

Nexus Between Women’s Employability and Child Caregiving: Insights from Early Education Centers

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Abstract

Early years are the most crucial for development of children while many mothers also need employment to sustain family economic needs. Provision of quality early education is vital for both women employability and childcare. Therefore, this study seeks to investigate the viewpoints of preschool administrators regarding caregiving practices for children aged 0-6. It compiles key insights regarding employer-supported early educational practices and existing community initiatives for early childhood education in Pakistan. The study followed qualitative research methodology using semi structured interviews from eight early education centers who were catering for children aged between 0-6. The findings of the study focused on three major themes including the challenges faced in provision of caregiving services, the impact on women’s employability, and the training needs for early childhood educators. The insights from preschoolers suggest that the key challenges in provision of early childhood education include meeting parental expectations and maintaining health standards, especially for younger children whose immune systems are more vulnerable. It was highlighted that the access to reliable childcare allows working mothers to focus on their careers, increasing productivity and women employability. Preschool administrators were of the view that having childcare facilities at the workplace can also facilitate employee retention, as parents feel more comfortable knowing that their children are safe and secure. Regarding training need assessment of early years education and development, Montessori training was regarded as fundamental prerequisite, with many centers preferring staff trained at reputable institutions. In-house training ensures caregivers stay up-to-date on best practices. Essential skills for caregivers include patience, empathy, adaptability, and strong communication, as well as health and safety competencies to ensure children’s well-being.

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INTRODUCTION

Preschool education plays a crucial role in the present-day societal context by offering supervised caregiving facilities and early childhood education outside of the home environment. (Melissa et al.,2023). The conventionally recognized context for early childhood education and development of children is a family environment where the responsibilities are assumed to be managed by the mother or other family members (Armstrong-Carter et al.,2023). The current need for female participation in the labor market to meet the economic needs, however, has contributed to an increased number of women from varied social backgrounds seeking assistance in caregiving responsibilities for their children (Müller et al.,2020). The increased need for women to leave home to work and consequently having lesser time for taking care of their house and children (Perry-Jenkins et al.,2020). Preschool education is conducive to child development and an option for caring for the children of working parents (Yizengaw et al.,2020). The early onset of preschool education is linked to the increased economic needs, changes in the family structures, the social role of women and the respective outcomes especially regarding the caregiving of young children (Singer et al.,2021).

Gary Becker's Labor Supply framework and childcare demand theory explain how parental decision-making regarding caregiving for their children is impacted by economic principles and social factors (Becker 1965). It provides a holistic perspective to understand the relationship between women's workforce participation, childcare services provided, and economic decision-making (Blau & Grossberg ,1992). According to the theory, mothers are the primary decision-makers who assess the cost of participation in the labor market against childcare services for their children (Blau and Grossberg,1992). The quality and cost of caregiving services, the developmental opportunities, and the environment provided to the child determine the mother's decision regarding their career advancement, potential earnings, and personal fulfilment. The access to quality childcare services makes it easier for mothers to confidently pursue their career goals. When mothers feel that their child is secure and they have reliable childcare options, they can focus more on their work, which leads to increased productivity levels. This enables them to maintain a balance between work and family life, thereby promoting greater job satisfaction (Becker, 1976).

The inception of early childhood programs marks a pivotal moment to the growing industrialization and urbanization trends that led to women entering the workforce (West,2020). Many families faced challenges in providing adequate care for their children while working in factories or other urban industries. As a solution to these challenges, preschools offered a supervised and safe environment where children could spend their day while their parents worked (Teo, 2023). This initial focus on child welfare aimed at protecting children from hazards present in urban settings and ensure they received proper nutrition, hygiene, and care during critical developmental years (Busse et al.,2020). In numerous countries worldwide, governments and educational organization authorities have initiated legislative policies and frameworks to encourage equitable and quality caregiving services for children (Gitanjali et al.,2024). While caregiving services are crucial, experts emphasize their critical importance in laying a solid foundation for lifelong development (Ata-Akturk, 2023). Recognizing this, the United Nations (UN) has integrated caregiving services into its global development agenda, highlighting their essential role in fostering holistic child development (Murray et al.,2023). The protections and

rights extended to children as part of the UN's Convention on Rights of the Child (UNCRC) include the right to an education, safety from violence, and to relax and play. The provision of high quality, safe childcare facilities fulfil the relevant articles of the Convention - illuminating the deeper value of such services to healthy child development.

