8-2022

THE EFFECT OF THE PANDEMIC ON NURSERY STUDENTS’ PERSONAL AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Viviana Zertuche  
*State University of New York College at Buffalo - Buffalo State College*, viviana.zertuche@asfm.edu.mx

Cordelia De la Garza  
*State University of New York College at Buffalo - Buffalo State College*, cordelia.delagarza@asfm.edu.mx

Recommended Citation
https://digitalcommons.buffalostate.edu/igpe_project/10

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.buffalostate.edu/igpe_project
THE EFFECT OF THE PANDEMIC ON NURSERY STUDENTS’ PERSONAL AND
SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

By
Cordelia de la Garza and Viviana Zertuche
Dr. Joan DellaValle

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Master of Science in Multidisciplinary Studies

The State University of New York, Buffalo State
June 2022
Identification of a Research Problem

Social and personal development skills are essential for every human being. Learning these skills at a young age helps children better understand their thoughts and emotions, become more self-aware, and develop more empathy for others within their community and the world around them. They are necessary skills for children to understand and regulate themselves, and interact with others. For this reason, Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) is vital in education. The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) defines Social Emotional Learning as “the process through which all young people and adults acquire and apply the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to develop healthy identities, manage emotions and achieve personal and collective goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain supportive relationships, and make responsible and caring decisions” (CASEL, 2021). From our perspective as nursery Educational Assistants, early childhood is a crucial age where children must start to develop personal and social skills. As they acquire these skills, we see how students improve in coping with emotional stress, becoming problem solvers, and regulating their emotions when it comes to unexpected and difficult circumstances.

Students’ mental health and well-being have been an important area of concern during the pandemic. Due to COVID-19, students at the American School Foundation of Monterrey (ASFM) learned from home with a distance learning model for approximately 16 months, without having any physical interaction with peers or teachers, which impacted the way we teach social and personal development skills. Four specific areas concerned us the most: students' ability to (1) persevere, (2) restrain impulsivity, (3) work independently, and (4) participate
actively in whole group activities. As nursery educational assistants, we experienced first hand how nursery students’ personal and social development was being affected by distance learning.

Our observations on these four areas raised our attention to further research and analyze the possible effects the pandemic has had on nursery students. Specifically, we were interested in comparing nursery students’ development of personal and social skills before, during, and after the pandemic. Even though the pandemic is not completely over yet, the availability of vaccines and treatments have allowed ASFM to reopen its doors to students, in a face-to-face learning environment like before.

We compared the personal and social growth of a sample of 150 students who coursed nursery during the 2019-2020 school year, with a group of 150 students who attended nursery during the 2020-2021 school year, and finally with a group of 150 students who coursed nursery this past school year 2021-2022. The first group (2019-2020) was able to go to school physically, the second group (2020-2021) coursed the school year in a distance learning model, and the third group (2021-2022) attended school in a face-to-face model again. Since the pandemic happened in March 2020, the second trimester of the 2019-2020 school year had just ended and there was no formal report card for the third trimester. For this reason, we plan to focus on the students’ development during the first two trimesters of each school year only.

**Review of the Literature**

The COVID 19 pandemic has had a tremendous psychological, social, and economic impact on people all over the world. As Robert Marchesini mentions in his book *The Virus Paradigm* “after the pandemic, nothing will be the same as before” (Marchesini, 2021). As
nursery teachers, one of our major concerns when it comes to the pandemic is the impact it has had on children’s socioemotional development, especially because early childhood is a crucial period for Social-Emotional Learning to take place and with children not being able to attend school physically nor interact with peers their age, this was challenging. After reading various studies done on the topic we have found interesting results about the effects of the COVID 19 pandemic on children’s personal, social, and emotional growth.

In Colorado, the Early Milestones organization conducted a study regarding the pandemic’s impact on their early childhood community. They implemented surveys of child care providers, early educators, and families. They found that “one in five parents with three- and four-year-olds said their child was doing worse than before the pandemic” (Delap, Nicolau, and Franko, 2021) when it came to their overall wellbeing. This study also found that 43% of young children were experiencing more mental health challenges and 29% were experiencing more difficulty with peer social interaction than before the pandemic. Comments from child care providers regarding toddlers’ emotional wellbeing after the pandemic include: “more children are aggressive and more prone to outburst (crying) when they do not get what they want” (Delap, Nicolau, and Franko, 2021). The negative effect of the pandemic on children’s social and emotional well-being was clear in this study.

