

Exploring Parent-Teacher Communication: Understanding Mutual Perspectives and Support During the Transition to First Grade

Asnat Dor¹

¹ Max Stern Academic College of Emek Yezreel, Israel

Correspondence: Asnat Dor, Max Stern Academic College of Emek Yezreel, Israel.

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Abstract

The transition to first grade represents a pivotal stage in a child's educational journey, marked by significant adjustments for both children and their parents. This study explores the expectations and needs of parents during this transition, as well as the perspectives of teachers regarding parental engagement. The findings highlight the critical importance of accessible communication, genuine attentiveness to children's emotional states, and continuous transparency in sharing classroom activities. Challenges such as inconsistent communication and varying levels of responsiveness are identified. Teachers, despite lacking formal training in parent engagement, have developed strategies to manage interactions effectively. The study underscores the necessity for targeted professional development to enhance teacher-parent interactions, ensuring a smoother transition for students. The research also reveals the complex emotional landscape parents navigate, emphasizing the need for sensitive communication and robust support systems to facilitate positive educational outcomes.

Keywords: early childhood education, educational adjustment, emotional support, First grade transition, parental engagement, teacher-parent communication, professional development

1. Background

The transition to first grade marks a pivotal point in a child's educational trajectory, requiring adjustments on multiple fronts. Children must adapt to new academic expectations, social dynamics, and behavioral norms, all within the confines of a more structured school environment (Goble et al., 2017; O'Kane, 2016). This stage necessitates that children autonomously manage their classroom engagement while concurrently developing a broad spectrum of skills, including social, emotional, verbal, and physical competencies (Hirst et al., 2011; Sénéchal & Young, 2008). Preschool teachers have reported behavior problems, difficulty following directions, and challenges in turn-taking as common issues during this transition (Urbina-Garcia & Kyriacou, 2018).

For parents, the onset of their child's formal schooling elicits a broad spectrum of emotions, characterized by a blend of excitement and anticipation coupled with anxiety and apprehension (Ben Shlomo & Taubman-Ben-Ari, 2017). This period reflects the multifaceted impact of this educational milestone on the entire family, highlighting the convergence of positive emotions alongside challenges related to routines and responsibilities (Dempsey et al., 2023). The transition exerts a significant emotional toll on parents, particularly in dimensions related to relationships and support, with mothers experiencing particularly intense emotions (Dempsey et al., 2023).

Parents transitioning their children to first grade often encounter stress due to various reasons. The shift introduces new routines, expectations, and responsibilities for both children and parents, necessitating adjustments that can be both challenging and daunting (Breuer & Tal, 2020). Concerns over academic performance loom large, with parents worrying about their child's ability to adapt to the foundational demands of reading, writing, and mathematics, which are crucial for future educational success (Sanagavarapu & Perry, 2005). Social adjustment is another significant area of concern, as parents contemplate their child's ability to forge new friendships, integrate into new social settings, and navigate classroom dynamics (Sanagavarapu & Perry, 2005).

The emotional well-being of children during this transition also causes anxiety for parents, who are concerned about their child's happiness, confidence, and resilience in coping with change (Sanagavarapu & Perry, 2005). Increased independence and time spent away from home raise concerns about the child's safety and their ability to manage on their own in a larger school environment (Breuer & Tal, 2020). Parents carry their own experiences and expectations into their child's entry into first grade, underscoring the significant emotional impact this

transition has on them (Goble et al., 2017). Establishing communication with new teachers and understanding how to engage effectively can be daunting, and comparisons with other children's progress and experiences can exacerbate concerns about their own child's development. Logistical challenges, such as changes in daily schedules, transportation, and after-school care arrangements, add another layer of complexity to this transitional phase (Zhuravleva et al., 2021). These factors highlight the multifaceted nature of stress experienced by parents as their children embark on their formal educational journey.

The emotional journey encountered by parents during this phase can significantly influence their own personal growth as they navigate their evolving role in their child's academic life (Ben Shlomo & Taubman-Ben-Ari, 2017). The foundational years of schooling are crucial for establishing a positive trajectory in children's academic and socio-emotional development. Research underscores the critical nature of robust interaction and communication between educators and parents in significantly enhancing the adjustment and educational outcomes of first-grade students (Cook et al., 2018). Parental engagement during this transition is not merely supportive but instrumental, reinforcing essential literacy and numeracy skills that are fundamental for the child's ongoing educational journey and literacy development (McDowall et al., 2017). Moreover, the symbiotic relationship forged between the school and the family is a vital contributor to the child's psychological and social well-being, positively influencing self-esteem, academic achievements, motivation, and a decrease in behavioral challenges and absenteeism (Al-Hail et al., 2021; Epstein, 2008; Kuhn et al., 2017; Leshtarova, 2017; Mau Kasi et al., 2021; Ramanlingam & Maniam, 2020).