As part of its mission, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) works to ensure that all children globally have access not only to education, but also to quality caregiving services (UNESCO, 2024). UNESCO emphasizes the role of quality early childhood caregiving, and education in providing essential skills that have a substantive impact on later learning, considering its goal of achieving Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4: inclusive education and lifelong learning opportunities for all. In its most recent report, UNESCO highlights the urgency of providing quality early childhood education in order to move closer to SDG 4, in light of the present learning crisis, exacerbated by the Coronavirus pandemic: "an estimated 37% of the world's children will not reach minimum proficiency levels in reading by 2030". While early childhood education facilities have grown globally since their introduction to contemporary life in the mid-1800s, such recent data clearly highlights that there is a lot more work to be done for early childhood education and caregiving to keep pace with the foundational learning needs of children, and to support social equity and inclusion as well as economic growth by enabling parents and primary caregivers to engage fully in the workforce.

While in developed countries like the United States and the United Kingdom, as well as Scandinavian states there has been a lot of progress toward equitable access to high quality childcare, the overall landscape remains fragmented (Ulybina, 2024). The dearth of equitable, quality early childhood care and education is worse in developing countries, where despite increasing overall levels of development aid for pre-primary education, there remains a lack of aid allocation toward pre-primary education or care. For instance, in the United States, where 'day nurseries' and 'nursery schools' were established in 1830, the early childhood care and education landscape remains lacking. While federally administered programs such as the 'Head Start' program introduced in 1965 to provide care and education for children over three years old have helped, there are also numerous differences across the country in terms of state-level funding for early childhood care and education, and consequent differences in the number of facilities and children served (Sheila & Shirley, 2007).

Sweden on the other hand has also been the pioneer in introducing daycare programs into its social welfare system to support gender equality and participation of women in the workforce. Legislative policies in Sweden regarding caregiving are focused on universal access to high quality early childhood education and childcare. The daycare system in Sweden emphasizes egalitarian principles and support for working families (UNESCO,1997). Moreover, Germany established extensive government supported daycare systems which aimed to support women's full participation in the labor force by provision of a comprehensive developmental and educational caregiving system for children. Their approach reflects socialist ideals of equal opportunity and collective responsibility.

On the other hand, in Low- and Middle-Income Countries (LMICs), the situation extends beyond fragmentation in terms of caregiving facilities or programs and their funding. Early childhood caregiving and education in LMICs are beset by a lack of government allocation of funds, as well

as a dearth of regulation and licensing, and the absence of evidence-based childcare practices, due to the lack of research on children in these countries. In fact, millions of children in LMICs are considered developmentally at risk, due to the absence of early childhood education and care that would otherwise support their social and cognitive development and prepare them for future learning and development.

In the case of Pakistan, a lack of financial resources allocated to Early Childhood Development (ECD) is compounded by the dearth of adequate teachers, a lack of regulation and licensing, and the nonexistence of official bodies to gather evidence that would otherwise support advocacy efforts to improve early learning interventions. A United Nations Fund for Children (UNICEF) report in 2017 highlights the absence of any data about parental mental health and parent support, but also any information about quality daycare provision. As highlighted in the Situation Analysis report as part of this project, daycare services in Pakistan vary provincially, and at best, are lacking in terms of quality benchmarks and caregiver screening. As an LMIC, Pakistan's focus on ECD includes attention to health and nutrition, parental training in caregiving, and child safety and security, and while the government and international development agencies have worked on these actionable areas, there has not been much traction on the provision of enabling and safe early learning environments.

