

Influence of Preschool Teachers' Characteristics on Children's Socio-Emotional Developmental Skill in Dutsin-Ma, Katsina State, Nigeria

Olabisi Adedigba^{1*}, Abubakar Abdullahi²

¹Department of Adult and Primary Education, University of Ilorin, Ilorin, Nigeria

²Department of Educational Foundations, Federal University of Dutsin-Ma, Katsina State, Nigeria

**Corresponding author's e-mail: olabisippp@gmail.com*

ABSTRACT

In the provision of quality preschool education, teachers occupy a serious and elusive place. They are the strength of the entire educational arrangement as rightly stated in the National Policy on Education that no education can rise above the quality of its teachers (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2013). Therefore, the study investigated the influence of the teachers' characteristics on children's socio-emotional developmental skills in the Dutsin-Ma Local Government Area. The study employed a descriptive research design of the observation type. The sample size comprised 25 preschool centres from both private and public schools, 50 teachers and 250 preschool children who were selected through a simple random sampling technique. The Children's Socio-Emotional Developmental Skill Rating Scale (CSEDSRS) with a reliability index of 0.77 was used for data collection. Hypotheses were tested using Analysis of Variance. The result indicated a significant influence of teachers' area of specialization, working experience, and qualification on the socio-emotional developmental skills of children. The study concluded that teachers are critical to supporting children's socio-emotional developmental skills in preschool education centres. It was recommended that teachers with a specialization in Early Childhood Education (ECE), high qualifications and good years of working experience be employed to work in ECE centres. This would help to improve the children's socio-emotional skills in preschool education centres.

Keywords: Teachers' Characteristics; Preschoolers; Socio-Emotional Developmental Skill; Early Childhood Education

1. Background

The main objective of preschool education is to nurture the holistic development of children. Preschool education is important not only for educational improvement but also for social and emotional change and good moral behaviour. Experiences children gain during preschool shape and influence the foundation of other multifaceted concepts of knowledge that would be attained in the future and play

a significant role in their accomplishment. Preschool education has huge optimistic economic and social impacts that last well into parenthood. The experiences and learning children acquire in their early years can give them the thorough support they need to develop and be successful throughout their lives. Preschool education in the life of a child represents the transitional ground that prepares the child mentally and psychologically for the expectation and sustainability of entering primary education soon. (Bowman, Donovan & Burns, 2001; Clements, 2004; Adedigba & Agarry, 2013).

Gradually, children's socio-emotional developmental skills are gaining recognition as one of the most important areas of development. Copple & Bredekamp (2009) emphasized the necessity for socialization and the development of socio-emotional skills as part of early childhood education. As identified by Maduewesi (2005), raising children who are socially and emotionally skilled with a good ability to advance in peer relationships besides adult relationships boosts children's chances to succeed in educational and non-educational situations. The abilities that are rightly confirmed in Cohen, & Lotan (2014) description of a socio-emotional developmental skill. The authors stated that social-emotional development skills comprise the child's experience, communication, problem-solving skills, ability to form and maintain constructive and fulfilling associations with others, prevent/address challenging behaviour and management of emotions. This is further explained by Kristine & Paula (2007) who stated that children who are socially and emotionally well-adjusted exhibit increased confidence, have good relationships, communicate well, and persist at challenging tasks. These skills allow children to build healthy and positive relationships, as well as help them manage their moods and behaviour.

Positive outcomes identified with children with socio-emotional skills are further revealed by the National Scientific Council on the Developing Child (2004) who submitted that children with active socio-emotional abilities are capable to form and retain relationships, develop assertive attitudes to learning and societal proficiencies, are certainly recognized by their peers, more adjustable, confident, and are more likely to be academically successful. Goodman, *et al.* (2015) led credibility and added that as soon as children are socially and emotionally proficient, they are more possible to nurture into adults with confident life consequences and greater levels of safety than children with deprived socio-emotional skills. Research also revealed that a child's socio-emotional competence also influences his/her academic success and overall development. This is confirmed by Raver *et al.* (2002) who submitted that social emotional development has been linked to early academic success for young children; Adedigba (2015) who opined that children's social abilities are important for early school achievement and future modification.