We analyzed another study by Tanja Linnavalli and Mirjam Kalland (2021) from the Faculty of Educational Sciences of the University of Helsinki called, “Impact of COVID-19 Restrictions on the Social-Emotional Wellbeing of Preschool Children and Their Families”. We found it very interesting because it compares various studies on how the pandemic affected
families and preschoolers from different countries. UNESCO estimates that the pandemic has affected the lives of around 1.6 billion school children in 190 countries, and the lives of an estimated 93 million children in early childhood education and preschool in 34 countries. In this research, we found that not all children were impacted the same way by the Covid-19 lockdown. Some parents reported a decline in children’s prosocial behavior and assessed that children who stayed at home were lonelier than children who remained in daycare, while others reported that being at home or in care was not associated with children’s physical or mental wellbeing.

In Finland, parents of children under the age of five rated their physical (2.5%) and mental (17.8%) well-being as having worsened during isolation (Patrick et al., 2020, as cited in Linnavalli and Kalland, 2021). There was a follow-up study by Gassman-Pines and colleagues (2020, as cited in Linnavalli and Kalland, 2021) that showed that although parents' well-being deteriorated during the pandemic containment, the children’s mood did not, and behavioral disorders did not increase compared to the time before the pandemic in the spring of 2020. Parents estimated that the deterioration in children’s mental state and increased behavioral problems were associated with illness in the family and the increased burden of childcare.

In Spain, a survey conducted on families with children three to twelve years old, revealed that parents estimated a greater increase in conduct problems and hyperactivity in three to six year old children, than in older children. According to the study, parents’ anxiety had a negative impact on children’s behavior and their ability to adjust to their situation.
In Italy, mothers estimated an increase in emotional problems, conduct problems, hyperactivity (assessed with a parental Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ)), and self-regulatory problems (assessed with The Behavior Rating Inventory of Executive Functions—preschool version) in their 2–5 year-old children, compared to pre-pandemic times. According to the research, an increase in these problems was linked to the sleep quality of both children and their mothers.

Finally, the same research study found that in Canada two-thirds (66.7%) of parents who answered the SDQ reported that their children were doing worse in at least one of these three dimensions (deteriorated: emotional problems (31.5%), conduct problems (29.6%), and hyperactivity (35.2%)). However, about one-third (31.5%) estimated that children were doing better considering at least one of the measured traits (improved: emotional problems (11.1%), conduct problems (16.7%), hyperactivity (14.8%)). In addition, children aged 2–5 years accumulated fewer problems and got over them faster than the older age groups studied, suggesting that young children suffer less from changes in daily routines than school-age children and adolescents.

After comparing the studies mentioned above, the results showed that the differences in these outcomes may be due to factors such as cultural differences between countries or differences in the educational level and work situations of the families involved. Pre-existing mental health conditions and family relationships had an impact on these results as well. In the research that took place in Finland, for example, the families involved were middle-class and had a high socio-economic status, so the economic situation had not worsened for most of them.
Parents of such families are presumably better able to protect their offspring from their own stress and anxiety. Particularly in well-off families, pre-school children did not appear to specifically suffer from the downsizing of their everyday circles or the change in their routines.

Even though some studies showed that there was not a great impact, the prosocial behavior of children was rated worse than earlier by parents. This might mean that the stress the children have experienced during the quarantine has manifested itself predominately in prosocial skills. After looking at these studies from different parts of the world, we were surprised to see all the different results and became even more curious to see how the pandemic specifically affected our students in Monterrey, México.

**Research Purpose and Questions**

The purpose of this research was to understand the effect of the pandemic and online learning on nursery students’ social-emotional development. It specifically looked at four areas of their personal and social growth: students’ ability to (1) persevere, (2) restrain impulsivity, (3) work independently, and (4) participate in the whole group activities. Comparing the development of the previously mentioned areas between students who were in nursery school in different settings (online and on-site) helped us demonstrate how children’s social-emotional skills were affected.

**Research questions:**

1. How does distance learning impact nursery students’ ability to persevere?
Hypothesis: Distance learning will not have an impact on students' ability to persever.

2. How does distance learning impact nursery students’ ability to restrain impulsivity?
   Hypothesis: Distance learning will have a negative impact on students’ ability to restrain impulsivity.

3. How does distance learning impact nursery students’ ability to work independently?
   Hypothesis: Distance learning will not have an impact on students' ability to work independently.

4. How does distance learning impact nursery students’ ability to participate in whole group activities?
   Hypothesis: Distance learning will have a negative impact on students’ ability to participate in whole group activities.

**Definition of terms:**

**Independent Variable:**

**Distance Learning:** A form of education in which students and teachers are physically separate, but use technology to have classes and facilitate communication (Merriam-Webster Dictionary, 2021). For this study, distance
learning refers to the model that ASFM used to teach students through Zoom during the pandemic.

**Dependent Variables:**

**Perseverance:** The ability to continue with something even though it is difficult (COBUILD Advanced English Dictionary, 2021).

