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Insights into Private Franchise Preschools

Academic, Administrative, and Operational Perspectives

Savita Kaushal

National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration
17-B, Sri Aurobindo Marg, New Delhi-110016, INDIA
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Insights into Private Franchise Preschools

Academic, Administrative, and Operational Perspectives

Savita Kaushal

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Abbreviations

CWSN	Children with Special Needs
DF	Degrees of Freedom
DPEP	District Primary Education Programme
ECCD	Early Childhood Care and Development
ECCE	Early Childhood Care and Education
ECE	Early Childhood Education
EWS	Economically Weaker Sections
GOI	Government of India
ICDS	Integrated Child Development Services
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
MWCD	Ministry of Women and Child Development
NCERT	National Council of Educational Research and Training
NCPCR	National Commission for Protection of Child Rights
NEP	National Education Policy
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NIPCCD	National Institute of Public Cooperation and Child Development
NPE	National Policy on Education
NTT	Nursery Teacher Training
PTA	Parent-Teacher Association
PTM	Parent-Teacher Meeting
RTE Act	Right to Education Act
SD	Standard Deviation
SE	Standard Error
SRI	School Readiness Instrument
SSA	Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan
UN	United Nations

Insights into Private Franchise Preschools

Academic, Administrative, and Operational Perspectives[#]

Savita Kaushal[*]

Abstract

Private franchise preschools have grown rapidly as a result of increased demand for Early Childhood Education (ECE), which has been fuelled by urbanisation, parental awareness, and the entry of more women into the workforce. The data from the 75th National Sample Survey (2017–18), UDISE+, and NCERT's Foundational Learning Study (2022) point out variable classroom practices and outcome indicators across private ECE settings.

This survey-based study examines the governance, academic structure, admissions procedures, costs, and early learning practices of a few franchise preschools in Delhi and Haryana. These states have seen significant preschool growth, driven by varying socio-economic situations.

A mixed-methods approach was used to get data from 40 preschools across 20 brands through a survey by means of questionnaire, interviews, observations, and the School Readiness Instrument (SRI). Respondents included parents, teachers, and administrators.

The findings suggested that franchise preschools adhere to standardised curricula and systemic practices. They also have issues like variation in school readiness, limited counselling, inconsistent teachers' salary, and financial constraints. The study proposes reforms that prioritise parental involvement, inclusive practices, improved teacher support, more effective oversight, and compliance systems so as to guarantee quality and equity in private franchise preschools

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1.1 Introduction

The progressive policy trajectory of early childhood education (ECE) in India has been shaped by national commissions, constitutional mandates, and developmental planning frameworks that prioritise the holistic development and school readiness of young children. Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) was formally introduced into India's welfare and planning system in 1953 with the establishment of the Central Social Welfare Board. As the Centre and the States share responsibility for child development, later programmes like Mahila Samakhya (1989) and the District Primary Education Programme (DPEP, 1994) were crucial in facilitating the expansion of access to early childhood education, especially for underprivileged and marginalised communities (Government of India, 1994). With the Crèche Scheme and the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS), which was introduced in 1975 and is still India's premier early childhood programme, the Ministry of Women and Child Development (MWCD) continues to be the main organisation in charge of ECCE (MWCD, 2013).

ECCE has a solid foundation owing to the constitutional framework. Articles 15(3), 21-A, and 51A(k) collectively safeguard children's rights to equality, education, and parental responsibility for learning. Article 45 mandates that the State provide early childhood care and education for all children under the age of six years (Constitution of India, 1950). The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act of 2009 does not apply to pre-primary education, but it is still required by the constitution and morally required. Private preschools, Anganwadis, and Balwadis are the means by which services are provided. Although access has increased, there are still issues with quality, inclusion, and cross-sectoral coordination in the education, nutrition, and health sectors (Ministry of Education, 2020; MWCD, 2013).

A number of important committees' recommendations and policy initiatives have influenced the development of ECCE practice and policy. The Education Commission (1964–1966) recommended the establishment of research centres and model programmes in addition to formally recognising preschool education for the first time (Government of India, 1966). The ICDS Scheme was introduced in 1975 as a

result of the Committee on Early Childhood Development (1972–1973), chaired by Mina Swaminathan, which emphasised the importance of integrated and holistic child development (Swaminathan, 1974). To improve school readiness and reduce the number of early dropouts, the National Policy on Education (1986) recognised ECCE as a vital part of the educational system (Government of India, 1986). Later policy frameworks reaffirmed the significance of universal, inclusive, and high-quality early learning opportunities, including the National Policy for Children (1974), the National Plan of Action for Children (1992), and the National ECCE Policy (2013) (MWCD, 2013).

The inclusion of the 3 to 8 years age range as the "foundational stage" in the new 5+3+3+4 curriculum structure represents a major reform of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020. Preschools and Anganwadi are emphasised as key locations for attaining educational equity and lifelong learning. A play-based, discovery-oriented, and experiential learning are emphasized as important methods of making preschool and Anganwadi more meaningful (Ministry of Education, 2020; NCERT, 2022). The policy emphasises the importance of multilingual learning environments, trained teachers, and the integration of early stimulation, nutrition, and health as components of a child's developmental ecosystem.

India's Five-Year Plans also mirror the development of ECCE. The First Five-Year Plan (1951–1956) acknowledged the importance of early childhood education but relied primarily on voluntary organisations (Planning Commission, 1951). While the Fifth Plan (1974–1979), which followed the National Policy for Children (1974), introduced the ICDS as an integrated approach to child health, nutrition, and education, the Fourth Plan (1969–1974) introduced the Family and Child Welfare Scheme with a community focus (Planning Commission, 1974). The importance of ECCE in human resource development has been increasingly acknowledged in later plans. While the Tenth and Eleventh Plans promoted the agenda of quality improvement and a rights-based approach to early childhood development, the Eighth and Ninth Plans placed more emphasis on community involvement and the integration of pre-primary education

with formal schooling. Convergence across sectors and universal access to ECCE were given top priority by the Twelfth Plan (2012–2017) (Planning Commission, 2013).

Table 1

Progression of Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) in Five-Year Plans of India

Five-Year Plan	Duration	ECCE Provisions and Focus
First Plan	1951–1956	Acknowledged ECCE; relied on the non-profit sector with no government funding.
Second & Third Plans	1956–1966	ECCE remained outside formal state responsibility; continued through private/voluntary efforts.
Ganga Saran Sinha Committee—in 1968--Recommended state intervention in ECCE.		
Fourth Plan	1969–1974	Introduced Family and Child Welfare Scheme with a community focus.
Fifth Plan	1974–1979	Following National Policy for Children (1974), launched ICDS (Integrated Child Development Services).
Sixth Plan	1980–1985	Emphasised use of local resources and ECCE for underprivileged children.
Seventh Plan	1985–1990	Reinforced ECCE's role in national development through ICDS.
Eighth Plan	1992–1997	Proposed integration of pre-primary classes into formal primary schools.
Ninth Plan	1997–2002	Focus on teacher training, community participation, and quality improvement.
Tenth Plan	2002–2007	Highlighted the importance of child development and school readiness.
Eleventh Plan	2007–2012	Advocated an inclusive, rights-based approach to early childhood education.
Twelfth Plan	2012–2017	Emphasised integrated ECCD and aimed for universal preschool access.

All things considered, the development of early childhood care and education in India has shown a paradigm shift from disjointed welfare interventions to a unified, rights-based, and quality-oriented framework. According to the National Curriculum Framework for Foundational Stage (NCF-FS, 2022) and NEP 2020, ECCE is currently positioned as the cornerstone of equity, lifelong learning, and national development (Ministry of Education, 2020; NCERT, 2022).

1.2 Current Status of Preschools in India

In India, there are diverse providers of preschool education, including private non-government and government organisations such as ICDS. ICDS provides free nutrition and early education, mainly to the underprivileged. Private preschools are primarily profit-driven and are concentrated in urban regions. They are now swiftly extending their reach to semi-urban and rural areas There is widespread belief that private schools are of higher quality. However, they have gaps in infrastructure, early learning strategies, and teacher qualifications. Though there are varied regulations, the rise of the private sector has brought new ideas; still, there are concerns raised about the quality, cost and equity.

Table 2

Characteristics of ECCE Programmes Across Sectors

Aspect	Government (ICDS, Anganwadi)	Voluntary/NGO (Balwadi)	Private (Nursery, KG, Pre-Primary)
Goal	Social welfare	Community development	Profit-oriented
Policy Implementation	Ministry of Women and Child Development; Department of School Education and Literacy	Varies; often community-driven	No centralised monitoring body
Worker Designation	Anganwadi worker/teacher	Balwadi teacher/worker	Teacher
Duration	Varies for 3–6-year-olds	Varies for 2–3-year-olds	Varies for 2–3-year-olds
Objective and Scope	Development of child in holistic manner	Education and care of children	Formal education and school readiness

Cont…

Components	Education, nutrition, care	Primarily education	Education, some care
Teaching Methodology	Activity-based, non-formal	Varies; informal to formal	Formal, school-like
Target Group	Policy-defined; often age-segregated	Low-income and underprivileged groups	Demand-driven; varies by region
Cost to Parents	Free	Free or nominal charges	Varies; fee-based

Source: Adapted from NCERT Position Paper on ECCE (2006).

There are inequities in accessibility and quality, even with the expansion of ECCE programmes. Preschool enrolment is only around one per cent of children under six (Education in India, 2025).

The growth of private preschools has been propelled by urbanisation, working parents, and heightened awareness of early learning are the main factors. Nevertheless, a large number of these establishments function without official regulation, which results in uneven quality (Kaul et al., 2015; Ghosh & Dey, 2020). Even low-income families are choosing private preschools in spite of financial difficulties due to increased competition in the educational system and a focus on "school readiness" (Sriprakash et al., 2020). The preschool market in India was estimated to be worth USD 957.86 million in 2023 and is expected to grow at a CAGR of 9.56% through 2028 (Research and Markets, 2023).

Table 3

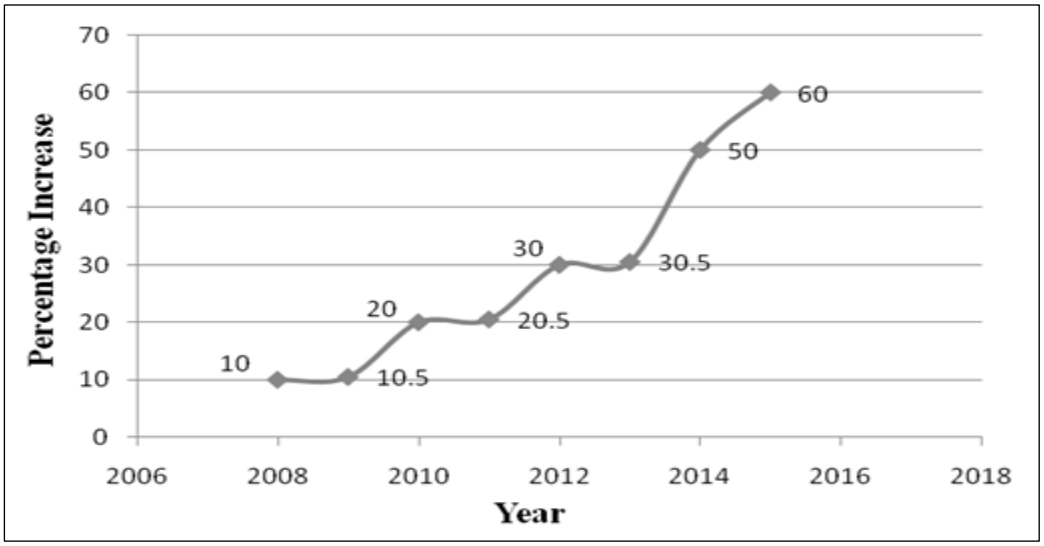
Preschool Market Size Estimation

Year	Urban Population (1–4 years, '000)	Rural Population (1–4 years, '000)	Urban Enrolment (%)	Rural Enrolment (%)	Urban Fees (Rs/year)	Rural Fees (Rs/year)	Revenue (Rs billion)	Revenue (USD billion)
2010	38,268	90,316	25	5	9,000	2,400	97	2.0
2015	39,818	87,080	33	5	9,600	2,640	138	2.9

Source: United Nations Population Statistics, cited in Anand Rathi Research (2011).

Figure 1

Rate of Increase in Franchise Preschools (%)



Source: Anand Rathi Research, 2011

1.3 Understanding the Dynamics of Pre-school Education in India: A Comprehensive Review

According to the 2011 Census, there are 164.48 million children between the ages of 0 and 6; however, many of them are not enrolled (Ministry of Education, 2020). Wealthier families are frequently given preference during the admissions process (Stern, 1993), and low-income households are increasingly choosing private English-medium preschools due to their perceived quality (MSSRF, 2000; NIPCCD, 2006). In cities with better staffing and infrastructure, such as Delhi and Andhra Pradesh, private preschools are more prevalent (Azim Premji Foundation, 2013). Governance problems still persist, as evidenced by Delhi's fraudulent admissions to economically disadvantaged groups (RTE Forum, 2016). Even though early childhood education and care have a positive effect on learning and retention (NIPCCD, 1992; NCERT, 1993), many centres continue to use rote methods, lack qualified staff, and have inequalities in their infrastructure (Kaul, 1998; NCERT, 2002; Sood, 2003). The desire for fluency in English also affects parental demand (Kaul et al., 2015).