The complexities surrounding early caregiving facilities in Pakistan reflects broader systemic challenges. The inadequacy of financial resources allocated to early childhood and development intensifies the difficulties such as lack of trained teachers, gaps in implementation of policies, and the absence of government and regulatory entities crucial for advocacy. The 2017 UNICEF report underscores these gaps, revealing a critical lack of data on parental mental health, support systems, and the quality of daycare services nationwide. This deficiency impedes efforts to standardize and improve daycare offerings across Pakistan's provinces, where variations in quality and caregiver qualifications persist despite government and international efforts to address health, nutrition, and child safety.

In Karachi, like in other parts of Pakistan, the access to quality caregiving resources plays a crucial yet often neglected role. The Early Childhood Development Index (ECDI) indicates that the progress benchmarks for children between 0-6 years in Karachi are far below the global standards. It indicates a high need for improvement in resources and training of caregivers. Local research also emphasizes the urgent need for tailored support and training programs for caregivers to improve the existing scenario (Singer & Wong, 2021). The knowledge and skills developed in early childhood go beyond traditional education to foster emotional and social development. Caregiving services encompasses processes and procedures that equip children with social, academic, and emotional skills, as well as the necessary nutrition and health to facilitate both intellectual and physical development in children. The existing literature on early child development indicates that by the age of four children will have developed a significant amount of their intellectual and developmental potential. Therefore, the training and developmental opportunities that children receive in the early years have strong implications for their future well-being.

This study focuses on the period 0 - 6 years in child development, given its direct relevance to early childhood education and caregiving. Pre-kindergarten, nursery, and Montessori programs are

meant to cater to this age group, while playgroup ideally also provide an enabling environment for younger children to develop the core foundations for future development. Given the sensitivity of the age 0 - 6 years particularly, which is a period of rapid brain development only paralleled by the speed of brain development during adolescence it is essential for early childhood educators and caregivers to use an informed approach when working with young children.

METHODOLOGY

Qualitative Research Design

The study utilized qualitative research design since it is particularly suitable for the analyzing the perspectives of preschool administrators providing early childhood education in Karachi, Pakistan. Qualitative research can provide in-depth analysis of complex phenomena. It allowed researchers to include the viewpoint of preschool administrators regarding the challenges faced in the provision of early childhood education and how does reschooling is beneficial for the employability of mothers. The researcher employed semi structured interviews which enabled a nuanced exploration of existing scenario of early childhood education. It facilitates the understanding of stakeholders' experiences, interactions, and perceptions within their specific contexts, providing rich, descriptive data that goes beyond quantitative measures. This approach not only aligns with the research questions aimed at comprehensively understanding daycare service complexities, but also ensures ethical considerations are met through respectful engagement and confidentiality. Qualitative research design is instrumental in uncovering the underlying factors influencing daycare service delivery and informing meaningful improvements in policy and practice.

Karachi, Pakistan's largest city and economic hub, sprawls over an area of approximately 3,780 square kilometers and hosts a population exceeding sixteen million residents. Known for its cultural diversity and robust industrial and commercial sectors, Karachi is characterized by a dynamic blend of ethnicities and socio-economic backgrounds. For this research project focusing on daycare services, data collection encompassed four strategically selected districts within Karachi: South, East, Central, and West. These districts collectively cover diverse socio-economic profiles, reflecting the city's urban complexity. Daycare centers across these districts provided crucial data, representing the perspectives of daycare center officials, caregivers, community service organizations, international NGOs, and governmental representatives. This geographic breadth allowed for a comprehensive exploration of daycare service provision, offering insights into the challenges, successes, and opportunities within Karachi's extensive urban landscape.