The Nursery Report Card Rubric from ASFM (see Appendix A) defines perseverance as students’ ability to stick to a task until it is completed, without giving up easily.

**Restrain impulsivity:** The ability to control and inhibit behavioral impulses (Nour-Mohammad Bakhshani, 2014).

The Nursery Report Card Rubric from ASFM (see Appendix A) defines restraining impulsivity as students’ ability to think before acting, follow rules, control their temper, and not interrupt, distract or disrupt others.

**Work independently:** For this study, working independently refers to a nursery child’s ability to complete a task without needing help from an adult (teacher, parent, or caretaker).

The Nursery Report Card Rubric from ASFM (see Appendix A) defines working independently as a student who is self-motivated to play and complete tasks on his/her own.
Participate in whole group activities: For this study, participating in whole group activities refers to a nursery child’s ability to share ideas and thoughts, and cooperate in group activities done in class.

The Nursery Report Card Rubric from ASFM (see Appendix A) defines participation in whole group activities as a student who participates by sharing ideas, asking and responding to questions, listening to a story, singing, acting, and repeating.

Social skills: The skills used to interact and communicate with others, verbally and nonverbally, every day (Kids Sense Child Development Corporation, 2021).

Personal development: “Encouraging each child to become personally, emotionally, socially and physically effective, to lead healthy, safe and fulfilled lives” (Council for the Curriculum, Examination, and Assessment [CCEA], 2021).

In the Nursery Report Card from ASFM, personal and social development includes the following strands: demonstrates self-confidence, perseveres, makes decisions when given choices, restrains impulsivity, works and plays independently, works and plays with others, and participates actively in whole group activities.
Methodology

This study consisted of a causal-comparative research design. A causal-comparative research design “seeks to find relationships between independent and dependent variables after an action or event has already occurred” (Salkind, 2010). In this study, the pandemic occurred, which had a tremendous impact on the 2020-2021 school year, making a forceful shift to online learning. In a causal-comparative research design, the goal is to determine if the independent variable affected the dependent variables by comparing two or more groups (Salkind, 2010). The independent variable in this research was distance learning, while the dependent variables were the four social and personal-development skills.

To gather data about the effect of distance learning on the social and personal-development skills of students, we used two different instruments. The first instrument was the ASFM Nursery Report Card (see Appendix B: Nursery Report Card Example). This report card included a Personal and Social Development section, which had four strands pertaining to the dependent variables in this study: how often the student (1) perseveres, (2) restrains impulsivity, (3) works independently, and (4) participates in whole group activities. These strands are marked in red in Appendix B. The grading codes for these strands were numbers one through four, where one represented seldom, two represented sometimes, three represented most of the time, and four represented consistently. We selected this instrument because it is a source that all nursery teachers use to identify students’ personal and social growth. Considering all teachers use the same rubric and guidelines to determine this grade, we found it to be a fair and equal way to compare students. It is also a valid instrument because the
The second instrument used to collect data for this research was a survey for nursery teachers at ASFM (see Appendix C: Teacher Survey “The Effect of the Pandemic in Nursery Students' Personal and Social Development”), designed specifically for the purpose of this study. This survey was created in Google Forms and included Likert scale questions, as well as open-ended questions with areas for comments or opinions. It was sent by email to homeroom teachers and educational assistants in the nursery grade level to determine their perception of the impact the pandemic had on students' personal and social development, specifically on the four personal and social skills of interest in this study: students ability to (1) persevere (2) restrain impulsivity, (3) work independently, and (4) participate actively in whole group activities. In Appendix B, we included the 15 questions of this survey. The first 12 questions were Likert scale questions asking teachers if they strongly agree, agree, disagree, or strongly disagree when it comes to students’ improvement in the four areas mentioned above for each of the three different school years: 2019-2020 (on-site learning before the pandemic), 2020-2021 (distance learning during pandemic), and 2021-2022 (on-site learning after the pandemic). The last three questions asked teachers their opinion on which personal and social skill they believe was the most affected by the pandemic and why, as well as any further comments regarding the impact of the pandemic on their students' socio-emotional growth. We decided to create our own survey because we wanted to ask very specific questions about our variables of interest. It was valid because we thoroughly researched other surveys that include Likert scale questions and made up well-written, meaningful questions based on that research.
**Project Timeline**

For this study, we created a timeline that guided us through the steps necessary for completing this research project. We started our research project in June 2021 and concluded it in June 2021. The review of the literature took place during two different times, once during the summer and then again during February and March 2022, because new studies took place due to the fact that the pandemic was a recent phenomenon. We worked throughout the school year and focused on one task per month to complete our project in time.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>2021</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>2022</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Jun</td>
<td>July</td>
<td>Aug</td>
<td>Sep</td>
<td>Oct</td>
<td>Nov</td>
<td>Dec</td>
<td>Jan</td>
<td>Feb</td>
<td>Mar</td>
<td>Apr</td>
<td>May</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proposal</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research literature</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creation of survey</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data collection 1 (Implementing survey)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Analysis 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data collection 2 (Report Cards)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Analysis 2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Results</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presentation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Calendar**