This study examines franchise-based preschools, which combine corporate models with early learning. Although market-led growth has been studied previously (Ross, 2009; Elliott, 2004), there aren't many findings that are unique to franchises. This study examines the ways in which these models affect access, governance, and instructional strategies. To address the gaps noted by Kaul (1998), NCERT (2002), and the RTE Forum (2016), it also looks into whether they prioritise commercial interests or meet the needs of children.

2.1 Methodology

Forty franchise preschools from 20 different brands were included in the study. This range gave an overview of the franchise preschool market in India. The study's link to more general patterns in private early childhood education is strengthened by this diversity. A descriptive mixed-methods approach was employed. The cost structures, pedagogical approaches, and administrative frameworks of these schools differed. Because of their diverse socio-economic conditions and rapidly expanding preschool sectors, Delhi and Haryana were selected by the researchers. Instead of concentrating only on urban centres, the study captured a broader range of contexts by incorporating both metropolitan and semi-urban areas.

Using survey questionnaire, interviews, classroom observations, and the School Readiness Instrument (SRI), the researcher gathered information from parents, educators, administrators, and heads of preschools.

3.1 Academic Organisation

Academic and administrative duties were performed by the Preschool Head, also known as the Headmistress, Centre Head, or Principal, in the majority of preschools. In half of the cases, the head also served as the chair of the committee or a director; in 35 per cent of the cases, the franchise owner was the Preschool Head. They were responsible for overseeing employees, enforcing policies, and maintaining a secure atmosphere. In every school, teachers oversaw the curriculum, tests, documentation, and parent communications with the help of aide (Ayas/Didi).

3.2 Academic Structure

In most preschools, the Preschool Head, also referred to as Headmistress, Centre Head, or Principal, oversees academic and administrative responsibilities. In 50 per cent of cases, the Preschool Head also served as Director or Head of the Management Committee. In 35 per cent of the cases, the franchise owner assumed that role. Their responsibilities included implementing policies, supervising staff, and maintaining a safe environment.

Teachers managed the curriculum, assessments, record-keeping and parent engagement, consistently supported by caregivers (Ayas/Didi) across all preschools. Qualified counsellors were hired in only 5 per cent of preschools; in the rest of the preschools, teachers addressed children's issues and parent concerns. Coordinators were present in 30 per cent of schools and provided assistance in classroom organisation, resource management, appraisal, and communication.

Approximately 85 per cent of preschools had management committees, typically comprising of the franchise owner and Preschool Head, overseeing planning, monitoring, and finance. However, 15 per cent did not have formal governance structures. Parental participation in decision-making was noteworthy; 93 per cent of parents showed willingness. The Management Committee membership had gender diversity, comprising 82.7 per cent women and over half aged above 35, suggesting a moderate level of experience.

Table 4

Profile of Management Committee Members

Gender of Management Committee Members	
Male	17.25%
Female	82.75%
Age Group of Members of Management Committee	
18 to 25 years	4%
26 to 30 years	24%
31 to 35 years	20%
35 years and above	52%

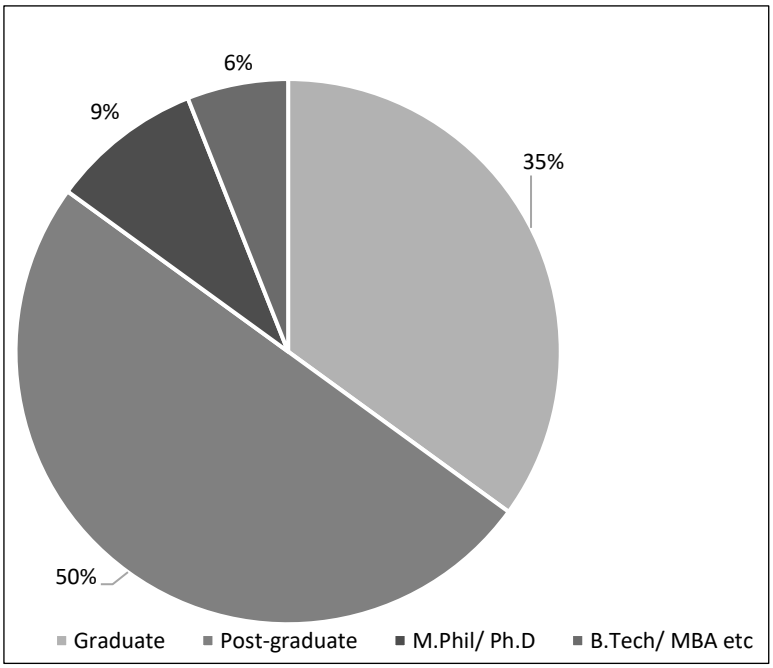
Source: Administrative Staff Questionnaire: Item No: 2

3.3 The Preschool Heads' Profile

Fifty per cent of the preschool heads had postgraduate degrees. Thirty-five per cent had technical or professional credentials. Six per cent were graduates, and nine per cent had earned an M.Phil. or Ph.D**.**

Figure 2

Qualifications of the Preschool Heads



Source: Preschool Head Questionnaire: Item No:3

Ninety-three per cent of preschool heads were women. The majority were aged between 31 and 50 years (52 per cent between the ages of 41 and 50, and 45 per cent between the ages of 31 and 40). Only 3 per cent were in their 20s.

Work experience among them was concentrated in the mid-career range: 23 per cent had 1–5 years, 26 per cent had 6–10 years, and 48 per cent had 11–20 years. Just 3.2 per cent of respondents had more than 20 years of experience.

It is Noteworthy that, before opening their own preschool through a franchise model, 18 per cent of the preschool heads had worked in another preschool. The nature and impact of this prior experience were not investigated in this study.

Table 5

Profile of the Preschool Heads

Gender	
Male	6.3%
Female	93.7%
Age Group[1]	
20 to 30 yrs	2.5%
31 to 40 yrs	45%
41 and 50 yrs	52.5%
Total Experience[2]	
1 to 5 yrs	22.6%
6 to 10 yrs	25.8%
11 to 15 yrs	32.3%
16 to 20 yrs	16.1%
21 yrs and above	3.2%
Experience in the Present Preschool	
1 to 3 yrs	69%
4 to 10 yrs	24%
11 yrs and above	7%

Source: Preschool Head Questionnaire: Item No: 3

Sixty-nine per cent of preschool heads had been in their current position for one to three years. A sizable portion had over 11 years of total work experience.

[1] The heads whose age was between 30 – 31 years, 40 – 41 years were included in the age group of 20 – 30 years and 31 – 40 years respectively.

[2] Heads with experience of more than 5 years but less than 6 years were included in the range of 1-5 years' experience. Similarly, experience of 10 – 11 years, 15 – 16 years and 20 – 21 years were included in the groups of 6 – 10 years, 11 – 15 years and 16 – 20 years of experience.

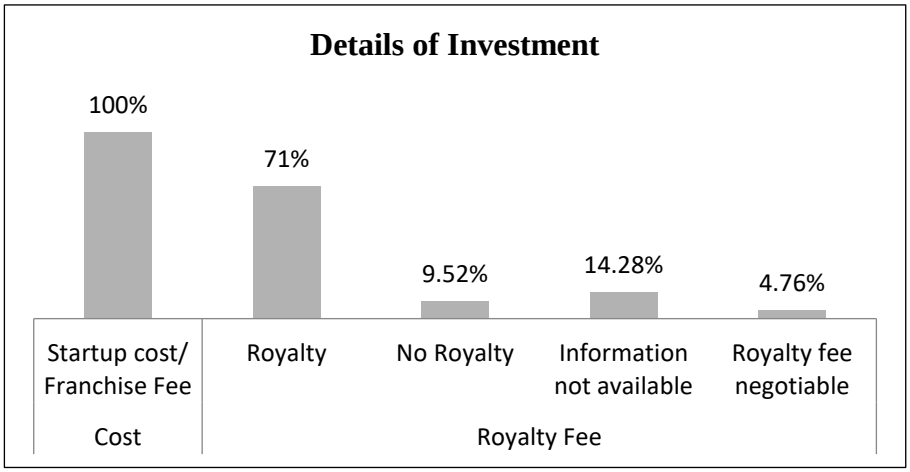
3.4 Franchise and Franchisee

The preschool franchise market is largely shaped by young women, with 87 per cent of owners being female and 79 per cent under 40. These owners are reasonably well-educated, as the majority hold at least a master's degree. Yet 65 per cent lacked prior experience in franchise operations. This draws attention to how the quality of early childhood education may be compromised due to inexperience. When selecting franchisees, franchisors often prioritise financial capability over educational background. Opening a franchise preschool typically costs between ₹10 and ₹20 lakhs. Therefore, this model attracts financially well-positioned entrepreneurs.

Franchisees had to do substantial initial capital investment and recurring royalties, which are not usually present in non-franchise preschools. Franchise preschools benefited from operational support, consistent curriculum, and brand recognition. Depending on performance and compliance, franchise agreements varied in duration from two years to a lifetime. This underscores the importance of scrutinising the true fairness and transparency of these renewal processes. Ownership required compliance with legal obligations, such as municipal approvals and possessing clear land or property titles.

Figure 3

Details of Franchise Investment



Source: Questionnaire for Administrative Staff: Item No: 14

3.4.1 Financial Edifice of Franchise Preschools

Significant upfront costs were necessary for franchise preschools, including a one-time franchise fee that differed by city tier and was ₹2 lakhs for tier-III, ₹3–4 lakhs for tier-II, and ₹5–6 lakhs for tier-I. Depending on variables like location, socio-economic circumstances, and brand, the overall investment ranged from ₹1.5 lakhs to ₹1 crore. Depending on the potential of the local market and the brand's worth, the franchise fee was paid at the time of contract signing. Furthermore, 71 per cent of preschools paid royalties each year, which had an effect on their long-term financial stability and usually ranged from 10 to 40 per cent of gross revenue. Notably:

- Nine per cent said there was no royalty fee.
- Fifteen per cent of respondents claimed that the terms of the royalty were not disclosed, while 5 per cent said that the terms could be negotiated.

According to the Franchise Services Act (Section 65(105) (zee)), royalty payments have been taxable since June 2015. Some people ran preschools under different brand names, even though it was illegal to have more than one franchise of the same company. This suggested that further research was necessary, as it raised questions regarding accountability and operational consistency.

3.5 Support by the Franchise Head Office

Franchise head office provided support in fostering skill development in:

- inclusive practices and child development
- class management, infrastructure standards, and curriculum delivery.

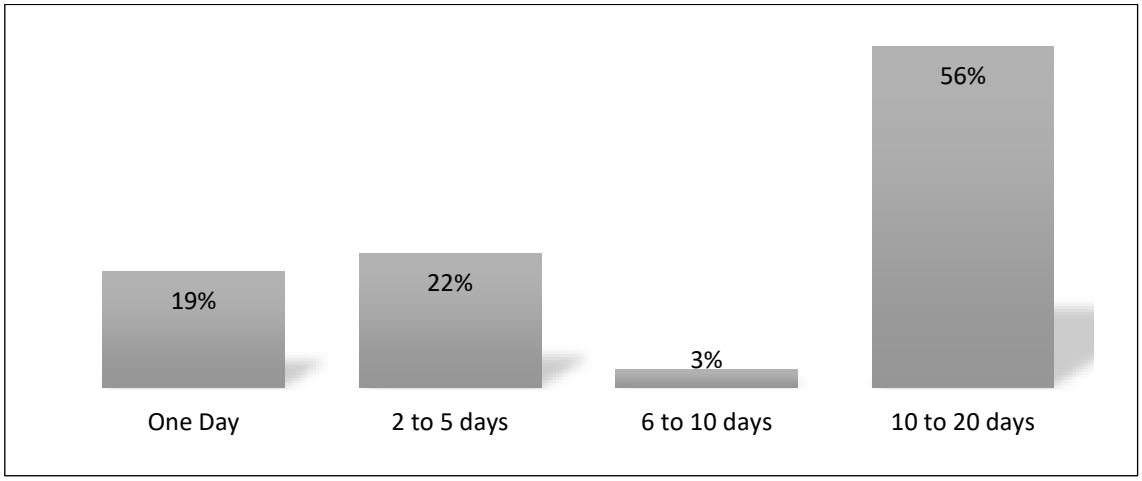
Preschool administrators and teachers were able to learn from one another through leadership workshops held by about 75 per cent of brands. But there wasn't much research or knowledge-building going on.

Although their deeper academic engagement was low, nearly 93 per cent of preschool heads underwent continued learning through professional seminars and workshops.

Motivations for starting franchise preschool sector varied widely – 58 per cent of franchisees were driven by social objectives; 60 per cent responded to unmet demand; 53 per cent saw it as a safe business; 47 per cent mentioned profitability; 25 per cent valued high margins; 58 per cent enjoyed the ease of entry; and 62.5 per cent thought the industry was respectable and expanding. However, roughly half expressed reluctance to grow with the same franchisor, citing operational difficulties or discontent. Franchise models attracted parents by offering a consistent curriculum and infrastructure, and supported thereby had scalable growth across India.

