

School Effects on Social Development of Preschool Children in Nigeria

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Abstract. Education is provided to give the child all round development – socially, intellectually, culturally, and morally. Contemporary educational efforts have been concentrated on the development of the intellect at the expense of other vital aspects of the totality of man. This type of lopsided provision of education will only lead the nation to the production of uneducated folks who are only literate, but morally bankrupt and a social misfit. This paper therefore, examined the influence of school effects on the social development of preschool children. Three hypotheses were formulated to guide the study based on the parameters of school effects and social development constructs. The study which consisted of 330 samples in all, involved 150 teachers, and 180 preschool children. The data collected by means of a self-constructed questionnaire, were thereafter analysed with the use of Chi –square statistic. Findings showed that there is a significant influence of school climate on the development of self-concept among preschool children ($X^2=11.02$; $P<0.05$). There is also a significant influence of school leadership on the social development of preschool children ($X^2 = 8.01$; $P<0.05$). However, school curriculum showed no significant influence on the social development of preschool children ($X^2 = 6.05$; $P<0.05$). It was concluded that the social development of preschool children is a matter that should be accorded adequate attention, as this determines the success or otherwise of a child's cognition and self-esteem.

Keywords: Preschool Children, School Climate, School Curriculum, School Effects, School Administrative Leadership, Resources

1. Introduction

Preschool Education constitutes the background foundation for the entire Education process. This requisite foundation which includes being able to read, write or answer simple cognitive questions; cannot be realised unless a child is socially and emotionally balanced to face the demands of learning. For children to therefore succeed academically in the future, the attributes of self-comportment, free mindedness to relate with peers, teachers and interact with infrastructures within the school environment is necessary at their early ages. For this reason, Thompson, R.A. (2002:148) submitted that children need a combination of intellectual skills, motivational qualities, and socio-emotional skills to succeed in school. They must be excited and curious about learning and confident that they can succeed (motivational qualities). They must also be able to understand the feelings of others, control their own feelings, behaviours, and get along with their peers and teachers (socio-emotional skills). Indeed, teachers in the kindergarten rate these motivational and socio-emotional skills to be more important to school success than being able to hold a pencil or read (National Centre for Education Statistics -NCES, 1995). They want children to be ready for learning to be able to cooperate, follow directions, demonstrate self-control, and “pay attention.” Where these pro-social skills are not instilled in children, they

grow up, lacking the learning etiquettes needed to thrive in their academic endeavours.

It therefore becomes imperative that preschool experiences should be able to support children's social and emotional development. While some preschools succeed in this; others do not, and yet, a few preschools succeeded only to a little extent in being able to groom the needed social development of preschool children. One underlying factor responsible for the differential level of success in the social development of preschool children is the 'school effects' operating within a preschool.

According to Spyros, K. (2005:72), school effects is the term that is used to indicate the associations between school structural features, resources, and pupil's achievement, while controlling for important pupil's background characteristics. It is the characteristics and features in a given school system that are absent in another school system, and which is the reason behind the differential academic achievement between the two schools being compared. The components of school effects have been identified in literature to include administrative leadership, school climate, school environment, curriculum content and instruction (Stephen, W., 1995; Spyros, K., 2005; Maxwell, S., et al., 2017; Tian, L. et. al., 2018; Dora, H.O. et al., 2019; King, N. & Ryan, B.J., 2019).

In other words, school effects generally refer to the influence of a school's features on pupils, which is responsible for the differential educational outcome, in comparison to the educational outcome of pupils from other schools without the same school characteristics. In describing the concept of school effects, Spyros, K.(2005:72) opined that the term "school effects" indicates the associations between school structural features (e.g., school sector) and resources (e.g., pupil-teacher ratio) and students achievement, while controlling for important student background characteristics (e.g., student SES). According to Raudenbush, S. W. & Wilms, J. D., (1995), the term school effects may refer to the effect of a particular policy or practice on a student's learning outcome.

Social development on the other hand, is a term that is used to connote the ability of an individual to understand self, fit into a group/society, without constituting a nuisance to self or others. In furtherance of this, Seefeldt, C., (2005) submitted that the dichotomy of socialization involves developing a strong sense of individuality while learning to become a member of a group. Children must retain their individuality, yet they must give it up by putting the welfare and interest of the group before their own. At school, they find out that they must share not only materials, toys, and time but also the attention of the teacher. Here they learn to cooperate, see others' viewpoints, and work together for the common welfare (Seefeldt, C., 2005). In the school, the focus on social skill development is threefold, revolving around the development of the following:

Self-Concept: Children's feelings about themselves are the foundation from which they learn to relate to and communicate with others.

