



Myths and Realities about Early Childhood Education: A Case Study of Early Childhood Education in Kano Municipal, Kano State, Nigeria

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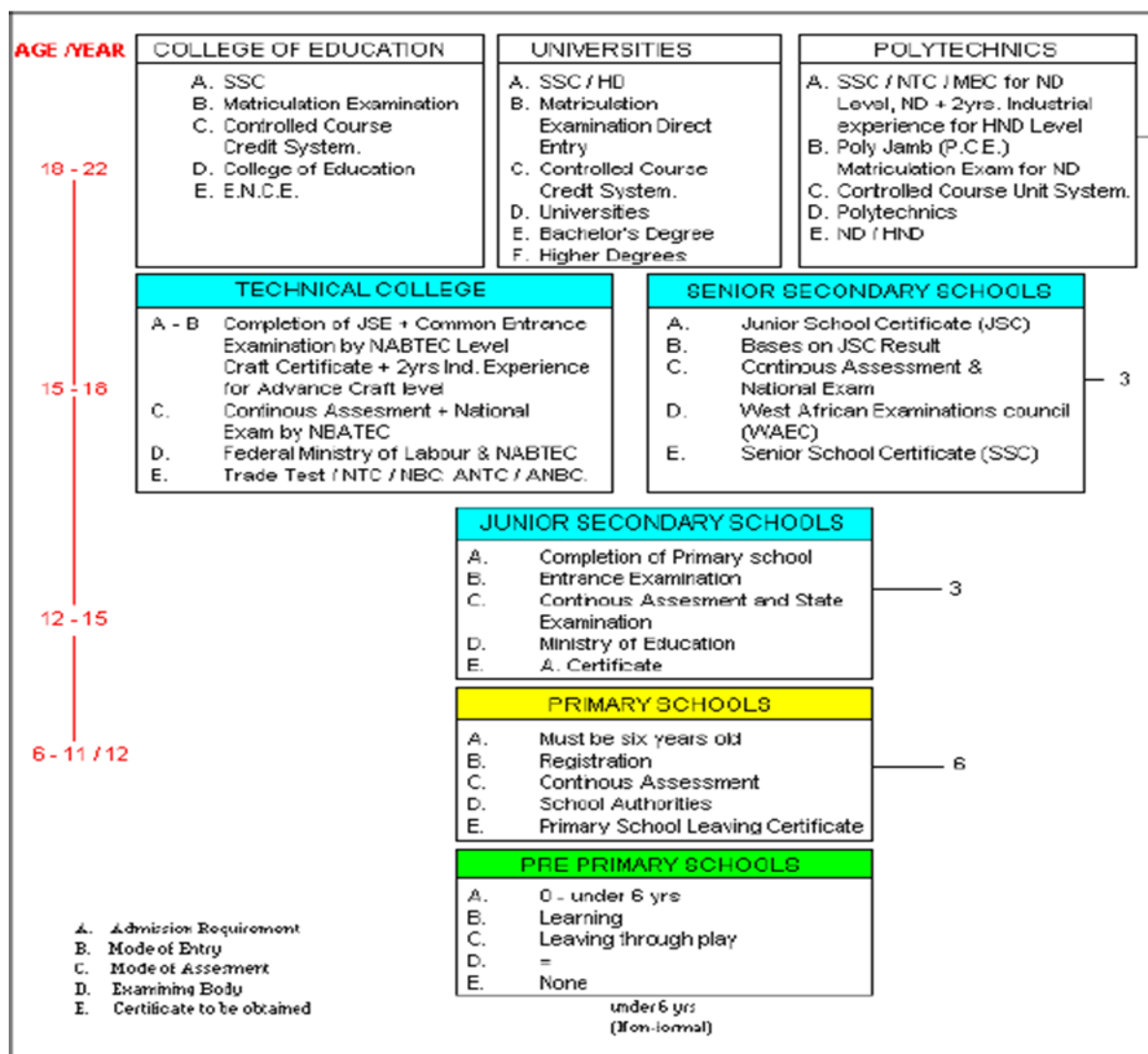
Abstract: This is a study on the misconception parents and teachers have about early childhood education. In order to carry out the study, a sample of five teachers and ten parents was randomly drawn from each of five schools that offer early childhood education (random and stratified sampling) and a research instrument, based on a Likert-scale, was administered on them. The data was analysed using frequency counts, measure of relative standing (%), and chi square (X^2). The research findings revealed that the majority of the respondents perceive early childhood education as important; children are enrolled in too many early childhood education programmes; both teachers and parents believe that children who attend early childhood education perform better than children who do not; children spend hours of study that are beyond their developmental stage; both parents and teachers opined that the scope of the early childhood education should include both the Western and Islamic curricula; and children who are not mature enough attend early childhood education. The study, therefore, recommended that stakeholders in early childhood education, especially parents, should be made aware that even though early childhood education is important, children should be exposed to a related programme only when they are sufficiently mature for it.