The degree of parental involvement is significantly shaped by their convictions regarding their efficacy in supporting their child's educational endeavors, complemented by their perceptions of the educational institution's receptivity to such involvement (Kim & Sheridan, 2015; Walker et al., 2005;). Hence, educators are tasked with the critical responsibility of fostering effective communication skills. This skill set encompasses the ability to share pedagogical goals, engage in consultative discussions on learning strategies, navigate conflicts with empathy, and cultivate a culture of constructive problem-solving (Aich et al., 2017).

Effective communication within this period is instrumental in providing a nurturing and supportive educational experience, laying the groundwork for the child's future success across various domains of their life (Sayers et al., 2012). This collaborative effort is essential for ensuring a smoother academic transition, fostering a sense of community, promoting active engagement in the learning process, and supporting the child through the myriad of academic and social challenges they encounter (Dockett & Perry, 2007; Dunlop & Fabian, 2007; Peters, 2010). The collective endeavor of parents and teachers, underpinned by mutual understanding and shared objectives, is pivotal in navigating this significant transitional phase effectively, thereby laying a solid foundation for the child's holistic development and long-term educational achievements.

In parallel to the adjustments required by parents and children during the school transition, teachers also face the necessity of acclimating to their new students and their families. Acknowledging the importance of sustained communication with parents, particularly for younger students, teachers actively work to create channels that support effective dialogue and are aware of the potential for increased worry and emotional stress among parents as their children commence first grade (Dor, 2023).

Challenges in fostering parent engagement have been highlighted by educators, noting a significant lack of response to communication efforts and a low level of involvement in school-related activities (Hagage Baikovich & Yemini, 2023; Yang et al., 2023). This lack of reciprocal interaction, compounded by issues such as economic, cultural variances, and adverse parental attitudes toward education, poses substantial hurdles in establishing robust connections (Perrigo et al., 2022). Furthermore, an observed deficit in parental respect towards educators diminishes their professional standing and negatively influences the esteem of early childhood education. These obstacles not only hinder the development of a nurturing educational environment but also place additional pressures on teachers, emphasizing the critical need for parental engagement and collaboration to nurture a thriving educational alliance (Mahmood, 2013).

Teachers often feel inadequately prepared for this role due to a lack of formal training in parent engagement and communication strategies (Groenewald, 2004; Milanovich, 2022). Studies emphasize the need for professional development programs that equip teachers with the skills necessary to navigate the complexities of parent-teacher interactions (Aich et al., 2017). Effective communication is seen as essential for fostering a positive relationship and supporting children's adjustment to school (Cook et al., 2018). However, teachers often face challenges such as parental disengagement or over-involvement, which can complicate interactions and hinder effective collaboration (Schultz et al., 2016).

Teachers recognize the importance of creating a supportive and understanding classroom environment that

addresses parents' concerns. One teacher noted, "Parents are particularly concerned about their children's social integration and whether they will make friends in their new class." Teachers also highlighted the practical challenges they face, such as managing communication with all parents and addressing the diverse needs of their students.

The importance of clear communication during this critical time cannot be overstated, as it is key to creating a welcoming and supportive learning environment that sets the stage for the child's ongoing success in various aspects of life (Sayers et al., 2012). Such a concerted effort is vital for a smooth transition to academic life, cultivating a community spirit, enhancing engagement in the educational process, and aiding children in overcoming the diverse academic and social hurdles they may face (Dockett & Perry, 2007; Dunlop & Fabian, 2007; Peters, 2010). The combined efforts of parents and educators, driven by mutual understanding and shared objectives, play an essential role in successfully managing this crucial period of transition, thus establishing a firm foundation for the child's comprehensive growth and future academic pursuits.

1.1 Research Rationale

The transition to first grade represents a significant milestone for children and their families, fraught with challenges and opportunities for growth. Effective collaboration between parents and teachers is crucial to ensure a smooth adjustment for students. While many studies highlight the importance of teacher-parent collaboration, fewer focus specifically on this relationship during the first-grade transition. This research aims to fill that gap by examining both parents' and teachers' perspectives during this critical stage. It seeks to understand the primary expectations and needs of parents from teachers and assessing how teachers perceive and respond to these needs. Understanding these dynamics is essential for developing targeted interventions and policies that acknowledge and address the concerns of parents and teachers, ultimately contributing to the positive educational outcomes of first-grade students.