Participants

The study involved a diverse group of participants representing various sectors involved in childcare and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Specifically, the participant pool comprised of seven administrators from day care centers, two officials from international non-governmental organizations (INGOs), and three representatives from community service (CSOs). These participants were chosen due to their roles and expertise in managing and overseeing childcare services, as well as their involvement in policymaking and advocacy within their respective organizations. Their diverse backgrounds and positions provided valuable insights into

the challenges and strategies related to childcare services and community engagement, making them integral to the study's exploration of effective practices and policy implications in the field.

Data Collection Tools

Semi-structured interviews were chosen for this study with administrators from day care centers, officials from international non-governmental organizations (INGOs), and representatives from civil society organizations (CSOs) due to their roles in childcare management, policymaking, and advocacy. This method allows for flexible yet focused exploration of their diverse perspectives and expertise in childcare services and community engagement. By using open-ended questions and allowing for probing and clarification, the interviews aimed to gather detailed insights into the challenges, strategies, and effective practices within these sectors. This approach ensures that the study captures nuanced information essential for understanding policy implications and improving childcare services and advocacy efforts.

Data Analysis

In this study, interviews with participants were audio-recorded and their responses were transcribed verbatim. Each participant was assigned a unique identifying code. Transcriptions of the audio recordings were done shortly after the interviews were conducted. The participant's unique identified codes were inserted onto the transcript, so the responses were correctly matched to the specific participants. The researcher utilized the pattern of analysis prescribed by Corbin and Strauss (2008). Raw data was broken into discrete parts, and codes were assigned according to the data. Codes that were found to be conceptually similar were grouped under more abstract concepts to form themes.

Trustworthiness

Qualitative research is a scientific process and is concerned with the concept of rigor. Rigor is defined as the demonstration of integrity and competence, and the legitimacy of the qualitative research process. Rigor is established by demonstrating the credibility, dependability, and conformability of the study. To increase credibility, member checking was conducted after the interviews were completed with the participants by asking them to go through their respective transcripts and confirm if the content was accurate.

Ethical Considerations

The researcher took the consent from the participants before the interviews. It was assured that the participant's privacy will be kept, and the information provided will be used only for research purposes. Respondents were assured that they are free to remove their consent at any time without any description or fear of any consequences. The researcher shared the whole findings with the research participants to assure trustworthiness in the research.

RESULTS & FINDINGS

This section presents the findings of a study that explores stakeholders' perspectives on key challenges within the caregiving services sector. Central to this inquiry is an examination of stakeholders' perceptions regarding both the obstacles and opportunities inherent in the provision of caregiving services. It also discusses stakeholders' views on how caregiving facilities contribute to enhancing the employability of women, highlighting the perceived economic empowerment facilitated by such facilities. Additionally, the section provides stakeholders' insights into the training requirements essential for caregivers at daycare centers, outlining their perspectives on the necessary skills and competencies crucial for effective caregiving practices. Furthermore, it identifies specific caregiving skills and competencies that stakeholders deem essential for both literate and unlettered women to effectively engage in caregiving roles within daycare settings.

Findings from the Interviews of Day Care Centers

One of the core challenges that organizations in the daycare sector continuously strive to address is meeting parental expectations effectively. This entails understanding and fulfilling the diverse demands that parents have regarding the care, education, and overall well-being of their children. To achieve this, daycare providers must implement strategies that ensure every child receives personalized attention and developmentally appropriate activities.

As an administrator from Dr Sophia Learning Center said

“Parents have high expectations from us. They expect a safe environment, excellent educational standards, regular communication about their child's progress, and flexibility in scheduling. Meeting these diverse demands while maintaining our standards is a significant challenge we continually strive to address.”

Similarly, the principal of DHA Montessori said.

“Timings like the working mothers mostly want their timings, like should be from 8:00 till five. This is the first challenge which I have because many admissions come, and they went back just for because of the times because we offer times were made till two.”