Pro-social skills: Being able to cooperate and share are necessary for forming solid relationships with others.

Making and keeping friends: Children who relate to and communicate with others, sharing and cooperating, are those who are accepted by their peers and can make and keep friends (Seefeldt, C., 2005)

1.2 Statement of Problem

Nowadays, many school children exhibit antisocial behaviours even right from their tender ages. It has been observed that juvenile delinquency of several kinds is fast becoming a way of life for many young people across societies and communities, and this could be traceable to a general faulty society in which a child is raised. Moreover, some kindergarten teachers have reported that more than half of their pupils come to school unprepared for academic activities.

These children want to be stuck to their parents who brought them to school; they regard their teachers and fellow peers as strangers and cry out at the slightest discomfort or provocation. There is no doubt that lack of good social

grooming of children is inhibiting the production of useful and acceptable members of the society. This phenomenon has subsequently contributed to poor academic achievement. Furthermore, it has led to wastage of resources, as government substantial percentage of the national budgetary allocation is utilized for treatment and rehabilitation of young people with severe antisocial problems in Nigeria. It is against this backdrop that this study was carried out to investigate the influence of school effects on the social development of preschool children.

1.3 Purpose of Study

The main purpose for carrying out this study was to investigate the influence of school effects on the social development of the preschool children.

The study was guided by the following specific objectives:

- To examine the influence of school climate on the social development of the preschool children
- To investigate the effect of school leadership on the social development of the preschool children
- To examine the effect of the curriculum/instruction on the social development of the preschool children

1.4 Research Questions

- To what extent does the school climate influence the self-concept of the preschool children?
- Is there any relationship between the school leadership and the social development of the preschool children?
- Is there any relationship between the school curriculum and the development of pro-social and emotional skills of preschool children?

1.5 Hypotheses

H₀1. There is no statistically significant influence/association between school climate and

the development of self- concept of preschool children.

H₀2. There is no statistically significant relationship between school curriculum and the development of pro-social and emotional skills of preschool children.

H₀3. There is no statistically significant association between school leadership and the social development of preschool children.

2. School Physical Environment and the Social Development of Preschool Children

The physical environment within a particular school could be different from those of another school, and this significantly affects the social development of children. The environment within some preschool institutions are characterized with features such as good building structures, lightening, road network, flowering, colourful paintings and artistic impressions on walls, with learned and civilized people etc. Other preschools on the other hand are cited in noisy environment with dilapidated buildings, poor lightening, and uncivilized members of the community.

Commenting on the differential impact of the school environment, Sanoff, H., (2008) noted that, the school environment affects students' and teachers' health, work, leisure, emotions, and a sense of place and belonging. According to the American Federation of Teachers (AFT, 2008), "unhealthy and unsafe school conditions make it difficult for students to concentrate, for teachers to teach, and for staff to do their jobs". This could translate into a poor social development of students. The school environment is of importance for child outcomes (Tian, L., et al., 2018). This outcome includes both academic outcome and social development outcome.

3. School Leadership and the Social Development of Preschool Children

Children by their nature can be timid or audacious, depending on their initial exposure. Since preschool children spends appreciable length of time in school with their teachers and

head teachers, their level of social development is largely influenced by the leadership style in operation within their school environment. For this reason, it is often observed that school children who attend schools governed by undemocratic and cruel school leaders tends to be timid, fidgeting, and also exude low self-esteem. This is in contrast to those who attend schools governed by democratic and accommodating leaders.

Supporting this assertion, Becky, H., (2014) noted that more often than not, the behavioural characteristics of a school leader, based on sex easily determine the climate of a school. Similarly, Eagly, A.H., & Johannesen-Schmidt, M.C., (2001) opined that in empirical studies comparing male and female leadership styles, researchers have documented that women tend to behave in more participative and democratic ways than men.

Hence, it can be expected that preschool children in the schools headed by females could be more outspoken and confident than their counterpart in schools headed by males.

4. School Curriculum/Instruction and the Social Development of Preschool Children

An overview of the activities of a school can be seen by examining the school's curriculum. Hence, Baki, A.,(2004) pointed out that academic curriculum/instruction is the wheel that drives teaching and learning process. Therefore, the social development of preschool children is largely affected by the curriculum/instruction being operated in the school. This researcher stressed further that it is difficult to overemphasize the importance of providing students with strong, effective, and core instruction. This is because; it determines what the child is to learn, and hence, the level of exposure of the child.