Figure 4

Duration of Participation in Professional Learning Opportunities



Source: Preschool Head Questionnaire: Item No: 5

3.6 Regulation of Curriculum and Professional Development

More than half (56 per cent) of preschool heads participated in professional training programmes lasting 10 to 20 days, thereby showing perseverance in enhancing leadership and dedication to teaching. Another 22 per cent participated in brief sessions

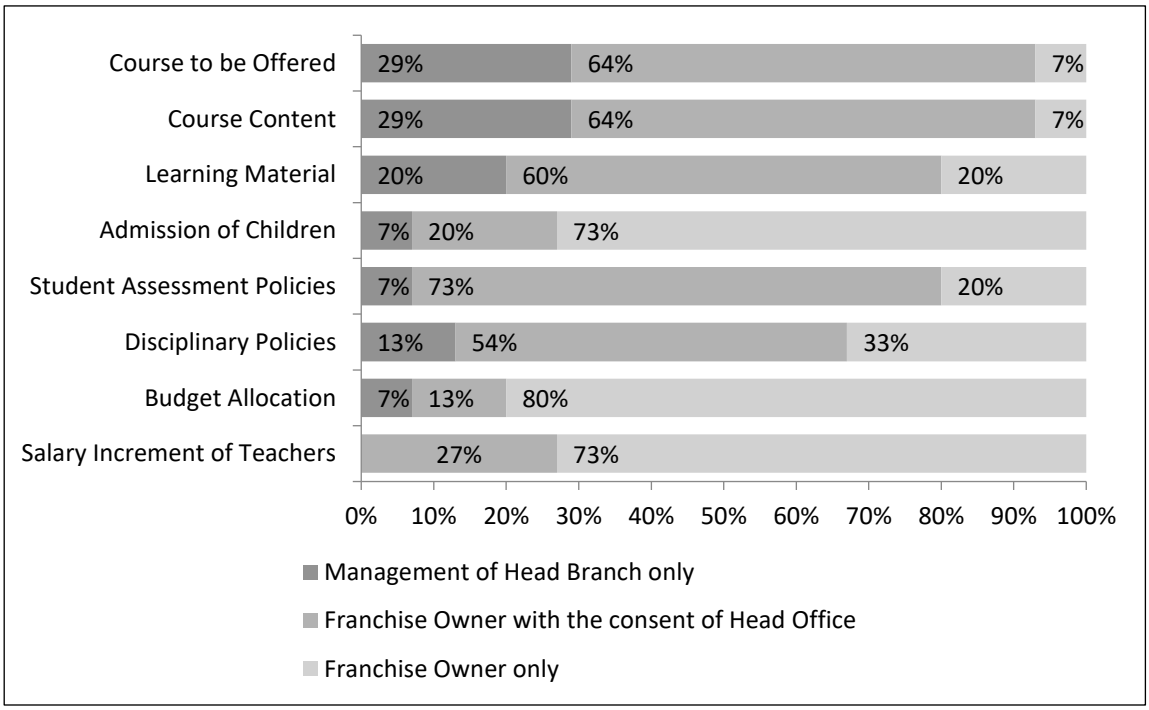
lasting two to five days, 19 per cent in one-day workshops, and only 3 per cent in programmes lasting six to ten days.

To maintain brand consistency, franchise headquarters typically offered standard infrastructure guidelines and curricula. Although the essential components stayed the same, local adaptations based on community needs were permitted with some flexibility. To facilitate consistent delivery, many franchises also provided standard kits and educational resources. There was operational diversity, though, as some franchises allowed centres greater latitude in selecting their own content.

Despite this variation, the parent company typically retained control over important curriculum components and branded learning materials to meet both marketing and instructional needs.

Figure 5

Contribution in Decision-Making



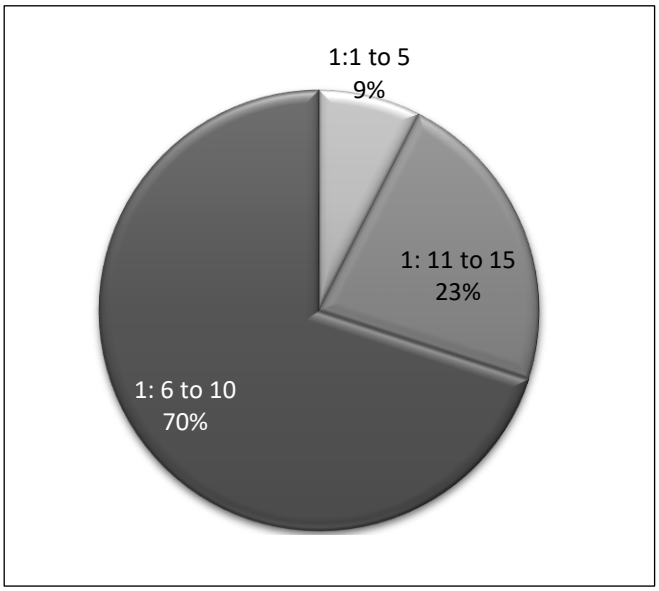
Source: Administrative Staff Questionnaire: Item No.8

3.7 Teacher-Child Ratios and Admission Procedures

Children under three and older were enrolled in franchise preschools. In accordance with ECCE standards for supportive learning, the majority of them—77.5%—maintained a teacher-to-child ratio of 1:10 or less. Interestingly, 7.5 per cent offered more individualised attention due to their superior 1:5 ratio. Nonetheless, a higher ratio of 1:15 was found in 22.5 per cent of preschools. Although there were still some implementation irregularities, the average teacher-to-child ratio across the centres surveyed was 1:10, indicating overall compliance with the expected norms.

Figure 6

Child-to-Teacher Ratio



Source: Preschool Head Questionnaire: Item No: 18

3.8 Preschool Caregiver-Child Ratios

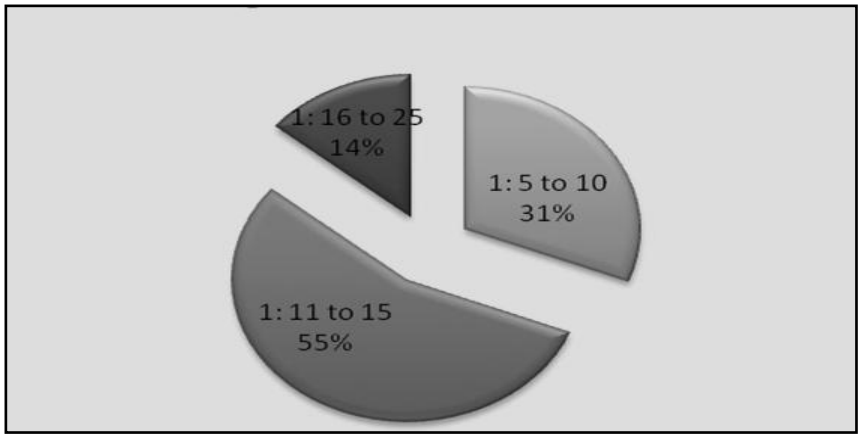
The caregiver-to-child ratio was 1:10 in 32.5 per cent of preschools. A better 1:5 ratio, which permitted more individualised attention, was reported by 15 per cent of preschools. For children under three, more than half of the preschools (55 per cent) met or surpassed the MWCD standards. According to NCPCR guidelines, all preschools adhered to a maximum ratio of 1:20. The highest ratio ever recorded was 1:25, which

was only observed in a small number of low-enrolment centres and was regarded as an anomaly.

Even within the same franchise, however, disparities were noted, suggesting inconsistent practices. The caregiver-to-child ratio was 1:10 on average for all preschools, which is typically in line with the requirements for early care that meet the needs of young children. However, even among centres of the same brand, there were variations in maintaining the same ratios. This demonstrates the differences in how each centre functioned. Preschools generally maintain a caregiver-to-child ratio of 1:10, which satisfies the requirements for early care that support the needs of young children.

Figure 7

Compliance with the Caregiver-Children Ratio



3.9 Teacher Qualifications, Age, and Gender

The fact that every preschool teacher in the study was a woman indicates that early childhood education is primarily a field dominated by women. Due to the strong gender norms associated with this position, no male candidates applied or participated in the selection process. A youthful workforce is indicated by the fact that over two-thirds of the teachers were under 30. Teachers cited the caring nature of the work, proximity to home, and convenient hours as key factors in their decision to pursue this career. Owing to these factors, preschool teaching was especially appealing to recently graduated young women.

Table 6

Preschool Teachers' and School Heads' Ages

Age in Years	Teachers		School Heads	
		%	Number	%
21- 30	80	66.7	1	2.5
31-40	36	30	18	45
41-50	3	2.5	21	52.5
51 and above	1	0.8	-	-
Total	**120**	**100**	**40**	**100**

3.10 Preschool Teachers' Professional and Demographic Profiles

The workforce is primarily young, as evidenced by the fact that the majority of preschool teachers (66 per cent) were between the ages of 21 and 30. Over 96 per cent were in the 21 to 40 age range, which highlights the profession's attraction for younger people. This appeal likely comes from flexible hours and the caring aspect of the job. However, there is a generational divide between leaders and teaching staff, as 52.5 per cent of preschool heads were between the ages of 41 and 50. Given that many leaders began their careers as teachers before transitioning into entrepreneurship, this may be a reflection of their professional development.

The majority of teachers' credentials either matched or surpassed national requirements. Although 71 per cent of teachers were graduates and 20 per cent were postgraduates, many of them had relevant preschool training; the MWCD requires an NTT qualification. The majority of NTT-qualified teachers exceeded the academic requirements; however, 9.2 per cent of them only had Senior Secondary credentials. The experience levels of the workforce varied:

- 51 per cent had between one and four years.
- 30 per cent had less than six months.
- 17 per cent had five to ten years, and
- 2 per cent had eleven to twenty years.

This points to either recent increases in hiring or a high rate of turnover in the industry.

3.11 Teachers' Salary

According to government guidelines, nursery teachers should begin earning Rs. 13,500 per month (with a pay scale of Rs. 9,300 to 34,800 plus Rs. 4,200 grade pay). However, teachers in 63.2 per cent of franchise preschools surveyed made between Rs. 5,000 and Rs. 10,000 per month, which is significantly less than the suggested salary. Teachers expressed their dissatisfaction with their low pay and the demanding nature of their jobs, which include overseeing the emotional development, academic progress, and general growth of the students. Compared to colleagues in other fields, many felt undervalued. However, some reported that they were gradually acclimating to the pay, perhaps as a result of job satisfaction or a lack of alternatives.

Table 7

Teachers' Salary

Rs. 5,000-10,000	63.2%
Rs.11,000- 20,000	26.3%
Rs. 20,000 and above	10.5%

This discrepancy between effort and compensation suggests more serious problems with teacher retention, morale, and the future of high-quality education in the preschool industry.

3.12 Method of Hiring Teachers

The franchiser's head office provided guidelines for recruitment in franchise preschools. Direct interviews or referrals were used to make the majority of the selections. Personal attributes were highly valued, even though academic credentials were required. Characteristics such as a warm disposition, effective communication, a fondness for children, creativity, endurance, and the ability to overcome obstacles were highly regarded by franchise owners. Remarkably, 95.6 per cent of teachers had made a deliberate decision to pursue a career in early childhood education,

demonstrating a high level of motivation. Just 4.4 per cent had happened to enter the field. This strategy emphasises how franchise preschools create a nurturing and developmentally appropriate learning environment by emphasising well-rounded skills rather than mere degrees.

Table 8

Entering the Teaching Profession

By choice	95.6%
By chance	4.4%
Selection Process of Teachers	
Through interview	95.1%
Direct entry on the basis of qualification and experience (without any interview)	2.1%
Through recommendation/ volunteering	1.8%

Source: Teacher Questionnaire: Item Nos: 1, 2

3.13 Preschool Teacher-Support Initiatives

The success of franchise-based preschools depends heavily on having qualified and experienced teachers. They ensure that the franchisor's operating standards and educational vision are fulfilled. Preschool heads are essential in promoting teacher development because franchise owners frequently lack the capacity to oversee day-to-day academic affairs.

Preschool administrators use structured self-evaluation, informal discussions, and classroom observations to pinpoint skill gaps. They offer targeted assistance, frequently with the help of more experienced educators who serve as mentors. Franchise head offices frequently supplement these initiatives with teacher-specific training programmes. These may include both internal workshops and external conferences or seminars focussed on early childhood development.

Enhancing teaching methods and individual development are the main goals of these capacity-building programmes. They frequently encourage interactive and

reflective learning. Some preschool administrators, on the other hand, adopt a transactional "hire-and-fire" strategy, choosing to replace underperforming teachers rather than offering assistance. This strategy differs from the more developmental approaches taken by the majority of franchise preschools. Generally, the management styles and leadership philosophies of various franchise systems shape the methods used to support teachers.

Table 9

Actions taken by the Head of the Preschool to Address Teachers' Shortcomings

Steps taken by the Preschool Head in Response to the Weakness of Teacher	
Discuss with teacher	75%
Undertake corrective actions to address the issue	15.6%
Report to higher authority and nominate for training	6.2%
Ask the teacher to improve /Dismiss the teacher	3.1%

Source: Preschool Head Questionnaire: Item No: 32

3.14 Techniques for Teachers' Capacity Development

Franchise preschool teachers' capacity is developed through a variety of professional learning and in-service training activities. According to 61.9 per cent of teachers, attending knowledge-sharing events, such as conferences, workshops, and seminars, was the most popular strategy. The purpose of these activities was to raise awareness of child development concepts, classroom management techniques, and classroom practices. With 50 per cent of teachers taking part, peer observation visits within the same preschool were the second most popular tactic. These workshops promoted group reflection and helped educators identify their teaching strengths and areas for improvement. There is, however, a lack of structure, as only 20.4 per cent of respondents viewed these visits as a component of official professional development.