Importance of preschool education has been recognized in Nigeria, but the issue of its quality remains a problem (Sooter, 2013; Subuola, 2017). A preschool education that upholds high standards of quality is concerned with the provision of programmes that help children develop socio-emotional skills that would assist them in their adjustment to elementary school. Significantly, the quality of services and early intervention given to children are fundamental because the skills developed from birth to age eight form the basis for future relationships, learning and labour market success. Teachers have a crucial role in providing a high-quality early childhood education. They constitute the backbone of the entire educational system.

Past research on the characteristics of teachers examined the variables in relation to learner academic achievement and cognitive development. For example, Kosgei *et al.* (2013) evaluated teacher characteristics on students' academic achievement in biology among secondary school teachers in Nandi South District, and Kamau (2016) investigated teacher characteristics on preschoolers in learning reading activity in Langata sub-county and Apata (2013) studied teachers' experience and students' numerical proficiency in solving physics problems in secondary schools. The body of literature has also supported research on socio-emotional development. For instance, Kristine & Paula (2007) studied the development of socio-emotional competence in preschool age children. Arace *et al.* (2021) investigated the socio-emotional wellness and socio-developmental skills of children as well as the emotional competence of early childhood educators. Dewaele, Gkonou & Mercer (2018) also

looked at how gender, experience, competency, and emotional intelligence of ESL/EFL teachers affected their classroom practices. Like this, several research have concentrated on the improvement of socio-emotional abilities. For example, McCabe and Altamura (2011) validated techniques to increase preschool children's social and emotional competence, and Goodman *et al.* (2015) investigated social and emotional skills in childhood and their long-term effects on adult life. Since there is little research on characteristics of teachers and children's socio-emotional development, this study was interested in examining these variables.

In this study, teachers' characteristics include teachers' area of specialization, years of teaching experience and qualification. The teachers' area of specialization is one of the characteristics that have been noted to relate to the issue of quality in preschool education. Findings of the studies of Bowman, Donovan and Burns (2001); Sylva *et al.* (2004); and Peisner-Feinberg *et al.* (2007) have revealed that children who are trained by teachers who partake in specialized training in the field of childhood education and development demonstrate good social skills, and are competent in the use of language, display good moral behaviour and accomplish at higher levels on mental tasks than those trained for by less-qualified adults. NAEYC (2009) stated that teachers who have specific and good training in early childhood have good acquaintance of child development and improved pedagogy to impart and are more likely to provide optimistic connections, better-off language skills, and excellence learning atmospheres.

Further, Pianta & Stuhlman (2004) are of the opinion that providing professional training promotes a steady strong learning atmosphere for children's knowledge and progress. Adedigba & Olofintoye (2019) also submitted that, to secure a quality crop of teachers for preschool and primary education, the National Policy Education recommended that teachers for early childhood and primary education be specially trained. Also, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development-OECD (2006), Strong (2006), teachers' review stated that if high-quality outcomes are expected in preschool education, it should be handled by teachers with intensive teacher education and training. Pramling & Samuelsson (2011) also noted that if teachers are trained for specific areas, the teachers would have good content knowledge of the curriculum, pedagogical competence and demonstrate ability to create a multidisciplinary learning environment. Hence, specialized education is important for teachers in preschool education for improved teachers' competences to provide suitable pedagogical learning opportunities for better child outcomes.

Not only this, but literature also confirmed that in a preschool education programme excellence can also be determined by the experiences of the teachers and staff. The influence a teacher's years of working experience can have on the quality of services to children and schools have been identified by numerous researchers (Clotfelter, Ladd & Vigdor, 2007; Kosgei *et al.*, 2013; Kamau, 2016;). The argument here is that children develop and learn better at the hands of teachers with long-serving experience. Ijaiya (2000) submitted that learning outcome is encouraging with experienced teachers because they have taught well and uninterruptedly over an epoch of years while reverse is the situation with children taught by inexperienced teachers because they showed poor teaching ability as identified by Tahir & Zone (2003). Also, Apata (2013) studied teachers' experience and students' numerical proficiency in solving physics problems in secondary schools and found that numerical proficiency of students taught by experienced teachers were better than that of students taught by less experienced teachers. Kamau (2016)'s study on the influence of teachers' characteristics on preschool children in learning the reading activity further uncovered that educators who have been practicing for a lengthy time have influence on preschool children compared with those who are young graduates from colleges. The experienced ones are found to be supportive to children in their reading activities while the content knowledge and reflective ability of teachers with lesser qualification are poor and this without doubt lowers the performance of children in reading.