Given the rationale presented, the current study's research questions will be:

What are the principal expectations and needs of parents from teachers during their children's transition to first grade?

To what degree and through what methods do parents regard the educational staff as a source of support and as a provider of pertinent information at this stage?

How do teachers perceive and understand parents' emotions and expectations during their children's transition into first grade?

What characterizes the relationship between teachers and the parents of first graders?

How do teachers assess their strategies and the professional training they receive to enhance and maintain a positive relationship with parents of first-grade pupils?

2. Method

2.1 Participants

The study included two groups of participants: parents and teachers of first-grade students.

Parents: The study included twenty volunteer parents (18 mothers, 2 fathers) of first-grade students, fitting within the participant range suggested by Creswell (1998) for phenomenological research. These participants, all from middle-class backgrounds, were married with one to five children. Seven of these interviewees had their eldest child transitioning to first grade. They were all employed; six were educators, and the others were employed in various fields such as therapy, computing, high-tech, and secretarial roles. They resided in five different towns across northern and central Israel, with their ages ranging from 29 to 46. Fourteen of these parents had attained a Bachelor's or a Bachelor of Education degree, and three had earned a Master's degree.

Teachers: Twenty-four female first-grade teachers volunteered for this study, aligning with Creswell's (1998) recommended range for phenomenological studies. These teachers, all married with 1 to 4 children, worked in eight public elementary schools across three towns in northern Israel. The age of participants ranged from 28 to 50, with teaching experience spanning from 3 to 23 years. Twenty participants held a BA or B.Ed., while four possessed an MA or M.Ed.

2.2 Research Tool

In this qualitative phenomenological research, semi-structured, detailed, and open-ended interviews were conducted. The interview protocols included demographic inquiries followed by primary questions tailored to the participants' roles:

For Parents: The protocol included questions about their expectations and needs from teachers, their views on educational staff as sources of support, and their overall experiences during the transition.

For Teachers: The protocol consisted of questions regarding their perceptions of parents' emotions, the nature of their relationships with parents, and their assessment of the strategies and professional training they received to foster positive relationships with parents.

Semi-structured interviews offer participants a chance to further explain and clarify their answers, thereby enabling the integration of illustrative examples (Groenewald, 2004).

2.3 Procedure and Ethics

The study received approval from the Ethics Committee of the Institution. The snowball sampling technique was employed to identify and recruit participants. In each group, three initial participants, who were already acquainted with the researcher, assisted in facilitating further recruitment.

All participants explicitly consented to partake in the research by signing an informed consent form. The one-on-one interviews, ranging from 40 to 60 minutes, were predominantly conducted at the participants' residences or via online Zoom meetings, according to the participants' choice and with their agreement, between January and June 2023. Each session was audio-recorded with the participants' permission and later transcribed verbatim. The anonymity of participants was guaranteed, and they were informed about their freedom to exit the study at any point. The interviews, originally conducted in Hebrew, were translated for the purposes of this article.

2.4 Data Analysis

The analysis commenced with an in-depth review of each interview transcript to gain a complete understanding. A thematic analysis, as outlined by Strauss and Corbin (1990), was then undertaken to identify distinct themes and categories relevant to each question posed. To validate the consistency of the themes identified, two independent researchers worked collaboratively to detect patterns, recurring elements, and explicit content within the data. After this phase, the researchers convened to discuss and reach a consensus on the identified themes, which were then clearly defined and categorized.

This rigorous analysis ensured that the data accurately reflected the participants' experiences and insights, providing a robust foundation for the study's conclusions. By comparing the findings from both groups, the study aimed to highlight similarities and differences in the perspectives of parents and teachers regarding the first-grade transition, ultimately offering recommendations to enhance communication and collaboration between these two critical stakeholders.

3. Findings

Content analysis of the interviews addressing the research questions presents the themes identified. These findings are integrated to provide a comprehensive view of the perspectives of both parents and teachers regarding the transition to first grade.

3.1 Expectations and Needs During the Transition

Accessible Communication

Both parents and teachers emphasize the critical need for accessible communication. Parents expressed a strong desire for an accessible communication channel that allows them to engage with teachers on various issues. They value methods that are readily available, convenient, and straightforward, enabling open and effective interaction without significant barriers or difficulties. One parent shared, "Having someone to turn to and converse with is crucial. There were instances when I messaged the teacher and received a response only after several hours or even the next day".

