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Parents and teachers' experiences and views of risky outdoor play in early learning centres

by

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this research study to my
wonderful husband, Renier,
alongside our
two lovely children,
Liam and Leah.

DECLARATION

I, Lorette Pretorius, student number 10464761, hereby declare that this dissertation, **Parents and teachers' experiences and views of risky outdoor play in early learning centres,** is submitted in accordance with the requirements for the degree M.Ed. This dissertation is my own work and has not previously been submitted for a degree at any other tertiary institution. All sources consulted in this thesis are acknowledged and indicated in the reference list.

2021-04-14

Signature

Date

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Parents and teachers' experiences and views of risky outdoor play in early learning centres

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26 March 2021

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The text was reviewed and edited using 'change tracking'. As such, the document that I submit is fully editable, and the author is entitled to accept, reject or modify my changes and suggestions. The final version of the document, submitted for assessment or publication by the author, may differ from that suggested by me.

ABSTRACT

PARENTS AND TEACHERS' EXPERIENCES AND VIEWS OF RISKY OUTDOOR PLAY IN EARLY LEARNING CENTRES

There is a concern that children are deprived of opportunities for responding to challenges and exploring risky situations in outdoor play. Children are not afforded the chance to be challenged by risky, yet safe situations. Exposing children to risky activities is valuable but one should be conscious about children's safety and therefore find the balance between hazardous situations and healthy risky experiences (Eager & Little, 2011:s.p.). Discouraging risky play has detrimental effects on children's development which may hinder their functioning in school and later in life. Risky play opportunities are therefore essential to develop children's confidence, self-esteem, autonomy and independence, as well as their problem solving and risk management skills. Therefore, parents and teachers in this study must empower children to engage in risky play. For caregivers to create opportunities to develop such skills at early learning centres, they must know and be conscious of the advantages of risky play for children's development. Positive attitudes towards the implementation of risky outdoor play and adequate support are required from parents.

Hence, the purpose of this study was to gain knowledge of parents and teachers' experiences and views about risky outdoor play; what prevents or supports teachers and parents from permitting risky outdoor play; and how the outdoor learning environment provides opportunities for risky play. This study was underpinned by Barbara Rogoff's sociocultural theory, which lays emphasis on how children cultivate knowledge by interacting with the social environment (Rogoff, 2008). The primary research question that guided this study is: *How do parents and teachers experience and view risky outdoor play in early learning centres?*

This study employed a qualitative approach and is positioned within the interpretivist paradigm. A multiple case study design was utilised and aligned with the researcher's goal of exploring and describing the views of parents and teachers on risky outdoor play. The study consisted of eight preschool teachers and seven parents from three

different early learning centres, who shared their experiences and views of risky play. Data were generated from teachers by means of semi-structured group interviews, observations of teachers and children during outdoor play and document analysis entailing teachers' daily planning of outdoor activities. Online semi-structured individual interview schedules were utilised to generate data from parents.

The findings of the study show that both parents and teachers perceive risky play as imperative for children's development. Furthermore, the constraints affecting children's opportunities to participate in risky activities and the concerns thereof were outlined. Finally, the study identifies challenges that parents and teachers experience when implementing risky play, although both parents and teachers support and permit risky outdoor play at the early learning centres, as well as in the home environment.

Keywords: Child/children, Early learning centre, Experiences, Outdoor play environment, Parents, Risky play, Teachers, Views

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

ADHD – Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder

ACARA – Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority

CAPS – Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement

DAP – Developmentally Appropriate Practice

DBE – Department of Basic Education

ECE – Early Childhood Education

ECEC – Early Childhood Education Centre

ECD – Early Childhood Development

ECDE – Early Childhood Development and Education

ECDSSG – Early Childhood Development Service Standard Guidelines

EF – Executive function

ELC – Early Learning Centre

EYLF – Early Years Learning Framework

LoLT – Language of Learning and Teaching

MoE – Ministry of Education

NAEYC – The National Association of the Education of Young Children

NCF – National Curriculum Framework

NMER - Norwegian Framework Plan for Content and Task of Kindergartens

QCA – Qualitative Content Analysis

RDD – Risk Deficit Disorder

UN – United Nations

UNICEF – United Nations International Children's Fund

USA – United States of America

ZPD – Zone of Proximal Development

CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION AND ORIENTATION

***"The more risks you allow children to take the better they learn to take care of themselves."* – Roald Dahl, 1993**

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Even though risky play holds many benefits for a child's development, opportunities for risky experiences have been reduced over time. Children are less exposed to adequate possibilities and chances to encounter challenges and seek for risky situations in outdoor play (Little, Sanseter & Wyver, 2012:301) due to the constraints of the school and home environments (Little, 2010a:3). Article 31 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations on November 20, 1989) (United Nations, 1989:09) acknowledges that all children have the right to play. However, in a rapidly evolving and technologically advanced society, children spend more time indoors and on devices and they are deprived of free play opportunities in the outdoor environment (Gibbons, 2006:137; Goldstein, 2012:3; Harper, 2017:6). Research shows that modern societies have become increasingly risk-averse, which restricts and controls children's opportunities to be independent and freedom to play outdoors (Gill, 2007:12; Little, 2010a:3). Excessive risk-aversion causes a concern that 21st-century children partake in fewer risky play activities to acquire skills and knowledge to face challenges in the outdoor environment (Little *et al*., 2012:301). Furthermore, Kvalnes (2017:6) states that childhood researchers are concerned that children are overprotected by teachers, the community and parents.

Play has been extensively researched in the Early Childhood Education (ECE) context, however, there seems to be a gap when it comes to parents and preschool teachers'[1] experiences and views on risky play, as well as their ability to provide

[1]In this study, the term preschool teacher represents the teacher teaching four- to five-year-old children.

children with risky outdoor play opportunities (McFarland & Laird, 2018:160). Studies regard parents and teachers as the main influential parties in promoting children's risky play (McFarland & Laird, 2018:160; Obee, Sandseter & Harper, 2020:1). Therefore, teachers and parents need to have a clear understanding of risky play, as well as its value for learning and development.

Sandseter and Kennair (2011:258) describe risky play as "thrilling and exciting forms of play that include some risk of physical injury". It is crucial for children to take risks in their play, as this contributes to their development by learning several skills and attempting new behaviours to reach their full potential (Little & Wyver, 2008:33). Existing literature indicates that risky play has several characteristic features. According to Sandseter (2009a:439) and Little and Wyver (2008:36), risky play is most evident in natural outdoor play areas. Furthermore, risky play enhances children's holistic development (Goldstein, 2012:6; Little, 2010a:3; Mardell, Wilson, Ryan, Ertel, Krechevsky & Baker, 2016:4). Also, risky play participation enables children to experience excitement and fear as they take risks (Sandseter, 2009a:439).

Risky play is required to teach children how to manage potential danger and harm. Without exposure to such situations, children are deprived of opportunities to gain knowledge in order to judge risks through past experiences with risky activities (Kvalnes, 2017:4). Gill (2007:16) states that there is a growing concern about the balance between the benefits of providing children with challenging outdoor play opportunities and risk. The aim of this study was to investigate parents and teachers' experiences and views of risky outdoor play. The qualitative study focused on parents and teachers at three early learning centres (ELCs) in Pretoria, Gauteng Province, South Africa; four teachers and four parents at the first early learning centre (ELC1), two teachers and one parent at the second early learning centre (ELC2) and two teachers and two parents at the third early learning centre (ELC3). The findings allowed me to gain knowledge about parents and teachers' views and experiences about risky play, and if such play is encouraged or intercepted at these ELCs. The findings of this study assisted teachers, as well as parents, in understanding the significance of risky play for optimal learning and development.

1.2 BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE

Being a mother of two small children (boy and girl twins) and an academic working in the field of education triggered my interest to explore the value and importance of risky play, as well as whether risky play was encouraged, supported and implemented in early learning centres (ELCs). As a self-proclaimed overprotective mother, I was inspired to research this particular topic. Play is not regarded as useful and important, even though it holds many benefits for optimal learning and development (Goldstein, 2012:6). This study was worth conducting, as limited studies focus on parents and teachers' experiences and views of risky outdoor play, as well as its benefits to a child's development in a South African context.

In order for children to develop confidence, self-esteem, autonomy, independence, as well as problem-solving and risk management skills, teachers must empower children to engage in risky play. For teachers to create opportunities to develop such skills, they must know and be conscious of the advantages of risky play for children's development. To enable teachers to do this, positive attitudes toward the implementation of risky outdoor play and adequate support are required from parents.

1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT

The concern is that children do not receive adequate possibilities and chances to experience challenges and search for risky situations in outdoor play (Little *et al.*, 2012:301). Discouraging risky play has detrimental effects on children's development which may hinder their functioning in school and later in life. However, if parents and teachers view risk as valuable for children's development, they will inspire and motivate children to take risks in their play (Orestes, 2015:20). Stephenson (2003:37,38) explains that "opportunities for risky play are dependent on teachers' attitudes with children's desire for physically risky experiences being met in settings where teachers had an interest in physical play and enjoyed being outdoors". Teachers' attitudes will have an impact on children's opportunities to be physically challenged in situations to learn how to come up with solutions by themselves (Couper, 2011:38).

When teachers have adequate knowledge and skills to facilitate and create opportunities for risky play, they will be more likely to endorse it in their daily programs. Overprotection of children is a risk because it could cause them to doubt their ability to deal with unpredictable situations when operating in daily life (Gill 2007:19; Lavrysen, Bertrands, Leyssen, Smets, Vanderspikken & De Graef, 2017:90). Several authors point out that teachers have a fear of children getting hurt and being held liable (Little & Wyver, 2008:34; Ball, Gill & Spiegel, 2012:15). This leads to teachers not providing risky play experiences for children in order to prevent litigation issues. Previous research indicates that parents and teachers acknowledge the value for children to take part in risky outdoor play activities, however, they fail to embrace the challenges it entails (Little, 2015:24; Little *et al.*, 2011:127; Jellyman, McPhee, Brussoni, Bundy & Duncan, 2019:1).

1.4 PURPOSE STATEMENT

This study aimed to explore parents and teachers' experiences and views of risky outdoor play in ELCs. The study's purpose was to determine whether risky play is supported or prevented by teachers and parents and for what reasons. Additionally, I investigated the role of the environment, at the ELCs and at home, in exposing children to risky play. The study allowed me to contribute to the professional development of parents and teachers regarding risky play and children's optimal development.

1.5 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This study aimed to answer the following primary and secondary research questions.

1.5.1 Primary research question

The primary research question for this study is:

- *How do parents and teachers experience and view risky outdoor play in early learning centres?*

1.5.2 Secondary research questions

The secondary research questions for this study are

- What are parents and teachers' experiences and views regarding the importance of risky outdoor play?
- What prevents or supports parents and teachers from permitting risky outdoor play?
- How do outdoor learning environments provide children with opportunities for risky outdoor play?

1.6 CONCEPT CLARIFICATION

The following terminology is clarified with reference to this study.

1.6.1 Play

The literature proposes that play has various meanings and does not consist of a single definition, however, according to Fleer (2009:2), play can be referred to as all the activities that children are engaged in. Brussoni, Olsen, Pike and Sleet (2012:3136) describe play as "the work of children which helps them develop intrinsic interests, learn how to make decisions, problem-solve, exert self-control, follow rules, regulate emotions, and develop and maintain peer relationships". Furthermore, Goldstein (2012:5) refers to play as "any activity freely chosen, intrinsically motivated, and personally directed". Play has different categories and takes place in various environments such as the indoor and outdoor environment. In this study, play refers to all the outdoor risky play activities that children are engaged in.

1.6.2 Risky play

Current literature offers various meanings for the concept of 'risky play'. Stephenson (2003:36) describes risky play as "play in which children engage in something new and unknown, including the feeling of being on the borderline of control". McFarland and Laird (2018:159) expand on this description by defining risky play as "a thrilling and exciting activity that includes some risk of injury". Furthermore, Sandseter and Kennair (2011:257) define risky play as "a set of motivated behaviours that both provide the child with an exhilarating positive emotion and expose the child to the stimuli which the child may have previously been fearful of, avoided, or been prevented

from trying". Moreover, the authors point out that risky play is not a planned and controlled by adults' activity, but rather a free play activity (Sandseter & Kennair, 2011:258). In this study, 'risk' in terms of risky play referred to a child being able to identify and evaluate a challenging situation and deciding to act on it (Ball *et al*., 2012:109). Furthermore, this study entailed all the risky outdoor play activities that provide children with some form of risk, excitement and challenging experiences.

1.6.3 Child

A child is defined as "a person under the age of 18 years" in the South African Children's Amended Act (38/2007:12). In the South African Schools Act (84/1996:4) a learner is defined as "any person receiving education or obliged to receive education". A preschool child is referred to as "a child under six years of age not yet attending formal school" (UNICEF, 2006:8). This study focused on children in early childhood between four and five years of age.

1.6.4 Early learning centre

UNICEF (2006:7) refers to an ELC as "any building or premises maintained or used, whether or not for gain, for the admission, protection and temporary or partial care of more than six children away from their parents". For the purpose of this study, a preschool was referred to as an ELC for four- to five-year-old children.

1.6.5 Experiences

'Experience' formed an essential part of this study as parents and teachers may attain various personal or lived experiences pertaining to risky outdoor play. 'Experience' in this study referred to parents and teachers' previous occurrences with children's engagement in risky play situations, as well as the skills and knowledge gained about risky play and the value thereof.

1.6.6 Outdoor play environment

The outdoor environment refers to open and continuously changing spaces in the outdoors (Maynard & Waters, 2007:256-257). Furthermore, the authors state that the outdoor environment provides opportunities for children to explore, move around freely, develop gross motor skills and interact with natural features. Such an outdoor environment also allows for children to participate in risky play activities.

1.6.7 Parent

The term ‘parent’ is defined in the South African Schools Act (84/1996:4) as the “guardian of a child, a person legally entitled to custody of a child or the person who undertakes to fulfil the obligations towards the child’s education at school”. Furthermore, the ‘parent’ is referred to as the main caregiver of the child who is not of a certain age, gender, race or religion.

1.6.8 Preschool teacher

UNICEF (2006:9) describes a preschool teacher as an “Early Childhood Practitioner”. Whereas, the Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary (2019) defines a teacher as “a person who teaches”, or “passes on information or a skill”, especially in a school. A teacher should guide and provide children with a safe environment according to the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) (DBE, 2011:10). The term ‘teacher’ is not used often in policy documents for the birth to four-years-old space, but rather practitioner or educator. However, in this study, the preschool teacher represented the teacher teaching children of four to five years of age.

1.6.9 View

The Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary (2019) defines the term ‘view’ as a way of looking at something, whereas the Cambridge Online Dictionary (n.d.) describes a view as “an opinion, belief, or idea, or a way of thinking about something”. Therefore, in this study, ‘view’ referred to the parents and teachers’ opinions, beliefs or way of looking at children’s risky outdoor play.

1.7 PRELIMINARY LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature reviewed focused on the importance of risky play for children’s development, the outdoor environment, barriers preventing children from engaging in risky play, perception of risk, parenting and risky play and international and national trends in terms of risky play.

1.7.1 The importance of risky play for children's development

According to Goldstein (2012:5) depriving children of play might result in immediate, as well as long-term negative consequences, as this is the time when children learn about their surroundings. Children need to be involved in physical risk-taking situations to ensure optimal growth and development (Little & Wyver, 2008:33). Restricting children from playing in outdoor environments due to fear of injury will likely result in other risks such as developing poor physical and cognitive abilities (Beneteau, 2017:7) and facing lifelong repercussions (Brussoni *et al*., 2012:3136).

Gill (2007:15) points out that children learn various skills and their overall development is enhanced when they take part in risky play. The author further states that it is imperative to provide opportunities to experience risky situations in a safe way. Research indicates that when children experience risk or engage in risky play, they learn various risk management strategies (Brussoni *et al*., 2012:3140). Little *et al.* (2011:114) state that children develop the ability to become independent, self-sufficient and learn to manage risks during early childhood. Goldstein (2012:5) regards play to have various instant benefits, such as fine and gross motor development, as well as long-term benefits in providing children with "a sense of morality".

1.7.2 The outdoor environment

Risky play takes place mostly in the outdoor environment (Sandseter & Kennair, 2011:258). The outdoor environment provides children with more chances to take part in risky play activities compared to the indoor environment (Little & Wyver, 2008:34). However, it depends on whether the social and physical environment provides for children to explore, experiment and to take risks (Little *et al*., 2012:301). If the outdoor environment does not provide children with challenging and stimulating opportunities to partake in risky play, children could develop anxiety to handle risky situations, even though they have the ability to do so (Sandseter & Kennair, 2011:258).

With that said, research indicates that children will look for risky endeavours in uncontrolled environments if play settings are not challenging enough (Ball *et al*., 2012:17). Therefore, environments should be carefully designed and controlled by teachers and parents for children to experience challenging but safe situations in play. Children become aware of the environment, as well as its possibilities and restrictions

when they explore and engage in risky play activities (Little *et al*., 2012:301). Therefore, it is imperative for adults to expose children to a stimulating, inspiring, resourceful, yet safe outdoor environments (Little & Wyver, 2008:39).

1.7.3 Barriers preventing children from engaging in risky play

Little *et al*. (2011:116) argue that teachers' pedagogical beliefs have a direct influence on whether teachers will allow children to experience risky play and be supportive thereof. Little *et al*. (2011:117) further assert that another contributing aspect likely to have an effect on children's risky play is parents' attitudes, as well as parents and teachers' childhood experiences. Modern society has become extremely focused on children's safety and strict risk management strategies have been put in place in children's play environments to prevent children from getting hurt (Sandseter & Kennair, 2011:258; Stephenson, 2003:38). An over-exaggerated focus on safety pertaining to children's play is problematic for physical and emotional development (Stephenson, 2003:39). Little and Wyver (2008:38) note the following five factors that negatively over exaggerates safety and diminish the opportunity for and benefits of risky outdoor play – "high child-staff ratios, external regulation restricting activities, inadequate understanding of the benefits of risk-taking, poor outdoor environment, and fear of litigation".

1.7.4 Perception of risk

Little and Eager (2010:499) point out that there is a misunderstanding regarding the perception of 'risk' and that risk and safety cannot coincide. In general, risk is assumed as something that is negative. Stephenson (2003:35) asserts that a negative perception of risk will demotivate people and therefore cause the avoidance of risk, whereas a positive perception of risk will motivate people to allow it to take place. If parents and teachers view risk as negative, they will prevent children from taking risks.

Children should be exposed to opportunities where they can explore and engage in play situations (Sandseter, 2007; Brussoni, Gibbons, Gray, Ishikawa, Sandseter *et al*., 2015b:6424). The way in which risk is perceived and interpreted will influence parents and teacher's beliefs and behaviours pertaining to children's safety and development (Harper, 2017:2). It is imperative to differentiate between risk and hazard. Stephenson (2003:35) states that a hazard is "any situation where there is an inherent danger of

death or serious injury", whereas a risk is "a situation where there is a balance between safety and challenge and the children are in no danger of serious injury". Therefore, parents and teachers should rather eradicate hazards without eliminating all the risks to enable children to be exposed to challenges and risky situations in a safe space (Sandseter & Kennair, 2011:261). To strengthen children's risk competence, it is essential to create risky play activities in ELCs (Brussoni, Gibbons, Gray, Ishikawa, Sandseter *et al*., 2015a:345).

1.7.5 Parenting and risky play

Parents in the past decade have become overprotective of their children, hence limiting activities in local neighbourhoods (Little, 2015:24). A few decades ago, children had the freedom to explore the environment for hours without any supervision. Kvalnes (2017:5) states that if parents in this day and age allow children the freedom to explore for hours without adult supervision, they would be considered irresponsible, bad and negligent. The freedom to explore without adult supervision is essential for children, even at the cost of exposing them to risky situations (Kvalnes, 2017:6). Safety, amongst many other factors, is one of the main causes why parents are resistant towards their children participating in risky outdoor activities.

1.7.6 International and national trends in terms of risky play

I researched the views of parents and teachers in relation to risky play internationally in Norway, Australia, New Zealand, China, and Kenya and nationally in South Africa. This was elaborated on in the literature review in chapter two. Culture has an impact on a child's play engagement, with regards to the settings for and the beliefs and attitudes towards play. Various cultures have different views and values and play in different ways (Lester & Russel, 2010:33; Gosso & Carvalho, 2013:2). Children have fewer opportunities to take part in risky outdoor play due to many countries not having the cultural heritage and motivation to spend time in the outdoor environment (Lavrysen *et al*., 2017:90). Many modern, Western societies are taking on a forest and nature school approach where children are receiving more exposure to the outdoor environment as part of their learning and development (Harper, 2017:3). However, this does not mean that risky play in the outdoor environment is supported and encouraged in every single country.

A country such as Norway is at the forefront of child-initiated approaches to child development and injury prevention (Little *et al*., 2012:312). In Sandseter's (2007:240) research, she indicates that Norwegian preschool teachers see risk-taking as an essential pedagogical approach to children's learning. The author further points out that Norwegian teachers do not discourage children to engage in risky behaviour regardless of the potential for minor injuries.

According to the Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA) (2017:47), "all children have the right to experience quality education and care in an environment that provides for their health and safety". Teachers in Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) settings in Australia point out that they function in a regulatory environment that puts a lot of emphasis on safety hence restricting them from providing children with challenging outdoor experiences (Little, 2010a:7; Bown & Sumsion, 2007:47).

New Zealand adopted the Te Whāriki curriculum which was proposed by the Ministry of Education (MoE) in 1996. Te Whāriki was one of the first (ECE) curriculum frameworks to be recognised internationally (MoE, 2017:7). Furthermore, Whāriki can be "understood as a metaphor for the developing child" (MoE, 2017:10). One of the core aims of the Te Whāriki curriculum (MoE, 2017:24,47) is to keep children safe from harm, as well as to encourage children to develop the confidence to "take risks and physical challenges". According to White, Ellis, O'Malley, Rockel, Stover and Toso (2009:45), Te Whāriki stands for culturally appropriate learning and teaching experiences for the child, parents, teachers and the community.

China does not offer a single curriculum but rather adopts various and diverse approaches to children's learning (Zhu & Wang, 2005:59). Rao and Li (2009:100) state that "developmental appropriateness and individual needs" are considered to be the main principles in preschool children's education. The authors further explain that it is imperative for teachers to follow guidelines to support the child's choice in play. To ensure holistic development, is important in ECE in China (Wong & Pang, 2002:63). Teachers in preschools are encouraged to embrace Vygotsky's ideas pertaining to the "Zone of Proximal Development" (ZPD) in scaffolding children's learning (Rao & Li, 2009:111).

According to Nganga (2009:227,231), the current curricula in Kenya do not succeed in developing children socially, emotionally and personally due to the fact that early childhood care or preschool education focuses mainly on preparing children for education in the primary phases. Due to the early childhood centres' poor physical conditions as described by Wanjiku (2016:6), teaching and learning are taking place mostly under the trees in the outdoor environment in some parts of Kenya (Adams & Swadener, 2000:294). Therefore, teachers have the main responsibility to ensure that the physical outdoor environment provides enough room and captures children's interest to engage in playful activities (Lee, 2006:435). In a study conducted by Quay (2014:751), the researcher found that teachers in Kenya show less interest in physical education compared to teachers in Australia. Teachers, parents and the community in Kenya do not regard physical play as an essential part of young children's education and development but rather see it as just another activity (Quay, 2014:751).

Nationally, in South Africa, there is currently insiffucient information pertaining to risky outdoor play at ELCs. However, the CAPS document (DBE, 2011:10) stipulates that preschool teachers have the obligation to afford a safe environment and appropriate opportunities for children to play and explore their surroundings under the supervision of the teacher.

1.8 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

According to Kivunja (2018:46), a theoretical framework entails theories developed by experts that provide the foundation and guidelines for the particular study. The theoretical framework that underpinned this study is neo-Vygotskian scholar, Barbara Rogoff's sociocultural theory which emphasises how children cultivate knowledge by interacting with the social environment (Rogoff, 2008).

Vygotsky (1978) proposes that children are cognitively developed via interaction with any individual in the community or society who is knowledgeable on the topic to act as a mediator for intellectual activity. A child continuously acquires and integrates new knowledge and meaning. New knowledge and meaning are adapted as the child forms new meaning through interaction with, for example, parents, peers and teachers.

Vygotsky's theory focuses on “social interaction that initiates children to the more mature ways of thinking that have been invented in the history of a society” (Rogoff, 1987:154). Rogoff and Lave (1984:103) argue that Vygotsky’s theory did not emphasise the child’s role in socialisation and more attention must be given to the child as participant in the socialisation process.

Rogoff (1995:149) moves beyond Vygotsky’s sociocultural theory, stating that attention should focus on “the active nature of children’s own efforts to participate [in] and observe the skilled activities of their community”. Furthermore, Rogoff (2003) expands on Vygotsky’s sociocultural theory by stating that children’s development is grounded in a cultural, social and historical perspective. She explains three planes of sociocultural activity: “apprenticeship, guided participation, and participatory appropriation” (Rogoff, 1995:141). These planes comprise various “grains of focus within the whole sociocultural activity”. She regards the planes as “inseparable concepts reflecting different planes of focus in sociocultural activity”.

The first plane, apprenticeship, refers to the active participation of individuals in culturally organised activities with members of the community, aiming to expose less experienced participants to mature activity participation (Rogoff, 1995:141). The author explains that the second plane, guided participation, entails the interaction between people, face-to-face or side-by-side while participating in cultural activities. Furthermore, Rogoff (1987:156) states that guided participation is the attempt to expand on Vygotsky’s “Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)” by involving the child in the activity during the complex transmission of information. She suggests that “individuals change through their involvement with one or another activity, in the process of becoming more prepared for subsequent involvement in related activities” (Rogoff, 2008:60). This refers to the third plane, the concept of participatory appropriation. This input is an important contribution, as it describes how new knowledge is conveyed to similar events later on. Rogoff (1995:140) states that none of the planes exist separately and focusing more on one plane still includes the partaking of the other planes.

Rogoff (1995:140) argues that children participate in communal activities through engaging with peers and adults in sociocultural activities and in the process progress to more mature participation in interrelated events. Therefore, parents at home and

teachers at ELCs play a vital part in contributing to a child's social interactions to enable the child to gain experience to be able to handle similar events later on. The following diagram (Figure 1.1) illustrates how Rogoff's sociocultural theory underpins this study.

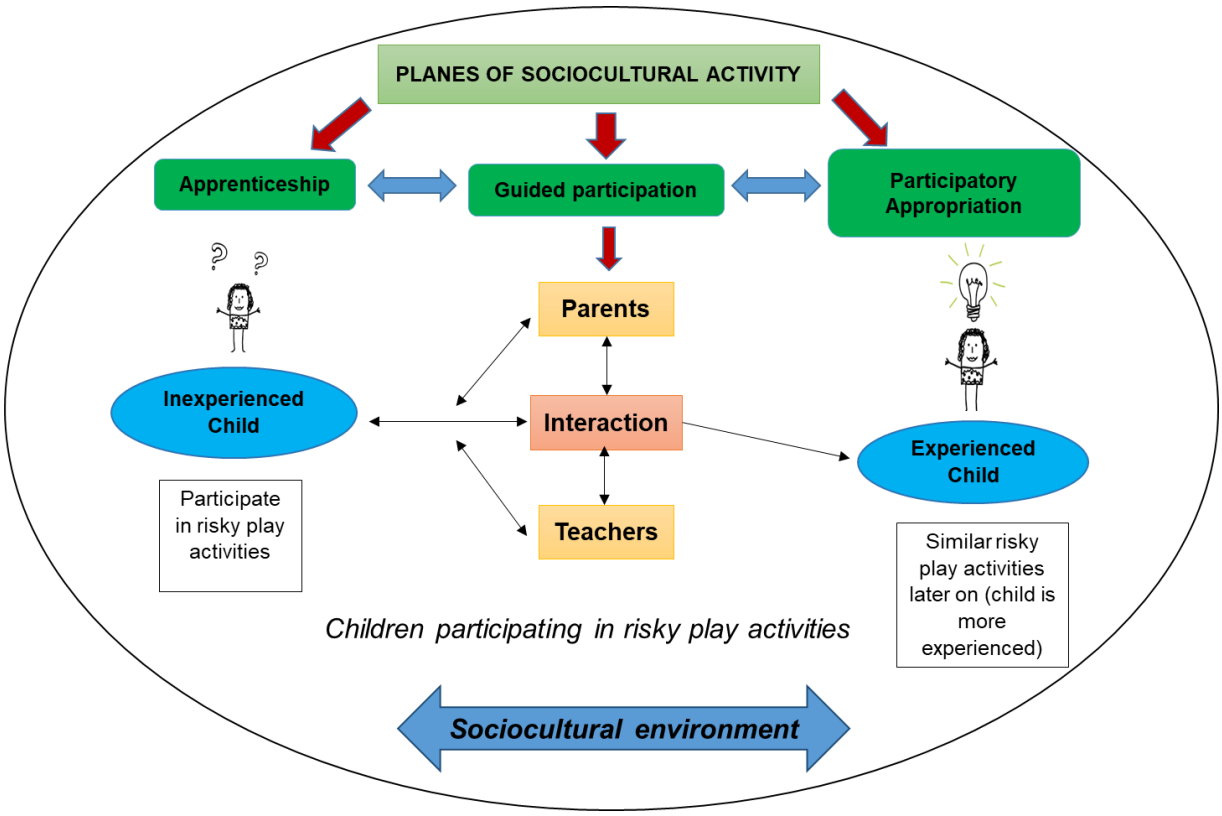


Figure 1.1: Diagram representing Rogoff's sociocultural theory applied to this study

On the left, the child is inexperienced regarding risky activities. The child actively participates in risky play activities with either peers at the ELC or with siblings at home. Rogoff (1995) refers to this as the first plane, called apprenticeship. In the middle, in the second plane of guided participation, parents and teachers interact with the child within the sociocultural environment. Both parents and teachers play an essential part in guiding the child's participation in risky play activities. On the right, the third plane emphasises the importance of involving the child in risky play activities during the complex transmission of information. The aim of risky play is to expose the child to various risk-taking activities to become prepared for similar risky activities later on.

This is evident on the right where the child is now more experienced, mature and confident to engage in risky play activities based on earlier experience with similar events.

1.9 RESEARCH PARADIGM

1.9.1 Meta-theoretical paradigm: Interpretivism

A paradigm can be defined as “a set of assumptions or beliefs about fundamental aspects of reality which gives rise to a particular world view” (Nieuwenhuis, 2016a:52). A paradigm guides the researcher to know exactly what will be researched, how the research will be conducted and in which ways the research will be interpreted (Hartell & Bosman, 2016:38). According to Morgan and Sklar (2012:73), interpretivism emphasises that “human experience can only be understood from the viewpoint of people”. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007:21) claim that interpretivism entails “the subjective world of human experience”.

Therefore, in this study, an interpretivist paradigm used parents and teachers’ experiences and views to interpret their understanding from the generated data. This allowed me to gain in-depth insight and data from participants’ actual experiences regarding the provision and permission of risky play in the outdoor environment. In addition, parents and teachers’ subjective views and experiences of risky play guided and brought meaning to this study.

1.9.2 Methodological approach: Qualitative research

Creswell (2014:4) defines qualitative research “as an approach for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem”. A qualitative research approach was utilised to interview parents and teachers at three respective ELCs within a “real-world setting where the researcher did not attempt to manipulate the phenomenon of interest” (Patton, 2001:39). A qualitative research approach was appropriate to gain insight from teachers’ experiences and views pertaining to risky outdoor play within an ELC. The same applied to parents of children associated with the particular ELCs. The qualitative approach and interpretivist paradigm were used interchangeably to study participants in their natural setting (Williams cited in Nieuwenhuis, 2016a:53). Generating data

within participants' natural settings enabled me to gain a true reflection of their risk-taking experiences.

1.10 RESEARCH METHODS

1.10.1 Research design: Multiple case study

A research design is a strategy that provides methods and instruments to achieve a particular task and to provide credible results (Seabi, 2012:81). Rule and John (2011:4) refer to a case study design as a "systematic and in-depth investigation of a particular instance in its context in order to generate knowledge". Using a case study design enabled me to develop an in-depth understanding of the case in participants' natural settings, taking into consideration the "complexity and context" (Seabi, 2012:83).

Multiple case study design allows for collaboration, to establish rapport and encourages participants to feel that they can share their stories (Crabtree & Miller cited in Nieuwenhuis, 2016b:82). Therefore, a multiple case study design assisted me to form an in-depth understanding (Seabi, 2012:83; Rule & John, 2011:1) of parents and teachers' experiences and views of risky outdoor play at each site. Moreover, utilising a multiple case study design allowed me to emphasise real life experiences and difficulties of permitting risky play to young children. Finally, a multiple case study research design allowed me to obtain rich information in understanding parents and teachers' risky play experiences.

1.10.2 Selection of participants and sites

Purposive non-probability sampling was utilised to select ELCs, parents and teachers to take part in the study as indicated in Table 1.1. Maree and Pietersen (2016:198) point out that predetermined criteria are used to select participants suitable for the particular study. Therefore, the participants selected for this study were the parents and teachers parenting or teaching children four to five years of age. The following table provides an outline of the inclusion criteria for suitable ELCs and participants for this study.

Table 1.1: Criteria for the selection of sites and participants

Sites	Criteria
ELCs	- Three ELCs within the Pretoria region. - An ELC was selected in the following areas: ➢ Inner-city; ➢ Suburban; and ➢ A smallholding area. - ELCs where the LoLT (Language of Learning and Teaching) is Afrikaans and/or English.
Parents	- Parents having a four- to five-year old child from the same ELCs as teachers. - Voluntary participation. - Language abilities: Afrikaans and/or English. - Participants representing diverse cultural upbringings, age, gender, race and socioeconomic status.
Teachers	- Teach in the age group of four to five years. - Language abilities: Afrikaans and/or English. - Older teachers with more experience. - Younger teachers with less experience.

1.10.3 Data collection and documentation

The qualitative data generation techniques adopted in this study were: semi-structured group interviews, observations, field notes, documents, semi-structured individual interview schedules and photographs.

1.10.3.1 Semi-structured group interviews

According to Seabi (2012:89), interviews are regarded as the most essential tool to generate data in qualitative research. Furthermore, an interview can be described as a joint discussion between the participant and researcher in order to generate data about the participants' behaviour, ideas, beliefs, views, opinions and experiences (Nieuwenhuis, 2016b:93). The author further states that the main goal of qualitative interviews is to view the world through the lens of the participant and generate rich

information that will enable the researcher to comprehend and interpret participants' experiences.

In this study, semi-structured group interviews were conducted with teachers from three ELCs. Conducting group interviews enabled me to ask semi-structured questions that encouraged participants to debate, as well as to provide conflicting arguments regarding the specific topic of risky play (Niewenhuis, 2016b:95). The main part of the interview was based on teachers' experiences and views of risky outdoor play. Moreover, interview schedules consisting of pre-determined questions were used, as well as questions that arose spontaneously. During the semi-structured group interviews, data were generated comprising of hand-written notes, as well as audio recordings.

1.10.3.2 Observations

Creswell (2014:239) states that qualitative observation refers to the researcher taking "field notes on the behaviour and activities of individuals at the research site". According to Seabi (2012:91), observation is a process that intends to generate data systematically without communication with participants. Observation afforded me essential information about participants' particular situations as it assisted me to "hear, see and experience reality as participants do" (Nieuwenhuis, 2016b:90). As a result, teachers were observed in the outdoor environment to report on their willingness to promote and enhance children's risky play.

Additionally, an observation schedule was used to observe how teachers employed the outdoor environment for risky play, as well as whether children are participating in free and risky outdoor play activities. I took the role of "nonparticipant observer" (Creswell, 2014:214) which required me to focus on taking notes of the participant activities without interfering with the setting or situation.

1.10.3.3 Field notes

Field notes contributed to the richness of the observation schedule utilised to observe teachers' and children's engagement in outdoor play. Lodico, Spaulding, and Voegtle (2010:118) distinguish between reflective and descriptive field notes. Reflective field notes refer to "descriptions of the observers' feelings and thoughts about what he or

she is observing" and descriptive field notes include personal and detailed descriptions of participants and settings being observed. By employing both types of field notes, I generated rich data on teachers' views and children's opportunities for risky play.

1.10.3.4 Documents

Documents formed part of the data generation methods since Nieuwenhuis (2016b:88) states that documents (textual data) include all written information that is used to generate data to study a particular phenomenon. In this study, documents comprised of the daily planning for outdoor activities. However, the daily planning provided by teachers was incomplete and did not contribute to rich data for this study (Creswell, 2014:192). It was clear that teachers plan for outdoor play but not in detail specifying the risky play activities.

