



PRE-KINDERGARTEN TRANSITION PROGRAM (PTP) FOR CHILD DEVELOPMENT WORKERS (CDWs)

Andrian A. Dela Cruz²ⁱ

¹Faculty, MAEd,
Mariano Marcos State University,
College of Teacher Education,
Laoag Campus, 2900,
Philippines

²Faculty, PhD,
Mariano Marcos State University,
College of Teacher Education,
Laoag Campus, 2900,
Philippines

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Abstract:

Utilizing the descriptive research design, integrating the Research & Development (R&D) methodology, this study developed the Pre-kindergarten Transition Program (PTP) for Child Development Workers (CDWs) based on the identified factors that affect common adjustment issues of pre-kindergartners and the various experiences of CDWs in handling adjustment issues during the transition period. The study was conducted in the five districts of Child Development Centers (CDCs) in Laoag City. Using a purposive sampling technique, this study involved 19 CDWs and three experts in the field of early childhood education (ECE). A structured interview guide for the Focus Group discussion (FGD) and a validation tool adapted from Valdez (2023) were used in gathering data. Data gathered from the FGD were analyzed using Braun and Clark's (2006) thematic analysis, while the mean was used to determine the validity of the PTP. Findings reveal that the factors that affect the common adjustment issues of pre-kindergartners during the transition period are lack of social exposure, separation anxiety, time and routine adjustments, and excessive use of gadgets at home. On the other hand, the CDWs employ interactive learning activities, open communication, and parental involvement and

ⁱ Correspondence: email jdguiang@mmsu.edu.ph, aadelacruz@mmsu.edu.ph

support in handling adjustment issues during the transition period. Findings also reveal that the developed PTP is highly valid in terms of objectives (3.77), content (3.88), staff/persons involved (3.66), duration (4.00), and assessment/evaluative technique (3.78), along with the overall mean of 3.82. Thus, the PTP is recommended to be implemented to capacitate the CDWs in managing effectively the common adjustment issues of pre-kindergartners during the transition period.

Keywords: child development workers (CDWs), common adjustment issues, pre-kindergarten transition program (PTP), transition period

1. Introduction

No person is naturally balanced and inherently adjusted. The ability to adapt to any circumstance or setting varies from person to person. Children, in particular, are highly vulnerable in this aspect due to various factors that can potentially hinder their academic journey. Besi and Sakellario (2019) asserted that one of the most important times for children to adjust to their development is when they transition from home to school. The transition to the first year of schooling, according to Margetts (2014) and Mior and Johnson (2021), is characterized by a diversity of complexity that inhibits children from easily adjusting to their new environment. As mentioned in the study of Marković and Kuterovac (2021), it is one of the major developmental milestones in a child's life, which requires complex adjustment to new social and academic demands. Successfully meeting these demands is found to benefit children's educational progress from a wider perspective (Bowes *et al.*, 2019). Thus, Marković and Kuterovac (2021) suggested that exploring the determinants of effective school transition and easy school adjustments is pivotal in meeting children's full potential.

Likewise, the ability to adjust in the transition process may help children develop bonds with their counterparts and teachers (Al-Yagon, 2020), improve cognitive abilities (Karaman & Cobb, 2022), and regulate their emotions (Skinner, 2018). This bolsters the Attachment Theory, which holds that social interaction is essential for children to expand their surroundings. The link between children's microsystems and mesosystems can be bridged through social interaction, particularly in a school setting, as elaborated in Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory.

On the other hand, the adjustment and transition periods of children do not begin and end on the first day of school. As found in the study of Pomerantz *et al.* (2011), it takes an average of six weeks for most pre-kindergartners to get used to their new environment. Within this period, as pointed out by Odinko and Osiesi (2019), children who have difficulty adjusting to the pre-kindergarten environment are most likely to experience difficulties in socializing, which may contribute to the occurrence of anxiety (Saadvedra, 2022; Silk *et al.*, 2022) and uncontrollable aggression (Guerra & Huesmann, 2022).

Conversely, as argued in the study of Besi and Sakellatio (2019), other adjustment issues that children may experience during the transition period are related to sleep

patterns, appetite, and energy levels. They found that children within this period exhibit unstable emotions, resulting in anxiety, fear, anger, sadness, and withdrawal.

In the Philippines, children ages 4.0 to 4.11 receive early learning services through the Early Childhood and Care and Development (ECCD) Council, which is responsible for crafting early learning experiences and programs implemented by the Municipal or City Social Welfare and Development Office (MSWDO/CSWDO) from different Local Government Units (LGUs), governed and monitored by the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD).

Additionally, the early learning experience happens in the Child Development Center (CDC), a facility that offers child and family care services manned by the Child Development Workers (CDWs). They are considered primary caregivers and play a central role in unfolding children's potential for their future, for the country, and in developing good citizens for the next generation. They work in pre-kindergarten and/or various early childhood education programs and settings (Sheridan, 2019).

Thus, CDWs in the Philippines play a crucial role in helping pre-kindergartners transition from home to school. They create a nurturing environment, build relationships with children and families, and support social-emotional development. CDWs provide individualized attention, organize transition activities, and collaborate with Child Development Teachers (CDTs). Their goal is to help children adjust smoothly to the school environment and enhance their overall development.

Considerably, a transition program for children promotes a smooth transition for children moving from home to school. The DSWD implements activities in the CDCs across the country that aim to ease and decrease the issues and challenges that come with these changes for children. It creates a bridge between the familiar comfort of home and the new environment of school, fostering a positive and confident start to their academic journey.

However, it is important to note that there is a lack of literature on the implementation of transition programs at the pre-kindergarten level (Villareal *et al.*, 2015) and limited studies investigating the factors affecting children's school adjustment in the Philippines (Bowes *et al.*, 2019). Recognizing the significance of children's experiences during the transition period to pre-kindergarten, this research aimed to analyze the factors perceived by the CDWs that affect the common adjustment issues in pre-kindergartners and their experiences in addressing these challenges during the transition period. The findings from this study served as a foundation for developing a pre-kindergarten transition program that capacitates CDWs to effectively handle the common adjustment issues observed during the transition period.

2. Statement of the Problem

This study developed the Pre-kindergarten Transition Program (PTP) for Child Development Workers (CDWs). Specifically, this study sought answers to the following questions:

- 1) What are the factors that affect the common adjustment issues that pre-kindergartners experience during the transition period, as perceived by the CDWs?
- 2) What are the experiences of the CDWs in handling the common adjustment issues of pre-kindergartners?
- 3) What program can be developed to capacitate the CDWs in handling the common adjustment issues of pre-kindergartners during the transition period?
- 4) How valid is the developed program along;
 - 4.1 objectives;
 - 4.2 content;
 - 4.3 staff/person involved;
 - 4.4 duration; and
 - 4.5 assessment/evaluative techniques?