5. School Climate and Social Development of Preschool Children

Marshall, M.L., (2009) explained that school climate could affect many areas and people

within schools. School climate played a significant role in providing a healthy and positive atmosphere. The interaction between students and teachers, the characteristics of schools, were two diverse factors that affected and helped to define the broad concept of school climate (Marshall, M.L., 2009).

School effects stemming from staff-pupil interaction has impact on learning outcome. It is an avenue through which educational information is exchanged and knowledge is acquired. For this reason, a high level of staff-pupil interaction implies that pupils are free to relate with their teachers. This reflects in social development of the pupil, due to the freedom they have to express themselves. Collaborating, Burchinal, M. R., et al., (2002:420) explained that teacher reported that closeness with children whose parents reported less progressive parenting practices resulted in positive gains in reading scores over time.

6. Research Design and Methods

The correlational research design has been adopted for this study. This is consistent with studies seeking to establish relationship or association between two or more variables. The study resides in the positivists' paradigm and a quantitative approach was adopted for its execution.

6.1 Population, Sample and Sampling Technique

The population for the study comprised all the preschool children (kindergarten and nursery) located within Ibadan metropolis, Oyo State, Nigeria.

The sample for the study consisted of 330 in all, involving 150 teachers, and 180 preschool children. While the stratified sampling technique was used to select the schools that were involved in the study, random sampling technique was used to draw respondents for the study.

6.2 Research Instruments

Data were collected for this study by means of four (4) research instruments namely:

Questionnaire, which was used to collect information from the teacher- respondents;
 Interview granted to collect pertinent information from the preschool children;
 Observational technique to get information about social interactions amongst the pupils;
 School records for primary and secondary data on the pupils.
 The self- designed questionnaire titled “School Effects on Social Development Questionnaire (SESDQ) served as the main research instrument for the study. The questionnaire was given to colleagues to critique and other experts in educational test and measurement for content and face validity, while it was later subjected to statistical treatment for the internal consistency

(reliability), using Chrombach Alpha, which yielded 0.78 reliability index, after which it was pilot tested. Primary data were collected by means of the questionnaire, interview, and observation (through observation checklist). Secondary data were collected from administrative offices in the sampled schools by checking through the pupils’ records. The questionnaire was administered on the teacher- respondents involved in the study, while the pupils were interviewed and also observed.

6.3 Method of Data Analysis

Data collected for the study were analysed using chi-square (χ^2) statistic. The hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance

7. Results

Ho1: There is no statistically significant association between school climate and the development of self-concept of preschool children

Table 1: Summary of Chi Square Statistic of the effect of school climate on the development of self-concept of preschool children

Variables	N	Degree of freedom	χ^2 (Calculated)	χ^2 (Theoretical)	Level of Sig	P Value	Remark
School climate	180	4	11.02	7.81	0.05	0.033	Hypothesis Rejected
Pupil’s self-concept							

Source: Field Survey, 2018. $P < 0.05$

From table1, since χ^2 -calculated (11.02) is greater than χ^2 -table value(7.81), then, the null hypothesis is rejected. It therefore implies that there is statistically significant association between school climate and the development of self- concept of preschool children in Ibadan metropolis of Oyo State.

H₀2: There is no statistically significant relationship between school curriculum and the development of pro-social and emotional skills of preschool children

Table 2: Summary of Chi Square Statistic of the effect of school curriculum on the development of pro-social and emotional skills of preschool children

Variables	N	Degree of freedom	χ^2 (Calculated)	χ^2 (Theoretical)	Level of Sig	P Value	Remark
School Curriculum	180	4	6.05	7.81	0.05	0.033	Hypothesis Accepted
Pupils’ social and emotional skills							

Source: Field Survey, 2018. $P < 0.05$

From table 2, since χ^2 -calculated (6.05) is less than the χ^2 -table value (7.81), the null hypothesis is therefore upheld. It then follows, that there is no significant relationship between school curriculum and the development of pro-social and emotional skills in Ibadan metropolis. This in effect means that the nature of the curriculum used in school does not affect the social development of preschool children in Ibadan metropolis.