Keywords: Early Childhood Education, Academic Performance, Western Education, Islamic Education, National Policy on Education (NPE)

1. INTRODUCTION

There seems to be an astonishing development and increase of desire for parents to provide early childhood education for their children especially among the elites in Nigeria (Aliyu, 2015). It should be noted that the northern part of Nigeria has a lead over its southern part in terms of Islamic education. While the southern part of Nigeria has a lead over the northern part of Nigeria in terms of Western education. Driven by a strong desire to provide education for their children, parents have turned to and began patronising early childhood education (ECE). ECE,

sometimes called “nursery education” is a broad term used to explain any type of educational programme that serves children in their pre-school years, before they are old enough to begin primary school education (Sambo, 1997). The educational system in Nigeria stipulates i) pre-primary education; ii) primary education; secondary education; and iv) tertiary education. Early childhood education falls within the category of pre-primary education, which is equivalent to kindergarten.



Source: UNESCO, 2004

Figure 1. Nigerian System of Education

Put more succinctly, the educational system in Nigeria is based on what is tagged as 6-3-3-4 system of education. It involves three levels of institutional learning processes: i) primary; ii) secondary; and tertiary. However, there is a level called early childhood (nursery or kindergarten) education, which precedes primary education. ECE is the focus of this paper. An ECE programme may consist of any number of activities and experiences designed to aid in the cognitive and social development of pre-primary school children before they enter primary school. In fact, the main idea behind ECE is contained in the development and preparation of the child for primary education (Jones, Brown, & Brown, 2011).

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

ECE is more or less a private endeavour rather than a public one in Nigeria (Sambo, 1997). In other words, the government, either at the federal or state level, does not fund ECE. Hence, there are a lot of differences between one school and another in the execution of ECE.

Kano Municipal has a population of over six million people and over two hundred primary schools (SUBEB, 2019). Two education segmentations were used in this study: Western education and Islamic. The Western education is based on the premise and values of the western world. It is termed as secular or non-religious in content and context (Aliyu, 2015). Some scholars define western education as formal education, which contains curriculum, syllabus, and duration for completion

(Fafunwa, 2004; Umar, Ibrahim & Clement, 2015). Aliyu (2015) stipulates that Islamic education is based on the tenets of Islam, which has two components: Qur'anic (Qur'anic studies) and Islamiyah (the practice of Islam – ibadat). In Kano State, which is the context of this study, a child is expected to learn through rote memory a considerable number of Qur'anic verses as well as to develop the ability of performing the five daily prayers without any assistance before the age of six – ibadat (Kano State Ministry of Education Annual Report, 2018).

Studies by scholars such as Cherry (2019), Nah and Lee (2016) postulate that ECE is used to develop the child's biological and physical functions, as well as visual and motor skills. Jansson (2015) also holds the same view that development of the child's biological and physical functions, as well as visual and motor skills should be the focus of ECE. The child's ability to relate with others is another focus of ECE. Through such education children develop an understanding of their rights and obligations as members of families and communities, as well as an ability to relate to and work with other children. ECE helps the child develop the way in which he/she creates emotional connections, builds their self-confidence through relating with other children, and strengthens their emotional connections when relating and sharing feelings with others (Gullotta, 2015). In addition, ECE develops the child's ability to communicate with other children including how the child presents his/her feelings and emotions, both to other people and to themselves. Before the age of six, the child must have developed language proficiency that enables them to undergo educational instruction. Scholars hold the view that typical language development is measured by the rate of vocabulary acquisition. ECE helps the child to develop his/her cognitive skills, such as problem-solving, creativity, innovation, imagination, and memory in such a way that they can organise data and information (Jones, Brown, & Brown, 2011). Cognitive, affective, and psychomotor skills determine the way children make sense of their environment. The work of Piaget has extensively exhibited prominence of cognitive development of children as they go through the

sensorimotor period, the pre-operational period, and the operational period, as elaborated on below.

A. Sensorimotor Stage (0-2 years)

During this stage, infants are only aware of what is immediately in front of them. They focus on what they see, what they are doing, and physical interactions with their immediate (social) environment. The infants constantly experiment with activities such as shaking or throwing things, putting things in their mouths. During the mid-sensorimotor stage, infants begin to develop what is called 'object permanence'. Thereafter, the infants start to crawl, stand, and walk as well as develop cognitive ability. Near the end of the sensorimotor stage, infants develop symbolic abilities leading to language development.