2.1 Significance of the Study

The results of this study could capacitate CDWs to effectively handle the common adjustment issues of pre-kindergartners during the transition period. Additionally, it could have a significant impact on pre-kindergartners, parents, ECCD administrators, policymakers, LGUs, and other researchers.

The PTP outputs of this study could help capacitate CDWs in handling pre-kindergartners who have concerns in their transition period. Likewise, the study could help the pre-kindergartners to adjust and enjoy the new environment they are in. In addition, the results of this undertaking could ease the burden of parents whose children are facing difficulty in adjusting to their learning environment. More so, the findings of this research could be used as the basis for ECCD Council administrators and policymakers in designing curriculum and providing training and seminars for CDWs that could capacitate them in handling issues and concerns to ensure a smooth transition journey among pre-kindergartners in the different CDCs in the country.

Furthermore, the study could assist LGUs, specifically MSWDO and/or CSWDO in the implementation of a smooth transition for pre-kindergartners moving from home to school. Finally, the result of this study could open an avenue for other researchers to conduct similar studies of a wider scope that could possibly address issues and concerns regarding pre-kindergarten implementation.

3. Methodology

This part of the paper presents the theoretical/conceptual framework, research design, locale of the study, population and sampling procedure, research instruments, data gathering procedure, and the statistical treatment of data needed in the study.

3.1 Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on the Adult Learning Theory formulated by Malcolm Knowles and Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory. Adult learning theory highlights the

unique characteristics of adult learners and identifies the learning styles that are most effective for them. Often referred to as andragogy, the art and science of adult learning, challenges the conventional approach of pedagogy, which adult education is recognized as distinct from child education (Ancho, 2021). According to Suarez (2022), the fundamental assumptions about adult learners differ significantly from those of child learners, particularly concerning their self-concept and their readiness to learn, which is closely tied to the developmental tasks associated with their societal roles.

Non-ECE graduates who served as CDWs may encounter challenges and concerns when working with pre-kindergartners due to their limited competence in effectively delivering and facilitating learning processes (Borreguero *et al.*, 2022). This lack of proficiency can result in a mismatch of skills and knowledge, impacting their ability to meet the learning needs of pre-kindergartners within the current educational system.

As a consequence, their students may not receive the quality education required for their holistic development. By incorporating the principles of Adult Learning theory and integrating a PTP, CDWs can enhance their professionalism and proficiency in providing and implementing effective transition programs for pre-kindergartners. This program aimed to refine CDWs' skills, increase their competence, and ensure a smooth transition period for the children.

Moreover, this study is also anchored on the Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory which provides a comprehensive framework for understanding the transition period of pre-kindergartners as they move between different environments. This theory examines child development along with how various environmental systems in a child's life interact with their development (Early & Pianta, 2023). This theory gives importance to the nature and nurture elements, which interplay in a sequenced manner between all the environmental systems in a child's development.

Moreover, within the framework of the pre-kindergarten transition period, ecological systems theory provides a deeper understanding of how different environmental systems can influence a child's adjustment from home to school. The implications of this theory in this study emphasize the teacher's proper planning to consider all different environmental systems (micro, meso, exo, macro and chronosystems) that interact to support children in the transition process (Early, 2023).

Furthermore, through Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory and the integration of pre-kindergarten transition programs, CDWs become more aware, resourceful, competent, and skilled in providing support for preschoolers during the transition period. By understanding Ecological Systems Theory and its implications for the period when children shift from home to school, parents and educators can enhance their ability to provide effective support to children during this crucial phase.

Therefore, the developed PTP from Adult Learning Theory and Ecological Systems Theory is useful to capacitate CDWs knowledge and skills in supporting children during the transition to school (Pianta & Mashburn, 2006) and to secure a warm and supportive environment at school, help children to develop coping skills, and building strong relationships between the home and the school.

3.2 Conceptual Framework

The Input-Process-Output (IPO) model is used as the framework of the study as shown in Figure 1.

The input includes the factors perceived by CDWs that affect common adjustment issues of pre-kindergartners, CDWs experiences in handling common adjustment issues during the transition period, and the Adult Learning Theory and Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory.

Moreover, the process involves the Designing, Writing, and Validating (DWV) model, encompassing designing, writing, and validating the PTP to capacitate CDWs in effectively managing the common adjustment issues of pre-kindergartners during the transition period.

Lastly, the PTP for CDWs represents the anticipated outcome of this research.

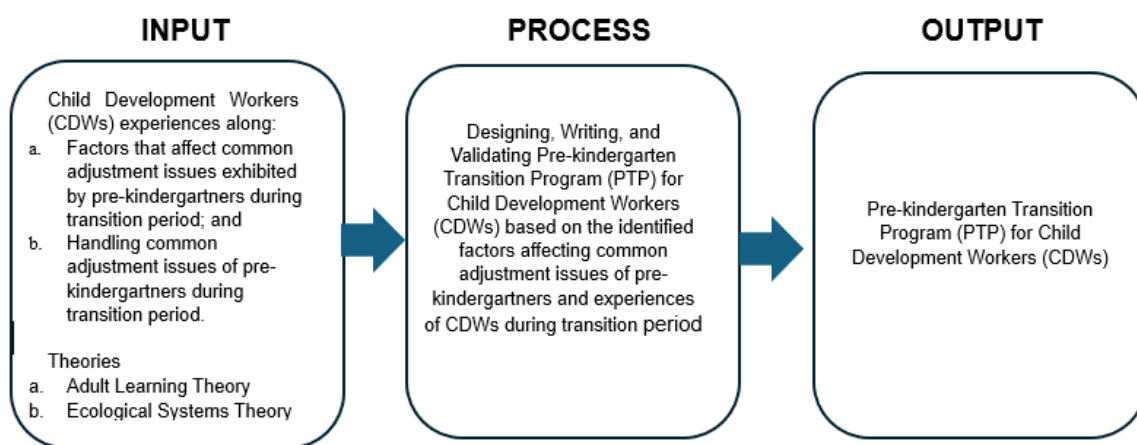


Figure 1: Research Paradigm

3.3 Research Design

This study employed the descriptive research design integrating the Research and Development (R & D) methodology to develop a PTP for CDWs. It is descriptive as the researcher analyzed thematically the factors affecting common adjustment issues of pre-kindergartners and the experiences of CDWs during the transition period. Moreover, this study focused on three key stages in the R&D process: planning, development, and the final stage. Figure 2 illustrates the schematic diagram that outlines the steps involved in the PTP for CDWs.

