

Influence of Environmental Factors on Social Skills of Preschool Children in Ekiti State.

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ABSTRACT

The study focused on the influence of environmental factors on social skills of preschool children in Gbonyin Local Government Area of Ekiti State. Observation and correlation design was adopted; the population of the study consists of all public primary school teachers in Gbonyin Local Government Area of Ekiti State.

The sample size for the study consisted of ten (10) preschool teachers and one hundred (100) preschool children selected from ten primary schools in the sampled local government area were randomly selected using ballot system. Two self-designed instruments were used for the study. These were the Preschool Children Rating Scale (PSCRS) and Social Skills Checklist (SSC), and the reliability coefficient yielded was 0.71 and 0.80, respectively, using Cronbach Alpha. These results showed that the instruments were reliable and were used for the study. Data was analysed using Pearson's Moment Correlation and frequency count. The results indicated that social skills influenced preschool children behavior and lack of it could lead to poor physical and mental health, depression and anxiety among them and brought about stress and loneliness in children.

Based on the findings it was concluded that social skills influenced the preschool children behavior. Therefore, it is advised that parents and educators take on the duty of ensuring that their children have a solid moral education in order to foster positive social performance and skills. Children who behave properly should receive gifts and awards from their families, schools, and society as a whole to encourage the development of their social skills. Due to the fact that schools are the secondary means through which students are socialized, social skills instruction and practice should take place there.

Keywords: Social skills, Environmental Factors and Preschool Children

INTRODUCTION

The future of society and the personal growth of each individual are significantly influenced by education. It is an interactive system that is open and dynamic and only succeeds if it adapts to changes in its surroundings.

According to Rena, Paula, and Frank (2019), people engage constantly with their settings (such as the womb, home, school, and society) from the moment of conception. Environmental elements in the context of skills development are those that are intended to advance the person along a social skills development route. About 219 million children under the age of five in underdeveloped nations do not develop to their full potential. Malnutrition, poor living conditions, neuropsychomotor stimulation, and inadequate language

are some of the major causes (Walker, 2011). It is acknowledged that a dynamic interaction of biological and environmental elements has a role in children's development. The physical environment in which the child lives, family dynamics, verbal stimulation, emotional engagement, and socioeconomic conditions are all included among other environmental factors (Santos, 2018),

The home and preschool, where parents and teachers play critical roles, are important environments for children to develop their social skills. Successful functioning in life depends on having strong social skills. These abilities help people know what to say, how to behave, and how to make wise decisions in many circumstances. Social skills are behavioral traits that assist a person in understanding and adapting to a variety of social circumstances. It's common to believe that toddlers pick up social skills by playing with one another in public. But this is just one step in the procedure. In actuality, the journey starts long before a child engages in peer interaction. Children pick up their earliest social skills by observing the adults in their environment and imitating what they observe. Because of this, parenting entails so much more than just attending to a child's bodily needs. Several social skills ought to have been taught to a youngster before they entered a classroom. Children need to develop their social skills through interactions with their instructor and peers once they are in a classroom setting. To help children learn how to interact with others, preschool teachers must teach social skills through play and entertainment such as stories, songs, puppet shows, and games. They will be better equipped to contribute to society later in life as a result.

Therefore, there is need to focus more on the important of social skills by preschool teachers in other to develop children completely. When it comes to expressing emotions, it's critical that kids learn to give their feelings a name as soon as possible. They find it more empowering to express their emotions verbally rather than through other channels. For instance, a kid should learn how to express his anger or frustration verbally instead of throwing things or beating other kids. Teaching kids to differentiate between emotions like happiness, sadness, and anger is crucial, according to the Center on the Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning (CSEFEL). Children must learn how to effectively process their emotions. They can be taught coping mechanisms once they can identify the emotion and name it. These are skills that are much-needed in adulthood.

Children must be able to communicate effectively at various developmental stages. For instance, a youngster must make eye contact with the person speaking to them when they are between two and three years old. Heather Henderson Toddlers frequently avoid contact as a form of self-control, says Shimm. Early on, students must be taught that making eye contact is courteous and shows that one is paying attention. They should be able to introduce themselves and take turns speaking.

The complexity rises with age. By the age of five or six, a child should be able to say please, thank you, and sorry. Positive role modeling is crucial at this point.

Children's development of communication abilities is crucial for their social integration. Children need to understand the difference between polite and disrespectful communication as early as feasible. Additionally, they must know the difference between speaking with adults and children. Children can develop their social skills and learn the value of taking turns by participating in conversations with groups of their classmates. Just gather them in a circle and invite them to share their weekend experiences. Some kids will speak with confidence while others may be reserved. Introverts must learn to take turns with extroverts in social situations. Additionally, the shy people must learn to open up sufficiently to join. The earlier kids learn how to get along with others, the better behaved they'll be in groups as they get older.