1.10.3.5 Photographs

Photographs were taken to support observations, as well as to capture and describe experiences of children's risky play activities. Taking photographs offered me the chance to capture rich evidence about the research site, participants and playful outdoor activities (Lodico *et al*., 2010:131). Photographs were handled with caution to abide by the ethical values outlined by Elias and Theron (2012:149) in the ethical considerations section. Consent from parents was received to ensure photographs of their children engaging in outdoor play activities may be used.

1.10.3.6 Semi-structured individual interview schedules

Semi-structured individual interview schedules provided detailed information about the particular discipline because participants' responses comprise of their ideas, opinions and experiences (Eckerdal & Hagström, 2017:1). In this study, parents' responses reflected their experiences and views pertaining to risky outdoor play. The following diagram (Figure 1.2) outlines how data were generated from parents by using the online Q-Survey programme.

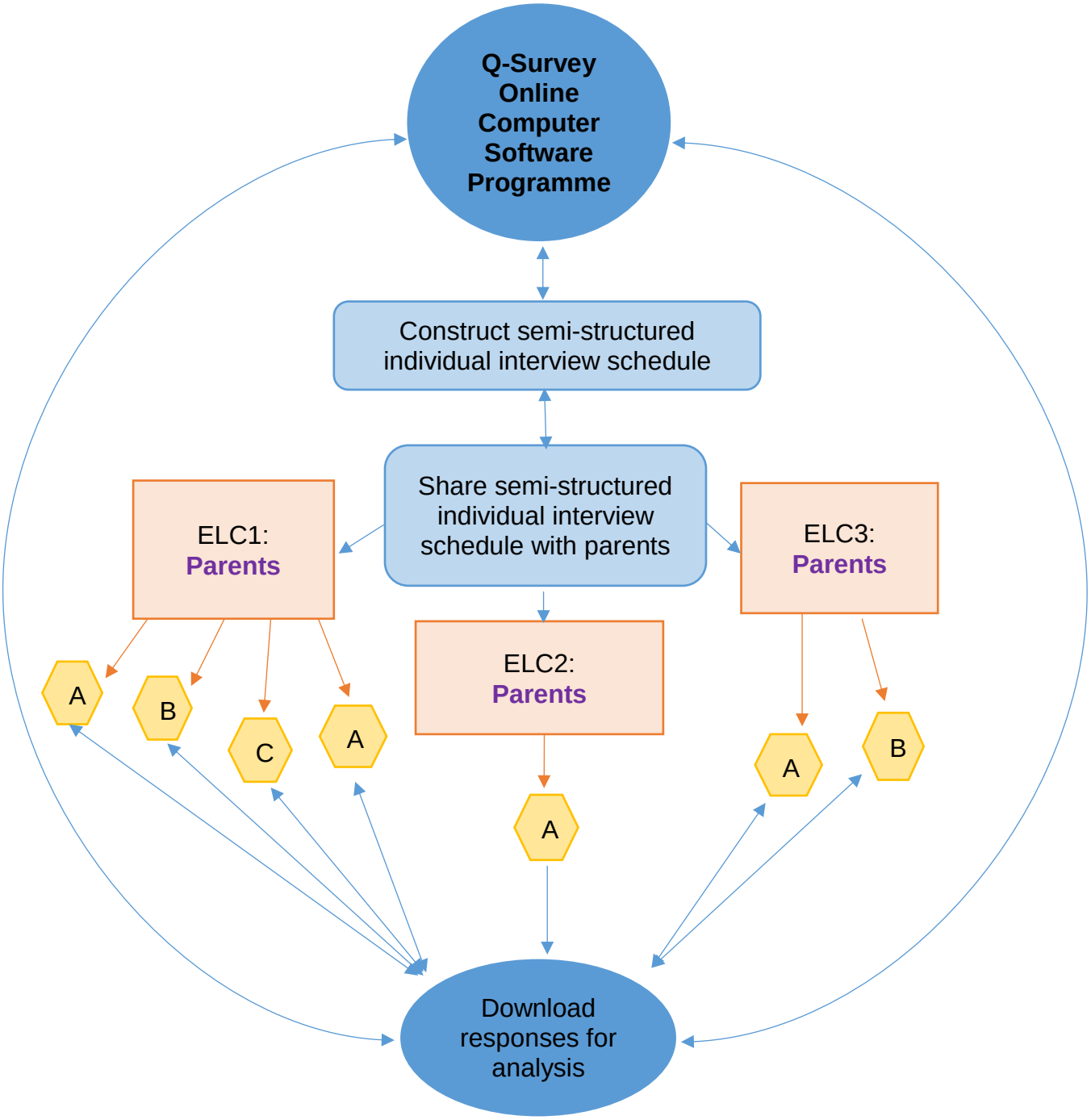


Figure 1.2: Diagram representing the semi-structured individual interview schedule using the online Q-Survey programme

Q-Survey is an online computer software programme used to generate informative data from parents of three different ELCs. The semi-structured individual interview schedules were shared amongst parents using the online platform for parents to complete the questions. The results were downloaded for analysis as soon as parents

completed the questions online. In conclusion, the data generation techniques that were employed in this study are summarised in Table 1.2:

Table 1.2: Summary of data collection techniques

Data collection technique	Time	Means of documentation	Type of activity
Teachers			
Semi-structured group interviews	30 to 45 minutes before and in between observations	- Written and audio transcriptions	Generated information about teachers' experiences and views of risky outdoor play.
Observations and field notes	2 hours before and after interviews	- Observation schedule	Observed teachers as well as children engaging in risky outdoor play.
Documents	After interviews	- Daily planning for outdoor activities	Generated information to determine whether teachers plan for children's risky outdoor play.
Photographs	During children's outdoor playtime	- Photographs	Took photographs of children engaging in outdoor play.
Parents			
Semi-structured individual interview schedules	30 minutes	- Online Q-Survey platform	Generated data from parents' experiences and views of their own children's risky outdoor play.

1.11 DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Nieuwenhuis (2016c:109) describes data analysis as an iterative and continuing process, stating that the generation, processing, analysis and reporting of data are aspects functioning as a whole and not as individual concepts. Thematic analysis, according to Engelbrecht (2016:120), is referred to as an instrument rather than a particular approach or method. The goal of data analysis in this study was to enable the researcher to understand parents and teachers' experiences and views on risky outdoor play. The steps of thematic analysis are indicated in Table 1.3 (Braun & Clarke in Engelbrecht, 2016:121).

Table 1.3: Steps in thematic analysis

Number	Steps	Description
1.	Become familiar with the data	Read and transcribe data from audio recordings by noting original ideas.
2.	Develop codes	Link interesting data with codes.
3.	Find themes	Collect data and link codes with potential themes.
4.	Revise themes	Use a thematic chart to revise themes in accordance with coded excerpts.
5.	Refine and name themes	Refine and analyse themes to create definitions for the themes.
6.	Provide feedback	Analyse the particular excerpts and link them with research questions and literature.

1.12 QUALITY CRITERIA

Trustworthiness is a concept that inspires transparency, scholarly rigour and professional conduct to establish a trusting relationship within the research community (Rule & John, 2011). Guba (cited in Nieuwenhuis, 2016c:123) suggests four criteria to be considered by the researcher to ensure the study is trustworthy: transferability, dependability, confirmability and credibility. Figure 1.3 describes the processes followed to ensure the trustworthiness of the study.

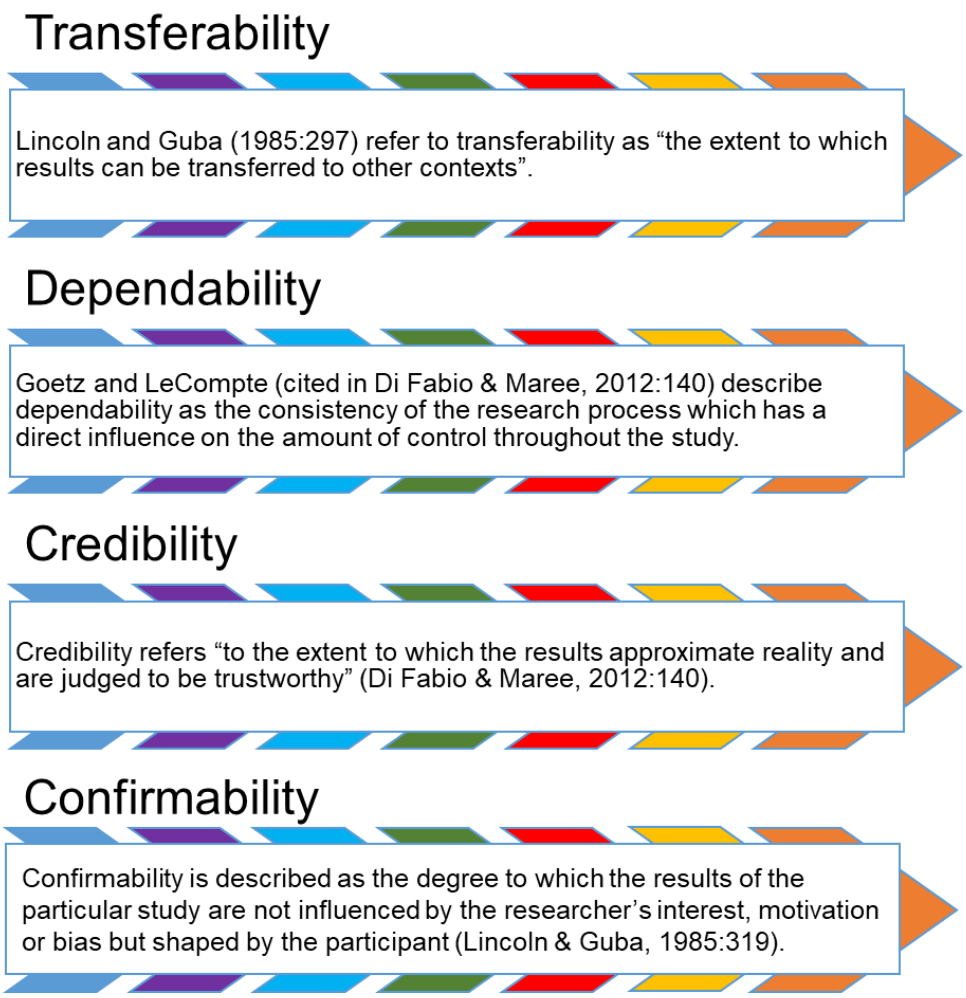


Figure 1.3: Processes followed to ensure trustworthiness

In this study, the researcher adhered to the abovementioned criteria by continually referring to the processes used to assess trustworthiness (Nieuwenhuis, 2016c:123).

1.13 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The researcher needs to respect the values, needs, rights and desires of the participants (Creswell, 2014:257). In this study, participants were protected from physical and psychological harm, as well as ensuring anonymity and confidentiality (Du Plessis, 2016:74). None of the participants were excluded from the sample, however, they were voluntarily selected (Yin, 2011:46). In conducting my research, I adhered to the following ethical principles as outlined by Elias and Theron (2012:149): to ensure fairness and justice to all participants; respect participants' right to privacy,

confidentiality and self-determination; promote honesty and truthfulness; establish trustworthy relationships with the participants.

Participants were made conscious of their role in this study and that they may pull-out from the research study whenever they like. The participants (parents and teachers of four-to-five-year-old children) at three different ELCs voluntarily agreed to take part in this study. An observation schedule (Annexure G) was prepared to observe teachers as well as children engaging in outdoor play. Also, an interview schedule was utilised consisting of pre-determined questions (Annexure E). In conducting this study, I adhered to the following ethical principles which are elaborated on in Chapter 3 (see Section 3.8).

- Informed consent;
- Voluntary participation;
- Protection from harm and deception; and
- Privacy and confidentiality.

1.14 SYNOPSIS OF CHAPTERS

A summary of Chapters one to five is presented below.

1.14.1 Chapter one

In Chapter one, an introduction as well as the reason why I conducted the study were given. The introduction outlined the primary and secondary research questions and the rationale of this study was explained. Relevant topics related to the study were defined in the concept clarification. Furthermore, the theoretical framework that underpins this study was introduced. Finally, the research methodology was presented focusing on the research paradigm, research approach, research design and the participants and sites of the study. In conclusion, Chapter one provided an overview and motivated the importance of this study.

1.14.2 Chapter two

Chapter two formed an essential part of this study. This chapter outlined a comprehensive exploration of existing literature concerning the imperative role of risky

outdoor play for children's development. The chapter started with a comprehensive definition of risky play and commences with the developmental advantages thereof. Furthermore, this chapter proposed the theoretical framework of Barbara Rogoff's sociocultural theory in explaining significant concepts and the relevance thereof to this study. Finally, this chapter concluded with a comparison of the views and beliefs of six different countries in terms of risky outdoor play.

1.14.3 Chapter three

Chapter three was devoted to illustrating the methodology and case study research design employed to present three cases of parents and teachers' experiences and views of risky outdoor play in ELCs. Chapter three outlined the qualitative research approach and explored the interpretivist paradigm that underpins this study. To address the research questions, appropriate research methods and strategies were utilised to generate data from participants. The qualitative thematic data analysis strategies for this study were furthermore presented in this chapter. Finally, reference was made to the trustworthiness and the ethical considerations of this study. Thus, the selected methodology was not generalisable to various contexts outside parents and teachers' risky play experiences and views in three ELCs in Pretoria.

1.14.4 Chapter four

Chapter four reflected on the processes followed during data analysis, the participants and research sites. In this chapter, the demographic information of participants was firstly outlined. The data generated via semi-structured group interviews, observations and teachers' daily outdoor planning at three research sites were analysed. Furthermore, semi-structured individual interview schedules were utilised to generate data from parents. Online colour coding was utilised to analyse data into themes and sub-themes. Moreover, in Chapter four, I described the findings of parents and teachers' experiences and views of risky outdoor play. Finally, the generated data were presented and linked to the tree themes and ten sub-themes that arose from the data analysis.

1.14.5 Chapter five

In the final chapter, the findings of this study were compared and contradicted against existing literature. Furthermore, the primary and secondary research questions were answered relating it to the generated data. The limitations and new insights into the topic of risky outdoor play were highlighted. Chapter five was concluded by presenting recommendations and possible contributions for further research.

1.15 CONCLUSION

This study aimed to investigate parents and teachers' experiences and views on risky outdoor play in ELCs. Providing children with opportunities to take part in risky play is essential for their development, therefore, parents and teachers play an important role in making such opportunities are available to them. Another factor that has an impact on whether children will partake in risky outdoor play is the role of the environment. Therefore, the theoretical framework used to underpin this study was neo-Vygotskian scholar, Barbara Rogoff's sociocultural theory, which lays emphasis on how children cultivate knowledge by interacting with others in the social environment (Rogoff, 2008). This theory strengthens the part that the social environment plays, as well as the importance of support from parents and teachers in assisting children to develop physically. Semi-structured group interviews and observations, as well as teachers' daily planning for outdoor activities, were used to generate data from teachers and semi-structured individual interview schedules were utilised to generate data from parents for this study.

CHAPTER TWO
LITERATURE REVIEW

"Learning involves taking risks. Growing involves taking risks. It takes skinned knees to learn to roller-skate or ride a bike. We all have a responsibility to keep children safe, but what about the risk of ruling out risks?" − Carol Garhart Mooney

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter one outlined the literature review, the theoretical framework and the research methodology applicable to this study. The goal of Chapter two is to concentrate on discussing literature regarding the importance of risky play in the outdoors, the views and understandings of parents and teachers of risky play and the factors supporting or preventing them from permitting risky play. Furthermore, risk and the perception of risk are considered and the theoretical framework of Rogoff's (2008) sociocultural theory that underpins this study is explained. Chapter two is concluded by a comparison of the views and beliefs in six different countries in terms of risky play.

2.2 COMPREHENSIVE EXPLANATION OF RISKY PLAY

Current literature has various meanings for the concept of 'risky play'. Stephenson (2003:36) describes risky play as "play in which children engage in something new and unknown, including the feeling of being on the borderline of control". Risky play forms a natural part of a child's outdoor play. Sandseter (2009a:439) asserts that "risky play involves thrilling and exciting forms of physical play that involve uncertainty and risk of physical injury". Furthermore, Sandseter, Cordovil, Hagen and Lopes (2019:2) explain that risky play is about providing children with opportunities to take risks, participate in challenging events and explore limitations. Gill (2007:15) states that risky play allows children to manage and understand risk and safety. Also, it "satisfies children's inherent desire for risk" and therefore taking risks in a controlled manner. Brussoni *et al*., (2012:3134) point out that "children have a natural propensity toward risky play".

From an evolutionary viewpoint, risky play assists and enables children to be released from phobias (Kvalnes, 2017:7). Risky play does not occur during play organised by adults but rather as children are engaged in free play (Sandseter & Kennair, 2011:258). Children take risks in play because it makes them feel good. However, children do not take risks when adults intervene all the time.

Various characteristics define risky play according to current literature. Firstly, risky play takes place mostly in a natural outdoor environment (Sandseter, 2009a:439; Little & Wyver, 2008:36). Secondly, risky play promotes children's cognitive, social, and emotional development (Goldstein 2012:6). Thirdly, children experience a plethora of sensory stimuli, excitement, as well as fear when engaged in risky play (Sandseter, 2009a:439). Kleppe, Melhuish and Sandseter (2017:1) describe risky play "as actions with a probability for undesirable results or negative consequences" and explain that the ability to evade extreme risks, to recognise own competencies and understand various circumstances, are imperative for children's development. Taking a risk in play is a risk that may lead to negative consequences, but also may hold many advantages for developing children's knowledge and skills.

Constructing risky play opportunities in early childhood affords children the necessary skills to identify possible risk, evaluate the severity of that risk and develop problem-solving strategies for justifying it (Brussoni *et al*., 2012:3135). However, Cooke, Wong and Press (2019:2) state that children's risky play is mainly regarded as a physical, voluntarily and enjoyable activity. They argue that the existing prevailing understanding of risk in ECE is happening during children's physical play in the outdoors rather than recognising the multifaceted aspect of risk.

Cooke *et al*. (2019:11) point out that previous studies have mainly conceptualised risk as children's physical risky outdoor activities, well-known as risky play. Brussoni *et al*. (2015b:6425) comment that Sandseter's risky play definition is well-known in international literature pertaining to children's risky activities, therefore, strengthening the prevailing outlook of risky play as a physical activity. However, Cooke *et al.* (2019:9) advocate that the view of risky play as a physical activity abandons the likelihood that risk may exist in non-physical developmental areas, such as social, cognitive and emotional areas. Nikiforidou (2017:620) reinforces the notion that children's risk-taking is not mainly physical. She argues that various other physical

activities such as “the risk of not recycling, the risk of eating sweets excessively, the risk of not sharing with peers” contribute to children’s emotional, social and environmental risk. Risky outdoor play holds many advantages for children and this is discussed in the next section.

2.3 RISK IN EARLY CHILDHOOD

Kvalnes (2017:3) claims that “risk is the possibility that something unpleasant or unwelcome will happen”. The term ‘risk’ is usually perceived as negative and it is avoided as far as possible, particularly for children in early childhood, according to Obee *et al*. (2021:100). However, Little and Eager (2010:499) argue that there is confusion concerning the concept of ‘risk’ and the “belief that risk and safety cannot co-exist”. “Risk is not always about being reckless but rather about engaging with uncertainty in order to achieve a particular goal” (Sandseter *et al*., 2017:118,119). Taking risk is an important learning disposition, especially for children in early childhood. “Risk is not necessarily a danger that needs to be avoided, but rather something that needs to be managed” (Sandseter & Kennair, 2011:261; Ball *et al*., 2012:16). There is a fundamental difference in the before mentioned views.

Gill (2007:15,16) presents arguments to emphasise that risk in childhood is positive. Firstly, experiences with particular kinds of risk assist children in learning how to deal with those risks. Secondly, Gill argues that children crave risk, therefore, preventing children from taking risks will create opportunities to seek out risky situations in dangerous ways. Thirdly, Gill claims that by receiving the chance of taking risks, children achieve additional advantages where the risk is outweighed by the health and developmental advantages. These arguments are associated with child development and have strong intuitive appeal (Gill, 2007:16).

Adams (2001:7) differentiates between subjective and objective risk. Objective risk entails predetermined, noticeable or measurable risk, whereas subjective risk can be described as how a person perceives risk in diverse situations. Sandseter (2009b:5) proposes that objective risk refers to the “environmental characteristics” such as heights, speed, uneven surfaces, etc. that are visible in the environment. Subjective risk refers to the “individual characteristics” such as how children’s experiences are evident through verbal (shouting, screaming, talking) and non-verbal (physically

participating in risk-taking such as climbing, sliding, jumping, running, etc.) expressions. However, according to Cooke *et al*. (2019:11), it is unfitting to accept that any risk conversation applies to all countries and cultures.

Recent research conducted by Cooke *et al*. (2019:2) highlights the issue that "beneficial risk" in early childhood research has mainly concentrated on risk-taking as a physical play activity in the outdoor environment. Cooke *et al*. (2019:2) defines beneficial risk as "engaging in experiences that take a person outside of their comfort zone and include outcomes that may be beneficial to learning, development and life satisfaction". Cook *et al*. (2019:2) additionally state that both children's and preschool teachers' experiences in ECE settings are associated with beneficial risk-taking. However, if teachers are unaware of the possible opportunities for beneficial risk-taking, they are more likely to oversee the motivation strategies necessary to manage these opportunities (Cooke *et al*., 2019:7).

Risk is inescapable and can have a negative or positive impact, however, risk-taking in play is beneficial and provides children with opportunities to experience enjoyment and learn how to act during risky conditions (Kleppe *et al*., 2017:3).

2.4 PERCEPTION OF 'RISK'

Sjöberg, Moen and Rundmo (2004:8) define risk perception as "the subjective assessment of the probability of a specified type of accident happening and how concerned we are with the consequences". This means that one particular incident can be seen in many ways. Zinn (2016) as cited in Cooke *et al*. (2019:3) explains that various features such as "experience, knowledge, culture, age and personality" have an impact on individual perception of risk and are likely to change depending on time and setting. According to Stephenson (2003:35), people will either encourage or discourage children's risk-taking depending on their perception of risk.

Niehues, Bundy, Broom and Tranter (2015:810,811) conducted a study on "parents' perceptions of risk and the ways these perceptions influence their decisions to offer children opportunities for age-appropriate risk-taking". Interviews were conducted with 37 parents divided into two groups; parents who had risky experiences in their own or their children's lives and parents who had lived a fairly harmless life. The findings of

the study show that parents who had experienced risky situations encourage their children to participate more in risky play activities with the aim of concentrating on the advantages rather than being overprotective. In contrast, parents who had experienced fewer risks concentrated more on the negative consequences (getting hurt), and how to protect children from disappointments (Niehues *et al*., 2015:810). Both groups of parents had different views of risk and ways to deal with risk (Niehues *et al*., 2015:817). Thus, parents' perceptions and views of risk will have an impact on the risky play activities that children will get to engage in. Niehues *et al*. (2015:810) further state that parents who focus only on keeping children safe, withhold their children from the advantages that risk-taking affords children. In conclusion, Niehues *et al*. (2015:817) assert that "while play is not without its risks, the learning that occurs is valuable and potential for harm is limited".

Thus, risky play is required to enable children to deal with potential hazards and harm. Experience with risky play situations exposes children to opportunities to learn to handle risks (Kvalnes, 2017:4). Little and Eager (2010:498) explain that "risk-taking can, and does, result in positive outcomes". The authors further state that "being prepared to take a risk is fundamental to human learning as we endeavour to develop new skills, try new behaviours, develop new technology, and abandon the familiar to explore what we know less well" (Little & Eager, 2010:499). Experiencing minor risks successfully during early childhood builds children's confidence and resilience and contributes to children taking bigger risks as they progress (Ball *et al*., 2012:70). In other words, creating a foundation for children to assess risks and engage in problem-solving will be valuable throughout life.

"The behaviour of young children, driven by curiosity and a need for excitement, yet curbed by their sense of danger, suggests that these junior risk experts are performing a balancing act" (Adams, 2001:1). Furthermore, Adams (2001:1) argues that even though adults control most of the children's decisions regarding risks in early childhood, needless to say, it is not always considered the best, most reliable or knowledgeable decision. Stephenson (2003:42) states that teachers should acknowledge the positive side of risk to learn that one is "adventurous, daring, brave, strong, confident and successful". Daily supervision regarding the planning of outdoor play environments is required to differentiate between hazardous and satisfactory risky

activities (Stephenson, 2003:39). Children are continuously reminded not to speak to strangers. As a result of an increasing amount of constraints, children are exposed to fewer opportunities to make their own decisions and therefore fewer opportunities to improve self-esteem and confidence (Stephenson, 2003:42).

Orestes (2015:13) suggests that society will probably encourage children to take risks in early childhood if risk-taking is seen as positive and beneficial for children's development. "For 'taking risks' we should say 'making mistakes' and being able to make mistakes at a young age is vitally important in terms of learning and development" (Armitage, 2011:1). Madge and Barker (2007:8) point out "that understanding and managing risk lie at the heart of the challenges we face today in business, government and civil society" and propose that children develop and will mature into knowledgeable, capable and experienced adults when learning to take risks during childhood (Madge & Barker, 2007:45). From this it is evident that experiencing and overcoming certain challenges are part of human life.

2.5 OUTDOOR ENVIRONMENT FOR RISKY PLAY

Van Heerden and Botha (2017:579) state that the outdoor environment has an impact on children's temperaments, new relationships with peers and efficiency in "work, play learning and health". They further assert that the outdoor environment should be prearranged, organised, sustained carefully and designed purposively concerning children's learning needs (Van Heerden & Botha, 2017:580). It is crucial for parents and teachers to make certain that the social and physical environment makes provision for children's play; or else their development and well-being are compromised (Lester & Russel, 2010:XI). The outdoor environment provides children with more chances to take part in risky play activities compared to the indoor environment (Little & Wyver, 2008:34). However, it depends on whether the social and physical environment provides for children to explore, experiment and to take risks (Little *et al*., 2012:301; Singer, Nederend, Penninx, Tajik & Boom, 2014:1234). A safe environment enhances children's development and enables them to safely explore, experiment and take risks in their surroundings (Little & Eager, 2010:498). The authors further explain that whilst children are exploring their environment, they learn to avoid injury as they take risks and therefore get physically skilled. This means that the more

a child is exposed to risk-taking in play, the more the child will develop the abilities to take risks safely.

Parents and teachers determine the time and space for children to experience play within their parameters (Lester & Russel, 2010:IX). Furthermore, the authors explain that various "social, cultural and political factors" influence children's capability to find space and time for play. Various contexts, home and ECEC settings, are identified for outdoor play and risk-taking possibilities (Little *et al*., 2011:115). Little and Wyver (2008:39) propose that parents and teachers should aim to provide children with a secure outdoor environment, yet sustaining a challenging, creatively and exciting one. Sandseter (2009a:439) and Little and Eager (2010:498) argue that resources in the environment play an essential role in permitting risky play opportunities and experiences for children.

Many children do not have the privilege to be exposed to an outdoor environment where they can socialise with peers (Kvalnes, 2017:4). If the environment does not provide children with some form of risk, children will search for it somewhere else (Brussoni *et al*., 2012:3141). In the past children used to play freely in natural environments, but this has changed with children now playing at home in their outdoor gardens (Sandseter *et al*., 2019:4). This is due to a lack of access to space in nature to do so.

The aim of a recent study conducted by Sando and Sandseter (2020:1) was to "develop knowledge about how the affordances of the ECEC outdoor environment may facilitate physical activity and well-being simultaneously". Gibson (2015:119) defines affordance as "what the environment offers the individual and what it provides or furnishes, either good or ill". Affordance is distinctive and relative for each person and entails the person, as well as the environment (Sando & Sandseter, 2020:2). A mixed-method approach was utilised to generate data via video observations from eight ECEC institutions. The findings emphasise the significance of the physical environment's features, as well as the importance thereof to enhance children's overall well-being when engaging in risky play in ECEC outdoor settings. Distinctive features were evident in the research; a child's goals, prior experiences and physical environment have an impact on the view one has towards affordance (Sando & Sandseter, 2020:2). Furthermore, Sando and Sandseter (2020:2) note that the main

goal should be to support and encourage children to engage in play through a conducive environment. In other words, preschools, as well as parents at home, should expose children to an environment comprising of various materials to allow children to have different experiences in their play.

Similarly, in another study by Obee *et al.* (2020:1) the goal was to form a clear understanding of "how children use affordance (environmental factors that intersect with and influence human behaviours) for risky play". In the study, they used Sandseter's (2009) earlier research that concentrated on "identifying physical affordances for risky play". Data were collected from children three to four years of age at a preschool in Norway through focused-video observations (Obee *et al*., 2020:3). Furthermore, the authors identified three distinct categories concerning features found in the environment; "stable, moveable, and weather". After analysis, findings indicate that environmental features for instance "wood planks, tires, and plastic crates" are optimised by children and should be integrated within the ECE centres to allow children the opportunities to take part in risky play (Obee *et al*., 2020:16,17). Moreover, Obee *et al*. (2020:14) suggest that challenging environments for risky play can enhance the improvement of children's emotional capabilities and reduce mental diseases.

"When outdoor learning environments are places that allow inspiration and creativity to take root, for curiosity and spontaneity to be realised and importantly, for risk and failures to be viewed as positive learning experiences, children will be the beneficiaries" (Nature Play SA, 2017:5). In other words, the outdoor environment plays a crucial role to provide children with playful opportunities where optimal learning and growth can take place. It is evident in both research studies (Sando & Sanseter, 2020; Obee *et al*., 2020) that environmental affordances have a direct impact on all aspects of play, particularly risky play. Skar *et al.* (2016:1) suggest that a vast amount of time spend in nature affords children a wide range of advantages such as health and well-being. Obee *et al*. (2020:14,16) propose that a greater focus should be created in order to make room for conducive environments where children are invited to take risks in their play, enhancing risk management skills needed for safety throughout life.

2.6 THE VALUE OF OUTDOOR PLAY

Engaging in outdoor play allows children opportunities to participate in different, unrestricted and important learning experiences that are associated with both nature and the curriculum (Nature Play South Australia, 2017:6). As children are playing in the outdoor environment, in nature, many opportunities are created for essential learning experiences. Professor Guy Claxton uses the terminology; “the wondering, engaging, explaining, experimenting, imagining, reasoning, collaborating and reflecting” − all constructive qualities that children use when involved in play and learning in the outdoors (Nature Play SA, 2017:7). He further explains that powerful learning experiences can be learnt and adopted.

Prince, Allin, Sandseter & Ärlemalm-Hagsér (2013:183) point out that in several countries children’s exposure to outdoor play is wearing away. This is a huge challenge, especially with children of various age-groups at ELCs. Tremblay *et al*. (2015:6477) debate the necessity to provide available, suitable, culturally adjustable, practical, economical and expandable strategies to increase children’s risky outdoor play activities.

The document, Nature Play South Australia (2017:7), outlines the importance to make sure children have excellent, high-quality outdoor play opportunities where risk-taking is experienced and learning in the outdoors is integrated into the “Australian Curriculum and Early Learning Frameworks”. The advantages of spending time in the outdoor environment, according to Nature Play South Australia (2017:8), are listed below:

- Authentic learning and independent thinking;
- Social skills and relationships;
- Confidence;
- Physical development and well-being;
- Decreased anxiety and negative behaviours;
- Appreciation of the environment and
- Greater risk-taking and self-assessment.

Regardless of the advantages of spending time in the outdoor environment, time to do so is restricted. The reasons for this are discussed below.

2.7 REASONS FOR DECREASE IN OUTDOOR PLAY

There is a tremendous decrease in outdoor play in most countries all over the world. Various researchers note the reasons for the decrease. According to Skar, Wold, Gundersen and O'Brien (2016:4), children's exposure to screen time has increased tremendously and seems to be one of the major competitors to children's participation in outdoor play. Access to digital technology is providing children with ways they can explore the virtual world (Gill, 2007:13). Furthermore, Doliopoulou and Rizou's (2012:145) research points out that television and video games limit children's outdoor play.

Teachers are concerned that children could be kidnapped and that they are sued if a child gets hurt during an accident. Sandberg (2012:185) describes the inability to move around, caused by adults' anxieties of traffic and supposed "stranger danger", as one of the major restrictions to children's outdoor play, as well as an increase in adults' perception that they need to safeguard children from harm as play apparatus do not cater for children's best interests (Brussoni *et al*., 2012:3138). Helicopter parenting or hovering is another factor that restricts children's risky play which has posed immense challenges to children and society. Helicopter parenting refers to parents that are extremely overprotective and involved in children's activities, making decisions on behalf of them and removing obstacles to keep them safe (Odenweller, Booth-Butterfield & Weber, 2014:408). Reed, Duncan, Lucier-Greer, Fixelle and Ferraro (2016:s.p.) conceptualise helicopter parenting as "a need-frustrating social environment". Reed *et al*. (2016:s.p.) further point out that "a supportive family environment is expected to promote health and well-being by satisfying an individual's needs, whereas a negative family environment is expected to thwart health and well-being by frustrating an individual's needs". Supporting children's risky play contributes to healthy development and decreases their frustrations when they are allowed to make decisions themselves. Moreover, Kvalnes (2017:9) asserts that society is still surrounded by helicopter parents' extreme focus on danger and fears rather than focusing on providing challenging adventures to children. Supportive parents are an imperative facet of children's development, if appropriate.

Goldstein (2012:6) argues that children today do not receive sufficient support, encouragement and time to participate in free play activities. The lack of support from

adults is due to a rushed way of life and an enhanced focus on academics and enrichment activities. Another imperative constraint to children's risky outdoor play opportunities is the unavailability of "proximity to nature areas and places for outdoor play" (Sandberg, 2012:185). Furthermore, the increase of "urbanisation" and parents' uncertainties and anxieties for safety restricts children's freedom and engagement in outdoor risky situations (Nature Play South Australia, 2017:4). In addition, a modern lifestyle and a fast "pace of life" reduce children's play (Doliopoulou & Rizou, 2012:133). Moreover, parents today work long hours and commuting to different areas contributes to children receiving fewer opportunities to spend time at parks and in natural environments. Doliopoulou and Rizou (2012:133) assert that a decrease in parents' and children's free time due to a vast amount of daily activities hinders children's playtime. See Figure 2.1 for a visual representation outlining the factors that restrict children's outdoor play.

Figure 2.1: Factors contributing to a decrease in children's outdoor play

2.8 THE INFLUENCE OF PARENTS AND PRESCHOOL TEACHERS ON CHILDREN'S RISKY PLAY

Without any doubt, both parents and teachers are key role players in providing children with possibilities to participate in risky play in early childhood. Parents and teachers both contribute to children's safety, however, they are also the main restriction

preventing them from risky and challenging play situations (Gill, 2007:17; Brussoni *et al*., 2012:3138). Previous studies on risky play indicate that parents and preschool teachers' attitudes and personal feelings regarding risk-taking have an influence on a child's risky play participation (Little *et al*., 2011:117; Little *et al*., 2012:303; Obee *et al*., 2021:100; Stephenson, 2003:37).

The aim of the research study conducted by Obee *et al*. (2021:99) was to form an understanding of the effect that social factors have on children's chances to participate in risky play activities. The social factors identified in the study are parents and preschool teachers' attitudes and beliefs regarding risky play. The qualitative study is conducted at a Norwegian ECEC with 28 children between the ages of three and four years, four preschool teachers and five parents. During the observations and semi-structured interviews with parents and preschool teachers, themes were identified that may enhance children's risky play opportunities in ECECs. The themes include: "assumptions about childhood, parents and practitioner attitudes, and pedagogical practices" (Obee *et al*., 2021:99). In conclusion, three key aspects are evident in the research study where the social features impact children's risk-taking opportunities: "assumptions about childhood, attitudes towards risk, and pedagogy" (Obee *et al*., 2021:102). It is evident that parents and teachers directly influence children's risky play opportunities.

Waller *et al.* (2010:439) state that the lack of children's outdoor play is because of parents' views and beliefs of their own childhood compared to modern childhood today. The section below discusses the views and attitudes of parents and preschool teachers towards risky play.