An administrator from Mama Day Montessori said.

“They think that after every hour, after two hours or three hours, they... they should get video of the activity for the child who is about to become one year.”

The administrator from IOBM described.

“The mothers were demanding from the nannies to pick their children from nearby schools which was very difficult for nannies, so we restricted that practice.”

Health-Related Concerns

Day care administrators emphasize the critical importance of maintaining stringent health standards to ensure the well-being of the children under their care. According to Shazia Adil, Principal of DHACSS Montessori and Daycare,

"Ensuring a clean and hygienic environment is our top priority. We adhere strictly to sanitation protocols to prevent any health risks for the children.

At another instance she said

"It is exceedingly difficult to find out if a child is crying non-stop. What is the reason behind that? Because we can just guess. They have a stomachache. He is feeling uneasy. So, at that time and they are crawling at that stage, they can put anything in their mouth. So, you need many, many people around them for that time. So, we do not take one before and in between zero to three months period. The child is too fragile. Even his neck is not adjusted at that time. So, they are handling, and this is. To take a full responsibility."

Similarly, the administrator from Dawood public school said.

"Especially with young children, their immune systems are delicate, so we take extra precautions to minimize any potential health concerns."

Another administrator, from Tiny Toddler Day Care center remarked,

"We train our staff to uphold the highest standards of cleanliness. It is crucial to keep surfaces sanitized and maintain proper handwashing practices. Despite our best efforts with hygiene protocols, viruses can still circulate among children who may not show symptoms immediately."

Perceptions of Caregiving Facilities and Employability of Women

The relationship between caregiving facilities and the employability of women is a critical aspect of contemporary workforce dynamics. Across various day care centers surveyed, a prevailing sentiment emerges accessible childcare services not only support working mothers but also enhance their productivity. Shazia Adil, principal of DHA day care center shared her personal experience to illustrate the impact of daycare facilities on productivity. She mentioned,

"It includes their productivity definitely when they are at peace with our children and the safe hands. It includes there. As in my case, I will give you, my example. When I joined the school, my eldest daughter was four and the youngest one at that time he was two. I joined a school. There was no daycare facility, and I drop my children at home along with Dadi and. Aya. I was not at peace because one day the housekeeper was not there. I must go to school. I do not have any option. Obviously, Dadi was there but she is old, and she is not able to manage physically.

Similarly, the manager of Tiny Toddler Daycare emphasizes,

"When mothers have reliable childcare, absenteeism decreases, and they can fully engage in their professional roles without worrying about their children's welfare."

The human resource administrator of Dr Sophia Day Care and Learning Center said. Daycare centers play a vital role in supporting workers. When children are here, mothers are free to do whatever they plan in their life. So, I think it must improve their productivity."

The administrator from mama day care Montessori remarked.

"Daycare facilities have a profound impact on women's development and employment. It allows them to work while knowing that their children are well taken care of."

Retention and Peace of Mind

Administrators from day care centers perceive that providing daycare facilities can enhance employee retention by offering a convenient and safe environment for children. As principal Shazia Adil from DHACSS day care highlighted this benefit, stating,

"If an employee's child is in the daycare of the same campus or the same workplace, I'm sure his productivity will increase."

Moreover, Administrator from IoBM added,

"We've noticed that parents are more likely to stay with us long-term when they have peace of mind that their children are receiving quality care just steps away from their offices. Day care centers not only do they support working parents by ensuring their children are well-cared for, but they also contribute to a more engaged and productive workforce."

The administrator of Tiny Toddler Montessori said.

"Yes, indeed. It increases employ retention. If a mother is at peace that her child is secure at home, and she can do her work without any worries she will keep doing that job but if she has no option to take care of her kids, she will leave her job."

Reflecting on this, administrator Sahar from Dawood Public School said

"Mothers prefer to work at Dawood Public School, because they know that we have arrangement for their children. They feel satisfied that their children are in secure hands. They feel thankful for that."

