skills for school readiness. Social-emotional skills are predictive of educational success, academic achievement More experience teachers placed less importance on children being able to follow directions and communicate
Puccioni, J., Baker, E. R., & Froiland, J. M. (2019).	USA	13,399	The current study examines associations among parents' school readiness beliefs, home-based involvement.	Quantitative: secondary data analysis	Parents emphasizing the significance of academic skills and behavioral attributes before kindergarten tend to have children with higher academic achievement, social skills, and self-regulatory skills; these school readiness beliefs are

					more strongly correlated with academic achievement than socio-emotional competencies, and there is variation in these beliefs and involvement based on race/ethnicity and socio-economic status.
Dunaway, L. E. F., Bazzano, A. N., Gray, S. A., & Theall, K. P. (2021).	USA	28	The current study aimed to address existing gaps in the literature by gathering parent perspectives on both health and school readiness in regard to neighborhood context as well as information on how parents' perceived level of neighborhood safety and support play a role in this relationship.	Qualitative: focus group interviews	Parents delineated school readiness characteristics into two primary categories: (1) knowledge content considered essential before starting school, and (2) the level of personal independence in basic daily activities. Additionally, participants highlighted social-emotional aspects, including skills like listening, respecting adults, and conflict resolution, with parents often implicitly linking neighborhood perceptions, such as crime and people, to their own stress in discussions about school readiness.
Oh, W., Kim, H. K., Park, S., Mastergeorge, A. M., & Roggman, L. (2022).	USA/South Korea	453	The present study sought to examine how maternal and paternal insensitivity from 24– to 36 months were similarly or differently manifested in shaping school readiness in	Quantitative: secondary data analysis	Both maternal and paternal insensitivity negatively impact school readiness, with maternal insensitivity indirectly predicting deficits in children's vocabulary and

			vocabulary and self-regulation skills among children from low-income families.		self-regulation skills, while paternal insensitivity directly predicts poorer self-regulation skills in children.
Xia, X., Hackett, R. K., & Webster, L. (2019)	China/USA	311	This study examined the moderating role of parenting style in the relations between different dimensions of parental involvement and their children's school readiness.	Quantitative: questionnaire	Home-based, school-based and home-school conferencing involvement were all positively related to children's school readiness. Home-based involvement showed stronger relationship to children's school readiness than the other two types of parental involvement.
Jose, K., Banks, S., Hansen, E., Jones, R., Zubrick, S. R., Stafford, J., & Taylor, C. L. (2020).	Australia	39	The aim of this study was to explore how parents experience and support their children's transition to school.	Mixed method: ethnographic study, questionnaire and interview	Parents see school readiness as their child's capacity to navigate the unfamiliar school environment independently, and they find early childhood services, especially those fostering social skills, helpful in facilitating their children's transition to school.

### *Parents' influence on Children's School Readiness*

Numerous studies have demonstrated the influence of school readiness on a child's school performance as well as their later academic and social performance (La Paro – Pianta, 2000; Reynolds – Bezruczko, 1993). Children's school readiness as a multifaceted construction related to many factors within the children's environment (Baldwin, 2011). The family's social class contributes to the children's development and consequently their readiness to school. Young children from low-income families are often at risk for limited school readiness. In addition to a lesser vocabulary, they also suffer from dis-advantages in emergent literacy and numeracy skills, self-regulation, socio-emotional skills, and socio-behavioral skills, which together can lead to more difficult school ad-justment and lower academic success (Mistry et al, 2010; Pianta et al, 2020; Welsh et al. 2020).



According to Landry and Smith (2008) parents are the most influential component of the children's environment. Parents are the closest people to their children; therefore, they play a significant role in the child's cognitive (overall intelligence, literacy, reading, math skills, and achievements), social, emotional, and behavioral development (Kanammah, 2014; Baldwin, 2011). Parents play a pivotal role in instilling good habits and routines in their children, which is crucial during early childhood to prepare for school. Demonstrating obedience, discipline, and responsibility through both teaching and example is vital. Research indicates that a parent's approach to upbringing is fundamental in establishing a strong foundation for school readiness (Kanammah, 2004 Welsh et al, 2020; Hosokama – Katsura, 2019).