Teachers, on the other hand, acknowledged the importance of effective communication, grounded in mutual respect and trust. They appreciate when parents acknowledge their professional expertise and support their classroom management and educational approaches. One teacher noted, "There are quite a few parents with whom it is a pleasure to work. They are attentive, cooperative, and actively engage with their children at home."

However, both groups also identified challenges. Parents sometimes felt that their expectation for open communication was not always fully met. Teachers, meanwhile, highlighted the difficulties in maintaining consistent contact with all parents, particularly those who are less responsive. One teacher explained, "Communicating with these parents can be difficult; they might not respond to messages, are unavailable for discussions, or promise improvements that don't materialize."

3.2 *Genuine Attentiveness and Sensitivity Towards the Child*

Parents place significant emphasis on the necessity for educators to attentively regard their child, actively inquire into their emotional state, demonstrate readiness to offer assistance, and provide solutions to various situations. This attentiveness augments the child's sense of security, which in turn enhances the parents' sense of reassurance. One parent noted, "What I needed was to know that the teacher sees my daughter".

Teachers recognize these concerns and strive to address them through supportive interactions. They understand that parents worry about their children's social integration, academic performance, and behavior in a new and structured environment. One teacher observed, "Parents might worry that their children will be lonely in class, especially since they don't know which of their friends from kindergarten will be in the same class as their children. This can be quite concerning for them".

Teachers also pointed out that working with first graders is unique, requiring a deep understanding of how parents experience the transition and their children's entry into school. Despite the lack of formal training, teachers have developed their own strategies to manage and improve their interactions with parents. One teacher shared, "Over time, I have learned to understand the parents, their emotions, and I've also learned to protect myself from those parents who are more challenging than others".

3.3 *Transparency: Continuous Information*

Parents articulated a preference for real-time updates, including photographs from classroom activities, briefs on events, and comprehensive information concerning both the academic and social dynamics of the class and their specific child. One parent shared, "The only thing I might have expected more of pertains to sharing - more photos of what's happening in the class, updates. After all, the child is still young and it's a new setting".

Teachers understand the need for transparency and strive to provide comprehensive information and reassurance while fulfilling their core duties of educating and supporting the entire class. They highlighted the necessity of establishing transparent communication guidelines, providing consistent updates, and conducting informational meetings to preemptively address prevalent issues. One teacher noted, "Sometimes, I encounter parents in my class who exhibit higher levels of anxiety about their child's functioning. They worry about every little detail and frequently contact me".

3.4 *Support and Engagement*

3.4.1 *Parental Perception of Educational Staff as a Source of Support*

Parents expressed varying degrees of satisfaction with the support and engagement from educational staff. Some parents reported positive experiences with responsive and proficient engagement from the school. One parent noted, "Yes. There was a relatively early stage when my daughter said she had no one to play with during breaks, which of course worried me a lot, so I spoke with the teacher".

Conversely, other parents reported a lack of adequately sensitive interaction, leading to dissatisfaction and a diminished likelihood of future outreach. One parent explained, "The teacher was very rushed, offered very technical solutions and actually made me feel like it was not the time. That was the last time I approached her."

Teachers acknowledged these challenges and emphasized the importance of sensitivity and understanding in their interactions with parents. They noted the complexities of addressing the worries of anxious parents, who often inquire about every detail of their child's school day. One teacher shared, "Every year, there are a few parents with whom I find it more challenging to interact. They approach me more frequently than other parents, often about minor issues."

3.4.2 *Professional Training and Self-Developed Strategies*

Teachers frequently mentioned that their training did not specifically prepare them for working with parents, particularly the parents of first-grade students. They emphasized the need for skills not typically covered in teacher training programs, such as emotional intelligence, conflict resolution, and effective communication strategies tailored to the concerns and anxieties of parents during this critical transition to formal schooling. Despite this lack of formal training, teachers have developed their own strategies to manage and improve their interactions with parents. One teacher shared, "There isn't a structured process that I underwent in training specifically on how to work with the parents of first-grade students."