2.8.1 Parents' views and attitudes towards risky play

Parents are an essential contributor to children's risk-taking experiences in their early learning years. Sandseter (2014:439) said, "adults help to ensure children are safe when playing, but at the same time, these adults represent the most important constraints on children's opportunities to experience risks and challenges". Parents feel accountable to protect their children from getting hurt and at the same time encourage the development of skills and abilities (Obee *et al*., 2021:100). In other words, parents' fears will have an impact on whether children will be exposed to risky

play activities. According to Kvalnes (2017:5), parents' attitudes have changed in the way that safety and keeping children away from hazards and harm are the main focus. Madge and Baker (2007:19) note that parents' "attitudes to risk, and the way in which these are conveyed, are likely to have a significant impact on their children and the confidence with which they engage with the world". Nevertheless, there is only so much that parents can do to keep their children safe, and this is determined by the child's willingness to cooperate.

Morrongiello (2018:217) found that three strategies assist parents to keep their children from birth to five years safe: "teaching the child about safety, such as behavioural rules to follow, e.g., don't touch knives, modifying the environment to eliminate hazards or access to hazards, e.g., locking cabinets to prevent access to knives, and supervising". Although supervision is a powerful tool to keep children safe at home, children should be allowed to explore and experiment around the house in a challenging yet safe manner where parents only intervene when necessary (Morrongiello, 2018:218). Parents' attempt to afford children a safe outdoor environment under adult supervision is the main aim to keep children from getting hurt (Miller & Azar, 2019:1; Morrongiello, 2018:218). Miller and Azar (2019:1) note that mothers' views regarding adult supervision and children's injuries are linked to an increase in monitoring and less risk for injuries.

In previous research, sociologists have shown how parents have shifted their perceptions in a way that children in modern society are viewed as precious and requiring all parents' time and attention (Einboden, Rudge & Varcoe, 2013:561). Various authors argue that parents' concerns about safety and a negative view of risk are the main principles prevalent in society (Harper, 2017:2; Sandseter & Sando, 2016:2) . Prince *et al*. (2013:183) clearly state that society's current trend appears to be that children participate in structured activities organised by parents most of the time, and this may lead to the "domesticated" child. As a result, parents are stuck between keeping children safe and wanting to support them in taking risks hence developing independence and confidence (McFarland & Laird, 2018:161).

2.8.2 Preschool teachers' view and attitude towards children's risky play

Early childhood teachers in a Norwegian study explain that children receive less physical challenges due to an extreme focus on safety for children (Sandseter & Sando, 2016:18). They further explain that teachers feel frustrated and pressurised by the over-emphasis on safety regulations that cause children's play to be restricted in ECEC settings and therefore, harm their ability to learn to manage risks. Children constantly search for opportunities to engage in physical challenges when they play, however, teachers find it challenging to afford children with such experiences due to strict safety regulations (Stephenson, 2003:35). Moreover, teachers are challenged with many other factors when supervising children and providing them with opportunities to take risks. A "lack of time and space", as well as an environment that is "organised for safety" restricts teachers to permit risky play (Keles & Yurt, 2020:440). Kalpogianni (2019:168) agrees that the absence of appropriate space restricts children's outdoor play. Van Rooijen and Newstead (2017:953) state that:

> "Teachers must weigh up all of the influencing elements, taking into account the various practical, personal, ideological and cultural implications for themselves, the children and their setting, and then assess and prioritize them before deciding what might be an appropriate response to risk in play. However, these influencing factors are often unseen: embedded in organizational policies or pedagogical curricula, professional perceptions of parental beliefs, the unwritten implications of regulatory good practice, and cultural and society expectations of 'normal' levels of risk for children."

Teachers are responsible for keeping children safe at the ELCs. However, they are also accountable to assist children to reach their developmental milestones. Teachers are challenged in providing risky play opportunities while at the same time taking cognisance of society and parents' need for children's safety (Van Rooijen & Newstead (2017:954).

Despite these restrictions, the attitudes of teachers also seem to have an impact on children's risky play opportunities. Stephenson (2003:37) describes that children are exposed to risky play opportunities and experiences when teachers have positive attitudes and show interest and enjoyment of physical play and the outdoor

environment. Stephenson (2003:39) further explains that teachers with a positive attitude towards risk are far more willing to allow children to seek risky encounters and experience risk without being exposed to hazardous situations.

McFarland and Laird's (2017:195) investigation into prior research about "children's risk-taking in play and early childhood educators and parents' attitudes and practices related to children's outdoor risky play" shows that educators and parents believe in the significance of risky play for children. However, a prominent difference was evident in the responses. Teachers emphasised how they provided children with risky play opportunities aimed at assisting children to participate in risky situations (McFarland & Laird, 2017:166). Teachers are clearly cognisant of the advantages risk-taking holds for children's development. In contrast, parents' responses were more emotional than those of teachers. Parents indicated that they feel nervous about their children participating in risky outdoor play activities but also tried to provide children with risky challenges and prevent hovering (McFarland & Laird, 2017:167). This study was conducted in both Australia and the United States of America (USA). It was noted that the Australian curriculum outlines the importance of risk-taking for children to learn and develop optimally, whereas the USA curriculum, Developmentally Appropriate Practice (DAP), does not mention this.

In general, parents feel the need and responsibility to keep their children safe from getting hurt, and for preschool teachers, their obligation of carefulness is the main influential aim in protecting children from harm (Madge & Barker, 2007:23; McFarland & Laird, 2017:166). If parents and teachers continue to protect children in a way that does not allow risk-taking, they will become reliant and unable to make appropriate decisions associated with risky play. In contrast, Orestes (2015:14) claims that if children are exposed to risk and problem-solving activities during childhood with support from adults, they will be more likely to make good decisions later on without adult support.

2.9 CATEGORIES AND CHARACTERISTICS OF RISKY OUTDOOR PLAY

In a study conducted by Stephenson (2003:36) based on four-year-old children's risk-taking in play, various elements were identified; "attempting something never done before, feeling on the borderline of 'out of control' often because of height or speed,

and overcoming fear". Stephenson (2003:36) explains that the children seem to be competent and in control of their physical capabilities. In the study, Stephenson (2003:36) asked the following question: "What makes a physical experience seem 'risky' to a 4-year-old"? The findings suggest that the important elements seemed to be that children engaging in activities for the first time, feeling the excitement when engaged in these activities and therefore overcoming the fear experienced.

In a study conducted by Greenfield (2003:4), four-year-old children were asked to express their views and feelings about the outdoor play area. It is evident that "the bikes, swings and 'zoom slide'" were amongst the favourites. All of these areas have mutual characteristics – "risk, speed, excitement, thrills, uncertainty and challenge".

Sandseter (2007:238) used the findings of the studies conducted by Stephenson (2003:36) and Greenfield (2003:4) to perform a new study based on two Norwegian preschools. The study considered both teachers' and children's views of what are risky, even though they are not similar (Sandseter, 2007:250). In a qualitative study, she used observations and semi-structured interviews with preschool teachers and children. Sandseter (2007:239) observed 38 children between the ages three-to-five-year old and created six categories of risky play. The categories are grounded on "perceived and actual risk" (Sandseter, 2007:250).

Sandseter (2007:242) identified the following risky play categories:

a) play with great heights;

b) play with high speed;

c) play with dangerous tools;

d) play near dangerous elements;

e) rough and tumble play; and

f) play where children can get lost/disappear.

A common feature was evident from the interview responses and observations; "excitement and exhilaration" experienced by children, as well as the aspiration to search for such experiences regardless of the fact that it could cause injuries (Sandseter, 2007:240).

In another qualitative study, Sandseter (2009b:9) wanted to expand her research on the categories and characteristics of risky play. She observed 29 children between the ages of four and five years for five months in two Norwegian preschools. After analysis, Sandseter (2009b:11) found that “two categories of risk characteristics emerged”, environmental characteristics (preschool teachers forming part of the environment) and individual characteristics (how children engage in play). The way children perceive risk in a particular situation, as well as the way of approaching risks, have an impact on both the individual and environmental characteristics (Sandseter, 2009b:20). Furthermore, Sandseter (2009b:13) discuss each of the previously identified categories of risky play following environmental and individual characteristics. An important contribution of her research indicates that “both features of the play environment, as well as children’s risk-taking actions based on their subjective risk perception, influence the objective risk present in the play situation” (Sandseter, 2009b:3). One of the major contributions of her study is that adults play an essential part in children’s risky play activities. This is evident in Sandseter’s (2009b:3) conclusion where she indicates that “the supervising adults’ risk perception in the situation will influence how they react to the risk-taking child, and thus their actions of interfering, constraining, or encouraging risky play will constitute factors that contribute to the potential risk in the situation”. Sandseter’s (2007, 2009) research is relevant to children’s risky play in various settings in South Africa, even though the studies were conducted in Norway. The following diagram representation (Figure 2.2) was designed to illustrate the categories, definitions and examples of risky play based on Sandseter’s (2007, 2009) research.

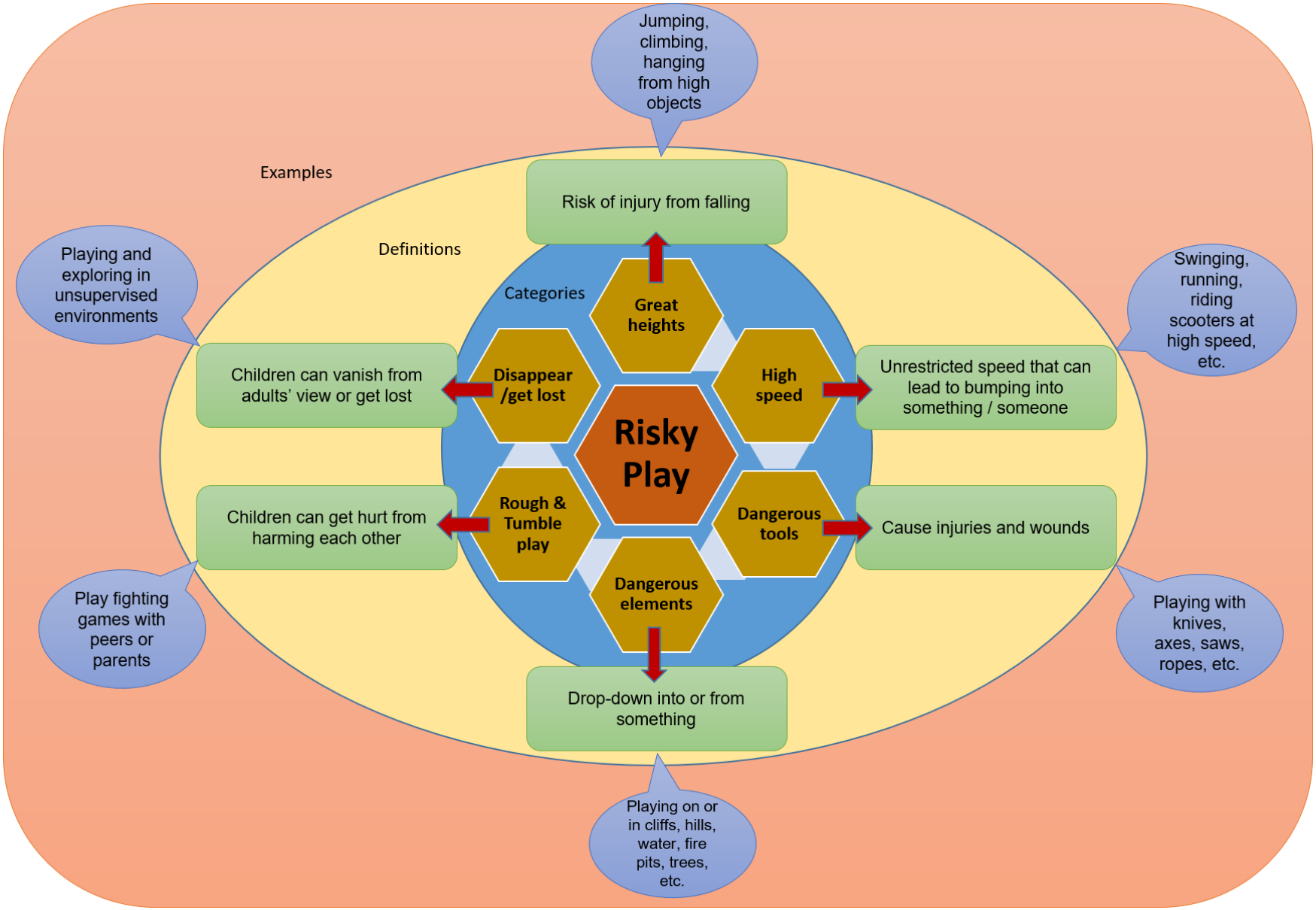


Figure 2.2: The categories, definitions and examples of risky play

Risky play is a diverse concept with various meanings for authors around the world. However, Sandseter's (2007, 2009) research on risky play is well-known and accepted in the literature. Figure 2.2 illustrates how each risky play category is defined and appropriate examples are provided. The centre of the figure illustrates the six risky play categories. Moving from the inner side to the middle, a definition for each category is given and the final outer layer points out an appropriate example reflecting the categories and definitions.

2.10 THE ADVANTAGES OF RISKY PLAY

Even though risky play holds many advantages for a child's development, opportunities to partake in risky play have been reduced over time. Children are less exposed to adequate opportunities to respond to challenges and explore risky situations in outdoor play (Little *et al*., 2012:301) due to the constraints of the school and home environments (Little, 2010a:3).

Lester and Russel (2010:IX) assert that there are several contradictory explanations regarding the advantages of play. They explain that "for example, adults' attitudes towards children's play vary: some ignore it, or dismiss it as a waste of time; some curb play as something dangerous or subversive, while others appropriate it as a learning or socialisation mechanism". Adults aim to protect children from any harm, however, taking risks in play is an essential and normal part of childhood and child development (Sandseter & Sando, 2016:1). Exposure to risky situations in early childhood is one of the unintentional benefits which construct a foundation to understand and deal with risks (Kvalnes, 2017:3). According to Kvalnes (2017:3), a professional adult must handle serious situations at work with a composed attitude, and experiences with dangerous conditions prepare one for such work. Therefore, engaging in risky situations during childhood seems to prepare one for handling risks in adulthood.

A study was carried out in 2015 on "the relationship between risky outdoor play and health" by Brussoni *et al*. (2015a). In the study, 21 articles were analysed based on children getting lost, playing at heights, rough-and-tumble play and environments that promote risky play. In their analysis, they point out that the results are mostly positive. Brussoni *et al*. (2015a:345) claim that conducive environments that promote risky play

and children playing where they can get lost, are more likely to have a beneficial effect on physical play and health, and a negative effect on inactive behaviour. Engaging in play with heights is not associated with serious injuries and rough-and-tumble play does not enhance aggression in boys but rather promotes social abilities.

Many researchers have noted the beneficial effects that risky play has on all the various domains of development (Goldstein, 2012:6; Little, 2010a:3; Mardell *et al*., 2016:4). It is evident from research that risky play is valuable for children's overall health, well-being and development. However, the belief that taking risks is valuable for children's development does not imply that one becomes unconcerned about children's safety, but rather that one needs to find the balance between risky and hazardous situations and healthy, risky experiences (Eager & Little, 2011:s.p.). A child engaging in risky play develops skills within the various developmental domains which are discussed below.

2.10.1 Physical advantages

Obee, Sandseter, Gerlach and Harper (2021:104) and Goldstein (2012:23) emphasise the important concern regarding global inactive lifestyles, childhood obesity and a decline in physical activity. Inactive lifestyles due to a decrease in outdoor spaces results in children having fewer opportunities to engage in play in public outdoor settings. Public spaces have evolved into sport and traditional playgrounds (Goldstein, 2012:23). Fjørtoft (2004:31) indicates that children's gross motor skills such as "running, jumping, throwing, climbing, crawling, rolling, swinging and sliding" are more evident in nature play rather than playing in traditional preschool playgrounds. Fjørtoft (2004:23) also explains that children find traditional play areas boring and rather prefer natural play areas in nature. Also, natural play areas are more likely to enhance the development of children's gross and fine motor skills.

Children spend more time indoors rather than exploring the outdoor environment and engaging in physical activities. Sando and Sandseter (2020:2) note that positive physical activity behaviours will develop if children are exposed to vigorous playful environments. Furthermore, Brussoni *et al.* (2012:3136) point out the advantage of taking risks in play for children's physical development and perceptual-motor skills and in the process, children gain experience in handling dangerous activities. Various

authors assert that risky play participation positively increases children's physical activity and enhances health and well-being (Brussoni *et al*., 2015b:6430; Sandseter & Kennair, 2011:268); Tremblay, Gray, Babcock, Barnes, Bradstreet, Carr, Chabot, Choquette, Chorney & Collyer, 2015:6478). Moreover, risky play has been shown to have a beneficial effect in reducing ADHD (attention deficit hyperactivity disorder) which is the inability to focus on a particular task, hyperactivity, and impulsivity (Goldstein 2012:23). Therefore, in order to promote health and well-being in children, opportunities to be physically active must be created.

2.10.2 Social advantages

Spending time outdoors promotes social interaction and learning. Other advantages that originate from children participating in risky play are the skills and lessons they learn unintentionally as they handle challenges and risks (Sandseter & Sando, 2016:3). Being exposed to risk-taking in play seems to have an increase in the development of children's self-confidence, risk management strategies, self-regulation skills and social behaviour (Brussoni *et al*., 2015b:6425; Sandseter & Kennair, 2011:260). It is important to note that during playful activities children explore, experiment, learn and exercise creative and innovative behaviours and social skills (Bruner, 1972, Pellegrini, Dupuis & Smith, 2007:269).

2.10.3 Emotional advantages

Little *et al.* (2011:114) state that children develop the ability to become independent, self-sufficient and learn to manage risks during early childhood. Furthermore, engaging in play assist children in improving emotional well-being such as decreasing "anxiety, depression, aggression and sleep problems" (Goldstein, 2012:23). Kvalnes (2017:6) asserts that the strategies adults implement to prevent the supposed cotton-wool children from getting hurt might harm their emotional and physical development. Restricting risky play might have a detrimental effect on children's emotional well-being and overall health. According to Obee *et al*. (2021:100), designing increased risk-taking in ECE environments may contest some of the disturbing tendencies evident in children's emotional development.

2.10.4 Cognitive advantages

Sutton-Smith (1997:17) remarks that “a child who is not being stimulated, by being played with, and who has few opportunities to explore his or her surroundings, may fail to link up fully those neural connections and pathways which will be needed for later learning”. Creating opportunities and allowing children to play improves cognitive development and creates new neural connections (Goldstein, 2012:5) resulting in positive outcomes later in life. Children have different developmental capabilities, therefore, one aspect may be challenging for one child and hazardous for another (Stephenson, 2003:39). Jellyman *et al*. (2019:1) confirm that risky play and opportunities to move around freely promote children’s cognitive development and overall health. Engaging in risky play permits children with various chances to develop knowledge and skills learnt from spending time in the outdoors. Wyver (2017:86) explains that less time spent outdoors is more likely to have an impact on cognitive development. One of the areas that relates to cognition is that of visual perception; myopia (short-sightedness). The Sydney Myopia Study (as cited in Wyver, 2017:92) found that outdoor play serves as a protective measure against myopia. The study clearly emphasises the importance and advantages of the outdoors on perceptual-cognitive development. In other words, children who spend more time outdoors are less likely to develop myopia. Wyver (2017:92) additionally explains that outdoor play empowers children to use peers and natural structures to lessen cognitive exertion.

2.11 IMPLICATIONS IF CHILDREN ARE NOT EXPOSED TO RISKY PLAY

We live in a society where people are more and more conscious of risk. Regardless of this, risky play has been found to enhance all domains of development. Engaging in risky play empowers children to take emotional and social risks, thus promoting these developmental domains. A lack of opportunities for developmentally appropriate risk-taking may cause the inability in children to develop emotional skills to deal with the challenges of daily life, making children more prone to mental illness (Brussoni *et al*., 2012:3135; Sandseter & Kennair, 2011:275). Eager and Little (2011:s.p.) state that cognitive development is negatively impacted when children are restricted from engaging in risky play. Furthermore, restricting children from engaging in risky play negatively influences their executive function (EF).

EF is difficult to define, however, most authors would agree that EF refers to a child's capability to have control over ideas and to take the required actions to respond appropriately and flexibly to the environment (Sharples, n.d.:1). EF comprises skills such as, "planning, working memory, changing strategy and response inhibition" (Wyver, 2017:88), as well as inhibitory control and cognitive flexibility. According to Barker, Semenov, Michaelson, Provan, Snyder and Munakata (2014:593), EF in early childhood "support a number of higher-level cognitive processes, including planning and decision-making, maintenance and manipulation of information in memory, inhibition of unwanted thoughts, feelings, and actions, and flexible shifting from one task to another". Developing these skills during early childhood promotes children's self-regulation skills. Self-regulation, according to Blair and Ursache (2011:320), is defined as "volitional control of attention, behaviour, and EF for the purposes of goal-directed action". Blair and Ursache (2011:320) further state that self-regulation and EF promotion are impacted by experiences. Therefore, it is vital that children are exposed to various risky outdoor play experiences to assist in developing these skills.

Moreover, Sharples (n.d.:2) asserts that preschool children's abilities to control their thinking are a better indicator of "school readiness than either IQ, entry-level maths or reading ability". These are imperative skills for children's school readiness. Mashburn and Pianta (2006:152) explain that school readiness is the way in which a child can efficiently participate independently in the social environment. Therefore, developing EF contributes to a child's school readiness. However, the development of EF is impacted by factors evident in the environment that contributes to children being able to adapt their social behaviour and physical well-being (Wyver, 2017:89). In other words, parents at home and teachers at school might negatively impact children's EF because they either restrict or encourage physical play. EF is known to be improved by physical activities. Therefore, when children are given appropriate opportunities to partake in risky outdoor play, EF will develop.

Walsh (1993:25) comments that a restrictive preschool can cause children to become uninterested; this will encourage them to seek and create challenges in unsafe ways. Gill (2007:17) and Sandseter (2011:7) agree with this statement in explaining that limiting children's risk-taking activities is likely to result in a risk-averse society where people cannot deal with daily events, as well as children exploring more dangerous activities in uncontrolled ways. Restricting children's risky play opportunities might lead

to anxiety and fear of taking risks later in life (Gill, 2007:14). In the short term, making preschools free from any hazards will unintentionally also remove all the challenges (Stephenson, 2003:40). The author further explains that in the long term, due to a lack of challenging experiences, children might not have the confidence in their specific capabilities to partake in physical challenges. An environment that is made too safe and where all dangerous resources are taken away propose a risk to children because they lack the opportunities to develop the skills and behaviours to be safe.

Mental or physical health problems, as well as obesity, could become a reality if children are restricted from taking risks in play (Brussoni *et al*., 2012:3135). Eager and Little (2011:s.p.) further explain that children who are completely removed from any risk-taking opportunities are more likely to develop complications such as a lack of independence and a decrease in learning, awareness and decision-making skills.

Brussoni *et al*. (2012:3134) propose that "injury prevention plays a key role in keeping children safe, but emerging research suggests that imposing too many restrictions on children's outdoor risky play hinders their development". According to Rimsza, Schackner, Bowen and Marshall (2002:1), approximately 90% of children's injuries can be avoided. One must take into account that behaviour might need to change to minimise the risk for children's injuries and not focus solely on the environment where play takes place (Morrongiello, 2018:217). "Some of the risks that children will take may result in injury and one reason why some children may be at elevated risk for recurring injuries is their own perception and appraisal of the risk" (Beneteau, 2017:26). Due to the fear of children getting injured during play, countries all over the world are implementing risk-management processes to keep children safe. Sandseter and Sando (2016:4) point out that in order to diminish the risk of injury, the height of playground apparatus is reduced, surfaces are softened and sharp edges are removed, therefore, making the playground more safe and secure for children.

2.12 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Kivunja (2018:46) describes a theoretical framework as theories developed by experts that provide the foundation and guides the particular study. This study highlights parents and teachers' experiences and views of risky outdoor play in ELCs. Various factors impact parents and teachers' views pertaining to risky play and how they will

act upon them at home and ELCs. Therefore, the theory that underpins this study is based on Barbara Rogoff's sociocultural theory focusing on how children cultivate knowledge by interacting with others and the social environment (Rogoff, 2008). Vygotsky's research "has laid the foundations for moving the unit of analysis beyond the individual and into the dynamic region between the individual and the society in which the individual lives" (Fleer, 2009:9). In the past, the individual and the context were seen as two different entities. The sociocultural theory emphasises the role of culture in children's development and learning process.

Play research has favoured Western society's cultural practices, however, Rogoff (2003) and Vygotsky (1978) propose arguments to emphasise that play should rather be viewed as "socio-cultural specific". Culture, according to Jones and Mistry (2019:60) can be described as "a set of beliefs, values, and practices shared by a group defined by ethnicity, nationality, or other collective affiliation". This outlook of culture suggests that the person and the context are separated from each other based on the notion that constant collaborations amongst children, parents, teachers and peers signify separable and individual behaviour (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006:794). However, sociocultural theorists Rogoff (2003) and Vygotsky (1978) argue that each part of the context are filled with culture due to the contexts that are experienced via cultural views and diverse understandings of the world.

Jones and Mistry (2019:74) claim that during the early years, a sociocultural approach is the best approach. Saracho (2017:36) further indicates that play is interpreted in relation to a particular culture. Jones and Mistry (2019:59) point out two imperative perceptions regarding children's development that are emphasised within the sociocultural theory; "a) the inseparability of person and context and (b) culturally situated meaning-making as the integration of person and context in the developmental process". This sociocultural perception entails the preschool and home environment as cultural communities where teachers and parents, as well as children, are the participants; inseparable from each other. Figure 2.3 below depicts the inseparability of the context and the participants within the sociocultural environment.

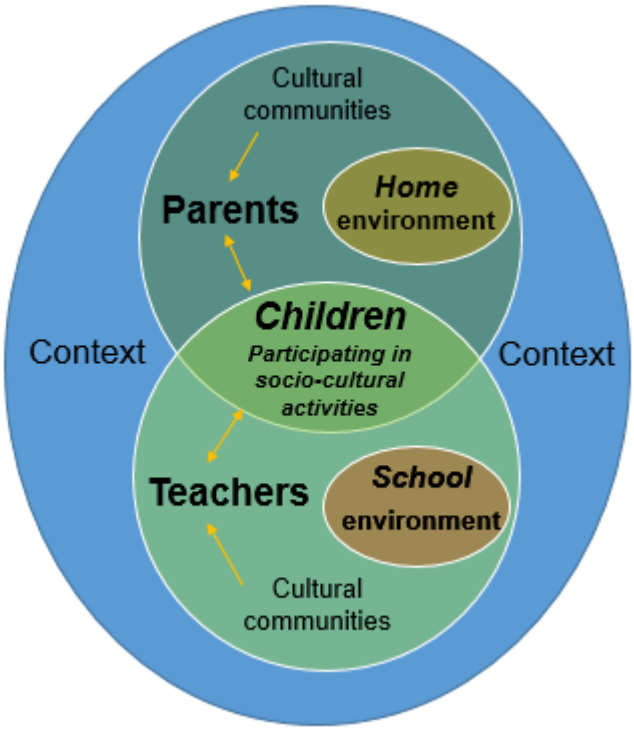


Figure 2.3: Sociocultural perception regarding children's development

Rogoff (2003) extended Vygotsky's sociocultural theory by asserting that children's development is grounded in a cultural, social and historical perspective. Rogoff (2008:61) explains three planes of analysis on sociocultural activity: "apprenticeship, guided participation, and participatory appropriation" in association with community/institutional, personal and interpersonal developmental processes. She regards the planes as "inseparable, mutually constituting planes comprising activities that can become the focus of analysis at different times, but with the others necessarily remaining in the background of the analysis" (Rogoff, 2008:58). Otherwise stated, some parts of the risky play activities are separated from others in the foreground without failing to forget about the other parts making up the whole activity. A child taking a risk in play (foreground) still includes the environment, resources, peers, parents or teachers (background) in the activity. Figure 2.4 illustrates the planes of analysis in relation to the developmental processes and how they are connected and inseparable from each other. The three planes of analysis are discussed below in Figure 2.4.

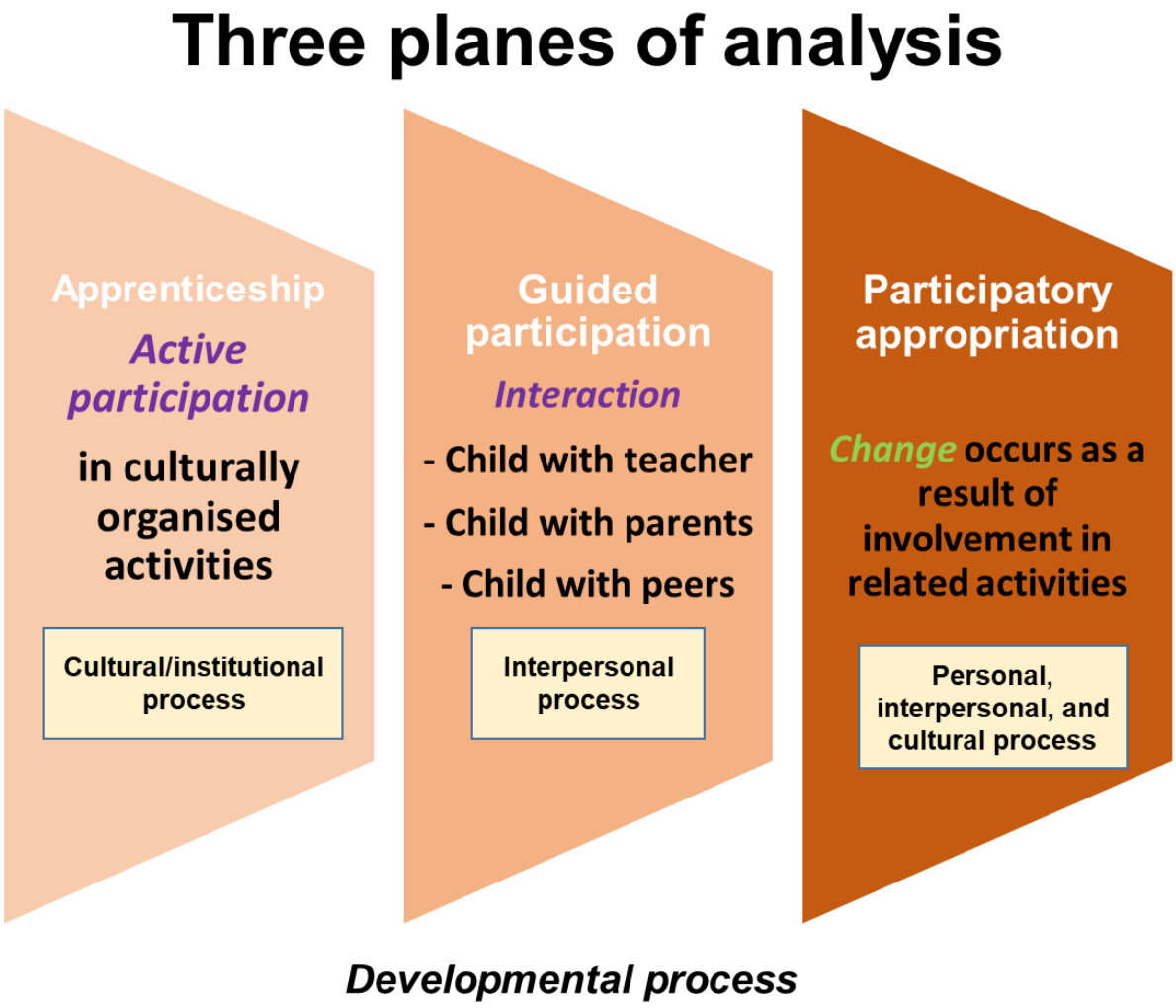


Figure 2.4: Planes of analysis in relation to developmental processes

2.12.1 Apprenticeship

The main aim of apprenticeship, the first plane of analysis, is to expose less experienced individuals to situations in which they can become more experienced (Rogoff, 2008:61). The author further states that this aim is reached when individuals participate in culturally structured activities with community members.

Children participate in risky play, handling their own activity along with peers in community/institutional practices, such as sliding or swinging, etc. that was established many decades ago. However, historical changes are taking place, such as a risk-adverse society where safety is the main concern of adults in allowing children to partake in risky play.

Teachers planning for children's risky play face many constraints, such as own views and beliefs, childhood experiences, parents' views, an environment that does not promote risky play, safety, litigation (Little *et al*., 2011:116), etc. in providing opportunities for risky play. These constraints have an impact on the child's activity participation and in turn impacts on the other developmental processes, namely guided participation and participatory appropriation.

2.12.2 Guided participation

The second plane of analysis, guided participation, involves direct interaction between people, while participating in cultural activities. The concept of guided participation entails the "mutual involvement of individuals and their social partners, communicating and coordinating their involvement as they participate in a sociocultural structured collective activity" (Rogoff & Gardner, 1984). Guided participation is associated with Vygotsky's "Zone of Proximal Development" (ZPD) where the individual is made part of the particular activity and supported through the participation therein. Rogoff (2008:58) claims that:

> "Children take part in the activities of their community, engaging with other children and with adults in routine and tacit as well as explicit collaboration (both in each other's presence and in otherwise socially structured activities) and in the process of participation become prepared for later participation in related events."

Guided participation on an interpersonal plane involves children participating in risky play activities provided by parents and teachers and in the process gaining experience in taking risks and learning how to manage these activities later on. Both parents and teachers play an essential part in guiding the child's participation in risky play activities to become mature risk-takers. Rogoff (2008:65) points out that communication and coordination play a vital part in the process of guided participation. Collaborations between the child, parents and teachers allow for progression from an inexperienced risk-taking child to an experienced risk-taking child. Therefore, parents and teachers communicating with children as part of supporting them in risk-taking activities are

crucial. Supporting and guiding the child during the interpersonal process is not separated from the personal and cultural process during all three planes of analysis.

2.12.3 Participatory appropriation

The third plane of analysis, participatory appropriation, states how “individuals change through their involvement with one or another activity, in the process of becoming more prepared for subsequent involvement in related activities” (Rogoff, 2008:65). Rogoff (2008) argues that “participatory appropriation” is used to contrast “internalization” in conferring children’s improvement when involved in sociocultural activities. The reason for contrasting “internalization” is because it usually separates the activity from the context (Rogoff, 2008:66). Rogoff (2008:67) refers to the term “appropriation” as the change that occurs when a child participates in an activity and “participation” entails the creative actions taken to understand and add to the social activity. Thus, changes take place within the child when taking part in risky play. Within participatory appropriation, time is not separated into the past, present and future (Rogoff, 2008:67). When a child participates in a risky activity based on experience, the previous participation contributes to the current activity by being prepared for it. In this way, the past spreads to the present and the future. Therefore, Rogoff (2008:69) claims that development within participatory appropriation is characterised by personal, interpersonal and cultural planes of focus in the sociocultural activity.

2.13 INTERNATIONAL AND NATIONAL TRENDS IN TERMS OF RISKY PLAY

Studying the various trends of risky play in various countries provided me with an opportunity to compare the views and beliefs of that of risky play in South Africa. The following countries are selected to be compared to South Africa: Norway, Australia, New Zealand, China and Kenya. These first and third-world countries are selected because of the diverse cultures and different perspectives they have with regards to early childhood development and education. Policy documents, as well as other credible journal articles on risky play in the particular countries, were used to compile the table below.

Table 2.1: Comparing risky play in various countries

	Norway	Australia	New Zealand	China	Kenya	South Africa
Early Childhood Education Curriculum / framework on risky play	Framework Plan for the Content and Tasks of Kindergartens (NMER, 2017).	Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) for children from birth to five years (EYLF, 2009).	Te Whāriki (Ministry of Education, 2017) curriculum.	China does not offer a single curriculum but rather adopts various and diverse approaches to children's learning (Zhu & Wang, 2005:59). In China, early year's education from three to six years is not included in the "universal education system" (Qi & Melhuish, 2017:268).	Early Childhood Development Service Standard Guidelines (ECDSSG) (MoE, 2006) for children from conception to eight years.	The South African National Curriculum Framework (NCF) for children from Birth to Four Department of Basic Education (DBE, 2015) and the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) (DBE, 2011) from Grade R to Grade 12.
Importance of risky play for children's learning and development	Emphasises the importance of learning and development to take place through sufficient opportunities for risky play throughout Norway (Obee *et al*., 2021:99). Kindergartens intend to allow children to enjoy various outdoor experiences and investigate nature as a field for	Outdoor physical play environments are an important feature of children's learning (EYLF, 2009:18).	The main aim of the Te Whāriki (MoE, 2017:24,47) curriculum is to keep children safe from harm, as well as to encourage children to develop the confidence to "take risks and physical challenges".	Rao and Li (2009:100) state that "developmental appropriateness and individual needs" are considered to be the main principles in preschool children's education.	Emphasise that learning takes place through play, is child-centred and focused on children's holistic development (ECDSSG) (MoE, 2006:16).	The main aim of the NCF is focused on well-being as an important aspect of children's learning and development (DBE, 2015:13). Children are provided with numerous challenging experiences (DBE, 2015:15).

