



ARAB EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF PARENT-KINDERGARTEN TEACHER PARTNERSHIPS AND CHILDREN'S DEVELOPMENT AND BEHAVIOR IN ISRAEL

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Abstract:

This study examined how Arab early childhood education students in Israel perceived parent-kindergarten teacher partnerships and their potential contribution to children's behavioral self-regulation, psychological confidence, emotional security, and broader development. The study was conducted to address the limited culturally situated knowledge about how future Arab kindergarten teachers understand family-educator cooperation and to strengthen the inclusion of partnership competencies in teacher preparation. Using a qualitative interpretive design, semi-structured interviews were conducted in Arabic with 30 Arab female students recruited through purposive and snowball sampling from the Galilee, the Triangle, and the Negev, and the data were examined through reflexive thematic analysis. Five themes emerged: reciprocal and trust-based partnership, home-kindergarten consistency, children's psychological confidence and emotional security, broader developmental contributions, and cultural, institutional, geographic, and interpersonal facilitators and barriers. The findings indicated that participants viewed trust, coordinated expectations, cultural and linguistic recognition, and accessible communication as central to effective partnerships. The study concluded that such partnerships may support children's behavioral, emotional, social, cultural, and educational experiences, although the findings represent students' perceptions rather than measured causal effects. It recommends integrating family-partnership training, culturally responsive practices, flexible meeting arrangements, and ethical digital communication into early childhood education programs. Theoretically, the study integrates ecological, overlapping-spheres, and sociocultural perspectives through the proposed Triadic Synergy of Trust model; practically, it provides guidance for teacher educators, kindergarten administrators, and future educators seeking to establish inclusive and context-sensitive family-kindergarten relationships.

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1. Introduction

The main aim of this research is to examine how Arab early childhood education students enrolled in higher education institutions in Israel understand the role of parent-kindergarten teacher partnership in children's development and behavior. The overarching research question is: How do Arab early childhood education students in higher education institutions in Israel perceive the role of parental partnership with kindergarten teachers in children's behavioral self-regulation, psychological confidence, and broader development in Arab society in Israel? Five sub-questions address students' definitions of effective partnership, perceived contributions to self-regulation and psychological confidence, perceived influence on social, emotional, cognitive, and educational development, and the cultural, social, institutional, and interpersonal conditions that facilitate or obstruct cooperation. In this article, psychological confidence refers to participants' descriptions of children's emotional security, self-assurance, willingness to participate, and sense of competence. It is used as an interpretive category and not as a standardized clinical or psychometric construct.

The parent-kindergarten teacher partnership can be defined as the ongoing and reciprocal interaction between families and kindergarten educators who talk to each other, share information about the child, coordinate their expectations, and work towards common goals. The concept under discussion is much broader than attending the events organized by the kindergarten or receiving notifications from the kindergarten. In their research, Gross *et al.* (2020) revealed that parents, teachers, early childhood staff members, school administrators, and community leaders do not share the same understanding of parent engagement, highlighting the multidimensionality of the concept. Barnett *et al.* (2020) differentiated between home-based and center-based parent engagement, and Rey-Guerra *et al.* (2022) reported that developmental associations differ depending on the place where parent engagement occurs. Meta-analysis of existing studies proves the positive correlation between parental involvement and children's academic, social, and emotional adaptation (Barger *et al.*, 2019). The quality of parent-teacher relationships was found to be especially relevant for the early social development of children (Serpell & Mashburn, 2012). For future kindergarten teachers, the views about parents' roles are professional since educators shape the attitude towards parents, encourage early communication, and perceive parental knowledge as a resource or hindrance (Hakyemez-Paul *et al.*, 2018).

The study is situated in Arab society in Israel and includes participants from the Galilee, the Triangle, and the Negev. These regional categories encompass varied communities and should not be treated as culturally or socially homogeneous.

Participants described partnership within contexts shaped by family expectations, language, employment demands, time, transportation, geographic distance, access to educational services, and differing understandings of the roles of parents and kindergarten teachers. The analysis draws on three complementary perspectives. Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory locates the child within connected developmental settings and identifies the links between home and educational environments as part of the mesosystem (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Epstein's overlapping-spheres framework emphasizes shared responsibility among families, schools, and communities (Epstein, 1995, 2011). Vygotsky's sociocultural theory highlights the role of language, culture, social interaction, and culturally mediated activity in development (Vygotsky, 1978).