Moreover, the educational qualification of a teacher can have serious implication on preschool education quality and child's learning and development outcome (Peisner-Feinberg *et al.*, 2007; Kamau, 2016; Muhammad, 2021). The authors all agreed that it is more likely that teachers with

degrees in early childhood education have superior skills to advance significant relationships with their children and create safe, nurturing environments that uphold children's emotional wellbeing. There is substantial indication that enriched preparation and qualification intensities advance the quality of communication and pedagogics in preschool education services (Strong, 2006). In line with this view, Howes, James, and Ritchie (2003) in their study establish that preschool educators with bachelor's degrees remained the most active experts. The study surveyed teachers' efficacy within the teaching space based on their ability to stimulate, engross children in learning accomplishments and their responsiveness to children's knowledge necessities. Sylva *et al.* (2010) in a study on the effective provision of preschool education also confirmed that vital supportive aspects for high-quality ECE remained associated to workforce with advanced qualifications. Such a workforce demonstrated a good indulgent of child progress and knowledge plus good management abilities. The study also indicated that higher levels of workforce participation among those with low-level credentials were related to fewer satisfactory child effects in the socio emotional. Highly qualified preschool teachers often provide better quality preschool education. This can yield better child outcomes socially and academically both in the short term and in the long term. In the Nigerian context, the minimum requirement for teaching at this level of education (pre-primary) as stated by FGN (2013) in its National Policy on Education is the National Certificate in Education (NCE). Hence, it is expected that any teacher in preschool classrooms in Nigeria should hold at least NCE.

On the other hand, some studies have revealed no significant relationship between teacher characteristics and the dependent variables studied. For example, Obonyo, Bin & Maina (2018) investigated the relationship between student scientific achievement growth and advanced degrees and years of teaching experience in Kenyan public secondary schools. The study discovered no differences in teacher qualifications across secondary schools with high and low educational rankings. Also, in senior secondary schools in Adamawa State, Filgona & Sakiyo (2020) assess the extent to which teacher academic qualification predicts students' attitudes and academic achievement in geography. The findings showed that teachers' qualifications did not predict pupils' attitudes towards geography. Added to this, in Kenya, Musau & Abere's (2015) research on the qualifications of teachers and students' academic performance in science, math, and technology subjects indicated that pupils' low academic achievement in the fields of science, mathematics, and technology (SMT) did not significantly correlate with the teacher's qualification and experience. In their investigation of how teacher specialization affects student success, Hwang & Kisida (2021) find no proof that raising the proportion of teacher specialists at the school level leads to gains in measures of school quality.

Although some of these researchers discovered that teachers' characteristics had a significant impact on the variables they looked at, which were primarily connected to academic accomplishment, there is still a paucity of information on teachers' characteristics and children' socio-emotional developmental skills. This created an informational gap that the current study set out to fill. As noted by Sridhar & Malliga (2015), Mondì, Giovanelli, and Reynolds (2021), most students experience difficulties with socio-emotional developmental skills in their early years in school. Such youngsters struggle greatly to establish strong, secure bonds with others, engage in positive relationships with others, comprehend, ascertain, prompt, and control their reactions, as well as resolve peer disagreement. They also run the risk of academic failure and general developmental delays. There are many aspects of their preschool experiences that might be blamed for such shortcomings and incompetence, but teachers' characteristics are a major one on which this study sought to provide further information.

The majority of the studies mentioned in the background were conducted in foreign and developed countries and therefore, their findings cannot be generalized for countries like Nigeria owing to modifications in social, traditional, and economic circumstances. Particularly, none of the available previous studies investigated the socio-emotional developmental skills of the preschoolers through the variables of the teachers' characteristics. Also, such a study has not been conducted using the Dutsin-Ma Local Government of Katsina as a geographical area. This created an existing gap which this study sought to fill by investigating the influence of teachers' characteristics on children's socio-emotional developmental skills in the Dutsin-Ma Local Government Area of Katsina State. The purpose of this

study was to find out the influence of teachers’ characteristics on preschoolers’ socio-emotional developmental skills. Specifically, the study examined significant influence of teachers’ level of educational qualifications, years of working experience and area of specialization on preschoolers’ socio-emotional developmental skill in Dutsin-Ma Local Government Area of Katsina, Nigeria.

