

## Developmental Readiness of Private School Children: A study of Gender Differences

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### ABSTRACT

Developmental Readiness plays a very crucial role in early childhood period and set basis for later development. It assures smooth and successful transition of children from pre-school to primary school. Developmental readiness work as a tool for making a child ready for school and had long term influence on academic achievement. The present study was conducted with the aim to assess the gender difference in developmental readiness of private school children. The sample size of study comprised of 200 children (i.e. 100 girls and 100 boys) of class-I selected through Multi stage sampling technique. The data was collected by using self-structured Developmental Readiness Checklist. The results of study revealed that most of the girls and boys had high level of skills across all domains of developmental readiness. Overall analysis of developmental readiness showed that both girls and boys were almost developmentally ready for formal schooling. The analysis of gender differences elucidates non-significant results in all domains except in cognitive and gross motor skills. Girls displayed significantly better cognitive abilities than boys whereas boys performed significantly better in gross motor skills. Some recommendation are suggested based on the results of the study.

**Keywords:** *Developmental Readiness, Cognitive readiness, Gross and Fine motor readiness, Socio-emotional readiness, Self-help readiness and gender differences*

The initial years of an individual's life signifies a crucial period in terms of biological, psychological, socio-emotional development and changes. Therefore, the first five years of young children's life represent a window of opportunity for the prosperous development that will laid foundation for their rest life (Slaby *et al* 2005). The environment quality influences the process of transformation among children. In order to promote the developmental potential of children, they require a stimulating and caring environment that provides opportunities for later success in life.

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The term readiness indicates the developmental status of individual in relation to some tasks. School readiness has been defined by many researchers, practitioners and policymakers which encompass that the children must have attained a developmental level to enables them to adjust to the demands, challenges and tasks of formal schooling (Ladd *et al* 2006). Thus it could be considered that school readiness is a multifaceted concept comprise of various areas of development such as physical, cognitive, socio-emotional domains along with favourable attitude towards learning that helps in successful entry of child to formal schooling (Janus 2007). The school readiness of child is supported by two pillars or readiness (i.e. developmental readiness and academic readiness) that together form the basis of ready child for school.

The concept named ‘developmental readiness’, includes the cognitive, physical, social and emotional aspects of development important for learning which later helps in achieving overall academic success (Janus & Duku 2007). It is based upon his or her maturity and the skills they have mastered. Regardless of the age at school entry, the child’s developmental readiness is determined by measuring the readiness levels of physical, cognitive, socio-emotional and self-help domains.

Physical Readiness is defined as a state at which child accomplishes the skills of physical development such as control over own body particularly over the muscles and physical coordination. It includes gross motor skills and fine motor skills. Gross motor readiness includes achieving skills which require whole body movement and involve the large muscles of the body to perform daily activities like standing, walking, running, and sitting upright. It also involve eye-hand coordination to perform activities like throwing, catching, kicking). While fine motor readiness involves development of the ability to use smaller muscle of the hands in order to perform tasks like cutting with scissors, painting, pincer control, tracing, solving jig-saw puzzle etc. Readiness in terms of gross and fine motor skills is considered as a fundamental part of development (Devi 2009).

Cognitive readiness in simple terms refers to the thinking skills that help children for constructing rationality in all acquired knowledge by using sense of patterns and relationships in their learning environment. The most basic cognitive skills are perception, attention, imitation and memory (Allen 2015). It is expected that young children should develop certain basic cognitive ability to perform logical multiplications, pre-number concepts and operations, spatial sense, pattern and measurements, skills related to sequential thinking, reasoning and problem solving and knowing the environment before entering the formal school environment.

