

THE INFLUENCE OF PRE-SCHOOL EDUCATION ON SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF NURSERY SCHOOL CHILDREN IN GOMBE LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA

¹Ibrahim Ahmed

School of Early Childhood and Primary Education

dalibiibrahimahmed@gmail.com

+2348036200210

Umar Abdullahi

School of Education

umarsanda197@gmail.com

+2348036656808

and

Abdullahi Muhammad

School of Science Education

muhammadabdullahi60@yahoo.com

+2348036819207

Federal College of Education (Technical) Gombe, Gombe State, Nigeria

Abstract

This causal comparative study examined the influence of pre-school education on social and emotional development in children in Gombe local government area of Gombe state. Sixty (60) children who were exposed to pre-school education were selected through cluster sampling from six different schools that is 30 boys and 30 girls. Also selected through convenient technique were 60 children who were not exposed to pre-school education in the locality. In all, 120 samples participated in the study. Data were obtained from the parent-child questionnaire made up of 10 items on social development and 10 items on emotional development. Parents reported on their observations of their child's social and emotional development. Two research hypotheses were formulated for the study. The null hypotheses were tested with student t-test statistic of independent samples at 0.05 level of significance. Overall, the study found that there is no significant influence of pre-school education on either the social and emotional development. Competent and qualified pre-school educators should be recruited by both government and private school proprietors to guide and teach the pupils at this level of education so as to lay a strong foundation for each child future career.

Keywords: Pre-School Education, social development, emotional development and nursery school children.

Introduction

The early stage of child's development is critical and may need to be handled with caution. This is a time of great growth which may be vulnerable. Research on pre-school education has under scored the impact of the first five years of child's life on his/her socio-emotional development. According to David (1998) good pre-school education is vital to help a child develop physically, intellectually, emotionally, and socially. This is time children particularly need high quality personal care and learning experiences. The

pre-school years require positive early learning experiences as the foundation for later success in intellectual, social and emotional development.

According to Henniger (2005) pre-school education is a unique field of study and practice. It is organized around three key elements. Understanding these foundational components and their relationships will help in understanding what is needed to work with children. They are provided opportunity to play, understand and respect diversity and guide social and emotional development.

The third key element of pre-school education emphasizes the importance guiding the young child's social and emotional development.

Pre-School education can produce significant gains in children's learning and development. High quality pre-school education assists many at-risk children in avoiding poor outcomes, such as dropping out of school. Other long-term benefits include decreased crime and delinquency rate and increased high school graduation. Although the benefits seem to cross all economic and social lines, the most significant gain is almost always noted among children from families with the lowest income levels and the least amount of formal education. Furthermore, according to Ajayi (2008), children who attend pre-school education find it easier to relate with other people, are happier and attend social gathering such as birth day parties and have and have a better emotional management. On the other hand, those who do not attend early childhood education were found not happy, inferior complex and shyness.

The National association for the education of young children (NAEYC) suggests a number of reasons why pre-school education cannot be overlooked in relation to social and emotional development. For example, one reason is that children spend most of their time playing and working with materials in pre-school education. They do not wander aimlessly and they are not expected to sit quietly for long periods of the time. According to Olayinka (2004), most children in Nigeria that school at early age are made to sit in one place and to remain quiet or sleep so that teachers themselves can do their own personal work.

Secondly, in pre-school programmes, children should have an opportunity to play outside every day. Outdoor play should never be sacrificed for more instructional time. Whether at home or in the school children use most of their time playing which may be meaningful to them (Banjo, 2000).

Like all development, this require planning and guidance on the part of those who are in charge of the child such as pre-school education teachers if the most desirable

results are to be achieved. Research has shown that pre-school education aids emotional development so that children are able to manage their emotions in a better way. Pre-school education also helps children to be better aware of their social expectations. Pre-school education is a crucial stage of life in terms of child's physical, intellectual, emotional, and social development. High quality pre-school education assists many at-risk children in avoiding poor outcomes such as drooping out of school.

In Nigeria, though appreciable progress has been made in pre-school care and education in the past four years due government policy requiring every public school to have the pre-primary school linkage. However, the proportion of children enrolled in pre-primary early childhood care centre still remains low an approximately 2.3 million children, representing about 21% of the population are children in this age group. This can be attributed to a number of reasons, such as caregivers who are majority unqualified, poor state of infrastructure, equipment, facilities and nonchalant attitudes of parents towards this development (UNICEF, 2009). Social development is the ability to behave in accordance with expectation of the age group, society. Since no human is born social, there is need to provide enabling opportunity for children to learn especially through pre-school education.

Relationship with teachers and caregivers help children develop social skills, interactions with peers are the proving ground for these unfolding abilities. Infants and Toddlers spend most of their time interacting with adults and only gradually move toward the more challenging task of socializing with peers. Pre-school children are becoming aware of their peers and beginning to build relationship with them. Primarily, children find that building friendships consume increasingly larger proportions of their time and energy (Heninnger, 2005). Schipper, Travecchio and Ijzendoorn (2008) examined children's attachment relationship and temperament with their professional caregiver in a centre day care.

