Lagos Journal of Contemporary Studies in Education
ISSN: 3043-9075 E-ISSN: 3043-6834
Volume 2, Issue 3, August 2024,91-99
DOI: htpps://doi.org/10.36349/lajocse.2024.v02i03.008

INFLUENCE OF PRE-SCHOOL EDUCATION ON THE SOCIAL AND COGNITIVE ADJUSTMENTS OF PRIMARY SCHOOL PUPILS IN PLATEAU STATE, NIGERIA.

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Abstract

The study was conducted to find out the influence of Pre-school Education on social and cognitive adjustments of basic one pupil in public primary schools in Jos-South Local Government Education Authority (LGEA), Plateau State. The research design was comparative survey (ex-post factor) research design. The study population was 35, 501 pupils and the sample were 240 pupils. 60 basic one teachers were also selected as samples. Two instruments were used to collect data. These were social adjustment Rating Scale and Cognitive Adjustment Rating Scale. Two research questions and two hypotheses were formulated and tested using t-test of independent samples at 0.05 levels of significance. The study revealed that pupils with Pre-school Education are more socially and cognitively adjusted than their counterparts without such experience. It also revealed that basic one pupils who had Pre-school have higher Attention and Recall mean scores than those who did not. Based on this finding, the researcher recommended that the federal, state and local government should expedite action in establishing Pre-school programmes in all public basic schools in the Jos-South LGEA and should also enact a law to compel parents to enroll all Pre-school age children in Pre-schools.

Key Words: Attention skills, Cognitive Adjustment, Pre-school Education Training, Recall skills, Social Adjustment.

Introduction

Social adjustment is defined as the efforts made by an individual to cope with standards, values and needs of a society to be accepted. It has to do with the accommodation to demands, restrictions

and mores of society including the ability to live and work with others harmoniously and to engage in satisfying interactions and relationships, social adjustment is different in people because people have different inborn traits and personality. Some easily socialize with others while some don't. The components of social adjustment include social skills, competence and emotional skills. Social skills and competence have to do with the ability of an individual to relate with others harmoniously while emotional skills have to do with the ability of an individual to understand his/her feelings, comprehend the feelings of others and regulate one's own behaviour (Ibiam, 2013 in Emma, 2022).

Social adjustment is an important indication of social interaction among people. Social adjustment is a major concern in all developmental stages because none of the developmental stages (social, cognitive, emotional, and motor) operate as an independent entity. Social adjustment process differs from individual to individual, family to family as well as culture to culture. Social adjustment determines the way in which an individual relates with other members of his/her community Ibiam, {in Emma, 2022).

Jaff (cited in James ,2021) opines that cognitive adjustment has to do with psychological processes and strategies that individuals use to cope with and adapt to various challenges, changes and stressors in their lives. It involves cognitive restructuring, developing coping mechanisms and adapting positive thinking patterns to maintain psychological well-being. It involves recall, retention, problem solving decisions from childhood through adolescent to adulthood. Cognitive adjustment involves a proactive approach to managing cognitive processes and adapting thought patterns to promote psychological well-being. Developing this component can lead to better emotional regulation, increased resilience, overall mental health, helping individuals to navigate life's challenges more effectively and improve the performances of individuals in diverse ways.

The components of cognitive adjustment include Memory recall skills and attention skills. These crucial skills enable children to process sensory information, evaluate, analyze, remember, make conparism and understand cause and effects. When a child learns to pay attention, it enables him/her to concentrate on this task for an extended period. Learning to focus attention is an important skill that the child will use to learn and recall what is learnt.

The choice of the two dependent variables is important to enhance learners' (social adjustment and cognitive adjustment) because they determine the extent to which a learner relates or interacts with

other members of the home/school environment, expresses his/her feelings, retains and recalls past experience, cope with challenges in the environment, solves problems and perform daily tasks.

Pre-school education is the care and education given to children aged 4 to 8 years in an organized learning environment. According to Gregory (2004) Pre-school education years form the foundation for the child's future learning. If the learning experiences are harmonious and pleasant, then the child develops love for future learning. When the experiences are traumatic and unpleasant at this stage, the child develops a negative attitude towards learning. It aims at developing the child wholistically (social, mental, emotional, physical). Pre- school has been a family role for many years; the current integrated pre-school education is a new concept in Nigeria. Pre-school Education started in the country only two decades ago Federal Government of Nigeria (2004). With this development, government is now resolved to create an enabling environment for the Nigerian child to develop his/her potential to the fullest. Besides, the society in recent times has appreciated that the care and support received by a child in terms of good health, nutrition, protection and psycho-social development are for a child's personality and social behaviour. Similarly, within the realm of psychological parlance, pre-school is regarded as "Foundation years" for moral, social, intellectual and attitudinal development (Wortham, cited in Dakun, 2009). Building on this view, Dakun (2009) stresses that the differences in motherhood bring about differences in children's personalities.

