Parental Perceptions of Child Development in Early Childhood Education: Instrument, Paradigm Variations, and Environmental Influences

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## Declaration of Competing Interest

Authors have no competing interests to declare.

## Funding

Zahvala za projekt – doda prof. Štemberger

## Acknowledgements

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to the study participants and their dedicated teachers and parents for their invaluable contributions.

## Author contributions

All authors contributed to the study conception and design. Material preparation, data collection and were performed by .... Data analysis was performed by Bor Bregant. The first draft of the manuscript was written by Bor Bregant and all authors commented on previous versions of the manuscript. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

## Data availability statement

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## Abstract

... (glej spodaj)

### Keywords

... (glej spodaj)

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## Abstract

In the realm of early childhood education (ECE), parental perceptions play a pivotal role in shaping children's educational experiences. However, existing literature lacks comprehensive insights into the factors influencing parental decisions and the domains of child development they prioritize. This study aims to address this gap by examining parental perceptions across socio-emotional, motor, artistic, language, scientific, and mathematical domains of child development in the context of ECE in Slovenia.

An empirical causal non-experimental exploratory study with a quantitative research approach was conducted to investigate parental perceptions in ECE. A novel model was proposed, delineating the relationship between environmental factors and parental decisions of ECE enrollment regarding child development. Sample comprised of 519 responses obtained from INSTRUMENT distributed among parents of children from 28 kindergartens? in Slovenia. The research instrument, developed and validated ..., to assess parental perspectives on various aspects of preschool enrollment and its perceived impacts on child development, namely socio-emotional, motor, artistic, language, scientific, mathematical, general expectations, and educator role.

Most of the scales in the instrument demonstrated good to excellent internal consistency. Paired *t*-test indicated significant differences in parental perceptions, except for socio-emotional and artistic scales. Impact of enviromental variables across aspects of child development was assessed with Random Forest analysis, which notably showed importance of household size, and maternal status and education.

Še zaključek (napišemo po diskusiji), in seveda prilagodimo glede na revijo...

### Keywords

Parental Perceptions (morda damo vse te raje expectations?), Early Childhood Education, Child development, (Enviromental Factors)

Možne revije:

EARLY EDUCATION AND DEVELOPMENT (Q1; 2.9 IF – mislim, da najbolj ustreza članek tej reviji)

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION JOURNAL

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## Introduction

The impact of children's involvement in education on the development of children and society as a whole is still an under-researched area both abroad and in our country. Previous studies indicate that children's participation in quality early childhood education (ECE) programs positively influences the development of all children, especially those from socially and economically disadvantaged environments (Council of the European Union, 2011). Research has also confirmed the positive short-term and long-term effects of quality ECE, which have been recognized at both individual and societal levels (Schmerse, 2020). These effects primarily manifest in providing key foundations for language development (Washington-Nortey et al., 2022), subsequent successful lifelong learning (Schmerse, 2020), social integration (Hannover et al., 2020), personal development, employment (i.e. of mother’s Halim et al., (2022)) and individual employability (i.e. of educator Kim et al., (2020)), and individual health (Toussaint et al., 2021). To je neposredno iz opisa projekta in dodanih nekaj citatov (in tudi naslednji ostavek).

The accessibility of organized ECE in Slovenia is at a high level. Data from the Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia show that in the past school year, almost 85% of children attended ECEs, as shown on Figure 1. Within this, the proportion was lower in the first age group (1 – 3 years old) of children – 71 %, while among children who have not yet entered school, it was 93 %. From 2004 to the year 2022, the proportion of children enrolled in ECE has increased by 23 %.

A graph of growth in preschool

Description automatically generated

Figure 1: Percantage of kids included in ECE in certain school year in Slovenia (SURS).

In Slovenia, the preschool curriculum (CITAT) is a national document designed for educators, assistant educators, principals, and counselors. It enables professional planning and high-quality ECE by incorporating professional literature and guides for educators. It evolves and adapts at the level of implementation curriculum, taking into account direct responses from children in the classroom, the organization of life in the ECE, and the integration of the ECE into the broader community. Its activities are categorized into the areas of movement, language, art, society, nature, and mathematics. The stated objectives within each activity area serve as a framework within which content and activities are offered professionally to educators. Additionally, it specifies the role in linguistically diverse areas and among Roma communities.

An increasing amount of scholarly inquiry investigates the reasons behind the variations in childcare choices among families and the consistent correlation of these differences with the income and socio-demographic attributes of families (Meyers & Jordan, 2006). Parents' choices regarding their children's ECE are influenced not only by complete information but also by the various strategies they employ to navigate the challenges and opportunities posed by their cultural and social environments, personal abilities, and situations (Ansari et al., 2020).

Meyers & Jordan (2006) state there are two main theoretical paradigms regarding the differences: (1) Economists view childcare within the framework of parents' choices regarding employment and spending, assuming these decisions are influenced by personal preferences and financial limitations, and (2) other social scientists analyze the decision-making process itself, taking into account the societal factors that mold parents' perceptions of optimal childcare options and their access to relevant information and resources. This approach aligns with that of Ansari et al., (2020), stating four main factors are believed to impact the selection of ECE arrangements: family needs, resources, community dynamics, and cultural values and preferences.