Cooperation is another important skill developed by children. When children willingly and without coercion by an authority figure support and assist one another, they are engaging in cooperative activity. Play provides many opportunities for cooperation. Respecting rules for appropriate conduct are important part of social interactions. Listening when another is speaking is just one of these rules that children must learn to follow if they want to participate effectively in social interactions.

Social interactions often lead to disagreements that must be solved, so children must learn problem-solving strategies to deal with these conflicts. Although children often express their feelings in appropriate ways with others such as hitting, kicking, biting, and name calling, they also quickly learn that these approaches get in the way of friendships and being part of group.

Emotional development in young children consists of a gradual growth in the ability to recognize, label, and appropriately respond to their feelings. Stimulus from the environment causes physiological responses in the body that lead to feelings such as anger, affection, fear, sadness, happiness and grief (Dyang, 2009).

Teachers can use a variety of materials and activities in the pre-school classroom to help children learn about dealing with feelings in positive ways. The following materials are effective in allowing children to explain their feelings in positive ways. Art materials, clay, play dough, and paints are all example of materials that many children use regularly to express feelings. Playing with a lump of play dough or painting a picture can be healthy release for many children. Tenenbaum, Alfred, Brooks, and Dune (2008) examined training to improve children emotional understanding. Children either explained or listened to an experimenter who explained the causes of protagonist's emotional reaction in nine different vignettes, compare to a control group who listened to vignette and answered questions unrelated to emotions. Children increased in their emotional understanding after participation in an exemplary conversation. Also it was revealed that

children learned from conversations when children listened to an adult's explanation or were questioned until they themselves provide the explanations.

Actively teach emotional literacy, use 'emotional vocabulary' in context. Start with basic emotions and gradually move to more complex ones and get the children involved in the process of identifying and expressing emotions. Ask questions such as 'what makes you feel angry?' how can you tell when you are angry, sad, scared?' focus attention on children's facial expressions, voice, and posture for different emotions. Also, use stories to infer and discuss characters, thought and emotions. 'How do you think the princess feels? Why? 'What happened in the story that made her feel like this?' what can she do? Stories can also be used for looking at problems from perspectives.

Support emotional regulation and self-control; play games that encourage control of body parts ('simon says', 'stop and freeze' movement games). Help children find ways to stay calm while encountering a strong emotional response. For instance, taking a deep breath, and providing a 'quiet area'. Demonstrate emotional regulation techniques with puppets, and role play to practice emotional regulation. Separate emotions from actions by letting the children know that all emotions are okay but not all behaviours are acceptable, for example it is perfectly normal to get angry, but not okay to hurt one another.

Statement of the Problem

No child is born social, he/she must learn to make adjustments with others, and this ability can be acquired only as a result of opportunities to be with all types of individuals, especially at the age of three to six years when socialization is an important phase of the child's development. The early years of life present a unique opportunity to lay the foundation for healthy development. One of the key elements that guide pre-school education is that it should foster social and emotional development. Therefore, pre-school education should improve the social and emotional development of children.

Although educating the mind is critical during the early years, teachers of young children find it equally important to help children develop a strong sense of self, learn to relate in positive ways with adults and peers and work through many positive and negative emotions they experience.

The researchers in a study visit to most of the Early Childhood Care and Development schools in Gombe metropolis observed poor attachment among the children and their caregivers. Although difficult to accomplish, findings indicated that developing peer relationships is an important step for children. Schipper, Travecchio and Ijzendoorn (2008) revealed that the frequency of positive caregiver was associated with attachment security and children's temperament. Weather the social and emotional development of a child is influenced by his exposure to preschool education or not is what forms the bases of this study.

Purpose of the study

The purpose of the study is to assess the influence of pre-school education on social and emotional development of nursery school children in Gombe local government area. Specifically, the study sought to assess:

1. The impact of pre-school education on children's social development in Gombe local government area.
2. The impact of pre-school education on children's emotional development in Gombe local government area.

Research Hypotheses

For the purpose of this study the following hypotheses have been formulated at 0.05 level of significant;

1. There is no significant difference between children who have being exposed to pre-school education and those who have not been exposed to pre-school education on social development.
2. There is no significant difference between children who were exposed to pre-school education and those who have not been exposed to pre-school education on emotional development.

Methodology

Research Design

The design for the study is survey research design. This is chosen because the study involves the seeking of opinion from the respondents as data for the study.

Area of the Study

The area of the study is Gombe Local Government Area of Gombe State. Gombe Local Government is the capital home of Gombe state. The local government is surrounded by Akko Local government to the west and south, Yamaltu Deba to the east and Kwami local government to the north.

Population and Sample of the Study

The population for the study comprises of all the Self school initiative (SSI) school children in Gombe Local Government Area. 120 children comprising of 60 exposed (30 girls and 30 boys) pre-school as well as 60 exposed (30 girls and 30 boys) none pre-school exposed children were randomly selected as samples for the study.