The quality and consistency of these efforts may be impacted by the fact that 43 per cent of preschool heads viewed teacher capacity-building as of low priority, despite

these opportunities. Nearly half (47.8 per cent) of the teachers thought these activities were very helpful, while others said they had a moderate (11.5 per cent) or minor (4.4 per cent) effect, and 36.3 per cent thought there had been no discernible improvement.

Play materials are a crucial component of early childhood education, but only 7.5 per cent of preschools provide in-service training on them. Although the franchise provided initial training to 60 per cent of teachers, there was little follow-up assistance. According to some educators, they were working on a trial basis without regular professional development opportunities or structured mentorship. In these situations, they turned to unofficial peer support rather than regular direction from preschool administrators.

This uneven landscape of teacher development makes clear that to foster strong outcomes in young learners, a more methodical and sustained approach to professional learning is required.

Table 10

Professional Development Activities

Participation in Conference /Seminar/Workshop	
Yes	61.9%
No	38.1%
Impact of Attended Conference / Seminar/Workshop	
No impact	36.3%
Small impact	4.4%
Moderate impact	11.5%
Large impact	47.8%
Individual and Collaborative Research Participation	
Yes	-
No	100%
Participation in Observation Visit	
Yes	20.4%
No	79.6%

Cont…

Impact of Attended Observation Visit	
No impact	46.0%
Small impact	8.0%
Moderate impact	16.8%
Large impact	29.2%

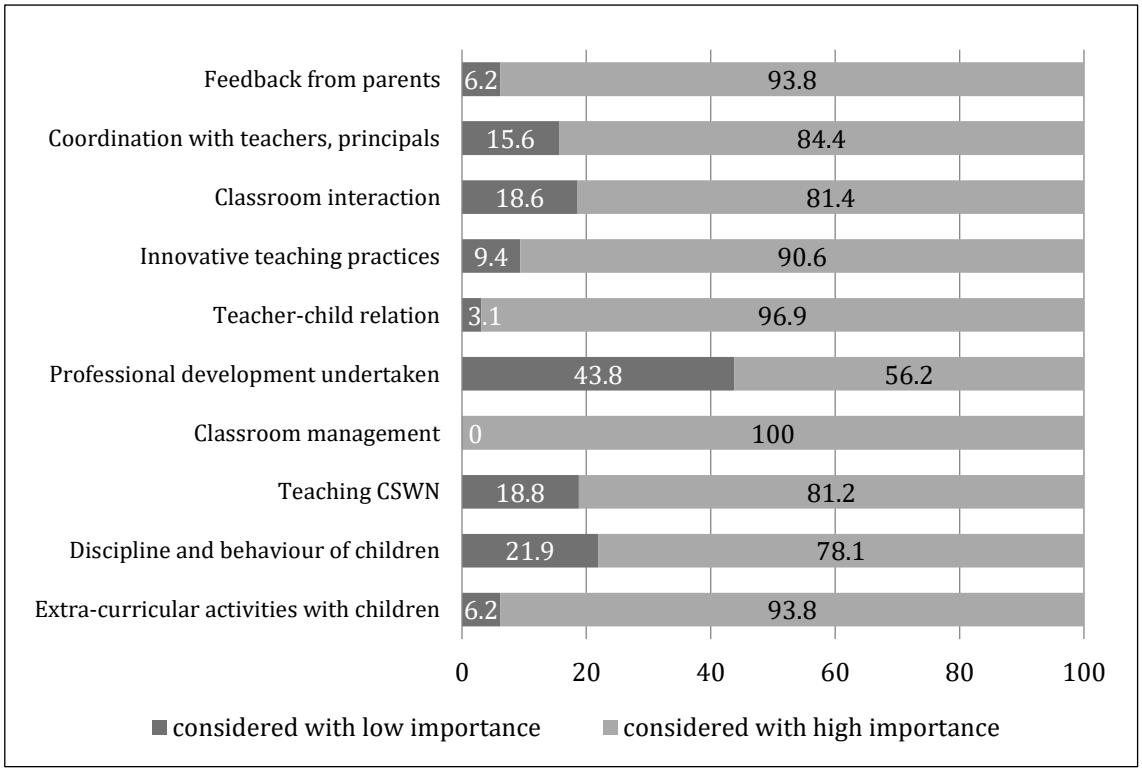
3.15 Qualifications of the Caregivers

The quality of early childhood care and education is significantly impacted by the credentials, abilities, and experience of preschool caregivers. Ninety-seven per cent of caregivers finished secondary school, compared to 2 per cent who finished senior secondary school. One per cent of them had a tertiary education. This implies a lack of formal higher education.

Thirty percent was relatively new, with less than a year of experience, while 51 per cent had more than a year of experience in preschool settings. Approximately 19 per cent had more than two years of experience, suggesting a greater level of familiarity with childcare procedures and potentially more robust abilities. This suggests a workforce with a growing amount of practical experience but only a modest level of formal education. The dearth of highly skilled caregivers emphasises the necessity of organised training and skill development for nurturing developmentally appropriate care.

Figure 8

Relevant Aspects of Preschool Management and Their Significance: Principal's Point of View



Source: Preschool Head Questionnaire: Item No: 33

Classroom management was the primary focus of preschool administrators. They also valued parent feedback, extracurricular activities, and the relationships between teachers and students. Parents' opinions were actively sought, even though they did not hold official management positions. As a common customer-focused practice, franchise preschools frequently use this strategy.

On important issues, though, opinions differed. While 44 per cent thought it was a low priority, 56 per cent supported teacher skill improvement. Additionally, 18.8 per cent gave low importance to support children with special needs, frequently claiming that these children were not present in their centres, and 21.9 per cent believed that dealing with children's behaviour and discipline was not important.

These divergent opinions highlight a disconnect between day-to-day operations and the broader objectives of inclusive, high-quality early education. Stronger policy support, specialised training, and increased awareness are obviously needed.

3.16 Problems and Decision-Making in Preschools

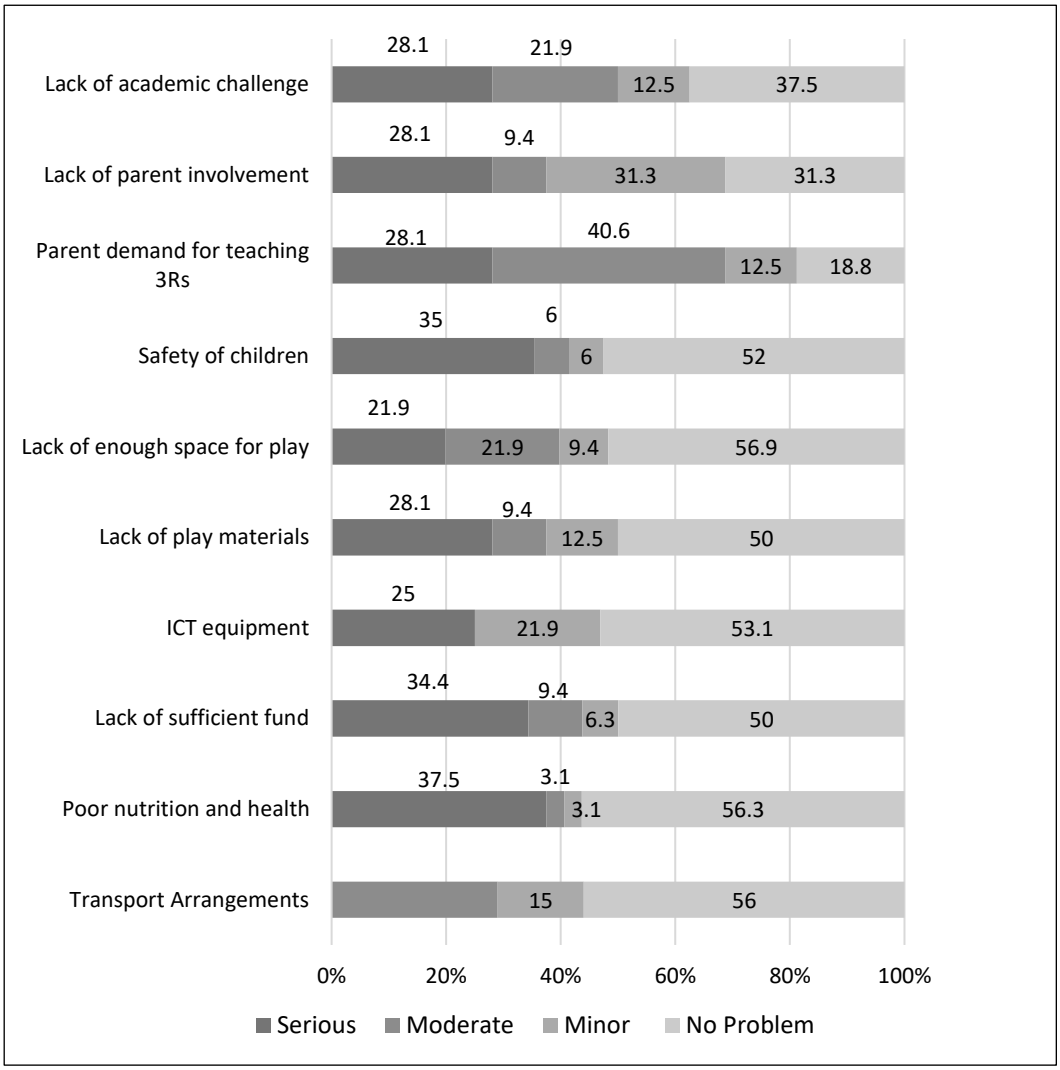
About half of the preschool heads reported no significant problems with safety, infrastructure, or basic services, such as transportation, play materials, or ICT tools. However, only 38 per cent performed routine health examinations and 23 per cent offered wholesome meals, indicating deficiencies in fundamental support for children's wellness.

One persistent worry was parental pressure. Unrealistic expectations for early academic performance were mentioned by about 28.1 per cent of heads, which conflicted with play-based learning methods. Another 28.1 per cent thought the curriculum was too rigid or not difficult enough.

The School Management Committees participated in areas like content (46.9 per cent), assessment (43.8 per cent), budgeting (37.5 per cent), and admissions (28 per cent), but primary decisions like teacher hiring (80 per cent), discipline (78 per cent), salary (71.9 per cent), content (53.1 per cent), and budgeting (62.5 per cent) were made primarily by heads. In general, team-based leadership was regarded favourably.

Figure 9

Important Issues in Preschools



Source: Preschool Head Questionnaire: Item No: 33

3.17 Difficulties in Starting and Maintaining a Franchise

Franchise owners encountered several operational and start-up challenges. Approximately 35 per cent of respondents stated that delays in licensing had an impact on admissions and put a strain on their finances. An additional 20 per cent encountered delays in obtaining educational resources and toys from franchisors.

While centres with owned premises (34.1 per cent) were better able to control costs, 65.9 per cent of centres were burdened by high ongoing rental costs. Since the majority of children came from nearby areas, relocation frequently resulted in lost enrolment. In a cut-throat, results-driven market, gaining the trust of parents was a gradual process, particularly for play-based models.

It was challenging to find qualified teachers. Due to the shortage of trained personnel, it was difficult to maintain the suggested teacher-to-child ratio of 1:10.

4.1 The Size of the Preschool

The number of children enrolled varied greatly amongst centres: 4.9 per cent had fewer than 10 children; 17.1 per cent each had 11–20 and 31–40 children; 9.8 per cent each had 21–30 and 41–50 children; 29.3 per cent enrolled 51–60 children (most common); and 12.2 per cent had more than 61 children. These variances were a result of variations in each centre's growth stage within the franchise model, infrastructure, and community demand.

Table 11

Children's General Profile

Entry Age of Children (Preschool Head Questionnaire-Item No: 7)	
1.5 yrs.	46.8%
2 yrs.	46.8%
2.5 to 3 yrs.	6.4%
Selection for Admission (Preschool Head Questionnaire-Item No: 8)	
Direct Admission	93.7%
Through interview	6.3%
Children Getting Fee Relaxation (Preschool Head Questionnaire-Item No: 9)	
Corporate / Noble Profession of Parents	20%
Early Registration	15 %
Siblings	31 %
Staff	39.3%
All of the Above (Except Early Registration)	9.3%

Cont…

Preschool Timings (Preschool Head Questionnaire-Item No: 10)	
9.00 am to 12.00 noon	47%
9.30 am to 12.30 pm	41%
10.00 am to 1.00 pm	7%
(Morning /Evening Shifts) 9.00 am to 12.00 noon and 9.30 am to 12.30 pm and 1.00 pm to 4.00 pm/2.00 pm to 5.00 pm	5%
Collection of Fees (Preschool Head Questionnaire-Item No: 13)	
Quarterly	56.2%
Monthly	43.8%
Extra-Curricular Activities (Preschool Head Questionnaire-Item No: 15)	
Swimming	6.2%
Dancing	25%
Music	6.2%
Art	3.1%
Others (cultural activities)	3.3%
All of the above	56.2%

Source: Preschool head Questionnaire, Item Nos-7, 8,9,10, 13, and 15.