	Norway	Australia	New Zealand	China	Kenya	South Africa
	play and learning (NMER 2017:52).					
Outdoor environment	The outdoor environment must be safe, yet challenging and provide children with various opportunities to take part in diverse movement activities (NMER, 2017:19).	The outdoor environment promotes "open-ended interactions, spontaneity, risk-taking, exploration, discovery and connection with nature" (ELYF, 2009:18).	The outdoor environment provides for challenging opportunities but is not hazardous Te Whāriki (Ministry of Education, 2017:28).	The outdoor environment must be safe from hazards, "well-maintained, easily supervised, and regularly inspected" (Hu, Li, De Marco & Chen, 2015:58).	The outdoor environment must cater for the amount of children to "play and run around safely" and equipment must be safe and not cause injuries (ECDSSG) (MoE, 2006:7).	The outdoor environment must be equipped to provide children with challenging experiences for physical movement (DBE, 2015:60). Conversely, there is insufficient information pertaining to outdoor risky play (Van Heerden & Botha, 2017:591).
Role of the teacher during risky play	Preschool teachers are required to encourage and motivate children to participate in risky play (NMER, 2017:50).	Teachers in ECEC settings in Australia point out that they function in a regulatory environment which puts a lot of emphasis on safety hence restricting them from providing children with challenging outdoor experiences (Little, 2010a:7; Bown & Sumsion, 2007:47).	Assist and motivate children to partake in risky play and to take on new challenges and endeavours (Te Whāriki (Ministry of Education, 2017:29).	Teachers' role is to "design environments, arrange time for outdoor play, supervise children's safety, and facilitate children's learning and development" (Hu *et al*., 2015:57).	Teachers have the main responsibility to ensure that the physical outdoor environment provides enough room and capture children's interest to engage in playful activities in a safe space (Lee, 2006:435).	CAPS (DBE, 2011:10) explains that preschool teachers comprise the role to prepare and provide a safe environment and varied possibilities for children to play and investigate their surroundings under the

	Norway	Australia	New Zealand	China	Kenya	South Africa
						supervision of the teacher. The teacher supports children when engaged in challenging events (NCF) (DBE, 2015:15).
Teachers' views about risky play	Teachers have a positive view of risky play *(Little et al*., 2012:311). However, according to Sandseter and Sando (2016), teachers are beginning to limit children's outdoor risky play due to safety precautions.	Preschool teachers regard risky play as imperative for children's "learning and development" (McFarland & Laird, 2018:166).	Teachers view risky play as beneficial for children but find themselves restricting risky activities in line with parents' beliefs (Hanrahan, Aspden & McLaughlin, 2019:30).	Teachers do not encourage outdoor play because they are fearful of children getting hurt which are more likely to occur during risky outdoor play (Hu *et al*., 2015:71).	Quay (2014:751) found that teachers in Kenya show less interest in children's physical education.	Teachers have a positive view regarding outdoor play (risky play) (Van Heerden & Botha, 2017:590).
Parents' views about risky play	Approximately 40% of parents by no means or rarely allow children to play outdoors without adult supervision (Skar *et al*., 2016:3).	Parents view children's risk-taking as an essential part of learning and becoming competent adults, however, they have a need to keep children safe (Little, 2010b:326).	Parents view risky play as essential for children's development yet children receive limited opportunities to engage in such activities (Jelleyman *et al.*, 2019:14).	Various beliefs in different parts of China. In general, parents belief that play is imperative for a child's development, but not for academic preparation (Lin & Li, 2018:163).	Parents and the community do not regard physical play as essential for children's education and development but rather see it as just another activity (Quay, 2014:751).	A lack of information regarding parents' views of children's risky outdoor play in South Africa.

2.13.1 Explaining the table − comparing risky play in various countries

Norway implements the Norwegian Framework Plan for Content and Tasks of Kindergartens (NMER, 2017) which is well-structured in taking on a holistic approach to children's development. In Australia, the Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) for children from birth to five years is used (EYLF, 2009). New Zealand is at the forefront of ECE and implements the Te Whāriki early childhood curriculum (MoE, 2017). China makes use of various approaches to the young child's learning and does not adopt a single curriculum (Zhu & Wang, 2005:59). Preschool children from three to six years are not seen as part of the education system in China (Qi & Melhuish, 2017:268). The Early Childhood Development Service Standard Guidelines (ECDSSG) (MoE, 2006) is used in Kenya to outline the services and programs for children from conception to eight years. In South Africa, "The South African National Curriculum Framework for children from birth to four" (DBE, 2015) and the "Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement" (CAPS) (DBE, 2011) from Grade R (five years of age) to Grade 12 are the curricula used. The reason for including the CAPS curriculum is because this study is based on children from four to five years of age, which is linked to both curricula.

Norway, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa show many similarities in terms of how each country views the significance of risky play for children's development and learning. All of these countries emphasise the importance of allowing children to engage in risky experiences safely (ELYF, 2009:18; DBE, 2015:15; MoE, 2017:24,47; Obee *et al*., 2021:100). In China, kindergartens are more likely to spend time on academic learning activities in the indoor environment focusing on academics to ensure children obtain skills and knowledge (Hu *et al*., 2015:69; Luo, Tamis-LeMonda & Song 2013:844) rather than spending time in the outdoors (Hu *et al*., 2015:69). Whereas, all Norwegian preschools are focusing on learning through playful activities in different contexts instead of concentrating on formal schooling (Sandseter, 2009b:9). In Kenya, learning is child-centred and focused on children's holistic development (ECDSSG) (MoE, 2006:16). However, a study conducted by Mutindi, Wadende and Nyambega (2019:172) found that approximately 90% of teachers in ECD centres do not employ play as part of young children's learning and development.

There is consensus in the policies of Norway, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa that the outdoor environment should provide children with risky and challenging

experiences. Australia specifically emphasises that the outdoors are used as a foundation for children's learning and development. In other countries such as China and Kenya, it is stated that the outdoor environments in kindergartens must be safe from hazards in order not to cause injuries to children (ECDSSG) (MoE, 2006:7; Hu *et al*., 2015:58). Furthermore, urbanisation in China is one of the key contributors for a lack of physical play outdoors and has caused children to have fewer opportunities for risky outdoor play (Hu *et al*., 2015:56). The policy documents, guidelines and frameworks do not provide sufficient information regarding learning in the outdoors in South Africa (DBE, 2015). Van Heerden and Botha (2017:591) point out that "there is still a gap in terms of specific guidelines for a safe and healthy outdoor environment, including outdoor play pedagogy, as well as outdoor play for learning and development".

In New Zealand, Kaiako, meaning "the feeder of knowledge", which in the South African context is the preschool teacher, supports and motivate children to take risks in their play with speed, heights, strength and actual materials (Te Whāriki) (MoE, 2017:28). Kaiako encourages and empowers children to assess safe risk-taking through conversations (Te Whāriki) (MoE, 2017:50). Previous research exploring the teacher's role during outdoor play, which is "how teachers design environments, arrange time for outdoor play, supervise children's safety, and facilitate children's learning and development" are nearly non-existent in Chinese kindergartens (Hu *et al*., 2015:57). According to the Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) (2017:7), one of the main components in the Australian Curriculum Framework to direct teachers' practice, is the importance of outdoor learning. Spending more time outdoors provides teachers with ample opportunities to motivate children and assist them in learning their potential (Nature Play SA, 2017:5). Countries such as Norway and South African preschool teachers aim to act as a facilitator in supporting children when exploring their environments and engagement in risky play activities (DBE, 2015:15; NMER, 2017:50). Kenyan teachers are expected to take responsibility to ensure children participate in a safe yet spacious and interesting physical environment (Lee, 2006:435).

There is unanimity amongst the majority of the countries pertaining to how teachers view children's risky outdoor play. Many studies point out that preschool teachers in Norway have a positive outlook on risky play (Little *et al*., 2012:311), however, even

though Norway has strong beliefs for encouraging children's risky outdoor play, more constraints are increasingly introduced to enhance children's safety (Sandseter *et al*., 2019:3,4). Australian teachers indicate that policy regulations limit the variety of play and the controlling environment severely influences on the provision of outdoor risky play (Little *et al*., 2012:312). Teachers in New Zealand view risky play as beneficial for children but find themselves restricting risky activities because they are concerned with parents' beliefs and responses (Hanrahan *et al*., 2019:30). Furthermore, teachers seem to use their "pedagogical knowledge and personal understanding" of the ECD guidelines to advantage children's capabilities to participate safely in risky play (Hanrahan *et al*., 2019:31). Despite the aim of providing children with at least two hours outdoor play daily, teachers will rather spend time indoors to minimise fear of children getting hurt during outdoor play (Hu *et al*., 2015:67,71). In Kenya, teachers do no show a lot of support towards children's risky play activities and therefore do not encourage or motivate children to partake in risky play (Quay, 2014:751). A study conducted by Van Heerden and Botha (2017:590, 591) found that South African teachers and student teachers view outdoor play as critical for children's holistic development and provides children with ample opportunities to access spaces, objects and places in the outdoors.

Guldberg (2009:60) asserts that "the Norwegians have a special love for outdoor pursuits and are reluctant to restrict children's freedom to roam outdoors – without adults watching them – to the same extent that other nations do". However, in a study conducted by Skar *et al*. (2016:3), it was indicated that approximately 40% of Norwegian parents prevent their children to play in the outdoor environment without adult supervision. Furthermore, Skar *et al.* (2016:2) contrast how Norwegian parents recall outdoor and nature play as being the foundation of their childhood, but today they view their own children in structured and controlled sporting activities or engaged in schoolwork. Australian parents believe that children should take risks in their play and that it contributes to their learning and development, as well as increasing confidence, motor skills and growth in problem-solving (Little, 2010b:326). However, parents assert that their children's risk-taking is dependent on the particular situation (Little, 2010b:326). It is noted that parents in New Zealand are aware and understand that risky play holds many advantages for their children's development. However, many children only sometimes participate in risky play activities (Jelleyman *et al.*,

2019:14). Chinese parents' vision on their children's academic success and learning is seen as a "serious rather than playful and entertaining activity" (Luo *et al*., 2013:847). Parents in Kenya do not value play-based learning and rather prefer that their children learn reading, writing and mathematics skills (Mutindi *et al*., 2019:174). Currently, a lack of information regarding parents' opinions of children's risky outdoor play is prevalent in South Africa. The lack of information is acknowledged and identified as a gap in South Africa, making this study relevant and worth conducting.

2.14 CONCLUSION

In Chapter two, I explored the literature regarding the importance of risky outdoor play for children's learning and development. There is consensus in the literature that risky play in early childhood is vitally important. Therefore, the negative implications if children are not exposed to risky play was highlighted. Furthermore, I explored the role of the outdoor environment, the reasons for a decrease in outdoor play, as well as the influence parents and teachers have on children's risky play opportunities. A discussion followed on Rogoff's sociocultural theory concerning children's risky play. Within the sociocultural theory, three planes of analysis: "apprenticeship, guided participation, and participatory appropriation" in relation to personal, interpersonal, and community/institutional developmental processes were applied to explain how children develop and learn in a sociocultural environment. Finally, the early childhood curriculum policies, as well as parents and teachers' views were presented (in Table 2.1) to compare risky play in six different countries. From this comparison it is evident that there is agreement on the importance of risky play in childhood, however, various factors prevent children to partake in risky play.

Chapter three is devoted to illustrating the methodology and research design utilised to address the research questions. The paradigmatic perspectives, data collection strategies and ethical considerations are described in the following chapter.

CHAPTER THREE
RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

"Only those who will risk going too far can possibly find out how far one can go." – T. S. Eliot

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter two presented a comprehensive review of literature about parents and teachers' experiences and views of risky outdoor play in ELCs. In Chapter three I will commence with an overview of the research methodology and research process applicable to this study, as illustrated in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1: Overview of the research methodology and research process

Research methodology and process	
Paradigm	
Meta-theoretical paradigm:	Interpretivism
Methodological paradigm:	Qualitative
Research design	
Multiple case studies	
Selection of sites:	Purposive non-probability sampling
Selection of participants:	Purposive non-probability sampling
Data Generation	
Qualitative data generation techniques	Qualitative data documentation techniques
Parents	
Online semi-structured individual interview schedule	Submit interview answers on the Q-Survey platform Attach visual aids (photographs)
Teachers	
Group interviews with teachers	Verbatim written transcripts of answers provided to questions in the interviews

Research methodology and process	
Observations of teachers and children during outdoor play	Observation schedule, field notes, visual aids (photographs)
Documents	Daily program and outdoor planning
Data Analysis and Interpretation	
Parents	
Data were generated from group interviews, observation schedules, field notes and photographs using thematic analysis.	
Teachers	
Data were generated from the online semi-structured individual interview schedules and photographs using thematic analysis.	
Quality Criteria	
• Credibility; • Transferability; • Dependability; and • Confirmability.	
Ethical Considerations	
Informed consent, voluntary participation, anonymity and confidentiality, trust and safety and sensitivity.	

(Adapted from Van Heerden, 2011:63,64)

3.2 RESEARCH PARADIGM

Hartell and Bosman (2016:38) explain that a paradigm guides the researcher to know exactly what will be researched, how the research will be conducted and in which ways the research will be interpreted. Nieuwenhuis (2016a:52) refers to a paradigm as “a set of assumptions or beliefs about fundamental aspects of reality which gives rise to a particular world view”. Particular perspectives define what knowledge is. Therefore, the purpose of a paradigm is to “serve as a lens or organising principles by which reality is interpreted” (Nieuwenhuis, 2016a:52). Nieuwenhuis further explains that the particular world view outlines essential assumptions on how reality is constructed − our current knowledge (ontology). The second assumption is based on the association between “the knower and known” − how do we know (epistemology). The final

assumption refers to how the researcher acquires knowledge (methodology). Figure 3.1 presents the paradigmatic assumptions applied to the interpretivist paradigm.

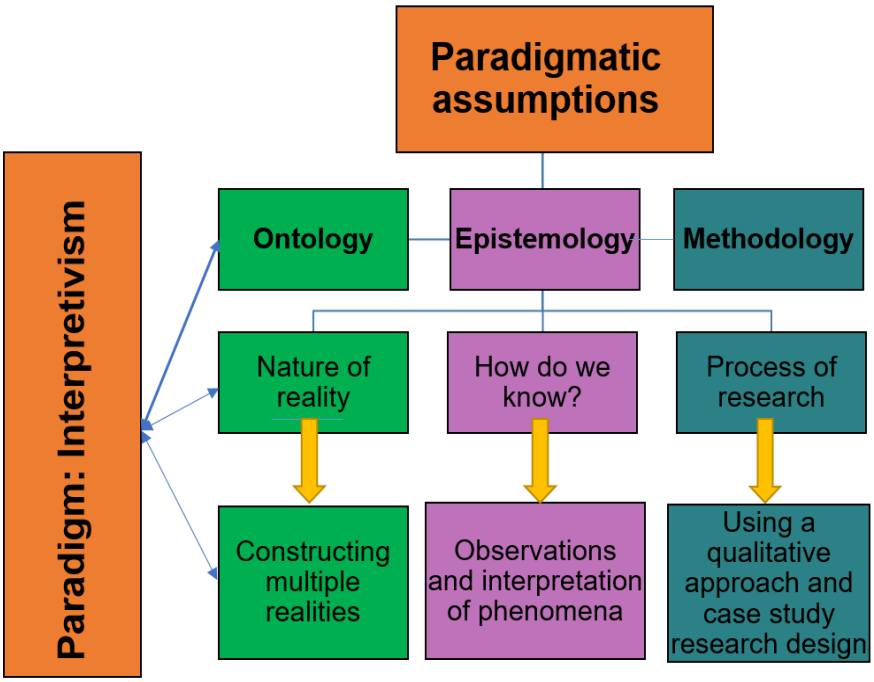


Figure 3.1: Paradigmatic assumptions

An interpretivist paradigm and a qualitative approach to enquiry were adopted in this study to understand and interpret how teachers and parents view risky play. Figure 3.1 presents the paradigmatic assumptions upheld in this study. Hamilton and Corbett-Whittier (2013:24) simplify the meaning of ontology as meaning "what can be known" and epistemology as "how it can be known". The ontological position adopted in this study is interpretivism which assumes that multiple realities exist and is "socially constructed" (Nieuwenhuis, 2016a:60).

Creswell (2016:41) regards epistemology as the main aspect of research because it describes how knowledge is gained from the study. The researcher must be proficient in explaining how knowledge is gained and where it is derived from. Therefore, in this study, the ontological and epistemological stance pursued parents and teachers' knowledge of risky outdoor play to determine whether and understand how it is permitted in ELCs.

The methodology for this study is derived from the ontological and epistemological stance concerning social reality, taking into consideration what I assume the social world to be, the research questions asked, as well as how the research process is conducted (Hesse-Biber, 2016). I employed a qualitative, interpretivist approach to contract parents and teachers' subjective experiences of risky play, which differed according to their own views. I will explain the interpretivist paradigm and qualitative approach below.

3.2.1 Meta-theoretical paradigm

The meta-theoretical paradigm suitable for this study is the interpretivist paradigm. "Interpretivism seeks to uncover meaning and understand the deeper implications revealed in data about people" (Somekh & Lewin, 2005:346). Merriam (2009:8) notes that:

> "… interpretive research, which is where qualitative research is most often located, assumes that a reality is socially constructed, namely, that there is no single, observable reality. Rather, there are multiple realities, or interpretations, of a single event. Researchers do not 'find' knowledge, they construct it."

This implies that interpretivism focuses attention on participants' experiences and how they construct reality in their world. No single reality of phenomena exists. The interpretivist paradigm empowers participants to share their views and understanding of the concept based on previous encounters, as well as prior knowledge to make meaning of phenomena. This view relates to Stringer's (2014:75) argument that "experiences, worldviews and cultural backgrounds" have an impact on the way humans interpret their experiences.

Interpretivist researchers aim to interpret people's meanings of the world. According to Creswell (2014:37), researchers are aware that their own experiences form their understanding and interpretation and recognise how their interpretations stream from their "personal, cultural, and historical experiences" (Blaxter, Hughes & Tight, 2006:60). I kept this in mind during semi-structured group interviews with teachers and observations thereof. Cohen and Crabtree (2006:s.p.) assert that "reality cannot be separated from our knowledge of it (no separation of subject and object); the

interpretive paradigm posits that researchers' values are inherent in all phases of the research process and that truth is negotiated through dialogue". It is for this reason that this research study is subjectively considered. Therefore, parents and teachers' subjective views and experiences of risky outdoor play guided and brought meaning to this study.

Lincoln and Guba (1985:15) point out that thoughts are encapsulated within paradigms and cannot be proven due to subjective practices. Cohen *et al*. (2007:137) agree with this statement and further explain that an interpretivist paradigm permits individuals to form their own interpretations of circumstances grounded in social experiences. Therefore, this study intended to explore what parents and teachers understand risky outdoor play to be and what prevents or supports them from permitting and encouraging children to engage in risky play. The interpretivist paradigm enabled me to join in parents and teachers' views and the way in which they permit risky outdoor play. The interpretivist paradigm was used to look at parents' childhood experiences and how they encourage or discourage their children to take part in risky play. Furthermore, the interpretivist paradigm allowed me to look at teachers' experiences and what supports or prevents them from permitting risky outdoor play. By employing the interpretivist paradigm it provided me with an opportunity to interpret parents and teachers' views regarding risky outdoor play and therefore gain insight to have answered the primary and secondary research questions of this study.

3.2.2 Methodological paradigm

The objective of qualitative research is to form a clear and detailed interpretation of participants' perceptions (Patten & Galvan, 2019:32). A qualitative research approach was employed to study participants' experiences and views of risky outdoor play in ELCs and how these are impacting children's development in early childhood. Qualitative research according to Creswell (2014:4), refers to "an approach for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem". Patton (2001:39) further explains that qualitative research is used to study a phenomenon within a "real-world setting where the researcher does not attempt to manipulate the phenomenon of interest". A qualitative research approach was appropriate to gain insight from parents and teachers' experiences and views pertaining to risky outdoor play within an early learning centre.

Patton (2002:40,41) and Johnson and Christensen (2014:563) provide 12 major qualitative research characteristics that apply to this study. Table 3.2 below outlines the characteristics as described by Patton (2002:40,41) and Johnson and Christensen (2014:563), and how it was applied to this study.

Table 3.2: Characteristic traits of qualitative research

Characteristics	Description of characteristics	Application to this study
Design strategies		
1. Naturalistic inquiry	Studies real-life events in a "non-manipulative" and non-controlling manner.	I studied the views and experiences of parents and teachers in terms of risky play, without trying to manipulate or control the findings.
2. Emergent design flexibility	Open to change the inquiry as new knowledge is gained and in the process seek new routes of discovery as it arises.	I was open to receiving new information and adapt the current knowledge one has of parents and teachers' experiences of risky play.
3. Purposeful sampling	Selects information-rich and illuminative cases. Sampling aims to develop an understanding of the particular phenomenon being studied.	Purposeful sampling was utilised to select ELCs, parents and teachers to take part in the study to gain rich information about risky play.

Data-Generation and Fieldwork Strategies		
4. Qualitative data	Entail observations, in-depth inquiry, interviews, case studies and a document review.	I generated data directly by observing teachers (indirectly children), interviewing teachers and parents, forming case studies and creating a review thereof.
5. Personal experience and engagement	To have a close connection with participants, events and the particular phenomenon. Own experiences and knowledge play an imperative part in the inquiry and understanding of the phenomenon.	Conversations during interviews enabled participants to provide rich-information about their experiences and views of risky play in ELCs.
6. Empathic neutrality and mindfulness	Show respect by being neutral during interviews and fully present during observations.	I was mindful and fully present during observations of the teachers (and indirectly the children). During interviews, I did not judge the parents and teachers' views and opinions by being open, sensitive and responsive.
7. Dynamic systems	The main emphasis is on the process where change is continuing regardless of the focus on the participant, culture, community, or organisation.	I was aware that changes occurred during the whole process of data generation from parents and teachers in ELCs.

Analysis Strategies		
8. Unique case orientation	Each case is unique. The first part of the analysis is based on respect and generating data of the particular cases. The second part is a cross-case analysis that is based on the quality of the case studies.	All data generated from each teacher and parent was regarded as unique and special and I did not in any case manipulate the findings. A comparison was made to enhance the quality of the particular cases.
9. Inductive analysis and creative synthesis	Identify patterns, themes and relationships through engagement with the data. The process starts by exploring, then confirming, and finally ends off with a creative analysis.	From the varied experiences and views of parents and teachers, themes and sub-themes unfolded.
10. Holistic perspective	The entire phenomenon is regarded as a complex structure and attention is focused on “interdependencies and system dynamics”.	The experiences and views of parents and teachers regarding risky play were viewed as a whole and not separated into different parts.
11. Context sensitivity	Results are positioned in a “social, historical and temporal context”. Be vigilant of meaningfully generalising findings across time and space.	I took a careful approach in analysing and comparing the generated data from semi-structured interviews and observations and in the process adapted the findings to the particular settings.

12. Voice, perspective, and reflexivity	Be objective and reflective in one's own opinion and perception; credibility transfers authenticity and trustworthiness. The main focus is on being "self-analytical, politically aware and reflexive" in awareness.	My main aim was to create a balance of being objective, subjective and ensuring credibility towards the findings of parents and teachers' risky play views and experiences in ELCs.

The characteristics presented in Table 3.2 enabled me to form a clear understanding of conducting qualitative research. The design, data generation and fieldwork, and analysis strategies provided me with suitable guidelines about how to qualitatively generate and process data. The characteristics made it clear how to search for rich-information and meaning from participants during discussions. Studying the phenomenon in participants' natural settings allowed the participants to explain their experiences and views in this regard. The application of each characteristic of this study was illustrated in Table 3.2.

Various approaches to qualitative research designs are available. Nieuwenhuis (2016b:75) points out five approaches to qualitative research designs: "narrative studies, phenomenology, grounded theory, ethnography and case studies". I have selected a multiple case study design because it was regarded as a suitable approach for the research design of this study.

3.3 THE ROLE OF THE RESEARCHER

Creswell (2014:187) highlights that the researcher is the main tool to generate and analyse data. My main aim as researcher was to add knowledge to the research field rather than judging parents and teachers' permission or prevention of children's risky play (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003:33). This enabled me to discuss each case study by using and analysing the generated data from interviews and observations and therefore adding to the body of research.

A qualitative design was adopted to conduct this research study. Therefore, another role I undertook was to generate data via semi-structured group interviews and observations in participants' natural settings. An interpretivist paradigm enabled me to thoroughly interact with teachers and form a clear representation of how teachers experience and view risky outdoor play. Moreover, the Covid-19 pandemic required and dictated that we play a different role and adhere to certain government protocols. In adherence to the Covid-19 pandemic rules and regulations regarding social distancing, I employed the semi-structured individual interview schedule method to generate data from parents. This method eliminated any face-to-face contact whilst still allowing me to continue my study. I only started generating data from ELCs when the country moved to level two of lockdown. During the interviews with teachers and the observation of teachers and children outdoors, social distancing was applied and a face mask was worn at all times. Finally, my role was to investigate and comprehend the phenomenon of parents and teachers' experiences and views of risky outdoor play within the context of the ELC and the home environment.

3.4 RESEARCH DESIGN

A research design according to Yin (2011:82) outlines the structure of a study. Creswell (2014:4) further describes a research design as "plans and the procedures for research that span the decisions from broad assumptions to detailed methods of data collection and analysis". Therefore, case studies were selected to outline the rich information gained from parents and teachers' experiences and views of risky play.

Case studies according to Creswell (2014:43) "is a design of inquiry found in many fields, especially evaluation, in which the researcher develops an in-depth analysis of a case often a program, event, activity, process, or one or more individuals". Given (2008:68) agrees with this statement and further explains that the case studies are not limited to one observation.

The multiple case study design was suitable and aligned with my goal of exploring and describing the views of parents and teachers on risky outdoor play of children at ELCs. By utilising a multiple case study design it empowered me to concentrate on a particular phenomenon, namely risky outdoor play, using multiple cases and sites to

form an in-depth understanding thereof (Yin, 2014:57). This increased the sturdiness of the research study. Three sites were selected and investigated individually which assisted in finding “similarities and differences” to gain rich data (Thomas, 2011:44). A multiple case study design enabled me to emphasise the certainties and difficulties of permitting risky play to young children. The multiple case study method was utilised to generate data through semi-structured group interviews, observations and teachers’ daily planning of outdoor activities, as well as semi-structured individual interview schedules from parents. The multiple case study design for this particular study is illustrated in Figure 3.2 below (adapted from Yin, 2014:50).

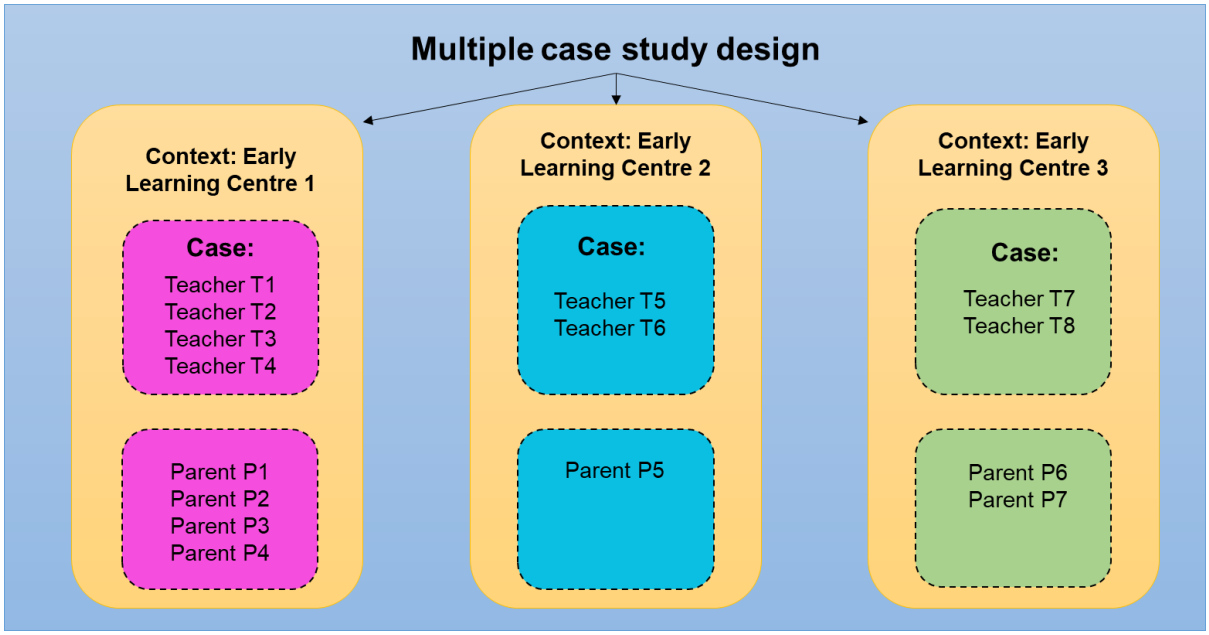


Figure 3.2: Multiple case study design (adapted from Yin, 2014:50)

Figure 3.2 portrays that the case is dependent on contextual environments. Yin (2014:51) points out that the case and the context are not separated from each other. Therefore, dotted lines were used to indicate the borders between the case and the context of ELC1, ELC2 and ELC3. In this particular study, parents, teachers and children everywhere have experienced some form of risky play participation at some stage. A discussion on the selection of samples follows.

3.5 RESEARCH SITES AND SELECTION OF PARTICIPANTS

In qualitative research, it is common to study a few participants and cases. This is because the researcher's capability to afford a comprehensive image reduces as more participants and sites are added (Creswell, 2012:209). The key objective of qualitative research is to present the complications of the data generated from participants or the research site (Creswell, 2012:209). Creswell (2009:138) outlines four factors that need to be considered when selecting participants and sites for a research study:

- The setting where data will be generated;
- The participants from which data will be generated;
- The times of data generated; and
- The process of data generated.

The abovementioned factors were considered when I selected participants and sites for the research study. Purposeful sampling enables researchers to purposefully choose participants and sites to gain insight from the principle phenomenon (Creswell, 2012:206; Nieuwenhuis, 2016b:85). For that reason, I employed purposeful sampling to select the research sites and participants which are elaborated on in the paragraphs that follow.

3.5.1 Research sites

Three ELCs were selected within the Pretoria, Gauteng Province, South Africa region. This included the following areas: an inner-city, suburban and urban area. Two preschool teachers from each of the three ELCs (six teachers in total) and three parents from each learning centre (nine parents in total) were selected to participate in the study. However, school A presented me with additional two teachers (four teachers in total) to participate in the semi-structured group interview.

3.5.2 Selection of participants

Purposive non-probability sampling was utilised to choose participants for this study because I had a specific purpose in mind (Cohen *et al.*, 2006:115). Purposively selecting participants enabled me to choose participants with specific characteristics in understanding the phenomenon under study (Patten & Galvan, 2019:32).

The main reason for selecting parents and teachers as participants for this study is because they provided me with rich, informative data (Yin, 2011:88), regarding risky outdoor play in early childhood. Predetermined criteria were used to select the participants as presented in Table 3.3.

Table 3.3: Criteria for the selection of participants

Criteria for the selection of participants
Parents
• Voluntary participation • Language abilities: Parents should be able to speak Afrikaans and/or English • Participants representing diverse cultural upbringings, age, gender, race and socioeconomic status
Teachers
• Language abilities: Teachers should be able to speak Afrikaans and/or English • Older teachers with more experience • Younger teachers with less experience

Eight teachers (participants), as well as seven parents (participants) from the same ELCs willingly took part in the study.

3.6 DATA GENERATION

Data was generated from participants in various ways. This study employed the following data generation methods for teachers: semi-structured group interviews, observations, documentation and photographs, and for parents: online semi-structured individual interview schedules. The selected data generation methods were most appropriate for studying parents and teachers' experiences and views of risky outdoor play in various ELCs.

3.6.1 Semi-structured group interviews

Interviews are used as qualitative data generation method in case studies. An interview can be referred to as a mutual discussion between individuals (participant

and the researcher) to generate data about the participants' behaviour, ideas, beliefs, views, opinions and experiences (Nieuwenhuis, 2016b:93).

Cohen *et al*. (2007:349) state that interviews empower participants to explain their world views and express their perspectives of situations from their viewpoint. Cohen *et al*. (2007:361) additionally point out that it is essential "to keep uppermost in one's mind the fact that the interview is a social, interpersonal encounter, not merely a data collection exercise". Different forms of interviews are utilised to generate data from participants. Nieuwenhuis (2016b:93) distinguishes amongst "open-ended, semi-structured and structured interviews".

Semi-structured group interviews were employed as the primary data generation method. Employing semi-structured interviews provided me the opportunity to ask open-ended questions and gain rich descriptive information assisting to understand participants' views and perspectives (Creswell 2012:218; Nieuwenhuis, 2016b:93). Semi-structured group interviews were chosen for this study because it provided me with the chance to elaborate and clarify questions when needed, without deviating too much from the original predetermined interview questions (Engelbrecht, 2016).

Interviews were the main data generation method requiring teachers' experiences and views in this study. Semi-structured group interviews were conducted with two preschool teachers from two ELCs and four teachers from one ELC. The interviews lasted approximately 45 minutes each. The interviews were conducted at the ELCs where teachers are teaching and arranged at their convenience. The main focus of the interviews was based on teachers' views and experiences of risky outdoor play. I made handwritten notes and the interviews were audio-recorded. Each interview was transcribed directly after the group interviews have been conducted. These transcriptions were used for analysing the generated data.

3.6.2 Observations

Observation, according to Creswell (2012:213), is referred to as a method of collecting open-ended, concrete information by means of observing participants and settings at a certain research site. Nieuwenhuis' (2016:90) description of observation is similar, describing it "as a systematic process of recording the behavioural patterns of participants, objects and occurrences without necessarily questioning or

communicating with them". Observation as a data generation method is beneficial and has some shortcomings. Some benefits of observation comprise the opportunity to record data as it transpires in a location, and enables the researcher to study participants who find it difficult to express their ideas (Creswell, 2012:213). However, a shortcoming of observation includes the possible limitation that the location and situation offer the researcher because, at the site, it is difficult to develop an understanding and connection with participants (Creswell, 2012:213). Furthermore, Yin (2011:143) argues that using observation as a data generation method can be invaluable because "what you see with your own eyes and perceive with your own senses are not filtered by what others might have (self-) reported to you or what the author of some document might have seen". Observation is usually implemented in qualitative studies, therefore, I chose observation as an additional tool to generate data. The teachers were the primary participants of this study and children were the secondary participants in the observation process. I observed the teachers to perceive whether risky play is permitted in the ELCs. In this study, I employed a "nonparticipant observer" approach (Creswell, 2014:214). This type of observation required me to concentrate on taking notes of the participant activities without interfering with the setting or situation.

Creswell (2014:239) explains that qualitative observation takes place when the researcher makes field notes on participants' behaviour and actions at a particular research site. The field notes entail unstructured or semi-structured recordings of previously set questions and activities (Creswell 2014:239). In a qualitative study, field notes refer to the words documented by the researcher in the course of observation, according to Creswell (2012:216). Creswell (2012:217) additionally explains two types of field notes. The first type is referred to as descriptive field notes in which the researcher describes what happened during activities, occasions and with individuals. The second type is known as reflective field notes which are used by the researcher to record personal feelings and perspectives in association with themes and ideas that arise during the observation. By employing both types of field notes I received rich data on teachers' views and children's participation in risky play. Field notes contributed to the richness of the observation schedule utilised to observe risky outdoor play.

3.6.3 Photographs

During observations, I took photographs of children engaging in outdoor play activities. Photographs offer the chance to capture rich evidence about the research site, participants and play activities (Lodico *et al*., 2010:133). I considered ethical considerations when taking photographs of participants. Taking photographs is beneficial and allows for greater involvement by participants, such as teachers and children, for the reason that they provide visual reality (Creswell, 2014:192). Data generated from photographs delivered proof of teachers' views of and children's opportunities to participate in risky outdoor play. Photographs were valuable for triangulation with other methods of data generation, such as observations and interviews.