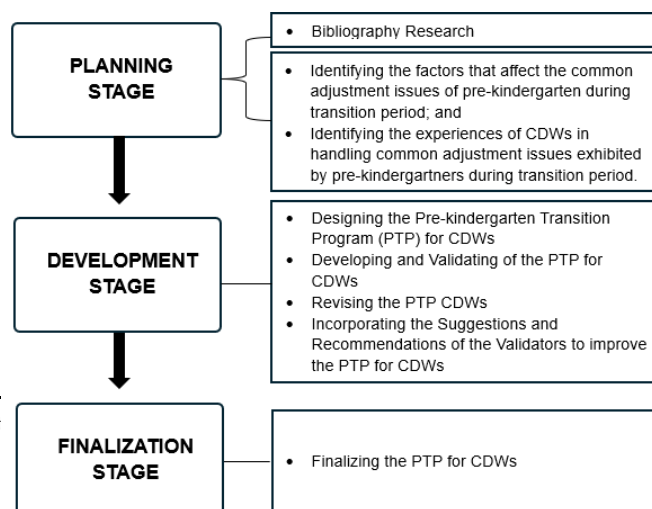


Figure 2: Schematic Diagram Showing the Steps in the Development and Validation of the Pre-kindergarten Transition Program (PTP) for Child Development Workers (CDWs)

Additionally, the program underwent validation by a pool of experts in the field of ECE. The final stage involved the revision of the PTP based on the feedback from the validators and the advisory committee, ensuring its completeness and effectiveness.

3.4 Locale of the Study

This study was conducted in the five districts of the CDCs in Laoag City, Ilocos Norte. CDWs are working in the different CDCs where pre-kindergartners experience the transition from home to school. There are 17 CDCs in Poblacion 1 district, 21 CDCs in Poblacion 2 district, 20 CDCs in the Northwest district, 20 CDCs in the East district, and 20 CDCs in the South district. The districts were grouped according to the city's distance and geographic location. The CSWDO of Laoag City oversees CDCs.

3.5 Population and Sampling Procedure

Using a purposive sampling technique, this study involved two sets of respondents: 19 CDWs from the five districts of CDCs in Laoag City who met the criteria and three validators who are experts in the field of ECE. The inclusion criteria in selecting the CDWs are:

- 1) currently serving as CDWs in Laoag City, Ilocos Norte;
- 2) have experienced the common adjustment behaviors and attitudes that preschoolers exhibited during the transition period;
- 3) with at least five years and above working experience as CDWs; and
- 4) were willing to participate in the study.

Only those who have met these inclusion criteria were considered as part of the study.

3.6 Research Instruments

This study utilized two instruments to gather the data. First was a researcher-made interview guide in which questions were translated into Ilokano and content validated by two experts in the field of ECE and one expert in the Ilokano language. This tool was used during the FGD. Furthermore, the participants of the FGD spent an hour to answer the questions in the interview guide.

Second was a validation tool, which was adapted from Valdez (2023) and was used to determine the level of validity of the PTP for CDWs. The said tool has five indicators, which include the program's objectives, content, staff/persons involved, duration, and assessment/evaluative techniques, wherein each item was rated using the following scale:

Range of Means	Descriptive Interpretation (DI)
3.51 – 4.00	Highly Valid (HV)
2.51 – 3.50	Moderately Valid (MV)
1.51 – 2.50	Slightly Valid (SV)
1.00 – 1.50	Not Valid (NV)

3.7 Data Gathering Procedure

The researcher strictly followed several steps in gathering the data pertinent to the study. After the proposal defense, the researcher sought clearance from the MMSU University Research Ethics Review Board (MMSU URERB).

Once the clearance was served, the researcher asked permission through a request letter to conduct the study addressed to the city mayor and coordinated with the social welfare and development officer of Laoag City. The conduct of the FGD began a week after the researcher received the URERB clearance and ended the following week after the scheduled FGD. Moreover, the respondents had the option to answer or not a specific question during the FGD. Likewise, the respondents could withdraw their participation during the conduct of the FGD at any time they deem necessary. Questions were translated into the language they were comfortable with. The gathered responses were organized and analyzed thematically and underwent audit trails by three qualitative specialists.

Furthermore, the data gathered were printed and secured in a storage cabinet after coding, theming, writing, and finalizing the analysis of data. After finishing the study, the gathered data will be discarded while any stored online data will be permanently deleted, and all printed papers will be shredded in compliance with the Data Privacy Act of 2012.

3.8 Statistical Treatment and Analysis of Data

The identified factors that affect common adjustment issues of pre-kindergartners as perceived by the CDWs and their experiences in handling these issues during the transition period were analyzed using Braun and Clark's (2006) perspective on Thematic Analysis. This approach provided a six-step technique that served as an effective framework for conducting this type of investigation.

Moreover, to ensure the trustworthiness of the thematic analysis, the researcher strictly adhered to criteria based on Lincoln and Guba (1985) and Nowell *et al.* (2017). Prior to journal submission, the research process underwent review by three qualitative experts in the field to ensure accuracy. The results of the FGD served as the foundation for the conceptualization and development of the PTP.

The developed PTP for CDWs handling pre-kindergartners was checked and validated by three experts in the field of ECE using an adapted validation tool from Valdez (2023) with objectives, content, staff/persons involved, duration, and assessment/evaluative techniques as its indicators. The validity of the PTP was described

using mean and interpreted using a 4-point Likert scale with the corresponding descriptive interpretation as shown below:

Range of Means Descriptive Interpretation (DI)	Descriptors
3.51 – 4.00 Highly Valid (HV)	The developed program exhibits exceptional components to capacitate CDWs
2.51 – 3.50 Moderately Valid (MV)	The developed program exhibits excellent components to capacitate CDWs
1.51 – 2.50 Slightly Valid (SV)	The developed program exhibits good components to capacitate CDWs
1.00 – 1.50 Not Valid (NV)	The developed program exhibits poor components to capacitate CDWs

4. Results and Discussions

In this chapter, the various experiences of CDWs in handling common adjustment issues exhibited by pre-kindergartners during the transition period are discussed, analyzed, and interpreted. This study also explored the factors influencing the common adjustment issues and examined the experiences of the CDWs in handling the common adjustment issues faced by pre-kindergartners during the transition period.

4.1 Factors Affecting the Common Adjustment Issues of Pre-kindergartners during the Transition Period

The study's findings reveal several emerging themes regarding the factors affecting the common adjustment issues of pre-kindergartners during the transition period as perceived by CDWs during the conduct of the FGD. The identified factors include:

- 1) limited social exposure,
- 2) separation anxiety,
- 3) time and routine adjustments, and
- 4) excessive use of gadgets at home.