### 1.1 Environmental factors

ECE enrollment rates are significantly influenced by a myriad of factors spanning socioeconomic, cultural, and familial dimensions. Primary decision make can be considered from a context of circumstances. Firstly, maternal employment, which is linked to work schedule and available free time, is shown to significantly impact (Ansari et al., 2020; Coley et al., 2014; Rasheed et al., 2021). The reverse is also true: ECE attendance has been demonstrated to mitigate labor market disparities between genders, fostering more equitable opportunities in both employment and earnings for women and men alike (Kesler, 2020). Nevertheless, it's crucial to acknowledge that the regulations and expenses associated with ECE and childcare exhibit substantial divergence across nations (Olivetti & Petrongolo, 2017). Since the labor market is intricately linked with socioeconomic status (SES), it is imperative to delve into this specific area as well. Parental education and occupational status, along with SES, positively impact preschoolers' school readiness through both parental engagement and child participation in extracurricular activities (Bradley & Corwyn, 2002; Ren et al., 2021). Furthermore, research suggests that for children from low-income backgrounds or those who are dual-language learners, ECE can serve as a vital platform for building an academic and social foundation, thereby facilitating improved performance in ECE and beyond (Schonberg et al., 2019). All the aforementioned factors are linked to education, as we have already observed. ECE enrollment rates, influenced by socioeconomic, cultural, and familial dimensions, directly impact the educational trajectories of young learners.

Parents' preferences for ECE and their evaluation of opportunities are often intertwined with their cultural backgrounds. Moreover, cultural factors extend beyond preferences and familiarity with the educational system; they encompass the broader context of community norms and values (Adams et al., 2016; Crosnoe et al., 2016). For children who are dual-language learners, ECE serves as a crucial platform for academic and social development, as ECE can facilitate improved performance in education beyond, particularly for these vulnerable groups (Schonberg et al., 2019). In the Slovenian context, this challenge is particularly pronounced due to the diverse demographics present in the country. With a significant number of families originating from various foreign backgrounds, mainly the Balkans, Ukraine-Russian due to recent geopolicies, and the Roma community, addressing language and cultural disparities has become increasingly crucial. These differences often pose significant hurdles, highlighting the essential role of strategies implemented by ECE institutions, social work centers, and other relevant bodies (Klun, 2021). In parts of Slovenia, even where majority populations exist, language barriers persist, necessitating additional support such as translators in some preschools.

### 1.2 Parental perception paradigms

Parents highly value quality in ECE, prioritizing factors such as nurturing environments (Forry et al., 2013), qualified teachers (Boyd-Swan & Herbst, 2018), and holistic developmental approaches (Forry et al., 2013). However, the literature indicates that many parents nowadays lack reliable information about what constitutes high-quality ECE, leading to challenges in decision-making (Gordon et al., 2021; Herbst et al., 2020).

Furthermore, parental perceptions about ECE encompass a wide range of considerations beyond the overall quality. These include specific aspects such as social, socio-emotional, motor, artistic, language, scientific, and mathematical development. Parents also hold general expectations regarding their child's ECE experience and the role of educators in facilitating their growth and learning. Understanding these diverse viewpoints is crucial in comprehensively addressing parental concerns and optimizing the ECE experience for children.

Acknowledging parents as important perceivers with expert insights into child development, systematic exploration of their concerns, alongside those of other caregivers, is vital for family-centered and personalized preventive child healthcare (Doove et al., 2021).

1. **Socio-emotional development**

Socio-emotional development pertains to the gradual acquisition of skills to engage with the social world, manage and express emotions, and foster connections with others (Palmer et al., 2018). This aspect is particularly crucial during ECE years, as it lays the foundation for later emotional and social competence (Duarte et al., 2024). Pivotal role is also of parental responsibility in the sense of attachment figure, cognitive and emotional expertise, and as a vessel in introducing to cultural and subcultural rules of emotion (Tan et al., 2020; Von Salisch, 2001). Moreover, mothers possessing advanced education often exhibit increased engagement in the developmental progress of their children (Cuartas, 2022).

Four typical areas encompass social competence (for instance, abilities related to interpersonal interactions), emotional competence (such as comprehension of emotions), behavioral challenges (including both internal and external manifestations), and self-regulation (like the ability to manage impulses) (Carson & Kuzik, 2021; Halle & Darling-Churchill, 2016)

1. **Motor development**

The prevalence of childhood obesity, notably in urban areas (cf. in Slovenia, Korošec et al., (2018)), has prompted heightened awareness regarding children's physical fitness and motor skills. Concerns arise from studies indicating a decline in certain physical abilities among preschoolers, potentially attributed to environmental shifts such as increased screen time (Martins et al., 2020), changes in transportation (Pabayo et al., 2010), and reduced opportunities for physical play at home (McManus et al., 2011). These alterations in the home environment intersect with socioeconomic status (SES) and parental attitudes toward physical activities, shaping children's developmental trajectories (Hu et al., 2022). Families with higher SES often afford better access to sports and educational resources, fostering enhanced physical development. Additionally, parental attitudes, whether supportive or indifferent, significantly impact children's engagement in physical activities, ultimately influencing their motor skill acquisition and overall physical fitness (Kader et al., 2015). Therefore, understanding the interplay between environmental factors, familial attitudes, and preschoolers' physical development is essential for designing targeted interventions to mitigate the decline in critical skills and promote healthy growth in children.