Recent work by Young and Abdullah (2022) has supported these previous results. They found that self-regulation skills and parenting style are two major variables that impact school readiness, and behavioral difficulties. For example, authoritative style parenting has a potential to impact on the development of self-regulation skills, which has a major impact on school readiness.

Lohndorf et al.'s (2022) study also connect to the previous one. Their results show that children who received higher levels of maternal supportive discipline at 3.5 years of age showed better school readiness abilities at the age of 5. Polat and Dilan's (2022) research findings have also supported these results by finding a significant relationship between not only self-regulation skills and school readiness, but also between parental involvement and children's school readiness as well.

Xia et al (2019) have reported a comparable outcome in regard to parental involvement. According to their results, all three types of parenting involvement (home-based, school-based, home-school conferencing) positively correlated to school readiness.

Notably, the impact of parenting involvement can be reduced by poor quality parent-child interactions (Cooper et al., 2010). These interactions and their quality is further crucial as children develop school readiness skills over the years by interacting with their parents and peers.

Fewer warm parent-child interactions can be the sign of maternal and paternal insensitivity as investigated by Oh et al's (2022). Their results suggest that both maternal and paternal insensitivity have a negative effect on school readiness, albeit in different forms. Maternal insensitivity indirectly predicted deficits in children's vocabulary and self-regulation skills, while paternal insensitivity directly predicted children's poorer self-regulation skills (Oh et al, 2022).

Parent-child interactions can further be affected by emotionality and the mother's depressive symptoms (Conger, et al, 2002). Han – Ko (2021) in their research — among others — studied the relation between children's negative emotionality, mothers' depressive symptoms, and school readiness in low-income families. Based on these Han-Ko suggest that helping these mothers financially and socially would be a way to promote at risk children's school readiness.

Besides mothers' mental health, mother-infant attachment security is also determining in school readiness. In the last decades there has been some research studying the relationship between school readiness, academic success and mother-infant attachment security. This previous work has provided strong evidence linking secure attachment to school readiness skills (Belsky-Fearon, 2002; Bergin-Bergin, 2009). Shim-Lim's recent (2022) study also supported these previous findings. According to their results, attachment security at 17 months of age had a direct effect on social and emotional development and school readiness at 7 years of age.

In addition to jeopardizing the parent-child bond, an incarcerated parent has a negative impact on the entire family, as a result of which the child's readiness for school is also negatively affected. Imprisonment of a parent destabilizes the family both economically and emotionally. In addition to a considerable limitation on the time a parent is able to invest into raising their child, the separation of the child and parent is an emotionally traumatic experience for the child, that has a detrimental effect on its development. Previous studies have shown that parental incarceration is associated with increased depression, stress, attention problems, anxiety, and aggression in children. According to Currie (2005) responses to stress are linked to

inhibited cognitive functioning, attention problems, and poorer memory in children which inhibit school readiness. (Williams–Lerner, 2019). More recent results from Testa–Jackson (2021) supported the previous findings. They found that children who had experienced parental incarceration are worse off in terms of school readiness compared to their peers who have not experienced parental incarceration. Children who were exposed to parental incarceration were at a significantly higher risk of failing early learning skills, self-regulation, as well as physical health and motor development.

### *Parents' Perception of Children's School Readiness*

Evidence suggests that a parent's views and beliefs on school readiness correspond with their actions, which have an outsized impact on children's actual school readiness as well as their later academic achievements (Barbarin et al, 2008; Joe – Davis 2009; Puc-cioni, 2015; 2018; Sy – Schulenberg, 2005; ). For this reason, many researchers are concerned with getting to know the opinions of parents and actors who play a role in the child's transition regarding school readiness, so they can make the transition easier for the children (Hair et al, 2006; Fleisz–Gyurcsik, 2021). In this review, recent results in regard to parent's views and perceptions of children's school readiness are compared to previous findings. Most previous research had shown that, in contrast to the complex concept of school readiness detailed above, parents define school readiness mostly through children's academic skills, such as knowledge of numbers and letters, as well as school-related behavior and self-regulation skills (Barbarin et al., 2008; Harradine & Clifford, 1996; West et al, 1995).