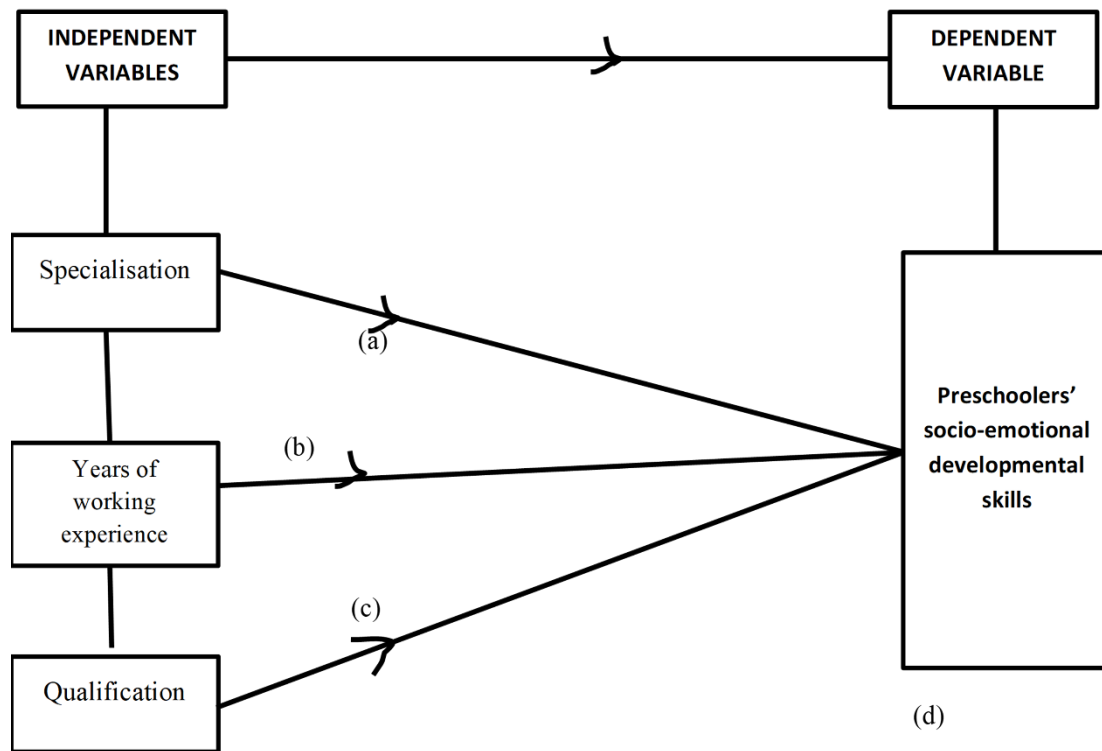


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework Model

The study investigated the influence of teachers’ characteristics on children’s socio-emotional developmental skills. The study considered the independent variable of teachers’ characteristics in three aspects (specialization, years of working experience and qualification) while the dependent variable was children’s socio-emotional developmental skill. The model proposed that teachers’ characteristics (a, b, and c) influenced children’s socio-emotional developmental skills (d).

2. Methods

2.1. Research Design

This study employed a descriptive design of observation. Generally, descriptive research design is a sort of research design that tries to systematically gather data to characterize a phenomenon, circumstance, or population that is being examined, according to Mugenda and Mugenda, (2003) and Siedlecki (2020). The quantitative observational type was deemed appropriate in this study. because it allowed the researchers to gather data based on their observations of the behaviour and characteristics of the respondents in their natural context, Additionally, the design, quantitative observation enabled the objective gathering of data that was primarily centered on numbers and values, whose outcomes could be examined using numerical and statistical approaches (Siedlecki, 2020; Voxco, 2021).