Socio-emotional readiness involves socio and emotional maturity of the child to participate appropriately and learn from classroom activities. This readiness acts as the foundation for school readiness of young children. Children with definite sense of personal well-being, consistent and positive relationship in initial years with emotional support are like to do perform well in classroom. The social and emotional skills of children are interrelated with their future academic success. Recent researches on early schooling revealed that relations of child with peers, teachers and caregivers depend upon his/her ability to regulate emotions in prosocial or antisocial ways. Children having problem in paying attention, following command, involving with others and unable to express needs and control negative emotions will fail in performing well in primary school (Landry 2015).

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Along with above mentioned readiness, child requires development of self- help readiness skills that enable him to locate and care for personal belongings and own toileting need without adults supervision as well as independent feeding, drinking, bathing, grooming and solve own problems. Overall, school readiness possesses a variety of elements that contributes to one's preparation for schooling at young age. All these skills and abilities are critical elements for school performances. Learners who enter in grade-I without these developmental skills face a significant greater risk experiences and difficulties such as poor school performance, anti-social behaviour and peer rejection (McClelland *et al* 2007)

The significance of Early Childhood Care and Education has been globally recognized as a major landmark that prepares children for formal schooling. In India, National Policy on Early Childhood Care and Education (2013) laid emphasis on universalization of pre-school education for improving school preparedness. The regular preschool participation provides opportunities for developing self-build confidence, raise social proficiency and provides basic cognitive skills which is significantly associated with learning outcomes in early primary grades. It was found that children with pre-school experiences showed better developmental competency than those who have no pre-school experiences (Eshetu 2014).

The transitions process of child from pre-school to new environment of formal schooling get effected by experience and comfort in new situation that had long term effects and success in transition which influence retention and completion of primary formal education (Fabian & Dunlop 2007). The transition is a cumulative process which involving both mastering new skills and improving existing abilities (Cunha *et al* 2006). A successful transmission of children to formal schools results in positive attitude toward school and show steady growth in academic and developmental skills.

The transition from preschool to primary grades could be a stressful time for both children and parents. Though, preschool teachers can facilitate collaboration to smother the transition process by familiarizing parents and children with formal schooling. A developmentally appropriate classroom and teachers with well-equipped knowledge of different learning styles and the temperaments of young children helps in successful transition of pre-schoolers. Thus readiness of school, parents and children is vital for the success of the child in the next level of education. Therefore readiness and transition are considered to be closely linked. For a smoother transition, children must be developmentally ready for school (Arnold *et al* 2006). A successful transition to formal school is seen as a key component of school readiness (Pianta & Kraft-Sayre 2003). The other researchers also supported that those children who experience continuity and are developmentally ready while entering the formal world of primary school are more likely to be successful in school. Hence, keeping all the factors in consideration this study was planned to assess the gender differences in developmental readiness of rural and urban private school children.

### ***Objectives of the study***

- a) To find out the gender differences in the developmental readiness of private school children.

## **METHODOLOGY**

### ***Sample Selection***

The present study was conducted in private schools affiliated with Punjab School Education Board (PSEB) of Ludhiana. The Multi-staged sampling technique was used for selection of

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the sample from rural and urban schools of Ludhiana District. For selection of rural sample, out of 12 blocks of Ludhiana District Block-1 and for selection of urban sample, out of four zones of Ludhiana District, Zone-D were purposively selected for this study. The total sample of the present study comprised of 200 children of Class-I equally distributed across both locales i.e. rural ( $n_1= 100$ ) and urban ( $n_2= 100$ ). Further care was taken to distribute the total sample equally across two genders [boys ( $n_b=100$ ) and girls ( $n_g=100$ )].

### *Tool used*

To assess the developmental readiness of class-I children, the self-structured developmental readiness checklist was used to collect information concerning various domains of developmental readiness viz. cognitive, physical, socio-emotional readiness and self-help skills.

