

Impact of Early Childhood Education Service Delivery on Working Class Parents

MANUEL Mojisola Nkechi, OMOTUYOLE Christy, OSAGIE Abimbola

University of Calabar, Calabar, Cross River State, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the effect of early childhood education services on working-class parents in Lagos Mainland Local Government Area, Lagos State. The study was guided by four specific objectives which were to examine the impact of early childhood education service delivery on parental job preference, receptivity to in-house caregivers, receptivity to after-school service, and parental job performance in Lagos Mainland Local Government Area, Lagos State. The descriptive research design was adopted. The population for this study was all working-class parents with pre-schoolers but only 150 of them were sampled in the study using a simple random sampling technique. A researcher-designed questionnaire which had a reliability coefficient of .802 was used to collect the data needed for the study. The data collected were analysed using the descriptive statistics of frequency count, and percentage to present the respondent bio-data while the mean was used to answer the research questions. The study revealed that early childhood education service delivery has a positive impact on parental job preference and job performance while the early childhood education service delivery has a negative effect on parental receptivity towards in-house caregivers and after-school service in Lagos Mainland Local Government Area, Lagos State. Hence, it was concluded that early childhood education services have a positive effect on working-class parents in Lagos Mainland Local Government Area, Lagos State. Based on the findings of the study, it was recommended among many others that ECCE providers should improve their staff requirement policy and ensure proper supervision to better enhance their compliance with the national minimum standard on ECCE so as to better satisfy the parents.

Keywords: Early Childhood; Early Childhood Education Service; Service Delivery; Care Giver; Working Class Parents

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Education is one of the most important components in a person's development. Every child, regardless of age, gender, race, or social background, has the fundamental right to quality education which will help individuals to develop to his or her full potential (Dada & Fagbemi, 2014). Early childhood education (ECE), on the other hand, provides the basis of instruction in pre-school education, which is delivered formally or informally at an educational institution to children aged two to five years before entering primary school (Nakpodia, 2011). It is made up all activities that take place before formal schooling, in this case, preschool is a part of early childhood, and the aim is the versatile development of child's personality and also helping the child to be ready and mature for a smooth transition to school (Ajala, in Chimbir & Nafiu, 2016)

Early childhood education includes childcare and development. This comprises kindergartens, nurseries, pre-school classes, child-care centers, and other similar institutions that provide early childhood services. It goes beyond what some refer to as pre-school education, since it is education in and of itself, with the goal of preparing children not just for school, but also for life, in the same way that all other aspects of education systems do (Hayes et al, 2010). Because early childhood is the most essential phase in human development,

comprehensive and high-quality early childhood education can help children's physical, psychomotor, cognitive, social, and emotional development, as well as their language and literacy acquisition. Children are active learners from the moment they are born, and the early years are critical to their academic and life success.

Until recently, structured education for children under the age of elementary school in Nigeria was not accorded the respect it deserved by the Nigerian government. Infant schools were first introduced to Nigeria by missionaries in the late twentieth century, when they were established in the Western and Eastern areas of the country. Early childhood education, often known as nursery school or pre-primary education, is predominantly a post-colonial phenomenon in Nigeria. Throughout the colonial period, kindergarten and baby classes, which comprised of groups of children deemed not yet ready for basic education, were resemblances to early childhood education. Because schooling at the time was not age-based, some children as young as six or even older could be affected.

The value and need for early childhood education was given formal recognition for the first time in 1977, when the then military government of Nigeria introduced the National Policy on Education, which was tied to the child's scholastic success in primary school. Gradually, early childhood institution stayed, and by 1985, Nigeria had about 4200 early childhood educational institutions. While by 1992 the number increased to about 8,300 (UNICEF, 1993). Nowadays, early childhood educational institutions are located in various places and buildings compuses of universities and Colleges, premises of some industries and business organizations, church premises, residential buildings with unprecedented expansion owing to the high demand for early childhood care and education by parents (Ejeh, cited in Tombowua, 2013). The objectives of early childhood education in Nigeria as stated by the national Policy on Education (FRN, 2013) are:

1. Effect a smooth transition from home to school
2. Prepare the child for the primary level of education
3. Provide adequate care and supervision for the children while their parents are at work (on the farm, in the market or offices)
4. Inculcate social norms