Table 1 presents the themes generated by the factors affecting the common adjustment issues of pre-kindergartners during the transition period as perceived by the CDWs.

Table 1: Factors affecting the common adjustment issues of pre-kindergartners as perceived by the CDWs during the transition period

Question	CDWs' Responses	Codes	Themes
What are the factors affecting	<i>Gapu ti limited exposure ti padada nga ubbing.</i>	Limited social exposure to	1. Limited Social Exposure

common adjustment issues of pre-kindergartners during the transition period?	<p>(Due to limited interaction with their counterparts).</p> <p>Due to limited exposure <i>iti nadumaduma a tattatao isu a nabigla tay ubing.</i> (Due to limited exposure, they were shocked to other persons.)</p> <p><i>Dagiti ubbing ket deprivedda ti play ken arwan unay ti ka-ay-ayam idiay balbalayda.</i> (The pre-kindergartners are deprived of play, and they do not have playmates at home).</p> <p><i>Dagitoy ubbingmi ket product ti lockdown isu kurang ti exposeda ti ruar ken social activities.</i> (Our pupils are the product of lockdown due to COVID19 so they do not have enough social activities and exposure).</p> <p><i>Idi lockdown saanda naikkan gundaway a manghalubilo iti adadu a tattao ken ti nadumaduma nga activities.</i> (During lockdown, pre-kindergartners do not have the opportunity to socialize and do other activities).</p>	<p>counterparts and peers.</p> <p>Deprivation of socialization at home</p> <p>Restricted movements and socialization during lockdown</p>	<p>A. Limited exposure to socialization</p>
	<p>Limited exposure <i>kadagiti activities idi adda diay balayda paylaeng.</i> (There is a limited exposure to home activities).</p> <p><i>Saanda nga isu ti active diay balayda ta arwan unay activities nga it-ited ni nanangda kanyada.</i> (Pre-kindergartners are not active due to limited of home activities).</p>	<p>Limited home activities</p>	<p>B. Limited exposure to home activities</p>

	<p><i>Dagiti activities a mait-ited kadakuada ket saan met nga isu ti masansan nga it-ited ti nagannak idiay balay ket saan a maiyannatop kadakuada.</i> (The parents or guardians of pre-kindergartners seldom gave activities at home, and it is not developmentally appropriate activities for them).</p> <p><i>Dagiti ubbing ket deprive da ti play idjay balbalayda ket no umaydanton ti pagadalan isudanton ti nakutkutin.</i> (Pre-kindergartners are deprived of home activities then when they come to school, they are so active).</p>	<p>Activities are not developmentally-appropriate</p> <p>Deprivation of play at home</p>	
	<p><i>Dadduma kadagiti ubbing ti ummuna nga aldaw ti panagbasada ket napakigtutanda ti langa ti center isu nga mabutengda.</i> (Some pre-kindergartners in their first day of classes were shocked because they were unfamiliar with the center, so they were also afraid).</p>	<p>New environment</p>	<p>C. Limited Exposure to the New Environment</p>
	<p><i>Agdamuda kenni teacher da.</i> (Pre-kindergartners were new to their teacher.)</p> <p><i>Adda nakitada a baro a rupa, tay maestrada.</i> (The pre-kindergartners saw a new face who is their teacher.)</p> <p><i>Mabalin pay a ti napigsa a boses ni teacher ken ti facial expressionda.</i> (Maybe because of the loud voice and the facial expressions of the teacher).</p>	<p>Introduction to the teacher</p> <p>Teacher's voice and facial expressions</p>	<p>D. Unfamiliarity to the teacher</p>

	<p><i>Damoda ti baro nga environmentda isu nga sabali met ti riknada iti teacherda.</i> (The pre-kindergartners were new to their environment so they also have new feelings toward their teacher).</p>		
	<p><i>Nakurang ti orientation wenno lack of communication ti parents kadagiti annakda.</i> (There is a limited orientation or lack of communication between parents and children).</p>	Lack of communication	E. Limited Parent-Child Orientation
	<p>From home to school <i>medio marigatanda nga ag-adjust gapu ti</i> lack of communication <i>ni</i> parent <i>kenni ubing.</i></p> <p>(From home to school, pre-kindergartners have a hard time adjusting due to a limited form of communication between the parent and children).</p> <p>Dadduma nga ubbingket na-force nga umay agbasa. (Some kids were forced to come to school).</p>	Issues on pre-kindergartners' readiness	
	<p>Separation Anxiety <i>ti rasonna no apay agsangsangit dagiti ubbing.</i> (Separation anxiety is the reason why pre-kindergartners are crying)</p> <p><i>Gapu iti panagsinada ti nagganakda.</i> (Due to the separation from their parents).</p> <p><i>Gappuanan'ta maisinada ti nagganakda, amangan kano a saandan a masublianen.</i> (Due to their separation from their parents, they</p>	<p>Detachment from parents</p> <p>Anxious feelings</p>	2. Separation Anxiety

	thought that they would not be fetched).		
	<p><i>Gaputa iso ti ummana nga aldaw dagiti ubbing ti panagbasada ag-adjust met ti oras ken ub-ubrada.</i> (Since it is the first day of classes, their time is also adjusted).</p> <p><i>Saan da a sanay ti agbasa iti oras ti schedulemi.</i> (They are not used to the time of our scheduled time).</p> <p><i>Time adjustment ti routinesda ket saan da sanay.</i> (They are not used to the time adjustment and their routines).</p>	<p>Not used to the new time</p> <p>Not used to the new routines</p>	3. Time and Routine Adjustments
	<p><i>Puro gadgets lattan iti it-ited dagiti nagannak sakbayda umay agbasa.</i> (Their parents often gave gadgets to their children before going to school.)</p> <p>Too much exposure to gadgets as children were spending a lot of time through games.</p>	Too much screen time at home	4. Excessive Use of Gadgets at Home

4.1.1 Limited Social Exposure

The theme of limited social exposure emerges as a common factor affecting the adjustment issues of pre-kindergartners during the transition period. According to Besi and Sakellariou (2019), exposure plays a vital role in children's adjustment to their new environment. However, based on the participants' responses in this study, several aspects of social exposure were found to be lacking for pre-kindergartners. The theme of limited social exposure encompasses:

- 1) limited exposure to socialization,
- 2) limited exposure to home activities,
- 3) limited exposure to the learning environment,
- 4) unfamiliarity with the teacher, and
- 5) limited parent-child orientation.

One of the main issues identified is the lack of exposure to socialization among pre-kindergartners during the lockdown, leading to limited interactions with peers and the environment, as highlighted by Dphil *et al.* (2020). This deprivation of play and restricted movements has been evident in shared statements from the FGD.