In many cases, in order to assess the factors that determine parents' school readiness, teachers' judgments are made in parallel, which are compared in order to recognize possible connections. In this regard, some different results can be observed.

Most previous studies have found that educators focus much more on the child's social and emotional development, while parents focus more on the child's academic readiness, such as to know letters, to be able to count to 20 or more, use a pencil, sit still, and pay attention (Diamond et al, 2000; Hains et al, 1989; West et al, 1995). It has to be addressed that there are signs that this trend is changing and that teachers increasingly value academic abilities (Wesley – Buysse, 2003). It has further been found that parents who have higher levels of education place a slightly lower importance on cognitive abilities (Kim et al, 2005). In contrast to these results, based on Kálmán-Tóth's (2021) results, both teachers and parents considered it more important than cognitive areas that the child who is preparing for school should be socially and emotionally mature.

During the systematic literature review, 6 studies were included and processed which focused on the parents' perception of school readiness in the last 5 years. Dunaway's results are in full agreement with previous results, showing that parents mostly defined the characteristics of school readiness in two categories. The first category includes everything that parents think children should already know before kindergarten. Such basic knowledge content is, for example, the child's name, the alphabet, shapes, colors, numbers, their own address, and telephone number. The second category is the level of personal independence, which allows the child to perform basic actions independently, such as dressing or going to the bathroom. The results of Jose et al. 2021 confirm Dunaway's results, especially with regard to independence, since according to their results, in the eyes of the parents, school readiness is the ability that enables the child to function effectively independently in the school and in an unfamiliar physical and social environment.

Kim's results already show that, despite the fact that parents recognize their own responsibility and role in their child's school readiness, they see it on a broader spectrum. In their study, Kim et al created five categories based on parents' answers, which are decisive for school readiness. The first category is physical readiness, which includes independently performing basic activities (e.g., use the toilet), having the appropriate fine and gross motor skills (e.g., be able to hold a pen, run, skip, climb), and being able to exercise control over their body and needs. The second category is socio-emotional readiness, which includes the ability of the child to be separated from his parents, to get along with teachers and children, and to behave respectfully, stand up for themselves, and during these interactions rely less on their parents

and control their emotions. The third category is behavioral readiness, which can be interpreted from the parents' point of view as the child's ability to listen to the teacher and follow instructions. The fourth category is literacy and numeracy readiness, which deviated among the responding parents. Several believed that these academic skills should be thought of as kindergarten, while some were consciously preparing their children to know colors, which filled them with reassurance. The fifth category is language and communication readiness, which the parents considered important primarily from the point of view of socialization, expressing their needs and classroom work.

In their research, Miller-Kehl, (2019) assessed parents' perception of school readiness by comparing it to that of teachers. Based on their results, in contrast to previous results, they found that teachers and parents generally agreed that health, happiness and to be socially skills than cognitive skills are more important for school readiness. Miller-Kehl's (2019) results, consistently with the research of Kim et al, (2005), also showed that parents with a higher education level consider cognitive skills to be less important for school readiness. Miller-Kehl's (2019) results regarding social skills also agree with previous results (Almlund et al. 2011; Heckman et al. 2014; Denham and Bassett 2018) showing that the level of a child's socio-emotional skills predicts their educational success and their academic performance; a socially competent child can get along better with their peers, handle conflicts better and more effectively, and can develop a more positive relationship with their teachers. An interesting result of Miller-Kehl's (2019) research is that more experienced teachers placed less importance on children being able to follow directions and communicate.