3.6.4 Documentation

The documentation used in the ELCs were teachers' daily planning for outdoor activities. The main aim of utilising documentation as a data generation tool was that it enabled me to triangulate the generated data. Nevertheless, the daily planning provided by teachers was incomplete (Creswell, 2014:192) and did contribute to rich data for this study. Furthermore, the daily planning for outdoor activities did not specify the particular risky play activities that are planned for children and only included general information such as that children will participate in outdoor play at certain times during the day. Subsequently, it was evident that teachers plan for outdoor play but not in detail specifying the risky play activities.

3.6.5 Semi-structured individual interview schedules

Semi-structured individual interview schedules provide detailed information about the particular discipline because participants' responses comprise of their ideas, opinions and experiences (Eckerdal & Hagström, 2017:1). A disadvantage of using online semi-structured individual interview schedules is that I had many responses, however, the responses are separated from the setting (Creswell, 2012:220). In other words, I am not present when data are generated from parents. As a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, I had to implement alternative measures to generate data from parents, therefore, I used the Q-Survey tool. Q-Survey is an online computer software programme to generate informative data from parents of three different ELCs. The semi-structured individual interview schedules were shared amongst parents using the

online platform for parents to complete the questions. The results were downloaded for analysis as soon as parents completed the online semi-structured individual interview schedules.

The data generated via semi-structured group interviews, observations, photographs and documentation from teachers and semi-structured individual interview schedules from parents were thoroughly prepared for the data analysis and interpretation process.

3.7 DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

According to Bengtsson (2016:8), various methods are used to analyse and interpret qualitative data. Data analysis aims to sort data and therefore produce meaning of the generated data. Nieuwenhuis (2016c:109) asserts that qualitative data analysis is established within an interpretivist paradigm to discover how participants understand the phenomena under study by exploring their "perceptions, attitudes, understandings, knowledge, values, feelings and experiences". Nieuwenhuis (2016c:109) further explains that data analysis is an "ongoing and iterative process" to understand the phenomena under study; in this study, parents and teachers' experiences and views of risky outdoor play.

In this study, I act in accordance with the seven steps of qualitative data analysis as outlined by Creswell (2014:197). The seven steps and the applicability to this study are presented in Table 3.4 below.

Table 3.4: Application of Creswell's (2014:197) qualitative data analysis steps to this study

Data analysis steps (Creswell, 2014:197)	Qualitative data analysis steps applicable to this study
Step 1	Generated data were organised and prepared for analysis. Interviews were transcribed. Teachers' daily and outdoor planning were scanned, field notes made during observations were typed and photographs were categorised into different sources of information.

Data analysis steps (Creswell, 2014:197)	Qualitative data analysis steps applicable to this study
Step 2	I noted teachers' ideas and generated a general feeling for the data by reflecting on information provided by teachers.
Step 3	The coding process started by breaking apart data whereby categories were identified.
Step 4	Colour coding was used to describe teachers' events, context, as well as outline the categories and themes for data analysis.
Step 5	The identified themes were described and discussed in a narrative to express the findings of the qualitative analysis.
Step 6	The findings that resulted from the qualitative data analysis were interpreted. My personal experiences and what was learnt were brought in.
Step 7	Descriptions and themes were validated against existing literature and finalised and concluded.

In the process of generating and analysing data, I followed the steps as presented in Table 3.4. Several methods were used to generate data (see Section 3.5). To address the research questions, the generated data from teachers were transcribed, coded and inductively analysed. For parents, the Q-Survey online programme was utilised to analyse the generated data, however, the generated data were also coded and inductively analysed. Thomas (2006:238) asserts that inductive data analysis strategies refer to "approaches that primarily use detailed readings of raw data to derive concepts, themes, or a model through which interpretations are made from the raw data by a researcher". Therefore, an inductive data analysis approach is suitable in order to determine whether multiple realities exist within an interpretivist paradigm (Nieuwenhuis, 2016c:109). Employing an inductive data analysis approach enabled me to use the data provided by participants and in the process create codes from the generated data, as well as to interpret it.

After I completed the process of generating data from participants at the three ELCs, the data analysis process started. I immediately transcribed the data and an audio recorder was used to ensure that each interview was transcribed precisely and

essential information was noted. I became familiar with the data by reading through the interview transcriptions, observation schedules and field notes, as well as teachers' daily planning of outdoor activities. Thereafter, codes were identified. Cohen *et al*. (2011:559) explain that "a code is simply a name or label that a researcher gives to a piece of text that contains an idea or piece of information". Rule and John (2011:77) state that coding is a way of familiarising oneself with the data to understand "what the data is saying". The codes were grouped in order to point out themes and sub-themes. Subsequently, themes and sub-themes were confirmed, data were analysed according to themes and compared to existing literature which enabled me to create categories.

This study used inductive thematic analysis to analyse the interview transcriptions, observation field notes and daily outdoor planning that were constructed from texts. According to Engelbrecht (2016:120), thematic analysis is an instrument rather than a particular approach or method. I followed six steps to conduct thematic analysis as indicated by Braun and Clarke (in Engelbrecht, 2016:121). These steps were as follow: I became familiar with the data, developed codes, found themes; revised themes; refined and named themes, and provided feedback (these steps are explained in Chapter 1, Section 1.11). The quality criteria facet of this study is discussed below.

3.8 QUALITY CRITERIA

Trustworthiness refers to a concept that inspires scholarly rigor, transparency and professional integrity to obtain trust within the research community (Rule & John, 2011). Nieuwenhuis (2016c:123) claims that trustworthiness entails "the acid test of your analysis, findings and conclusions". Furthermore, the processes to ensure trustworthiness must be continually kept in mind when analysing data (Nieuwenhuis, 2016c:123). Moreover, trustworthiness is regarded as a systematic process that determines the accuracy and competence of a study. Yin (2011:19-21) suggests three objectives for acquiring a trustworthy and credible qualitative study.

Table 3.5: Three objectives to ensure trustworthiness and credibility

Objectives	Objectives applied to this study
Transparency	• Provides detailed descriptions of the research methods to ensure it is understandable and can be reviewed. • Data are available for critique.
Methodic-ness	• Open to and allow new discoveries. • Being fully present during observations and when field notes are made (Eisenhart, 2006:574). • Demonstrates that the data and interpretations are accurate. • Being thoughtful when reporting about the relationship between myself and participants in a self-reflexive way (Eisenhart 2006:575-579).
Adherence to evidence	• The evidence provided is explicit. • The study's conclusions are related to the actual data generated and analysed.

The three objectives suggested by Yin (2011:19-21) were applied to this particular study to confirm the trustworthiness of the research. In qualitative research, trustworthiness comprises credibility, transferability, confirmability and dependability, which are the quality criteria proposed in this study. These criteria are discussed below.

3.8.1 Credibility

Di Fabio and Maree (2012:140) describe credibility as the degree to which the findings of a study are real and trustworthy. Credibility which is similarly regarded as internal validity is described as "the extent to which the research findings are believable and trustworthy" (Maree, 2016:373). Lincoln and Guba (1985:219,301) and Lodico *et al*. (2010:273) point out that credibility takes various forms of support:

- The study should provide evidence of how the researcher is involved in the study; the amount of time spent in the setting and meaningful interactions with participants.
- Generate multiple sources of data to confirm a wide-ranging representation of the settings and participants that are studied.
- Use member checks; the transcribed data from interviews are sent to participants to review.
- Negative case analysis; examining the data for contradictions.

I ensured credibility in this study by adhering to the above-mentioned forms of support. Furthermore, I ensured that the findings of the study accurately described the phenomenon of interest (Cohen *et al*., 2007:477). Fairness and an unbiased approach were followed in this study.

3.8.2 Transferability

Lincoln and Guba (1985:297) refer to transferability as "the extent to which results can be transferred to other contexts". For this to transpire, the researcher should ensure that all facets of the study are detailed comprehensively as it allows assessors to look at whether the results apply to other contexts. Ary, Jacobs and Razavieh (2002:457) propose two strategies for transferability: first, the researcher provides detailed and precise "thick descriptions" to allow judgements regarding transferability to be made by the reader; second, purposive sampling is used to ensure transferability so that the variety of particular information is improved when data are generated from different settings and participants are selected purposively.

The first strategy of transferability, thick descriptions, refer to detailed explanations of the research process (the methods used to generate data, descriptions of the sampling procedures and research site, as well as sharing findings with participants). In addition, thick descriptions enable other researchers to replicate related experiences in other contexts.

The second strategy relates to purposeful sampling. Utilising purposeful sampling ensures that the selected participants with particular characteristics fit the phenomenon being studied (Patten & Galvan, 2019:32). Purposeful sampling assisted me to choose participants who are conversant about and dealing with children in early

childhood. Selecting such participants enabled me to add excessive depth to the results of the study. These strategies were applied to this study to relate the results to other settings.

3.8.3 Confirmability

Confirmability is described as the degree to which the results of the particular study are not influenced by my interest, motivation or bias but shaped by the participants (Lincoln & Guba, 1985:319). Bengtsson (2016:13) further asserts that confirmability contemplates the objectivity and neutrality of generated data. This implies that my bias does not impact the results of the study. Triangulation and self-reflection are strategies implemented to diminish researcher bias (Nieuwenhuis, 2016c:125). Furthermore, another strategy implemented to reduce the risk of bias was to allow parents and teachers to validate field notes taken during observations and interview transcripts; also known as member checking. An essential component required to be added to the augment of confirmability is that of an audit trail (Nieuwenhuis, 2016c:125; Stringer, 2014:94), where the generated data (interview transcripts, observation field notes) are checked. To this end, I considered the above-mentioned strategies to comply with the demands of confirmability.

3.8.4 Dependability

Dependability and reliability are narrowly connected. However, in qualitative research, dependability takes preference and is more likely to be used. The features of dependability are linked to the probability that if the research study were reiterated with similar or the same participants, the results would be equal (Ary *et al*., 2002:457; Di Fabio & Maree, 2012:140). Cohen *et al*. (2011:202) emphasise that dependability can be attained through “respondent validation”. I achieved this by sharing emerging themes with participants to validate and therefore confirm the dependability of the results.

3.9 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Aubrey, David, Godfrey and Thompson (2000:156) describe research ethics as “the moral philosophy or set of moral principles underpinning a project”. Ethical clearance

and approval were granted by the University of Pretoria before the commencement of the data generation phase. I was mindful of ethical underpinnings throughout the research study. Creswell (2014:87) emphasises the importance for the researcher to "protect their participant, develop a trust with them, promote the integrity of research, guard against misconduct, and cope with new challenging problems". To ensure a quality research study that cultivates trustworthiness, researchers should act in a virtuous and ethical way. The ethical considerations during the data generation phase are discussed below.

3.9.1 Informed consent

Participants must have a clear understanding of what the research study involves after a detailed explanation by the researcher (Rubin & Babbie, 2011:118). Additionally, participants should be allowed to withdraw at any time during the research study. A detailed and informed consent letter was created and given to participants before the commencement of the data generation. Therefore, participants could make a knowledgeable decision to participate in the research study or not. In the consent letters, I informed participants that interviews would be audio recorded and that participants are allowed to have access to the data generated from interviews and observations. In addition, participants' anonymity would be assured by not using actual names but rather using pseudonyms in the research. Participants were required to sign the letters of consent before data was generated from them.

3.9.2 Voluntary participation

Participation, according to Rubin and Babbie (2011:76), ought to always be voluntary and no participant must feel the obligation to take part in a research study. Therefore, I did not force any participant to partake in the study but rather allowed them to voluntarily participate. Participants were cognisant that they could withdraw themselves from the study at any time.

3.9.3 Protection from harm and deception

Trust was entrenched in this research study. A trusting relationship between the researcher and the participant is a requirement before the commencement of data generation. Therefore, trust was applied during the data generation and analysis phases. Cohen *et al*. (2000:49) point out that ethical issues could ascent from the

explored issues while attaining reliable data. However, no unexpected ethical issues occurred (Creswell, 2014:92). None of the participants were put in danger or exposed to any act of deception during the research study. Participants were protected against harm by safeguarding their privacy and confidentiality (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000:139; Silverman, 2013:162). Adherence to participants' privacy and confidentiality are discussed next.

3.9.4 Privacy and confidentiality

I paid special attention to ensure that participants' privacy and confidentiality were not compromised by the thick descriptions made during observations. Cohen *et al*. (2000:63) point out three perspectives to ensure privacy: first, the information provided by participants are sensitive, second, the setting where data are generated is private, and third, participants' privacy should be protected when distributing information. Participants were assured that they have a right to privacy and that the data generated from interviews would by no means expose their identities. Therefore, appropriate coding was used to replace sites and participants' identities (Yin, 2014:280). Participants' confidentiality was guaranteed and data will not be traced back to them. In addition, all generated data from this research study will be put in safekeeping at the University of Pretoria for a period of 15 years.
dissimenation

3.10 CONCLUSION

The purpose of Chapter three was to discuss the research methodology for this study. I elaborated on the research design, as well as how multiple case studies guided the research. Furthermore, the sampling procedures and data generation methods from parents and teachers in terms of risky outdoor play were described in this chapter. I described the data analysis process and the quality criteria that were considered throughout the research process. Lastly, the ethical considerations during the data generation phase were discussed.

Chapters four and five will offer a detailed discussion on the qualitative data analysis and the findings of this study.

CHAPTER FOUR
DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

"Children must be kept as safe as needed, not as safe as possible. We can't eliminate risk and challenges essential for learning." − Unknown

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter three explained the methodology and research design utilised in this study. This qualitative research study is positioned in the interpretivist paradigm and justified the reason for utilising a case study research design. Data were generated using the following methods: semi-structured group interviews, observations, document analysis and semi-structured individual interview schedules. The semi-structured group interviews were audio-recorded and the generated data obtained from observations were noted on an observation checklist. Finally, Chapter three discussed the ethical considerations to ensure trustworthiness of the study.

The primary goal of Chapter four is to afford the results of the study derived from the data analysis process. The results of the study are aligned with the primary research question that guides this study, namely: *How do parents and teachers experience and view risky outdoor play in early learning centres?* Both primary and secondary research questions, as well as the themes and sub-themes derived from the generated data are outlined in this chapter. Furthermore, in Chapter four, I will describe the profiles of the participants, the research sites as well as outline the way data were generated, coded and grouped into themes and sub-themes. A discussion regarding the data analysis process follows.

4.2 DATA ANALYSIS PROCESS

Qualitative data analysis entails "organising, accounting for and explaining the data" (Cohen *et al.*, 2007:461). Nieuwenhuis (2016c:109) explains that data analysis grounded within the interpretivist paradigm enables the researcher to explore participants' "perceptions, attitudes, understandings, knowledge, values, feelings and

experiences" to make sense of multiple realities. In doing so, the researcher develops a sense of the generated data of participants' views and experiences and in the process identifies concepts and similarities. Table 4.1 below outlines the process that was followed to analyse the data generated from participants.

Table 4.1: Steps taken to analyse generated data from participants

Teachers	***Parents***
Semi-structured group interviews	**Semi-structured individual interview schedule**
Step 1	
The interview recordings were organised in accordance with the three ELCs from which data were generated. Tables were created to note teachers' responses and to assist in the organisation of the transcription process.	Parents' responses were received on the Q-Survey online computer software programme. No transcription of data was required as parents' responses were already in typed format.
Step 2	
I transcribed the generated data of the interviews conducted at the tree ELCs. During this process, I listened to the interview recordings numerous times to ensure I accurately transcribe the responses.	I viewed parents' responses several times to gain insight into their views, experiences and opinions pertaining to risky play.
Step 3	
I viewed the transcribed interviews several times reflecting on the data and to form a detailed understanding of teachers' views, experiences and opinions pertaining to risky play.	I started coding the generated data (responses provided by teachers) by using colour. Similar responses were coded with the same colour. Thereafter, I grouped the colour coded phrases and created categories.
Step 4:	

Teachers	*Parents*
Semi-structured group interviews	**Semi-structured individual interview schedule**
I started coding the generated data (responses provided by teachers) by using colour. Similar responses were coded with the same colour. Thereafter, I grouped the colour coded phrases and created categories.	From the categories, three themes and ten sub-themes were identified. Data was interpreted whereby the identified themes and sub-themes were discussed and considered against the theoretical framework (see Section 2.12).
Step 5:	
From the categories, three themes and ten sub-themes were identified. Data was interpreted whereby the identified themes and sub-themes were discussed and considered against the theoretical framework (see Section 2.12).	Descriptions of the emerged themes and sub-themes were validated against existing literature and finalised and concluded.
Step 6:	
Descriptions of the emerged themes and sub-themes were validated against existing literature and finalised and concluded.	

Different steps (step one and step two) were followed to analyse data of teachers and parents. From step three onwards, the same process was followed to analyse teachers and parents' responses.

4.2.1 Coding of participants and research sites

Coding does not refer to labelling only, it is more about linking. Richards and Morse (2007:137) explain that coding "leads you from the data to the idea, and from the idea to all the data pertaining to that idea". To ensure anonymity and confidentiality, participants (parents and teachers) were allocated symbols. The ELCs used in this

study were coded as ELC1, ELC2 and ELC3. Teachers were referred to as T1 to T8, whereas the parents were referred to P1 to P7. Table 4.2 illustrates the coding of participants; parents and teachers, as well as the research sites where data were generated.

Table 4.2: Coding of participants and research sites of the study

Research site	Area	Participants	Teachers	Participants	Parents
Early Learning Centre 1 (ELC1)	Urban	Teacher 1	T1	Parent 1	P1
		Teacher 2	T2	Parent 2	P2
		Teacher 3	T3	Parent 3	P3
		Teacher 4	T4	Parent 4	P4
Early Learning Centre 2 (ELC2)	Inner-city	Teacher 5	T5	Parent 5	P5
		Teacher 6	T6		
Early Learning Centre 3 (ELC3)	Suburban	Teacher 7	T7	Parent 6	P6
		Teacher 8	T8	Parent 7	P7

Initially, two teachers were selected from each of the three ELCs to take part in the study. However, with my arrival at ELC1, two additional teachers wanted to take part in the semi-structured group interview, making it a total of four teachers (T1 to T4). Furthermore, the two additional teachers only took part in the interview and were not included during the observation process. Also, they taught in the age group of three to four years old, which is not the focus age group of this particular study. However, they provided rich data and in-depth information about the importance of children participating in risky play. Also, they were well-informed about the advantages of risky play for children's health and development.

From ELC1, four parents (P1 to P4) agreed to complete the online semi-structured interview schedule whereas, in ELC2 only one parent (P5) agreed to participate. From

ELC3, four invitations were sent out but two parents participated (P6 and P7). However, one parent's (P7) interview schedule was incomplete.

4.2.2 Outlining the profile of participants

Teacher participants were mainly selected based on teachers teaching four- to five-year-old children. Parent participants were selected for having a child between the ages of four- to five-years from the same ELC as teachers. (See Chapter 3, Section 3.5 for the additional criteria that assisted in the selection of participants.) Table 4.3 presents the teachers' ages, gender, qualifications, number of years teaching experience and the language of instruction used at the ELC.

Table 4.3: Information about teachers

Participants	Gender	Age of participants	Qualification	Number of years teaching experience	Language of instruction
T1	Female	67	Teacher Higher Education Diploma (THED) − Junior Primary	35	Afrikaans
T2	Female	45	Honours in B. Communication Pathology, Post Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE); Pre-Primary	13	Afrikaans
T3	Female	48	Higher Education Diploma − Pre-Primary and Junior Primary	10	Afrikaans
T4	Female	60	Teacher Higher Education Diploma (THED) − Pre-primary, Further Diploma in Education − Pre-Primary	37	Afrikaans
T5	Female	29	Diploma (Early Childhood Development)	4	English
T6	Female	43	Grade R Teaching Certificate (Early Childhood Development)	7	English
T7	Female	31	B Com Industrial Psychology, Post Graduate Certificate in	7	Afrikaans

Participants	Gender	Age of participants	Qualification	Number of years teaching experience	Language of instruction
			Education (PGCE) Early Childhood Development (ECD)		
T8	Female	33	B Ed	9	Afrikaans

Table 4.4 depicts parents' genders, ages, home languages, the number of children each parent has, as well as the ages and genders of the child/ren.

Table 4.4: Information about parents

Aspects	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7
Gender	Male	Female	Female	Female	Female	Female	Female
Age: 20 – 30 years 31 – 40 years 41 – 50 years 51+ years	 X	 X 	 X 	 X 	 X 	X 	 X
Home language	Afrikaans	Afrikaans	Afrikaans	Afrikaans	Sepedi (Northern Sotho)	Afrikaans	Afrikaans
The number of children	2	2	2	2	1	2	2
Gender and ages of children	Boy – 4.5 Boy – 2.5	Girl – 4 Boy – 9 months	Boy – 4 Boy – 2	Boy – 5 Boy – 8	Girl – 4	Girl – 4 Boy – 1	Boy – 4 Girl – 14

4.2.3 Describing the profile of the research sites

Below is a description of each research site: ELC1, ELC2 and ELC3.

4.2.3.1 Research site: ELC1

ELC1 is situated in an urban area in eastern Pretoria. The school consist of a primary, as well as a pre-primary school on the premises. The pre-primary school accommodates children 18 months to 5 years, as well as Grade R. The primary school consist of learners from Grade 1 to Grade 7. There are two classes allocated to the

four- to five-year-old age group with approximately 20-24 children in each class. The teachers are knowledgeable with many years of early childhood experience. Each teacher has been teaching for more than ten years in the early childhood phase. The outdoor learning environment is well resourced and equipped to provide children with opportunities to take risks, as shown in Photographs 4.1 to 4.4:

Photograph 4.1: A wooden climbing frame at ELC1

A sandpit is underneath the climbing frame and trees are covering the play area.

Photograph 4.2: A climbing wall at ELC1

The wall is covered by trees on top and grass underneath, as well as cement steps covering the left side of the wall.

Photograph 4.3: Various types of swings at ELC1

A sandpit is underneath the swings.

Photograph 4.4: A trampoline standing on cement at ELC1

On the right is a large sandpit. At the back is the climbing frame with tyres to walk on, as well as tyre swings.

4.2.3.2 Research site: ELC2

ELC2 is an inner-city school situated in western Pretoria. It is a pre-primary school that includes a Grade R class. The total amount of children in the ELC is 41. The amount fluctuated due to the impact that Covid-19 pandemic had on the numbers. Two classes are allocated to the four- to five-year-old age group with a 1:16 teacher/child ratio. However, these numbers have also decreased due to parents keeping children home due to Covid-19. Nevertheless, the ELC is well resourced with more than enough space for children to play and in the process take risks. It is evident that teachers are passionate and enthusiastic about the children's optimal development. The outdoor play environment is shown in Photographs 4.5 to 4.8:

Photograph 4.5: Tyres and tyre swings at ELC2

Tyres to walk and jump on and over. Jungle gym on the left and sand covering the ground throughout the play area.

Photograph 4.6: Jungle gym at ELC2

In the front area is a jungle gym standing on the grass. Slides, steps and drums are attached to the jungle gym.

Photograph 4.7: Large open space at ELC2

In the back area is a large open space with tyre swings. One set is established in the sand and the other set on the grass. A large tree is visible and tyres to jump on and over.

Photograph 4.8: A jungle gym at ELC2

The second jungle gym is standing on cement. A slide, tyre swing, drum and hanging rings are attached to the jungle gym.

4.2.3.3 Research site: ELC3

ELC3 is in a suburban area located in northern Pretoria. The privately-owned ELC accommodates approximately 280 children. The school includes children from 18 months to Grade R. The ELC has four classes for children in the four- to five-year-old age group with a total of approximately 16 to 18 children in each classroom. The principal, as well as the teachers are experienced and very much focused on children's gross motor skills development. The resources used to promote children's gross motor skills are of top quality and are mostly imported from overseas. The outdoor play environment is shown in Photographs 4.9 to 4.12.

Photograph 4.9: A steel frame at ELC3

A shade net is covering a steel frame consisting of monkey bars horizontally and vertically. A slide and steps are attached to the steel frame.

Photograph 4.10: A second steel frame at ELC3

The frame contains steel hanging rings, two swings and a slide. The frame is standing on synthetic grass.

Photograph 4.11: A large jungle gym at ELC3

The jungle gym has many features such as, a turning slide, various types of steps to climb onto the jungle gym, a small bridge covered with ropes and holes to climb through. Synthetic grass and pavement covering the surface underneath and next to the jungle gym.

Photograph 4.12: A round plastic climbing container with holes in it at ELC3

On the right is a swing, as well as a tree which are available for children to climb into. An open space with a hop scotch game painted on the cement.

4.3 THE INTERVIEW PROCESS

Semi-structured group interviews formed the primary data generation method for this study. I contacted the principals telephonically, as well as via e-mail requesting permission to generate data from the particular ELCs. During this communication, I informed them about the objective and nature of the study. Originally six ELCs were approached, three agreed to participate. The Covid-19 pandemic had an impact on the principals' decisions to allow access to the ELC premises. Furthermore, I arranged a time and date that were convenient for each participant to take part in the interview.

At the start of each group interview, I provided participants with a definition of risky play (see Chapter 2, Section 2.2) and outlined the categories, as well as the characteristics of risky play as identified by Sandseter (2007, 2009) (see Chapter 2, Section 2.8). I once again assured participants that I am adhering to the ethical principles by ensuring their confidentiality and anonymity. Finally, consent letters were signed and I asked for participants' consent to audio record the interviews. The interviews held at ELC1 lasted approximately 55 minutes whereas, the interviews at ELC2 and ELC3 lasted 25 to 30 minutes.

All participants from the three ELCs were asked similar questions and in cases where I did not receive sufficient responses, I probed for more information. Participants were given an opportunity to provide their experiences and views on risky play, as well as risky play applied to the particular ELC. The emerged themes and sub-themes are presented and discussed below.

4.4 RESEARCH FINDINGS

According to Bogdan and Biklen (2003:147), interpreting data is about creating notions pertaining to the findings of the study and linking it to existing literature. Data was coded and notions were grouped into categories. Initially, many categories were identified but similar categories were grouped together (Creswell, 2014:200). Table 4.5 illustrates the clusters of categories.

Table 4.5: Categories of coded data

Category A	Category B	Category C	Category D
Perceptions and experiences	Developmental advantages for children	Influencing factors	The outdoor play environment
• Support • Knowledge • Childhood memories • Supervision	• Learning • Physical • Cognitive • Social	• Overprotection • Anxiety • Fear • Covid-19 pandemic • Technology	• Environment ➢ Space ➢ Resources

Four themes and several underlying sub-themes were identified from the categories in Table 4.5 in relation to the research questions (Rule & John, 2011:78). Figure 4.1 depicts the three main themes and ten sub-themes identified to present parents and teachers' experiences and views of risky outdoor play in ELCs.

In Chapters four and five, different colours represent the three identified themes; Theme one: **green**, Theme two: **purple** and Theme three: **turquoise**. Therefore, participants' direct words are written in the same colour used for the particular theme.

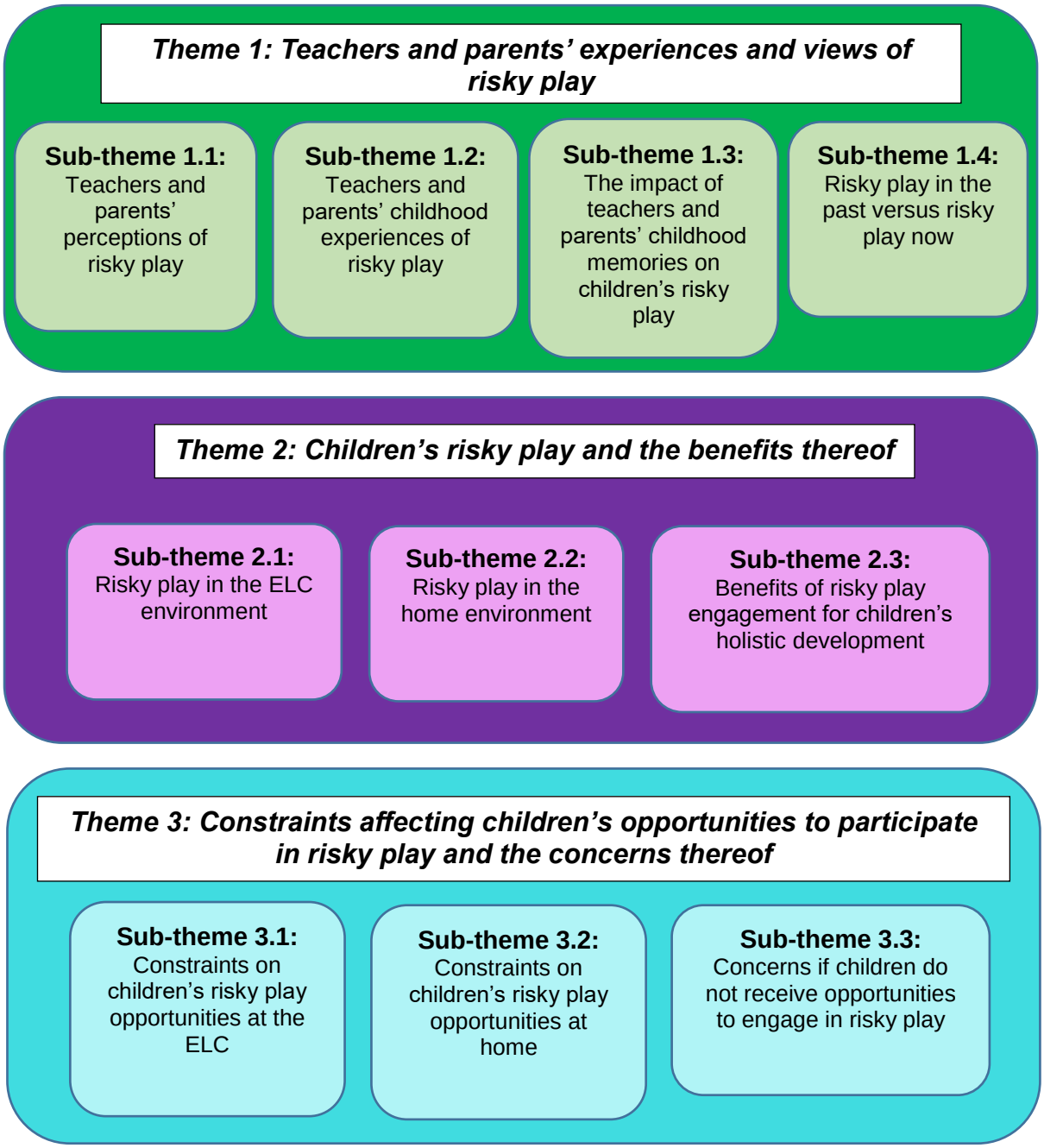


Figure 4.1: Identified themes and sub-themes

4.4.1 Theme 1: Teachers and parents' experiences and views of risky play

Theme one serves as the foundation on which the remaining themes and sub-themes are built. Participants were asked several questions regarding their opinions and views of children's risky play participation, as well as their experiences of risky play during their own childhood. I wanted to understand how participants view risky play and what they believe is appropriate in terms of risky play.

4.4.1.1 Sub-theme 1.1: Teachers and parents' perceptions of risky play

Both parents and teachers were asked to provide their opinions or views on risky play. The most prominent definition of risky play states that "risky play involves thrilling and exciting forms of physical play that involve uncertainty and risk of physical injury" (Sandseter, 2014:439) (see Section 2.2). In general, the data findings disclose that the majority of participants support and allow risky play but with the necessary precautions. T1 stated that: "***Ek is baie positief daaroor. Ek moedig dit aan. Ek raak nie bevrees of beangs as kinders 'n bietjie waag nie, want ek weet wat die inpak daarvan is op hulle as kind***" (I am very positive about it. I encourage it. I do not get scared or anxious when children take risks because I know what the impact of it is on them as a child). T2 and T4 agreed with this statement but mentioned that it is imperative to be aware of children's capabilities when they take risks. In contrast, T3 replied that risky play is limited at the same ELC. However, one should take into consideration that T3 teaches in the three- to four-year-old age group whereas, the focus for this particular study is on the four- to five-year-olds. T4, T6 and T7 mentioned that risky play is essential, however, children should not participate in risk-taking activities without proper supervision. Furthermore, T7 stated that "…***dit is belangrik, ek dink net daar moet toesig wees, iemand wat heeltyd dophou***" (It is important, I just think there should be supervision, someone who watches all the time). Teachers feel accountable and responsible for children's safety.

P1, P2, P3, P5 and P7 indicated that they support their children's risky play participation. P6 specified that: "***It is dangerous if not looked after properly***" and P7 stated that: "***Being a mom it is scary as you don't want your little one to get hurt … I personally have a wild child and she always wants to test the limits so I really need to keep an eye out sometimes so she doesn't go too far***". The response of P4 makes reference to T4, T6 and T7's response that risky play is acceptable but within boundaries.

Even though participants support children in taking risks, they fear for children's safety when engaged in risky play activities. T6 expressed that: "***I can say that we all have that fear when they are playing outside like if they get hurt or something***…" Literature indicates that adults aim to protect children from any harm, however, taking risks in play is an essential and normal part of childhood and child development (Sandseter & Sando, 2016:1). According to all the teacher participants and P1 and P3,

one of the main reasons why they support risky play is because of the skills that are developed when children take risks. These views corroborate with literature that engagement in risky play promotes various areas of children's development (see Section 2.3). In contrast, children are less exposed to adequate possibilities and chances to encounter challenges and search for risky situations in outdoor play (Little *et al*., 2012:301), even though risky play holds many advantages for a child's development.

4.4.1.2 Sub-theme 1.2: Teachers and parents' childhood experiences of risky play

The reason for asking participants about their risky play memories as a child was to determine whether participants' experiences are similar or different from children today. Throughout the interviews, participants were very eager to share their experiences and memories. Participants excitedly expressed how they did/did not participate in risky play. At this point, participants shared the following examples of their risky play experiences:

T1: "***… ek was baie waaghalsig. Ek het maklik van 'n dak af gespring. Op daai groot dromme so gerol en geloop.***" (I was very daring. I easily jumped off a roof. Rolled and walked on those big drums.)

T3: "***Daar was niks grense by my nie.***" (There were no boundaries with me.)

T4: "***… ons het boom geklim en ons het vanuit die bome uit, het ons in damme gespring. Ons het van die binnebande wat ons opgeblaas het … het ons ingeduik."*** (We climbed trees and we jumped out of the trees, we jumped into dams. Some of the tubes that we inflated … we dived in.)

T5: "*I* ***grew up in the old days, they never supervised us, we just played and yes, arms were broken and we got hurt at times.***"

T6: "***…we were playing with fire…***"

T7: "***maar ons het met roller blades…ek het daar neer gepletter, my arm gebreek morsaf. Maar ek het aangehou met dit…***" (but we did with roller blades… I crashed down there, broke my arm. But I kept going).

T8: "***…het ek by 'n foefie slide af gegaan en toe kan ek nie vashou nie, toe val ek, maar soos in nerfaf, stuitjie seer … en ek het dit weer gedoen.***"

(I slipped off a foefie slide and then I could not hold on, then I fell, but as in skin off, butt/tailbone hurt … and I did it again.)

T5, T7 and T8 highlighted how they seriously got hurt from their risky play activities but also mentioned that they continued to do similar activities again. T2 was the only participant to not have taken risks in childhood and shared that: "***Ek was die een wat reg gestaan het om my ma te gaan roep, ek was die kleinste***" (I was the one who stood ready to call my mother, I was the smallest). T4 replied to this statement: "***Ek dink nogals jou herinneringe spruit uit jou verwysingsraamwerk uit. Jy's die versigtige juffrou***" (I rather think your memories stem from your frame of reference. You're the careful teacher). From these statements, it is evident that T2 did not take risks during childhood and is also the "more careful" teacher, as T4 mentioned. T4 recognised that taking risks during childhood might have an impact on whether risks will be taken during adulthood, as well as whether one will allow and encourage it.

P1, P3, P5, P6 and P7 provided examples of how they took risks during childhood. The following examples were mentioned: *climbing trees, rock climbing, jumped from the roof, out and about on the farm, exploring koppies.* Consequently, P5, P6 and P7 revealed that they got hurt but continued to participate in risky play activities. P2 and P4 had similar responses, as both mentioned:

> "***Not much, ek is steeds maar 'n bangbroekie***" (Not much, I'm still a scaredy-cat).
>
> "***My mother did not allow any high-risk plays – we did not really play any risky games***".