A qualitative interpretive design was used to preserve the meanings participants assigned to partnership rather than reducing those meanings to a predetermined scale. Thirty Arab female early childhood education students participated in semi-structured Arabic-language interviews. Reflexive thematic analysis produced five research-question-aligned themes and an integrative conceptual model, the Triadic Synergy of Trust. The study contributes an account of how future educators connect teacher leadership, consistency across home and kindergarten, cultural recognition, and practical accessibility with children's perceived behavioral and developmental experiences. Because children were not observed, developmental outcomes were not measured, and parents and practicing kindergarten teachers were not interviewed as separate respondent groups, the findings must be read as participants' interpretations rather than as proof that partnership caused changes in children.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Parental Involvement in Early Childhood Education

Parental involvement in early childhood education is not a single activity. It can include home-learning routines, conversation about children's experiences, participation in kindergarten activities, communication with educators, decision-making, and relationship-building. Gross *et al.* (2020) demonstrated that parents, teachers, early childhood staff, school leaders, and community leaders often define parent engagement differently, indicating that the term can conceal substantial variation in expectations and practice. This variation matters because a family may be deeply engaged in the child's learning at home while being unable to attend events during kindergarten hours, whereas another family may be physically present at activities but have limited opportunities for reciprocal dialogue with the teacher. A useful analysis therefore distinguishes the location, form, quality, and purpose of involvement rather than equating involvement with visible attendance alone (Shen, 2025).

Early childhood research evidence suggests studying both home and educational contexts. Thus, Barnett *et al.* (2020) concluded that the engagement practice of early childhood providers was associated with higher parental engagement at home and in the

center and indirectly linked to kindergarten academic preparedness via the amount of home learning engagement. In Colombia, Rey-Guerra *et al.* (2022) noted that home family engagement was linked to emergent literacy, numeracy, social-emotional functioning, and motor development skills, while center family engagement was only linked to literacy and numeracy skills. Positive but small associations were reported by Barger *et al.* (2019) between naturally occurring parental involvement and children's academic, social, and emotional adjustment, while positive and moderate average effects of parental involvement interventions were reported by Cosso *et al.* (2022). Although this evidence confirms the need for researching parental involvement, it is important to remember that observational associations cannot be turned into universally true causal relationships, while intervention findings should be analyzed in terms of specific programs and target populations. Therefore, the current study explores how students themselves see the relations between parental involvement and academic success.

2.2 Parental Partnership with Kindergarten Teachers

Parent-kindergarten teacher partnership is narrower and more relational than the broad category of parental involvement. It concerns how parents and educators communicate, share authority and information, negotiate differences, and act around the child's needs. Kambouri *et al.* (2022) describe effective early years partnerships in terms of two-way dialogue, trust, mutual respect, empowerment, and commitment. Epstein's framework similarly treats family, school, and community relationships as overlapping spheres of influence rather than isolated contacts (Epstein, 1995, 2011). From this perspective, a message sent to a parent is not necessarily evidence of partnership; partnership is more clearly visible when communication permits response, incorporates family knowledge, and leads to coordinated understanding or action.

The educator's stance is especially important because teachers often control the timing, tone, and boundaries of contact. Hakyemez-Paul *et al.* (2018) examined educators' attitudes, reported practices, and reasons for insufficient parental involvement; participants expressed generally positive attitudes but also described gaps involving time, perceived parental motivation, and institutional opportunities. In Israel, Addi-Raccah and Grinshtain (2016) found that Jewish and Arab teachers reported differing relations with parents characterized by disengagement, perceived threat, and collaboration, with forms of teacher capital related differently to those relations. In another study with parents of children in elementary school, Grinshtain and Harpaz (2023) revealed that higher parent-teacher cooperation was associated with more autonomous help-seeking from teachers among the Arab and Jewish participants, although the forms of help-seeking were different between the groups. These results indicate that an ethnographically grounded consideration of Arab learners getting ready to engage in early childhood education is appropriate. This suggests that partnership success should be measured through reciprocity, access, and acknowledgment and not the number of connections.