B. Preoperational Stage (2-7 years)

During this stage children are able to think about things symbolically. Their language use as well as memory and imagination become more developed. Hence, they understand the difference between past and future. However, their thinking is based on intuition and still not completely logical. They cannot yet grasp more complex concepts such as cause and effect, time, and comparison.

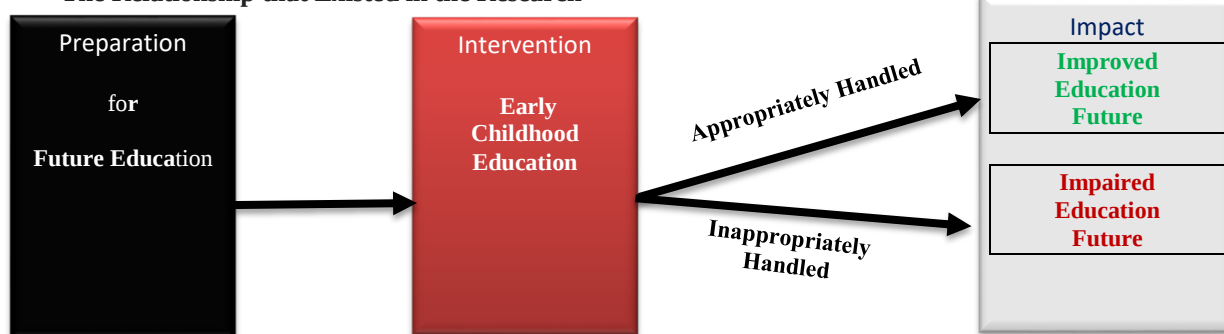
C. Concrete Operations Stage (7-11 years)

This stage covers the elementary-age and pre-adolescence. During this stage children demonstrate logical, concrete reasoning; their thinking becomes less egocentric and they become increasingly aware of the external environment. They begin to realize that one's own thoughts and feelings are unique and may not be shared by others or may not even be part of reality.

D. Formal Operations Stage (11-17 years)

Usually by the age of 11 years and over, children are able to logically use symbols related to abstract concepts, such as algebra and science. They can think about multiple variables in systematic ways, formulate hypotheses, and consider possibilities. They can also ponder abstract relationships and concepts such as justice.

The Relationship that Existed in the Research





3. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The conceptual framework of this study is based on the premise that learning begins at birth, and that caring for children and educating them should be inseparable (Erdemir, 2019). Along with this comes the position or stance that the child needs to be prepared for future education endeavours; and that ECE is one of the means for preparing children for a better educational future (Mooney, 2013). Scholars such as Piaget, Dewey, Montessori, Erickson and Vygotsky and others postulate various models that explain the stages of cognitive, affective and psychomotor development. So, the conceptual framework of this research study hinges on the theory purported by Vygotsky that although early childhood education can be used to improve the future educational development of the child, there are specific times (stages) for that to happen (learning to take place). Put more concisely, the conceptual framework of the study holds the view that if ECE is handled appropriately, it would lead to an improved educational future; while, if handled inappropriately, it would lead to an impaired educational future of the child.

4. RESEARCH PROBLEM, QUESTIONS, AND HYPOTHESES

A number of teachers and parents appear to have no clear understanding of the child's cognitive, affective and psychomotor development process (Ibrahim, 2015; Aliyu, 2015; & Tahir, 2006). Thus, they ignore or may not be aware that the most important task of early childhood is to prepare the child and not to teach the child. Parents enroll children into ECE programmes and teachers accept them irrespective of their physical and cognitive maturity and readiness to undergo such programmes. This can defeat the whole purpose behind ECE and can in turn affect the children's future developmental process negatively (Emechebe, 2012; Oruwari, 2012; Aliyu, 2015; and Jatto, 2007).

A. Research Questions

- Do teachers and parents differ in their perceptions of ECE?
- Do parents and teachers differ on the scope of ECE?
- Do parents and teachers differ on the daily training hours for ECE children?
- Do children who receive ECE differ in performance from children who do not?
- Do schools differ on the number of ECE programmes children should attend?
- How early should children start ECE?

B. Hypotheses

- Ho: There is no significant difference between teachers and parents in their perceptions of ECE.
- Ho: There is no significant difference between teachers and parents on the scope of ECE.
- Ho: There is no significant difference between parents and teachers on hours ECE children should spend in school.
- Ho: There is no significant difference in performance between children who receive ECE and children who do not.
- Ho: There is no significant difference among schools on the number of programmes ECE children should attend.
- Ho: There is no significant difference among schools on how early children should start ECE.