The economic circumstances in Nigeria have necessitated the formal abolition of gender disparities and discrimination in which women play second fiddle. As a result, females have been entrusted to participate in all aspects of society affairs, just like their male counterparts. Females no longer play second fiddle; women increasingly perform nearly male-like jobs in order to earn a living or assist their male spouse in caring for the family's needs. Due to the difficulty in achieving these goals, females are now involved in eight (8 a.m.) to six (6 p.m.) work, neglecting their responsibilities of child rearing and leaving it in the hands of externals known as early childhood education service providers to oversee their child's overall development. These ECCE caregivers were there to make money as well, thus they may not have a motherly or biological relationship with the children. As a result, their (ECCE provider) treatments will differ. Hence, the present study investigated the performance of working parents at the workplace knowing their children are in someone else's care.

Research Questions

The following questions were answered in the study:

1. What is the impact of early childhood education service delivery on parental job preference in Lagos Mainland Local Government Area, Lagos State?
2. What is the impact of early childhood education service delivery on parental receptivity towards in-house caregivers in Lagos Mainland Local Government Area, Lagos State?
3. What is the influence of early childhood education service delivery on parental receptivity to after-

school service in Lagos Mainland Local Government Area, Lagos State?

4. How does early childhood education service delivery influence parental job performance in Lagos Mainland Local Government Area, Lagos State?

METHOD

Research Design

As a quantitative study, descriptive research design was adopted to investigate the impact of early childhood education delivery on the job preference and receptivity towards in-house caregivers by the parents. Study also investigated the influence of early childhood education delivery on parental receptivity to after-school service and parental job performance. This design is viewed to be appropriate for this study because the researcher collects data in a systematic manner and describes the features and facts about the population and comes up with a conclusion based on the characteristics and facts from the data collected.

Study Sample

The respondents in this study include 150 working parents who have younger children. Purposive and random sampling techniques were adopted for the study. The sample for this study was drawn mainly from working class parents whose children are within early childhood education age (2-5 years). The sample was drawn from 15 (10 respondents from each school) randomly selected private nursery schools in Mainland Local Government Area, Lagos State.

Research Instruments

Self-design questionnaire was used for this study. The questionnaire used the Likert Scale type from 1 – 4 with variables including strongly agreed, agreed, disagreed and strongly disagreed respectively. Validity of the research instrument was determined by experts who scrutinised the questionnaires and removed items that were poorly phrased or did not correspond to the study's objectives. The expert also considered the questionnaires' coverage, the content's relevancy, and the statements' simplicity, clarity, and ambiguity. The researcher then adjusted the questionnaire based on the supervisor's comments. To establish the reliability of the instrument, pilot test was conducted by giving twenty (20) copies of the questionnaire to twenty (20) working parents outside the study scope. Data gotten were then subjected to the Chronbach Alpha test to determine the questionnaire reliability coefficient which yielded 0.802.

Method of Data Analysis

The data collected were analyzed using the descriptive statistics of frequency count, and percentage to present the respondents' bio-data while the research questions were answered with the use of mean. All the analyses were done with the use of Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS).

Ethical Approval

The researchers sought and got written consent from each participant in the study. Participants were duly informed on the need and objectives of the study, with assurance assured of confidentiality of their responses. Participants were also informed of their freedom to withdraw their participation in the study if they not satisfied with the procedures of the study. Reports of the findings were explained and sent to the participants individually.

RESULT

Research Question 1: What is the impact of early childhood education service delivery on parental job preference in Lagos Mainland Local Government Area, Lagos State?

Table 4.2: Descriptive Statistic Showing the impact of early childhood education service delivery on parental job preference