There is consensus amongst the majority of responses. Only three of the 15 participants (both parents and teachers), did not participate in risky activities when they were children. Pertaining to the literature, six risky play categories are identified according to Sandseter (2007:242) (see Section 2.8):

a) play with great heights,

b) play with high speed,

c) play with dangerous tools,

d) play near dangerous elements,

e) rough and tumble play, and

f) play where children can get lost/disappear.

When comparing the above-mentioned categories with participants' responses, it is apparent that they participated in risky play. From the participants' responses, it became evident that risky outdoor play was a normal part of childhood and that there were not many restrictions that limited them from taking risks.

4.4.1.3 Sub-theme 1.3: The impact of teachers and parents' childhood memories on children's risky play

Teachers were asked to explain whether they think their childhood memories will have an impact on whether they will prevent or support children's risky play activities. Furthermore, participants were asked what their opinion is on the way children played in the past as opposed to how they play nowadays. Despite the fear for children's safety, T2 recognised the importance of permitting children to partake in risky play. T2 stated that: "***dit is vir my as mens soms moeilik, want ek sien al hoe val hulle maar, hulle val nooit nie, ek weet hulle gaan nie...ek sal dit nie voorkom nie maar dit het definitief 'n invloed***" (it is sometimes difficult for me as a human being, because I see how they are going to fall, but they never fall, I know they are not going to...I will not prevent it but it definitely has an affect).

T1 mentioned that there is a difference in time; from the first few months of the year compared to the middle and end of the year. In the first few months of the year, teachers will guide children more by showing them how to do certain activities and what not to do. The teacher and child are mutually involved in the sociocultural activities (risky play participation) where the teacher guides the child through interaction, communication, etc. to eventually master certain skills. As children get more familiar with their own capabilities, they are motivated to take risks in their play. T1 further noted that children are taking more risks during the Covid-19 period. This is because usually, children from all age groups used to play together and the older ones were instructed to be careful of the younger children, hence limiting them to do certain risky play activities, but this has changed due to social distancing. Now, children are separated according to the various age groups and rotating between the various areas

on the playground. Therefore, the four- to five-year-old children are less restricted and have more confidence to take risks because of the absence of younger children. As a result, the four- to five-year-old children have more freedom to explore and participate in risky activities.

T6's response is similar in explaining that it is imperative to teach and caution children on what to do and what not to do. T4 shared that: "***Ek dink tog 'n mens se verwysheidsraamwerk het 'n invloed wat jy toelaat en nie toelaat nie.***" (I do think one's frame of reference has an influence on what you allow and do not allow). T4 further explained that teachers have a responsibility towards children and that they are working with a very overprotective community. This has an impact on whether risky play will be encouraged and supported within the ELC. Furthermore, T4 expressed that: "***Die feit dat ons bome het waarin hulle mag klim en waar hulle waag om te klim en tot hoog klim, dink ek dis 'n voorreg wat baie min skole het.***" (The fact that we have trees where they are allowed to climb and where they dare to climb and climb high, I think it is a privilege that very few schools have). With this being said, it is evident that children receive opportunities at ELC1 to engage in risky play activities.

T5 explained that children should be supported in their attempts to take risks. T5 further stated that: "***I have noticed like when my kids were younger we will take them to the park and you find some moms who would refuse their kids to climb because they fear for them, we all have fear, we are all afraid … it's different because I have a little bit of knowledge and understand that this one is developing the skills, but you find those moms who are kind of protecting them, know they might hurt themselves there, forgetting that are incapacitating the child. The child needs to explore and develop skills through climbing, jumping around, skipping … but with precaution***". T5 is a teacher, as well as a parent who can see both sides of the coin.

Parents were asked how their own childhood engagement in play compares to their children's participation in risky play. The majority of responses from P1, P2, P3 and P4 feel that both children and their own risky play experiences are very similar to one another. P7 on the other hand beliefs that children's risky play experiences are limited due to fear and stated that: "***I would never let my little one play outside our gate alone and when I was younger, that was not a problem***". This statement indicates

that in the past children had the freedom to play in the streets, whereas today it is too dangerous to allow small children to do that due to safety. P7 provided a similar response in stating that: "***When I was young, we could drive on our bicycles to the garage and walk alone outside … today you can't even sit at a restaurant without fearing for your child's life. So I would have preferred my little one to play like I did when I was a child***".

P1 shared some important information regarding risk-taking as a child and the impact it has on him as an adult. P1 expressed that: "***Risky play played a big part in my upbringing, cultivating self-confidence, building self-image and building trust in my own abilities. I understand risk much better, which enables me to coach and pass on risk analysis abilities***". Coordinating and communicating these experiences to children will allow for progression from an inexperienced risk-taking child to an experienced risk-taking child.

4.4.1.4 Sub-theme 1.4: Risky play in the past versus risky play now

T4 expressed that: "***Ek dink net ons was meer vryheid toe gelaat. In vandag se dae, ek dink as gevolg van televisies, tegnologie ... kinders ontwikkel nie meer drie-dimensioneel soos wat ons dit gedoen het nie. Ons het regtig waar gespeel. Ons het kreatief gedink en stokke was gewere, en in die sand was daar hop scotch bane geteken en ons het kreatief gedink want daar was nie speelgoed nie. So ons het gewaag ons het geklouter ons het gespeel ... Vandag se kinders sit voor televisies***" (I just think we were left with more freedom. Nowadays, I think because of televisions, technology ... children no longer develop three dimensionally as we did. We really played. We thought creatively and sticks were guns, and in the sand there were hop scotch lanes drawn and we thought creatively because there were no toys. So we dared we climbed we played...Today's children sit in front of televisions).

T6 agreed that children in the past were more creative because they learnt to do things on their own. T4 additionally mentioned that these days, children find it difficult to initiate their own games. In a classroom full of toys, children are bored and do not know what to play with. Another vital statement made by T4, was that: "...***ek dink net in die verlede, ons het eers die groot motoriese spiere ontwikkel. So ons kon***

drie-dimensioneel beter ontwikkel het dat ons later beter twee-dimensioneel beter kon werk. Maar ek dink nou is dit 'n geval van dat kinders is baie meer en vroeër visueel oorgestimuleerd en twee dimensioneel ontwikkeld maar nie drie-dimensioneel ontwikkel nie. So ek dink hulle uitval op standard 1* (Graad 3) *vlak is enorm teenoor ons ... " (... I just think in the past, we first developed the big motor muscles. So we could have developed three dimensionally better that we could have worked two dimensionally better later. But I think now it is a case of children being much more and earlier visually overstimulated and two dimensionally developed but not three dimensionally developed. So I think their dropout at standard 1 (Grade 3) level is huge compared to us…"). The above statement highlights a very crucial issue namely, that children whose gross motor skills are not optimally developed, might experience issues later on. Consequently, gross motor skills are developed as children participate in climbing, jumping, running, etc. risky play activities but children rather spend time indoors watching television or spending time on tablets, etc.

T2 shared that: "…***ek dink ook die gevaar in die stad, waar ons woon. Toe ek byvoorbeeld klein was het ons oor groot paaie fiets gery winkel toe en jy het met jou geldjies gaan koop, en jy het daar op die hoek gesit, jy en jou maatjie het mekaar daar gekry in Graad 1, en dan het jy gou-gou gekuier en jy het weer self huistoe fiets gery en dit was sonder 'n selfoon, sonder niks is jy net weer veilig by die huis. Waar nou, as jy nie regtig 'n lekker fietspaadjie het nie kan jy nie eintlik jou kind noodwendig winkel toe stuur met 'n fiets meer nie. Nie noodwendig met die motors nie maar omdat die fietse gesteel en selfone gesteel word, is dit die groot gevaar wat mens hulle terug hou***" (... I also think the danger in the city, where we live. When I was little, for example, we rode bicycles across big roads to the store and you went shopping with your money, and you sat there on the corner, visiting your friend in Grade 1, and then you rode your bicycles home again and it was without a cell phone, without anything you were just safe at home again. Where now, if you do not really have a nice bicycle path, you cannot actually send your child to the store with a bicycles anymore. Not necessarily with the cars but because the bicycles are stolen and cellphones are stolen, it is the great danger that holds one them back). In the past children had the opportunity to ride bicycles in the streets, meet friends at the shops without any concerns. Today, children do not have the same experiences as children's safety is a major concern.

T3's response is related to younger parents and indicated that: "***ouers in die jong geslag wat self nie gewaag het nie, ek dink en wat oorversigtig is vir alles, ja maak dit, sneeubal die hele effek***" (parents in the younger generation who did not take risks, I think and who are overcautious for everything, yes make it, snowball the whole effect).

T2 and T3 agreed that children's risky play opportunities and engagement in this day and age are highly dependent on their parents. Moreover, T2 explained that the current year group she is teaching is emotionally strong and added that these children are mainly the youngest and middle children. In contrast with the previous responses, T5 highlighted that toys are far more sophisticated and fun today.

P1 and P4 had similar responses by sharing that in the past, environments were safer and children had more freedom to be creative and participate in risky play activities freely. P1 referred to play as "***toned down***" and further expressed that: "***… play is less risky than before, maybe due to legal implication and the convenient tranquilising effect of available technology***". Whereas P4 revealed that: "***In the past, children had to be creative to make their own games and entertainment – they had more freedom and less dangers involving the people around them…***" P7's and P6's responses revealed that children's safety is a major concern today compared to the past. P7 stated that: "***… the world has changed and it's a dangerous place and we try to protect our children …***" P6 described that: "***In the past, children made their own playing activities like climbing in trees … on roofs … and even jumping off them. Nowadays everyone is very anxious about what could go wrong …***"

From the analysed responses of both teachers and parents, it became clear that there are differences in terms of risky play in the past versus risky play today. Similar responses came to light from teachers and parents. Both teachers and parents highlighted that they were more creative and children today are far more fascinated by the use of technology. This causes concern since children are visually overstimulated (T4) and physically under-stimulated. Finally, they stated that safety is a major concern and children have less freedom today.

4.4.2 Theme 2: Children's risky play and the benefits thereof

The second theme pertains to the implementation of risky play at home and at the ELC, as well as the developmental advantages when children participate in risky outdoor play. These advantages shed light on the various areas or domains of development that are promoted during the implementation of risky activities. During this process, children are learning various skills as they are engaged in risky play. Many researchers have noted the beneficial effects that risky play has on all the domains of development (Goldstein, 2012:6; Little, 2010a:3; Mardell *et al*., 2016:4). It is evident from research that risky play is valuable for children's overall health, well-being and development and participants acknowledged this in their responses.

4.4.2.1 Sub-theme 2.1: Risky play in the ELC environment

T4 continually highlighted the importance of the teacher to know the children and their capabilities. Also, some children need more guidance when participating in risky play activities. Moreover, T4 clearly emphasised that children are participating in risky outdoor play at ELC1. Subsequently, from the interviews, the following responses came to light and are evidence of how children are engaged in risky outdoor play at ELC1, ELC2 and ELC3, despite the fear of children getting hurt.

T1: "***Hulle hardloop op die klimraam dan spring hulle vir daai brandweerpyp***" (They run on the climbing frame then they jump for that fire pipe) and "...***by die monkey bars is sement onder en hulle hang onder so met hulle voete ... en daar's nie 'n matras of niks onder nie***..." (... at the monkey bars there are cement underneath and they hang upside down like with their feet … and there is no mattress or anything underneath).

T2: "***Hy kan onderstebo hang of hy kan hoog boom klim***" (He can hang upside down or he can climb high trees).

T4: Die kinders "***het dit nou self uitgedink om van die sandput af op 'n klein trampolientjie te spring. Nou wil hulle die heletyd die trampolinetjie verder skuif***..." (The children now invented themselves to jump from the sandpit onto a small trampoline. Now they want to move the trampoline further all the time) and "…***maar sy waag alles…sy is hals oor kop…sy is absoluut 'n rabedoe***" (but she dares everything…she is head over heels…she is absolutely a tomboy)

and "…***het vandag gekyk by die swaaitjies, hoe hulle ondestebo aan hulle voete hang***…" (watched today at the swings, how they hang upside down from their feet) and "***hardloop en spring en onderste bo hang en boom klim***" (run and jump and hang upside down and climb trees).

T5: "...***climbing, jumping around, skipping***…"

T6: "…***if she goes to a swing, climb on top***" and "***for them to play on the jungle gyms, for them to play with scooters***".

T7: "***Op die paal op en af klim***" (Climb up and down the pole) and "***hulle moet kan boomklim, moet kan hoë apparate klim, moet kan gly, swaai***" (they must be able to climb trees, must be able to climb high apparatus, must be able to slide, swing).

The responses from T8 focused on the learning process when children participate in risky play. T8 stated that children who engage in risky play and get hurt learn from a particular experience. Furthermore, T8 emphasised that: "***Dit is hoe jy leer…as jy een keer geval het van 'n hoë ding af, dan gaan jy nie sommer weer so wild speel en dit gaan nie weer gebeur nie, hulle leer baie daaruit***" (This is how you learn…once you have fallen from a high object, then you will not just play as wild and it will not happen again, they learn a lot from it). Finally, T8 mentioned that she finds it satisfactory when children master risky play activities that were previously too challenging. Thus, when a child participates in a risky activity based on experience, the previous involvement contributes to the current activity by being prepared for it. In this way, the past spreads to the present and the future.

The responses from teachers during the interviews were confirmed by my observations of children's outdoor play. At ELC1 children have various opportunities to participate in risky outdoor play. Teachers were not interfering with children's play but were visible at all times supervising the children. I have noticed that children did not once look bored; they were running on uneven surfaces, jumping on the trampolines, jumping from climbing frames and high objects, climbing and sitting in trees and riding bicycles and scooters. Furthermore, the children were climbing on the climbing wall and jumping from the wall onto the grass. The wall is definitely at a height where children might injure themselves. Moreover, other children were hanging from a steel frame and monkey bars. During my observations, I have noticed that children

were not scared to play on top of high structures and jump from it. Throughout the playground, children were exposed to various risky activities and experiences. Photographs 4.13 to 4.18 presents evidence of children engaging in risky play at ELC1.

Photograph 4.13: Risky play at ELC1

Children climbing on a fairly high wall.

Photograph 4.14: Risky play at ELC1

Various risky play activities are evident in this photograph. Firstly, one child sits in a tree, secondly, several children hanging from a steel frame and thirdly, two children jumping on the trampoline.

Photograph 4.15: Risky play at ELC1

Children jumping from a high point on the wooden climbing frame onto a hard surface covered with sand.

Photograph 4.16: Risky play at ELC1

Children climbing on the high wooden climbing frame.

Photograph 4.17: Risky play at ELC1

Two children climbing and sitting in a tree.

Photograph 4.18: Risky play at ELC1

One child sitting on top and others are hanging from a steel frame.

During my observations of children engaging in risky play at ELC1, I have noticed that the majority of areas on the playground are hard and covered either by paving or

cement, as well as uneven surfaces. Although the ELC places a very high premium on safety in terms of risky play, they may not realise how unsafe the hard surfaces are. Especially, if a child falls on their head.

I observed both T1 and T4 as they are teaching in the four- to five-year-old age group. Both T1 and T4 were very encouraging, motivating children to take on challenging activities. I have noticed how T4 praised children when they were able to go from one side to the other while hanging from the monkey bars. Through interaction, T1 guided children as they were jumping on the trampolines and climbing in the trees. At one point, T4 took a stance back and observed children as they engaged in various risky play activities.

At ELC2, children engaged in risky play activities by riding on scooters and bicycles on uneven surfaces in an area that is usually used as a car park. A few children climbed onto the jungle gyms where they were sliding and swinging. I have noticed that even though there were fewer children compared to the other ELCs, the majority of children were engaged in fantasy play activities. Various fantasy play resources were packed out for the children to play with. However, children were not restricted and had the freedom to select where and what they wanted to play with. Photographs 4.19 to 4.22 depict how children participated in playful activities at ELC2.

Photograph 4.19: Risky play at ELC2

Children riding bicycles and scooters on a hard and uneven paved area.

Photograph 4.20: Risky play at ELC2

One child climbing on a high steel jungle gym.

Photograph 4.21: Risky play at ELC2

One child sliding from the high steel jungle gym.

Photograph 4.22: Risky play at ELC2

Children swinging from and climbing on a second steel jungle gym.

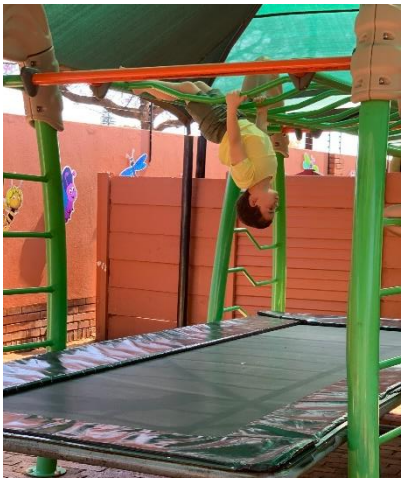
The aim was to observe both T5 and T6, however, T5 asked to be excused due to ECD training she had to attend. T6 was visible at all times during my observations, supervising the children. She did not interfere with the children's play but walked around on the playground and interacted with them as they were playing. Furthermore, I have observed that T6 is positive and caring towards the children. Subsequently, children reflected fun, laughter and comfortableness. A lack of planning for risky outdoor play was reflected in the teachers' planning. However, the resources available outdoors and my observations showed that risky play is taking place at the ELC.

The principal at ELC3 indicated that the majority of outdoor resources have been imported aiming to promote children's gross motor skills. The resources are in excellent condition and it was evident that children enjoyed playing outdoors. Children participated in risky outdoor play by climbing onto high structures and jumping from them. Furthermore, they were hanging upside down from monkey bars with a trampoline underneath. One child climbed onto a tree structure and others were playing on a very interesting resource where the aim is to promote vestibular development. This resource turns and children need to hold on tight to not fall from it. A gym area was created for the five-year-olds as depicted in Photograph 4.26. Consequently, having access to the resources as shown in the photographs below,

afford children opportunities to take risks in their play. Photographs 4.23 to 4.28 propose how some children were taking risks as they played at ELC3.

Photograph 4.23: Risky play at ELC3

Children climbing and sitting on a half rounded, hard plastic structure with holes in it.



Photograph 4.24: Risky play at ELC3

One child hanging upside down from monkey bars. A trampoline is underneath the monkey bars for safety purposes.

Photograph 4.25: Risky play at ELC3

Two children jumping on a trampoline.

Photograph 4.26: Risky play at ELC3

Children enjoyed playing at the 'gym' area. They were gliding, climbing on and hanging upside down from the structures.

Photograph 4.27: Risky play at ELC3

One child climbing on top of a tree stump.

Photograph 4.28: Risky play at ELC3

Children standing on top of and holding tight as the frame moves in circles.

While I was observing T7 and T8 respectively during children's outdoor playtime, the teachers guided them with rotational activities. Children participated in various activities using different resources, rotating from one activity to the next. Both teachers and children were mutually involved in sociocultural structured activities. I suspected that the activities were very much structured. This suspicion was confirmed by both T7 and T8 during the interviews. Planning for outdoor play was sufficient and children were exposed to various areas and resources by rotating every day to different parts of the playground. Each age group of children was colour coded and therefore the teachers and children know where to go for outdoor play.

4.4.2.2 Sub-theme 2.2: Risky play in the home environment

Parents are an essential contributor to children's risk-taking experiences in their early learning years. Rogoff (2008:65) points out that communication and coordination play key roles in the process of guided participation, therefore, parents' communication with children, as part of supporting them in risk-taking activities, is crucial. However, parents feel accountable to protect their children from getting hurt and at the same time encourage the development of skills and abilities (Obee *et al*., 2021:100). In other words, parents' fears will have an impact on whether children will be exposed to opportunities to engage in risky play activities. During the semi-structured individual

interview schedules, parents shared some emotional responses when they see their child/children engaged in risky play activities. The most prominent responses were that parents experience feelings of fear and anxiety but also feelings of proudness. Below are some of the responses from parents:

P1: "***Concerned for safety, yet proud and supporting.***"
P2: "***Proud, but scared.***"
P3: "***I'm a bit anxious, but there to see if they are safe … to give direction if absolutely required.***"
P4: "***My heart stops beating! But I remain a straight face and praise him for being so brave and doing it so well. I will watch him to make sure he is okay … or I will walk away and pray he does not get hurt.***"
P5: "***I become too worried but I let go and see it as part of learning.***"
P6: "***When she is on the edge of the bridge, it feels like my heart is pounding … I just want to run and be there if she falls.***"
P7: "***Nervous.***"

Even though fear is evident in almost all the responses, P4 also indicated that children are praised and that they feel like engaging when it seems like the child is going to fall or get hurt. Furthermore, P4 shared that, "***My mother always had an eye on us … but not interfering. So my comfort zone with play does not involve risk. My husband used to swing really high and do all sorts of wild stuff as a kid and he is more open to allowing them to go much further than me. But, I believe it is a good balance, we do not tie them down but we also don't allow a too high risk, we try to balance it out***". In the statement above, it is evident that the spouses share different experiences and views on risky play but can compromise and reaches a balance between allowing risky play at home, but 'not too much risky play'. P3 revealed that "… ***at home, I allow more, but as they are still small, I have an eye on them***". This shows that P3 supports risky play at home but under supervision.

From the responses, it became clear that parents do support and motivate children to partake in risky play. However, fear is prevalent in the responses. McFarland and Laird (2018:161) assert that parents are stuck between keeping children safe and wanting to support them in taking risks hence developing independence and confidence.

4.4.2.3 Sub-theme 2.3: Benefits of risky play engagement for children's holistic development

The belief that taking risks is valuable for children's development does not imply that one becomes unconcerned about children's safety, but rather that one needs to find the balance between risky and hazardous situations and healthy, risky experiences (Eager & Little, 2011:s.p.). Participants were asked in what ways they consider risky play to be beneficial for a child's development. Grounded on the information acquired from the interviews and semi-structured individual interview schedules, it became clear that participants are aware of the developmental advantages of participation in risky outdoor play.

T6 recognised that children "***need to develop their gross motor skills***". In a similar response, T8 asked the question: "***Hoe anders gaan hulle dan leer, groot spiere, klein spiere***?" (How else are they going to learn then, big muscles, small muscles?). Furthermore, T8 shared that the main focus of ELC3 is to promote children's gross motor skills "…***ons hele fokus is dan nou maar om by die groot motories te begin en te werk tot 'n kindjie reg is om te kan sit***…" (Our whole focus now is to start and work on the gross motor skills until a child is ready to sit). This is a valuable statement because children's gross motor skills need to be developed first before they will be able to sit and do work when progressing to higher grades.

In T5's response, she mentioned: "***The child needs to explore and develop skills through climbing, jumping around, skipping, you know, all that but with precaution***". Moreover, children's confidence was identified to be promoted during risky play participation (T2 and T5).

T4 acknowledged that: "…***in die eerste plek dink ek dit ontwikkel kreatiwiteit, want om in daai boom te klim moet ek planne maak oor hoe gaan ek in daai boom kom…Dit bevorder waagmoed en selfvertroue…deur hierdie spel word kleuters bloodgestel aan groter uitdagings, so hulle moet beter beplanningsvaardighede hê. Hulle moet dink wat moet hulle eerste doen en waar gaan hulle eerste moet trap en tweede moet trap en derde moet trap om bo te kom…dit gee hulle die geleentheid om wyer te eksploreer, en nuwe ervarings te beleef, dit gee hulle die geleentheid om kanse te waag en reëls te breek en dit laat hulle leer om verantwoordelikheid te neem vir hulle besluite. Sodoende groei en ontwikkel***

hulle" (In the first place, I think it develops creativity, because to climb that tree I have to make plans on how I will get into that tree…It promotes courage and confidence…through this children are exposed to bigger challenges so they have to have better planning skills. They need to think about what they should do first and where they are going to step first and step second and step third to get to the top…it gives them the opportunity to explore wider, and to have new experiences, it gives them the opportunity to take chances and break the rules, and this allows them to learn to take responsibility for their decisions. In this way they grow and develop). This is a powerful statement made by T4 who is a knowledgeable and experienced teacher.

Consequently, the following skills are promoted during risky play, as described in the above statement: creativity, making plans, taking risks, handling severe challenges, planning, wider exploration, being exposed to new experiences, taking chances, learning to break rules and for children to learn to be accountable for their choices. These skills are valuable and provide children with the opportunity to experience and develop the skills when they take risks in their play. Furthermore, T3 and T4 added that cause-and-effect is another skill promoted during risky play. Moreover, T4 mentioned that above all, the challenges provide children with a sense of enjoyment. In addition, T4 indicated that children's problem-solving skills are also promoted "…***dit bevorder probleemoplossing … as hulle in is, moet hulle uit, so hulle moet dink hoe hulle uit die probleem uit kom***" (… it promotes problem-solving … if they are in, they need to get out, so they need to think about how to solve the problem). T2 and T4 noted that children learn from experience. In other words, by taking risks, they learn about their own abilities, as well as how to handle specific situations in the future. Changes take place within the child when taking part in risky play. Therefore, when a child participates in a risky activity based on experience, the previous experience contributes to the current activity by being prepared for it. In this way, the past spreads to the present and the future.

T7 revealed that children's midline crossing, spatial orientation and body perception skills are developed during risky play. Whereas, the response from T8 is related to social development. T8, however, asked the following question: "…***gaan jy saam speel, kan jy nie, gaan jy beurte maak, kan jy lei, kan jy help?***" (…are you going to play together, can you not, are you going to take turns, can you lead, can you help?).

This also relates to emotional development as children learn when they are unable to master an activity or skill.

P4 explained that risky play engagement promotes confidence and cause-and-effect by highlighting that risky play "…***give them confidence in their own abilities and teach them that with every action is an equal reaction, they need to think about what can happen if something goes wrong***". Similarly, P3 noted that it is vital for children "***to experience it as part of growing up***". P6 further mentioned that children's independence is promoted, as well as physical development. Additionally, P6 indicated that: "***I support outdoor play due to the fact that it helps my child develop on a physical… and mental way***…" While, P5 stated that her child is an only child, therefore, by engaging in risky play with other children, it will promote her social development.

Taken together, all participants − both teachers and parents − acknowledged the importance of risky play for a child's development. The responses shed light on the promotion of all developmental domains: physical, cognitive, social and emotional, as a result of risky play participation. Consequently, children develop holistically when they participate in risky play.

4.4.3 Theme 3: Constraints affecting children's opportunities to participate in risky play and the concerns thereof

This theme encapsulates the factors impacting children's risky play opportunities and the concerns thereof. Sandseter (2011:7) asserts that limiting children's risk-taking activities is likely to result in a risk-averse society where people do not have the ability to deal with daily events, as well as children exploring more dangerous activities in uncontrolled ways. Participants were asked a variety of questions regarding their experiences and views of risky play both at the ELC, as well as the home environment. Participants mostly expressed the feelings they experience regarding the impact that various factors have on their decisions to allow and encourage or prevent risky play.

4.4.3.1 Sub-theme 3.1: Constraints on children's risky play opportunities at the ELC

I wanted to understand what impacts teachers' decisions to allow children to participate in risky outdoor play. Therefore, I asked teachers various questions in this

regard. T3 mentioned that the Covid-19 pandemic had an impact on the development of some children. During the lockdown period, when ELCs were closed, some children were not actively involved in risky play at home. This was evident as children started returning to the ELC.

The general response from teachers revealed that "***lack of support from parents"*** is one of the main challenges they encounter. Moreover, T1, T2, T5 had similar responses regarding support from parents when it comes to children's risky play engagement at the ELC. T1 mentioned that parents are "***die een groot speek in die wiel"*** (the one big spit in the wheel), meaning that parents limit teachers to implement risky play at the ELC. Furthermore, T2 stated that: "***as ons gevrywaarde ondersteuning van elke ouer het, sal dit ons werk, ons wêreld makliker maak"*** (if we have liberated support from every parent, it will make our work, our world easier). Moreover, P7 agreed that receiving support from parents is imperative and that it is a challenging task when some children are not allowed to participate in certain risky activities. Another response was based on fear about children getting hurt and the reaction of parents thereon "…***we all have that fear when they are playing outside like if they get hurt or something, at the end of the day, you are responsible for that child and you are going to be questioned for that***…" (T6). Similarly, T5 explained, "***When there is an accident, right, the blame basically comes on you".*** However, "***some parents understand***" that accidents do happen.

T4's response relates to overprotection and responsibility. In her response, she expressed that: "***Ons het met 'n gemeenskap te doen wat baie oorbeskermende, um ouergemeenskap. So die kinders voel ons ontsettend verantwoordelik voor***" (We are dealing with a community that is very overprotective, um parent community. So, we feel incredibly responsible for the children). Subsequently, T4 shared that teachers experience a predicament between supporting children's risky play but also face an overprotective community "...***is die twee kante, jy het die ingesteldheid om dit aan te moedig, maar jy sit met 'n gemeenskap wat bitter oorbeskermend is...so jy moet altyd daai balans handhaaf***". (...are the two sides, you have the mindset to encourage it, but you are sitting with a community that is bitterly overprotective...So, you must always maintain that balance). Similarly, T7 and T8 shared that: "***Die generasies het so verander dat jy meer protective is***" (The generations have changed so that you are more protective) and "***Ek dink alles is net***

oorbeskermend (I think everything is just overprotective). Parents having an overprotecting mindset towards their children pose a challenging task for teachers to have the courage to encourage and implement risky outdoor play at the respective ELCs. T3's response indicated how the playground and the amount of space available limit children's risky play opportunities. Additionally, T2 indicated that they would have removed all the houses and made a huge playground for the children if that was a possibility. It is evident that many ELCs these days do not have large playgrounds and this is due to a lack of access to space to do so.

From the responses provided, it became clear that teachers experienced parents as the main constraint to implementing risky play at the ELC. Understandably, parents are concerned about their children's safety and in the process puts a lot of pressure on the ELC (P7). However, this predicament between teachers and parents' feelings might negatively impact the children and their holistic development.

4.4.3.2 Sub-theme 3.2: Constraints on children's risky play opportunities at home

There is a tremendous decrease in outdoor play in most countries all over the world. According to Skar *et al*. (2016:4), children's exposure to screen time has increased immensely and seems to be one of the major competitors to children's participation in outdoor play. P1 noted this constraint and highlighted that: "***I, however, encourage play to be similar to what I have experienced as a child, limiting technology***". From this response, it is evident that P1 belief children are not engaged in risky activities compared to the past, as well as that technology has an impact on children's playful activities.

Additionally, P3, P4 and P7 acknowledged that children do not get enough opportunities to play and ride bicycles in the streets and socialise with neighbourhood children. This is problematic as many children are living in confined spaces in their home environments and the streets are an ideal place to play with other children. According to P1, "***play areas today are more structured and confined – sort of limiting some risk factors***". Similarly, P4 replied that "***we played outside in the streets … kids are now confined to a small yard, with little or no trees or garden, playparks are unsafe … children are forced to stay indoors …***". Therefore, the

streets are an ideal place for children to play without having structured and confined spaces. However, due to the dangers of society, children are not granted this opportunity. Moreover, P7 expressed that she fears for her child's life in any public environment.

In addition, P4 and P6 highlighted that children nowadays are not granted opportunities to climb trees. This might be due to the danger it poses to children, parents' fears for children's safety or the unavailability of appropriate trees to climb. During the interviews, T2 mentioned that many home environments in their area today mostly have palm trees which makes it impossible for children to climb. Furthermore, P6 mentioned a very important fact when stating that: "***Nowadays everyone is very anxious about what could go wrong, so they try to make all toys as safe as possible***". Creating toys that are safe does not permit children opportunities to take risks and therefore play in ways that are as safe as possible. Finally, P5 indicated that her child "***likes taking risks, it is me who sometimes prevents her***". This corroborates with literature that parents' beliefs and attitudes impact children's risky play participation.

From the analysed responses, parents' fears, unsafe environments, less freedom, less risky play opportunities, parents' beliefs and attitudes, confined spaces and technology are amongst the contributing constraints that limit children's risky play participation at home. These constraints corroborate with the existing literature as described in Chapter two.

4.4.3.3 Sub-theme 3.3: Concerns if children do not receive opportunities to engage in risky play

Because children in the four- to five-year-old age group are still in the phase where development is essential, they require support from adults. Participants (teachers and parents) were asked to share their concerns if children are not exposed to risky outdoor play opportunities. From participants' responses, it is noted that they agreed that no engagement in risky play will negatively impact children in many ways.

T1 reflected on a child who would not participate in any risky activities during outdoor play and mentioned that the child will not even dare to taste different types of fruit. T1 recognised that the child does not participate in outdoor play but as soon as the

teacher takes out a cell phone, the child immediately shows interest. This behaviour reveals that the child is mostly exposed to two-dimensional activities rather than participating in kinaesthetic activities.

T4 noted that children might experience social problems and they may not be able to listen to instructions. T2 further asserts that: "***Ek dink om 'n vraestel binne 'n gegewe tyd klaar te maak sal vir hulle 'n reuse probleem wees***" (I think when completing a paper within a given time will be a huge problem for them.) In other words, when children reach higher grades, they might find it difficult to complete tests within the given time limit. Furthermore, T4 indicated that: "…***hulle is passiewe kinders…hulle lê altyd…ek dink die meeste van hulle het ook 'n lae spiertonus want hulle het geen energie nie*** …" (They are passive children…they always lie down…I think most of them also have a low muscle tone because they have no energy.)

T2 replied by sharing one of her observations. She observed a child getting frustrated and showing anger and aggression towards his mother for not getting what he wanted. She mentioned that this particular child is usually quiet and withdrawn but he was taken out of his comfort zone and routine. T2 recognised that the child is unable to adapt and does not like surprises which may be the effect of no risky play participation. Subsequently, T2 noted that if children are not receiving enough opportunities for free and risky outdoor play that this will impact their creativity, listening skills and willingness to learn.

T6 highlighted that children will be unable to choose between what is right and wrong when taking risks in play. "***Won't be able to know that okay, wrong or right, even if I am jumping, I must not jump too high***". When children are not experienced, they will find it challenging to make such decisions. T8 emphasised the problematic effect of non-exposure to risky play activities which creates great concern "…***dis 'n groot probleem…dis 'n groot bekommernis…gaan nie optimaal ontwikkel nie***" (it's a big problem it's a big concern…is not going to develop optimally.) This statement corroborates with literature that "injury prevention plays a key role in keeping children safe, but emerging research suggests that imposing too many restrictions on children's outdoor risky play hinders their development" (Brussoni *et al*., 2012:3134).

Taken together − analysed responses from teachers and parents − I feel that parents are not as concerned about providing their children with risky play opportunities. The majority of parents mentioned that their children receive enough chances to take risks. For example, P4 replied that: "***When we go camping, they will ride a bike and do what other kids are doing, challenging themselves to things they have not yet tried … so, I feel they do get enough opportunity to play involving taking risks.***" Parents feel that children receive enough opportunities to take risks, whereas teachers are more concerned about children not receiving ample opportunities to take risks in their play.

In conclusion, if parents and teachers continue to protect children in a way that does not allow risk-taking, children will become reliant and unable to make appropriate decisions associated with risky play.

4.5 CONCLUSION

Chapter four aimed to afford the research findings to address the research question: *How do parents and teachers experience and view risky outdoor play in early learning centres?* The generated data from 15 participants (eight teachers and seven parents) through interviews and children's outdoor play observations were analysed and interpreted. Three themes and ten sub-themes arose from the generated data and revealed teachers and parents' experiences and views of risky outdoor play, children's risky play and the benefits thereof, as well as factors affecting children's opportunities to participate in risky play and the concerns thereof. Participants' experiences revealed that they are aware of the advantages of risky play for children's development. However, some restrictions are evident in limiting the implementation thereof. Furthermore, teachers highlighted how support from parents would positively contribute to their decisions to encourage risky play at the respective ELCs. Moreover, teachers revealed that an overprotective community, lack of space, as well as safety are key constraints limiting children's risky outdoor play. Whereas, parents indicated that they support risky play but fear for children's safety. Consequently, Chapter five will present the results, conclusions, limitations and implications of the study, as well as recommendations for future research and practice.

CHAPTER FIVE
FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

"Facing risk helps children assess the world around them and their place in it. Children love to see how high they can climb on a ladder, a tree or a jungle gym. Over time they see their abilities grow, and they become ever more confident about stretching their boundaries and taking appropriate changes. They also learn about their limits and the consequences of going too far beyond their limits." – Almon, 2013

5.1 INTRODUCTION

In Chapter four, participants (teachers and parents) shared their opinions, ideas and experiences pertaining to risky outdoor play in both the ELC and home environments. The research findings from participants were stated in line with the three themes and ten sub-themes as they arose from the analysed data.