5. METHODOLOGY

This study is a survey about the misconception or rather the myth around ECE. In order to carry out the survey, five schools were selected as the research population through a stratified sampling technique; the stratum being schools that offer ECE programmes. Thereafter, the research sample was selected through the systematic sampling technique. Ten (10) parents and five (5) teachers from each school served as respondents. This implies that fifty (50) parents and twenty-five (25) teachers served as respondents. The research instrument was an opinionnaire (adapted from Likert-scale).

A pilot study was conducted to standardise the research instrument, which was administered to teachers and parents through the conference method. Parent respondents were interviewed; teacher respondents gave written responses. There was a one hundred percent (100.0%) response rate of the instrument. Frequency count, measure of relative standing (%), and chi-square (χ^2) were used in analysing the data. The schools were labelled using letters instead of names for confidentiality sake, as the respondents were promised. Furthermore, the research instrument was translated into Hausa for respondents who preferred to respond in this language.

6. DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

TABLE 1. RESPONDENTS PERCEPTION OF EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

School	Important		No comment		Not important		Column Total	
	Teachers %	Parents %	Teachers %	Parents %	Teachers %	Parents %	Teachers %	Parents %
A	4 (80.0) (16.0)	9 (90.0) (18.0)	1 (20.0) (4.0)	1 (10.0) (2.0)	0 (0.0) (0.0)	0 (0.0) (0.0)	5 20.0	10 20.0
B	4 (80.0) (16.0)	8 (80.0) (16.0)	1 (20.0) (4.0)	2 (20.0) (4.0)	0 (0.0) (0.0)	0 (0.0) (0.0)	5 20.0	10 20.0
C	5 (100.0) (20.0)	9 (90.0) (18.0)	0 (0.0) (0.0)	1 (10.0) (2.0)	0 (0.0) (0.0)	0 (0.0) (0.0)	5 20.0	10 20.0
D	4 (80.0) (16.0)	9 (90.0) (18.0)	1 (20.0) (4.0)	1 (10.0) (2.0)	0 (0.0) (0.0)	0 (0.0) (0.0)	5 20.0	10 20.0
E	5 (100.0) (20.0)	9 (90.0) (18.0)	0 (0.0) (0.0)	1 (10.0) (2.0)	0 (0.0) (0.0)	0 (0.0) (0.0)	5 20.0	10 20.0
Row Total	22 (88.0)	44 (88.0)	3 (12.0)	6 (12.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	25 100.0	50 100.0

 $X^2 = 43.6$; $DF = 1$; $CV = 3.84$; $P < 0.05$

Ho: There is no significant difference between teachers and parents on the perception of ECE.

Analysis of the data in Table 1 shows twenty-two (22) teacher-respondents, eighty-eight percent (88.0%) of whom perceive that ECE is important; with three (3) teacher-respondents (12%) having no comment on whether the ECE is important or not; and zero percent (0.0%) perceiving ECE as not important.

Similarly, the response by parents reveals forty-four (44) teacher-respondents of whom eighty-eight percent (88.0%) perceive that ECE is important; six (6) teacher-respondents (12.0%) having no comment on whether ECE is important or not; and zero (0) (0.0%) perceiving ECE as not important.

Responses from both the teacher-respondents and the parent-respondents reveal that an overwhelming percentage of the respondents perceive that ECE is important. Summarily, it could be concluded that majority of the respondents perceive ECE as important; and this view is held by both parents and teachers. The test statistics, $X^2 = 43.6$; $DF = 1$; $CV = 3.84$; $P < 0.05$, rejects the null hypothesis and accepts the alternate hypothesis that ECE is viewed as important by both teachers and parents.

TABLE 2. THE PERCEIVED SCOPE OF THE EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

School	Western		Islamic		Both Islamic and Western		Column Total	
	Teachers	Parents	Teachers	Parents	Teachers	Parents	Teachers	Parents
A	0 (0.0) (0.0)	1 (10.0) (4.0)	0 (0.0) (0.0)	1 (10.0) (4.0)	5 (100.0) (20.0)	8 (80.0) (16.0)	5 (100.0) (20.0)	10 (20.0)
B	0 (0.0) (0.0)	1 (10.0) (4.0)	0 (0.0) (0.0)	2 (20.0) (8.0)	5 (100.0) (20.0)	7 (70.0) (14.0)	5 (100.0) (20.0)	10 (20.0)
C	0 (0.0) (0.0)	1 (10.0) (4.0)	0 (0.0) (0.0)	2 (20.0) (8.0)	5 (100.0) (20.0)	7 (70.0) (14.0)	5 (100.0) (20.0)	10 (20.0)
D	0 (0.0) (0.0)	1 (10.0) (4.0)	0 (0.0) (0.0)	1 (10.0) (4.0)	5 (100.0) (20.0)	8 (80.0) (16.0)	5 (100.0) (20.0)	10 (20.0)
E	0 (0.0) (0.0)	1 (10.0) (4.0)	0 (0.0) (0.0)	1 (10.0) (4.0)	5 (100.0) (20.0)	8 (80.0) (16.0)	5 (100.0) (20.0)	10 (20.0)
Row Total	0 (0.0)	5 (10.0)	0 (0.0)	7 (14.0)	25 (100.0)	38 (76.0)	25 (100.0)	50 (100.0)