### *Sub checklist of developmental readiness checklist*

- A) **Cognitive Readiness Checklist** was used to assess the cognitive readiness skills of girls and boys of Class-I. It was comprised of 13 worksheets and seven activities related to different components of basic cognitive abilities such as visual discrimination through matching and classification on the basis of colour, size and shape; visual sequencing; seriation; logical thinking; recognize common object, number and colour; follow two-part command; understanding of time etc.
- B) **Physical Readiness Checklist** was used to evaluate the physical readiness of children. This checklist had further two sub-domains i.e. Gross motor readiness and Fine motor readiness.
  - 1) **Gross Motor Readiness Checklist** included 20 activities which involved the use of large muscles of the individual to perform activities like running, jumping, catching and throwing a ball, skipping, balancing, walking on tip toe etc.
  - 2) **Fine Motor Readiness Checklist** included 13 activities and seven worksheets related to fine motor skills i.e. drawing line, tracing of shapes and hand, solving jigsaw puzzle, demonstrating pincer control, tying shoe lace, use child friendly scissor, moving hand while reading, screw and unscrew jar lid etc.
- C) **Socio-Emotional Readiness Checklist** was used for evaluating the socio-emotional skills of the children assessed through observations and interactions with children in the classroom setting. A total of 14 interactive questions and five observational activities related to different components i.e. expressing likes and dislikes, naming of emotions, identifying reliable adults, developing positive interaction with others etc. were included in the checklist.
- D) **Self-Help Readiness Checklist** was used for measuring the self-help skills of the children which included both activities and observations related to self-help skills like toilet trained, can eat from a spoon and drink from cup, can pull a zipper, pack school bag, wash hand, brush independently, self-feeding without spilling etc.

### *Statistical Analysis*

The collected data were classified and tabulated as per objectives in order to arrive at meaningful and logical inferences by frequency, percentage, arithmetic mean, standard deviation, Z-test and t-test.

**RESULTS**

The present study made an effort to analyse the gender differentials in developmental readiness of private school children. The data were analysed and results obtained are presented in tables.

*Table 1: Gender differentials in socio-personal profile of the children n=200*

Domains of Socio-Personal Profile	Girls (n <sub>g</sub> =100)		Boys (n <sub>b</sub> =100)	
	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
<b>Pre-School Education</b>				
No	5	5.00	6	6.00
Yes	95	95.00	94	94.00
<b>Fathers' Education</b>				
Illiterate	1	1.00	2	2.00
Primary	5	5.00	5	5.00
Matriculate	21	21.00	20	20.00
+2	44	44.00	40	40.00
Graduate	29	29.00	33	33.00
<b>Mothers' Education</b>				
Illiterate	3	3.00	3	3.00
Primary	12	12.00	14	14.00
Matriculate	30	30.00	34	34.00
+2	44	44.00	38	38.00
Graduate	11	11.00	11	11.00
<b>Fathers' Occupation</b>				
Labour	6	6.00	8	8.00
Farming	10	10.00	7	7.00
Business	23	23.00	27	27.00
Service	27	27.00	29	29.00
Others*	34	34.00	29	29.00
<b>Mothers' Occupation</b>				
Labour	17	17.00	14	14.00
Service	13	13.00	12	12.00
Housewife	48	48.00	54	54.00
Self employed	22	22.00	20	20.00
<b>Family Size</b>				
Small (upto 4)	24	24.00	31	31.00
Medium (5–8)	58	58.00	55	55.00
Large (>8)	18	18.00	14	14.00
<b>Birth Order</b>				
1 <sup>st</sup>	39	39.00	41	41.00
2 <sup>nd</sup>	46	46.00	39	39.00
3 <sup>rd</sup>	11	11.00	17	17.00

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Domains of Socio-Personal Profile	Girls (n <sub>g</sub> =100)		Boys (n <sub>b</sub> =100)	
	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
4 <sup>th</sup>	4	4.00	3	3.00
<b>Family Type</b>				
Joint	23	23.00	25	25.00
Nuclear	77	77.00	75	75.00

\*Others include driver, painter, mechanic, tailor, watchman, washer man, guard and carpenter