Pre-school age corresponds to a period of rapid physical, cognitive and psycho-social development for the child. The quality and intensity of care, nutrition and stimulation a child receives during this period largely determines the level of physical and cognitive development a child can attain (UNICEF, 2009). The Universal Basic Education Act of 2000 recognizes pre-school Education as an integral part of basic Education. It represents the first important step in achieving the goals of education for all. Since pre-school Education is the foundation of life-long education, the government is expected to be actively involved in providing it to the younger children. Evidence has shown that parents, private individuals and religious bodies constitute the largest proprietorship of pre-school education while government only provides 10% (Nakpodia, 2011).

Objectives of the Study.

The purpose of this study was to investigate the influence of pre-school education on the social and cognitive adjustments of basic one pupil in Jos-south LGEA, Plateau State. The specific objectives of the study were to:

1. Find out the extent to which Pre-school Education influences the social adjustment level of primary one pupil.
2. Find out whether Pre-school Education has any influence on the cognitive adjustment of primary one pupil.

Research Questions

The following Research questions are formulated to guide the study:

1. To what extent does Pre-school Education influence the social adjustment of primary one pupils who have such experience and those who do not?
2. What is the extent to which Pre-school Education influences the cognitive adjustment of primary one pupils with and without such experience?

Hypotheses

Based on the Research questions, Research objectives and research questions, the following null hypotheses will be tested at 0.05 level of significance.

HO1: There is no significant difference in the social adjustment levels of Primary one school pupils with and without Pre-school Education Experience.

HO2: There is no significant difference in the cognitive adjustment levels of primary one pupils with and those without Pre-school Education Experience.

Methodology

Research Design

The nature of the study dictates the employment of a comparative Survey Research (ex-post factor) design for data collection. This type of survey research design allows performance comparison between two study groups which was used with a view to obtain pertinent data from the study Samples and presenting the research finding without the manipulation of the subjects of the study (Cohea & Manion, cited in Cohen, 2000).

Population

The population of this study was 35, 501 pupils and 2,004 Teachers which comprises all the basic one pupil and in all the 185 public basic schools in Jos-south LGEA, Plateau State (Plateau

State Universal Basic Education Board, 2023). The choice of only public primary schools is to have access to pupils who have Pre-school education experience and those who do not have such experience. According to Anikweze (2010), research population refers to the set of all the cases that are of interest to a researcher.

Sample

The sample for this study consisted of 240 basic one pupils and 60 basic one teachers.

Instruments

The instrument used for data collection in this study are the social adjustment Rating scale (SARS) and cognitive Adjustment Rating (CARS) for children aged 5-8 years will be developed by the researcher.

Description of Instruments.

The social Adjustment Rating scale (SARS) was developed by the researcher to test the social adjustment level of primary one pupil with Pre-school Education Training experience and those without such experience. The instrument consists of 13 items on a four (4) point scale. The primary one Teachers teaching these classes will respond to the instrument because they know those who attended pre-school Education Training and those who did not as well as their social characteristics.

The cognitive adjustment Rating scale (CARS) was also developed by the researcher to test the cognitive adjustment level of primary one pupils with Pre-school Education Training experience and those who do not have such experience. The researcher was guided by the pre-school education curriculum in designing the instrument. The cognitive adjustment Rating scale covers two core cognitive adjustment scales (attention and memory recall).

Validity and Reliability of Instruments.

To ensure the face and content validity of the instruments, they were given to two experts in Research, Measurement and Evaluation and one expert in Educational Psychology. The researcher effected the corrections by these experts. In determining the reliability of the instruments, they were pilot tested at LGEA Primary school Gyel which is situated within the study area but not one of the schools sampled for the study. The Cronbach's coefficient Alpha method was used to analyze the results. It yielded an Alpha Coefficient of 0.81.

Procedure for Data Collection.

The researcher collected an introductory letter from the head of Department of Educational Foundations, University of Jos in order to visit each of the twelve schools selected for the study. After the school authorities granted permission to undertake the study, the researcher administered the cognitive adjustment Rating scale (CARS) to the two groups of pupils (those with and without Pre-school Education). The researcher Analyzed the data. The social adjustment Rating scale (SARS) was administered to the teachers teaching in the selected classes to rate social adjustment levels of pupils with and without Pre-school Education Training experience. The researcher spent twelve days administering the instruments. Each day was dedicated to a school. The research worked together with three other research assistants to ensure smooth collection of data.

