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Parents' Perspectives on School Transitions: Challenges and Strategies on Transition from Preschool to Primary School for Equitable Education

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Abstract

The transition from preschool to primary school is a critical period in a child's development, involving significant changes in environment, routines, and academic demands. Parental involvement plays a key role in ensuring a smooth transition; however, many parents experience anxiety due to misconceptions about literacy expectations and limited communication from schools. This study explores parents' perspectives on school transition, identifies challenges they face, and examines their involvement in supporting their children's adjustment. Using a qualitative phenomenological approach, this study conducted in-depth interviews with four parents of first-grade students from different public and private elementary schools in Cimahi City. Observations at one public elementary school complemented the interview data. Thematic analysis was applied, and findings were interpreted using Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory to understand how various social and environmental systems influence school transitions. Findings reveal that parental concerns about school readiness often stem from misunderstandings about academic expectations and inadequate school communication. Fathers' involvement in the transition process was notably limited, with mothers playing the primary role in preparation and support. Strengthening collaboration between parents and schools is essential for an effective transition. According to Bronfenbrenner's model, successful transitions depend on interactions across subsystems, including the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, and macrosystem. This study enhances understanding of parental roles in school transitions and provides recommendations for educators and policymakers to design inclusive transition programs. Future research could expand sample sizes and further investigate fathers' participation to develop targeted interventions. Encouraging stronger school communication policies and fostering collaboration between early childhood and primary educators can optimize parental involvement and support children's transition success.

Introduction

The transition from preschool to primary school is an important period in a child's educational journey, where the child will encounter many new experiences. This will be a big challenge for the children (Tao & Lau, 2021). Parents also have an important role during this period. Parental support and involvement both socially, emotionally and academically will determine the success of children (Barger et al., 2019; Barker & Fabian, 2009; Webb et al., 2017). This situation makes parents important to ensure that they are aware of how their children adapt to school after the transition period has passed (Tobin et al., 2022).

Parental involvement and support during the school transition can be realized by building a positive relationship with the school. This is also very crucial (Galindo & Sheldon, 2012). A positive relationship between parents and the school can have an impact on the development of children's self-esteem, enabling them to gain mental strength, skills and abilities throughout

life (Barker & Fabian, 2009; Park et al., 2017). The basis of a positive relationship are frequent and open communication, mutual respect and a clear understanding of what is best for each child. Parents and schools need to synchronize their beliefs, perceptions and values regarding the education system that will be implemented, so that they can facilitate children's transition from home to school successfully (Besi & Sakellariou, 2019).

The positive relationship built between school and parents can also serve as the child's most powerful external protection during the school transition. This is based on the resilience framework (Bailey & Baines, 2012), where mental resilience, which cannot be taught, can be fostered by instilling a sense of security, support for self-esteem, independence and optimism. This should be facilitated by parents at home and developed by teachers at school. As a result, children will grow stronger and be able to tackle new challenges with confidence (Niesel & Griebel, 2005). Furthermore, it is important for schools to improve communication with parents so that this parental involvement can occur (Galindo & Sheldon, 2012).

In Indonesia, parental support and involvement during school transitions has been highlighted recently after the introduction of the enjoyable PAUD-SD transition program or Program Transisi PAUD ke SD yang Menyenangkan - in Indonesian (Kemendikbudristek, 2022). This program encourages cooperation between schools and parents in facilitating children's transition from early childhood education to primary school, one of which is by equalizing the perception that it is important to build children's six foundations before reading, writing and counting skills (Amriani et al., 2023). This program also requires every school to organize MPLS (Period of Introduction to School Environment) activities in the first 2 weeks of school (Susilahati et al., 2023). With the changes in the dynamics of education as above, parents are again challenged to provide more complex needs for their children.