- 2019-2020: On-site Learning
- 2020-2021: Distance Learning
- 2021-2022: On-site Learning
Data Analysis

Studying the data from the Nursery Report Cards and surveys helped us answer our research questions. First, we analyzed the grades of 150 students who were in nursery school during the 2019-2020 school year (on-site learning). We focused specifically on four strands of the Personal and Social Development area, which were students' ability to: (1) persevere, (2) restrain impulsivity, (3) work independently and (4) participate in whole group activities. We found the average grades for each of the strands from the first and second trimesters and then compared them to determine their growth throughout the school year. As the pandemic forced a shift from on-site learning to distance learning at the end of the second trimester, we only compared the grades for the first two trimesters.

Secondly, we analyzed the grades of 150 students who were in nursery school during the 2020-2021 school year (distance learning) in the four strands previously mentioned. We compared both averages to determine their growth from the first trimester to the second trimester.

Subsequently, we studied the grades of 150 nursery students from the 2021-2022 school year (back to on-site learning) in the four strands mentioned before. We compared both averages to determine their growth from the first trimester to the second trimester.

Finally, we compared nursery students' personal and social growth during the 2019-2020 school year (on-site learning), with the one that took place during the 2020-2021 school year (distance learning), and lastly with the growth that occurred during the 2021-2022 school year (back to on-site learning). This comparison helped us determine the pandemic's impact on nursery students' personal and social development. We graphed our results to visually represent the difference in growth between the three different school years.
To analyze data about the point of view of teachers on the impact that the pandemic had on nursery students, we gathered and studied all the answers to the survey to see which areas of personal and social development teachers believed were affected the most. We also graphed this results to visually portray the effect of distance learning on these areas of personal and social development, according to teachers.

Findings

After analyzing data from our two different instruments, we were able to find a clear trend, which showed that the pandemic did impact social and personal development skills in nursery students at ASFM.

The first instrument was the Nursery Report Card for the school years of 2019-2020 (on-site learning), 2020-2021 (distance learning), and 2021-2022 (on-site learning). With the data we collected from this instrument, we could see students’ growth in each of the four social and personal skills we focused on, which were the students' ability to (1) persevere, (2) restrain impulsivity, (3) work independently, and (4) participate in whole group activities. These four abilities are graded in the Nursery Report Card on a scale from one to four: one representing seldom, two representing sometimes, three representing most of the time, and four representing consistently. We found that students did improve in all four areas throughout the three school years, both on-site and distance learning settings. However, there was a slight deterioration in demonstrating these abilities during the 2020-2021 school year (online). In all four areas we could see that during 2019-2020 and the 2021-2022, the on-site setting school years, their ability for these skills was slightly higher than in the distance learning school year.
The results showed that on a scale of one to four, students’ ability to persevere grew by 0.21 during the 2019-2020 school year in an on-site learning setting. The average grade started at 3.03 in the first trimester and improved to an average of 3.24 in the second trimester. During the 2020-2021 school year, in a distance learning setting, students’ ability to persevere started with an average of 2.99 in the first trimester and improved to an average of 3.13 for the second trimester, growing by 0.14. In this past school year, 2021-2022, back in an on-site learning setting, students’ ability to persevere started with an average of 3.07 for the first trimester and improved to an average of 3.30 for the second trimester with a growth of 0.23.

These results indicated an improvement in all three school years. Their ability to persevere was slightly higher in an on-site learning setting than in a distance learning setting. Also, students in the distance learning school year demonstrated less growth than those who attended school physically.
Students’ ability to restrain impulsivity showed the same pattern as their ability to persevere. On a scale from one to four, their grades averaged 2.77 in the first trimester and improved to 2.91 during the second trimester of the 2019-2020 school year in an on-site learning setting, growing by 0.14. In the 2020-2021 school year, in a distance learning setting, their ability to restrain impulsivity had an average of 2.73 in the first trimester and improved to an average of 2.85 for the second trimester, growing by 0.12. In this past school year of 2021-2022, back in an on-site learning setting, students’ ability to restrain impulsivity started with an average of 2.89 for the first trimester and improved to an average of 3.01 for the second trimester, with the same growth as the previous year of 0.12.