 $X^2 = 2.6$, $DF = 1$; $CV = 3.14$; $P > .05$

Ho: There is no significant difference between parents and teachers on the scope of ECE



Analysing the data in Table 2 reveals zero (0) teacher-respondents (0%) supporting the scope of ECE to reflect Western education only; and five (5) teacher-respondents representing one hundred percent (100.0%) of the respondents supporting the scope of ECE to reflect both Western and Islamic education.

On the other hand, the analysis reveals five (5) parent-respondents representing ten percent (10.0%) of the respondents supporting the scope of ECE to reflect Western education only; seven (7) parent-respondent representing fourteen percent (14.0%) of the respondents supporting the scope of ECE to reflect Islamic education only; and thirty-eight (38) parent-respondents representing seventy-six percent (76.0.0%) of the respondents supporting the scope of ECE to reflect both Western and Islamic education.

Responses from the parent-respondents reveal that respondents give preference to Islamic education over Western education. However, the overwhelming percentage of the respondents support the scope of ECE to reflect both Western and Islamic education. This shows the value placed on both Western and Islamic education by both parents and teachers. Furthermore, the test statistics ($X^2 = 2.6$, $DF = 1$; $CV = 3.14$; $P > .05$) comparing the opinion of the parents and teachers reveals that there is no significant difference between parents and teachers on the scope of ECE; thereby accepting the null hypothesis. Hence, both the parents and the teachers hold the view that the scope of ECE should combine both Islamic and Western components.

TABLE 3. HOURS TO BE SPENT ON EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION ON DAILY BASIS

School	More than Primary School Hours		Same as Primary School Hours		Less than Primary School Hours		Column Total	
	Teachers	Parents	Teachers	Parents	Teachers	Parents	Teachers	Parents
A	0 (0.0) (0.0)	1 (10.0) (2.0)	1 (20.0) (4.0)	6 (60.0) (12.0)	4 (80.0) (16.0)	3 (30.0) (6.0)	5 (100.0) (20.0)	10 (20.0)
B	0 (0.0) (0.0)	0 (0.0) (0.0)	0 (0.0) (0.0)	7 (70.0) (14.0)	5 (100.0) (20.0)	3 (30.0) (6.0)	5 (100.0) (20.0)	10 (20.0)
C	0 (0.0) (0.0)	0 (0.0) (0.0)	1 (20.0) (10.0)	7 (70.0) (14.0)	4 (80.0) (16.0)	3 (30.0) (6.0)	5 (100.0) (20.0)	10 (20.0)
D	0 (0.0) (0.0)	0 (0.0) (0.0)	0 (0.0) (0.0)	7 (70.0) (14.0)	5 (100.0) (20.0)	3 (30.0) (6.0)	5 (100.0) (20.0)	10 (20.0)
E	0 (0.0) (0.0)	0 (0.0) (0.0)	1 (20.0) (10.0)	7 (70.0) (14.0)	4 (80.0) (16.0)	3 (30.0) (6.0)	5 (100.0) (20.0)	10 (20.0)
Row Total	0 0.0	1 2.0	3 12.0	34 68.0	22 88.0	15 30.0	25 100.0	50 100.0

$X^2 = 34.6$; $DF = 2$; $CV = 5.99$; $P < 0.05$

Ho: There is no significant difference between parents and teachers on hours ECE children should spend in school

Analysing the data in Table 3 reveals zero (0) teacher-respondents (0%) supporting that children spend more hours than primary school hours undergoing ECE; three (3) teacher-respondents representing twelve percent (12.0%) of the respondents supporting that children spend the same number of hours as primary school undergoing ECE; and twenty-two (22) teacher-respondents representing eighty-eight percent (88.0%) of the respondents supporting that children spend less hours than primary school hours undergoing ECE.

However, the response by parents with reference to hours to spend undergoing ECE in Table 3 reveals that one (1) parent-respondent representing two percent (2.0%) of the parent-respondents supports that children spend more hours than primary school undergoing ECE; thirty-four (34) parent-respondents representing sixty-eight percent (68.0%) of the respondents support that children spend the

same hours as primary school undergoing ECE; and fifteen (15) parent-respondents representing thirty percent (30.0%) of the respondents support that children spend less hours than primary school undergoing ECE.