2.2. Population and Sampling

The population for this study comprised all public and private pre-schools, teachers, and kindergarten children (KG 2) in Dutsin-Ma Local Government Area of Katsina State. There are 42 pre-primary (26 public and 16 private) schools in Dutsin-Ma Local Government Education Authority, with a population of 1869 KG2 children and 140 teachers across all schools. The choice of the preschool (public) and (private) KG2 children was because these children have spent at least one year in play group, first and second terms in kindergarten classes. A simple random sampling technique was used to select 15 out of 26 public schools and 10 out of 16 private schools. The selection yielded a total of 25 schools that were sampled. 2 teachers and 10 children were selected from each centre, making a total of 250 children and 50 teachers that were selected to participate in the study. The sample size was a good representation of the entire population. The research table advisors (Krejcie & Morgan, 1970) confirmed that a sample size of 250 (preschoolers) and 50 (teachers) is found appropriate in a population size of 1869 and 140, respectively, with a marginal error of 5%. The sample table is as represented below:

Table 1: Sample of the Study

Dutsin-Ma Local Government Education	No of Schools	No of Preschool Children	No of Teachers
Public Schools	15	150	30
Private Schools	10	100	20
Total	25	250	50

2.3. Data Collection

The Children's Socio-Emotional Developmental Skill Rating Scale (CSEDSRS) was used for data collection. It has sections A and B. Section A captured the demographic information of the teachers in the observed preschool education centres. This generated information on teachers' characteristics. Section B contains 25 items grouped into the major areas of socio-emotional developmental skills of children covering self-management, relationships, social awareness, responsibilities/decision making and self-awareness. The items were structured in a three Likert type scale of all the time, Sometimes and Never (3, 2, 1). The face and content validity of the CSEDSRS were confirmed by the lecturers in the field of early childhood education. The instrument (CSEDSRS) was administered twice, with an interval of two weeks. The two ratings were correlated using Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC), CSEDSRS yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.77.

The data collection lasted for a period of four weeks. The first week was the training of the research assistants. The second, third and fourth weeks were for observation of the preschool children in the selected schools using the instrument for assessing the children's socio-emotional developmental skills. All the ethical guidelines for research development in coordination with the university commitments were taken into consideration. The researchers sought the consent and voluntary participation of the schools, teachers and children who were involved in the data collection.

2.4. Measurement

The formulated research hypotheses were analyzed using Analysis of Variance and all hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance.

3. Results

Research Hypothesis One: There is no significant influence of teachers' area of specialization on children's socio-emotional developmental skill.

Table 2: Teachers' area of specialization on children's socio-emotional developmental skill

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	15298.116 ^a	3	5099.372	53.354	0.000
Intercept	214128.628	1	214128.628	2240.384	0.000
Specialization	15298.116	3	5099.372	53.354	0.000
Error	23511.884	246	95.577		
Total	699300.000	250			
Corrected Total	38810.000	249			

Table 2 shows the influence of teachers' areas of specialization on children's socio-emotional developmental skills. There was a significant influence of teachers' areas of specialization on children's socio-emotional developmental skills ($F_{(3, 246)} = 53.354$; $P < 0.05$). The hypothesis is therefore rejected considering the result since the significant value is less than 0.05. This implies that teachers' areas of specialization had a significant influence on children's socio-emotional developmental skills. Table 3 below revealed the source of the difference in children's socio-emotional developmental skill.

Table 3: Summary of Bonferroni's Post Hoc pairwise Comparison of the socio-emotional developmental skill of children based on their teachers' area of specialization.

Specialization	Mean Score	NCE in ECE	NCE in other areas	B.Ed./B.A. (Ed)/B.Sc. (Ed) in other areas	B.Sc.
NCE in ECE	62.92		*	*	*
NCE in other areas	46.54	*		*	*
B.Ed./B.A. (Ed)/B.Sc. (Ed) in other areas	48.13	*	*		*
B.Sc.	43.26	*	*	*	

Table 3 revealed that the significant main effect exposed by table 2 is because of the significant difference among the following specialization:

- i. NCE in ECE
- ii. NCE in other areas
- iii. B.Ed. in other areas
- iv. B.Sc.

This implies that the socio-emotional developmental skills of children whose teachers specialized in Early Childhood Education (Mean = 62.92) were significantly better than the children whose teachers specialized in other areas.