Although the results indicated an improvement in all three school years, their ability to restrain impulsivity was slightly higher in an on-site learning environment than in a distance learning environment. However, the growth in students’ ability to restrain impulsivity from trimester one to trimester two in the school year 2020-2021 (distance learning) and 2021-2022 (on-site learning) was the same. There was a growth of 0.12, which means that distance learning did not impact students’ ability to improve on this specific personal skill.
When it came to students’ ability to work independently, results showed that on a scale of one to four, students started with an average of 3.19 in the first trimester and improved to an average of 3.33 during the second trimester of the 2019-2020 school year in an on-site learning setting, growing by 0.14. In the 2020-2021 school year, in a distance learning setting, their ability to work independently averaged 3.03 in the first trimester and improved to an average of 3.06 for the second trimester, growing by 0.03. In 2021-2022, back in an on-site learning setting, students’ ability to work independently started with an average of 3.23 for the first trimester and improved to an average of 3.52 for the second trimester, growing by 0.29.

These results indicated an improvement in all three school years, but even more so in those school years with an on-site learning environment. In fact, in the distance learning setting, students had very little, almost no growth of .03 in their ability to work independently. During the distance learning school year of 2020-2021, this was the personal and social skill that grew the least.
Finally, the results on students’ ability to participate actively in whole group activities showed very little growth throughout the 2020-2021 school year, in a distance learning setting, compared to the 2019-2020 and the 2021-2022 school years in an on-site learning setting. On a scale of one to four, the study showed that students’ ability to participate actively in whole group activities started with an average of 2.95 in the first trimester and improved to an average of 3.14 during the second trimester for the 2019-2020 school year where the setting was on-site learning, growing by 0.19. In the 2020-2021 school year, in a distance learning setting, their ability to participate actively in whole group activities had an average of 3.05 in the first trimester and improved to an average of 3.15 for the second trimester, growing by 0.10. In this past school year of 2021-2022, back in an on-site learning setting, students’ ability to participate actively in whole group activities started with an average of 3.15 for the first trimester and improved to an average of 3.37 for the second trimester, growing by 0.22.
These results indicated an improvement in all three school years. The growth in their ability to participate actively in whole group activities was higher in an on-site learning environment than in a distance learning environment.

After analyzing the dependent variables in this study, we realized that the skill that grew the least during the distance learning school year of 2020-2021 was the students’ ability to work independently by 0.03 on a scale from one to four. Next came their ability to participate in whole group activities with a growth of 0.10, followed by their ability to restrain impulsivity by 0.12, and then their ability to persevere by 0.14.

The second source for this study was a survey answered by 16 nursery teachers at ASFM. This survey was composed of Likert scale questions regarding the four strands mentioned above.
The results demonstrated how teachers perceived the impact of the pandemic on their students’ social and personal development.

First, we asked teachers’ opinions on their students’ perseverance. Ten teachers agreed, and six strongly agreed that students’ perseverance improved during the 2019-2020 school year in an on-site learning setting. For the 2020-2021 school year, in a distance learning setting, six teachers strongly agreed, seven agreed, and three disagreed that students’ ability to persevere improved throughout the year. In this past school year, 2021-2022, back in an on-site learning setting, nine teachers strongly agreed, and seven agreed that students’ ability to persevere improved.

These results indicated that all teachers think students’ ability to persevere improved in an on-site learning environment (2019-2020 and 2021-2022), but during distance learning (2020-2021), some teachers didn’t see any improvement.
We then asked teachers about their opinions on students’ ability to restrain impulsivity. In the 2019-2020 school year, with an on-site learning setting, four teachers strongly agreed, and ten teachers agreed that students’ ability to restrain impulsivity improved. In the 2020-2021 school year in a distance learning setting, two teachers agreed, nine disagreed, and five strongly disagreed that students’ ability to restrain impulsivity improved. In this past school year, 2021-2022, back in an on-site learning setting, three teachers strongly agreed, 11 agreed, one disagreed and one teacher strongly disagreed that students’ ability to restrain impulsivity improved.

These results demonstrate that according to teachers, students’ ability to restrain impulsivity did not improve during the 2020-2021 school year, in a distance learning setting. However, teachers believe that students' ability to restrain impulsivity did improve in an on-site learning environment (school years 2019-2020 and 2021-2022).
The third area we asked for teachers’ opinions on was students’ ability to work independently. In the 2019-2020 school year, with an on-site learning setting, six teachers strongly agreed, nine agreed, and one teacher disagreed that students’ ability to work independently improved. In the 2020-2021 school year, in a distance learning setting, four strongly agreed, nine agreed, and three teachers disagreed that their ability to work independently improved. In this past school year, 2021-2022, back in an on-site learning setting, six teachers strongly agreed, nine agreed, and one teacher disagreed that students’ ability to work independently improved.