The concluding Chapter five commences with the core themes that arose from the generated data. The data will be compared and contradictions will be indicated in this chapter. I will outline the findings of the study and compare them to the existing literature in order to answer my secondary and primary research questions. The chapter continues with a presentation on the limitations and finally, the chapter, as well as the research study is concluded by presenting implications of the study and recommendations for further research and practice.

5.2 LITERATURE CONTROL

Literature control aims to demonstrate the relationship between existing literature and the findings of this research study. Tables 5.1 to 5.3 illustrate the similarities and Tables 5.4 to 5.6 present the contradictions that were found between existing literature and the findings of the study. Data generated from each participant during the semi-structured interviews, outdoor observations, teachers' daily planning of outdoor activities and semi-structured individual interview schedules were utilised to compare and contradict the existing literature.

5.2.1 Comparing similarities of existing literature with the findings of this study

Tables 5.1 to 5.3 summarise the similarities that originated between the existing literature of risky outdoor play and the findings of the study. The literature review (see Chapter 2) is compared to the findings of the study. Column one presents the sub-themes and column two the source from which the literature originates. Column three illustrates the existing knowledge (existing literature) regarding risky outdoor play. In the findings and interpretations column, the similarities that arose between the findings of the study and existing literature are discussed.

Table 5.1: Comparison of this study's findings with existing literature: Supporting evidence on parents and teachers' experiences and views of risky play

Theme 1: Teachers and parents' experiences and views of risky play			
Sub-themes	**Sources**	**Existing knowledge**	**Findings and interpretations**
1.1 Teachers and parents' perceptions of risky play	Niehues *et al*. (2015:817)	Parents' perceptions and views of risk will have an impact on the risky play activities that children will get to engage in.	Parents view risk as a necessity and they have a positive perception of risk. This is evident when seven parents indicated that they support their children's risky play participation.
	Brussoni *et al*. (2012:3138)	An increase in adults' perception that they need to safeguard children from harm.	T4, T6 and T7 mentioned that risky play is acceptable but within boundaries. T7 further explained that supervision is important to keep children from getting hurt. P6 specified that "*it is dangerous if not looked after properly*". Therefore, supervision is required.
	Sandseter (2009b:3)	"The supervising adults' risk perception in the situation will influence how they react to the risk-taking child, and thus	Even though parents and teachers support children's risk-taking, they fear for children's safety when

Theme 1: Teachers and parents' experiences and views of risky play			
Sub-themes	**Sources**	**Existing knowledge**	**Findings and interpretations**
		their actions of interfering, constraining, or encouraging risky play will constitute factors that contribute to the potential risk in the situation."	engaged in risky play activities. T6 said, "*I can say that we all have that fear when they are playing outside like if they get hurt or something* …". T1 stated that: "*Ek is baie positief daaroor. Ek moedig dit aan. Ek raak nie bevrees of beangs as kinders 'n bietjie waag nie, want ek weet wat die inpak daarvan is op hulle as kind*" (I am very positive about it. I encourage it. I do not get scared or anxious when children take risks because I know what the impact of it is on them as a child).
	McFarland and Laird (2017:195)	Both educators and parents believe that risky play is valuable for children.	The majority of teachers and three out of the seven parents indicated that risky play is an essential part of early childhood because of the skills children develop.

Theme 1: Teachers and parents' experiences and views of risky play			
Sub-themes	**Sources**	**Existing knowledge**	**Findings and interpretations**
1.2 Teachers and parents' childhood experiences of risky play	Keles and Yurt (2020:440)	"It is possible to relate teachers' personal attitudes concerning risk with the value they give on risky play and their risky play experiences."	Seven of the teachers and all parents shared how they participated in risky play when they were children. T2 never participated in risky play as a child and confirmed that she is the more careful teacher. T4 said, "*Ek dink nogals jou herinneringe spruit uit jou verwysingsraamwerk uit. Jy's die versigtige juffrou*" (I rather think your memories stem from your frame of reference. You're the careful teacher).
	Keles and Yurt (2020:440)	"The majority of teachers indicated that there are no changes between their childhood plays and current child plays of children attending their classes."	The majority of teachers mentioned that there is not really a difference between their risky play childhood experiences and the implementation thereof at the various ELCs. Whereas, parents indicated that their childhood

Theme 1: Teachers and parents' experiences and views of risky play			
Sub-themes	**Sources**	**Existing knowledge**	**Findings and interpretations**
			experiences and their children's risky play are very similar.
1.3 The impact of teachers and parents' childhood memories on children's risky play	Niehues *et al*. (2015:810)	Parents who had experienced risky situations, encourage their own children to participate more in risky play activities with the aim of concentrating on the advantages rather than being overprotective.	Four parents mentioned that both children and their own risky play experiences are very similar. P1 shared that risk-taking as a child has an impact on him as an adult. He said, "*Risky play played a big part in my upbringing, cultivating self-confidence, building self-image and building trust in my own abilities. I understand risk much better, which enables me to coach and pass on risk analysis abilities*".
	Obee *et al*. (2021:99)	In Obee *et al.'s* (2021:99) study, themes were identified that may promote a child's risky play opportunities in ECECs. The themes include: "assumptions about childhood, parents	P7 beliefs that children's risky play experiences are limited due to fear and stated that: "*I would never let my little one play outside our gate alone and when I was younger, that was not*

Theme 1: Teachers and parents' experiences and views of risky play			
Sub-themes	**Sources**	**Existing knowledge**	**Findings and interpretations**
		and practitioner attitudes, and pedagogical practices".	*a problem*". This statement indicates that in the past children had the freedom to play in the streets whereas, today it is too dangerous to allow small children to do that due to safety concerns.
	Kvalnes (2017:3)	A professional adult must handle serious situations at work with a composed attitude, and experiences to risky conditions prepare one for such work.	Parents indicated that when children are engaged in risky situations during childhood, it seems to prepare them for handling risks in adulthood.
	Madge and Baker (2007:19)	Parents' "attitudes to risk, and the way in which these are conveyed, are likely to have a significant impact on their children and the confidence with which they engage with the world".	One parent shared how taking risks as child has an impact on his attitude towards risk. P1 expressed that: "*Risky play played a big part in my upbringing, cultivating self-confidence, building self-image and building trust in my own abilities. I understand risk*

Theme 1: Teachers and parents' experiences and views of risky play			
Sub-themes	**Sources**	**Existing knowledge**	**Findings and interpretations**
			much better, which enables me to coach and pass on risk analysis abilities".
1.4 Risky play in the past versus risky play now	Einboden *et al*. (2013:561)	Sociologists have shown how parents have shifted their perceptions in a way that children in modern society are viewed as precious and requiring all parents' time and attention.	Four of the parents mentioned that safety today is the reason for limiting children's risky play. Parents indicated that they had more freedom to participate in risky activities, hence, limiting their children's risky play. Therefore, children are less creative and restricted and require more of parents' time and attention.
	Prince *et al*. (2013:183)	Society's current trend appears to be that children most of the time participate in structured activities, organised by parents, and this may lead to the "domesticated" child.	T2 and T3 agreed that children's risky play opportunities and engagement in this day and age is highly dependent on their parents. T4 and T6 mentioned that children today are bored and need parents/teachers to tell them what to do or play with.

Theme 1: Teachers and parents' experiences and views of risky play			
Sub-themes	**Sources**	**Existing knowledge**	**Findings and interpretations**
	Sandseter *et al*. (2019:4)	In the past children used to play in natural environments, but this has changed to children playing at home in their outdoor gardens.	Safety is a major concern and therefore, children have less freedom to play in the streets. Children are exposed to confined spaces in their gardens at home due to safety reasons.
	Sandseter *et al*. (2019:13)	Parents stated that "nowadays mutual neighbourhood surveillance of children is no longer practised, unlike in previous generations".	Parents prevent their children from playing with neighbourhood children in the streets as they fear for children's safety. P7 said, "…*the world has changed and it's a dangerous place and we try to protect our children* …" and P4 said, children *"had more freedom and less dangers involving the people around them* …".

Table 5.2: Comparison of this study's findings with existing literature: Supporting evidence on the advantages of risky play

Theme 2: Children's risky play and the advantages thereof			
Sub-themes	**Sources**	**Existing knowledge**	**Findings and interpretations**
2.1 Risky play in the ELC environment	Stephenson (2003:37)	Children are exposed to risky play opportunities and experiences when teachers have positive attitudes and show interest and enjoyment of physical play and the outdoor environment.	All of the teachers provided examples of how children are taking risks at the ELCs. It became clear that all teacher participants have positive attitudes towards children's risky play exposure and supporting them therein.
	Obee *et al*. (2020:16,17)	Environmental features for instance "wood planks, tires, and plastic crates" are optimised by children and should be integrated within the ECE centres to allow children the chances to partake in risky play.	Various apparatus are visible at all the ELCs that provide children with possibilities to participate in risky play (see Section 4.7.2.1).
	Gill (2007:15,16)	Experiences with particular kinds of risk assist children in learning how to deal with those risks.	T8 mentioned that children who engage in risky play and get hurt, learn from the particular experience. She said, "*Dit is hoe jy leer…as jy een keer geval het van 'n hoë ding af, dan*

Theme 2: Children's risky play and the advantages thereof			
Sub-themes	**Sources**	**Existing knowledge**	**Findings and interpretations**
			gaan jy nie sommer weer so wild speel en dit gaan nie weer gebeur nie, hulle leer baie daaruit" (This is how you learn…once you have fallen from a high object, then you will not just play as wild and it will not happen again, they learn a lot from it).
	Cook *et al*. (2019:2)	Both children and preschool teachers' experiences in ECE settings are associated with beneficial risk-taking.	All eight teachers agreed that taking risks in play is beneficial for children to learn certain skills and how to handle risks. T8 mentioned that she finds it satisfactory when children master risky play activities that were previously too challenging.
2.2 Risky play in the home environment	Obee *et al*. (2021:100)	Parents feel accountable to protect their children from getting hurt and at the same time encourage the development of skills and abilities.	Parents experience many feelings of fear and anxiety but also feelings of proudness when they see their children taking risks.

Theme 2: Children's risky play and the advantages thereof			
Sub-themes	**Sources**	**Existing knowledge**	**Findings and interpretations**
	McFarland and Laird (2018:161)	Parents are stuck between keeping children safe and wanting to support them in taking risks hence developing independence and confidence.	It became clear that all of the parents support and motivate children to partake in risky play at home. However, fear is prevalent in the responses of all seven parents.
	Miller and Azar (2019:1); Morrongiello (2018:218)	Parents' attempt to afford children a safe outdoor environment under adult supervision is the main aim to keep children from getting hurt.	P3 revealed that "…at home, I allow more, but as they are still small, I have an eye on them". This shows that P3 supports risky play at home but under supervision.
2.3 Advantages of risky play engagement for children's holistic development	Armitage (2011:1)	"For 'taking risks' we should say 'making mistakes' and being able to make mistakes at a young age is vitally important in terms of learning and development."	One of the main reasons why both parents and teachers support risky play is because of the advantages it holds for children's development.

Theme 2: Children's risky play and the advantages thereof			
Sub-themes	**Sources**	**Existing knowledge**	**Findings and interpretations**
	Goldstein (2012:5)	Play have various instant advantages, such as fine and gross motor development, as well as long-term advantages, in providing children with "a sense of morality".	T5, T6 and T8 agreed that promoting children's gross motor skills are essential. T8 further mentioned that the main focus at ELC3 is to promote children's gross motor development.
	Kleppe *et al*. (2017:1)	Risk-taking refers to "actions with a probability for undesirable results or negative consequences" and explains that the ability to evade extreme risks, to recognise own competencies and understand various circumstances, are imperative for children's development.	T2, T4 and T5 emphasised that children's confidence was identified to be promoted during risky play participation. T4 said, "…*give them confidence in their own abilities and teach them that with every action is an equal reaction, they need to think about what can happen if something goes wrong*".
	Kvalnes (2017:3)	Exposure to risky situations in early childhood is one of the unintentional advantages which construct a basis to understand and deal with risks.	When children participate in a risky activity based on experience, the previous participation contributes to the current activity by being prepared

Theme 2: Children's risky play and the advantages thereof			
Sub-themes	**Sources**	**Existing knowledge**	**Findings and interpretations**
			for it. In this way, the past spreads to the present and the future (T2, T4).
	Goldstein (2012:6); Little (2010:3); Mardell *et al*. (2016:4)	Risky play is beneficial for children's overall health, well-being and development.	All of the parents and teachers underscored the importance of risky play to develop various skills, including physical, emotional, cognitive and social.
	Brussoni *et al.* (2012:3136)	The advantage of risky play for children's physical development and perceptual-motor skills and the process children gain experience in handling dangerous activities.	T2 and T4 noted that children learn from experience. By taking risks, they learn about their own abilities, as well as how to handle specific risky situations in the future.
	Brussoni *et al*. (2015b:6425); Sandseter and Kennair (2011:260)	Being exposed to risk-taking in play seems to have an increase in the development of children's self-confidence, risk management strategies, self-regulation skills and social behaviour.	T4 listed the following skills to be promoted during risky play: creativity, making plans, taking risks, handling severe challenges, planning, wider exploration, being exposed to new experiences, taking chances, learning

Theme 2: Children's risky play and the advantages thereof			
Sub-themes	**Sources**	**Existing knowledge**	**Findings and interpretations**
			to break rules and for children to learn to be responsible for their choices.

Table 5.3: Comparison of this study's findings with existing literature: Supporting evidence on the factors limiting children's risky play engagement and the concerns thereof

Theme 3: Constraints affecting children's opportunities to participate in risky play and the concerns thereof			
Sub-themes	**Sources**	**Existing knowledge**	**Findings and interpretations**
3.1 Constraints on children's risky play opportunities at the ELC	Keles and Yurt (2020:440)	"Parents' common concern about risky plays specifically is the possibility of being injured. Therefore, they expect schools and teachers to provide safe environments for their children."	The majority of teachers stated that parents' views and overprotective tendencies are the key reason for restricting children's risky play at the ELCs. T2 said, "*as ons gevrywaarde ondersteuning van elke ouer het, sal dit ons werk, ons wêreld makliker maak"* (if we have liberated support from every parent, it will make our work, our world easier). Teachers indicated that they experience parents

Theme 3: Constraints affecting children's opportunities to participate in risky play and the concerns thereof			
Sub-themes	**Sources**	**Existing knowledge**	**Findings and interpretations**
			as the main constraint to implementing risky play at the ELC. Understandably, parents are concerned about their children's safety and in the process put a lot of pressure on the ELC (P7).
	Kalpogianni (2019:168)	Teachers indicated that "a lack of suitable outdoor space as the main factor hindering children's outdoor play".	T3's response indicated how the playground and the amount of space available limit children's risky play opportunities at ELC3.
	Kvalnes (2017:17)	Overprotective parents hamper children's healthy development when they limit them to take risks.	Three teachers mentioned that parents' overprotective mindsets limit them to implement risky play at the various ELCs. T4 shared that teachers experience a predicament between supporting children's risky play but also face an overprotective community "...*is die twee kante, jy het die ingesteldheid om dit aan te moedig,*

Theme 3: Constraints affecting children's opportunities to participate in risky play and the concerns thereof			
Sub-themes	**Sources**	**Existing knowledge**	**Findings and interpretations**
			maar jy sit met 'n gemeenskap wat bitter oorbeskermend is...so jy moet altyd daai balans handaaf" (...are the two sides, you have the mindset to encourage it, but you are sitting with a community that is bitterly overprotective...So, you must always maintain that balance).
3.2 Constraints on children's risky play opportunities at home	Skar *et al.* (2016:4)	Children's exposure to screen time has increased immensely and seems to be one of the major competitors to children's participation in outdoor play.	P1 belief that technology has an impact on children's playful activities. He said, "*I, however, encourage play to be similar to what I have experienced as a child, limiting technology*".
	Nature Play South Australia (2017:4)	The increase of urbanisation and parents' uncertainties and fears for safety, restricts children's freedom and engagement to outdoor risky situations.	P3, P4 and P7 acknowledged that children do not get enough opportunities to play and ride bicycles in the streets and socialise with neighbourhood children.

Theme 3: Constraints affecting children's opportunities to participate in risky play and the concerns thereof			
Sub-themes	**Sources**	**Existing knowledge**	**Findings and interpretations**
	Kvalnes (2017:4)	Many children do not have the privilege to be exposed to an outdoor environment where they can socialise with peers.	Two parents mentioned that children are living in confined spaces. P4 said, "*We played outside in the streets…kids are now confined to a small yard, with little or no trees or garden, playparks are unsafe…"*
	Kvalnes (2017:5)	Parents' attitudes have changed in a way that safety and keeping children away from hazards and harm are the main focus.	P5 indicated that her child "*likes taking risks, it is me who sometimes prevents her*". Parents' beliefs and attitudes impact children's risky play participation.
3.3 Concerns if children do not receive opportunities to engage in risky play	Brussoni *et al*. (2012:3135)	Mental or physical health problems, as well as obesity, could become a reality if children are restricted from taking risks in play.	T4 said, "*hulle is passiewe kinders…hulle lê altyd…ek dink die meeste van hulle het ook 'n lae spiertonus want hulle het geen energie nie*…" (They are passive children…they always lie down…I think most of them also have a low muscle tone because they have no

Theme 3: Constraints affecting children's opportunities to participate in risky play and the concerns thereof			
Sub-themes	**Sources**	**Existing knowledge**	**Findings and interpretations**
			energy). Physical problems are evident when children do not take risks in their play.
	Eager and Little (2011:s.p.)	Children who are completely removed from any risk-taking opportunities are more likely to develop complications such as a lack of independence and a decline in learning, awareness and decision-making skills.	T1 shared an observation where a child is only interested in her cell phone and not in any of the kinaesthetic activities. The child does not attempt to take any risks.
	Brussoni *et al*. (2012:3134)	"Injury prevention plays a key role in keeping children safe, but emerging research suggests that imposing too many restrictions on children's outdoor risky play hinders their development."	T8 emphasised the problematic effect of non-exposure to risky play activities which creates great concern "…*dis 'n groot probleem…dis 'n groot bekommernis…gaan nie optimaal ontwikkel nie*" (it's a big problem it's a big concern…is not going to develop optimally).

Theme 3: Constraints affecting children's opportunities to participate in risky play and the concerns thereof			
Sub-themes	**Sources**	**Existing knowledge**	**Findings and interpretations**
	Wyver (2017:86)	Less time spend outdoors, are more likely to have an impact on cognitive development.	T2 mentioned that when children reach higher grades, they might find it difficult to complete tests within the given timeframe.
	Sandseter (2011:7)	Limiting children's risk-taking activities are likely to result in a risk-averse society where people do not have the abilities to deal with daily events, as well as children exploring more dangerous activities in uncontrolled ways.	T2 shared an event that she observed. The child got frustrated and showed anger and aggression towards his mother for not getting what he wanted. She mentioned that this particular child is usually quiet and withdrawn but he was taken out of his comfort zone and routine and therefore the child is unable to deal with the challenges of everyday life.
	Brussoni *et al*. (2012:3135)	Constructing risky play opportunities in early childhood affords children with the necessary skills to identify possible risks, evaluate the severity of that risk	T6 highlighted that children will be unable to choose between what is right and wrong when taking risks in play. "*Won't be able to know that okay, wrong or right, even if I am*

Theme 3: Constraints affecting children's opportunities to participate in risky play and the concerns thereof			
Sub-themes	**Sources**	**Existing knowledge**	**Findings and interpretations**
		and problem-solving strategies for justifying it.	*jumping, I must not jump too high*". When children are not experienced, they will find it challenging to make such decisions.

5.2.2 Contradictions between existing literature and the findings of this study

Tables 5.4 to 5.6 summarises the contradictions that originated between existing literature of risky outdoor play and the findings of the study. The literature review (see Chapter 2) is compared to the research findings. Contradictions of certain sub-themes with their corresponding numbers are indicated. Column one presents the sub-themes and column two the source from which the literature originates. Column three illustrates the existing knowledge (existing literature) regarding risky play. The contradictions column refers to the differences that arose between the findings of the study and existing literature.

Table 5.4: Comparison of this study's findings with existing literature: Contradictory evidence of parents and teachers' experiences and views of risky play

Theme 1: Teachers and parents' experiences and views of risky play			
Sub-themes	**Sources**	**Existing knowledge**	**Contradictions of existing knowledge with my findings**
1.1 Teachers and parents' perceptions of risky play	Little *et al*. (2011:116)	Teacher opinions about children's risk-taking impact the amount to which such experiences are provided and supported.	T2 stated that even though she did not participate in risky activities during her childhood, and the fact that she fears for children to get hurt when they take risks on the playground, she does allow that.
	Little *et al*. (2011:117)	Teachers planning for children to take risks in play experience fear of litigation, limiting them to encourage risky play.	None of the teachers mentioned fear for litigation as a factor or constraint to reduce children's risky play opportunities.
1.3 The impact of teachers and parents' childhood memories on children's risky play	Waller *et al*. (2010:439)	The lack of children's outdoor play is because of parents' views and beliefs of their own childhood compared to modern childhood today.	The most prominent response from parents is that they fear for their children's safety and that is the reason why they would not allow them to, for example, play in the streets alone. P7 said, "*I would never let my little one play outside our gate alone and*

Theme 1: Teachers and parents' experiences and views of risky play			
Sub-themes	**Sources**	**Existing knowledge**	**Contradictions of existing knowledge with my findings**
			when I was younger, that was not a problem".
1.4 Risky play in the past versus risky play now	Kvalnes (2017:5)	"If parents today had given their child the amount of freedom that children had some decades ago, they would most likely come under criticism for negligence and bad, irresponsible parenting. Concerned neighbours may have found a reason to contact child welfare."	Parents are concerned about children's safety. However, none of them indicated that they fear for other stakeholders' criticism as a factor for either allowing or limiting children's risky play.

Table 5.5: Comparison of this study's findings with existing literature: Contradictory evidence on the advantages of risky play

Theme 2: Children's risky play and the advantages thereof			
Sub-themes	**Sources**	**Existing knowledge**	**Contradictions of existing knowledge with my findings**
2.1 Risky play in the ELC environment	Sandseter and Kennair (2011:258)	Risky play does not occur during play organised by adults but rather as children are engaged in free play.	At ELC3, I suspected that children's outdoor activities were very much structured. This suspicion was confirmed by both T7 and T8 during the interviews.
	Fjørtoft (2004:31)	Children's gross motor skills such as "running, jumping, throwing, climbing, crawling, rolling, swinging and sliding" are more evident in nature play rather than playing in traditional preschool playgrounds.	During my observations of children's outdoor play at all the ELCs, I have noticed how children engaged in "running, jumping, throwing, climbing, crawling, rolling, swinging and sliding" activities. Thus, developing their gross motor skills.
	Sandseter and Sando (2016:4)	To minimise the risk of injury, the height of playground apparatus is reduced, surfaces are softened and sharp edges are removed,	This might be evident at ELC2 and ELC3 however, at ELC1 the outdoor play equipment did not reflect this. The following was visible: children jumping from a large

Theme 2: Children's risky play and the advantages thereof			
Sub-themes	**Sources**	**Existing knowledge**	**Contradictions of existing knowledge with my findings**
		therefore, making the playground more safe and secure for children.	and high wooden climbing frame, running and playing on uneven and hard surfaces, big rocks, children climbing into high trees and onto a high climbing wall, hanging from thin and high steel frames, etc. (see Section 4.7.2.1).
2.2 Risky play in the home environment	Sandberg (2012:185)	The inability to move around caused by adults' anxieties of traffic and supposed "stranger danger"; one of the major restrictions to children's outdoor play.	Parents referred to how they fear for their children's safety and the people around them. However, none of the parents mentioned anything about the role that traffic plays in restricting children's outdoor play. Rather, parents are concerned that children will get hurt when participating in risky play.
2.3 Advantages of risky play engagement for	Obee *et al*. (2020:12)	Designing increased risk-taking in ECEC environments may contest some of the disturbing tendencies	From my observations, it was evident that all three ELCs comprise of a conducive outdoor environment which poses many

Theme 2: Children's risky play and the advantages thereof			
Sub-themes	**Sources**	**Existing knowledge**	**Contradictions of existing knowledge with my findings**
children's holistic development		evident in children's emotional development.	possibilities for children to take risks. T8 mentioned that children develop emotionally as they learn to handle disappointments when they are unable to master an activity or skill.

Table 5.6: Comparison of this study's findings with existing literature: Contradictory evidence on the factors limiting children's risky play engagement and the concerns thereof

Theme 3: Constraints affecting children's opportunities to participate in risky play and the concerns thereof			
Sub-themes	**Sources**	**Existing knowledge**	**Contradictions of existing knowledge with my findings**
3.1 Constraints on children's risky play opportunities at the ELC	Walsh (1993:25)	A restrictive preschool can cause children to become uninterested, and this will encourage them to seek and create challenges in unsafe ways.	Teachers highlighted that they are facing a challenge between exposing children to risky play and dealing with overprotective parents. Even though parents are conscious of the developmental

Theme 3: Constraints affecting children's opportunities to participate in risky play and the concerns thereof			
Sub-themes	**Sources**	**Existing knowledge**	**Contradictions of existing knowledge with my findings**
			advantages of risky play, they do want their children to develop all the necessary skills, they also want their children as safe as possible and no harm done at school. ELCs are challenged by not being too restrictive, keeping children safe and adhering to parents' requests.
	Keles and Yurt (2020:440)	A factor that "affects teachers' practices about children's risky play is the environment, which is organised for safety".	None of the teachers indicated that the environment limits children to partake in risky play. From what I have observed, all three ELCs are equipped to pose challenges to children and therefore they have the opportunities to take risks in their play.
	Keles and Yurt (2020:440)	Teachers indicated that a lack of time contributes to a change in children's risky play.	Time was never mentioned by any of the eight teachers as a limiting factor in children's risky play opportunities at the three ELCs.

Theme 3: Constraints affecting children's opportunities to participate in risky play and the concerns thereof			
Sub-themes	**Sources**	**Existing knowledge**	**Contradictions of existing knowledge with my findings**
3.3 Concerns if children do not receive opportunities to engage in risky play	McFarland and Laird (2017:195)	In a prior research study about "children's risk-taking in play and early childhood educators and parents' attitudes and practices related to children's outdoor risky play" shows that educators and parents believe in the importance of risky play for children.	Parents acknowledge the importance for children to receive ample possibilities and chances to partake in risky play activities. However, it is evident that parents are not as concerned about creating such opportunities and would rather allow children to sit indoors and be safe. P1 referred to play as "*toned down*" and further expressed that: "…*play is less risky than before, maybe due to legal implication and the convenient tranquillizing effect of available technology*".

5.3 NEW INSIGHTS

New ideas have emerged from the themes and sub-themes after completing data generation and analysis.

- Two teachers continually mentioned that is imperative for teachers to be aware of children's capabilities when allowing, supporting and encouraging risky play at the ELC. In my opinion, this is a factor that is overlooked when one decides to either support or prevent risky play. Teachers from ELC1 and ELC3 highlighted that there is a vast difference concerning children's skill levels and capabilities at the beginning of the year compared to the middle and end of the year. At the beginning of the year when children return to school, entering a new phase/class/age group, they are less experienced risk-takers. As time goes by and children are exposed to risky activities in the outdoors, guided by the teachers, they learn how take-on risks and in the process become more experienced in their risky play engagement.
- T3 teacher pointed out that there is a difference between the various age groups parents find themselves in. She said, "*ouers in die jong geslag wat self nie gewaag het nie, ek dink en wat oorversigtig is vir alles, ja maak dit, sneeubal die hele effek*" (parents in the younger generation who did not take risks, I think and who are overcautious for everything, yes make it, snowballs the whole effect). This means that the younger generation parents were not as exposed to risk-taking as older parents and therefore they are more overprotective and allowing less risk-taking than parents in the older age groups.
- T1 and T3 mentioned that the Covid-19 pandemic had an impact on children. They shed light on two different aspects concerning Covid-19. T1 notes that children are taking more risk during Covid-19 pandemic at ELC1. Before the pandemic, children from all age groups used to play together on the playground and the older ones were instructed to be careful of the younger children, hence limiting them to do certain risky play activities. However, this has changed due to social distancing. Now, children are separated according to the various age groups and rotating between the various areas on the playground. As a result, the four- to five-year-old children are less restricted to take risks and have more freedom to explore and participate in risky activities. T3 mentioned that the

Covid-19 pandemic had an impact on the development of some children. During lockdown when ELCs were closed, some children were not actively involved in risky play at home. This was evident as children started returning to the ELC.

5.4 ANSWERING THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS FOR THIS STUDY

The primary goal of this research study was to investigate parents and teachers' experiences and views of risky outdoor play in ELCs. The secondary and primary research questions (see Section 1.5) in Chapter one are answered below in Sections 5.5.1 to 5.5.4.

5.4.1 Secondary research question one:

What are parents and teachers' experiences and views regarding the importance of risky outdoor play?

Risky play forms a normal part of a child's outdoor play. As children are engaged in risky play, they experience a plethora of sensory stimuli, excitement, as well as fear when engaged in risky play (Sandseter, 2009a:439). However, according to literature, parents and teachers directly impact children's risky play opportunities. Whether children are exposed to risky play is highly dependent on the caregivers. Therefore, secondary research question one aimed to explore how teachers and parents experience and view risky play. The answer to this secondary research question arose from sub-themes 1.1 'Teachers and parents' perceptions of risky play', 1.2 'Teachers and parents' childhood experiences of risky play' and 1.3 'The impact of teachers and parents' childhood memories on children's risky play'.

- Teachers and parents' perceptions of risky play

  Teachers highlighted the significance of risky play during early childhood for the developing child. However, supervision, which is mentioned by both parents and teachers, is essential when children engage in playful activities, especially risky play. Five parent participants indicated that they support their children's risky play participation at home and P6 specified that: "*It is dangerous if not looked after properly*". It is clear that both teachers and parents agree that risky play is important but that proper supervision is a requirement thereof. Another

factor that came about from teachers is that of knowing children's capabilities when allowing and encouraging risky play at the ELCs. To allow and encourage risky play, it is essential to take cognisance of what the child can do and what not as yet.

- Teachers and parents' childhood experiences of risky play.

  Teachers felt free to elaborate on their own experiences of risky outdoor play as a child. Throughout the study, teachers and parents provided examples of how they participated in all kinds of risky play activities. These activities were even riskier than the risky play activities expected for children to participate in today to enhance their development. Risky outdoor play was a normal part of teachers and parents' childhood and there were not as many restrictions that limited them to take risks.

- The impact of teachers and parents' childhood memories on children's risky play.

  Parents and teachers had more freedom to participate in risky play activities as children compared to children today. There were not as many restrictions that limited them to take risks in their play. One parent mentioned that his risk-taking activities enabled him to become self-confident in his abilities to take-on risks as an adult. Furthermore, the majority of teachers mentioned that there is not really a difference between their risky play childhood experiences and the implementation thereof at the various ELCs. Parents indicated that their childhood experiences and their children's risky play are very similar.

5.4.2 Secondary research question two:

What prevents or supports parents and teachers from permitting risky outdoor play?

The answer of secondary research question two emerged mainly from sub-themes 2.1 'Risky play in the ELC environment', 2.2 'Risky play in the home environment', 2.3 'Advantages of risky play engagement for children's holistic development', 3.1 'Constraints on children's risky play opportunities at the ELC' and 3.2 'Constraints on children's risky play opportunities at home'.

- Factors *preventing* parents and teachers from permitting risky outdoor play
  - Parents

All of the parents indicated that even though they want to completely prevent children from taking risks in play, they are rather supporting them thereof. Even if that means "*remaining a straight face and praise him for being so brave and doing it so well"* or praying that he does not get hurt (P4). However, there are certain challenges that parents experience when supporting their children to take risks. Safety today is the main constraint limiting children's risky play participation in both the ELC and home environment. Parents fear for their children's safety in various ways. Firstly, parents are aware that risky play is an essential contributor to children's learning and development. However, they fear for their children to get hurt when taking risks such as jumping from high features. Secondly, parents want to permit their children to play in the streets, interacting with neighbourhood children, but again fear for their safety. This is due to the unsafe environments and 'stranger danger' as mentioned in the literature where parents fear that children could get lost or harmed. Thirdly, parents mentioned that children are confined to small outdoor spaces and that they do not receive the opportunities they had when they were younger. Therefore, children have less freedom to explore. Safety amongst others is the main challenge contributing to parents' anxieties when children are attempting risky activities.

- Teachers

All eight teachers indicated that they do not prevent children from taking risks during outdoor play at the ELCs. However, the teacher participants shed light on the challenges they experience when planning and supporting children to participate in risky outdoor play activities. The challenges they experience are, firstly, a lack of support from parents. Teachers clearly emphasised how they appreciate it if they receive parents' support to implement children's risky play at the respective ELCs. T1 mentioned that if we have liberated support from every parent, it will make our work, our world easier. Another teacher (T1) said parents are "*die een groot speek in die wiel"* (the one big spit in the wheel). Teachers made it clear that parents make it difficult for teachers to motivate and support children to partake in risky play. Secondly, an overprotective community is another challenge that teachers face. Teachers indicated that

they are working with overprotective parents and that they are trying to maintain a balance between keeping children safe but also exposing them to risky play to develop them holistically. Thirdly, one teacher (T3) mentioned that a lack of space is another challenge she experiences. However, according to my observations, children are exposed to ample space and opportunities to take risks in play. Fourthly, teachers feel extremely accountable and responsible for children's safety. Teachers know that they need to protect children and prevent them from any harm. When children get hurt, teachers know that they are responsible and have to explain to parents where and why the child got hurt. Understandably, parents are concerned about their children's safety but in the process, they put a lot of pressure on the teachers (P7).

- Factors *supporting* parents and teachers from permitting risky outdoor play
  - Parents

    Parents feel accountable to protect their children from getting hurt and at the same time encourage the development of skills and abilities (Obee *et al*., 2021:100). However, in the examples parents provided, I noticed that parents do permit their children to partake in risk-taking at home but under supervision. Most of the parents mentioned how "*nervous*", "*scared*", "*worried*", "*anxious*" and "*concerned*" they are when they witness their children taking risks. However, they also mentioned that they praise and support them (P5, P1) or give "*direction*" (P3) when needed. (See Sub-theme 2.2 for examples of parents' support towards children's risky play.)

  - Teachers

    Even though many factors pose challenges towards the implementation of risky outdoor play, all of the teacher participants highlighted that they support and encourage children to participate in risky outdoor play. This was confirmed during my observations of children's outdoor play at each of the three ELCs. Children participated in various risky play activities and it is evident that the children are used to taking risks in their play at ELC1 and ELC3. At ELC2, I noticed that children took some risks, but not as much as the children at the other two ELCs (see Section 2.1 for examples on children's risky play).

> Teachers emphasised the importance of risky play participation to develop various skills important for children's social, emotional, cognitive and physical development. Skills that were highlighted are creativity, making plans, taking risks, handling severe challenges, planning, wider exploration, being exposed to new experiences, taking chances, learning to break rules, children learning to be responsible for their choices, how to handle disappointments, cause-and-effect, problem-solving, children learn about their abilities, midline crossing, spatial orientation and body perception, confidence, independence, social skills and fine and gross motor skills. From the list of skills mentioned, it is clear that the teacher's belief in risky play to be beneficial for children's holistic development. One teacher also highlighted that risky play provides children with a sense of enjoyment (T4).

Children are fully dependent on parents at home and teachers at the ELCs to expose them to developmentally appropriate risk-taking activities. Therefore, parents and teachers are essential contributors to children's risk-taking experiences in their early learning years.

5.4.3 Secondary research question three:

How do outdoor learning environments provide children with opportunities for risky outdoor play?

The availability of resources in the outdoors plays a vital role in providing risky play opportunities. Resources such as jungle gyms, climbing frames, walls, rocks, trampolines, swings, trees, slides, tyres, space, etc. are useful in providing children with opportunities to take risks. Risky play happens mostly in a natural outdoor environment (Sandseter, 2009a:439; Little & Wyver, 2008:36). However, during my observations, I have noticed that children take risks at all three ELCs. Despite the many challenges parents face to encourage children to take risks at home, the data generated from parents indicated that children are participating in risky play in their home environments.

Teacher participants at ELC1 indicated that they would have preferred to have a much larger playground and more space available for children to play during outdoor

playtime. At ELC1 the buildings/classes are all built in the middle and the playgrounds are located around the buildings. Space was a bit limited at ELC1 and ELC3, whereas ELC2 which is located in the inner city, did not experience that problem due to the number of children in the centre. It was evident at all three ELCs that teachers and classes rotate to certain areas at different times on the playground during outdoor play. Rotating to different areas contributes to teachers having more control over children and allows for more space for fewer children. I noticed that space is definitely a challenge teachers experience at the ELCs and therefore they try to improvise to expose children to all areas on the playground.