Responses from the parent-respondents reveal that an overwhelming percentage of the respondents support that children spend the same hours as primary school undergoing ECE; a few supports that children spend more hours than primary school undergoing ECE. Both stances are hazardous to child development in that the child is stretched beyond his/her capability.

Briefly, it could be concluded that there is a significant difference between parents and teachers on hours ECE children should spend in school. Whereas parents are of the view that children should spend the same number of hours or more as primary school children; teachers hold the view

that children should spend less hours than those in primary school. This is supported by the test statistics ($X^2 = 34.6$; $DF = 2$; $CV = 5.99$; $P < 0.05$), which rejects the null

hypothesis and accepts the alternate hypothesis that there is a significant difference between parents and teachers on the hours children should spend undertaking ECE.

TABLE 4. ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OF CHILDREN WHO RECEIVE EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION VS CHILDREN WHO DO NOT

School	Teachers			Parents			Column Total					
							Teachers			Parents		
	A	NI	D	A	NI	D	A	NI	D	A	NI	D
A	4 80.0 17.4	0 0.0 0.0	1 20.0	7 70.0	2 20.0	1 10.0	4 80.0	0 0.0	1 20.0	7 70.0	2 20.0	1 10.0
B	5 100.0 21.8	0 0.0 0.0	0 0.0	8 80.0	0 0.0	2 20.0	5 100.0	0 0.0	0 0.0	8 80.0	0 0.0	2 20.0
C	5 100.0 21.8	0 0.0 0.0	0 0.0	8 80.0	0 0.0	2 20.0	5 100.0	0 0.0	0 0.0	8 80.0	0 0.0	2 20.0
D	5 100.0 21.8	0 0.0 0.0	0 0.0	7 70.0	3 30.0	0 0.0	5 100.0	0 0.0	0 0.0	7 70.0	3 30.0	0 0.0
E	4 80.0 17.4	0 0.0 0.0	1 0.0	8 80.0	1 10.0	1 10.0	4 80.0	0 0.0	1 20.0	8 80.0	1 10.0	1 10.0
Row Total	23 92.0	0 0.0	2 8.0	38 76.0	6 12.0	6 12.0	23 92.0	0 0.0	2 8.0	38 76.0	6 12.0	6 12.0

$X^2 = 77.8$; $DF = 2$; $CV = 5.99$; $P < 0.05$

Ho: There is no significant difference in academic performance between children who attend ECE and children who do not.

Analysis of teachers' responses with reference to children's performance in Table 4 reveals that twenty-three (23) respondents representing ninety-two percent (92%) agreed that children who received ECE performed better than children who did not; zero (0) respondents (0%) had no idea whether children who received ECE performed better than children who did not; and two (2) respondents representing eight percent (8%) disagreed that children who received ECE performed better than children who did not.

Similarly, the responses by parents with reference to children's performance in Table 4 reveal that thirty-eight (38) respondents representing seventy-six percent (76%) agreed that children who received ECE performed better than children who did not; six (6) respondents representing twelve percent (12%) had no idea whether children who received ECE performed better than children who did not; and one (6) respondent representing twelve percent (12%) disagreed that children who received ECE performed better than children who did not.

Responses by both the teacher-respondents and the parent-respondents reveal that an overwhelming percentage of the respondents agreed that children who received ECE performed better than children who do not. Thus, it could be concluded that the majority of the respondents believe that children who receive early childhood education perform better than children who do not. This is supported by the test statistics, $X^2 = 77.8$; $DF = 2$; $CV = 5.99$; $P < 0.05$, which rejects the null hypothesis and accepts the alternate hypothesis that respondents believe that children who receive ECE perform better than children who do not.



TABLE 5. NUMBER OF EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION PROGRAMMES CHILDREN ATTEND

No. of Programmes	School/ Parents					Column Total
	A	B	C	D	E	
Onefold	1	1	2	1	3	8
	12.5	12.5	25.0	12.5	37.5	100.0
	2.0	2.0	4.0	2.0	6.0	16.0
Twofold	3	4	2	3	3	15
	20.0	26.7	13.3	20.0	20.0	100.0
	6.0	8.0	4.0	6.0	6.0	30.0
Threefold	3	3	6	4	3	19
	15.8	15.8	31.6	21.0	15.8	100.0
	6.0	6.0	12.0	8.0	6.0	38.0
> Threefold	3	2	0	2	1	8
	37.5	25.0	0.0	25.0	12.5	100.0
	6.0	4.0	0.0	4.0	2.0	16.0
Row Total	10	10	10	10	10	50
	20.0	20.0	20.0	20.0	20.0	100.0