Social skills, according to Isawumi & Oyundoyin (2016), are the precise behaviors people utilize when dealing with others that help them successful in reaching their personal goals. Social skills are needed in a variety of situations, including casual conversation, forming friends, expressing emotions, and securing

something from others. Both what is said and how it is said during a social engagement are examples of good social skills. The verbal content of the communication, or the person's choice of words or phrases, is crucial when communicating with others. It can also be crucial how that message is delivered.

People create their lives through social skills, according to Mahmoodzadeh (2013), because social life necessitates social skills, self-assurance, mental readiness, and social adjustment. People who lack social skills find it difficult to lead fulfilling lives, according to a WHO report from (Khalatbari, Ghorbanshiroud, and Taromsari 2010). Social skills facilitate social adaptation, foster new social interactions, and uphold current ones. They also have both long- and short-term consequences on a person's life (Gulay & Akman, 2019). As a result, the development of social skills in children occurs most rapidly throughout the preschool years. As a result, children who have developed their social skills are better able to build lasting relationships with others, are more prepared for school, and perform better academically.

Children who lack social skills experience feelings of isolation, which can result in mental and behavioral issues, poor interactions with their parents, teachers, and peers, and school maladjustment, according to Lodder, Goossens, Scholte, Engels & Verhagen (2016). Initial social skill development occurs at the interpersonal level at home through interactions with parents. The process of socialization is then continued when children enroll in preschool, their first social setting (Whitted, 2011). Since preschoolers spend the majority of their time with teachers, they have similar caregiving responsibilities with parents in terms of ensuring their safety, relieving their stress, and educating them when appropriate (Zhang & Nurmi, 2012). Within exchanges between teachers and students, children develop social skills that they later apply in relationships with their parents at home. In a similar way, kids use social skills they learn at home in their interactions with instructors and classmates later on in school (Myers & Pianta, 2018). Teachers and parents are thought to be powerful forces in the development of children's life skills and are in the greatest position to provide a dependable assessment of children's social abilities, according to Koch, Kastner-Koller, Deimann, Kossmeier, Koitz and Steiner (2011). Teachers deal with students in a variety of contexts that call for varied social skills. Teachers have the ability to notice a wide range of social behaviors in children that parents typically are unable to do due to lack of expertise.

However, parents are aware of their children's behaviors outside of the classroom (Veenstra, 2018). As a result, a thorough investigation of children social skill requires a teachers' opinions. The study of Mohamed (2018) stated the school environment have an impact on how well kids perceive their social skills, in addition to the traits of their parents. The numerous researches that were previously undertaken have shown a lot, but there are still holes that need to be filled. This is due to the fact that little or no research has been done to examine how environmental influences preschoolers' social skills in the Gbonyin LGA. In light of these circumstances, this study examined the impact of environmental influences on preschoolers' social skills.

Purpose of the Study

The main objective of this study is to examine influence of environmental factors on social skills of preschool children in Gbonyin Local Government Area of Ekiti State. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. examines the relationship between social skills and children behavior in Gbonyin Local Government Area of Ekiti State
2. determine the negative effect in lacking social skills among preschool children in Gbonyin Local Government Area of Ekiti State.

A research question was raised and one hypotheses was formulated and tested at 0.05 levels of significances

Hypothesis

Ho: There is no significant relationship between social skills and pre-school children’s behaviour in the study area;

Research Question

What are the negative effects in lacking social skills among preschool children in Gbonyin Local Government Area of Ekiti State?

METHODOLOGY

Observation and correlation design was adopted; the population of the study consists of all public primary school teachers in Gbonyin Local Government Area of Ekiti State.

The sample size for the study consisted of ten (10) preschool teachers and one hundred (100) preschool children selected from ten primary schools in the sampled local government area were randomly selected using ballot system. The children in each school were selected based on the criteria that children fall within the age range of 3–5 years and that the children are in preschool. Two self-designed instruments were used for the study. These were the Preschool Children Rating Scale (PSCRS) and Social Skills Checklist (SSC), and the reliability coefficient yielded was 0.71 and 0.80, respectively, using Cronbach Alpha. These results showed that the instruments were reliable and were used for the study. Data was analysed using Pearson’s Moment Correlation.

RESULTS

Descriptive Analysis

Table 1: Gender

Variables	Categories	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	26	26
	Female	74	74

Source: Field Survey, 2022

The gender distribution of the respondents revealed in table 1 showed that female respondents constitute larger percent (74%) of the population while male accounts for (26%). This means that, females are the major respondents available at the period of this study.