1. **Artistic development**

The parental perspective on artistic activities within early childhood education reveals varying attitudes towards the importance of such activities. While ECE teachers tend to prioritize art activities as a significant component of children's learning experiences , parents may not consistently share this view (Konca & Demi̇Rtaş İLhan, 2021). This preference indicates a potential gap in understanding the role of artistic expression in children's development among parents. Factors such as socioeconomic background and cultural influences may contribute to these discrepancies in parental perspectives. For instance, parents from low socioeconomic backgrounds may prioritize academic values, while those from higher socioeconomic backgrounds emphasize personal and social values in early childhood education (YAKA et al., 2014). This insight suggests that there could be a discrepancy between what parents prioritize in early childhood education and the emphasis placed on artistic activities within ECE classrooms.Top of Form

1. **Language development**

Parents are often concerned about detecting language developmental issues promptly to prevent their escalation into disorders (Hawa & Spanoudis, 2014). Additionally, concerns regarding language development predict alterations in social participation among preschoolers, with persistent language impairment correlating with increased risks of adult mental health issues and diminished social engagement, as shown in a 29 year long longitudinal study, conducted by (Schoon et al., 2010), highlighting the intertwined nature of language and social skills. Thus, actively listening to parental and professional caregivers' concerns without imposing diagnostic labels is imperative within preventive child health care practices to identify potential developmental challenges without subjecting children to unnecessary stigmatization (Doove et al., 2021).

In a recent study by Doove et al., (2021) a significant association between parental and professional caregivers' concerns regarding preschoolers' language development and its impact on social participation was shown. Konca & Demi̇Rtaş İLhan, (2021) adds that parents typically prioritize language activities in ECE settings, aiming to enhance their children's linguistic development and communication skills, while educators often seek to foster peer interaction and social skills through language-based activities, recognizing their crucial role in ECE. Parental involvment in home settings is also highlighted as a role in shaping preschool children's language abilitiesTop of Form (c.f. Feng & Tan, 2023) for nuanced interactions on this topic).

1. **Scientific development**

Parental opinions on preschool's role in children's scientific development vary widely, while parental engagement and family characteristics and interest in scienci is associated with children's early science learning (Junge et al., 2021). One important aspect nowadays is fostering respect for nature, advocating for programs that encourage outdoor exploration and hands-on experiences with the natural world, valuing programs that incorporate sensory activities, experimentation, and observation (Änggård, 2010; David Sobel, 2014). On the other hand, there's a growing interest in the integration of digital tools for problem-solving, with some parents viewing technology as a valuable tool for expanding children's understanding of scientific concepts and enhancing critical thinking skills from an early age (Familyarskaya, 2021; Wan Zakaria et al., 2022). OECD (2016) states that the concept of scientific literacy encompasses elements of understanding (like vocabulary and key ideas), as well as comprehension of scientific methodologies, and emotional components like attitudes and enthusiasm toward scientific subjects.

1. **Mathematical development**

Studies have indeed shown a positive correlation between home numeracy activities and preschool children's mathematical development (see meta-analysis by Dunst et al., 2017) (nekaj je tudi argumentov proti, glej Dowker 2021). However, the extent to which this improvement encompasses solely numerical activities or also encompasses the emotional dimension remains uncertain (Dowker, 2021). It is plausible that the emotional environment surrounding mathematical learning at home, including parents' own mathematical confidence and attitudes, could significantly impact children's mathematical development. Notable study was conducted by (Skwarchuk et al., 2014), who proposed a Home Numeracy Model after surveying nearly 200 parents of ECE children and conducting numeracy tests a year later. They found that parents' formal numeracy activities predicted children's symbolic arithmetic, while exposure to numerical games predicted non-symbolic arithmetic. Parental attitudes toward arithmetic mainly predicted children's non-symbolic arithmetic skills. Their model suggests that parental academic expectations drive formal numeracy activities, predicting children's formal numeracy, while parental attitudes and informal activities predict informal numeracy.

Verjetno bi bolj napisali glede učenja, pridobljenih veščin in veselja do mat. (glede na starševska pričakovanja)

1. **General expectations**

In today's educational landscape, parental expectations of ECE extend far beyond mere academic readiness. Parents increasingly seek environments that prioritize holistic child development (Levinthal et al., 2021), respecting and upholding their child's rights to a nurturing and supportive learning experience (Ansari et al., 2020). Key to these expectations is a commitment to individualized care, where each child's unique needs, strengths, and interests are recognized and fostered. Safety and health benefits are paramount concerns (Klingberg et al., 2021), with parents expecting ECE to provide environments that are physically and emotionally secure. Moreover, collaboration between educators and parents is essential, forming a symbiotic relationship where insights from both sides contribute to the child's growth and development. In essence, modern ECE expectations reflect a desire for comprehensive, child-centered education that nurtures every aspect of a child's well-being.