These results indicate that all but one teacher think that in a distance learning setting during the pandemic, the students’ ability to work independently did improve, the same as the years before and after that one in an on-site learning environment.
The last skill we asked teachers’ opinions about was the one of students’ ability to participate actively in whole group activities. In the 2019-2020 school year, with an on-site learning setting, eight teachers strongly agreed, and eight agreed that students’ ability to participate actively in whole group activities improved. In the 2020-2021 school year, in a distance learning setting, one teacher strongly agreed, three agreed, ten teachers disagreed, and two strongly disagreed that students’ ability to participate actively in whole group activities improved. In this past school year, 2021-2022, back in an on-site learning setting, six teachers strongly agreed, and ten agreed that students’ ability to participate actively in whole group activities improved.

These results show that not all teachers have the same opinion on students’ improvement in participating in whole group activities in a distance learning setting. Some of them agreed they improved, while others disagreed. Contrary to that, all teachers believe that students’ ability to participate actively in whole group activities did improve in on-site learning setting the year before and after the pandemic.
The survey also included a question asking nursery teachers which personal and social skill, out of the four variables of interest, they believed was impacted the most by distance learning and why. Eight teachers thought distance learning hindered students’ ability to restrain impulsivity the most, mentioning that “they unmuted and did not wait for their turn to speak”, “it was hard for them not to play with toys and things around them, and parents were not present to place boundaries”, “students had many distractors to give-in to at home”, and “it was easily for students to simply stand up and leave whenever they wanted to”.

Two teachers mentioned that distance learning impacted students’ ability to work independently the most, mentioning that “parents or small group teachers helped or did the child’s work constantly” as well as “many students had mom by their side doing a lot of things for them, like handing them the materials or even answering the questions or doing the work for them”.

The other six teacher mentioned that in their opinion the pandemic affected students ability to participate in whole group activities the most, because “students lost their attention easily”, “didn’t follow up on the lessons in order to participate accordingly”, and “this skill is worked a lot when waiting turns and cooperating with classmates in the classroom, but during distance learning students were not so aware of this teamwork because they were alone at home”.
Finally, the survey included an open-ended question for further comments regarding teachers’ observations on the pandemic’s impact on students' personal and social development. An interesting comment on the survey was, “I thought that it was not going to be possible to teach in distance learning as well as face-to-face, but I was impressed with how the objectives were achieved and how the children showed learning and improving skills throughout the year. I think that in creativity and problem solving the pandemic was very beneficial, but it did affect teamwork, social-emotional skills, and in situations where you had to guide the child more and that we did not have the support at home to achieve it (for example how to hold scissors or pencil correctly).” Another comment was, “coming back to school this year after the pandemic was a hustle. Sharing, Playing, and Talking to other kids were the things I saw most impacted by the pandemic.”
We learned that generally, student grades and teacher opinions reflect a negative impact on students’ personal and social development during distance learning. We also found that most teachers believe that learning online harmed their ability to restrain impulsivity and participate actively in whole-group activities the most. Distance learning benefitted their abilities to persevere and work independently equally as in on-site setting. Overall, both students’ grades and teachers’ opinions show that on-site learning helps students grow more in their social and personal development than distance learning.

This data informs our teaching that nursery teachers should put extra effort into practicing controlling impulsive behavior because it was something that students didn’t acquire during the pandemic. After coming back to on-site learning, nursery teachers may also want to work as much as possible in whole group activities to promote participation amongst peers. Students have missed too much on getting together with others that being back at school with peers may even result overwhelming.

I would like you to respond to each hypothesis.

**Other Project Considerations**

As nursery educational assistants, we believed this study would reveal the negative impact distance learning had on personal and social development. We predicted this because social and personal-development skills develop through day-to-day personal interactions and situations that arise in the classroom, such as a student interrupting, students fighting for a toy, and students struggling to get something done. Learning from home, students had parents or
caretakers helping them constantly, not facing situations where they had to share or work together, and some even avoided doing certain activities. As teachers, it was hard to control and take advantage of these learning situations through a screen.

The findings of the impact of distance learning on personal and social development help teachers in two ways. First of all, confirming that students exposed to a whole school year of distance learning have underdeveloped social and personal-development skills alerts teachers about the urgency of helping the students get to where they need to be. Secondly, these findings warn us about the need to improve the distance learning program, looking for new and innovative ways to teach social and personal-development skills through a screen if we return to school in a distance learning or hybrid model (which is very likely).

This study was beneficial for teachers because it provided facts about the specific areas of concern in students' personal and social development, allowing us to look for new strategies to further teach and help students in those proven areas of concern.