H₀3: There is no statistically significant association between school leadership and the social development of preschool children

Table 3: Summary of Chi Square Statistic of the effect of school leadership on the social development of preschool children

Variables	N	Degree of freedom	χ^2 (Calculated)	χ^2 (Theoretical)	Level of Sig	P Value	Remark
School physical environment, climate and leadership	180	4	8.01	7.81	0.05	0.033	Hypothesis Rejected
Pupils' social development							

Source: Field Survey, 2018. $P < 0.05$

Table 3 showed that χ^2 -calculated (8.01) is greater than the χ^2 -table value (7.81), the null hypothesis is therefore rejected. It therefore implies that there is statistically significant main effect of school leadership on the social development of preschool children in Ibadan metropolis, Oyo State

8. Discussion

The summary of the chi square statistic (Table 1) revealed a significant association between the school climate and the self-concept of preschool children in Ibadan metropolis, South- West Nigeria. It follows therefore, that the perception of preschool children about themselves (self-concept) is greatly determined by the nature of the school climate in operation within their school. This could be attributed to the fact that children in their formative age have tender and blank minds so that whatever impression is made on them lingers in their minds and tends to define their disposition. This is in conformity with Jennifer, P., (1992), who earlier reported that, the quality of emotional support and classroom organization was significantly predictive of children's behavioural concerns. She further added that the quality of the classrooms may in fact, impact on students' development of social competencies. In the same vein, one of the findings of the study carried out by Maxwell et.al. (2017), also lends credence to this result. The result consolidated the importance of school climate and school identification on students' academic achievement (curriculum). Preschool children do develop a good sense of self concept when the school climate is safe. To create a climate of safety, halls and classrooms must be free of

behaviour like fighting, bullying, and harassment. (Larry, L., 2013).

It was shown in the table 2 that school curriculum does not exert significant influence on development of pro-social and emotional skills of the preschool children in Ibadan metropolis of Oyo State. Curriculum could affect cognitive learning but not to a significant level for affective domain. Hence, it was argued that it is difficult to overemphasize the importance of providing students with strong, effective core instruction. This is because; it determines what the child is to learn and the timing for the learning. Mehrotra, S.,(2006) added that the means or strategies employed by teachers in an attempt to impact knowledge to the learner (teaching methodology) determine students' results.

The result in Table 3 showed that there is statistically significant main effect of school leadership on the social development of preschool children.

This implies that school leadership exerts influence on the social development of preschool children within Ibadan metropolis. Giving credence to this, , Eagly, A.H.,&Johannesen-Schmidt, M.C., (2001) carried out a meta-analysis study of transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire styles of male and female leaders, and reported that female leaders exceeded males on the three scales of idealized influence, inspirational motivation, and individual consideration. These findings were interpreted to mean that female leaders tended to behave in manners that motivated others to feel respected, build a sense of belongingness and self-confidence in them, show optimism about

the goals of the organization, and attend to the needs of the other members of the organization (, Eagly, A.H., & Johannesen-Schmidt, M.C., 2001). Similarly, the finding Dora, H.O. et al., (2019) also supported this result as it was concluded that preschool leadership has a crucial role to play in the reform agenda of Early Childhood Education in China. This type of atmosphere operating in the school environment will no doubt promote speedy social development of the preschool children.

9. Conclusion

Consequent upon the results and the foregoing discussion, it may be safely concluded that the social development of preschool children is a matter that should be accorded adequate attention by all the stake holders in the education industry, as it serves as the determinant of the success or otherwise of the child's cognitive, affective, and psychomotor development. This study also concludes that constructs such as child's self- esteem, self -concept, emotions, intelligence, and inter-relational skills are very vital to the future academic success of a child. Hence, it is imperative that relevant stakeholders in school should create school effects that will enhance the development of these attributes in preschool children.

10. Recommendations

The following were recommended based on the findings and conclusion above:

- The school climate should be one that encourages free and mutual interactions amongst the different occupants (school authority, staff, and pupils) of the school environment, where differences are amicably resolved, and cooperation is the order of the day, thereby allowing peaceful atmosphere to envelope the school environment, and therefore leading to the achievement of both individual and organisational goals. This is particularly important as the children's level of social development is largely influenced by the leadership style operating in their school

environments. This is why school children who attended schools governed by undemocratic and cruel school leaders tend to be timid, fidgeting, and also exude low self- esteem, and vice versa.

- Staff members should always behave as pseudo parents, radiating a great deal of love and kindness to the pupils under them.
- As well, since the social development of the preschool children is largely influenced by the curriculum/instruction being operated in the school, the school as an institution established by the society should operate the curriculum that brings the child up in ways acceptable to the society.

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