3.4.3 *Summary of research findings*

The findings from the interviews highlight key themes regarding the transition to first grade, emphasizing the perspectives of both parents and teachers. Both groups stress the importance of accessible communication, with

parents desiring readily available, straightforward channels, and teachers valuing mutual respect and engagement. Challenges include inconsistent communication and varying levels of responsiveness. Parents also emphasize the need for genuine attentiveness to their children's emotional states and continuous, transparent updates on classroom activities. Teachers, despite lacking formal training, have developed their own strategies to manage interactions and address parents' concerns effectively. The findings underscore the need for targeted professional training to enhance these interactions.

4. Discussion

The transition to first grade signifies a critical phase in a child's educational journey, marking a period of significant adaptation and emotional adjustment for both children and their parents. This study focused on exploring the expectations and needs of parents during this transition, as well as their perceptions of educational staff as a source of support and information. The findings have illuminated the complexities of this transition, particularly emphasizing the importance of effective communication, attentiveness, and transparency between parents and teachers.

4.1 Emotional Landscape and Expectations

Teachers are acutely aware of the complex emotions parents experience as their children enter first grade. These emotions range from concerns about social integration, academic performance, and behavioral adaptability to broader uncertainties about navigating the school system (Malatji et al., 2023). Parents exhibit a duality of emotions: while they are apprehensive about the challenges their children might face, they also feel a sense of achievement and anticipation as they witness their child's transition into formal education. This duality reflects a mix of apprehension and pride, as parents grapple with the challenges and milestones of their child's early educational journey.

From the parents' perspective, there is a significant emotional toll during this period, as highlighted by Dempsey et al. (2023). Parents expect not only to be heard but also to feel that their concerns are genuinely addressed. This expectation aligns with previous studies that emphasize the need for teachers to demonstrate a deep understanding of each child's unique circumstances and to communicate this understanding back to the parent (Ben Shlomo & Taubman-Ben-Ari, 2017).

4.2 Communication Dynamics

Effective communication is pivotal in the transition to first grade, playing a crucial role in addressing the emotional and informational needs of parents. Both parents and teachers emphasize the need for accessible, respectful, and responsive communication channels. Parents expressed a strong desire for communication methods that are straightforward and responsive, enabling them to discuss their concerns and receive timely feedback. One parent shared, "Having someone to turn to and converse with is crucial. There were instances when I messaged the teacher and received a response only after several hours or even the next day." This expectation is critical because it directly influences parents' perception of the school's supportiveness and responsiveness (Cook et al., 2018).

Teachers, on their part, appreciate interactions grounded in mutual respect and trust, which facilitate open and productive dialogue. They highlighted the necessity of establishing transparent communication guidelines, providing consistent updates, and conducting informational meetings to preemptively address prevalent issues. One teacher noted, "Sometimes, I encounter parents in my class who exhibit higher levels of anxiety about their child's functioning. They worry about every little detail and frequently contact me."

However, securing cooperation from disengaged parents and managing the demands of over-involved parents present significant challenges. Teachers often feel pressured and dominated by parents, leading to conflicts between meeting parents' demands and maintaining their professional integrity and pedagogical standards (Dahl, 2017). This scenario highlights the necessity for teachers to develop political strategies and employ open communication and diplomacy to manage conflicts (Addi-Racah & Arviv-Elyashiv, 2008).

4.3 Training and Professional Development

A significant finding is the lack of specific training for teachers in effectively engaging with parents, particularly those of first-grade students. Teachers frequently mention that their formal education did not specifically prepare them for working with parents during this critical transition period. This gap in teacher training programs underscores the need for curricular adjustments that better equip educators to handle the nuanced dynamics of parent-teacher interactions during critical educational transitions (Milanovich, 2022).

Despite this lack of formal training, teachers have developed their own strategies to manage and improve their interactions with parents. This self-development process involves gaining an understanding of parents' emotions,

learning to navigate challenging interactions, and establishing boundaries to protect their professional well-being. One teacher shared, “Over time, I have learned to understand the parents, their emotions, and I’ve also learned to protect myself from those parents who are more challenging than others”.

These findings indicate a clear need for more targeted professional training for teachers, specifically designed to address the unique challenges of engaging with parents of first-grade students. By incorporating such training into teacher education programs, schools can better prepare teachers to support both students and parents during this critical transition period.

4.4 Power Dynamics and Parental Involvement

The findings reveal that parental cooperation can sometimes lead to imbalances in power and authority, potentially impacting teachers’ sense of professional responsibility. Teachers may feel overruled by dominant parents and may also feel overwhelmed or frustrated by over-involved parents who excessively intervene in their child’s academic and social life. This can lead to negative consequences such as increased stress for the child and potential conflicts between the teacher and parent (Lindt, 2019). This dynamic can result in teachers feeling vulnerable to scrutiny and needing to employ political strategies to maintain control over their professional domain (Addi-Racah & Arviv-Elyashiv, 2008).