| S/N | Statement | SA | A | D | SD | Mean |
|-------------------|---|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|------|
| 1. | I made the decision to return to full-time employment due to the quality of service of the ECCE centre. | 58 (38.7%) | 60 (40.0%) | 23 (15.3%) | 9 (6.0%) | 3.11 |
| 2. | I have no trouble working as a full-time since my child's ECCE centre is located distant from markets and major roadways. | 55 (36.7%) | 74 (49.3%) | 17 (11.3%) | 4 (2.7%) | 3.20 |
| 3. | My child's safety is ensured by the ECCE center's walled perimeter, so I may take on any sort of employment. | 47 (31.3%) | 86 (57.3%) | 13 (8.7%) | 4 (2.7%) | 3.17 |
| 4. | Because of the standard of care provided by the ECCE centre my kid attends, I am unable to work full-time. | 8 (5.3%) | 11 (7.3%) | 73 (48.7%) | 58 (38.7%) | 3.21 |
| 5. | It is impossible for me to relax while working with the private sector giving the ECCE center service delivery quality. | 32 (21.3%) | 80 (53.3%) | 14 (10.8%) | 3 (2.3%) | 2.89 |
| 6. | My own business will allow me more time with my kid, regardless of how well the ECCE centre do their jobs. | 39 (26.0%) | 72 (48.0%) | 39 (26.0%) | 31 (23.8%) | 3.00 |
| 7. | Even if the ECCE centers' service is of high quality, I would prefer to continue working as a contract employee. | 9 (6.0%) | 57 (38.0%) | 84 (56.0%) | – | 2.50 |
| Grand Mean | | 2.81 | | | | |

Key: 1 = Strongly Disagree; 2 = Disagree; 3 = Agree; 4 = Strongly Disagree

Decision: 0.00 – 2.44 = Negative Impact; 2.45 – 4.00 = Positive Impact

Table 4.2 revealed that most of the respondents believed that early childhood education service delivery has a positive impact on their job preference in the following ways: I made the decision to return to full-time employment due to the quality of service of the ECCE centre ($X = 3.11$); I have no trouble working as a full-time since my child's ECCE centre is located distant from markets and major roadways ($X = 3.20$); My child's safety is ensured by the ECCE center's walled perimeter, so I may take on any sort of employment ($X = 3.17$); Because of the standard of care provided by the ECCE centre my kid attends, I am unable to work full-time ($X = 3.21$); It is impossible for me to relax while working with the private sector giving the ECCE center service delivery quality ($X = 2.89$); My own business will allow me more time with my kid, regardless of how well the ECCE centre do their jobs ($X = 3.10$) and lastly, Even if the ECCE centers' service is of high quality, I would prefer to continue working as a contract employee ($X = 2.50$). Finally, a

grand mean of 2.81 was obtained out of the 4.00 maximum value obtainable, which falls within the decision value for positive impact. Hence, it is concluded that early childhood education service delivery has a positive impact on parental job preference.

Research Question 2: What is the impact of early childhood education service delivery on parental receptivity towards in-house caregivers in Lagos Mainland Local Government Area, Lagos State?

Table 4.3: Descriptive statistic showing effect of early childhood education service delivery on parental receptivity towards in house care givers

| S/N | Statement | SA | A | D | SD | Mean |
|-------------------|---|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|-------------|
| 1. | I no longer need a home caregiver since I now have access to an excellent ECCE centre. | 69 (46.0%) | 56 (37.3%) | 18 (12.0%) | 7 (4.7%) | 3.24 |
| 2. | Regardless of the quality of the ECCE service provider, I would rather have a home caregiver than rely on the center service. | 21 (14.0%) | 11 (7.3%) | 53 (35.3%) | 65 (43.3%) | 2.56 |
| 3. | Since my kid is well-cared-for by the ECCE centre, I only employ the services of home care givers during vacations. | 14 (9.3%) | 84 (56.0%) | 40 (26.7%) | 12 (8.0%) | 2.67 |
| 4. | In order for me to be successful as a mother, I need both home caregivers and an ECCE centre. | 20 (13.3%) | 25 (16.7%) | 52 (34.7%) | 53 (35.3%) | 2.08 |
| 5. | I have never had any need for house care giver even before I discover the present ECCE centre. | – | 44 (29.3%) | 55 (36.7%) | 51 (34.0%) | 1.95 |
| Grand Mean | | | | | | 2.50 |

Key: 1 = Strongly Disagree; 2 = Disagree; 3 = Agree; 4 = Strongly Disagree

Decision: 0.00 – 2.44 = Positive Effect; 2.45 – 4.00 = Negative Effect

Table 4.3 shows that most of the respondents believed that early childhood education service delivery has a negative effect on parental receptivity towards in house care givers in the following ways: I no longer need a home caregiver since I now have access to an excellent ECCE centre ($X = 3.24$); Regardless of the quality of the ECCE service provider, I would rather have a home caregiver than rely on the center service ($X = 2.56$); Since my kid is well-cared-for by the ECCE centre, I only employ the services of home care givers during vacations ($X = 2.67$); In order for me to be successful as a mother, I need both home caregivers and an ECCE centre ($X = 2.0$) and lastly, I have never had any need for house care giver even before I discover the present ECCE centre ($X = 1.95$). Finally, a grand mean of 2.50 was obtained out of the 4.00 maximum value obtainable, which falls within the decision value for negative effect. Hence, it concluded that early childhood education service delivery has a negative effect on parental receptivity towards in house care givers in Lagos Mainland Local Government Area, Lagos State.