4.2 Admission Processes and Costs

Franchise preschools cater to different age groups, including toddlers, preschool, nursery, and kindergarten. A small percentage began slightly later, at 2.5 to 3 years old, but the majority (93.7 per cent) admitted children between 1.5 and 2 years old.

The primary criterion for admission was age eligibility, which was used by 93.7 per cent of preschools. Only 15 per cent of them conducted informal interviews to assess parental involvement and verify documents. Family interaction sessions were held by just 6.3 per cent.

Seventy-three per cent of preschools offered campus tours to promote parent participation. A large number also made use of digital systems; 65 per cent permitted online appointment scheduling and 72.5 per cent accepted online enquiries.

Some preschools allowed registration at birth, which came with advantages like fee protection and early access to orientation.

4.3 Charges

Each centre had a different fee schedule. The majority, roughly 77.7 per cent, charged between ₹2000 and ₹4000 per month. In contrast, 10.5 per cent charged ₹4000 or more, and 15.8 per cent charged between ₹1000 and ₹2000. The range of non-refundable admission fees was ₹8,000 to ₹25,000. Meals, transport and stationery were extra expenses that increased the financial strain.

As many as 96.1 per cent of parents believed that the quality of education outweighed the costs. They appreciated the curriculum's emphasis on play and the stimulating learning atmosphere. To help working families, some centres offered afternoon sessions at a reduced rate from 2:00 pm to 5:00 pm.

4.3.1 Concessions for Fees

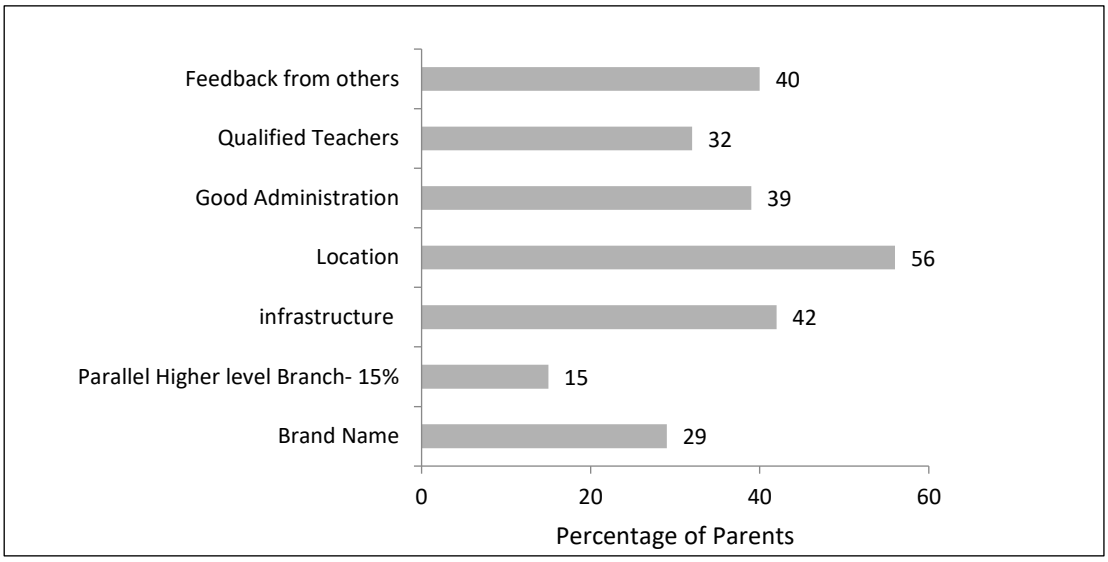
There were no reports of fee waivers for Economically Weaker Sections (EWS). Nonetheless, a number of concessions were made:

- 40 per cent of corporate employees received discounts.
- 40 per cent of staff children received benefits.
- 40 per cent of corporate employees received discounts.
- Sibling discounts were offered by 31 per cent.
- 9.3 per cent offered additional selective concessions.
- 15 per cent offered incentives for early registration.

These actions improved community relations and parental loyalty. However, the absence of EWS-specific provisions revealed a gap in inclusion and underscored the necessity of policy changes to allow equitable access.

Figure 10

Justification for Selecting the Preschool



Source: Parents Questionnaire-Item No: 3

4.4 Important Factors Influencing Parents' Preschool Selection

When choosing a preschool, parents consider factors like convenience, trust, infrastructure, and quality. Approximately 42 per cent of respondents valued hygienic, colourful, and clean surroundings that guarantee children's safety and friendliness. Forty per cent, meanwhile, depend on referrals from friends and family. Thirty-two per cent of respondents place a high value on teacher quality. For 29 per cent of parents, brand reputation is important. Additionally, 15 per cent favour preschools that are affiliated with K–12 institutions for continuity. Referral incentives, such as discounts for bringing in new families, draw in a smaller group of 5 per cent.

One important consideration is convenience. Preschools close to home are preferred by roughly 56 per cent of parents, who place a high value on accessibility and convenient commutes, particularly in crowded cities.

In general, the decisions made by parents are a reflection of their pragmatic requirements as well as their emotional confidence in the preschool's setting and methodology.

4.5 Infrastructure Quality

Preschools are gradually implementing international best practices to design environments that are secure, engaging, and developmentally appropriate. Important characteristics include:

1. Classrooms that are well-ventilated and bright.
2. Clean drinking water and child-friendly restrooms.
3. Playthings for both indoor and outdoor use. Learning aids like books, puzzles, and story props; safety features like childproofing; and trained support personnel. Apps, notice boards, and parent portals are examples of communication tools.

These components enhance teacher satisfaction and parental confidence, while fostering a nurturing environment for inquiry and learning. This pattern reflects a larger trend towards inclusive, experience-rich early learning environments.

Table 12

Infrastructure

		Rented	Own
Building	Type of building	65.9	34.1
		Yes	No
	Disabled-friendly infrastructure	17.1	82.9
	Proper building	92.7	7.3
Outdoor Area	Cemented outdoor area	90.2	9.8
	Grass covered outdoor area	41.5	58.5
	Safety-compliant outdoor area	51.2	48.8
Indoor Area	Enough equipment in outdoor area	56.1	43.9
	Adequate light in indoor area	80.5	19.5
	Adequate learning equipment and games	80.5	19.5
	Adequate indoor space for group and individual activity	85.4	14.6
	Sufficient indoor storage space	92.7	7.3
	Airy classrooms	70.7	29.3

Table 13

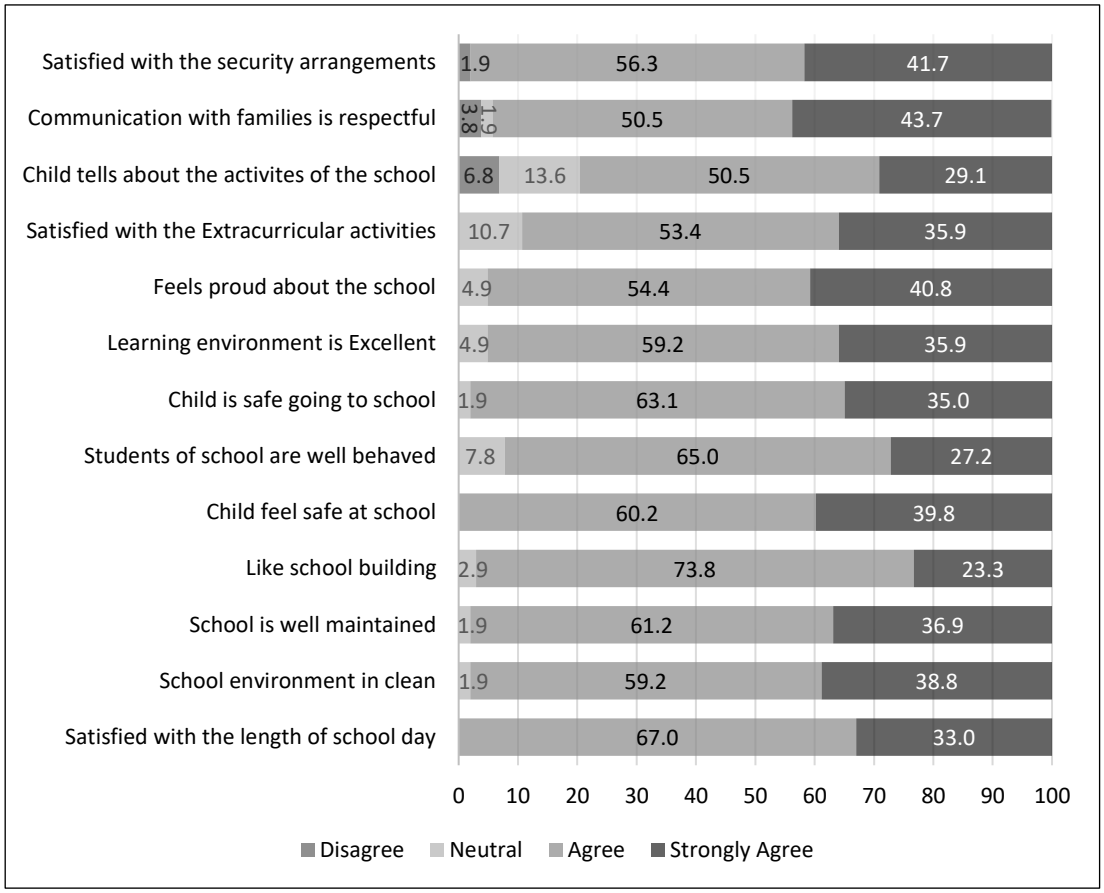
Safety Measures

Measures to ensure safety	Per cent
Registration of drivers of all outsourced preschool vans	5.6
Send Ayah/helper in preschool vans to pick and drop children	11.1
Verification of staff	65
(i) Registration of drivers of all outsourced preschool vans (ii) Send Ayah/helper in preschool vans to pick and drop children (iii) Monitoring class through CCTV camera (iv) Verification of staff	83.3

Source: Preschool Head Questionnaire-Item No: 16

Figure 11

Parents' Opinion about various Aspects of the Preschools



Source: Parents Questionnaire-Item No: 17

4.6 Parental Satisfaction and Preschool Environment

Franchise preschools satisfied MWCD infrastructure requirements and were generally liked by parents. The vast majority (98 per cent) expressed satisfaction with the safety precautions, and 94 per cent valued frequent communication between the preschool and parents, demonstrating a strong sense of cooperation.

Ninety-six per cent of parents were proud of their preschool choice. The building's physical infrastructure received high marks; 98 per cent of respondents thought the space was clean and hygienic, and 97 per cent appreciated the preschool building. The hours of preschool were thought to align well with the children's routines.

Ninety-five per cent of respondents praised learning environments for encouraging participation and social-emotional development. High levels of engagement were also indicated by the fact that 90 per cent of parents stated that their children regularly shared preschool experiences at home and, 89 per cent valued extracurricular activities.

4.7 PTA Meetings and Parental Involvement

Parent-teacher meetings (PTMs) took place every three or six months. Teachers maintained observation records and participated in internal meetings. About 50 per cent of parents met with teachers every month, 13.5 per cent did so weekly, and 36 per cent met on an as-needed basis.

Communication happened through children (89 per cent), personal meetings (52.8 per cent), phone calls (23 per cent), and home-school diaries or written notes (14.2 per cent).

Even with high parental involvement, only 12 per cent of preschools had formal Parent Volunteer Programmes. Still, participation in school events was strong:

- 88 per cent hosted festivals and cultural programmes
- 72 per cent organised exhibitions
- 73 per cent arranged picnics
- 54 per cent planned excursions
- 100 per cent conducted graduation ceremonies

These activities helped build relationships between school and home through shared experiences.

5.1 Background of the Children

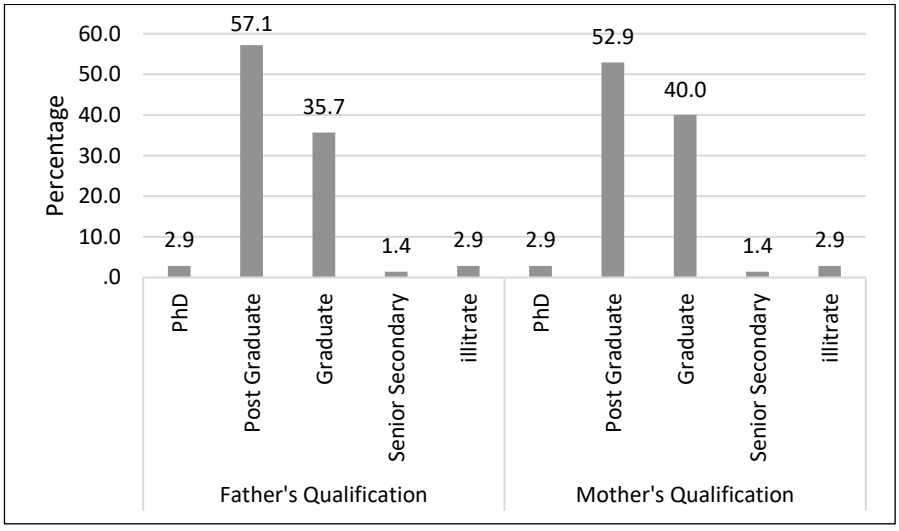
Most of the enrolled children came from educated families:

- 57.1 per cent of fathers and 52.9 per cent of mothers held postgraduate degrees
- 35.7 per cent of fathers and 40 per cent of mothers were graduates
- A small number (2.9 per cent) were PhD holders or illiterate

This implies that parents with higher education levels value early learning and often select well-regarded preschools, which supports earlier research (Lei et al., 2009).