When conducting this research, some slight challenges affected our results. First, students were graded based on teacher observations and perspectives, which may not be exact, especially when observing students through the screen. However, we know this was something that we could not control, and we know teachers tried to be as precise and non-biased as possible. Another challenge faced was having all nursery homeroom teachers and educational assistants answer the survey. We had to remind them and insist, but they all finally took the time to give us their feedback.
When it came to generalization, our study was limited because our findings only applied to the personal and social development of nursery students, and we will not be able to generalize our findings to upper-grade levels. However, our research might inspire other teachers to compare the personal and social development of students in higher grades before and during the pandemic to determine how it impacted them. This study was also limited to our school, ASFM, because the distance learning program differs from other schools, even within the same city. In some preschools in Monterrey, students did see each other and had on-site learning, and their social-emotional skills might not have been as affected as ours. However, our findings could apply to nursery students at other schools who had online learning like us, as their programs probably underwent the difference in teaching social and personal-development skills through a screen rather than in person.

Conclusion

The sudden shift from on-site learning to distance learning has affected education in many ways. This study focused on the pandemic's impact on nursery students' personal and social development, and has demonstrated interesting findings. Four skills were studied: students' ability to persevere, restrain impulsivity, work independently, and participate actively in whole group activities. Data was collected through two different instruments, ASFM’s Nursery Report Card and a survey for nursery teachers.
In our hypothesis, we stated our belief that the pandemic had a negative impact on two of our four variables of study: students' ability to restrain impulsivity and participate actively in whole group activities. We considered that students were not acquiring these skills through distance learning as they usually did in an on-site setting. On the other hand, we thought that distance learning did not necessarily impact the other two variables of interest: students’ ability to persevere and work independently, as we perceived that students were still developing these skills through online learning as much as if they had attended school. We were surprised by our findings after conducting this study.

Our findings from the Nursery Report Cards revealed improvement in all four strands of students’ social and personal development in on-site learning (2019-2020 and 2021-2022 school years) and distance learning (2020-2021 school year). However, despite the growth that occurred in distance learning, the results of this study show that, for all four variables, there was more improvement in an on-site learning environment than in a distance learning setting. Meaning that the pandemic did have a negative impact on all four personal and social skills because students did not develop them as much through distance learning as they did on-site.

Our findings from the survey revealed that nursery teachers agreed to see more improvement in the four personal and social skills during the school years of 2019-2020 and 2021-2022, which were both on-site. However, the majority did not consider that these areas improved during the distance learning school year 2020-2021. The results from the survey coincide with the data from the Nursery Report Cards, stating that on-site learning helped students’ personal and social development much more than distance learning. This data supports
half of our hypothesis because we believed that the pandemic and distance learning had a negative impact on two of our variables of interest, but not on all four, as the results show.

It would be interesting to do further studies to gather more information about the pandemic’s impact on students and their education. One study could involve researching the pandemic’s impact on students’ academic performance. It could analyze their math, fine motor, reading, and writing skills from the three different school years: 2019-2020 (on-site learning), 2020-2021 (distance learning), and 2021-2022 (back to on-site), and compare if their academics hindered by distance learning compared to the school years with an on-site learning setting. Another study we find interesting to carry out, is to follow nursery students throughout the next school years up to middle school. Analyzing the personal and social skills strands in their report cards to see if the pandemics’ impact on their socioemotional development is long-term or if they can recover from the negative effect that the pandemic had during their distance learning school year in nursery. A third study we consider interesting is to analyze the development of personal and social skills during the pandemic in upper-grade levels and then compare them to determine if the pandemic affected the socioemotional development of younger or older students the most. The shift to online learning was something new that we had never experienced before, and we are sure that there will be many more studies on its impact on education. We are very interested in understanding how it affects beyond our school community in education worldwide.
References


Appendix A

Nursery Report Card Rubric

**Personal and Social Development Descriptors**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Descriptor</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Demonstrates self-confidence</td>
<td>By showing pride of own work, expressing own opinion, interacting willingly with other students and adults, initiating eye contact, taking risks and participating</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perseveres</td>
<td>Sticks to a task until it is completed; does not give up easily;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Makes decisions when given choices</td>
<td>Choosing a center, different art materials, where to play during recess</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restrains impulsivity</td>
<td>By thinks before acting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Following rules</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Controlling their temper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Not interrupting, distracting or disrupting others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Works and plays independently</td>
<td>Is self motivated to play and to complete tasks on his/her own</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Works and plays with others</td>
<td>By collaborating, participating, taking turns, respecting the opinion of others, sharing ideas and materials</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is actively involved in whole group activities</td>
<td>Participates by sharing ideas, asking and responding to questions, listening to a story, singing, acting and repeating.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix B