Furthermore, these aspects of lack of exposure corroborate the study of Redmon *et al.* (2017), "Child Deprivation in Malaysia: Final report," quantitative research that identified the impact of missing basic needs and opportunities on a child's well-being, growth, and development. Barger *et al.*'s (2019) research further support this, showing that 50% of pre-kindergartners faced challenges with temperament during transitions, being easily irritated and hard to soothe.

Another finding from the FGD results is the limited exposure to home activities. These activities, crucial for children's skill development and well-being, involve tasks at home guided by parents outside of work hours. Despite their importance, some parents fail to engage their children in such activities before they start school, as revealed by CDWs in the study (Slicker *et al.*, 2017). Moreover, it was also found that even if parents provide activities to children, the nature of the task is not suited to their level and age.

Lastly, without such opportunities, their interactions with peers may be restricted, impeding the development of social competence. This can create obstacles for children in forming new friendships or adapting to new social dynamics during transitions (Balayan *et al.*, 2022) and make it more difficult for children to cope with changes and adjust emotionally (Tobin *et al.*, 2020).

Lack of exposure to the learning environment also emerged as a subtheme under the lack of exposure. Children who lack exposure to the learning environment face challenges in their development. This includes the physical set-up, socio-cultural aspects, and educational materials needed for their growth (Evans *et al.*, 2011). Research shows that pre-kindergartners are experiencing insufficient exposure to the learning environment, leading to negative emotions like fear, shock, and tantrums, as observed by the CDWs.

These results are aligned with the study of Wilmshurst (2012), "Adjustment Problems and Disorders in Childhood and Adolescence." This qualitative study found that adjustment can lead to a variety of emotions, such as confusion, frustration, or a feeling of loss as children are exposed to unknown surroundings.

Another sub-theme under the factor of lack of exposure is the pre-kindergartners' unfamiliarity with their teacher, impacting the need to establish rapport during the transition period. This familiarity helps in the smooth adjustment of both children and teachers. The study identifies children's unfamiliarity with their teacher as a theme, linked to undesirable behaviors triggered by the teacher's loud voice and facial expressions (Roorda *et al.*, 2017).

Therefore, these events are caused by the unfamiliar relationship between the pre-kindergartners and their teacher. This can lead to attitudes and behaviors exhibited by pre-kindergartners being predicted by the practices of teachers, including voice, facial expressions, classroom organization, and emotional support (Blazar & Kraft, 2017).

Additionally, according to the study of Caciopo and Hawkey (2015), "Perceived Social Isolation and Cognition," a qualitative study found that children who are isolated due to lack of exposure or unfamiliarity with the teacher can have biased perceptions and remember negative interactions, leading to misunderstandings of their peers' actions. This, in turn, can result in children displaying misbehavior and struggling emotionally.

The last sub-theme related to the lack of exposure in pre-kindergartners' transition issues is inadequate parent-child orientation. Proper orientation from parents is crucial for children to adjust to new environments, people, routines, and academic progress (Li, 2023; Lara & Saracosti, 2019). Despite efforts by CDWs, insufficient parent-child orientation persists, with some parents not adhering to transition guidelines, even resorting to forcing children to attend school.

These indicate that parents are not properly oriented on their roles in preparing their children to be ready for the school environment and assisting them in adapting to new academic and social challenges during the transition period. In the study of Hornby (2011), "Barriers to Parental Involvement in Education: An Explanatory Model," this qualitative research found that without adequate parent-child orientation, children may encounter difficulties in adapting to the school environment, feeling alienated from their parents' support, and experiencing academic and social struggles.

Moreover, children who are being forced to come to school develop academic pressure that can lead to stress and various degrees of anxiety, which also leads to learning disorders. These detrimental factors have long-term effects and delays on a child's development. These findings are reflected in the mixed-method study of Gray (2023) titled "Forced schooling, anxiety, and 'learning disorders'"

4.1.2 Separation Anxiety

One prevalent theme arising from participants' responses that affects common adjustment issues of pre-kindergartners during the transition period is separation anxiety. According to Ali *et al.* (2021), the attachment between young children and their primary caregivers is beneficial for pre-kindergartners social, cognitive, and emotional development. When this bond is disrupted, as seen when children start prekindergarten, separation anxiety can manifest as feelings of fear or distress when away from their caregivers or familiar environments (Guy-Evans, 2023). This initial separation often leads children to cry as a coping mechanism, as observed in the study by Pepito & Montalbo (2019).

Moreover, several emotions, including worry, anguish, fear, and missing someone, contribute to separation anxiety during the transition period. These emotions identified by Feriane *et al.* (2023) serve as precursors to Separation Anxiety Disorder (SAD), particularly in children, when they experience extreme concern, worry, uncertainty, and dread related to separation from a trusted caregiver. Milrod *et al.* (2014) further support this, indicating that childhood SAD may lead to adult panic disorder and other anxiety issues.

Furthermore, pre-kindergartners separation anxiety is more observed when they are separated from their mother. This is shown in the table's statements. However, this result contradicts several studies related to whom a child is more attached to, the mother or father. According to the studies of Fernandes *et al.* (2021), "Early Attachment to Mothers and Fathers: Contributions to Preschoolers' Emotional Regulation," and the study of Kamza (2019), "Attachment to Mothers and Fathers during Middle Childhood: Evidence from a Polish Sample," both of which are quantitative in nature, suggest that a

deeper insight into children's development can be gained by considering the combined influences of both mother-child and father-child attachment relationships, rather than studying them independently.

Lastly, Fishtrom *et al.* (2022) emphasised the importance of forming secure attachment bonds with caregivers, including mothers and fathers, was highlighted. Research shows that the quality of attachment to parents significantly impacts a child's well-being, influencing their ability to manage separation and deal with anxiety effectively.

4.1.3 Time and Routine Adjustments

The themes of time and routine adjustments emerged as factors affecting pre-kindergartners' common adjustment issues during the transition period. Having an established routine and managed time is essential for children as they are building their own habits (Arlinghaus & Johnston, 2018). During the transition period, according to Ethereged (2023), children may experience challenges in adjusting their time and routine. In the time adjustment factor, children are going through changes in their time and sleep patterns. According to the FGD, pre-kindergartners felt tired while at the center and found it challenging to adapt to new schedules. Consequently, disruptions in pre-kindergartners' routines can make it difficult for them to participate in the planned activities.

These statements corroborate the findings of Schlieber and Han (2021), "The Role of Sleep in Young Children's Development: A Review." Their qualitative study supports the idea that alterations in schedules can influence young children's sleep patterns, impacting their well-being and daily functioning. This lack of sleep can worsen difficulties experienced by children during times of change.