Figure 12

Parents' Qualifications



Source: Parents Questionnaire: Item No-1.e

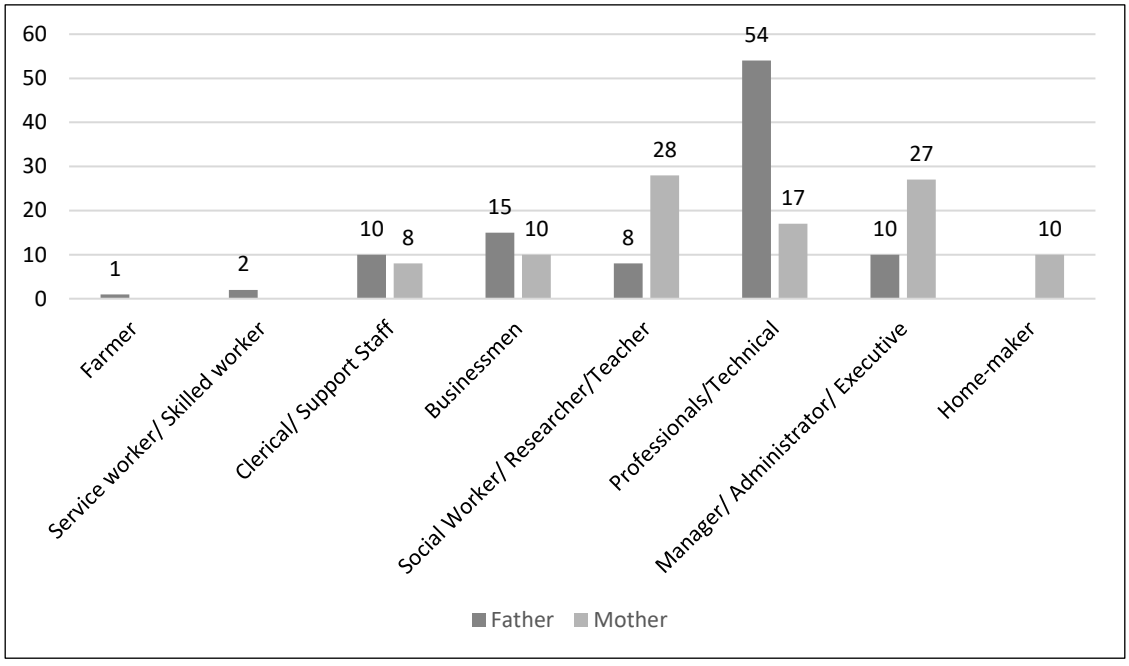
5.2 Parental Occupations of Children Enrolled in Preschools

Parents of children in franchise preschools came from various professional backgrounds. Approximately 54 per cent of fathers and 17 per cent of mothers held professional or managerial jobs, while 28 per cent worked in research or social work. Business ownership or self-employment was reported by 15 per cent of fathers and 10 per cent of mothers. A small number of fathers were in skilled services (2 per cent) or agriculture (1 per cent).

In total, 59 per cent of fathers and nearly 20 per cent of mothers were in technical or professional fields. Over 25 per cent of mothers and 10 per cent of fathers held managerial positions. This shows that the parents are educated and focused on careers.

Figure 13

Parents' Occupation



Source: Parents' Questionnaire: Item No-1.e

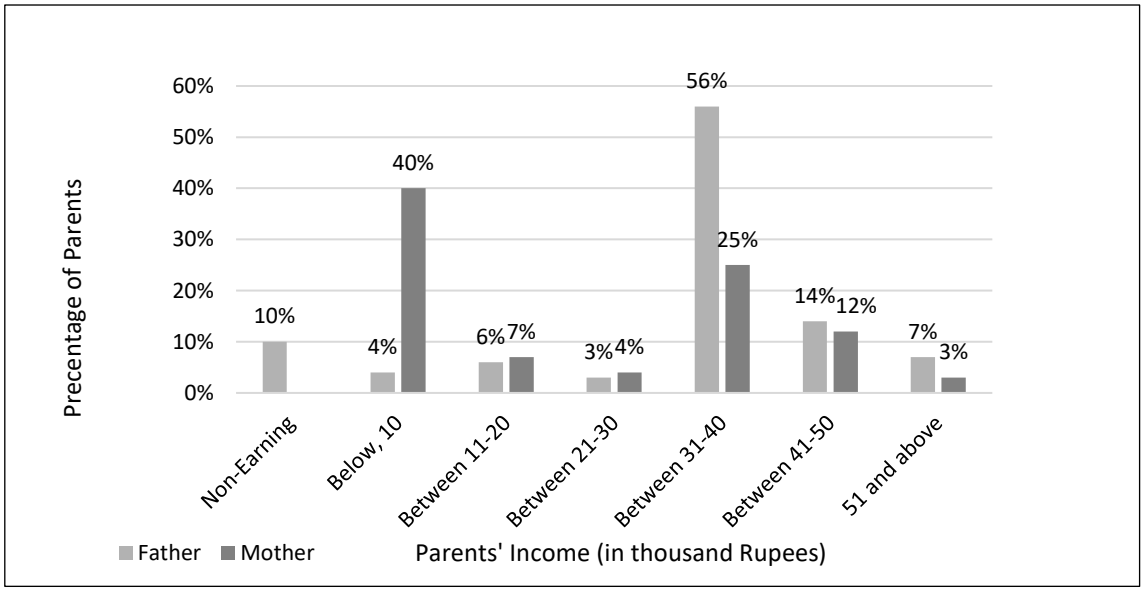
5.3 Monthly Income of Parents

Most fathers (77 per cent) and about 40 per cent of mothers reported a monthly income of over Rs. 31,000. This shows a mainly middle- to upper-income group of parents. A small number of fathers (6 per cent) and mothers (7 per cent) earned between Rs. 11,000 and Rs. 20,000. Meanwhile, 3 per cent of fathers and 4 per cent of mothers fell in the Rs. 21,000 to Rs. 30,000 range.

Notably, 40 per cent of mothers and 4 per cent of fathers earned less than Rs. 10,000 per month. This highlights some income inequality within households, despite the overall economic stability of the parent population.

Figure 14

Parents' Income



Source- Parents' Questionnaire: Item No-1.e

5.4 Special Needs and Curriculum Transaction Techniques

About 36.3 per cent of preschool teachers reported having children with special needs in their classrooms, and 38.9 per cent had received relevant professional training.

When it comes to early learning practices, 33.3 per cent of preschools used alternative approaches, such as multiple intelligences, project-based learning, and play techniques. Some schools adopted the Canadian curriculum, which focuses on social-emotional learning, while others followed Montessori or kindergarten-based models.

Table 14

CWSN in the Class

Presence of CWSN in the class	
Yes	36.3
No	63.7
Professionally trained to attend CWSN	
Yes	38.9
No	61.1

Table 15

Approach Adopted for Teaching

Kindergarten	**6.7%**
Montessori	6.7%
Integrated/Combined	53.3%
Any other - (Multiple intelligence, thematic method, Rego Emillia, project-based learning, Play way)	33.3%

Source: Administrative Staff Questionnaire: Item No-4

6.1 Language Use and Integrated Instruction

53.3% of preschools used integrated instruction, which incorporates themes such as people, festivals, and cultural heritage into lessons through the use of visual aids, pretend play, art, hands-on exploration, and stories to encourage holistic learning. In terms of language use, approximately 25% of preschools provided instruction only in English, while approximately 75% employed a bilingual Hindi-English approach.

Table 16

Classroom Interaction

Classroom Interactions		
	Yes (%)	**No (%)**
Classroom Management		
Corrects misbehaviour	95	5
Provides opportunity to children to help one another	90	10
Inculcates good eating habits	93	7
Provides positive feedback to children	95	5
Encourages children to take care of their belongings	78	22
Differentiation and Inclusion		
Creates an environment in which all children are involved	71	29
Instructional skills		
Conducts recapitulation of concept from time-to-time	98	2
Represents general warmth and empathy towards all children	98	2
Provides kind and relaxed atmosphere in the classroom	98	2
Engages every child in productive work	93	7
Introduces new concepts based on prior knowledge	88	12
Encourages children to work cooperatively	85	15
Poses question to initiate reflection	85	15
Facilitates mutual interaction among children	78	22
Gives turn to all children	78	22
Asks children to reflect on solution to problem	71	29
Correlates the concepts with day-to-day life examples	71	29
Uses ICT	51	49
Teacher waits sufficiently to allow children to reflect on their answer	41	59
Clarity of Instruction		
Teacher communicates in a clear and understandable manner	98	2
Provides opportunities for problem solving	95	5
Provides activities for active involvement of children	95	5
Provides opportunity to be active learners	85	15
Presents lesson in logical flow	63	37
Uses appropriate interaction strategies for children of different groups	59	41
Clarification of lesson objectives at the beginning of the lesson	34	66
Assessment and Evaluation		
Gives explicit, detailed and constructive feedback	93	7
Gives activities based on students' prior knowledge of children	93	7

Source: Observation Schedule: Item No-12

Curriculum Content Contained Activities For	Yes (%)	Can't Say (%)
All round Development	99	1
School Reading	67	33
Adaptive Behaviour	67	33

7.1 Observations in the Classroom: Teaching and Management Practices

Observations in the classroom showed that teacher-student interactions were largely positive. Roughly 95 per cent of teachers encouraged problem-solving, and 98 per cent provided clear instructions. Only 34 per cent, though, initially shared learning objectives.

Pedagogically, 85 per cent promoted teamwork, 88 per cent linked new material to existing knowledge, and 93 per cent included all students. Although real-world connections (71 per cent) and reflective questioning (78 per cent) were prevalent, 51 per cent of classrooms used ICT tools, and only 41 per cent set aside time for reflection.

Strong management techniques were used: 90 per cent encouraged peer cooperation, 93 per cent encouraged healthy eating, and 95 per cent successfully dealt with misbehaviour. Individualised assignments frequently lacked peer support, even though 78 per cent of teachers encouraged responsibility and 71 per cent favoured inclusion.

These trends demonstrate generally good classroom management and instruction, creating a positive and stimulating learning environment.

Table 17

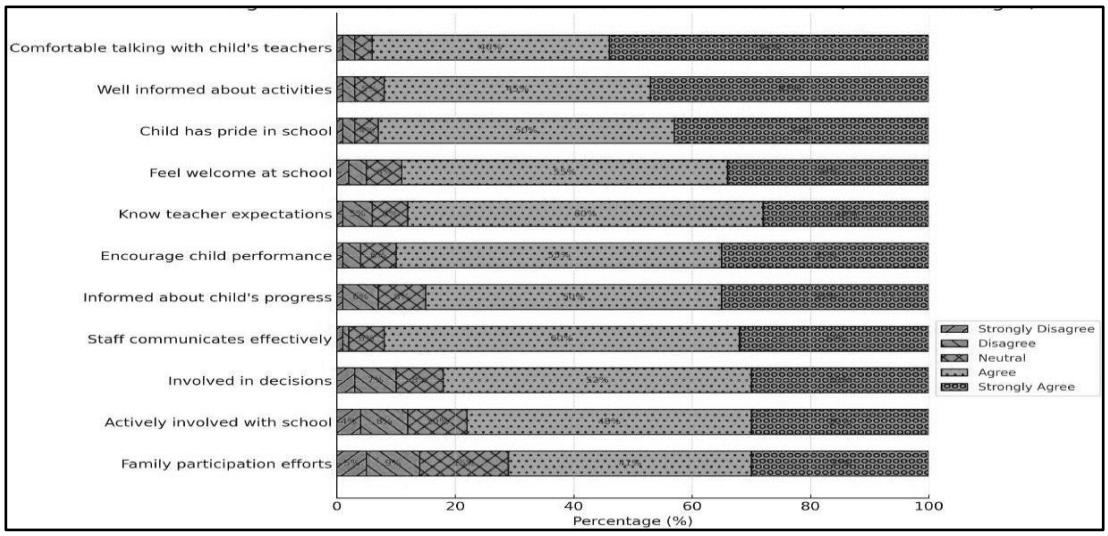
Use of ICT

Use of ICT	
Yes	67.3
No	32.7
Total	100.0
Kind of Activities Conducted through ICT	
Explanation of the concept	2.7
Play rhymes	12.4
For musical movement and exercises	1.8
To show movies or cartoon shows	3.5
Music, show movies and power point presentations	79.6
Frequency of Use of ICT	
Daily	32.7
Weekly	38.9
Monthly	8.8
Very rare	19.5

Source: Teacher Questionnaire: Item Nos-6,7,8

Figure 15

Parent Satisfaction Levels Across Domains (with %)



Source: Parent Questionnaire: Item No-19

8.1 Private Franchise Preschool Operations: Strengths and Weaknesses

Strong parent relationships have been established by private franchise preschools. Ninety-five per cent of parents said their children were proud to go, 96 per cent said they felt welcome, and 98 per cent said they felt comfortable talking to the teachers. As many as 91.3 per cent of students understood teacher expectations, and 94 per cent of parents received regular progress updates. Furthermore, 80 per cent actively participated in school activities, and 87 per cent reported good staff communication.