Research related to parental involvement during the school transition period has been conducted previously. Including research conducted by Lestari (2023) by providing parental assistance in supporting the transition from preschool to elementary school through parenting classes. The result is that parents have a good understanding in supporting their children during the transition from preschool to elementary school. Another study was conducted by Pagarwati et al. (2021), related to the role of parents and teachers in preparing children's transition to elementary school. The results of the study stated that parents and teachers have a very important role in the transition period. These roles include being responsible for children's school preparation, being an inspiration for children, taking a supervisory role and receiving children's questions to ensure all their needs are met. In addition, this study also highlighted the importance of cooperation between kindergarten and primary school teachers to provide reports on children's progress and receive or organize visits between schools. (Sa'bani & Diana, 2024) also examined parental involvement on children's literacy and numeracy skills in the early childhood transition. The results showed that parental involvement has a positive effect on children's literacy and numeracy skills. Their involvement can develop the literacy skills of PAUD children to transition to primary school.

Based on the findings above, the majority of research that has been conducted focuses on the role and impact of parental involvement in school transition. Research related to the challenges and strategies employed by parents during the school transition is still rare. Therefore, this article will explore the challenges encountered by parents during the school transition and will propose effective strategies that can be implemented to support a successful school transition in order to realize quality education. The aim is to provide parents with insights into how they can positively contribute to their child's school transition, so that it can be a good starting point for their child's success. This study can also serve as a measuring tool to see the extent of parents' involvement in facilitating the school transition for their children.

Urie Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory of development was used as a theoretical framework to understand parents' perspectives on school transition in this study. Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory offers a way to look at children's development with the various social systems that exist around them, where each of these systems is interconnected

and affects the adaptation process and the success of children's transition from one educational stage to another (Tudge et al., 2016). This theory suggests that child development occurs within various ecological systems, including: Microsystem (the closest layer consisting of family, friends and school); Mesosystem (connecting the various elements in the microsystem); Exosystem (external factors that do not directly interact with the child, but directly affect it); Macrosystem (the most extensive layer that includes social, cultural and policy norms); and Chronosystem (a layer that includes the dimension of time and change throughout an individual's life). Each of these layers interacts with each other to shape each child's experience (El Zaatari & Maalouf, 2022). Using this theory, this article not only explores parents' perceptions from a single point of view, but also considers how factors from the micro to macro environment influence their views. This approach will provide a deeper understanding of the role of parents, schools and communities in supporting children's success through their transition (Hanifah & Kurniati, 2024; Rimm-Kaufman & Pianta, 2000).

Methods

This study employs a qualitative research method with a phenomenological approach to explore parents' perspectives on school transition. A phenomenological approach enables researchers to deeply understand participants' experiences by focusing on their subjective perceptions and interpretations of reality (Neubauer et al., 2019). This approach is particularly valuable for gaining comprehensive insights by synthesizing the experiences of multiple participants (Greening, 2019; Saracho, 2015).

The study involved four parents of first-grade elementary school students in Cimahi City. Participant selection considered diversity by including parents from both public and private schools. Public elementary schools were selected due to their standardized implementation of the MPLS (Period of Introduction to the School Environment) program during the first two weeks of school. Private schools were included to enrich the diversity of parental perspectives on school transition. The small number of participants is justified by the phenomenological research approach, which prioritizes depth over breadth to ensure a rich exploration of lived experiences rather than statistical generalization (Creswell, 2012).

Participant data are as follows:

Table 1. Participant Data

Name (disguised)	Gender	Occupation	School Type
Inf 01	Male	Teacher	Private School
Inf 02	Female	Housewife	Private School
Inf 03	Female	Housewife	Public School
Inf 04	Female	Housewife	Public School

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews with selected parents. This method provided flexibility in responses while maintaining consistency across interviews. Observations were also conducted in one public elementary school in Cimahi City during the first two weeks of MPLS, serving to complement the interview data by offering direct insights into the school transition process and parental involvement.

The main instruments used included interview guidelines and observation checklists. Instrument validity was ensured through expert judgment involving two experts—one in early childhood education and one in qualitative research. These experts reviewed the instruments for clarity, relevance, and alignment with the research objectives. Revisions were made based on their input to enhance the trustworthiness and feasibility of the instruments.