$X^2 = 14.3$; $DF = 12$; $CV = 18.6$; $P < 0.05$

Ho: There is no significant difference among schools on the number of programmes ECE children should attend

In Table 5, the respondents were parents only. It could be observed that eight (8) of them representing sixteen percent (16%) agreed that children should attend one category of the ECE programmes; fifteen (15) parents representing thirty percent (30%) believed that children should attend two categories of the ECE programmes; nineteen (19) representing thirty-eight percent (38%) opined that children should attend three categories of the ECE programmes; and eight (8) representing sixteen percent (16%) believed that children should attend one category of the ECE programmes.

It is normal for children to attend Western and Islamic education in Kano. Therefore, it may not be harmful if children attend up to two categories of an ECE programme. This implies that the forty-six percent (46%) of the children who attend both the onefold and twofold categories (onefold = 16.0% and twofold 30%) could be termed as desirable. However, the fifty-four percent (54%) of the children who attend both the threefold and more categories (threefold = 38.0% and >threefold = 16.0%) could be termed as undesirable. Hence, this reveals that the majority of children are subjected to education programmes beyond their capabilities and that there is a significant difference among schools in exposing children to many programmes. This is supported by the test statistics ($X^2 = 14.3$; $DF = 12$; $CV = 18.6$; $P < 0.05$).

Conclusively, it can be argued that the majority of children are subjected to many ECE programmes, and this is considered harmful to them. Children at this stage of human development should not be subjected to too much instruction that they are not yet sufficiently mature and ready to receive.

Table 6. Age Children Start Early Childhood Education

Age Range	Schools					Column Total
	A	B	C	D	E	
1 – 2	0	0	0	0	0	0
	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
2 – 3	2	1	0	1	2	6
	8.0	4.0	0.0	4.0	8.0	24.0
	40.0	20.0	0.0	20.0	40.0	100.0
3 – 4	2	3	2	3	2	12
	8.0	12.0	8.0	12.0	8.0	48.0
	40.0	60.0	40.0	60.0	40.0	200.0
5 – 6	1	1	3	1	1	7
	4.0	4.0	12.0	4.0	4.0	28.0
	20.0	20.0	60.0	20.0	20.0	100.0
Row Total	5	5	5	5	5	25
	20.0	20.0	20.0	20.0	20.0	100.0

$X^2 = 77.8$; $DF = 2$; $CV = 4.60$; $P < 0.05$

Ho: There is no significant difference among schools on how early children start ECE

In Table 6, it can be observed that zero (0) respondents (0%) reported that children attend ECE from the age range of one to two years; six (6) respondents representing twenty-four percent (24.0%) reported attendance from the age range of two to three years; twelve (12) respondents representing forty-eight percent (48.0%) reported attendance from the age range of three to four years; and seven (7) respondents representing twenty-eight percent (28.0%) reported attendance from the age range of five to six years. The null hypothesis is rejected by the test statistics, $X^2 = 77.8$; $DF = 2$; $CV = 4.60$; $P < 0.05$ and accepts the alternate hypothesis that there is a significant difference among schools on how early children start ECE. This implies that teachers and parents hold the view that children could attend ECE at almost any age.



In conclusion, it can be confirmed that parents and teachers are of the view that children can attend ECE at almost any age. This is hazardous for the future of the children as various research studies in the literature reveal that there is time for everything and learning is NO exception. In other words, it is not desirable to involve children in an ECE programme before they are mature and ready enough for it

7. Discussion of findings

The majority of the respondents perceive ECE as important. This is not surprising as people, especially parents, are becoming increasingly aware of the significance of education. Enrolment in both primary and secondary education increases year after year (SUBEB, 2019). This can be seen where the Vice President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, on the 5th of September 2019, in Kano launched compulsory education nationwide.

Both parents and teachers reported that the scope of ECE should include both the Western and Islamic curricula. This finding agrees with a lot of research studies conducted in northern Nigeria (Aliyu, 2015). Although, western education is now appreciated, any education programme that excludes Islamic education is bound to fail in northern Nigeria, especially Kano State. This finding is in line with the position of researchers such as Umar, Ibrahim and Clement (2015).

Parents and teachers differ on the hours children should spend undertaking ECE and hours children should spend undertaking primary school education. Parents hold the view that ECE children should spend as much hours as hours spent in primary school. However, children spend hours that are not commensurate to their developmental stage. This finding is in consonance with the findings that children are made to undergo academic activities far beyond their cognitive, affective and psychomotor capability by overzealous parents (Ladd, Muschkin, & Dodge, 2014). This implies that parents, in an attempt to make their children educationally successful, they register and thereby overload their children with academic programmes beyond their developmental capabilities.