1. **Educator role**

Parental perceptions of the educator's role in ECE are deeply rooted in the belief that they serve as partners in their child's development journey. Effective communication between educators and parents is paramount, fostering trust and transparency in understanding children's progress and addressing concerns (Puccioni et al., 2020). Parents expect educators to not only engage children in meaningful learning experiences but also actively involve them in program planning and implementation (Ata-Aktürk & Demircan, 2021), valuing parental insights and cultural backgrounds. Child-centered approaches, where educators tailor activities to individual needs and interests, are highly valued, promoting a nurturing and inclusive environment (Recchia & Bentley, 2013). Discipline management is seen as a collaborative effort, with parents expecting educators to employ positive reinforcement strategies that promote self-regulation and social-emotional growth (Tompkins & Villaruel, 2022). Professional expertise is revered, with parents entrusting educators to possess the knowledge and skills necessary to facilitate their child's learning and development effectively (Manigo & Allison, 2017). Še nekaj o izobrazbi delavcev v vrtcu na slovenskem? Ali pa pustimo za diskusijo...

### 1.3. Study aims

The study aimed to address a critical gap in understanding parental perceptions of child development in ECE. Recognizing the importance of parental involvement in shaping children's educational experiences, the research sought to explore the reliability of an instrument designed to measure such perceptions. Additionally, the study aimed to investigate potential disparities among different paradigms of parental perceptions within the ECE context. Furthermore, it sought to examine the influence of environmental factors on these paradigms.

## 2. Methods

### 2.1. Methodology and proposed model

The methodology utilized is an empirical causal non-experimental exploratory study, employing quantitative research approach.

In our study, we present a novel model, as presented on Figure 2, elucidating the intricate interplay between environmental factors and parental decisions regarding enrollment in ECE. Our model delineates the significant impact of diverse variables such as child age and gender, parental demographics (age and gender), socio-economic indicators (parental employment and education), household dynamics (size), linguistic barriers, and special needs considerations on the enrollment landscape. Moreover, we propose a bijective correspondence between parental enrollment decisions and their nuanced expectations concerning multifaceted dimensions of child development, encompassing socio-emotional, motor, artistic, linguistic, scientific, and mathematical domains, as well as parental perceptions of the educator's function, and general expectations.

A diagram of a child's development

Description automatically generated

Figure 2: Proposed model of parental expectations regarding child development.

### Sample and procedure

The sample for our study comprised 519 responses obtained, and filtered from an initial pool of 826 solved questionnaires. These questionnaires were distributed among students’ parents from 28 primary schools in Slovenia, providing a diverse representation of the student population.

O tem, kako so bili podatki pridobljeni, kdaj....

All participants gave their informed consent. Also, participants took part on a voluntary basis and were not financially remunerated for their participation in the research. The study was carried out following the ethical standards of the 1964 Declaration of Helsinki, the European data protection law (European General Data Protection Regulation – GDPR UE 2016/67), and the European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity.

### Instrument used

The instrument utilized in this study encompass a series of Likert-type scales designed to gauge parental perspectives on various aspects of preschool enrollment and its perceived impacts on child development, developed, and already validated by CITAT.

1. **Social development (SoD1)** assesses parental beliefs regarding the influence of preschool enrollment on children's social development. It consists of items evaluating children's interactions with peers, their ability to engage and participate in group activities, acquisition of new skills, independence, self-confidence, and emotional expression. This scale comprises 13 items.
2. **Socio-emotional development (SED)** delves into parental perceptions of preschool's impact on children's socio-emotional development. It examines aspects such as emotional recognition, empathy, conflict resolution skills, adaptation to new environments, and expression of needs and opinions. This scale includes 8 items.
3. **Motor development (MoD)** focuses on parental opinions regarding preschool's influence on children's motor development. It evaluates factors like awareness of physical abilities, enjoyment in movement, confidence in physical skills, exposure to different sports, and the use of digital tools for physical activities. It consists of 7 items.
4. **Artistic development (ArD)** explores parental views on preschool's role in fostering children's artistic development. It assesses aspects such as exposure to various forms of art, aesthetic perception, artistic expression, creativity, and the use of digital tools for artistic creation. This scale comprises 5 items.
5. **Language development (LaD)** examines parental perceptions of preschool's impact on children's language development. It includes items related to language awareness, listening skills, exposure to literary works, verbal and non-verbal communication skills, vocabulary enrichment, and comprehension of story sequences. This scale consists of 8 items.
6. **Social development (SoD2)** investigates parental beliefs regarding preschool's influence on children's social development. It covers areas such as inclusive participation, formation of life habits, cultural sensitivity, and promotion of a safe and healthy lifestyle. This scale includes 4 items.
7. **Scientific development (ScD)** assesses parental opinions on preschool's role in children's scientific development. It evaluates factors like respect for nature, diverse approaches to learning about the natural world, and the use of digital tools for problem-solving. This scale consists of 4 items.
8. **Mathematical development (MaD)** focuses on parental perceptions of preschool's impact on children's mathematical development. It includes items related to everyday math learning, mathematical expression, problem-solving skills, and enjoyment of mathematical activities. This scale comprises 6 items.
9. **General expectations (GeE)** evaluates parental expectations of preschool in terms of holistic child development, adherence to child rights, individualized care, safety, health benefits, and collaboration between educators and parents. This scale consists of 7 items.
10. **Educator role (EdR)** assesses parental perceptions of the educator's role in preschool. It examines aspects such as communication with parents and children, parental involvement in program planning and implementation, child-centered approaches, discipline management, and professional expertise. This scale includes 12 items.