4.1.4 Excessive Use of Gadgets at Home

Excessive use of gadgets at home emerged as a theme affecting the common adjustment issues of pre-kindergartners during the transition period. According to Mupalla *et al.* (2023), it refers to the prolonged and disproportionate amount of time that children spend engaging with gadgets, such as television, computers, smartphones, tablets, and other electronic devices, within their home environment. However, this behavior is controlled by parents, yet some of them allow children to use gadgets for extended periods.

These results show that pre-kindergartners are increasingly devoting excessive hours to screen time, engaging in activities such as gaming, entertainment, or other digital interactions. This is supported by the study of McArthur *et al.* (2022), "Screen Time and Developmental and Behavioral Outcomes for Preschool Children." This quantitative study found an association linking the amount of time children spend on screens to their development in language and behavioral progress.

Moreover, there is a correlation indicating that longer screen time is associated with negative outcomes, such as undesirable behavior that has adverse effects on their overall well-being, growth, and adjustment. These observations by the CDWs align with

the study of Mupalla (2023), where excessive reliance on screen media among children has raised significant concerns for children's health due to its potential negative impact on their behavior, cognitive, and social-emotional skills.

Furthermore, the time spent on the use of gadgets by children is linked to a high likelihood of developing behavioral problems, such as conduct issues and hyperactivity/inattention difficulties. Using gadgets without educational content is also associated with behavioral problems in childhood. This is evident from the results of the mixed-method study of Hosokawa (2018), "Association Between Mobile Technology Use and Child Adjustment in Early Elementary School-age."

4.2 Child Development Workers' (CDWs) Experiences in Handling the Common Adjustment Issues of Pre-kindergartners during the Transition Period

CDWs have firsthand experience in teaching, assisting, planning, implementing programs, and supervising pre-kindergartners inside the CDC. They have direct experience in employing interventions to address the common adjustment issues exhibited by pre-kindergartners during the transition period. This study explored the different experiences of CDWs in handling common adjustment issues of pre-kindergartners during the transition period.

Applying interactive learning activities and parental involvement and support emerged as themes based on the different experiences CDWs have in handling the common adjustment issues of pre-kindergartners during the transition period. These two ways of addressing adjustment issues of pre-kindergartners were highlighted in the shared statements of the participants in the study.

Table 2 presents the themes generated based on the experiences of CDWs in handling the common adjustment issues of pre-kindergartners during the transition period.

Table 2: Experiences of CDWs in handling the common adjustment issues of pre-kindergartners during transition period

Question	CDWs' Responses	Codes	Themes
What are the experiences of CDWs in handling the common adjustment issues of pre-kindergartners?	<i>Mangitedkami ti play-based activities kanyada iti nadumaduma nga areas. (We gave play-based activities to them in the different areas).</i>	Interactive activities	1. Application of Learning Activities
	<i>No madlawko a mangrugidaman nga agsangiten, mangisingitak ti kankanta ti klase. (If I noticed that some were starting to cry, I integrate songs in our class).</i>	Incorporation of rhyming songs	A. Engaging Activities in Different Learning Areas
	<i>Usarenmi ti audio wenno kankanta tapnon ma-catch ti attention dagiti ubbing ken agusarkami dagiti materials ti areas.. (We used</i>		

	<p>audio and songs to catch the attention of pre-kindergartners with the use of the materials from the areas).</p> <p><i>Dagiti met active nga ubbing sakbaykami a mangrugi i-catch ko ti attention</i>dan through musics and songs. (For me to catch the attention of those pre-kindergartners who are hyper, I will start the class through playing of musics or songs).</p> <p><i>Tapnon ma-catch ko ti attention-da aglalo dagiti ubbing a taray di taray, mangpabuya ak ti stories ket agtugtugawdanton.</i> (For me to catch their attention especially those who always ran in the center, I showed them digital stories then all of them were seated properly).</p> <p><i>Isalsalik ida ti interactive nga ay-ayam.</i> (I let them join the interactive activities).</p> <p>I will assign them to the different areas in the center.</p> <p>I-pacify-ko ida usar dagiti toys ken learning areas. (I pacify them with toys that are available in the different areas).</p> <p><i>Dagiti met ketdi areas nga inaramidmi ket nadesign para kadagiti ubbing</i> all through-out the year. (Actually, all the learning areas that we created are designed for them all throughout the year).</p>	<p>Sustaining pre-kindergartners' attention through varied activities</p> <p>Story-telling activity</p> <p>Reinforced group playing and activities in the different learning areas</p>	
	<p><i>No ti rugi ti klase innak i-greet ida to sango ti ridaw.</i> (During the start of classes, I greeted the pre-kindergartners in front of the door).</p> <p><i>Kasarsaridak dagiti agsangangit ket ay-aywek ida.</i> (I talked to those</p>	<p>Greetings to open conversation</p> <p>Constant talking to pre-kindergartners</p>	B. Maintaining Open Communication

	<p>who were crying and pacify them).</p> <p><i>Ti usto a sarita kanyada ket agsardengdanto met lattan.</i> (Proper way of talking to them aided their bothered emotions).</p> <p><i>Ibagbagak kanyada a ni parents-da ket adda lang ta ruar agur-uray ken agsublida.</i> (I said to them that their parents are just outside, waiting for them and they will be fetched).</p> <p><i>Kasarsaridak dagiti managbabain ket pagtugawek ida ti dagiti ubbing a nabibo.</i> (I talked to pre-kindergartners who are shy and let them be seated beside those who are active).</p> <p><i>No makasaritami met dagiti ubbingen, maibagada met no ana ti kayatda ken dida kayat.</i> (After talking to the pre-kindergartners, they also expressed their wants and worries).</p>	<p>Pacifying pre-kindergartners through proper communication.</p> <p>Active Listening</p>	
	<p><i>Iti first two months i-allow ko ti parent dagiti ubbing a permi sangitna iti uneg ti pagadalan.</i> (In the first two months, I allow parents of children who often cry to come and be seated in the center).</p> <p><i>Pagtugawek paylaeng nukua tay nanang tay ubing tapnon makitkitana latta.</i> (I allowed some parents to be seated in the center for the children to still see their parents).</p> <p>Parents <i>pay ti agbalin nga</i> teacher aid nukuan. Parents became teacher aids).</p> <p>Parents will come to the center and help me look after not only</p>	<p>Allowing parents to stay in the center</p> <p>Parents as teacher's aids</p>	2. Parental Involvement and Support

	their child but other children too.		
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4.2.1 Application of Interactive Learning Activities

The theme of applying interactive learning activities is the most experienced way to handle adjustment issues during the transition period. The identified activities employed by CDWs to decrease children’s adjustment issues during transition include:

- 1) providing engaging activities in the different learning areas, and
- 2) maintaining open communication.