2.3 Partnership, Psychological Confidence, and Children's Development

The relationship between families and kindergarten teachers can be interpreted through the child's connections across developmental settings. Bronfenbrenner (1979) located the home and educational setting within the child's immediate ecology and described the relationship between them as part of the mesosystem. Communication and consistency between home and kindergarten therefore represent interactions between settings, not merely characteristics of either setting in isolation. Epstein's model adds the idea of shared responsibility across family, educational institution, and community (Epstein, 1995, 2011). Vygotsky's sociocultural theory emphasizes that learning and psychological development are mediated through language, social interaction, cultural tools, and meaningful participation (Vygotsky, 1978). These perspectives are particularly useful for considering why participants connected family presence, Arabic language, traditional practices, and recognition of family knowledge with children's security and competence. Various empirical studies provide evidence of some developmental paths; however, the level of such evidence is different. Family and school relationships are related to early social development (Serpell & Mashburn, 2012) and kindergarteners' achievements (Galindo & Sheldon, 2012). Provider interaction methods are connected with home learning interactions and kindergarten readiness (Barnett *et al.*, 2020). Rey-Guerra *et al.* (2022) found correlations between home interactions and several developmental domains. Sheridan *et al.* (2019) have provided randomized evidence of improvement in teacher-rated preschool social competencies and in children-teacher and parent-teacher relationships after getting ready intervention, which is relationship-focused. This intervention is relevant because it proves that there is a possibility of change under certain conditions using specially developed practices. It does not mean that all types of interactions and participation produce the same impacts. The current study focuses on the interpretation by students of developmental processes.

2.4 Partnership and Children's Behavioral Self-Regulation

Behavioral self-regulation in early childhood includes the developing ability to manage impulses and emotions, follow routines, sustain attention, respond to limits, and participate in social and learning activities. These capacities are influenced by many children, family, classroom, and community factors; parent-teacher partnership is one possible relational condition rather than a complete explanation (Tutkun & Tezel Şahin, 2026). Participants in the present study were especially interested in the clarity children receive when significant adults communicate similar expectations. Their accounts imply that children may find it easier to understand boundaries when adults coordinate their responses and may test limits when home and kindergarten send contradictory messages.

Research on coordinated family-school problem-solving provides a relevant comparison. In a randomized trial, Sheridan *et al.* (2012) found that students receiving conjoint behavioral consultation showed greater increases in adaptive behavior and social skills than controls; improvements in teachers' reported relationships with parents

mediated positive behavioral change. Sheridan *et al.* (2019) likewise found that the relationship-based Getting Ready intervention improved teacher-rated preschool social skills and strengthened student-teacher and parent-teacher relationships. More broadly, the perceived quality of parent-teacher relationships in prekindergarten has been associated with children's early social development (Serpell & Mashburn, 2012). These findings support the plausibility of participants' views about coordination, but they do not independently verify the specific children or situations described in the interviews. Maintaining that distinction is essential because the current data consist of students' narratives and professional interpretations, not behavioral observations or experimental outcomes.

3. Material and Methods

This study employed a qualitative interpretive methodology informed by constructivism (Tanlaka & Aryal, 2025). Parent-kindergarten teacher partnership was treated as a relationship whose meaning is produced through communication, expectations, cultural knowledge, and lived experience rather than as a fixed administrative arrangement. The study was phenomenologically informed because it attended to participants' educational, practicum, community, and, where applicable, professional experiences. It was not presented as a complete phenomenological analysis; the analytical method was reflexive thematic analysis (Hossain *et al.*, 2024). This design was suitable for examining how participants explained trust, conflict, consistency, cultural recognition, and accessibility in ways that standardized questionnaires might not capture.

The target population consisted of Arab early childhood education students enrolled in higher education institutions in Israel. The sample included thirty Arab women, with ten participants from the Galilee, ten from the Triangle, and ten from the Negev. Purposive sampling was used to recruit students who met the study's educational and cultural criteria and could discuss parent-kindergarten teacher partnership from their academic, practicum, community, or professional perspectives. Snowball sampling enabled participants to refer other eligible students through educational and professional networks. The regional distribution widened the contextual range of the accounts but did not create a statistically representative sample. Participants also differed in experience; one reported twenty-six years of professional work, but extensive professional experience was not assumed to characterize the sample as a whole.