Research Question 3: What is the influence of early childhood education service delivery on parental receptivity to after-school service in Lagos Mainland Local Government Area, Lagos State?

Table 4.4 Descriptive statistic showing the effect of early childhood education service delivery on parental receptivity to after-school service

| S/N | Statement | SA | A | D | SD | Mean |
|-------------------|---|---------------|---------------|------------|---------------|-------------|
| 1. | I do not require after-school care for my kid because of the nature of the ECCE center' service offering. | 77 (51.3%) | 37 (24.7%) | 28 (18.7%) | 8 (5.3%) | 3.22 |
| 2. | There is no need for an after-school program since the ECCE centre takes excellent care of my kid until I get home from work. | 81 (54.0%) | 34 (22.7%) | 10 (6.7%) | 25 (16.7%) | 3.14 |
| 3. | To ensure my kid is in excellent hands before I return from work, after-school care may be necessary, regardless of the ECCE centre's service delivery. | 2 (1.3%) | 39 (26.0%) | 14 (9.3%) | 95 (63.3%) | 1.65 |
| 4. | When I know my kid is in the care of an after-school program and an ECCE facility, I will be able to rest while at work. | 8 (5.3%) | 84 (56.0%) | 51 (34.0%) | 7 (4.7%) | 2.62 |
| 5. | It seems like a waste of money to me to pay for an after-school program when the ECCE center my kid attends already provides one. | 89 (59.3%) | 30 (20.0%) | 8 (5.3%) | 23 (15.3%) | 3.23 |
| Grand Mean | | | | | | 2.77 |

Key: 1 = Strongly Disagree; 2 = Disagree; 3 = Agree; 4 = Strongly Disagree

Decision: 0.00 – 2.44 = Positive Effect; 2.45 – 4.00 = Negative Effect

Table 4.4 indicates service in Lagos Mainland Local Government Area, Lagos State. The table revealed that most of the respondents believed that early childhood education service delivery has a negative effect on parental receptivity to after-school service in the following ways: I do not require after-school care for my kid because of the nature of the ECCE centre's service offering ($X = 3.22$); There is no need for an after-school program since the ECCE centre takes excellent care of my kid until I get home from work ($X = 3.14$); When I know my kid is in the care of an after-school program and an ECCE facility, I will be able to rest while at work ($X = 2.62$) and lastly, It seems like a waste of money to me to pay for an after-school program when the ECCE center my kid attends already provides one ($X = 3.23$). Meanwhile, most respondent still have positive attitude towards after-school service in the sense that it ensure kid is in excellent hands before I return from work, after-school care may be necessary, regardless of the ECCE centre's service delivery ($X = 1.65$). However, a grand mean of 2.77 was obtained out of the 4.00 maximum value obtainable, which falls within the decision value for negative effect. Hence, it concluded that early childhood education service delivery has a negative effect on parental receptivity to after-school service in Lagos Mainland Local Government Area, Lagos State.

Research Question 4: How does early childhood education service delivery influence parental job performance in Lagos Mainland Local Government Area, Lagos State?

Table 4.5: Descriptive statistic showing effect of early childhood education service delivery on parents job performance

| S/N | Statement | SA | A | D | SD | Mean |
|----------------------|---|----------------|----------------|---------------|--------------|-------------|
| 1. | While at work, I am able to prioritize my tasks since I know the ECCE centre can adequately care for my child’s needs. | – | 105 (70.0%) | 37 (24.7%) | 8 (5.3%) | 2.65 |
| 2. | Because I knew the ECCE centre would be there, I was able to get my job done without worrying about my child’s safety. | 108 (72.0%) | 31 (20.7%) | 11 (7.3%) | – | 3.65 |
| 3. | Having a high-quality ECCE centre care for my kid has improved my work-related time management skills. | 38 (25.3%) | 97 (64.7%) | 7 (4.7%) | 8 (5.3%) | 3.10 |
| 4. | My capacity to take on more duties at work is enhanced because of the nearby ECCE centre’s high quality. | 19 (12.7%) | 106 (47.7%) | 15 (10.0%) | 10 (6.7%) | 2.89 |
| 5. | As long as the ECCE centre is taking good care of my child’s needs, I no longer have to stress about coming up with innovative solutions to workplace problems. | 89 (59.3%) | 41 (27.3%) | 11 (7.3%) | 9 (6.0%) | 3.40 |
| Total Average | | | | | | 3.14 |