These instruments, which were self-reported, collectively provide a comprehensive understanding of parental perspectives on preschool enrollment and its perceived impacts on various domains of child development.

Kratek povzetek iz članka o validaciji le tega.

### Data analysis

The gathered data was analysed using *Python* programming language, primarily using *pandas* (version 3.11.4) and *scikit-learn* (version 1.3.2) libraries.

All data was transformed in the form of tidy data. Label encoding, and one-hot encoding (i.e. use of dummy variable for use of Random forest) were used to tackle categorical variables. Missing variables and participant rows were dropped, if they had less than 1/5 of the values, and other missing values were replaced with arithmetic mean.

For internal consistency, we used Cronbach *α* coefficient. For correlation metric of enviromental factors between ordinal-ordinal variable pairs, we used Kendall *τ* coefficient. For categorical-categorical pairs Cramér's *V* was utilized, while we skipped the measure for categorical-ordinal variables, due to multi-level categorical variables in our case. Differences between parental perceptions were evaluated using paired *t*-test. Strength of enviromental factors on parental perceptions were measured using Random forest analysis (as some variables were unbalanced).

## Results

### Preliminary analysis

Dataset description regarding parental perceptions with quantile information is summarized in Figure 3. We can observe that (niti ne vem, kaj bi tukaj interpretirali, saj npr. dve skali social developmenta nista npr. višje kot matematika/znanost... Morda v smislu: We can observe that sociosocio-emotional, motor, and artistic development are rated higher than language, science, and mathematical skills. However, it is noteworthy that within the realm of social development, particularly concerning inclusivity and cultural differences, perceptions rank comparatively lower than other aspects of social development.

Parents may prioritize holistic development and value aspects such as social interaction, physical activity, and creativity as essential components of their child's early education experience. Additionally, societal expectations and cultural influences may emphasize these domains as markers of a well-rounded education.

The lower ranking of inclusivity and cultural differences within the social development category could be attributed to a variety of factors. It may reflect a lack of awareness or emphasis on the importance of fostering cultural sensitivity and inclusivity in early childhood education settings. It could also indicate potential gaps or challenges in how these topics are addressed or integrated into the curriculum or classroom environment. Furthermore, parental perceptions may be influenced by their own beliefs, biases, or experiences, which could impact how they evaluate the importance of inclusivity and cultural awareness in their child's educational experience. (To gre verjetno bolj v diskusijo)... To vprašanje je imelo tudi slabo notranjo konsistenco!

A graph of blue and white boxes

Description automatically generated with medium confidence

Figure 3: Boxplots of MinMax scaled parental perceptions.

We opted to exclude certain environmental factors—specifically, the presence of special needs in the child, as it exhibited imbalance (6 of 519 participants (children?) were categorized as special needs children), and the child's age and age at enrollment in ECE, as these variables fell within an extremely narrow age range. All the enviromental factors data is summarized in Figure 4, and Figure 5.

A close-up of a graph

Description automatically generated

Figure 4: Distribution of categorical enviromental factors impacting ECE enrollment, and parental expectations.

A group of graphs with different colored bars

Description automatically generated with medium confidence

Figure 5: Distribution of ordinal enviromental factors impacting ECE enrollment, and parental expectations.

### 3.2. Internal consistency of parental perceptions instrument

Table 1: Internal consistency test using Cronbach’s alpha.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Variable | Cronbach α |
| SoD1 | 0.95 |
| SED | 0.89 |
| MoD | 0.87 |
| ArD | 0.87 |
| LaD | 0.79 |
| SoD2 | 0.50 |
| ScD | 0.57 |
| MaD | 0.72 |
| GeE | 0.66 |
| EdR | 0.89 |

Overall, most of the scales demonstrate good to excellent internal consistency, except for SoD2 (Social Development) and ScD (Scientific Development), which show poor internal consistency. These findings suggest that the items in these two scales may not effectively measure the intended constructs or may require further refinement. Results are comparable to those found in članek o veljavnosti....

### 3.3. Correlation of enviromental factors (morda bolje čisto na koncu?)

A graph with numbers and symbols

Description automatically generated with medium confidence

Figure 6: Correlation matrix of enviromental factors impacting ECE enrollment, and parental expectations. Cramer V was used for categorical-categorical pairs, while Kendall τ was used for ordinal-ordinal pairs.