Data were collected through semi-structured individual interviews conducted in Arabic. The interview guide addressed five domains: definitions of effective partnership; perceived contributions to children's behavioral self-regulation; perceived contributions to psychological confidence, emotional security, and competence; perceived influence on broader social, emotional, cognitive, and educational development; and perceived facilitators and barriers. Follow-up questions invited examples, comparisons, and explanations of the reasoning underlying participants' views. Interviews were audio-

recorded with permission and transcribed. Selected quotations are presented in English translation for reporting.

The interviews were analyzed through reflexive thematic analysis following six iterative phases: familiarization with the transcripts, initial coding, development of candidate themes, review of themes in relation to the complete dataset, definition and naming of themes, and production of the analytical account (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Coding was guided by the research questions while remaining open to unanticipated meanings and contradictions. Reflexive thematic analysis recognizes the researcher's active role in constructing themes, so a reflexive journal and analytical documentation were used to make that interpretive role visible (Braun & Clarke, 2019). Trustworthiness was considered through credibility, dependability, transferability, and confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The study supported these criteria through Arabic-language interviewing, follow-up probing, regional contextualization, an audit trail, reflexive notes, and grounding themes in participant quotations. Participants received information about the study, provided written consent, and were informed that participation was voluntary. Identifying information was replaced by codes, data were stored securely, and recruitment was intended not to affect grades, academic standing, practicum assessment, or relationships with lecturers.

4. Results

Thematic analysis produced five interrelated themes corresponding to the study's sub-questions. The themes describe how participants understood effective partnership and how they connected it with children's behavior, psychological confidence, emotional security, and broader development. They also identify the conditions that participants believed made partnership more or less possible in Arab communities in Israel. The themes are presented as interpretations of interview accounts. They do not constitute independent assessments of children or causal estimates of partnership effects.

Theme 1: Effective Parental Partnership as a Reciprocal and Trust-Based Relationship

The Arab early childhood education students described effective partnership as more than occasional messages or instructions sent from the kindergarten to the child's home. They emphasized continuous two-way communication, mutual respect, confidentiality, trust, and a shared commitment to the child's well-being and development. The students believed that parents and kindergarten teachers possess different but complementary forms of knowledge. Parents understand the child's history, routines, family relationships, cultural background, and behavior at home, whereas kindergarten teachers observe the child's participation, learning, peer relationships, and behavior within the educational setting. One student from the Galilee, who combined her university studies with considerable previous professional experience, reflected on how her understanding of parents had changed. She recalled that she had once *"kept parents at the door."* As a student participant, she used this reflection to explain how her academic learning and

experience had encouraged her to move away from protecting professional territory and toward including parents in educational decision-making. The students did not understand partnership as requiring the future teacher to surrender her professional judgment. Instead, they envisioned relationship-centered educational leadership in which the kindergarten teacher initiates respectful communication, listens to parental concerns, explains educational decisions, and establishes clear structures for shared responsibility. This understanding corresponds with partnership models emphasizing dialogue, trust, mutual respect, commitment, and parental empowerment (Kambouri *et al.*, 2022). It is also consistent with the importance of examining early childhood educators' attitudes, practices, and perceived barriers to parental involvement (Hakyemez-Paul *et al.*, 2018). Overall, the students believed that the quality, openness, and reciprocity of communication were more important than the frequency of contact alone.