Engaging activities in the learning areas as a way for CDWs to handle the common adjustment issues of pre-kindergartners during the transition period emerged under the theme of applying interactive learning activities. According to Butler and Ostrosky (2018), these activities are designed tasks that actively engage and involve pre-kindergartners in a variety of interactive and stimulating activities in an early learning environment. The participants in the study shared several activities, such as songs, storytelling, engaging activities, and play-based activities.

The incorporation of songs during the transition from home to school and transitioning from one activity to another plays a crucial role in helping pre-kindergartners establish routines and adapt to the learning process. This experience supports the study of McIntosh *et al.* (2004), "Teaching Transitions: Techniques for Promoting Success between Lessons." Additionally, CDWs effectively engage pre-kindergartners using storytelling and often incorporating technology. As highlighted by Ramamurthy *et al.* (2023), storytelling serves as a powerful communication tool that transcends linguistic barriers and facilitates pre-kindergartners' adaptation to new cultures and environments.

Moreso, CDWs employ a range of engaging activities in an organized learning environment to captivate and maintain the attention of pre-kindergartners, particularly those who are shy. This approach has demonstrated its effectiveness in sustaining children's interest (Slattery *et al.*, 2022). Further, Mirana (2022) highlights the significance of the learning environment as the second home for children, where they can freely express themselves and develop their emotions.

This aligns with Rusticus *et al.* study (2023) titled "What are the Key Elements of a Positive Learning Environment? Perspectives from Students and Faculty," which emphasizes the positive effects of an organized and creative environment on children's growth and development. Additionally, CDWs' experiences underscore the significance of exposing pre-kindergartners to their new environment and providing developmentally appropriate materials and practices. This resonates with Lee and Lee's study (2023) titled "Relationships between Physical Environments and Creativity: A Scoping Review," which highlighted the role of a creative and organized learning environment in supporting children's academic and social adaptation.

On the other hand, the theme of maintaining open communication emerged, indicating that the CDWs employ simple actions to understand how pre-kindergartners are faring during the transition period. This facilitates a strong connection between the

CDWs and the pre-kindergartners. Consistent communication and active listening to pre-kindergartners' thoughts and emotions are key aspects of this approach, as reflected in the participants' responses.

Therefore, the CDWs' ability to engage in meaningful conversations and actively listen to pre-kindergartners of varying temperaments enhances their overall abilities. This finding is consistent with Johnson's (2024) study on effective classroom communication strategies for teachers, which emphasized how effective communication builds strong relationships with students and enhances their cognitive and emotional development.

4.2.2 Parental Involvement and Support

The role of both home and school is to establish a supportive atmosphere for children, particularly during the transition period. Parental involvement and support have emerged as a key theme in addressing common adjustment issues of pre-kindergartners during this transitional phase.

The experiences taken by the CDWs in addressing common adjustment issues reflect the crucial role of parental support and involvement during the transition period of pre-kindergartners. This aligns with the study conducted by Tao and Lau (2022) titled "Coparenting and Parental Involvement during School Transition among Chinese Mothers and Fathers: Children's School Liking as a Moderator," which revealed a strong association between parenting support and involvement and children's academic and social achievements.

4.3 Pre-kindergarten Transition Program (PTP) for Child Development Workers (CDWs)

The developed PTP for CDWs is named STEP-UP, which stands for "Smooth Transition for Early Learners' Progress in Unveiling Potentials". This program aims to capacitate CDWs teaching in various CDCs in the City of Laoag and to effectively manage the common adjustment issues among pre-kindergartners during the transition period. The program spans for four days, with at least three sessions each day, including workshops, open forums, and presentations for evaluation of outputs. Distinguished resource persons in the field of ECE will be invited to discuss the outlined topics during the program. Additionally, the program will be implemented in different CDCs across the five districts in the City of Laoag in collaboration with the Mariano Marcos State University College of Teacher Education, particularly the Early Childhood and Special Needs Education Department (ECSNEd).

The focus of the first day of the PTP is on why transitions are important for pre-kindergartners and how to create a caring and supportive environment for them. The goal is to help CDWs to provide a welcoming place for pre-kindergartners as they move from home to school.

Day 2 is all about "CONNECT," which helps Child Development Workers (CDWs) enhance problem-solving skills and support pre-kindergartners with needs like separation anxiety, temperaments, and hyperactivity during transitions. Participants will gain new skills and knowledge throughout the day.

Day 3 sessions are designed to equip CDWs with the tools to address time and routine adjustment issues of pre-kindergartners during the transition period. Resource persons will assist participants in crafting activity plans, activities, and learning worksheets as part of the workshop.

The last day of training emphasizes inclusivity and parental involvement in pre-kindergarten transitions, covering topics like supporting pre-kindergartners with special needs and collaborating with parents for smooth transitions. Resource speakers will help participants identify adjustment issues early and involve parents in creating a supportive environment for pre-kindergartners during transitions.

After each day of the workshop, participants will present their outputs for evaluation by assigned resource persons. Appropriate rubrics will be used to evaluate their outputs and provide constructive feedback to enhance their learning outcomes. The developed materials and procedures will serve as unified activities for CDWs during the transition period in their respective centers. The PTP aims to capacitate CDWs to effectively handle common adjustment issues among pre-kindergartners during the transition period.

4.4 Validity of the Pre-kindergarten Transition Program (PTP) for Child Development Workers (CDWs)

This section presents the validity of the developed PTP for CDWs in terms of its objectives, content, staff/persons involved, duration, and assessment/evaluative techniques.

The mean ratings of the validity of the developed PTP for CDWs are explicitly presented in Table 3 on the succeeding page.

Table 3: Mean ratings of the validity of the PTP for CDWs

Indicators	Mean	DI
Objectives	3.77	HV
Content	3.88	HV
Staff/Persons Involved	3.66	HV
Duration	4.00	HV
Assessment/Evaluative Techniques	3.78	HV
Overall Mean	3.82	HV

Range of Means Descriptors	Descriptive Interpretation (DI)
3.51 – 4.00 Highly Valid (HV)	The developed program exhibits exceptional components to capacitate CDWs
2.51 – 3.50 Moderately Valid (MV)	The developed program exhibits excellent components to capacitate CDWs
1.51 – 2.50 Slightly Valid (SV)	The developed program exhibits good components to capacitate CDWs
1.00 – 1.50 Not Valid (NV)	The developed program exhibits poor components to capacitate CDWs

The developed PTP obtained an overall weighted mean of 3.82, interpreted as highly valid. This indicates that the PTP exhibits exceptional components to capacitate CDWs in handling common adjustment issues of pre-kindergartners during the transition from home to school.