In Table 2 we see the four most absolute correlated variables, according to one of the two metrics utilized. All the mentioned correlations are mild (0.2 < | correlation | < 0.5). Other correlations were not of statistical importance. The correlations provided are self-explanatory.

Table 2: Most correlated enviromental variables.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Variable pair | | τ | *V* |
| Maternal education | Father's education | 0.45 (τ) | |
| Household size | Consecutive order | 0.43 (τ) | |
| Parent's gender | Language | 0.29 (*V*) | |
| Maternal education | Maternal status | 0.25 (τ) | |

### 3.3. Differences between importance of paradigms

The paired t-test revealed, as shown on Figure 4, that the only two questions not significantly different from each other were socio-emotional development and artistic development, suggesting similar parental perceptions of preschool's impact on these aspects of child development.

A graph with numbers and a number of objects

Description automatically generated with medium confidence

Figure 7: Paired t-test p-values between parental perceptions.

### 3.4. Variable importance

Enviromental variable impact on parental aspects were assessed using Random Forest analysis, as it handles unbalanced data of different type, and is mostly unaffected by scaling. We calculated the average across all the paradigms To ni najbolje, ker smo ravno pokazali, da so razlike med temi pogledi... Vsakega posebej pa postane potem ogromno rezultatov (90)... Še interpretacija (npr. zanimivo, da mama (izobrazba, status) veliko bolj vpliva... je pa to verjetno zato, ker so večinoma mame izpolnjevale [čeprav naj bi RF analiza to preprečila] :). To gre lahko v diskusijo.)

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Household size (Labeled »Number«) | 0.20 |
| Maternal status | 0.15 |
| Maternal level of education | 0.14 |
| Father's level of education | 0.12 |
| Consecutive kid (Labeled »Order«) | 0.12 |
| Language | 0.10 |
| Gender | 0.09 |
| Parent's gender | 0.05 |
| Father's status | 0.04 |

## Discussion

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Ni reliability ker nimamo vertikalnih podatkov

...

It is important to note that the decision to enroll a child in preschool often hinges on practicalities, with many parents seeking childcare solutions due to work commitments rather than primarily focusing on the child's developmental needs. While preschool undoubtedly offers valuable social, emotional, and cognitive benefits, parents may find it challenging to gauge the quality of educators beforehand, raising concerns about the kind of influence their child will encounter. Despite these uncertainties, parents emphasize the crucial role they play in their child's development, underscoring the significance of parental involvement and the need for preschools to effectively collaborate with families. In assessing parental perceptions of preschool, it becomes evident that while practical considerations may drive enrollment, parents place immense value on the quality of education and the partnership between educators and families in nurturing their child's holistic growth. To je iz komentarjev staršev

## Conclusions and limitations

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# Appendices

## Appendix A: Questionnaire (ni niti prebrano, samo Gpt prevod)

**I decided to enroll my child in kindergarten because I believe that participation in kindergarten significantly influences the child:**

...interacting with other children.

...playing with other children.

...communicating with peers.

...learning to engage and participate in a group.

...learning something new.

...gaining new experiences.

...becoming independent.

...believing in themselves.

...learning to share things with peers.

...learning to help others.

...learning to be a good friend to peers.

...expressing emotions.

...recognizing their own emotions.

...regulating and controlling the expression of their emotions.

**I decided to enroll my child in kindergarten because I believe that participation in kindergarten significantly influences the child:**

...recognizing the emotions of peers.

...understanding that they can influence others' emotions.

...trusting adults outside the family as well.

...resolving conflicts with peers.

...adapting to new environments (peers and kindergarten rules).

...learning to express their needs, desires, and opinions.

...developing empathy.

...developing social skills through digital tools and play.

**I decided to enroll my child in kindergarten because I believe that participation in kindergarten influences the child's motor development. It is important for the child's development to:**

...be aware of their motor abilities.

...develop their motor skills.

...experience pleasure in movement.

...gain confidence in their body and motor skills.

...learn about and adopt the basic characteristics of various sports genres.

...understand the importance of collaboration, respect, and appreciation of differences.

...through individual motor computer games, promote and develop certain motor patterns.

**I decided to enroll my child in kindergarten because I believe that participation in kindergarten influences the child's development in the artistic field. It is important for the child's development to:**

...explore different types of art, e.g., music, dance, drama, visual arts, film art.

...develop aesthetic perception.

...develop expression through art.

...foster creativity in the artistic field.

...use digital tools for creating artistic products.

**I decided to enroll my child in kindergarten because I believe that participation in kindergarten influences the child's language development. It is important for the child's development to:**

...develop awareness of the existence of their own and other languages.

...listen to and experience language.

...encounter fundamental literary works for children.

...develop verbal communication skills.

...develop non-verbal communication skills.

...enrich their vocabulary.

...learn about letters.

...understand story sequences (beginning, middle, end).