Theme 2: Home-Kindergarten Consistency and Children's Behavioral Self-Regulation

The second theme concerned the students' perceptions of consistency between the home and kindergarten as a possible support for children's behavioral self-regulation. The students associated self-regulation with children's developing abilities to follow routines, manage impulses, accept boundaries, maintain attention, express emotions appropriately, and respond to social expectations. Based on their studies and field experiences, they believed that children notice whether their parents and kindergarten teachers respect one another and whether the two sides communicate similar expectations. When parents and teachers coordinated rules, routines, and responses, the students perceived children as more secure, cooperative, and able to understand what was expected of them. In contrast, when adults openly contradicted or criticized one another, the students associated this inconsistency with confusion, resistance, and attempts by children to move between competing expectations. Student participant P7 from the Triangle summarized this interpretation by stating that when the parent and educator "*speak the same language*," "*the child stops fighting us both*." Her use of "us" positioned her within the educator role for which she was preparing through her early childhood education program and practical training. The phrase "*speak the same language*" referred primarily to coordinated messages and expectations rather than only to the literal language used by adults. The students' interpretation is compatible with research indicating that conjoint behavioral consultation can improve adaptive behavior and social skills through structured parent-teacher coordination (Sheridan *et al.*, 2012). It also resembles findings associating the quality of prekindergarten parent-teacher relationships with children's early social development (Serpell & Mashburn, 2012).

Theme 3: Partnership, Psychological Confidence, Emotional Security, and Sense of Competence

The early childhood education students connected parent-kindergarten teacher partnership with children's psychological confidence, emotional security, sense of

belonging, and perceived competence. They believed that children feel safer when parents demonstrate trust in the kindergarten teacher and when the teacher recognizes and respects the child's family. This connection was viewed as especially important during children's transition into kindergarten, when they separate from familiar caregivers, enter an unfamiliar environment, and begin forming relationships with teachers and peers. The students also emphasized the importance of making parents, grandparents, family stories, occupations, traditions, and familiar language visible within kindergarten activities. In their view, such practices communicate to children that their family and cultural worlds are valued rather than excluded from the educational setting. Student participant P22 from the Negev illustrated this perception while discussing a child whose father had visited the kindergarten: *"the day his father came, the boy walked differently."* The student interpreted the change in the child's posture and participation as an expression of pride, recognition, and increased confidence. Her account demonstrates how the students connected family visibility and cultural validation with the child's developing identity and sense of competence. Bronfenbrenner's ecological perspective supports attention to the relationships between home and educational settings because these connections form part of the child's developmental environment (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). The role-sharing concept of Epstein also stresses the partnership between family, school, and community (Epstein, 1995, 2011). However, the sociocultural theory of Vygotsky highlights the development of children in terms of language, interaction, and participation based on culture (Vygotsky, 1978).

Theme 4: Parental Partnership and Children's Broader Development

The Arab early childhood education students did not limit parental partnership to addressing behavioral problems. Instead, they connected it with children's peer relationships, emotional expression, classroom participation, learning engagement, language development, cultural identity, and the early recognition of developmental or educational needs. One student expressed this interconnected understanding by stating that *"the child cannot be repaired inside the classroom alone."* Although the expression was problem-focused, the student used it to emphasize that children's lives extend across the home, kindergarten, family, and community and that a kindergarten teacher cannot understand the whole child without listening to the family. The students believed that parents and teachers observe children in different environments and therefore notice different dimensions of their behavior and development. By exchanging observations, the two sides may identify children's needs earlier and develop more coordinated forms of support. The students also perceived communication about kindergarten activities as an opportunity for parents to continue learning activities at home. At the same time, family stories, cultural knowledge, familiar expressions, and information about children's interests could enrich the curriculum and make classroom learning more personally meaningful. The students spoke most directly about social, emotional, cultural, behavioral, and educational development, whereas cognitive development was

discussed more indirectly through continuity in language, home-learning activities, and educational support. Barnett *et al.* (2020) found that early childhood providers' engagement practices were associated with greater home-learning engagement and kindergarten readiness. Similarly, school-home connections and family involvement have been associated with kindergarten achievement gains (Galindo & Sheldon, 2012), while home-based engagement has been related to literacy, numeracy, social-emotional functioning, and motor development (Rey-Guerra *et al.*, 2022).