Likewise, the training successfully met its objectives with a composite mean of 3.77, described as highly valid. This confirms that the training's objectives are specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, and time-bound, aligning with effective learning objectives. Furthermore, it demonstrates that the objectives are suitable for equipping CDWs to address common adjustment issues among pre-kindergartners during the transition phase, in line with ECCD Council's standards for CDWs and CDTs.

Aligning training objectives with the SMART framework enhances goal clarity, participant engagement, overall program effectiveness Roberts *et al.* (2020), and achieve desired outcomes (Anderson *et al.*, 2019).

The training content has been deemed highly valid by the validators, with a composite mean rating of 3.88, indicating its relevance and appropriateness. The logically sequenced topics offer valuable learning experiences, enhance knowledge acquisition, and facilitate the transfer of knowledge to the workplace, emphasizing the importance of aligning training materials with intended learning outcomes (Brown *et al.*, 2020; Smith *et al.*, 2019).

With the staff/persons involved, the validators' responses are notable, showing a high mean of 3.66, indicating high validity. This suggests that the program's resource persons are knowledgeable and command respect, inspiring and engaging participants effectively. Borreguero *et al.* (2022) and Ancho (2021) suggested that resource persons and speakers can inspire and motivate their audience, earning their trust through the efficient delivery of topics.

The training duration is considered highly valid, with a mean of 4.00. This means that the time allocated for the PTP is sufficient for speakers to present and discuss topics effectively. This aligns with Gallardo *et al.* (2021) recommendation to keep sessions concise for better engagement and concentration. Adequate time for questions is crucial for participants to enhance their understanding of the topics covered (Almasa, 2020).

In the assessment of the training, a composite mean of 3.78 was achieved, indicating high validity. This suggests that the activities effectively harness participants' abilities, while evaluative techniques measure how well CDWs handle common adjustment issues during transitions. If feedback is collected for improvement, the participants enhance their potential and critical thinking skills (Perez *et al.*, 2019; Martinez *et al.*, 2020).

To further enhance the developed PTP for CDWs, the following comments and recommendations from the validators were incorporated. Validator 1 suggested that one of the outputs of the CDWs should be a floor plan for the CDC. Additionally, Validator 2 recommended including an activity in the program where CDWs simulate the happenings during the transition period. Lastly, Validator 3 did not provide any suggestions or recommendations.

The following statements are the validators' comments for the developed PTP for CDWs:

"The topics are beneficial to the Child Development Workers (CDWs). These will help us to create and learn appropriate strategies for children's development." (Validator 1)

"Congratulations! This is a notable project for Child Development Workers (CDWs) in Laoag City. Please submit a copy of the terminal report to the School Division of Laoag City upon implementation." (Validator 2)

"The resource speakers are highly competent in their field that made them qualified to lead the discussions of the pertinent topics for the program. Moreover, the participants will be equipped with needed knowledge and strategies which may be adapted to address the unique needs of pre-kindergartners during the transition period." (Validator 3)

5. Findings, Conclusions, and Recommendations

The data gathered were carefully analyzed, evaluated, and presented. Subsequent to this, this chapter presents the findings, the conclusions, and the researcher's proposed recommendations.

5.1 Findings

Findings reveal that CDWs have identified several factors affecting common adjustment issues of pre-kindergartners during the transition period. These issues include: 1) limited social exposure; 2) separation anxiety; 3) time and routine adjustments; and 4) excessive use of gadgets at home. Moreover, CDWs have different experiences in handling common adjustment issues of pre-kindergartners, employing the application of interactive activities and parental involvement and support. These served as the basis for the developed PTP for CDWs.

Findings also revealed that the PTP for CDWs is rated highly valid in terms of objectives (3.77), content (3.88), staff/persons involved (3.66), duration (4.00), and assessment/evaluative techniques (3.78). The developed PTP is generally rated highly valid, as indicated by the overall weighted mean of 3.82.

5.2 Conclusions

As evidenced by the themes generated of limited social exposure, separation anxiety, time and routine adjustments, and excessive use of gadgets at home, these factors as perceived by the CDWs contribute to common adjustment issues experienced by pre-kindergartners during the transition period.

Likewise, the CDWs apply interactive learning activities and parental involvement and support in handling these issues of pre-kindergartners. These interventions highlight the crucial role of the CDWs in supporting smooth transitions and promoting positive outcomes during this critical period.

Based on these findings, it can be concluded that the CDWs need a transition program designed to address the perceived factors and diverse experiences in handling common adjustment issues of pre-kindergartners during the transition period. Furthermore, the evaluation of the experts shows that PTP is highly valid. Therefore, it exhibits exceptional components to equip CDWs in effectively addressing common adjustment issues experienced by pre-kindergartners.

The PTP aligns with the Adult Learning Theory, which emphasizes the unique characteristics of adult learners and identifies effective learning styles for them. Known as andragogy, this approach challenges the traditional pedagogical methods, recognizing adult education as distinct from child education. The training aims to capacitate the CDWs in handling the common adjustment issues of pre-kindergartners effectively during the transition period.

Furthermore, the PTP is in line with Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory, providing a framework for understanding pre-kindergartners' transition periods and how various environmental systems can impact a child's adjustment to pre-kindergarten. Understanding the Ecological Systems Theory and its implications for the transition from home to school enables parents and educators to enhance their ability to provide effective support to children during this critical phase.

5.3 Recommendations

Considering the findings and conclusions of the study, the following recommendations are forwarded. The PTP is recommended to be presented to the higher authorities of the ECCD Council for immediate implementation to test its effectiveness in capacitating CDWs in Laoag City. Likewise, strong collaboration between CDWs and parents is suggested to provide ample exposure to socialization and home activities, establish routines, manage screen time, and create a supportive environment for a smooth transition for pre-kindergartners. Moreso, the DSWD may coordinate with the ECCD Council to develop relevant early experiences and programs for pre-kindergartners, as well as competency-based programs specifically addressing adjustment issues of pre-kindergartners in the different CDCs across the country. Lastly, further studies by other researchers may be conducted to evaluate the effectiveness of the PTP.

Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

About the Author(s)



Andrian A. Dela Cruz (PhD) was a former Assistant Professor at the Mariano Marcos State University where he handled major and allied subjects in the Early Childhood and Special Needs Education Department. As a researcher, he published his research articles

focusing on children's behavior, personality traits, professional development and self-efficacy, pre-service teachers' career readiness, and inclusive education in international peer-reviewed, Scopus Index and ASEAN Citation Index journals.

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