Table 1 represents gender differentials in socio-personal profile of the children. It was found that majority of children irrespective of genders had pre-school education. Majority of fathers of children were educated upto +2. Similarly proportion of mothers' educated upto +2 was again with higher proportion among girls as compared to boys. Most of the girls' fathers were engaged in various kinds of occupation while equal proportions of boys' fathers were in service and other occupations. Regarding mothers' occupation, it was observed that majority of mothers in both genders were housewives. Most of the children belonged to medium sized family. Data revealed that more number of girls were found to be second birth order whereas majority of boys were found to be first birth order. And data regarding family type again revealed that majority of girls and boys both had nuclear type of family.

**Table 2: Overall gender differences of developmental readiness among children across different domains and levels n=200**

Domains and levels of Developmental Readiness	Girls (n <sub>g</sub> =100)		Boys (n <sub>b</sub> =100)		Z-value
	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)	
<b>Cognitive Skills</b>					
High	80	80.00	65	65.00	2.38*
Average	20	20.00	35	35.00	2.38*
Low	0	0.00	0	0.00	N.A.
<b>Physical Skills</b>					
<b>(a) Gross Motor Skills</b>					
High	78	78.00	87	87.00	1.96*
Average	22	22.00	13	13.00	1.96*
Low	0	0.00	0	0.00	N.A.
<b>(b) Fine Motor Skills</b>					
High	83	83.00	84	84.00	0.19
Average	17	17.00	16	16.00	0.19
Low	0	0.00	0	0.00	N.A.
<b>Socio-Emotional Skills</b>					
High	80	80.00	74	74.00	1.01
Average	20	20.00	26	26.00	1.01
Low	0	0.00	0	0.00	N.A.
<b>Self-Help Skills</b>					
High	75	75.00	67	67.00	1.25
Average	25	25.00	33	33.00	1.25
Low	0	0.00	0	0.00	N.A.

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Domains and levels of Developmental Readiness	Girls (n <sub>g</sub> =100)		Boys (n <sub>b</sub> =100)		Z-value
	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)	
<b>Overall Developmental Readiness</b>					
High	87	87.00	85	85.00	0.48
Average	13	13.00	15	15.00	0.48
Low	0	0.00	0	0.00	N.A.

\* 0.05 level of significance

Table 2 presents the overall gender differences in developmental readiness of children across different domains and levels. In cognitive skills, significantly more number of girls were found at high level whereas, boys were significantly (0.05 level of significance) more at average level. However, in gross motor skills, significantly (0.05 level of significance) more number of boys were at high level while more number of girls were at average level. In rest of the dimensions, no significant gender differences were found indicating developmental readiness of boys and girls were at par.

**Table 3: Gender differences in mean scores ( $\pm$ S.D) of the children across different domains of developmental readiness n=200**

Domains of Developmental Readiness	Girls (n <sub>g</sub> = 100)	Boys (n <sub>b</sub> = 100)	t-value
	Mean $\pm$ S.D	Mean $\pm$ S.D	
<b>Cognitive Skills</b>	35.04 $\pm$ 4.64	33.10 $\pm$ 5.55	1.99*
<b>Physical Skills</b>			
(a) Gross Motor Skills	23.10 $\pm$ 3.14	23.42 $\pm$ 2.89	0.53
(b) Fine Motor Skills	22.42 $\pm$ 2.91	22.29 $\pm$ 3.15	0.21
<b>Socio-Emotional Skills</b>	20.69 $\pm$ 2.58	20.67 $\pm$ 2.73	0.04
<b>Self-Help Skills</b>	19.53 $\pm$ 2.75	18.95 $\pm$ 3.02	1.01
<b>Overall Developmental Readiness</b>	120.78 $\pm$ 12.93	118.43 $\pm$ 13.09	0.90

\*0.05 level of significance

Table 3 signified the gender differences in mean scores of children across different domains of developmental readiness. Non-significant gender differences were found in all the skills of developmental readiness except cognitive skill where girls were found to have significantly (0.05 level of significance) higher mean scores as compared to boys which indicated that girls performed significantly better in cognitive activities than boys. Similarly, non-significant gender difference was found in overall developmental readiness of children which proved that because of quality preschool experiences, both genders were developmentally ready for adjusting in formal schooling.