Training Requirements for Caregivers at Daycare Centers

Montessori training stands as a cornerstone in the development of daycare staff. According to Shazia Adil, principal of DHACSS,

"They should be trained directors from any reputable institution, preferably from AMI. "We do not hire. "

Furthermore, ongoing in-house training emerged as crucial for caregivers. Shazia Adil emphasized, "It's ongoing, weekly in-house training." This continuous development initiative ensures that caregivers stay abreast of the latest practices and techniques, enabling them to deliver superior care that meets the dynamic needs of children and their families.

Montessori Training

The importance of Montessori training for daycare staff was emphasized. Shazia Adil specified, "They should be trained directors from any reputable we prefer from AMI." This underscores the value placed on Montessori education methods in fostering a child-centered learning environment that supports holistic development. Ongoing In-House Training: Continuous training and skill development for caregivers were highlighted as essential. Shazia Adil mentioned, "It's in-house training and it keeps on going on a weekly basis." This ongoing training ensures that caregivers are equipped with the latest knowledge and techniques to provide high-quality care and meet the evolving needs of children and parents.

Essential Caregiving Skills and Competencies

- **Soft Skills:** Stakeholders identified soft skills such as patience, empathy, and effective communication as crucial for caregivers working with young children. Shazia Adil stressed the importance of being "soft-spoken, lively smiling" to create a positive environment conducive to children's development.
- **Adaptability and Child-Centric Approach:** Understanding and adapting to the individual needs of children, including their emotional and developmental requirements, were seen as vital skills. Shazia Adil emphasized, "Their handling is very important because they are inside the washroom. Those with whom my advice concerns me myself are teachers." This highlights the caregiver's role in creating a nurturing and supportive environment that promotes each child's well-being and learning.

Core Challenges in the Provision of Caregiving Services

- **Stakeholders' Perspectives:** Stakeholders perceive several challenges in the provision of caregiving services:
- **Parental Expectations:** "They want to have pictures and videos every time... They think that after every hour, after two hours or three hours, they should get a video of the activity for the child."
- **Regulatory Issues:** "There is no registered license holder... We do have a policy, but we don't have implementation."
- **Operational Challenges:** "We have plans according to the appropriate age that we will teach them, their Montessori early years of education as well."

Perceptions of Caregiving Facilities as Beneficial to the Employability of Women

- Stakeholders' Perspectives: Stakeholders view caregiving facilities as beneficial to women's employability:
- Convenience and Accessibility: "Having their Montessori in a commercial area, that's why I'm residing in a pure commercial area."
- Professional Development: "They have their uniforms, they have their shades over there, we have the app that our teacher features over there daily."
- Economic Empowerment: "Yes, they care. They care about their location. They can earn money if they can make some money."

Stakeholders' Perceptions of Training Requirements for Caregivers at Daycare Centers

- Stakeholders' Perspectives: Stakeholders emphasize specific training requirements for caregivers:
- Educational Background: "We have hired our Montessori directors from London Montessori International as well."
- Specialized Care: "They also have facilities for ADHD and northeast sick children."
- Continuous Improvement: "There is always room for improvement... It's the policy of the organization to provide the government with key counseling."

Specific Caregiving Skills and Competencies Identified as Essential

- Stakeholders' Perspectives: Stakeholders identify essential skills and competencies for caregivers:
- Soft Skills: "Patience and empathy... They should be mothers... Their personal look matters, but their expertise, their skills matter more."
- Child Development: "The child is emotionally mature now through some motion applying... They have the skills to oversee a baby."
- Health and Safety: "We have some plans to start Mother Korla plan as well."