The interview guide contained questions addressing various indicators such as school selection criteria, perceptions of early childhood and elementary education, definitions of a good school, expectations regarding transition, parental roles, feelings, preparations, unique experiences, the effectiveness of MPLS, parental involvement, and expectations from the school.

Table 2. Interview Guide Excerpt

Indicators	Sample Questions
Parents' school selection criteria	What factors influenced your decision in choosing a school?
Perceptions of early childhood and elementary education	How should learning be conducted in kindergarten and elementary school?
Definition of a good school	What characteristics define a good school in your opinion?
Expectations regarding school transition	What do you imagine when your child transitions to elementary school?
Parental roles in the transition process	Who do you think is responsible for assisting children in their transition?
Parental feelings during transition	How did you feel when your child entered elementary school?
Preparations for school transition	What did you prepare for your child's transition?
Unique experiences during transition	What unique experiences did your child face during the transition?
Effectiveness of MPLS	Did the MPLS program help your child adapt to their new school environment?
Importance of parental involvement	Do you think parental involvement is crucial during the transition period?
Expectations from the school	What activities do you expect from the school to support the transition?

The observation instrument focused on several key indicators: school transition activities, parental involvement, children's adaptation, teacher-student interactions, and observed challenges.

Table 3. Observation Instrument

Indicators	Observation Focus
School transition activities	What activities were conducted during the MPLS program?
Parental involvement	How actively did parents participate in the transition activities?
Children's adaptation	How did children respond to the new school environment?
Teacher-student interactions	How did teachers facilitate children's transition?
Challenges observed	What difficulties were noted during the transition period?

Data analysis was conducted using thematic analysis, a method suitable for identifying, analyzing, and interpreting patterns of meaning within qualitative data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The process began with transcription and careful reading of the interviews and observation notes to become familiar with the content. Initial codes were generated to capture relevant features, which were then organized into potential themes reflecting shared patterns across participants. Themes were reviewed and refined to ensure internal coherence and relevance to the research questions. Each theme was then clearly defined and named, highlighting its role in explaining the parents' experiences. These thematic findings were synthesized into a cohesive narrative supported by direct evidence from the data.

The analysis was guided by Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory to contextualize the parental experiences within broader environmental systems. This theoretical lens provided insights into how interactions at different levels—family, school, and community—shaped the school transition experience. Ultimately, the study offers a multidimensional understanding of parental roles and challenges in supporting children's adjustment to elementary school.

Result

This study explored parents' perspectives and experiences regarding their children's transition from early childhood education to primary school. Data from interviews and observations were analyzed thematically to identify recurring patterns and significant insights into parental involvement and systemic influences. Table 4 summarizes the three main themes that emerged from the thematic analysis of the interviews and observations. These themes reflect various levels of Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems and highlight key factors that shape the transition experience for children and their families.

Table 4. Research Themes

Theme	Desciption
Parents' Belief about School Transition	This theme emerged from responses related to parents' perspectives on the ideal transition process, expectations of school readiness, and what constitutes a successful transition. Codes included "importance of pre-academic skills," "emotional readiness," and "school as a new challenge."
Parental Involvement in School Transition	This theme captured the various roles parents play in facilitating the transition, such as providing emotional support, preparing children academically, and engaging with teachers and school activities. Codes such as "home learning support," "communication with teachers," and "encouraging independence" contributed to this theme.
Parental Challenges and Strategies for School Transition	This theme was developed based on difficulties parents faced and their coping strategies. Challenges included "child's anxiety," "academic pressure," and "adjusting to new routines," while strategies involved "establishing routines," "engaging in transition activities," and "seeking peer support."

Parents' belief about school transition

The school transition is a crucial phase where children go through a process of moving from early childhood learners to primary school learners. During the transition period, children will be challenged and exposed to new things, so they need support to adapt well to their environment. Parents' beliefs about the transition are often based on the hope that new experiences at school can strengthen their child's character, broaden their horizons and improve various skills. School quality is currently the most dominant reason for parents' beliefs in choosing a school for their child (Rohde et al., 2019). As the interview with Mr. Inf 01 who explained his reasons for choosing a school for his child.