**Table 4: Gender differences in developmental readiness of the rural children across different domains and levels n=100**

Domains and levels of Developmental Readiness	Girls (n <sub>g</sub> = 50)		Boys (n <sub>b</sub> = 50)		Z-value
	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)	
<b>Cognitive Skills</b>					
High	38	76.00	36	72.00	0.47

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Domains and levels of Developmental Readiness	Girls (n <sub>g</sub> = 50)		Boys (n <sub>b</sub> = 50)		Z-value
	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)	
Average	12	24.00	14	28.00	0.47
Low	0	0.00	0	0.00	N.A.
<b>Physical Skills</b>					
<b>(a) Gross Motor Skills</b>					
High	40	80.00	42	84.00	0.52
Average	10	20.00	8	16.00	0.52
Low	0	0.00	0	0.00	N.A.
<b>(b) Fine Motor Skills</b>					
High	43	86.00	42	84.00	0.28
Average	7	14.00	8	16.00	0.28
Low	0	0.00	0	0.00	N.A.
<b>Socio-Emotional Skills</b>					
Average	44	88.00	42	84.00	0.58
Average	6	12.00	8	16.00	0.58
Low	0	0.00	0	0.00	N.A.
<b>Self-Help Skills</b>					
High	40	80.00	36	72.00	0.94
Average	10	20.00	14	28.00	0.94
Low	0	0.00	0	0.00	N.A.
<b>Overall Developmental Readiness</b>					
High	44	88.00	46	92.00	0.67
Average	6	12.00	4	8.00	0.67
Low	0	0.00	0	0.00	N.A.

Table 4 presents the gender differences in developmental readiness of rural children across different domains and levels. The results illustrated that there were no significant differences found in all domains of developmental readiness among rural boys and girls. This showed rural boys and girls were at par in their developmental readiness which indicated that both girls and boys were equally ready for formal schooling with necessary skills to perform tasks.



**Table 5: Gender differences in mean scores ( $\pm$ S.D) of the rural children across different domains of developmental readiness n=100**

Domains of Developmental Readiness	Girls (n <sub>g</sub> = 50)	Boys (n <sub>b</sub> = 50)	t-value
	Mean $\pm$ S.D	Mean $\pm$ S.D	
<b>Cognitive Skills</b>	35.12 $\pm$ 4.71	33.95 $\pm$ 5.52	1.12
<b>Physical Skills</b>			
(a) Gross Motor Skills	23.48 $\pm$ 3.29	24.08 $\pm$ 3.20	0.92
(b) Fine Motor Skills	22.72 $\pm$ 2.70	22.60 $\pm$ 3.22	0.20
<b>Socio-Emotional Skills</b>	21.14 $\pm$ 2.30	21.44 $\pm$ 2.68	0.60
<b>Self-Help Skills</b>	20.08 $\pm$ 2.94	19.58 $\pm$ 3.26	0.81
<b>Overall Developmental Readiness</b>	122.54 $\pm$ 13.76	121.65 $\pm$ 12.83	0.34

Table 5 depicts the gender difference in mean scores across different levels of developmental readiness among the rural children. The differences in mean scores of rural girls and boys were found non-significant across all the skills of various domains of development readiness. Hence it could be concluded that both rural boy and girl had ample overall developmental readiness for successful entry in formal schooling were at par.