4.5 Parental Needs for Transparency and Support

The theme of transparency identified in this study underscores the importance of parents receiving regular and detailed updates about their children’s progress and activities at school. This need for transparency helps parents feel more involved in their children’s education and can significantly enhance their trust in the educational system (Epstein, 2008; Kuhn et al., 2017). Providing parents with real-time updates and involving them in school activities can foster a more inclusive and engaging educational environment.

However, the findings also reveal that these needs are not always adequately met. Some parents reported feelings of isolation and frustration due to delayed responses or inadequate engagement from the educational staff. This gap in expectations versus reality highlights an area where schools could improve, particularly in training teachers to better manage and prioritize communication with parents. The literature supports this, indicating that teachers who are well-prepared to engage with parents can significantly enhance the educational experience and outcomes for students (Mahmood, 2013; Kim & Sheridan, 2015; Walker et al., 2005).

5. Conclusion

In sum, the study reveals the complex emotional landscape parents navigate as their children transition into first grade, encompassing significant concerns about communication, attentiveness, and transparency. Teachers are acutely aware of these emotions and strive to address them through supportive interactions, despite the challenges posed by a lack of formal training and the need to balance sensitivity with assertiveness. The main insight gleaned from the findings is the need for sensitive communication and targeted professional development to support parents during the first-grade transition effectively. By understanding and addressing parental emotions and concerns, teachers can foster positive relationships and facilitate a smoother transition for both parents and children. Teachers play a crucial role in supporting parents through collaboration, communication, and advocacy strategies for the success of students in inclusive classrooms (Schultz et al., 2016). However, the research also highlights that teachers often feel pressured and dominated by parents, which can lead to conflicts between meeting parents’ demands and maintaining their professional integrity (Dahl, 2017). This underscores the need for more comprehensive training and support for teachers to navigate these complex dynamics effectively.

5.1 Practical Implications

The findings of this study provide practical implications for enhancing parent-teacher communication specifically during the transition to first grade. Schools should consider implementing training programs that equip first-grade teachers with effective communication strategies tailored to the unique needs of parents and children during this critical period. Establishing clear and accessible communication channels can foster better collaboration between parents and teachers, ultimately supporting first graders’ academic and social-emotional development. Additionally, schools can organize workshops for parents to help them understand the expectations and processes of first-grade education, thereby reducing anxiety and enhancing their engagement.

5.2 Areas of Future Research

Studies could investigate the impact of specific training programs on first-grade teachers’ abilities to engage with parents effectively during the transition to formal schooling. Another valuable avenue for future research would be to gain a deeper understanding of first-grade teachers’ attitudes towards parents, their awareness of the parents’

experiences and challenges during this transition, and how they can refine their methods to ensure continuous and effective communication with parents. This research could provide insights into how teachers perceive their role in supporting parents and what strategies might enhance their engagement and collaboration. Another area of interest could be the role of cultural differences in shaping parent-teacher interactions in the context of first grade, as well as how socioeconomic factors influence the level and quality of parental engagement during this transitional phase.

5.3 Limitations

Several limitations pertain to this study. Being qualitative, the study involved a relatively small number of participants, which may not fully represent the broader population of first-grade teachers and parents. Additionally, the majority of first-grade teachers are women, leading to a lack of gender balance among participants. The study's limited geographic scope presents a localized view of the situation, potentially limiting the generalizability of the findings. Qualitative research focuses on in-depth understanding rather than generalizability, which can be seen as a limitation for applying findings broadly (Makgopa & Mokhele, 2013).

Despite these limitations, key insights emerged: Teachers are relatively aware of what parents are experiencing, though they may not fully recognize the existential anxiety many parents feel about sending their young child to a broader, less protected environment. Future research could address these limitations by involving a larger, more gender-diverse participant pool and expanding the geographic scope to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the teacher-parent dynamics in the first-grade transition. Additionally, exploring the extent of teachers' recognition and strategies to mitigate parents' existential anxieties could offer valuable contributions to developing more effective support systems for families during this critical period.

By acknowledging these limitations and building on the findings of this study, educational stakeholders can better support the transition into first grade, a critical period that sets the foundation for future educational engagement and success.

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Competing Interests Statement

The authors declare that there are no competing or potential conflicts of interest.

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