> "*I chose school A because it implements a good curriculum, which is a curriculum of adab before knowledge. I hope by sending my child to school there, my child's fitrah can be maintained, expand his knowledge and my child's potential develops with the foundation of adab and iman*" (Mr. Inf 01, August 9, 2024).

In addition, Indonesia is currently implementing a zoning program as an attempt to equalize the quality of education for public schools, including public primary schools. This program provides a policy for each student to attend school in the area where they live, in an attempt to improve the quality of schools with human resources that are native to the area (Safarah & Wibowo, 2018). Therefore, for parents who choose public schools, commonly the school chosen is based on the zoning program determined by the local government.

> "*... because of the zoning system, my child goes to school there*" (Mrs. Inf 03, August 8, 2024).

During the child's transition, parents tend not to have excessive anxiety. Parents give full trust to their child's new school, because parents have previously known the learning curriculum at school.

> "*So far I don't feel worried, because I already know the curriculum. Besides that, I also know the teachers*" (Mr. Inf 01, August 9, 2024).

In addition, some parents also revealed that they did not have excessive anxiety while their children were going through the transition, because they reflected on the experience of previous children who had gone to school there.

"*Previously, his brother was already there. So, I already know how the school is*" (Mrs. Inf 02, August 9, 2024).

However, there are also parents who feel anxious because they are worried that their children will not be able to follow the learning at school. This is based on the reason that their children have not been able to acquire the skills of reading, writing and arithmetic. Parents are worried that learning in primary school is too extreme for their children who have not acquired these skills.

"*My child can't do calistung yet. So, I'm afraid I can't follow the learning in class. Because yesterday he was also assigned to write 1 paragraph, and my child finished working last*" (Mrs. Inf 04, August 8, 2024).

Currently, parents tend to have the perception that children must be proficient in reading, writing and arithmetic before entering primary school. This is a misconception that has occurred for a long time. Although Indonesia is currently implementing a Program for a Joyful PAUD-SD Transition which is one of the government policies to facilitate a quality PAUD-SD transition (Lestari, 2023), based on the results of interviews conducted by researchers it seems that this has not been successful in changing parents' perceptions. As the results of interviews with Mrs. Inf 02 and Mrs. Inf 03 show.

"*Learning calistung in PAUD is still important. It must be there. Because elementary school teachers now want instant. Children must be able to do calistung when they enter primary school*" (Mrs. Inf 02, August 8, 2024).

"*I agree, in my opinion it is still necessary, because whether we want it or not, children are immediately told to read and write in elementary school*" (Mrs. Inf 03, August 8, 2024).

The enjoyable PAUD-SD Transition Program is essentially designed to produce 3 changes, which are eliminating the calistung test as the basis for accepting new students in primary schools, conducting an introductory period during the first 2 weeks at school and synchronizing the learning process in PAUD and early grade primary schools (Wijaya, 2023). This program aims to ensure that every child has the right to be nurtured in their foundation skills (Lestari, 2023).

The 2-week introductory period, known as MPLS (Period of Introduction to the School Environment) seems to be one of the most striking changes among the other 3 changes. Schools generally start the new school year by conducting MPLS in the first 2 weeks. As in school B, the first 2 weeks at school the grade 1 children still wear their kindergarten uniforms. Activities at school are filled with an introduction to the school environment, including the introduction of the rooms in the school, the introduction of teachers and the adaptation of learning activities. During the first 2 weeks, children are not given a heavy learning load. Learning in the classroom is mostly filled with singing activities and motor-cognitive exercises, such as practicing writing their own names, letters and numbers. Parents believe and fully support this MPLS program, hoping that this program can help minimize anxiety and make it easier for children to get through their transition.

"*I agree and MPLS for 2 weeks is very sufficient for my child to get to know the surrounding environment. So, the child is not too surprised when he enters his new school*" (Mrs. Inf 02, August 8, 2024).