**Table 6: Gender differences in developmental readiness of urban children across different domains and levels n=100**

Domains and levels of Developmental Readiness	Girls (n <sub>g</sub> =50)		Boys (n <sub>b</sub> =50)		Z-value
	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)	
<b>Cognitive Skills</b>					
High	42	84.00	29	58.00	2.87**
Average	8	16.00	21	42.00	2.87**
Low	0	0.00	0	0.00	N.A.
<b>Physical Skills</b>					
<b>(a) Gross Motor Skills</b>					
High	38	76.00	45	90.00	1.96*
Average	12	24.00	5	10.00	1.96*
Low	0	0.00	0	0.00	N.A.
<b>(b) Fine Motor Skills</b>					
High	40	80.00	42	84.00	0.52
Average	10	20.00	8	16.00	0.52
Low	0	0.00	0	0.00	N.A.
<b>Socio-Emotional Readiness</b>					
High	36	72.00	32	64.00	0.86
Average	14	28.00	18	36.00	0.86

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Domains and levels of Developmental Readiness	Girls (n <sub>g</sub> =50)		Boys (n <sub>b</sub> =50)		Z-value
	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)	
Low	0	0.00	0	0.00	N.A.
<b>Self-Help Skills</b>					
High	35	70.00	31	62.00	0.84
Average	15	30.00	19	38.00	0.84
Low	0	0.00	0	0.00	N.A.
<b>Overall Developmental Readiness</b>					
High	43	86.00	39	78.00	1.04
Average	7	14.00	11	22.00	1.04
Low	0	0.00	0	0.00	N.A.

\*\* 0.01 level of significance \* 0.05 level of significance

In this line, table 6 represents the gender differences in developmental readiness of urban children across different domains and levels. The data revealed that at high level of cognitive skills, the percentage of urban girls were found significantly (0.01 level of significance) higher than urban boys. While significantly (0.01 level of significance) more boys were found at average level. In contrast to these results, in gross motor skills significantly (0.05 level of significance) more number of boys were found at high level while significantly (0.05 level of significance) higher proportion of urban girls were at average level. And in rest of the domains of developmental readiness urban girls and boys were found at par. The overall data also depicted that there was non-significant gender difference in overall developmental readiness.

**Table 7: Gender differences in mean scores ( $\pm$ S.D) of the urban children across different domains of developmental readiness n=100**

Domains of Developmental Readiness	Girls (n <sub>g</sub> = 50)	Boys (n <sub>b</sub> = 50)	t-value
	Mean $\pm$ S.D	Mean $\pm$ S.D	
<b>Cognitive Skills</b>	34.96 $\pm$ 4.62	32.24 $\pm$ 5.51	2.68**
<b>Physical Skills</b>			
(a) Gross Motor Skills	22.72 $\pm$ 2.98	22.76 $\pm$ 2.40	0.07
(b) Fine Motor Skills	22.12 $\pm$ 3.10	21.98 $\pm$ 3.09	0.23
<b>Socio-Emotional Skills</b>	20.24 $\pm$ 2.77	19.90 $\pm$ 2.59	0.63
<b>Self-Help Skills</b>	18.98 $\pm$ 2.45	18.32 $\pm$ 2.65	1.29
<b>Overall Developmental Readiness</b>	119.02 $\pm$ 11.93	115.20 $\pm$ 12.65	1.55

\*\* 0.01 level of significance

Table 7 showed the gender differences in mean scores of urban children across different domains of developmental readiness. The significant (0.01 level of significance) gender difference was found in mean scores of cognitive skills with urban girls having significantly better cognitive skills than urban boys. However, non-significant gender difference was

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observed in skills of remaining domains as well as in overall developmental which highlighted that in all domains of developmental readiness except cognitive skills urban boys and girls were at par.