These patterns are consistent with Rafoth's (2004) focus on family and classroom involvement. Ninety per cent of preschools used resources for gross motor development, and the majority used materials that encouraged creativity. Facilities for nature walks, and observation were available, their use varied, showing inconsistent pedagogy. Only 58.5 per cent of centres regularly used expressive tools like puppets and dramatic play. Even though 56.1 per cent preschools owned outdoor paraphernalia, 43.9 per cent preschools did not regularly incorporate it into their daily schedules.

Table 18

Children in High, Medium and Low Scores in terms of their Performance on School Readiness in Reading and Numeracy (Using SRI)

N	Mean	S.D.	At Level	Mean	SE	SD	Scores obtained between	Number of Children	Percentage of Children
480	31.079	5.834	High	37.858	.144	1.844	35-40	154	32.1
			Medium	31.272	.136	1.754	29-34	155	32. 3
			Low	24.730	.216	2.890	0-28	171	35.6

Table 19

Level of Significance between High Score and Low Score Groups using t-value

SRI	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	t-value	Significant/ Non-Significant
Low Group	171	24.7303	2.89072	.21667	49.371**	Significant
High Group	154	37.8580	1.84447	.14492		

Source: Df-338, Significant at 0.01 and 0.05 level, t value > table value (2.59, 1.96).

Table 18 identifies significant differences between children with high and low school readiness. The development of number concepts is a fundamental yet challenging task that calls for careful pedagogical preparation. Building solid mathematical foundations requires identifying individual differences in number sense and offering early assistance to children who are having difficulty when they start school (Aunio et al., 2005).

9.1 Pre-Number Concepts

Early mathematical understanding is supported by pre-number concepts such as big-small, tall-short, and more-less. Fifty-five per cent of children correctly answered both questions in the readiness assessment (Item 1), 24 per cent correctly answered one, and 21 per cent did not provide a correct response. This variation emphasises the necessity of appropriate and early strategies to support the development of basic numeracy.

9.2 Space Concepts

Understanding positions and directions requires an understanding of spatial concepts like above-below, front-behind, and in-out. Ninety-four per cent of children correctly identified "front" and "behind" in the school readiness assessment (Figure 17), demonstrating a high level of spatial awareness. This shows that some children may develop spatial understanding before number sense, as evidenced by their 55 per cent proficiency in quantity-related concepts.

Figure 16

Maximum and Least Concept

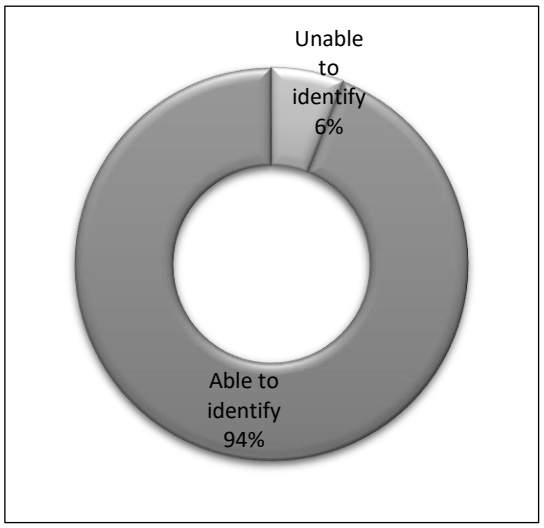
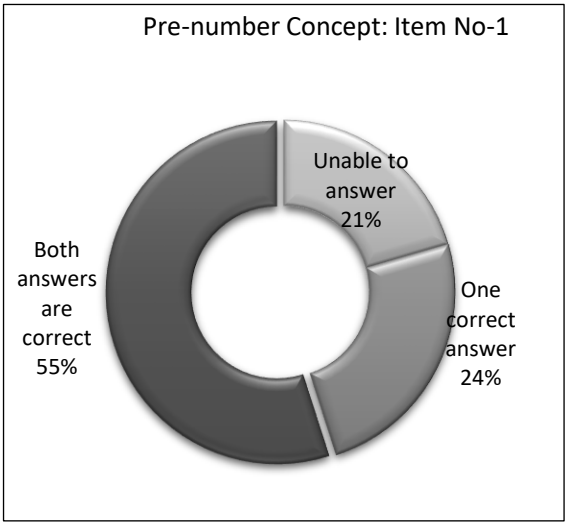


Figure 17

Concept of Front and Behind Concept



9.3 Sequential Thinking

Item 3 used a picture story about filling a bucket to test sequencing abilities. Ninety-eight per cent of the children accurately described the steps, and all of them (100 per cent) correctly arranged the images. Just 2 per cent had trouble explaining things verbally. Strong sequential thinking, a crucial cognitive ability for logical reasoning and subsequent academic learning, is demonstrated by these findings.

Figure 18

Sequential Thinking

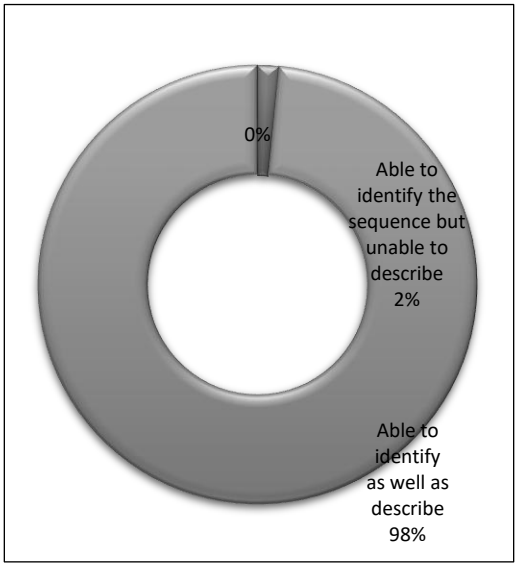
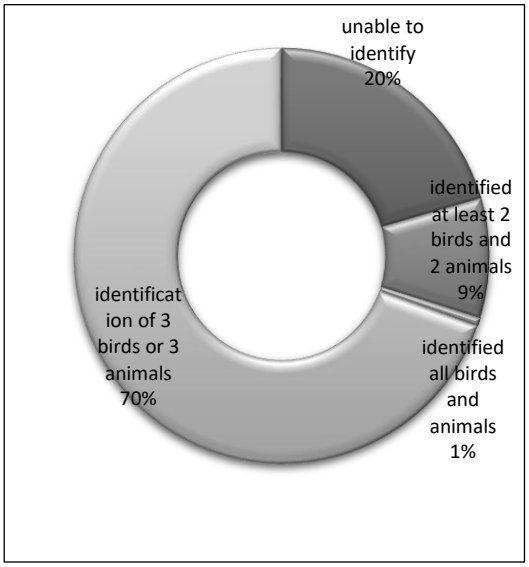


Figure 19

Classification of Birds and Animals



9.4 Classification

Classification—the arrangement of items based on attributes like colour, shape, or size—is essential for early numeracy and logical reasoning. In the school readiness assessment, children were asked to identify whether an item was a fruit or a vegetable (Item 4). The findings showed that only 1 per cent of respondents could correctly sort every item, 70 per cent could only identify one category, 9 per cent could identify two, and 20 per cent were unable to classify.

Classification skills performed worse than sequential thinking (100 per cent) and spatial concepts (94 per cent). This emphasises how crucial it is to provide early learners with targeted, developmentally appropriate activities to improve their classification skills.

Figure 20

Following Instructions

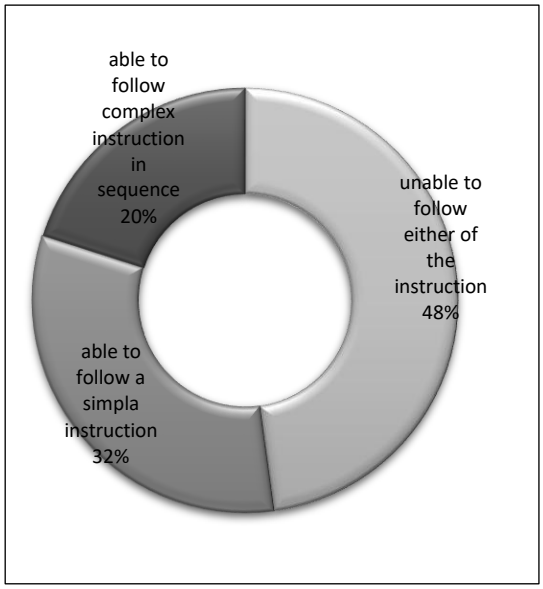
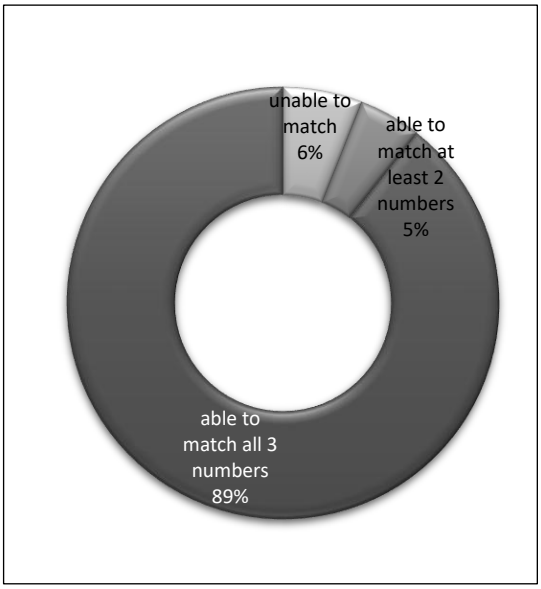


Figure 21

Number/ Objects Matching



9.5 Matching

By allowing children to connect numerals with corresponding quantities, matching is a fundamental skill that enhances number sense. Children had to match sets of objects with number symbols as part of the school readiness assessment (Item 6).

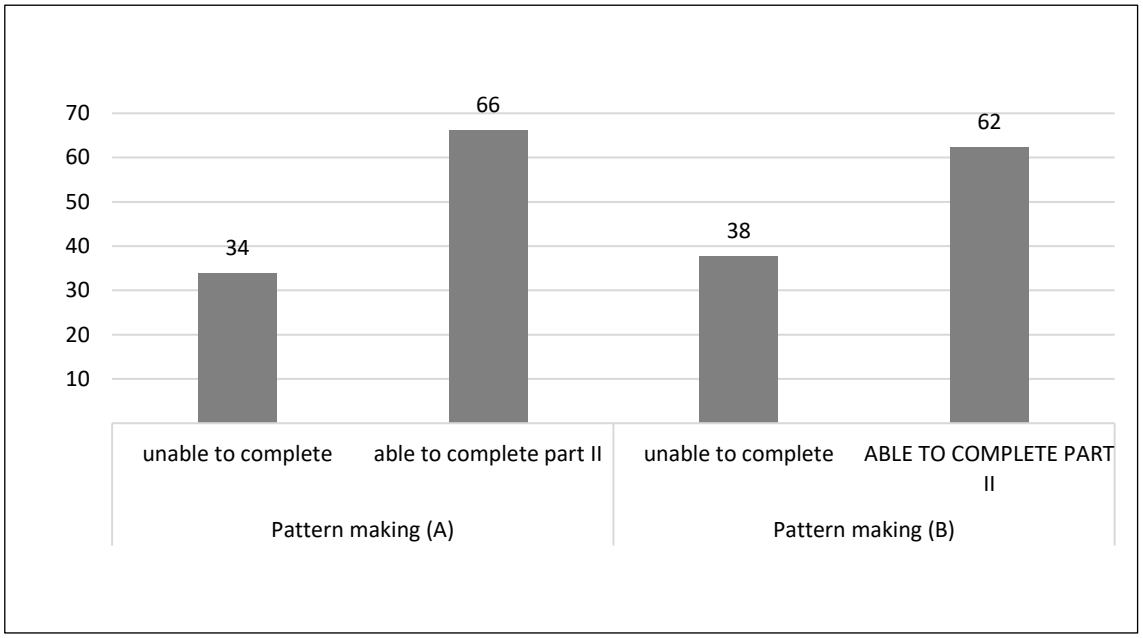
According to the results, 89 per cent of participants successfully matched all three pairs, 5 per cent made partial matches, and 6 per cent failed to complete the task. The results indicate that by the time they entered school, the majority of children had already acquired a basic understanding of numbers and quantities, with 94 per cent demonstrating at least partial success.

9.6 Pattern Making

The development of sequencing and prediction is aided by pattern-making, which is essential to early mathematical thinking. Children were asked to complete and repeat visual patterns in Item 8. The exercise promotes skills such as perseverance, preparation, and critical thinking.

Figure 22

Number of Students Able to Complete the Pattern



According to the assessment, 62 per cent of children successfully completed the patterns, and 66 per cent were able to repeat them. However, challenges were encountered by 34 per cent and 38 per cent, respectively. Although pattern-making

performance outperformed reading readiness, these results suggest room for improvement.