Apart from experiencing a shortage of space, all three ELCs are equipped with useful resources in the outdoors. (Section 4.4 entails detailed information about the resources available at the three ELCs which promotes risky outdoor play.) Various apparatus are visible and it was evident during my observations that children utilise the apparatus to play with and in the process take risks. In my opinion, ELC1 and ELC3 provide children with more chances to take risks in their play and are also very focused on children's gross motor development which is promoted during risky play.

5.4.4 Primary research question:

How do parents and teachers experience and view risky outdoor play in early learning centres?

Both parents and teachers shared positive experiences regarding risky play participation during their own childhood. It is clear that both teachers and parents acknowledge the significance and essential advantages of risky play for children's development. The majority of teachers and two parents stated that they support children's risky play for developmental purposes. Teachers believe that it is vital to be aware of children's capabilities when encouraging and motivating children to take risks in their play. Teachers shared various examples of how children are engaged in risky outdoor play at the ELCs (see Section 4.7.2.1). Figure 5.1 illustrates examples of risky play categories and some risky activities evident at the ELCs.

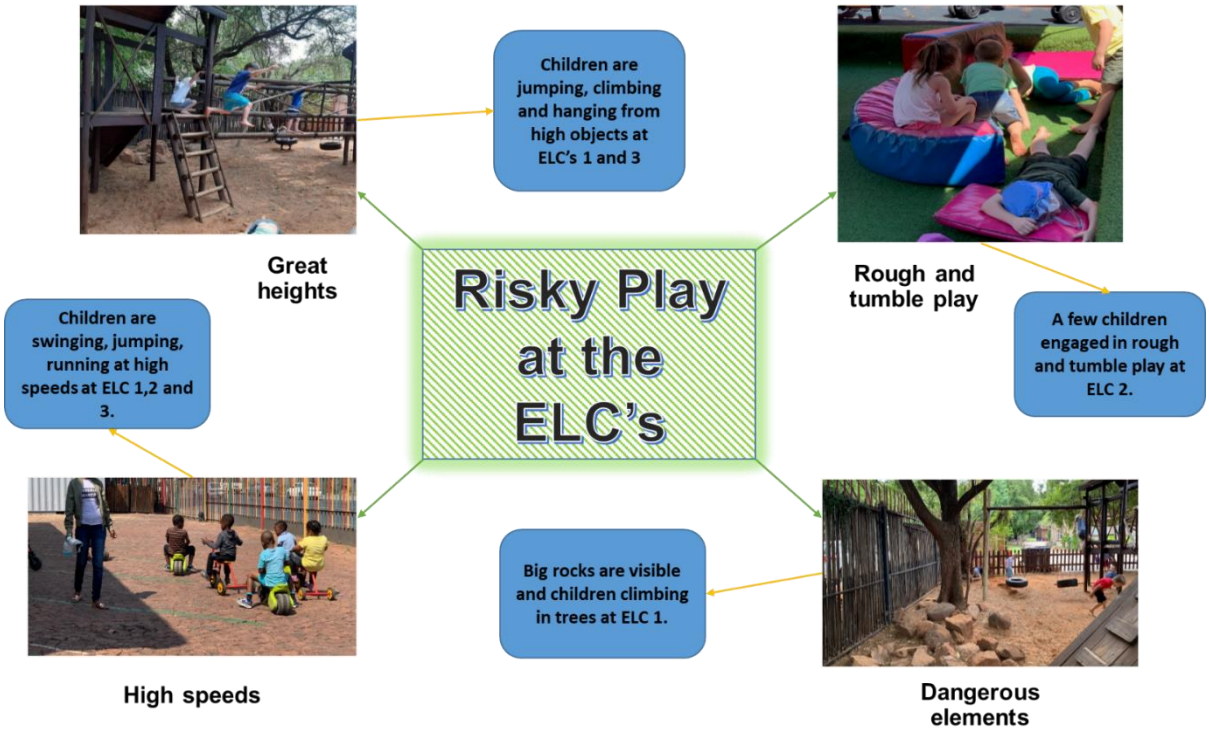


Figure 5.1: Summary of how risky play is implemented at the ELCs

Four of the six risky play categories were visible at the ELCs. These categories include great heights, rough and tumble play, high speeds and dangerous elements. However, dangerous elements were only visible at ELC1 and rough and tumble play at ELC3. Children engaging in great heights and high speeds were obvious in all three ELCs. Furthermore, two of the risky play categories were non-existent at any of the three ELCs; that is playing with dangerous tools, as well as disappear/getting lost.

Teachers are permitting risky play at the ELCs by providing children with opportunities to do so. Teachers' views and own experiences seem to have an impact on children's opportunities. However, all eight teachers from the three ELCs showed evidence of how they encourage and motivate children to play and in their play take risks. Teachers were visible on the playgrounds facilitating children's outdoor play. It is evident that supervision is vital to ensure children are safe at each of the ELCs.

It is clear that participants had positive experiences of risky play during their own childhood and that there were not as many restrictions that limited them to take risks compared to today. Parents and teachers' childhood experiences in how they respond to children's risky play activities and challenges might have an impact on them.

It is obvious that teachers view parents as the main constraint to implementing risky play at the ELCs. Teachers are of the opinion that there is an insufficient amount of support from parents in this regard. Furthermore, teachers shed light on fear for children's safety when children take part in risky play. However, they indicated that their fear does not limit them to permit risky play at the ELCs because they are aware of the developmental advantages it holds for children. Whereas, it is apparent that factors such as parents' fears, unsafe environments, less freedom, less risky play opportunities, parents' beliefs and attitudes, confined spaces and technology are amongst the contributing constraints to limit children's risky play at home.

Parents indicated that they are emotional respondents with regards to viewing their children take part in risky activities in the home environment. Parents shared different examples of their reactions during their children's risk play (see Section 4.7.2.2). McFarland and Laird (2018:161) assert that parents are stuck between keeping children safe and wanting to support them in taking risks hence developing independence and confidence. Even though fear is prevalent, findings show that parents do support and encourage children to engage in risky activities at home.

In addition, outdoor resources play an essential role in implementing risky play. Having access to various outdoor equipment both at the ELC and the home environment enhances exposure to children's risky play opportunities. Jungle gyms, trampolines, climbing walls, trees, uneven surfaces, scooters, bicycles, swings, slides, etc. are amongst the contributing resources to promote children's risk-taking. These resources were evident at the ELCs and are used to create and provide children with risky play opportunities. Consequently, risky play can be implemented and permitted in different outdoor environments and contexts. To permit risky play relies heavily on parents and teachers' views and willingness to instil risk-taking opportunities. I was delighted to have observed the well-equipped outdoor environments at each of the three ELCs situated in completely different areas and providing children with risky play opportunities.

In conclusion, the attitudes of both parents and teachers do impact their decisions to either permit or restrict children's risky play. This finding corroborates with existing literature, that parents and teachers' attitudes and personal feelings regarding risk-taking have an effect on children's risky play participation (Couper, 2011:38; Little *et*

al., 2011:117, Little *et al*., 2012:303; Obee *et al*., 2021:100; Stephenson, 2003:37). Positive attitudes pertaining to children's risky play were apparent at the three ELC and therefore risky play was permitted.

5.5 THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND THE DATA AND FINDINGS OF THIS STUDY

The data and findings are linked to the theoretical framework of this study. This study confirms Rogoff's (2008) three planes of analysis, which are 1) apprenticeship, 2) guided participation and 3) participatory appropriation. The three planes of analysis underlie parents and teachers' perceptions and children's engagement in risky play activities. In my attempt to understand parents and teachers' experiences and views of risky play, it became clear that both had different but also very similar opinions of children's risky play. Therefore, children's participation in culturally risky play activities is highly reliant on parents and teachers' perceptions. However, there are various constraints that both parents and teachers experience with regards to permitting risky play at the ELC and the home environment. These constraints have an impact on the child's activity participation and in turn impacts on the other developmental processes; guided participation and participatory appropriation.

Society has become very risk-averse and safety amongst others is the main concern of parents in allowing children to engage in risky play. Parents have made it clear that they fear for their children to get hurt when engaging in risky play. Teachers expressed that a lack of support from parents is the main constraint when encouraging and permitting risky play at the ELCs. However, both parents and teachers are aware of the developmental advantages and therefore try to 'look the other way' or guide them as they take risks. According to Rogoff (2008:65), communication and coordination play a key role in the process of guided participation. Therefore, it is vital that parents and teachers facilitate and guide children as they take risks in their play. During my observations, I noticed how a teacher praised children as they were hanging from monkey bars – in this way the teacher fulfils her role in providing children with words of encouragement and supporting them. Interactions between teachers and children were obvious during outdoor playtime at the three ELCs. Collaborations between the

child and teachers allow for progression from an inexperienced risk-taking child to an experienced risk-taking child.

As children get more experienced in taking risks, there is a change that occurs within the child. Teachers at ELC1 and ELC3 highlighted the difference in children's risk-taking at the beginning of the year compared to the middle and end of the year. When a child participates in a risky activity based on experience, the previous participation contributes to the current activity by being prepared for it. In this way, the past spreads to the present and the future.

In addition, the context is not separated from the social activity taking place. Jones and Mistry (2019:59) confirm that two imperative perceptions regarding children's development are emphasised within the sociocultural theory; "a) the inseparability of person and context and (b) culturally situated meaning-making as the integration of person and context in the developmental process". Furthermore, Rogoff (2008:58) emphasises that some parts of the risky play activities are separated from others in the foreground without failing to forget about the other parts making-up the whole. A child taking a risk in play (foreground) still includes the environment, resources, peers, parents or teachers (background) in the activity. Therefore, the environment that children are exposed to plays a vital role and contributing to their risky play opportunities. In other words, without the necessary outdoor resources (jungle gyms, climbing walls, swings, slides, uneven surfaces, scooters, bicycles, etc. which are all evident at the ELCs), the risky activity is less likely to take place. Children are exposed to opportunities for taking risks because they are provided with the necessary equipment which allows them to do so.

The theoretical framework that underpinned this study afforded valuable insight into parents and teachers' experiences and views of risky play in ELCs. Although the parents and teachers in this study emphasised their fear for children's safety and teachers expressing the lack of support from parents, the findings confirmed that both permit and encourage risky play at the ELCs and the home environment.

5.6 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Utilising a case study research design has innate limitations such as time and activity (Engelbrecht, 2016:136-138). Only three ELCs situated in the Pretoria region were incorporated in this study. Additionally, the findings of the study ought not be generalised to risky outdoor play in all ELCs across the country. Researcher bias is evident in the process of selecting cases for the study, as well as the interpretation and analysis of data. I acknowledge this limitation and therefore made an attempt to control it (Mukherji & Albon, 2010:87). Throughout the study, it was imperative to be conscious of the aim of this study which was to interpret and obtain an in-depth understanding of parents and teachers' experiences and views of risky outdoor play. However, the findings of the study are not simply repeatable by other researchers even though the methodology was discussed in detail.

At first, I did not realise how challenging it was going to be to find ELCs to participate in the study. Initially, I approached nine ELCs of which only three ELCs agreed to take part in the study. The six ELCs who did not accept my invitation to participate elaborated on the reasons as to why they are unable to assist me. This was due to the lockdown level three regulations of the Covid-19 pandemic. Covid-19 limited my exposure and access to ELCs as no-one was allowed on the premises of the ELCs during this period. After some time, when the country moved to lockdown level two, I was able to find ELCs who agreed and accepted my invitation to participate in the study. However, a principal of one ELC indicated that they are more than willing to take part in my study, but the parents of the ELC shared their concern about a person from the public to enter the premises. This is understandable as parents were also not allowed onto the ELC's premises. Another ELC that agreed to participate in the study indicated that they did not have a sufficient amount of children to obtain data from. During lockdown level two, many parents did not send their children back to the ELC and I was therefore forced to find another centre.

Moreover, I experienced Covid-19 to have had an impact on the data generation methods of this study. I had to adapt my data generation technique of semi-structured interviews with parents to utilising an online semi-structured individual interview schedule. I furthermore experienced some technical difficulties when links were sent to parent participants and therefore did not receive all the responses from parents. To

avoid any further challenges in this regard, some participants were asked to complete the interview questions in a Micosoft Word document.

After data analysis, I realised that the following two questions should have been included as part of the interview questions to generate data pertaining to the effect of early childhood risky play on adulthood.

- How do you think your own exposure to risky play has affected you as an adult?
- How do you think your child's exposure to risky play or a lack thereof will affect his/her life as an adult?

The data generated from participants from the two above questions would have contributed to providing in-depth information regarding the impact of participants' risk-taking experiences on them as adults.

The recommendations below are presented to assist ELCs, teachers and parents in supporting children's risky play in various contexts.

5.7 IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Concerning this study's findings and literature review, the following implications of this study and recommendations on the topic of parents and teachers' experiences and views of risky outdoor play are proposed for further research and practice.

5.7.1 Expanding similar research to other areas

5.7.1.1 Implication

Implications for similar research and practice must involve the exploration of ELC teachers and parents' views of risky play to investigate further different methodologies to ensure the integration of participants' childhood experiences, comprehensions and histories of risky play. Parents and teachers encountered different risky play scenarios, therefore, future studies must incorporate a broader field and larger audience of the community.

5.7.1.2 Recommendation

Future studies on this topic should pay attention to ECD teachers and how they experience risky outdoor play at the ELCs. Research on this topic can be expanded to the rest of the Gauteng Province, as well as other provinces across South Africa. This study focused on three different areas including an urban, suburban and inner-city area. Rural areas can be included in future research as different case studies to obtain a greater understanding of teachers' experiences of risky play at the ELCs in various contexts. Furthermore, a comparative study amongst ELCs in different countries, including risky play differences in gender, is suggested for future research.

5.7.2 Enhancing the professional development of teachers, as well as parents

5.7.2.1 Implication

It will be beneficial for ECE and children's development if teachers are professionally educated and parents made aware of the importance and advantages of risky play for children's early learning and development. Both teachers and parents must be encouraged to think about their risky play experiences, their understanding of risky play, as well as how this knowledge applies to their practice. To obtain full benefit of this, knowledge and information sharing between teachers and parents are essential.

5.7.2.2 Recommendation

Future research can focus on teachers' professional development at the various ELCs. Attending workshops can assist teachers to reflect on their own risky play experiences during their childhoods and how it has affected them in later life. This will promote teachers' knowledge of the value of risky play for children's development. Therefore, ELCs can start to make changes at the centres to encourage and create opportunities for children to take more risks in their play. The workshops can be expanded to inviting and including parents of the ELCs to impart the valuable knowledge of risky play to them. Including parents in the workshops can assist them to comprehend why children need to take risks in their play and why the ELCs allow and encourage risky play at the centres. Information brochures containing the information presented at the workshops could be distributed to those parents who are unable to attend the workshops. It is essential to take into account that teachers and parents come from

different backgrounds and contexts and have various beliefs and attitudes towards risk. Therefore, to ensure successful change at the centres, the workshops should focus on professional development, teacher and parent change and outlining the categories and advantages of risky play.

5.7.3 In-depth investigation of the constraints that prevent children's risky outdoor play

5.7.3.1 Implication

Amongst other factors, parents indicated that safety is the main challenge contributing to their anxieties when children are attempting risky play activities. To identify and possibly eliminate the constraints regarding children's risky play opportunities, an in-depth investigation into these constraints must be conducted in a larger context.

5.7.3.2 Recommendation

Further studies on risky play in early childhood in South Africa could focus on research to perform an in-depth investigation of the constraints on children's risky outdoor play. The focus can mainly be on parents' experience in the home environment and how these constraints are managed by parents. In addition, research can include different sociocultural and socioeconomic contexts and backgrounds of parents consisting of various demographic characteristics.

5.7.4 Support structures and other approaches to implementing risky outdoor play

5.7.4.1 Implication

The findings of the study showed that even though teachers permit risky outdoor play at the ELCs, teachers experience a lack of support from parents in this regard. Programmes and policies must emphasise the important role of parent involvement in supporting the implementation of children's risky outdoor play at the ELCs.

5.7.4.2 Recommendation

Future studies could concentrate on appropriate support structures for teachers to enable them to permit risky outdoor play without fear at the ELCs. Programmes and policymakers should emphasise the role of parents as the primary role-players in providing and supporting children's risky play. Other stakeholders such as the role of the principal, different types of curricula or approaches (Reggio Emilia, Montessori, Forest Schools) and governing bodies could be included in researching this topic.

5.8 CONCLUSION

The final chapter reflects an interpretation of the study's findings which are presented in table format. Contradictions of the study's findings and existing literature were also outlined. New insights that have emerged from the themes and sub-themes of this study were discussed. I furthermore strived to answered the secondary and primary research questions of this study. Finally, Chapter five was concluded by discussing the limitations and implications of the study and providing recommendations for possible future research and practice.

My experience with this study was exciting and enriching. As a parent, I believe the knowledge gained provides me with an opportunity to reflect on my own attitude towards my children's engagement in risky play. Furthermore, as an academic, I have gained a vast amount of knowledge and I will use this knowledge to build on my professional trajectory. The main aim of this study was to explore parents and teachers' experiences and views of risky outdoor play in ELCs. During my in-depth engagement with the literature (see Chapter 2), it became clear how essential the role of risky play is for children's holistic development. I found it delightful to discover how many children participate in risky play at the three ELCs, despite the challenges and limitations teachers and parents experience in permitting risky outdoor play. Although participants were not aware of the categories of risky play before the interviews, it was evident that both parents and teachers unknowingly permit and support children's risky play.

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ANNEXURE A: PRINCIPAL LETTER OF CONSENT

October 2020

Dear Principal,

REQUEST TO COLLECT DATA FROM PRESCHOOL TEACHERS TEACHING CHILDREN IN THE AGE RANGE OF 4 TO 5 YEARS AT YOUR SCHOOL

My name is Lorette Pretorius and I am currently registered as a Master's student at the University of Pretoria in the Department of Early Childhood Education. I am a lecturer at the SANTS Private Higher Education Institution. I am interested in understanding/finding out more about parents and teachers' experiences of and views on risky outdoor play and the benefits it has for a child's development. The title of my study is ***Parents and teachers' experiences and views of risky outdoor play in early learning centres.***

This study will be conducted under the supervision of Dr Judy van Heerden in the Department of Early Childhood Education at the University of Pretoria.

I would like to request permission from the school to gather data for my research. This research is done through the University of Pretoria by interviewing teachers and observing teachers as they engage with children during outdoor play. The data will be gathered from preschool teachers teaching children in the age range of 4 to 5 years only. Children will be involved as secondary participants during the observation of the teacher.

Data collection will involve two teachers, who choose to participate, by firstly being involved in a group interview to find out what their experiences and views are of risky outdoor play. Secondly, I will observe each teacher, and indirectly, the children during the children's outdoor play. To obtain the necessary data for my study, I also want to take photographs of the outdoor learning environment, the play activities the teachers employ throughout the day, as well as the children engaging in these play activities. I would like to assure you that no photographs, where children's faces or the identity of the school can be identified, will be taken or used for research purposes. However, the child's hand, back, back of the head/hair, etc., might be photographed in the process of collecting data.

The data collected will afford me the opportunity to gain knowledge about teachers' previous and current experiences of and views on risky play in the outdoors. This data will, consequently, assist me in establishing whether risky play is encouraged or intercepted within the early learning centre. The findings of this study could assist teachers, as well as parents, in understanding the importance of risky play for children's optimal learning and development.

The interview will take between 30 to 45 minutes in a venue at the early learning centre, convenient for the teacher. The observation will not take longer than two hours during the children's outdoor playtime. The children's identities will not be known by any person involved in the study other than the teacher (participant). The interviews and observations will not disturb the normal daily activities.

The University of Pretoria will remain custodians of all the research findings. Your favourable consideration of this request will be greatly appreciated. Please sign the attached request form stating that you are aware of and support that the selected preschool teachers teaching children in the age range of 4 to 5 years at your school may participate in this research study.

We would also like to request your permission to use your data, confidentially and anonymously, for further research purposes, as the data gathered will be the intellectual property of the University of Pretoria. Further research may include secondary data analysis and using the data for teaching purposes. The confidentiality

and privacy applicable to this study will be binding for all future research studies.

Kind regards,

Mrs Lorette Pretorius
Lecturer
SANTS Private Higher Education Institution
Email: Lorette.pretorius@outlook.com

Dr Judy van Heerden
Supervisor
University of Pretoria
Email: judy.vanheerden@up.ac.za

UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

Faculty of Education
Fakulteit Opvoedkunde
Lefapha la Thuto

PERMISSION FOR RESEARCH

I, _____, hereby give permission to Lorette Pretorius to allow selected preschool teachers teaching children in the age range of 4 to 5 years at my school to participate in her research entitled ***Parents and teachers' experiences and views of risky outdoor play in early learning centres.***

Signature: _____

Date:_____

ANNEXURE B: TEACHER LETTER OF CONSENT

October 2020

Dear preschool teacher,

INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY

My name is Lorette Pretorius and I am currently registered as a Master's student at the University of Pretoria in the Department of Early Childhood Education. I am a lecturer at the SANTS Private Higher Education Institution. I am interested in understanding/finding out more about parents and teachers' experiences of and views on risky outdoor play and the benefits it has for a child's development. The title of my study is ***Parents and teachers' experiences and views of risky outdoor play in early learning centres.***

This study will be conducted under the supervision of Dr Judy van Heerden in the Department of Early Childhood Education at the University of Pretoria.

I would like to invite you to participate in the collection phase of this research study. The data collection phase will include:

1) Group interviews pertaining to your experiences and views of risky outdoor play;

2) The observation of yourself in your teaching environment and, indirectly, children engaging in outdoor play; and,

3) Having you complete and submit your daily programme and planning for outdoor play.

The data collected will afford me the opportunity to gain knowledge about teachers' previous and current experiences of and views on risky play in the outdoor environment. This data will, consequently, assist me in establishing whether risky play is encouraged or intercepted in the early learning centre. The findings from this study could assist teachers, as well as parents, in understanding the importance of risky play for children's optimal learning and development.

To obtain the necessary data for my research study, I want to take photographs of the outdoor learning environment, the play activities teachers employ throughout the day, as well as children engaging in play activities. I would like to assure you that no photographs where children's faces or the identity of the school can be identified will be taken or used for research purposes. However, the child's hand, back, back of the head/hair, etc., might be photographed in the process of collecting data.

Your participation in this research is entirely voluntary. If you agree to take part in this study willingly, your anonymity and confidentiality will be guaranteed. This anonymity will be assured by not using your actual name but rather using a pseudonym in the research. You may also withdraw from the research at any time and your decision to withdraw will be respected.

The interview will take between 30-45 minutes in a venue at the early learning centre that is convenient for yourself. The observation will not take longer than two hours during the children's outdoor playtime. The interview and observation will not disturb the normal daily activities. If you decide to take part in this research study, I will need your consent so that an audio recording can be made during the interview. The recording will only be used to ensure the easy and more accurate transcription of the data. The audio recording will be kept safe and stored on a secure and password protected laptop. Only my supervisor and myself will be able to access the audio recording, and the recording will only be used for academic purposes for this research study.

At the end of the data collection and analysis phase, you as the participant may have access to the data from this research study. On request, you will be able to verify your views, transcription of the interview and notes made of the observation.

We would like to request your permission to use your data, confidentially and anonymously, for further research purposes, as the data sets are the intellectual property of the University of Pretoria. Further research may include secondary data analysis and using the data for teaching purposes. The confidentiality and privacy applicable to this study will be binding on future research studies.

You are welcome to ask questions before and during the time of participation. If you have any concerns, please contact my supervisor or myself.

Kind regards,

Mrs Lorette Pretorius
Lecturer
SANTS Private Higher Education Institution
Email: Lorette.pretorius@outlook.com

Dr Judy van Heerden
Supervisor
University of Pretoria
Email: judy.vanheerden@up.ac.za

PERMISSION FOR RESEARCH
I, _____, hereby give permission to Lorette Pretorius to include me as a participant in her research study entitled ***Parents and teachers' experiences and views of risky outdoor play in early learning centres.*** I understand that my participation in this study is voluntary, that my anonymity and confidentiality will be protected, that interviews will be audio-recorded, and that I may withdraw from this study at any time. Signature: _____ Date:_____

ANNEXURE C: PARENT LETTER OF CONSENT

October 2020

Dear Parent,

INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH PROJECT

My name is Lorette Pretorius and I am currently registered as a Master's student at the University of Pretoria in the Department of Early Childhood Education. I am a lecturer at the SANTS Private Higher Education Institution. I am interested in understanding/finding out more about parents and teachers' experiences of and views on risky outdoor play and the benefits it has on a child's development. The title of my study is ***Parents and teachers' experiences and views of risky outdoor play in early learning centres.***

This study will be conducted under the supervision of Dr Judy van Heerden in the Department of Early Childhood Education at the University of Pretoria.

I would, therefore, like to invite you to participate in the collection phase of this research study. This data collection phase will include the completion of an online semi-structured individual interview schedule using the computer software program, Q-survey. The interview schedule can be accessed by accepting the invitation that will be emailed to you. The researcher will receive the results as soon as the interview schedule has been completed.

The data collected will afford me the opportunity to gain knowledge about your previous and current experiences of and views on risky play in the outdoors. This data will, consequently, assist me in establishing whether risky play is encouraged or discouraged at home. The findings of this study could assist teachers, as well as parents, in understanding the importance of risky play for children's optimal learning and development.

At the end of the data collection and analysis phase, you, as the participant, may have access to the data from this research study. On request, you will be able to verify the views and the analysis of your interview schedule.

We also would like to request your permission to use your data, confidentially and anonymously, for further research purposes, as the data sets are the intellectual property of the University of Pretoria. Further research may include secondary data analysis and using the data for teaching purposes. The confidentiality and privacy applicable to this study will be binding on future research studies.

On request, the findings of this research study will be made available to you. If you have any concerns or questions, please contact my supervisor or myself.

Kind regards,

Mrs Lorette Pretorius
Lecturer
SANTS Private Higher Education Institution
Email: Lorette.pretorius@outlook.com

Dr Judy van Heerden
Supervisor
University of Pretoria
Email: judy.vanheerden@up.ac.za

PERMISSION FOR RESEARCH
I, _____, hereby give permission to Lorette Pretorius to include me as a participant in her research study entitled ***Parents and teachers' experiences and views of risky outdoor play in early learning centres.*** I understand that my participation in this study is voluntary, that my anonymity and confidentiality will be protected and that I may withdraw from this study at any time. Signature: _____ Date:_____

ANNEXURE D: CAREGIVER LETTER OF CONSENT

October 2020

Dear Parent,

INFORMED CONSENT FOR CHILDREN TO TAKE PART IN STUDY

My name is Lorette Pretorius and I am currently registered as a Master's student at the University of Pretoria in the Department of Early Childhood Education. I am a lecturer at the SANTS Private Higher Education Institution. I am interested in understanding/finding out more about parents and teachers' experiences of and views on risky outdoor play and the benefits it has on a child's development. The title of my study is ***Parents and teachers' experiences and views of risky outdoor play in early learning centres.***

This study will be conducted under the supervision of Dr Judy van Heerden in the Department of Early Childhood Education at the University of Pretoria.

For this study, I will observe the teacher, and indirectly, your child/children, during children's outdoor play. The data collected will afford me the opportunity to gain knowledge about teachers' previous and current experiences of and views on risky play in the outdoors. I will, however, observe your child's/ children's responses as a way of observing the teacher's effective facilitation and planning for risky outdoor play. This data will, consequently, assist me in establishing whether risky play is encouraged or intercepted within the early learning centre. The findings of this study could assist teachers, as well as parents, in understanding the importance of risky play

for children's optimal learning and development. Please note that the early learning centre's name, as well as your child's/children's identity, will remain anonymous at all times.

To obtain the necessary data for my studies, I want to take photographs of the outdoor learning environment, the play activities teachers employ throughout the day, as well as your child/children engaging in these play activities. I would like to assure you that no photographs where your child's/children's face or the identity of the school can be identified will be taken or used for research purposes. However, your child's/children's hand, back, back of the head/hair, etc., might be photographed in the process of collecting data.

Participation in this study is voluntary. Should you choose not to allow your child or children to take part in this activity, it will have no negative impact on you or your child/children's association with the early learning centre in any way. You are free to withdraw your child/children from the study at any point.

Please consider allowing your child/children to take part in this study, as it will provide parents and teachers with the knowledge they need, in order to see the benefits that risky outdoor play has on a child's development.

We also would like to request your permission to use your data, confidentially and anonymously, for further research purposes, as the data sets are the intellectual property of the University of Pretoria. Further research may include secondary data analysis and using the data for teaching purposes. The confidentiality and privacy applicable to this study will be binding on future research studies.

On request, the findings of this research study will be made available to you. If you have any concerns or questions, please contact my supervisor or myself.

Please complete the tear-off slip below and send it back to your child's teacher as soon as possible.

Kind regards,

Mrs Lorette Pretorius
Lecturer
SANTS Private Higher Education Institution
Email: Lorette.pretorius@outlook.com

Dr Judy van Heerden
Supervisor
University of Pretoria
Email: judy.vanheerden@up.ac.za

UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

Faculty of Education
Fakulteit Opvoedkunde
Lefapha la Thuto

PERMISSION FOR RESEARCH

I, _____, hereby grant permission/refuse permission to Lorette Pretorius to include my child or children, _____ as a participant/participants in her research study entitled ***Parents and teachers' experiences and views of risky outdoor play in early learning centres.*** I understand that my child's/children's participation in this study is voluntary, that his/her anonymity and confidentiality will be protected and that he/she may withdraw from this study at any time.

Signature: _____

Date:_____

ANNEXURE E: TEACHER INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Date of interview:	
Time of interview:	
Research site:	
Interviewer:	
Interviewee A:	
Interviewee B:	

Teachers' semi-structured interview questions

A. Demographic information

	Responses	
	Teacher A	Teacher B
What is your age?		
What is your nationality?		
Which ethnic group do you identify with most?		
Do you have an Early Childhood Education qualification? If yes, please indicate what type of qualification you have obtained.		
How many years have you been facilitating children in early childhood education?		

What language of learning and teaching (LoLT) is used at the early learning centre where you work?		
What is the teacher-learner ratio in your classroom?		

B. Experience of and views on risky play

1. What are your views (opinion) on risky play?
2. What memories do you have regarding your own risky play experiences as a child?
3. Do you think that these memories have an impact on whether you will prevent or support children's risky play?
   3.1 Please explain your answer.
4. What is your opinion on the way children played in the past as opposed to how they play nowadays?

C. Risky play as applied at the early learning centre where you work

1. Do you think that teachers' experiences and knowledge regarding risky play have an impact on the implementation thereof?
   1.1 Please explain your answer.
2. In what ways do you consider risky play to be beneficial for a child's development?
3. How do you think risky outdoor play could assist in a child's development?
4. What concerns do you have if children do not have opportunities to take risks while they are playing?
5. Does the outdoor learning environment at your early learning centre provide children with opportunities for risky outdoor play?
   5.1 Please explain your answer.
6. What support do you, as teachers, need in order to allow and encourage children to take part in risky play activities?
7. What is your opinion about the demands set by stakeholders, such as the principal, parents, etc. regarding risky play?

8. Do parents impact your decision, as a teacher, to allow children to engage in risky play at the early learning centre?
   8.1 Please explain your answer.
9. In what way does the curriculum you follow make provision for risky play activities?
10. Do you make provision for risky play when doing your daily planning?
    10.1 If yes, how is risky play reflected in your daily planning?
    10.2 If no, please explain why not.
11. What do you think your role is in facilitating risky play?
12. Which activities do you use to promote children's risky play?
13. Which strategies do you use to enhance children's risky play?
14. How do you respond to children when they are engaged in risky outdoor play?
15. How does children's participation in risky play differ between age groups and genders?

ANNEXURE F: PARENT INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Parents' semi-structured individual interview schedule

A. Demographic information

What is your age?	A. 20 – 30 years B. 31 – 40 years C. 41 – 50 years D. 51+ years
What is your gender?	
What is your home language?	
What is your nationality?	
Which ethnic group do you identify with most?	
How many children do you have? Specify each child's age and gender.	

B. Your personal experience of and views on risky play

1. What are your views (opinion) on risky play?
2. What memories do you have regarding your own risky play experiences as a child?
3. Do you think that these memories have an impact on whether you will prevent or support your child's risky play activities? Please elaborate.
4. Do you think that your own experiences and knowledge regarding risky play have an impact on the implementation thereof? Please elaborate.

5. Do you and your spouse/partner share the same views regarding your child's risky play activities? Please elaborate.
6. What is your opinion on the way children played in the past as opposed to how they play nowadays?
7. How do the outdoor play environments of the past differ from how they are nowadays?
8. How does your own childhood engagement in play compare to your child's/childrens' participation in risky play?
9. How do you feel when you see your four to five year old son/daughter engaged in risky activities?

C. Views on risky play and your child

1. How do you perceive your child's self-esteem, confidence and autonomy?
2. How do you perceive your child's problem-solving skills and risk management strategies?
3. What role do you think risky outdoor play could have in your child's development?
4. What prevents or supports you from permitting risky outdoor play?
5. Which activities do you use to promote your child's risky play? If any.
6. Which strategies do you use to enhance your child's risky play? If any.
7. Do you have any concerns that your child does not receive sufficient opportunities to take risks in play? Please explain.
8. Does your child's willingness to participate in risky play change when:
   8.1 Playing alone/with other children?
   8.2 Playing with younger/older children?
9. (Only to be answered by parents with more than one child). How is your children's participation in risky play different in terms of their ages and gender?
10. Does the outdoor learning environment at home provide your child with opportunities for risky play?
    10.1 If yes, in what ways does the outdoor learning environment at home provide your child with opportunities for risky play?
    10.2 Does your child have access to any other outdoor learning environments? Please elaborate.

11. How do you feel about your child engaging in risky play at the early learning centre (preschool)?
12. Do you think that teachers' views and knowledge about risky play influence the implementation thereof? Please elaborate.
13. Do you allow your child to play outdoors without adult supervision?
    13.1 If yes, for how long at a time? And if no, why not?

ANNEXURE G: OBSERVATION SCHEDULE

Date of observation: _____ Research site: _____

Time of observation: _____

Teacher's observation schedule		
Checklist	**Items**	**Notes**
1. How does the teacher support children's risky play?	Plan, Guide, Direct, Organise, Create, etc.	
2. How is the teacher involved in children's play activities?	Interact, Guide, Encourage, Observe, Facilitate, etc.	
3. Which approach/approaches	Model, Explain,	

does the teacher use to facilitate children's risky play?	Prompt, Transitions, Games, Movement activities, Nature/environment, etc.	
4. How does the teacher guide children during risky play activities?	Model, Explain, Prompt, Transitions, Support, etc.	
5. What resources are used to promote children's risky play?	A jungle gym, Scooters, Swings, Games entailing the use of height, speed, etc.	
6. What challenges does the teacher face whilst facilitating children's risky play?	Lack of resources, Lack of planning, Lack of knowledge about risky play, Children's lack of interest etc.	

7. What is the teacher's attitude towards the children and their play?	Positive, Negative, Loving, Caring, Kind, Discouraging, Supportive, etc.	

Children's observation schedule		
Checklist	**Items**	**Notes**
1. Do children easily accept the teacher's guidance/support in risky play activities?	Listen, Moving gestures, Lose interest, Refuse to participate, Accept support, etc.	
2. Which activity/activities do the children prefer to engage in most?	A jungle gym, Scooters, Swings, Climbing,	

	Games entailing the use of height, speed, risk, etc.	
3. Emotional and physical response of the children during risky play.	Excited, Bored, Frightened, Worried, Anxious, Seek or avoid risky activities, etc.	
4. How are children socially involved in their play?	Interaction, Play with peers or in groups, Play alone, Avoid contact or interaction with others, etc.	
5. Do children have the confidence to take risks in their play?	Participate in risky activities, Do not participate in risky activities, etc.	

6. Are children exposed to various activities that promote their holistic development?	Risky play games that promote physical, social, emotional and cognitive development.	
7. Which environmental features provide children with opportunities to engage in risky play?	Rocks, Hills, Open spaces, Even/uneven surfaces, etc.	
8. What resources in the outdoor environment promote risky play?	A jungle gym, Scooters, Swings, Climbing apparatus, Tyres, etc.	