### DISCUSSION

The assessment of gender differences in developmental readiness of private school children has been done in the present study. According to various researchers, children who begin formal schooling with appropriate developmental readiness acted as foundational skills could ensure optimal learning in classroom and success in academics and later life. A systematic and thorough literature review related to the importance of developmental readiness provides helpful suggestion for significant investigation. Gordon and Browne (2014) stated that in order to have holistic development of learner, it become essential that all the aspects of development grow together as they all are inter-dependent and are part of personal growth. Prior to entrance in formal school, the developmental readiness of a child can be assessed through 3 aspects i.e. physical readiness, cognitive readiness and socio-emotional readiness (David & Packard 2004). Although these domains are discrete and distinct but there is consistent overlap of skills. There is a link between physical learning environment and child school readiness. The child who has pre-kindergarten experience will adapt better to the later education system (Shaari & Ahmad 2016). A Vygotskian perspective suggested that the social interactions with scaffolded learning experiences that the learners received from the environment of early schooling acts catalysts for their developmental readiness for school (Brewer 2007).

The present study revealed that majority of girls and boys had pre-school experience, major proportion of fathers and mother were educated upto +2. The higher proportion of the girls' fathers were working as driver, painter, tailor etc. while equal proportion of boys' fathers were engage in various kind of occupations and services whereas about half of the mothers of boys and girls were housewives. Majority of children belonged to medium sized family of nuclear type.

Gender wise assessment of development readiness of private school children indicated that irrespective of gender, most of the children were found to have high level of skills across all the domains of developmental readiness followed by few of them at average level while none of them were found at low level. The present finding was supported by Taylor *et al* (2000) who concluded that preschool experiences had influence on school readiness of children. The result of their study revealed that irrespective of gender, the children with preschool experiences demonstrated good proficiency in communication area, logical reasoning, physical skills, self-help skills and social capability. Thus children with pre-school experience demonstrated higher overall readiness scores as compared to those who had not attended preschool.

The study findings also stated that overall gender differences in developmental readiness of children elucidated non-significant results in all domains except in cognitive skills and gross motor skills with significantly more number of girls at high level of cognitive skills whereas significantly more number of boys were at high level of gross motor skills. Pahhlevanian and Ahmadizadeh (2014) also found significant difference in motor skills of both gender with boys scored significantly higher than girls while in cognitive skills, girls had higher means scores than boys. Similar results were reported by Arora *et al* (2011). They found no significant gender differences in mean scores of motor skills, socio-emotional skill and self-help skills.

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The study found no significant gender difference in developmental readiness of the rural children across different domains and level indicating readiness of rural girls and boys for formal schooling. Whereas, gender differences of urban children indicated significant difference only in cognitive skills with majority of girls having better cognitive skills than boys and boys outnumbered girls in gross motor skills. The current findings had been confirmed by Jyothi (2015) who stated that more number of girls were found to have level of cognitive skills in contrast to boys. Most of the boys presented high level of gross motor as compared to girls. She also reported that children with preschool experience were at high or average level of developmental readiness for formal schooling in comparison to children which no pre-school experience.

### CONCLUSION

The results of study along with literature review indicated the benefit of assessment of developmental readiness level of children irrespective of gender for formal schooling. Developmental readiness for school acts as foundation for ensuring quality and equality in access to education and learning outcomes. It includes school maturity in terms of physical, mental and socio-emotional growth. Attending pre-school is associated with child's readiness for formal schooling which results in smooth transition to formal schooling through development of basic developmental skills required for academic learning. The present study provides certain suggestion for enhancing developmental readiness of young children:

- A) Teachers should focus on assessing developmental readiness of children along with academic readiness at the time of enrolment in formal school. Age and gender differences need to be taken into account while assessing the readiness level of children across primary grades.
- B) The government should formulate policies regarding criteria of enrolment of children into preschool and primary school which can be used as determinant for development readiness of children.
- C) Planning and conduction of activities at classroom and home settings that can enhance skills of developmental readiness of children.
- D) Appropriate curriculum planning which involve innovative methods for parent education, especially of mothers must be introduced for making children developmentally ready for school.
- E) Development of effective transition programmes should be there which focus on meaningful partnerships between teachers, parents and children.

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The author declared no conflict of interests.

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