Results

Hypothesis one

There is no significant difference in the social adjustment levels of basic one school pupils with and without Pre-school Education. This Hypothesis was tested using t-test of independent samples and the result is presented in table 6.

Table 6: t-test analysis of mean difference between social adjustment levels of pupils with and without Pre-school Education.

GROUP	N	X	SD	@level	df	t-cal	t-cri
Group A (with PE)	30	32.5	4.34				
				0.05	14	4.97	2.24
Group B (without PE)	30	12.87	2.07				

Hypothesis one (HO_1) examined the differences in social adjustment levels of pupils with and without Pre-school Education. From the table, Group A (Pupils with Pre-school Education Training) had a mean score of 32.5 and a standard deviation of 4.34 while Group B (Pupils without Pre-school Education Training) had a mean score 12.87 and a standard deviation of 2.07. The t-calculated was 4.97. The critical or table value was 2.24 at the difference of 14 at a significant level of 0.05. Since the t-calculated is greater than the t-critical, we reject the null hypothesis. This means that there is a significant difference in the social adjustment levels of basic one pupil who attended Pre-school Education Training and those who did not.

Hypothesis two

There is no significant difference in the cognitive adjustment levels of basic one pupils with and those without Pre-school Education. This hypothesis was tested using t-test of independent samples and the result is presented in table 7.

Table 7: t-test analysis of mean difference between cognitive adjustment levels of basic one pupils with and without Pre-school Education.

GROUP	N	X	SD	@level	df	t-cal	t-cri
Group A (with PE)	120	15.00	2.79				
				0.05	14	3.16	2.14
Group B (without PE)	120	11.04	3.60				

Hypothesis Two (HO_2) examined the differences in the cognitive adjustment levels of basic one pupil with and without Pre-school Education. From the table, Group A (Pupils with Pre-school Education Training) had a mean score of 15.00 and a standard deviation of 2.79 while Group B (Pupils without Pre-school Education Training) had a mean score of 11.04 and standard deviation of 3.60. The t-calculated was 3.16. While the critical or table value was 2.14. Since the t-calculated is greater than t-critical, we reject the null hypothesis. This means that there is a significant difference in cognitive adjustment levels of basic one pupil with and without Pre-school Education.

Discussion of Findings

The first null hypothesis ($H0_1$) was rejected because the calculated-t (4.97) was greater than t-critical (2.24) at 0.05 level of significance. This means that there is a significant difference in the social adjustment levels of basic one pupil with and without Pre-school Education. This result is in agreement with the findings of Benard (2021) who state that Pre-school Education Training has been observed to influence pupils' social adjustment. This finding is also consistent with Anderson (2012) who says that when children are exposed to Pre-school Education Training, they will develop superior social adjustment skill, necessary physical ability and social unity needed in adults life.

The second null hypothesis ($H0_2$) was rejected based on the results shown in table 7. The results indicated that t-calculated (3.16) was greater than the t-critical (2.14) at 0.05 level of significance. It therefore means that there is a significant difference in the cognitive adjustment levels of basic one pupils with and those without Pre-school Education. This finding agrees with the findings of Magnuson (2014) who observes that Pre-school Education raises cognitive adjustment as well as mathematics and reading performance of pupils at school entry. This finding also agrees with the findings of Schweinhart (2003). According to him, there remains a clear advantage for male and

female children who attended Pre-school compared with those who did not. Children who attend Pre-school have higher cognitive adjustment and attainment levels than home children at school entry. The gab in average cognitive and attainment between Pre-school and home children appear to remain consistent over time

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, the following conclusions were drawn.

1. Basic one pupil with Pre-school Education Tare more socially adjusted than those who did not.
2. Basic one pupil who had Pre-school Education are more cognitively adjusted than their counterparts who did not attend it.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

1. Government should expedite action in establishing Pre-school education programmes in all public basic schools as contained in the national policy on education (2004).
2. Government should monitor and supervise the operations of all Pre-school programmes education with a view to maintaining standard.
3. Educational and curriculum planners should provide developmentally appropriate curriculum, policies and programmes for Pre-school Education.
4. Parents, Teachers, the general public and other stakeholders should be enlightened on the importance of Pre-school Education.
5. Government should enact a law to compel parents of Pre-school age (0-5) children to enroll their wards in public Pre-school programmes which are non-fee paying.
6. Government and other stake holders in Education should ensure that only those who have the requisite qualifications are employed to teach in Pre-schools.

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