Nursery Report Card Example

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School Rules</th>
<th>T1</th>
<th>T2</th>
<th>T3</th>
<th>Attendance</th>
<th>T1</th>
<th>T2</th>
<th>T3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cares for Self</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Total Possible Days</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cares for Others</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Absent</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cares for the Environment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Tardy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cognitive Development</td>
<td>T1 T2 T3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Personal and Social Development</td>
<td>T1 T2 T3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demonstrates creativity and imagination</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Demonstrates self-confidence</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shows curiosity and desire to learn</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Perseveres</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demonstrates problem-solving skills in different contexts</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Makes decisions when given choices</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contributes thoughts and ideas</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Resists impulsivity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demonstrates age-appropriate attention span</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Works and plays independently</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Works and plays with others</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Participates actively in whole group activities</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Academic Grading Coded:
M - Meeting expectations with sufficient evidence demonstrated
A - Approaching expectations with sufficient evidence demonstrated
N - Not yet meeting expectations
L - Limited or no evidence submitted

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Movement</th>
<th>T1</th>
<th>T2</th>
<th>T3</th>
<th>Fine Motor Development</th>
<th>T1</th>
<th>T2</th>
<th>T3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participates to develop gross-motor movement, balance and coordination</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Uses hand-eye coordination to complete tasks</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uses a variety of tools with increasing strength, control and form</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Music</th>
<th>T1</th>
<th>T2</th>
<th>T3</th>
<th>English Language Development</th>
<th>T1</th>
<th>T2</th>
<th>T3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participates to develop beat, rhythm, singing and playing instruments</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Understands common phrases and follows simple directions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uses language to express basic needs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Responds orally to language patterns in stories, poems, and songs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reading and Writing</th>
<th>T1</th>
<th>T2</th>
<th>T3</th>
<th>Mathematics</th>
<th>T1</th>
<th>T2</th>
<th>T3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Demonstrates understanding of concepts of print</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Uses and understands number concepts</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distinguishes between similarities and differences in spoken languages</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Explores spatial relationships, shapes, and patterns</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understands and responds to texts</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Displays emergent writing skills</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Signature of Homeroom Teacher: Promoted
Appendix C

Teacher Survey “The Effect of the Pandemic in Nursery Students' Personal and Social Development”

Survey questions:

1) Nursery students’ ability to persevere improved throughout the 2019-2020 school year (on-site learning).
   a) Strongly agree
   b) Agree
   c) Disagree
   d) Strongly disagree

2) Nursery students’ ability to persevere improved throughout the 2020-2021 school year (distance learning).
   a) Strongly agree
   b) Agree
   c) Disagree
   d) Strongly disagree

3) Nursery students’ ability to persevere improved throughout the 2021-2022 school year (on-site learning).
   a) Strongly agree
   b) Agree
   c) Disagree
   d) Strongly disagree
4) Nursery students’ ability to restrain impulsivity improved throughout the 2019-2020 school year (on-site learning).
   a) Strongly agree
   b) Agree
   c) Disagree
   d) Strongly disagree

5) Nursery students’ ability to restrain impulsivity improved throughout the 2020-2021 school year (distance learning).
   a) Strongly agree
   b) Agree
   c) Disagree
   d) Strongly disagree

6) Nursery students’ ability to restrain impulsivity improved throughout the 2021-2022 school year (on-site learning).
   a) Strongly agree
   b) Agree
   c) Disagree
   d) Strongly disagree

7) Nursery students’ ability to work independently improved throughout the 2019-2020 school year (on-site learning).
   a) Strongly agree
   b) Agree
   c) Disagree
8) Nursery students’ ability to work independently improved throughout the 2020-2021 school year (distance learning).
   a) Strongly agree
   b) Agree
   c) Disagree
   d) Strongly disagree

9) Nursery students’ ability to work independently improved throughout the 2021-2022 school year (on-site learning).
   a) Strongly agree
   b) Agree
   c) Disagree
   d) Strongly disagree

10) Nursery students’ ability to participate actively in whole group activities improved throughout the 2019-2020 school year (on-site learning).
    a) Strongly agree
    b) Agree
    c) Disagree
    d) Strongly disagree

11) Nursery students’ ability to participate actively in whole group activities improved throughout the 2020-2021 school year (distance learning).
    a) Strongly agree
    b) Agree
12) Nursery students’ ability to participate actively in whole group activities improved throughout the 2021-2022 school year (on-site learning).
   a) Strongly agree
   b) Agree
   c) Disagree
   d) Strongly disagree

13) Which of the following social and personal-development skills do you think distance learning impacted the most and why?
   a) Perseverance
   b) Restraining impulsivity
   c) Working independently
   d) Participating in whole group activities

14) Explain why you think distance learning impacted that skill the most.

15) Any further comments regarding the pandemic’s impact on students' personal and social development?