Instrument for Data Collection

Questionnaire was used for the collection of data from the respondents. The questionnaire contained two sections. Section A and B, section A takes care of bio-data of the respondents and section B contained 20 items which were further splited into two, 10 items for social development and the other 10 items deals with emotional development. These items were used in obtaining information from parents of children who were between ages 3 to 6 years.

Method of Data Collection

The researchers administered the instruments to the respondents at their respective schools and communities within the study area. The headmasters of the schools were briefed before the researchers proceed to nursery classes. The researchers explained to the teachers their purpose of the visit. They gave out the questionnaire to the children of sampled parents for onward delivery. The questionnaire were submitted to the teachers the next day by the children where the

researchers in a follow up visit retrieved back the instruments for analysis. Only 59 out of the 60 questionnaire administered to the parents of children not exposed to preschool were returned indicating 98.3% response. However, all the 60 (100%) questionnaire administered to parents of the children exposed to preschool was returned.

Method of Data Analysis

The hypotheses were tested using t-test at 0.05 level of significance. The Vassastat online statistical software was used for the data analysis. For the decision rule, where the calculated t value was greater than the table value the hypothesis was rejected. However, where the calculated value was less than the critical value the hypothesis was accepted.

Results

Hypothesis 1

There is no significant difference between children who were exposed to pre-school education and those who have not been exposed to pre-school education on social development.

Table 1: t-test Results of the Influence of Pre-School Education on Social Development

Respondents	N	Mean	SD	t-cal	P
Pre-School Education Retrain	60	25.65	6.69	0.02	0.984
No Pre-School Education	59	25.63	6.24		

Table 1 shows the result of the influence of pre-school education on social development. The table also shows that the p-value of 0.984 is greater than alpha at 0.05, so the null hypothesis is retained. There is no

significant difference between children who were exposed to pre-school education and those who have not been exposed to pre-school education on social development.

Hypotheses 2

There is no significant difference between children who were exposed to pre-school education and those who have not been exposed to pre-school education on emotional development.

Table 2: t-test results of the Influence of Pre-School Education on Emotional Development

Respondents	N	Mean	SD	t-cal	P
Pre-School Education Retain	59	28.02	4.46	-0.48	0.632
No Pre-School Education	60	28.42	4.57		

Table 2 shows the result of the influence of pre-school education on emotional development. The table also shows that the p-value of 0.632 is greater than alpha at 0.05, so the null hypothesis is retained. There is no significant difference between children who were exposed to pre-school education and those who have not been exposed to pre-school education on emotional development.

Results and Discussion

Table 1 and 2 showed that there is no significant difference between children who were exposed to pre-school education and those who have not been exposed to pre-school education on social and emotional development and also lack of motivation in terms of allowances and other entitlements. Research hypothesis one revealed that there are no differences in social development of children who are exposed to pre-school education and those who are not exposed to pre-school education. This is in contrast to findings by David (1998), who reported that good pre-school education is vital to help a child develop physically, intellectually, emotionally and socially. He believed that pre-school is a time when children particularly need high quality personal care and learning experiences.

Similarly, hypothesis two revealed that there is no difference in emotional development of children who attend pre-school education and those who do not attend pre-school education. This also contradicts findings by researchers like Greenberg, Kusch, and Mihalic (1998) who report that children who are aware of their emotions through pre-school education have a lower risk for problems of aggression and anxiety disorders.

The contradiction in the study can be attributed to a number of reasons, for this

may be attributed to lack of good relationship or rapport between the teachers and the pupils in pre-school education, another reason might be that the parents are biased about their report on their children which are not absent in Gombe state at this level of education. Also, in Nigeria especially in Gombe state there are no instructional materials for teachers to make any impact on social and emotional development of children, a situation where children were made to sit under the tree or even in the classroom sitting on stones. In addition, this could be attributed to lack of proper training on the part of the teacher on how to respond to different feelings that the children might display. Furthermore, teachers may also not be motivated to teach effectively because the government delays salaries and other allowances which may demoralize them from putting in their best in terms of caring for the pupils.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, the following conclusions were drawn. The study revealed that there is no significant influence of pre-school education on social development or emotional development. Therefore, competent and qualified pre-school educators are recruited by both government and private school proprietors to play and infuse learning so as to lay a strong foundation for each child's future career.

Recommendations

From the study the following recommendations were made to improve pre-school education on social and emotional learning in children aged three to six.

1. Competent and qualified pre-school educators should be recruited by both the government and private school proprietors to play and infuse learning so as to lay a strong foundation for each child's future career.

2. Pre-school educators should have more understanding of developmental characteristic of children ages three to six so as to effectively relate well with them and ensure necessary support needed to improve their social and emotional development.
3. Pre-school educator as a matter of priority change his mindset that handling pre-schoolers is more of playing, running, jumping, rolling etc. because play is part of children work and it is through play that naturally the learn.
4. Pre-school educators need to be creative so as to provide different type of toys which are age appropriate using our local materials for children to be interacting with so as to enhance their skills of social interaction and collaboration as well as negotiation which in turn improve their social and emotional development.

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