**I decided to enroll my child in kindergarten because I believe that participation in kindergarten influences the child's social development. It is important for the child's development to:**

...participate equally in activities and daily life regardless of their age, gender, and social or economic background.

...form basic life habits and understand the habits of other social groups.

...become aware of and develop sensitivity to cultural, traditional, and environmental diversity.

...learn about a safe and healthy way of life.

**I decided to enroll my child in kindergarten because I believe that participation in kindergarten influences the child's development in the field of natural sciences. It is important for the child's development to:**

...recognize and develop a respectful and responsible attitude toward living and non-living nature.

...develop various approaches to understanding nature as well as techniques and technical subjects.

...use digital tools for categorizing things in nature.

...use digital tools for problem-solving.

**I decided to enroll my child in kindergarten because I believe that participation in kindergarten influences the child's development in the field of mathematics. It is important for the child's development to:**

...get acquainted with mathematics in everyday life.

...develop mathematical expression (e.g., naming numbers).

...develop mathematical thinking (e.g., observing and creating symmetric elements, spatial orientation).

...develop mathematical skills (e.g., counting, classifying, sorting, weighing).

...experience mathematics as a pleasant experience.

...learn to understand sequences (numbers, steps, data) using digital tools.

**It is important for the child's development that:**

The kindergarten ensures the holistic development of the child.

The kindergarten will respect the child's rights and ensure development in all areas of the curriculum.

The kindergarten also provides individual attention to children, early detection of developmental peculiarities.

The kindergarten provides childcare for parents.

The kindergarten ensures the safety of children.

By entering kindergarten, the child improves their immune system - resistance before entering school.

Educators and parents collaborate and work together for the child's well-being.

I decided to enroll my child in kindergarten because I believe that participation in kindergarten influences the child's development, as the educator:

...communicates well and collaborates with parents.

...involves parents in planning the child's program.

...involves parents in implementing the child's program.

...involves the child in planning the program.

...involves the child in implementing the program.

...plans and implements the program in a way that meets the needs of children.

...plans and implements the program in a way that considers children's desires.

...communicates well with children.

...takes good care of discipline within the group.

...teaches children about order.

...establishes rules of life in kindergarten together with the children.

...has professional knowledge for the upbringing and education of the child, which parents may not have.

## Drugo komentarji (to bomo dali v diskusijo, ce je kaj relevantnega):

'Sistem vključevanja otrok v vrtec je primerno narejen. Je pa zaradi preveč horizontalne vzgoje otrok in premalo spodbude individualnimi lasrnostim oziroma sposobnostim posameznega otroka. Preveč je sistemskega ukvarjanja z otorki s slabšimi sposobnostimi in premalo dela z otroki z boljšimi ali izjemnimi sposobnostmi na posameznem področju. Tak način dela se zatem nadaljuje tudi v šoli, kar lahko bistveno vpliva na razvojno obdobje otroka v letih osamosvajanja (po 12. letu). Skratka pogrešam sistemsko ureditev dela z vsemi otroki po njihovih sposobnostih. Ta del ne more biti v celoti prevaljen na starše, saj otrok v sistemski ureditvi vrtca ali šole preživi vsaj 8 ur dneva.'

'Ne. Izredno hvaležna sva kot starša, da so vzgojitelji našima deklicama v predšolski doobi pomagali nadgraditi že osvojene spretnosti, skrb za lastno telo in higijeno ter omogočil celosteni razvoj z gibanjem, glasbo, ustvarjalnim delom. Vzgojne ustanove (vrtec v tem primeru) se je pri nas izkazal kot odlična podpora pri vzgoji deloovnih navad in reda, vendar obe navedeni, sta pridobljeni doma, kakor je tudi prav.'

"Za mojega otroka je bilo v vrtcu zelo lepo poskrbljeno. Po njegovi diagnozi epilepsije in njenih posledicah je bil izdelan individualni program zanj, kar je neprecenljivo. Empatija osebja je bila zame kot mater ključnega pomena v najtežjih trenutkih. Za prehod v šolo so po mojem pooblastilu pripravili vso dokumentacijo in poročila za šolske pedagoge. Vsekakor je vrtec zelo pomembna življenska izkušnja za otroka. Žal se vrtci v Kopru preveč prilagajajo t.i. ''novim'' kulturam in običajem drugih narodov in zato zmanjkuje časa in prostora za ostale stvari, ki so del slovenske kulture."

"Pri vprašalniku vidi pomanjkljivost v tem, da mi ne da možnosti odzvati se na posamezne trditve (V10 - V17) v splošnem smislu - ali je navedena trditev v splošnem bila ali ne razlog za vključitev mojega otroka v vrtec. Moj glavni razlog za vključitev otroka v vrtec je bila predvsem zaradi zagotavljanja varstva v času, ko smo starši v službi; od vrtca nisem neposredno pričakovala, da bo mojega otroka izobrazil na področju umetnosti, gibanja, zdravega življenja ipd., kot tudi ne, da bo v vrtcu načrtno razvijal socialne kompetence. Seveda, če se je vse to v času njegovega obikovanja vrtca zgodilo, je to dobrodošel ''stranski učinek''."