The results of the research of Puccioni et al, 2019, as compared to the research of Miller-Kehl's (2019), show that parents' beliefs about school readiness were more strongly related to academic achievement in comparison to socio-emotional competencies. Puccioni et al, (2019) found that the children of parents who still place more emphasis on children having a set of academic skills and behavioral attributes prior to kindergarten tend to have children with higher levels of academic achievement, social skills, and self-regulatory skills.

In Öngören's research, he examined exactly these parental practices in order to assess how parents prepare their children for school in the social, emotional, cognitive, linguistic terms and self-care domains.

Based on the answers of the parents, five different practices were identified as social support practices. The most frequently mentioned practice (37%) is that the parent ensures that their child can spend time in a peer community with friends. This was followed by social activities which included visits to the park or going to the movies (26%). In addition to these, parents saw their role in offering educational activities, ensuring family interactions, and teaching responsibility. Emotional support is also provided in the performance of joint activities, in addition to helping the child to recognize and express his feelings through oral communication. The support for the development of cognitive abilities was mostly seen in playing math games and reading books or finally playing games. Parents believed that the means of language support are primarily continuous conversations with the child in which the child is given the opportunity to express themselves and receive feedback if they pronounce something wrong, use phrases incorrectly, or do not know a particular word. Regarding language support, the role of reading books and games also appeared among the answers. Parents' self-care support practices were primarily related to promoting habits and carrying them out independently. They were further connected to responsibility, and in connection with this, the role of parents as role models also appeared (Öngören, 2021).

## Discussion

This systematic review aimed to appraise the recent literature in regard to parents' influence and perception of their children's school readiness. Parenting style, parental involvement, children's self-regulation skills, and children's socio-emotional skills tend to have an impact on school readiness (Miller – Kehl, 2019; Young-Abdullah, 2022; Xia et al, 2019). The results of Dunaway et al (2021) and Puccioni et al (2019) show that parents put the emphasis on cognitive areas, on the other hand, based on the results of Miller-Kehl (2019), parents agreed with teachers that health, happiness, and being socially skilled are more important

than cognitive skills. Parents' perception of school readiness were strongly associated with a level of independence (Jose et al, 2022; Dunaway et al, 2021).

Parents with a higher level of education considered cognitive skills less important in terms of school readiness (Miller-Kehl, 2019). However, it was found that parents who place more emphasis on academic skills and behavioral attributes before entering kindergarten tend to have children with higher levels of academic achievement, self-regulatory, and social skills (Puccioni et al, 2019). The examined studies further show that parental insensitivity, lack of parental warmth, mothers depression, children's negativity, insecure attachment style, and parental incarceration have a negative influence on the different key competencies underlying school readiness.

In sum, studies published within the last 5 years have largely confirmed previous results as well as contributed new aspects to them. The results indicate that recent studies examining the issue of school readiness no longer solely focus on the set of abilities and competencies of the child but increasingly emphasize the role of the child's environment. These studies have demonstrated the high importance of parental characteristics as well as perceptions in the context of children's school readiness. New research indicates that studies examining school readiness no longer solely focus on the child's skills and competencies but also highlight the role of the child's environment. As a result, the responsibility of the environment increases not only to recognize potential shortcomings but also to positively influence school readiness. To reduce potential disadvantages and enhance the level of school readiness, further research is needed for a better understanding of influencing factors.

**Supplementary Materials:** The following supporting information can be downloaded at: [www.mdpi.com/xxx/s1](http://www.mdpi.com/xxx/s1), Figure S1: title; Table S1: title; Video S1: title.

**Author Contributions:** For research articles with several authors, a short paragraph specifying their individual contributions must be provided. The following statements should be used "Conceptualization, Á.F.; methodology, Á.F.; formal analysis, Á.F.; investigation, Á.F.; data curation, Á.F.; writing—original draft preparation, Á.F.; writing—review and editing, G.V.; visualization, Á.F.; supervision, G.V. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript." Please turn to the CRediT taxonomy for the term explanation. Authorship must be limited to those who have contributed substantially to the work reported.

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