Key: 1 = Strongly Disagree; 2 = Disagree; 3 = Agree; 4 = Strongly Disagree

Decision: 0.00 – 2.44 = Negative Effect; 2.45 – 4.00 = Positive Effect

Table 4.5 indicates that most of the respondents believed that early childhood education service delivery has a positive effect on parental job performance in the following ways: While at work, I am able to prioritize my tasks since I know the ECCE centre can adequately care for my child’s needs ($X = 2.65$); because I knew the ECCE centre would be there, I was able to get my job done without worrying about my child’s safety ($X = 3.65$); high-quality ECCE centre improved work-related time management skills ($X = 3.10$); nearness of ECCE centre enhances capacity to take on more duties at work ($X = 2.89$) and lastly, as long as the ECCE centre is taking good care of my child’s needs, I no longer have to stress about coming up with innovative solutions to workplace problems ($X = 3.40$). However, a grand mean of 3.14 was obtained out of the 4.00 maximum values obtainable, which falls within the decision value for a positive effect. Hence, it concluded that early childhood education service delivery has a positive effect on parental job performance in Lagos Mainland Local Government Area, Lagos State.

DISCUSSION

The findings of research question one in Table 4.2 showed that, early childhood education service delivery has a positive impact on parental job preference in Lagos Mainland Local Government Area, Lagos State. The findings validated the finding of Ylenia, Daniela, and Chiara (2015) who investigated the effects of public childcare availability in Italy on mothers’ working status and reported a positive and significant

effect of childcare availability on mothers' working status. Particularly, Ylenia, et. al., (2015) study found that a percentage change in public childcare coverage increases mothers' probability to work by 1.3 percentage points.

The findings from research question two as contained in Table 4.3 showed that early childhood education service delivery has a negative effect on parental receptivity towards in-house caregivers in Lagos Mainland Local Government Area, Lagos State. This indicates that now that parents, particularly working-class parents, have access to ECCE services, they no longer value or feel obligated to seek out in-home caretakers.

The findings from the research question three as shown in Table 4.4 showed that early childhood education service delivery has a negative effect on parental receptivity to after-school service in Lagos Mainland Local Government Area, Lagos State. This research indicates that, now that parents, particularly working-class parents, have access to ECCE services, the majority of them no longer value or feel compelled to solicit the services of after-school child sorogates practices.

Lastly, the result of research work as shown in Table 4.5 revealed that early childhood education service delivery has a positive effect on parental job performance in Lagos Mainland Local Government Area, Lagos State. This shows that ECCE service provides a solution to the problem identified by the study of Evertsson (2013) which found that the transition to motherhood with all of the changes it brings may lead to a redistribution of priorities and slightly lower work commitment among new mothers compared with non-mothers. Additional analyses indicate that the negative relationship between becoming a mother and work commitment is restricted to the first few years of a child's life.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings from the study, it is concluded that early childhood education services have a positive effect on working-class parents in Lagos Mainland Local Government Area, Lagos State. Specifically, early childhood education service delivery has a positive impact on parental job preference and job performance while having a negative effect on parental receptivity towards in-house caregivers and after-school service.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made;

1. ECCE providers should ensure proper supervision in compliance with the national minimum standard on ECCE in order to always maintain quality service delivery.
2. ECCE providers' should improve the quality of the center's environment to ensure strict adherence to the provision of an environment that promote quality learning outcomes as outlined by the national minimum standard on ECCE and ensure parental rest of mind even when at work.
3. ECCE providers should ensure continuous improvement in the provision of health facilities to ensure stable children's health protection in accordance with thenational minimum standard on ECCE, this will further strengthen the belief and trust of the parents in the programme.

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Conflict of Interest

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