CONCLUSION

This study provides a comprehensive analysis of stakeholders' perspectives on key challenges and opportunities in the caregiving services sector. Through exploring stakeholder views, it is evident that the provision of daycare services faces several significant challenges, including meeting diverse parental expectations, addressing health-related concerns, and ensuring effective communication. However, these challenges also present opportunities for improving and innovating caregiving practices. Central to the findings is the recognition that daycare facilities play a crucial role in enhancing the employability of women. By providing reliable childcare, these facilities support working mothers, enabling them to pursue their professional goals with greater ease and confidence. The economic empowerment facilitated by accessible caregiving services is highlighted as a key benefit, contributing to increased productivity and retention in the workforce. Furthermore, the study underscores the importance of targeted training for caregivers. Stakeholders agree on the necessity of both Montessori-specific training and ongoing professional development to ensure high-quality care. Effective caregiving practices are seen as dependent on

a range of skills and competencies, including both soft skills and technical knowledge. The need for caregivers to possess empathy, patience, and adaptability, as well as specialized training in early childhood education, is emphasized.

Discussion

The findings of this study reveal a multifaceted landscape of challenges and opportunities within the caregiving sector. Stakeholders identify meeting parental expectations as a primary challenge, noting the difficulty of balancing diverse demands while maintaining care quality. The need for flexible scheduling, consistent communication, and personalized attention underscores the importance of adapting to the varied needs of parents. Health and safety concerns are also paramount, with administrators stressing the importance of rigorous sanitation practices and vigilant health monitoring. The delicate nature of young children's health requires continuous improvements in health protocols and staff training to address potential issues effectively.

The positive impact of daycare services on women's employment is a significant finding. Reliable childcare enables working mothers to remain productive and engaged in their professional roles, leading to increased job satisfaction and reduced absenteeism. This economic empowerment highlights the critical role of daycare facilities in supporting the broader workforce. Training and professional development are crucial for maintaining high standards of care. The emphasis on Montessori training and ongoing skill development reflects a commitment to providing caregivers with the tools needed to support children's holistic development. Investing in comprehensive training programs is essential for enhancing caregiving quality and supporting staff growth. Effective communication with parents is also highlighted as a key factor in caregiver success. Regular updates and transparent communication foster trust and satisfaction, helping to address parental concerns and improve the overall caregiving experience.

Future Recommendations

Based on the study's findings, several recommendations are proposed to address the identified challenges and enhance caregiving services:

- **Innovative Scheduling Solutions:** Develop flexible scheduling options to better accommodate the diverse needs of parents. Explore partnerships with local businesses and community organizations to support varied scheduling requirements.
- **Advancements in Health and Safety Practices:** Invest in new health technologies and continuously update sanitation protocols. Regularly train staff on health and safety procedures to minimize risks and ensure a secure environment for children.
- **Expanded Training Programs:** Implement advanced training programs for caregivers, focusing on both Montessori-specific and general caregiving skills. Collaborate with educational institutions and professional organizations to provide ongoing development opportunities.
- **Enhanced Communication Tools:** Utilize modern communication tools and platforms to improve interaction between caregivers and parents. Provide real-time updates and address concerns effectively to strengthen the caregiver-parent relationship.

- **Policy Advocacy:** Advocate for supportive childcare policies, including workplace childcare options and subsidies. Such policies can integrate childcare services into work environments and further support working parents.
- **Support for Both Literate and Unlettered Women:** Ensure that training programs and caregiving practices are inclusive, providing support and opportunities for both literate and unlettered women to engage effectively in caregiving roles. Develop tailored training that meets the diverse needs of all caregivers.

To effectively address the training needs in the caregiving sector, programs should encompass these components, ensuring that caregivers are well-prepared to provide high-quality care. By focusing on foundational knowledge, health and safety, communication skills, behavior management, curriculum development, professional growth, cultural competency, technology integration, soft skills, and regulatory compliance, training programs can enhance the effectiveness of caregivers and improve the overall quality of caregiving services. Regular updates and feedback should be incorporated to keep training programs relevant and responsive to emerging needs and best practices.

Competing Interests

The authors did not declare any known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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