Parental involvement in school transition

Parental involvement during the school transition is the most important factor influencing how well a child adapts to his or her new environment (Webb et al., 2017). Compared to other environmental variables such as social class, parental education level, or parental income and academics, parental involvement during the transition is the variable that exerts the greatest influence on children's academic success. Parental involvement can also help bridge the gap between home and school, increase school effectiveness, and improve children's learning outcomes (O'toole et al., 2019).

According to Boonk et al. (2018), parental involvement is divided into 2 indicators, including involvement at home and involvement at school. Involvement at home refers to the way parents support children's education at home, such as parents' communication with

children about events at school, monitoring children's progress at school or helping children with homework. Some researchers also include parents' expectations of their children's achievement as a part of the involvement. Whereas involvement at school, such as attending parent-teacher meetings and other school events.

During the school transition, participants agreed that parental involvement was the most important factor influencing the child's success through the transition. This may include preparing school supplies (including food), introducing the child to new friends and taking the child to school.

> "*Every morning, we wake up together, prepare school needs, take care that the child doesn't lose his mood. We usually divide the tasks, such as the mother preparing breakfast, lunch and school supplies, me (father) ensuring that the child bathes properly, preparing clothes and taking the child to school*" (Mr. Inf 01, August 9, 2024).

> "*Every day, I wake up early to go to school. Prepare uniforms and food supplies, because now children are required to bring food from home, they are not allowed to bring money for snacks. Then after that, they are taken to school until the gate. Every morning it is usually a hassle, the father sometimes helps, but sometimes he has already left for work*" (Mrs. Inf 02, August 8, 2024).

> "*When I am at home, everyone helps to prepare. Sometimes his grandmother also helps him to bathe and prepare, because I have to prepare food for school. His father sometimes just helps to take him to school, and sometimes he is involved when doing homework at home*" (Mrs. Inf 03, August 8, 2024).

> "*I prepare the children's food and equipment for school every morning. I also take them to school because their father has already left for work*" (Mrs. Inf 04, August 8, 2024).

A curious thing was found in this study. Three from four participants stated that mothers were the most involved parents during their child's transition. Some mothers stated this because fathers were busy at their jobs, and some mothers stated this because fathers did not want to be involved in their children's education.

> "*The only one involved is usually me (Mom). The father is busy with his work. He has already left for work in the morning, so he does not have time to help with school needs*" (Mrs. Inf 02, August 8, 2024).

> "*Yes, I am the one who is bothered every morning. If the father knows it's done. Sometimes he just helps to take the children to school*" (Mrs. Inf 03, August 8, 2024).

This is similar to the results of research presented by Tao & Lau (2021), where father involvement in school is lower, because fathers tend to rely on mothers to take care of their children's schooling, so they feel they do not have to be involved. However, this parental involvement is influenced by several factors, including cooperation between parents (coparenting), the level of children's preference for school and gender roles (mother or father). The relationship between the above factors can be summarized into 2 important points, which are: 1) Mother, if the child's preference for school is high, mothers tend to be more involved in school, especially when they feel there is good cooperation with their partner; and 2) Fathers, if the child's preference for school is high, fathers who experience more triangulation (situations where the child tries to involve the father in conflict or tension between the parents) will be less involved at home. However, if the child has a low school preference, the father is less involved at school. That involvement will increase if they perceive triangulation.

This seems to resonate with the participants in this study. The participants revealed that their children tended to be very excited to go to school. There is no worry or fear surrounding their children, so it can be said that they have a high level of preference for school. Therefore, when referring to the results of Tao & Lau's research (2021), this lack of father's involvement may also occur due to the high level of children's preference for school. Therefore, mothers tend to be more involved in school.

However, the participants also agreed that fathers should still be encouraged to be involved in assisting children through their transition. Both at home and at school. They agreed

that the school should create a program specifically for fathers to accompany or participate in activities at school.

> "*Yes, it seems that the school also needs to be encouraged. Like by organizing special activities accompanied by fathers so that fathers want to be involved and participate in activities at school*" (Mrs. Inf 03, August 8, 2024).