Theme 5: Facilitators and Barriers to Parent-Teacher Partnership in Arab Society in Israel

The students identified several conditions that could either support or restrict parent-kindergarten teacher partnership in Arab communities in Israel. Perceived barriers included parents' employment obligations, limited time, childcare and family responsibilities, transportation difficulties, geographic distance, fear of being judged, lack of trust, and communication that occurred only when a child experienced a problem. Students from the Negev placed particular emphasis on distance and limited transportation, while students from all three regions noted that working parents might be unable to attend meetings scheduled during kindergarten hours. Consequently, the students recommended flexible meeting times, appropriate home visits, telephone conversations, WhatsApp groups, photographs, voice messages, and brief video updates as ways of maintaining contact with families. Student participant P25, identified as a Bedouin early childhood education student, used the professional identity she was developing to describe the telephone as *"the bridge my kindergarten stands on."* Her statement illustrated how a student preparing to become a kindergarten teacher imagined using accessible communication to connect geographically or practically separated families with the educational setting. At the same time, the students distinguished between digital communication that maintains an existing relationship and personal interaction that establishes deeper trust. They therefore viewed technology as a supplement to, rather than a replacement for, respectful face-to-face communication. Other facilitators included empathy, confidentiality, culturally responsive language, positive communication before problems emerged, recognition of different family circumstances, and institutional support that provides teachers with sufficient time and guidance for communicating with parents. Israeli research has identified collaboration, disengagement, and perceived threat as distinct patterns within teacher-parent relationships (Addi-Raccah & Grinshtain, 2016). Stronger collaboration has also been associated with more autonomous parental help-seeking from teachers among both Arab and Jewish parents (Grinshtain & Harpaz, 2023). The students' accounts demonstrate that limited physical attendance should not automatically be interpreted as parental disinterest, particularly when employment, transportation, geographic distance, or family responsibilities restrict parents' opportunities to attend kindergarten activities.

5. Discussion

This study examined how thirty Arab female early childhood education students from the Galilee, the Triangle, and the Negev perceived parent-kindergarten teacher partnership and its possible influence on young children. Across the five themes, the students understood partnership as an ongoing relational and educational process rather than an administrative requirement or occasional exchange of information. They associated effective partnership with trust, reciprocal communication, shared responsibility, coordinated expectations, recognition of the family's cultural and linguistic background, and accessible forms of communication. The findings are particularly significant because they reflect the perspectives of students preparing to become kindergarten teachers or further developing their professional knowledge in early childhood education. Their interpretations were informed by their academic studies, community experiences, practical training, and, in some cases, previous professional experience. Therefore, the findings illuminate the developing professional beliefs through which future Arab educators may approach relationships with children's families.

The first finding demonstrates that the students viewed effective parental partnership as a reciprocal and trust-based relationship. Their accounts reflected a developing professional identity in which the kindergarten teacher does not simply provide instructions to parents but listens to them, recognizes their knowledge, explains educational decisions, and creates opportunities for shared responsibility. The statement of one student with previous professional experience that she had once "*kept parents at the door*" illustrates a shift from protecting professional authority toward recognizing parents as educational partners. This quotation should not be generalized to all participants; rather, it exemplifies how one student critically reconsidered her previous practice through her current educational and professional learning. The students did not believe that collaboration required future teachers to surrender professional judgment. Instead, they described relationship-centered leadership in which professional expertise and family knowledge complement one another. This interpretation corresponds with the aspects of reciprocity, trust, mutual respect, empowerment, and commitment that are stressed in the works of Kambouri *et al.* (2022). Likewise, the attitudes, behaviors, and barriers of educators influence the participation of parents in education in the study by Hakyemez-Paul *et al.* (2018). From the Israeli perspective, Addi-Racah and Grinshtain (2016) distinguish collaboration, disengagement, and threat as the types of parent-teacher relations, and Grinshtain and Harpaz (2023) reveal the association between collaboration and autonomy of parents in help-seeking activities. These results suggest that family partnership should be considered an integral component of professional competence in teacher education programs.

The second finding indicates that the students regarded consistency between the home and kindergarten as a potential support for children's behavioral self-regulation. They believed that children are affected by whether parents and kindergarten teachers

communicate similar expectations concerning routines, boundaries, behavior, and social participation. Student P7's observation that when the parent and educator "*speak the same language*," "*the child stops fighting us both*" expresses this perception of coordinated adult guidance. The student's use of the first-person educator voice reflects the professional role she was preparing to assume through her studies and practical experiences. The phrase "*speak the same language*" referred primarily to consistency in expectations and responses rather than only to the literal language used. This finding is compatible with Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological perspective because the relationship between the home and kindergarten forms part of the child's mesosystem. When the two settings communicate and coordinate, children may encounter clearer expectations; when adults openly contradict one another, children may experience competing behavioral messages. Evidence from conjoint behavioral consultation supports the possible value of structured family-educator coordination for adaptive behavior and social skills (Sheridan *et al.*, 2012).

