Visual arts is one of many arts-related activities in which children participate in the early childhood education setting. Building on previous research and current, this study aimed to explore the role of visual arts in early childhood education and the ‘views’ and ‘experiences’ of educators who are not familiar with visual arts struggles to provide opportunities for children to engage in a more comprehensive experience. The purpose of this research is to understand the ways educators perceive the role of visual arts in pre-k children’s learning. Through a qualitative method, four early childhood educators share their role in visual arts practice with children and their personal views and experiences relating to the subject in a semi-structured interview. Various topics such as art practices, classroom environment, and pedagogical approaches were discussed. This research suggests that educators need more comprehensive knowledge and understanding of visual arts to support their children's learning. Furthermore, educators should be provided with professional development opportunities to enhance their understanding and appreciation of visual arts. The study findings provide insights into the role of visual arts in early childhood education and shed light on the importance of educators’ views and experiences in shaping children's learning outcomes.

Methodology

The research design of the present study involved semi-structured interviews with four early childhood educators. Each interview lasted for about 35 minutes, and Participant 4 lasted for 16 minutes. Participants were asked about their personal views and experiences related to visual arts, their experiences of working with children, and their own learning experiences. The interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed, and analyzed using thematic analysis. The data analysis began with open coding, large chunks of information were gathered based on seeing similar patterns that appeared in each participant’s responses. Patterns like coloration were coded based on the themes identified in the interviews. The data were analyzed to identify common themes and patterns that emerged from the interviews. The themes that emerged from the data analysis were related to the educators’ views and experiences on visual arts, their teaching practices, and their personal learning experiences. The study findings suggest that educators need more comprehensive knowledge and understanding of visual arts to support their children’s learning. Furthermore, educators should be provided with professional development opportunities to enhance their understanding and appreciation of visual arts.

Literature Review

Literature presents two major key themes, views on visual arts and experiences of visual arts. According to How Does Learning Happen (2014), every child is capable of communicating about himself or herself in many ways, and for those many ways, the educators are the ones to understand how conversations can be shown in various forms of expression and to foster those forms of expression (p. 16). The study found that children’s visual arts are defined as the way in which children view visual arts (Malin, 2013, p. 15). Educators are considered to be co-constructors and co-learners with children as they are exploring and testing out their views and influences (How does learning happen, 2014, p. 16). An Irish based study found that an artist approach with supporting educators in visual arts activities, encouraged educators and children to fully explore and engage through the art-making process, not on the basis of end-product (Hayes et al, 2017, p. 216). Importantly, literature suggests that a more holistic, the purpose of learning and creating is to explore and experience the arts, is to be perceived as ‘fun’, and to feel free to create without restrictions (ECEs’ Perceptions on the Role of Visual Arts in Pre-K Children’s Learning, 2018, p. 317). Literature further suggests that educators’ little to non-existent interest in visual arts, educators still react towards children’s art positively, and seeing art as more than just traditional drawings, but ‘evolutionary’ and creative, and having a more open-minded approach to children’s art, can provide further opportunities, space, and abilities for educators’ to give qualities for opportunities to children to experience with art. Importantly, this research can further encourage educators to critically think about how their perceptions on the subject may affect the way they deliver art experiences for children.