It can also be encouraged by building positive relationships by fostering relationships between children, families and schools that can indirectly have a positive impact on children. These relationships should be built prior to the transition, particularly with regard to the family's sense of readiness, which will provide an awareness of the importance of family participation in the child's transition. Thus, they are given the opportunity to connect with their child's school and teachers (Tobin et al., 2022).

The child's high level of preference for school is in fact also influenced by the habits and motivation obtained by the child at the previous education level. As expressed by Mrs. Inf 04,

> "*He is very excited to enter elementary school. There is no drama or strike at all, because he is already familiar with school from kindergarten. Then he is also excited to enter elementary school because maybe he feels he is getting bigger, the school is also wider and he sees his older siblings who are cool with their red and white uniforms*" (Mrs. Inf 04, August 8, 2024).

This is aligned with what Rifai & Fahmi (2017) revealed, where parents and teachers of preschool institutions have a very important role in helping children's readiness to enter primary school. Children who attended preschool education before, tend to have a higher school readiness than children who did not attend preschool education before. Children who have high learning motivation also have better school readiness (Damayanti & Rachmawati, 2016).

Parental challenges and strategies for school transition

School transitions involve a lot of complex changes, so it is essentially a life-changing experience not only for the child, but also for the family. It is important for parents to be aware of the challenges their children may be exposed to during this time (Samara & Loannidi, 2018; Tobin et al., 2022). These range from concerns about the child's ability to adapt to a new environment, anxiety about the child's ability to follow more complex lessons, to the demands of more complex social interactions and changes in the physical environment (Khalawati & Hariyanti, 2024)

This happened to one of the participants in this study. Where she revealed that she was worried that her child could not participate in class learning because he had not properly mastered reading, writing and counting skills.

> "*My child can't do calistung yet. So I'm afraid I can't follow the learning in class. Because yesterday he was also assigned to write 1 paragraph, and my child finished working last*" (Mrs. Inf 04, August 8, 2024).

As explained earlier, until now parents tend to have the perception that children must be proficient in reading, writing and arithmetic before entering primary school. Although the government is promoting a joyful PAUD to SD Transition program, this does not seem to be understood by various stakeholders. (Amriani et al., 2023; Inf 04dari & Fachrani, 2023) explained that the success of the PAUD to SD transition program must be understood by the whole of the society. Calistung skills do not have to be mastered by children before entering primary school, because the purpose of learning in PAUD is to stimulate children's growth and development, not to make children proficient in calistung. This is also an evaluation of the grade 1 elementary school book because it is considered quite difficult for children who have just mastered calistung.

Related to this, collaboration between kindergarten and primary school teachers also plays an important role in the success of children through their transition, through the implementation of appropriate transition practices, which are generally consistent with the goal of improving children's learning and well-being at school. In this collaborative process, there is a need for cooperation and communication based on trust, respect and responsibility between

early childhood and primary school teachers. Cooperation on curriculum development and the sharing of written information about children between ECE and primary school teachers can also help children transition well (Ahtola et al., 2011; Besi & Sakellariou, 2019). Parents' anxiety can also be minimized through an introduction phase that aims to reduce the risk of stress and anxiety by providing a positive environment and building a sense of safety (Susilahati et al., 2023).

In addition to parental anxiety, another challenge parents encounter during the transition period is the slow provision of information from the school. Although a group has been formed through the WhatsApp application, teachers are often unresponsive and late in providing various information.

> "*Information is also sometimes announced too late. Sometimes other classes know about it first. So the teacher is not responsive. I like to be confused about what to prepare for school. I'm afraid there is something that must be prepared or brought. The information is often very late*" (Mrs. Inf 03, August 8, 2024).

During the transition period - in particular, parents need precise and clear information, including about their child's development, changes in the curriculum and upcoming activities. This may make it difficult for parents to provide appropriate support to their child in academic preparation if information from teachers is not received quickly. Therefore, schools - especially teachers - should build positive relationships with parents (Barker & Fabian, 2009; Galindo & Sheldon, 2012). Communication between teachers and parents such as through WhatsApp Group as a form of digital communication has a very important role in building collaboration for mutual respect and trust, with the hope of feedback, both encouraging and promoting improvement (Kuusimäki et al., 2019).