The third finding shows that the students connected parent-kindergarten teacher partnership with children's psychological confidence, emotional security, belonging, and sense of competence. They believed that children may feel more secure when parents communicate trust in the kindergarten teacher and when the teacher treats the child's family with respect. The students placed particular importance on transitions into kindergarten because children are entering an unfamiliar environment, separating from caregivers, and beginning to develop relationships with new adults and peers. Student P22's statement that "*the day his father came, the boy walked differently*" illustrates how the participants interpreted a family member's visible presence as a source of pride, recognition, and confidence for the child. This interpretation was offered by an early childhood education student and should therefore be understood as her observation and professional meaning-making, not as a clinical assessment of the child's psychological state. The students also viewed family stories, traditional practices, familiar language, parental occupations, and grandparents' participation as ways of showing children that their family identities were valued within the kindergarten. Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory supports this emphasis on culturally meaningful language, interaction, and participation. Epstein's overlapping-spheres framework similarly emphasizes shared responsibility among families, educational institutions, and communities (Epstein, 1995, 2011). Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological theory further suggests that development may be supported when important settings in the child's life are positively connected. The findings therefore add a cultural dimension to the home-kindergarten relationship by showing that the students regarded family recognition not merely as a courtesy to parents but as a possible source of children's emotional security and sense of competence.

The fourth theme extends the students' understanding of partnership beyond behavior management. They associated family-kindergarten cooperation with children's social relationships, emotional expression, language, cultural identity, educational engagement, and the early recognition of developmental or learning needs. The

statement that *"the child cannot be repaired inside the classroom alone,"* expressed by a student from the Galilee, represents the view that a child cannot be fully understood through classroom behavior in isolation. Although the word *"repaired"* is problem-focused, the student's broader explanation emphasized that children's experiences extend across the home, kindergarten, family, and community. The students believed that parents and kindergarten teachers observe children in different situations and therefore possess complementary information. Sharing this knowledge may help future educators and families notice concerns earlier and coordinate appropriate responses. The students also perceived communication about kindergarten activities as a way of enabling parents to continue learning at home, while family stories and cultural knowledge could enrich educational activities in the kindergarten. Barnett *et al.* (2020) associated early childhood providers' engagement practices with parental engagement and kindergarten readiness. Galindo and Sheldon (2012) connected school-home relationships and family involvement with kindergarten achievement gains, while Rey-Guerra *et al.* (2022) found associations between home-based engagement and literacy, numeracy, social-emotional functioning, and motor development. Barger *et al.* (2019) reported generally small positive associations between parental involvement and children's academic, social, and emotional adjustment, whereas Cosso *et al.* (2022) found positive average effects of parental-involvement interventions across academic and nonacademic outcomes. These studies support the plausibility of the students' interpretations, but their different designs and contexts mean that they should not be treated as direct confirmation that the forms of partnership described by the participants caused developmental changes.

The fifth theme demonstrates that the students understood partnership as being shaped by cultural, institutional, geographic, and interpersonal conditions. They recognized that a parent's limited physical attendance at kindergarten activities may result from employment, family responsibilities, transportation difficulties, geographic distance, or unsuitable meeting times rather than a lack of concern for the child. Students from the Negev particularly emphasized distance and transportation, whereas students across all three regions identified work and family obligations as possible barriers. Student P25's description of the telephone as *"the bridge my kindergarten stands on"* reflects the professional identity she was developing as a Bedouin early childhood education student. Through this future-oriented educator voice, she expressed how telephone calls and digital communication could maintain contact with families who could not attend regularly. The students considered WhatsApp groups, photographs, voice messages, video updates, flexible meetings, and appropriate home visits useful methods of communication. However, they did not regard technology as a substitute for personal relationships. Instead, they believed that digital tools should support an already respectful relationship and that trust also requires privacy, sensitivity, opportunities for dialogue, and face-to-face interaction where possible. These findings have important implications for early childhood teacher preparation because students need guidance on using digital communication ethically, protecting confidentiality, recognizing diverse

family structures, and adapting partnership practices to regional circumstances. A single model of parental attendance should not be imposed equally on families in the Galilee, the Triangle, and the Negev.