Both teachers and parents believe that children who attend ECE perform better than children who do not. However, research findings by scholars (Bustamante, Hirsh-Pasek, Vandell, & Golinkoff, 2017) have negated this belief. In other words, scholars have debunked the belief that children who attend ECE do better than children who do not.

Children are made to attend too many ECE programmes. The realisation of the significance of education as well as the desire to provide education early on makes parents enrol their children in numerous childhood education programmes, which in most cases are beyond the capability of the children. This is hazardous to the future educational development of the children. This finding is supported by Tough (2012)'s point that in order

to succeed, children should only be exposed to educational programmes commensurate with their cognitive, affective and psychomotor capability.

Parents and teachers are of the view that children could attend ECE education at almost any age. This can imply that there are children who are not mature enough attending ECE. This is disheartening, especially when even the elites tend to send their children to school before they are mature and ready to undertake an ECE programme. Tough (2016) pointed out that making children undergo an educational programme prematurely does not guarantee future educational success. In other words, making a child attend school before they are ready does not help the child.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

Stakeholders in ECE, especially parents, should be made aware that even though early childhood education is important, children should only be exposed to any educational programme when they are mature enough for it. This is because exposing children beyond their capability would result in failure, which would in turn result in frustrating the child. This view is supported by Mooney (2013), who postulated that overstretching the child results in future lack of their confidence and is a hindrance to their cognitive development.

It follows that teachers or better still school authorities should be professionally inclined rather than financially inclined. It should not be about the amount of money that schools make; it is the future of the children that should be the concern of all stakeholders. Education is supposed to guarantee a society's future (Onojerena, 2015). Therefore, all efforts should be on deck to ensure that we do not destroy the future of our children by being overzealous.

ECE should be regulated and monitored, as there is a series of after-effects of getting it wrong at this stage of development of the child. It is interesting to note that some states in Nigeria have started paying significant attention to ECE. However, efforts should be coordinated, especially between Western and Islamic education providers.

The media, even the social media, should be involved in educating parents of the danger of enlisting children to undergo inappropriate ECE programmes. Aliyu (2015) postulated the need for educating stakeholders, especially parents, on the dangers of engaging children in ECE before they are of age. It is lamenting that we tend to pay little attention to proactive management of our endeavours, including education. The future of our children should be planned so that our nation would not be left behind in the community of developing nations.

This study focused mainly on the perceptions around ECE. Future research, especially, studies longitudinal in nature, focusing on the determination of the impact, effect or influence of ECE on the academic performance of children could be undertaken. Similarly, the scope of the research should be widened to reach as many schools as



possible, the state and the nation. ECE should be enjoyed and not abhorred through helping children experience success in the educational endeavour (Tough, 2016).

8. FURTHER REFLECTIONS

It is A common misconception that children should attend ECE irrespective of its scope, modalities, and children's readiness. Although ECE is supposed to cover the social, emotional, physical, language as well as cognitive development of the child, ECE actually covers mostly academic/cognitive content (SUBEB, 2019). This misconception is carried to primary education where children complete the programme much earlier than they ought to. According to the National Policy on Education (NPE), children should commence primary school education when they are, at least, six years old. Similarly, the misconception is carried out to secondary school education as well as tertiary education, where students graduate far earlier than what is stipulated in the National Policy on Education (Tahir, 2006). This misfortune continues to a multiplier effect when children enter university (Krause, 2012).

On another note, although it is healthy to engage in both Western education and Islamic education, it is healthier if children should commence with Islamic education before involvement with Western education (Aliyu, 2015). Whatever worldly prosperity is there in the Western education, we should be very mindful of our everlasting relationship with our Creator.

9. CONCLUSIONS

This study has revealed the misconception parents, teachers, school administrators have about ECE. The misconception leads to registering children in ECE education at any age as well as registering them into many educational programmes, which leads to overburdening the children due to undertaking education programmes beyond their capability. The misconception of parents and teachers that children who attend ECE perform better than children who do not may lead to wrongly believing that children who perform below average at this stage may be failures in later educational endeavours, which in turn would lead to developing a negative halo-effect on children by both parents and teachers.

There is the need to address such misconceptions because not doing so, might lead to unpleasant educational consequences. Kano Municipal has a population of over six million people and over two hundred schools. However, not all the schools offer ECE. Even in the schools that offer it, some of the administrators refused to partake in the survey. This led to the restriction of the research population to five schools. Despite this limitation, the study attempted to unveil the hazards children face when exposed to ECE before being ready for it.

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