However, it should also be noted that teachers and parents should provide balanced and encouraging feedback, both for parents, students and teachers. Mrs. Inf 04 stated that it is not uncommon for teachers to provide information through WhatsApp Group related to children's weaknesses. Such as providing a list of names of children who cannot read, write and count.

> "*Sometimes teachers also like to spread too much information in class. Like giving a list of names of children who cannot do calistung. Maybe on the other hand, it is to provide information to all parents, but from my point of view, it is better to contact them personally. Because I'm worried that there will be parents who are embarrassed, or parents will judge their children's friends*" (Mrs. Inf 04, August 8, 2024).

This statement is aligned with the results of Kuusimäki et al.'s study (2019), where digital communication that takes place between teachers and parents still seems to have too much emphasis on children's weaknesses. In fact, parents actually expect encouraging feedback, which is more encouraging for their children's motivation. Because more positive feedback and encouragement can improve the well-being of the school community, which will build partnerships and strengthen social relationships between teachers and parents. Therefore, teachers must know how to communicate with each parent in a positive way, which can foster trust, respect and appreciation for each other (Epstein, 2013).

Discussion

Parents believe that schools, through their various programs and activities, can facilitate their children's transition to the school environment (MPLS). They assume that schools have the necessary resources, structured programs, and competent educators to help children adapt to more demanding academic settings. According to Bronfenbrenner's perspective (El Zaatari & Maalouf, 2022), this belief aligns with the concept of the microsystem, where children directly interact with teachers and school-based programs. In this context, the school functions as an important agent of socialization that supports the adaptation process. Moreover, this interaction between family and school exemplifies the mesosystem, highlighting the significance of relationships between two immediate environments. Parents who place trust in schools tend to be more confident about their child's successful transition to formal education.

Despite this trust, many parents express anxiety about their children's basic academic skills, such as literacy and numeracy. This concern stems from the perception that primary schools require immediate mastery of foundational skills, which some parents may feel imposes excessive pressure on young children (Inf 04dari & Fachrani, 2023). The gap between parental expectations, school demands, and children's actual readiness points to systemic issues. These tensions can be explained through the exosystem, which encompasses broader environmental influences like school curricula and educational policies that shape family experiences but remain beyond direct parental control (El Zaatari & Maalouf, 2022). Therefore, successful transitions from early childhood education to primary school require alignment and collaboration among families, preschools, and primary institutions. Without such coordination, children risk being caught between inconsistent expectations and developmental capabilities.

Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory also identifies the macrosystem—comprising cultural values, social norms, and policy frameworks—as a vital influence on how parents perceive their children's readiness. High academic expectations placed on young learners may reflect broader societal values that equate early achievement with long-term success. These pressures can create stress not only for children but also for their families, particularly when support systems are unevenly distributed. Hence, the interplay of microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, and macrosystem factors determines whether transitions are smooth or challenging. It becomes crucial, therefore, for stakeholders to reframe school readiness'' not as a binary status of being ready'' or ``not ready,'' but as a flexible developmental process. In this model, all actors—parents, educators, and policymakers—must work together to ensure that children gain the foundational skills necessary for lifelong learning (Amriani et al., 2023).

Parental involvement is a key factor in supporting children's transition to school, affecting both their emotional and cognitive adjustment (Barker & Fabian, 2009; Tobin et al., 2022; Webb et al., 2017). From a microsystem perspective, parents influence children's development through their direct interactions at home and school. At home, they help children prepare emotionally and psychologically for the changes ahead, providing reassurance and routine. These forms of support contribute to a child's overall readiness, especially during unfamiliar experiences such as entering formal education. Simultaneously, parental engagement with school activities builds a bridge between the home and school environments. This dual presence reinforces the child's sense of security and promotes consistent expectations across settings.