The five themes are integrated within the Triadic Synergy of Trust, which represents the students' developing understanding of effective parent-kindergarten teacher partnership. Its first component is reflexive and relationship-centered educator leadership, through which the future teacher initiates respectful communication, listens to parents, and critically examines defensive assumptions about families. Its second component is home-kindergarten alignment, through which parents and educators coordinate expectations and exchange observations without requiring the two settings to become identical. Its third component is validation of the child's cultural and linguistic world, through which family language, traditions, stories, knowledge, and identity are treated as educational resources. Practical accessibility, including flexible communication, appropriate use of technology, and sensitivity to employment, transportation, and geographic conditions, operates as a contextual condition that can strengthen or restrict all three components. The model should be understood as a data-informed interpretation of Arab early childhood education students' perceptions rather than an established theory or tested causal mechanism. Its primary contribution is to organize teacher preparation around four connected concerns: how future educators build trust, how expectations are coordinated, how family culture is recognized, and how partnership is made practically accessible. Future longitudinal, mixed-method, and intervention research is needed to examine whether these components are associated with independently assessed behavioral self-regulation, emotional security, social competence, and educational engagement.

6. Conclusion

The present study provides a culturally situated account of how thirty Arab female early childhood education students enrolled in higher education institutions in Israel perceived parent-kindergarten teacher partnership. The students defined effective partnership as reciprocal, continuous, trust-based, culturally responsive, and centered on the child's interests. They believed that parents and kindergarten teachers possess different but complementary knowledge and that children may benefit when this knowledge is exchanged respectfully. The students associated coordinated expectations between the home and kindergarten with clearer behavioral guidance and possible support for self-regulation. They also perceived parental trust, family visibility, familiar language, and cultural recognition as possible sources of emotional security, psychological confidence, belonging, and competence. In addition, they connected partnership with broader social, emotional, cultural, linguistic, and educational development. However, these conclusions concern the students' perceptions and developing professional understandings; they do not demonstrate that partnership directly caused changes in children.

Such conclusions have profound implications for the preparation of early childhood educators from an Arab culture. Programs of higher education must include family partnerships as a key professional competence, and not as an auxiliary communication skill. Future teachers need to receive practice in family meetings, handling parents' questions, explaining educational decisions, conflict resolution, maintaining confidentiality and harmonizing expectations without undermining differences between family and kindergarten settings. Techniques such as reflective writing, role-playing, case study and practical work under supervision may help to analyze the assumptions that students hold about parents and develop a relationship-oriented leadership style. Furthermore, teacher education programs must prepare students to incorporate family language, culture, storytelling, profession and community knowledge in kindergarten activities so as to strengthen children's identity. Finally, kindergartens and their administration must facilitate flexibility in meeting times and ethical online communication, while preserving possibilities to build personal trust. At the same time, they must not equate infrequent attendance at meetings with parental indifference in cases where working schedule, lack of transport, geographical distance or family obligations prevent parents from attending.

The conclusions must be considered within the study's limitations. The sample consisted of thirty Arab women recruited through purposive and snowball sampling and therefore cannot statistically represent all Arab early childhood education students in Israel. The findings were based on self-reported perceptions and did not include direct observations of children, standardized developmental measures, or separate interviews with parents, practicing kindergarten teachers, administrators, or children. Although the regional inclusion of students from the Galilee, the Triangle, and the Negev widened the contextual range of the accounts, these regions contain internally diverse communities and should not be treated as homogeneous categories. Participants also differed in the extent of their practicum and professional experience, meaning that some statements reflected anticipated future practice while others drew partly on previous educational work. Future studies should include students of different genders, institutions, academic years, and professional backgrounds; compare regional experiences without essentializing Arab communities; and incorporate the perspectives of families, practicing educators, and children. Longitudinal, observational, mixed-method, and intervention studies are also needed to examine the Triadic Synergy of Trust empirically. Until such research is conducted, the model should be regarded as an interpretive representation of how participating Arab early childhood education students understood the potential role of parent-kindergarten teacher partnership in children's behavior and development.

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Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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