Teachers should use common materials like flowers, seashells, or leaflets to create a variety of hands-on pattern activities that promote number readiness. Children's mathematical foundations are strengthened, and logical thinking is encouraged when they are asked to predict the next item in a pattern.

9.7 Numeracy Proficiency: Comparative Analysis

One of the most important numeracy skills is relative comparison, such as knowing "more than" or "less than." Just 22 per cent of children performed well on Assessment Item 10, indicating limited development in this area.

Gaining proficiency in this area is crucial for quantitative reasoning. Introducing structured comparison tasks through classroom activities and games can help children grasp this concept more effectively from an early stage.

9.8 Proficiency in Reading

Pre-literacy skills like listening, following directions, describing images, and recognising first sounds are all part of reading readiness. Different levels of competence were revealed by the School Readiness Instrument results; some children showed signs of developing literacy skills, while others required more help.

Creating language-rich environments through storytelling, picture talk, and exposure to print and sound activities is crucial to prepare children for formal reading instruction.

9.9 Listening Skills

Understanding, communicating, and learning all depend on listening. According to item 5 of the school readiness assessment, 32 per cent of children were able to follow

simple instructions, 20 per cent were able to follow complex ones, and 48 per cent couldn't follow instructions at all.

Teachers should incorporate exercises like rhyming stories, interactive oral games, and environmental sound recognition to help students improve their listening skills. In classrooms that are diverse and multilingual, simplified instructions in the home language or familiar tongue are particularly beneficial.

Figure 23

Sentence Making

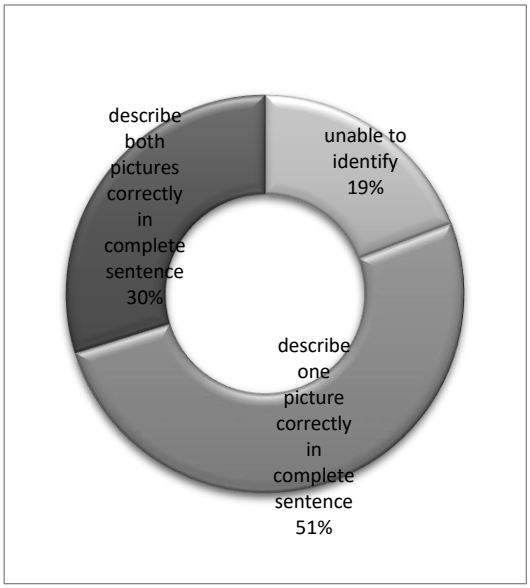
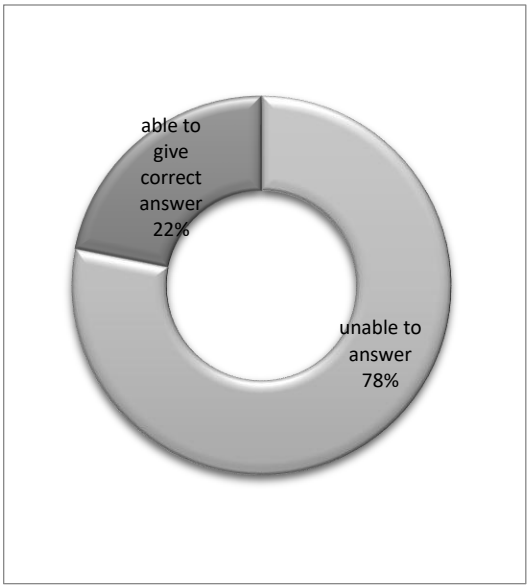


Figure 24

Relative Comparison: Greater Number/ Lesser Number



9.10 Communication Abilities

Speaking abilities are the cornerstone of later literacy and develop in tandem with listening. Eighty-one per cent of children demonstrated partial or full skill development in the school readiness assessment (Item 9), with 30 per cent describing both pictures with complete sentences and 51 per cent describing just one picture. But 19 per cent couldn't describe any images.

These results highlight the necessity of more organised oral language exercises. Storytelling, dramatisation, and guided conversations are examples of narrative-based

activities that can help children express themselves more confidently and clearly in complete sentences.

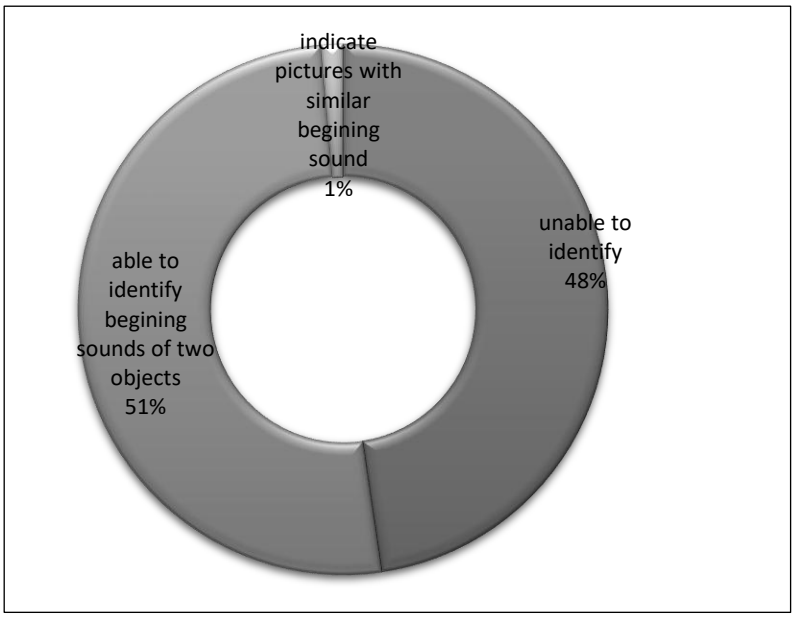
9.11 Reading Skills

Item 7, which measures reading readiness, concentrated on recognising initial sounds. Although 51 per cent of children were able to recognise them, only 1 per cent were able to match words with similar sounds, and 48 per cent had no trouble at all.

These findings suggest that efforts to increase phonemic awareness should be intensified. Rhyming games, sound matching, and story reading are a few activities that can improve early literacy and help children develop the decoding and auditory skills necessary for successful reading.

Figure 25

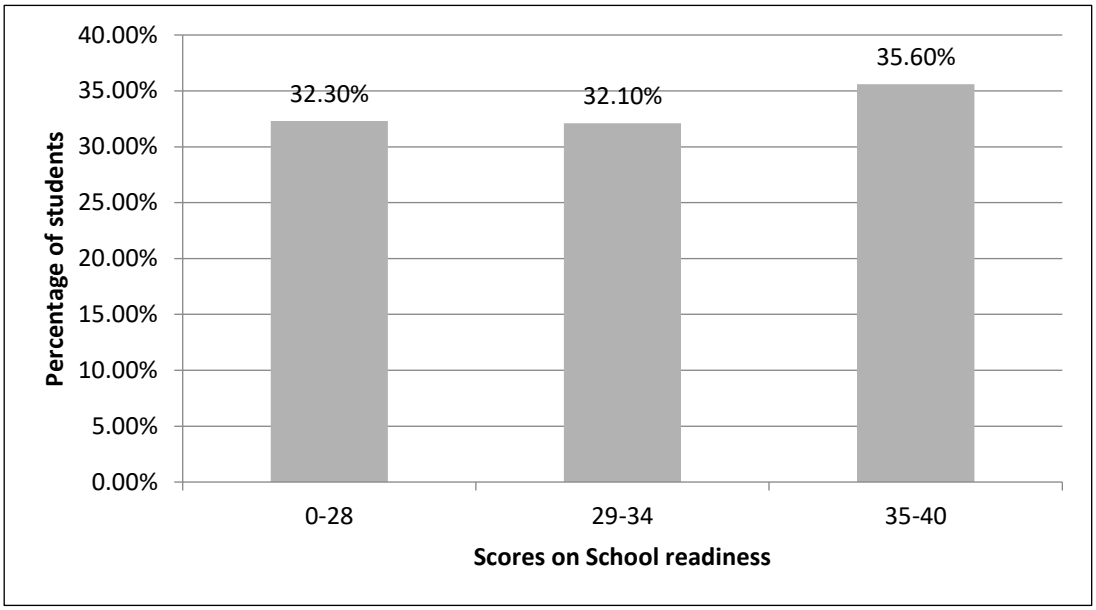
Reading Readiness, Identification of Beginning Sounds



A majority of children faced difficulty in recognising pictures with the same beginning sound, pointing to limited exposure to language-rich activities at home or in preschool. This highlights the urgent need for structured, practice-based phonemic awareness and engaging early literacy experiences**.**

Figure 26

Performance on School Readiness



With a mean score of 31.079, the average performance on the school readiness test was 77.6 per cent. However, the mean is not a reliable indicator of performance levels because of medium dispersion. The median, which is lower than the mean, indicates the central tendency, which is 38. Further to this, the highest frequency in the data corresponds to the value 3 i.e. mode. This indicates that the majority of students obtained a score of 34. About 67.7 per cent scored above 28. One-third scored low (0-28), one-third medium (29-34), and one-third high (35-40), showcasing varied performance outcomes. Overall, a significant percentage demonstrated good readiness (29-40 score) on the instrument.

10.1 Conclusion

10.2 Academic and Administrative Structure

The top-down, hierarchical structure of private franchise preschools places a strong administrative emphasis on the preschool head, who is responsible for curriculum supervision and child welfare. Daily functioning is supported by teachers and caregivers. Some preschools also benefit from counselling services, though access

varies. Management Committees—typically comprising franchise owners—guide strategic and administrative decisions. The workforce is predominantly female, including heads and management members, indicating it is a gendered sector. While many franchise owners are women, managerial inexperience and financial challenges—such as startup costs, royalties, and taxation—continue to persist. Other issues include low parental involvement in governance and limited access to counselling. Further research is needed to assess how franchise ownership affects quality, multi-branch governance, and financial sustainability.

10.3 Operational and Educational Aspects

When it comes to educating preschool owners and employees about inclusive education, curriculum resources, and child development, franchise brands are crucial. Standardised curricula foster parental trust, and professional development sessions enhance the quality of instruction.

Early-stage operational problems, concerns about teachers' salaries, and franchisees' reluctance to expand are among the difficulties. In spite of these, quality delivery is supported by brand identity. The majority of the teaching-caregiving staff are women with a range of educational backgrounds. Ongoing training is not a priority for all leaders, though. Strong leadership and cooperation between franchise heads, teachers, and owners are necessary to manage parental expectations while promoting play-based learning.

10.4 Financial Aspects

Franchise preschools need a lot of money upfront, like startup costs and royalty fees, which makes them an expensive enterprise. But they get brand value, structured support, and standardised academic offerings from them.

10.5 Teacher Recruitment and Professional Development

Budget limits affect the hiring of teachers. Low pay makes it hard for the teachers to stay. Professional development is seen as important, but not all centres do it the same way.

10.6 Policies for Admission and Infrastructure

Children who attend preschool come from a wide range of economic and social backgrounds, but support for children with special needs is not always consistent. Age and the commitment of the parents are usually taken into account when deciding who gets in. Digital tools make it easier to handle applications. There are often discounts, but there are no quotas for EWS children. Parents, on the other hand, are mostly happy with safety, communication, and infrastructure. Usually, there is play equipment and, outdoor play area. Many preschools underutilise outdoor resources, indicating missed opportunities for holistic child development.

10.7 Curriculum Framework and Teaching Methods

Franchise preschools often use a hybrid curriculum that combines traditional and progressive methods—like project-based learning, multiple intelligences, and play-based instruction. Influences include Montessori and Canadian frameworks. Bilingual education (Hindi-English) is common, though some centres use only English.

10.8 Achievements and Challenges

Despite the fact that many children are prepared for school, there are still fundamental gaps in reading and numeracy. Targeted activities that support language-rich learning are essential. Low parental involvement in governance, inconsistent access to counselling, owner financial strain, and staffing shortages are among the difficulties.

10.9 Important Takeaways

The intricate, hierarchical structures in which franchise preschools function are influenced by both parental and financial factors. With the help of carers, and sometimes counsellors, preschool heads play a crucial role in governance. The majority of roles are held by women, and management committees give guidance.

Professional training, a standardised curriculum, and high parental satisfaction are among its advantages. High setup costs, little assistance for special needs, low teacher compensation, and uneven performance are still problems, though. There is a pressing need for better inclusion, staff development, and policy support to sustain quality and equity.

10.10 Policy Directions

- Provide supportive environments for all children and training of teachers in inclusive practices.
- Curriculum and Pedagogy: Support multilingual teaching methods and align with NEP 2020, emphasising foundational skills Enhancing Career Advancement.
- Provide continuous, need-based training associated with NCF-FS and NIPUN Bharat. Establish parent councils and consistent feedback mechanisms.
- Organise workshops to connect the learning home and school. Counsellor Assistance and Child Welfare: Assign counsellors based on enrolment; collaborate with child psychologists to provide more comprehensive assistance. Sustainability of Finances: Offer low-interest loans and training in financial management. Develop models that are both economical and of high quality.
- Evidence-based Policy-making: Encourage in-depth studies on the sustainability and efficacy of preschools.
- Create national franchise guidelines that strike a balance between accountability and flexibility.

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