Active parental participation in school, such as involvement in school events or parent-teacher associations, is equally crucial (Tao & Lau, 2021; Yantoro & Istofa, 2020). Within Bronfenbrenner's mesosystem framework, these engagements represent interactions between two microsystems—home and school—which are essential for cohesive child development (Crawford, 2020). Effective communication and cooperation between teachers and parents can foster an environment where children feel supported and understood. Moreover, this collaboration can serve as a protective factor that reduces the stress children often experience during periods of transition (Bailey & Baines, 2012; Barger et al., 2019). When children perceive that both school and home environments are working together, they are more likely to display resilience and confidence. This underscores the need for deliberate efforts to strengthen partnerships between families and educational institutions.

However, a noticeable gap exists in the level of father involvement during school transitions. Many fathers remain less engaged in school-related activities compared to mothers, limiting the scope of support children receive during this critical period. This imbalance suggests that the mesosystem is not functioning at its full potential, as optimal child outcomes depend on comprehensive parental involvement. External factors in the exosystem, such as job demands or rigid work schedules, often restrict fathers' availability for school-related matters (Tao & Lau, 2021). These constraints highlight how indirect environmental influences can shape the quality of parental engagement, even when intentions are supportive. Without equitable

involvement from both parents, children may experience gaps in emotional, social, and academic support during their transition to primary school.

At the macrosystem level, cultural norms and societal expectations continue to influence how parental roles are distributed. In many cultures, caregiving responsibilities are primarily assigned to mothers, while fathers are expected to prioritize economic contributions (Halizah & Faralita, 2023; Husnah et al., 2023; Sakina & A, 2017; Tao & Lau, 2021). These gendered expectations can lead to underrepresentation of fathers in school settings, despite their potential to positively influence their child's transition. Such systemic patterns reveal a need for policies and programs that promote inclusive parental involvement, regardless of gender. Encouraging active father participation not only balances the support system but also models equitable parenting roles for children. Addressing these broader issues within the macrosystem is essential for creating inclusive environments where every child can thrive.

This study highlights the importance of enhancing communication between schools and families to facilitate smoother transitions. Schools should adopt strategies that clearly articulate academic expectations and provide consistent information to parents, which can help mitigate anxiety and confusion (Dizon-Ross, 2018). Additionally, schools and policymakers should implement targeted initiatives to promote greater father involvement in school activities. Such efforts would contribute to a more comprehensive and equitable support network for students. One limitation of this study is its small sample size, which may not fully capture the diversity of parental experiences and perspectives. Future research should examine how variables such as socioeconomic status, cultural background, and school type influence parental involvement across different contexts.

Further exploration of specific strategies to increase father engagement would provide valuable insights into the dynamics of school transitions. By ensuring that all elements within a child's ecosystem operate in harmony, educational institutions can create more supportive and adaptive environments. Recognizing that school readiness is not a fixed benchmark but a dynamic, evolving process can help shift focus toward long-term learning and well-being. In this view, transition success is not solely the responsibility of the child but a collective outcome shaped by relationships among all stakeholders.

Conclusion

he study highlights the crucial role of parental involvement in children's school transitions, emphasizing how interactions within the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, and macrosystem influence this process. While parents trust schools to support their children's adaptation, anxieties about academic readiness and limited school communication remain significant concerns. The findings indicate that fathers' involvement is notably lower than mothers', largely due to cultural expectations and external constraints. Strengthening collaboration between early childhood and primary school educators, improving school communication policies, and encouraging fathers' participation can enhance children's transition experiences. Future research should explore larger and more diverse samples to examine variations in parental involvement across different socio-economic and cultural backgrounds. Additionally, investigating school strategies to actively engage fathers and evaluating the long-term impact of parental involvement on children's academic and social adjustment would provide deeper insights into optimizing school transition processes.

Declarations
Author contribution statement

Data availability statement

Data from the findings in this article are available through request from the first author. The data presented are not openly published to maintain the privacy of participants. However, data can be accessed with proper permissions and after approval by the concerned authorities.

Declaration of interest statement

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have influenced the work reported in this paper. Alternatively, the authors declare the following financial interests/personal relationships, which may be considered as potential competing interests.

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