'Za vključitev otroka v vrtec sem se odločila zarafi potrebe po varstvu in ne zaradi naštetih trditev v vprašalniku! Večino veščin, ki jih omenja vprašalnik otrok osvoji tudi v domačem, družinskem okolju. Nekatere veščine, kot je uporaba digitalnih orodij, črk, itd. se mi ne zdijo nujno potrebna za 1-5 letne otroke. Moji odgovori v vprašalniku navajajo mnenje k čemu vrtec prispeva ali bi moral prispevati. Ne odražapa razlogovza vpis v vrtec.'

'Strokovno znanje ima vzgojiteljica, ampak vzgoja se začne doma. :)'

'Individualizirane obravnave v vrtcih izvajajo le glede na možnosti (npr. v nekaterih skupinah predšolski otroci morajo še ležati dolgo na ležalnikih, čeprav ne morejo več spati, npr. 5-letniki)'

"Mislim, da bi vsak otrok moral v vrtec pred šolo, da se nauči v prvi vrsti socializacije, da se nauči, da ni ''center'' vsega sveta, da se se vrti okrog njega. Na ta način bo tudi zanj doživjal manj konfllikotv v šoli, sam s sabo in z drugimi. Glede vrtca me edino moti cena, ki je absolutno previsoka (pa pustimo dohodke staršev). Vsak otrok, tudi otrok staršev z visokimi dohodki, je deležen istega programa in istega jedilnika. Poleg tega pa je večina teh staršev neporočenih in zaradi ''matere samohranilke'' vseeno plačujejo manj."

'Vrtec je v vseh pogledih pozitiven vpliv na otroka predvse, če je strokovno osebje (vzgojitelji, pomočniki in ostalo osebje vrtca) profesionalno in strokovno. Se pa žal še vedno prepogosto dogaja, da se z otroci za zaprtimi vrati dogaja marsikaj. Nujno bi bilo potrebno uvesti psihološke teste za vse, ki dalajo direktno z otroci (moje mnenje, da ni vsak primeren za delo v VIZ). Hvala.'

'Za vključitev v rtec sva se odločila, ker sva oba zaposlena in nimava druge (boljše) možnosti za varstvo. Če bi kot svojo pot prepoznala to, da sem doma s predšolskimi otroki, bi jih imela doma - mislim, da bi bilo tudi to zelo dobro za otrokov razvoj, sploh v mlajših letih v marsikaterem vidiku celo bolje. Vključenost otroka v vrtec in njen vpliv na otrokov razvoj so zelo odvisni od konkretnega otroka, vrtca, vzgojiteljice in skupine - težko sem ocenjevala na splošno. Seveda je pomembno tudi, kaj bi bila alternativa, če ne bi bil v vrtcu - v kakšnem okolju, s kom, s kakšnimi spodbudami in priložnostimi bi se srečal.'

'Rubrike so nas zanimale, seveda so vse tudi uresničene, če je vzgojitelj/vzgojiteljica tudi dovolj strokoven/strokovna. Žal je po vrtcih - sploh javnih - čedalje več slabih izkušenj. Razlika je namreč v tem ali otroka res vzgajaš, učiš, vodiš ali ga v bistvu komandiraš in mu s tem onemogočaš "zdrav" razvoj. kako naj leti, če mu že od zgodnjega otroštva "režeš peruti". Vse premalo se tako v vrtcih kot tudi v šolah resnično posvečajo otrokom, ker imajo žal drugačne interese. Premalokrat se otroka vpraša za mnenje, oni so tisti, ki preživljajo veliko časa v vrtcih in šolah. Vprašajmo njih in se skupaj pogovarjajmo ter "rešujemo" stiske.'

'Pri V19 - težko se opredelim za katerokoli trditev. Za navedene trditve pred vpisom otroka v vrtec nisem morala vedeti, saj je nemogoče vedeti kakšna bo vzgojiteljica. Vse navedene trditve so namreč odvisne od nje (vzgojiteljice).'

'Glavni razlog, da sva otroka vpisala v vrtec je predvsem to, da ima otrok zagotovljeno vvarstvo in nego v času, ko sva midva v službi. Meniva, da vse socialne veščine, gibalni razvoj in razvijanje na različnih področjih (umetnost, jezik, matematika …), ki jih otrok pridobi, jih dobi tudi v domačem okolju. Otrok čuti in se razvija z vsemi svojimi čuti - od tipanja, opazovanje, voha, sluha. Tako da digitalno orodje v času predšolskega obdobja nimajo kaj početi v vrtčevski vzgojni ustanovi.'

'Menim, da ima vrtec pri otrokovem razvoju zelo veliko vlogo, a ključno morajo odigrati starši.'

'Vse je odvisno od vzgojiteljice, nekatere so super in je otrokov vstop v vrtec super in gre z veseljem v vrtec, pri nekaterih pa je otrok samo številka oziroma stvar, ki jo moramo postaviti v red. Upam, da bo čim manj takšnih :) otrok gre potem z velikim odporom v vrtec, slabše sodeluje in je raje doma.'