Ho: There is no significant relationship between social skills and pre-school children’s behaviour in the study area;

Table 2: Pearson Correlation Table of Social Skills and Preschool Children Behavior.

		SOCIAL SKILLS	CHILDREN BEHAVIOUR
SOCIAL SKILLS	Pearson Correlation	1	-.204*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.042

	N	100	100
PRESCHOOL CHILDREN BEHAVIOUR	Pearson Correlation	-.204*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.042	
	N	100	100

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 1 shows that there was a significant relationship between social skills and preschool children behavior. This was statistically significant ($r = -.204^*$ $n = 100$, $p = .042$). As a result, Hypothesis was rejected.

Research Question: What are the negative effects in lacking social skills among preschool children in Gbonyin Local Government Area of Ekiti State?

Table 3: Negative effects in lacking social skills among preschool children

S/N	ITEMS	Mean	St.D.	Remark
1	It leads to poor physical and mental health.	3.51	0.61	Agreed
2	Lack of social skills brings about stress and loneliness in children.	3.38	0.48	Agreed
3	Arousing highly negative responses from others that lead to high levels of peer rejection.	3.26	0.44	Agreed
4	Pupil demonstrate poor academic performance as an indirect consequence.	3.55	0.49	Agreed
5	It leads to depression and anxiety among preschool children.	3.25	0.43	Agreed
	Grand Mean	3.38	0.55	Agreed

$\bar{X} \leq 2.50$ indicate Agreed otherwise “Disagreed”

The result presented in Table 5 revealed the possible solutions to maintain proper social behaviour among abused pupils in primary school this shows that larger population of the respondents agreed with all statements from item 1-5 that it leads to poor physical and mental health (3.51), lack of social skills brings about stress and loneliness in children (3.38), arousing highly negative responses from others that lead to high levels of peer rejection (3.26) and it leads to depression and anxiety among preschool children with the mean rating of (3.25). The responses of the respondents explain the negative effects of lacking social skills among preschool children in Gbonyin Local Government Area of Ekiti State.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The study explored the influence of environmental factors on social skills of preschool children in Gbonyin Local Government. The first findings of this study revealed that there was a significant relationship between social skills and preschool children behavior. Acquired social skills influenced preschool children behavior, this meant that social skills promotes interpersonal relationship among preschool children, it helps in developing per group reading, ability to manage social adjustment and interaction issues and its help preschool children to improve in creative thinking. This finding corroborated prior research by Isawumi & Oyundoyin (2016), who discovered that social skills are a certain set of behaviors people engage in while interacting with others and that these behaviors help them achieve their personal goals. Social skills are needed in a variety of situations, including casual conversation, forming friends, expressing emotions, and securing something from others.

Furthermore, it was revealed that there were negative effects in lacking social skills among preschool children which led to poor physical and mental health, depression and anxiety among them and brought about stress and loneliness in children. This finding supported the findings of Lodder, Goossens, Scholte, Engels & Verhagen (2016), who found that children with poor social skills experience feelings of isolation, which can result in mental and behavioral issues, poor interactions with their parents, teachers, and peers, and poor school performance.

CONCLUSION

Based on the discussion, it meant that social skills influenced preschool children behavior, it promotes interpersonal relationship among them, it helps in developing peer group reading, ability to manage social adjustment and interaction issues and its help preschool children to improve in creative thinking. The implication is that when the social skills are lacking among the preschool children it could lead to poor physical and mental health and also affect their interpersonal relationship with others.

The policy implications of the influence of social skills in preschool children's behavior are significant, as they can inform decisions that promote healthy development and academic success. The implication includes:

1. Supporting evidence-based programs that target social skills development in early childhood education.
2. Providing professional development opportunities for teachers to learn effective strategies for promoting social skills in young children.
3. Incorporating social-emotional learning into curriculum guidelines and assessments to ensure equal emphasis with academic skills.
4. Encouraging parents to prioritize social skills development through workshops, resources, and home-school partnerships.
5. Creating physical and social environments that foster social interaction, cooperation, and emotional regulation.
6. Emphasizing play as a vital learning tool for social skills development, rather than solely focusing on academic instruction.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based the findings, the research recommend the following:

1. It is the duty of parents and teachers to ensure that children have a solid moral education in order to improve their social abilities and performance.
2. To encourage the development of social skills in children, the home, schools, and society should reward good behavior by awarding gifts and prizes to well-behaved youth.
3. As the secondary agent of socialization for the students, schools should teach and practice social skills.
4. To enhance children's social skills, more consideration should be paid to the home situation, the teachers, and the preschool center's characteristics
5. In order to make up for the lack of social skills among students with intellectual disabilities, the government and other stakeholders in education should find a means to incorporate pertinent topics related to the development of social skills into the curriculum of the schools.

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