Research Hypothesis Two: There is no significant influence of teachers' working experience on children's socio-emotional developmental skill.

Table 4: Teachers’ working experience on children’s socio-emotional developmental skill.

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	1969.532 ^a	2	984.766	7.597	0.001
Intercept	170024.925	1	170024.925	1311.595	0.000
Experience	1969.532	2	984.766	7.597	0.001
Error	32019.144	247	129.632		
Total	517197.000	250			
Corrected Total	33988.676	249			

Table 4 shows the influence of teachers’ working experiences on children’s socio-emotional developmental skills. There was a significant influence of teachers’ working experience on children’s socio-emotional developmental skill ($F_{(2, 247)} = 7.597; P < 0.05$). The hypothesis is therefore rejected considering the result since the significant value is less than 0.05. This implies that teachers’ working experiences had a significant influence on children’s socio-emotional developmental skill. Table 5 below revealed the source of the difference in children’s socio-emotional developmental skills based on their teachers’ working experiences.

Table 5: Summary of Bonferroni’s Post Hoc pairwise Comparison of the socio-emotional developmental skill of children and teachers’ working experience.

Working experience	Mean Score	Below 5 years	5 – 10 years	11 – 20 years
Below 5 years	42.56		*	*
5 – 10 years	46.30	*		*
11 – 20 years	55.30	*	*	

Table 5 revealed that the significant main effect exposed by table 4 is as a result of the significant difference among the following teachers’ working experience:

- i. Below 5 years
- ii. 5 – 10 years
- iii. 11 – 20 years

This implies that the socio-emotional developmental skill of children whose teachers’ working experience was 11 – 20 years (Mean = 55.30) is significantly better than the children of teachers with other years of working experience.

Research Hypothesis Three: There is no significant influence of teachers’ qualification on children’s socio-emotional developmental skill.

Table 6: Teachers' qualification on children's socio-emotional developmental skill

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	15356.116 ^a	2	7678.058	101.783	0.000
Intercept	215084.942	1	215084.942	2851.244	0.000
Qualification	15356.116	2	7678.058	101.783	0.000
Error	18632.560	247	75.435		
Total	517197.000	250			
Corrected Total	33988.676	249			

Table 6 shows the influence of teachers' qualifications on children's socio-emotional developmental skills. There is a significant influence of teachers' qualifications on children's socio-emotional developmental skills ($F_{(2, 247)} = 101.783$; $P < 0.05$). The hypothesis is therefore rejected in light of the result since the significant value is less than 0.05. This implies that teachers' qualifications had a significant influence on children's socio-emotional developmental skills. Table 7 below reveals the source of the difference in children's socio-emotional developmental skills based on their teachers' qualifications.

Table 7: Summary of Bonferroni's Post Hoc pairwise Comparison of the socio-emotional developmental skill of children based on their teachers' qualification.

Specialization	Mean Score	NCE	B.A. Ed./B.Sc. Ed	B. A/B.Sc./HND
NCE	42.08		*	*
B.Ed/B.A. (Ed)/B.Sc.(Ed)	69.43	*		*
B.A/B.Sc./HND	36.90	*	*	

Table 6 revealed that the significant main effect exposed in table 6 is because of the significant difference among the following teachers' working experience:

- i. NCE
- ii. B.Ed/B.A. (Ed)/B.Sc.(Ed)
- iii. B.A/B.Sc./HND

This implies that the socio-emotional developmental skills of children whose teachers' qualification was B.Ed./B.A. (Ed)/B.Sc. (Ed) (Mean = 69.43) were significantly better than the children of teachers with other qualifications.

4. Discussion

The result showed that teachers' areas of specialization had a significant influence on how well children developed their socio-emotional skills. The results corroborate those of Howes *et al.* (2008), who found that students who are taught by educators with a specialization in early childhood education and development exhibit strong social skills and are literate. This is consistent with Pianta & Stuhlman's (2004) argument that professional training will help create an environment that is conducive to children's learning and development. The outcome supports the submission of Pramling & Samuelsson (2011) that educators in preschool education should be encouraged to develop their competencies to provide appropriate pedagogical learning opportunities for better child outcomes. Additionally, the study supports Kamau's (2016) findings on how teachers' characteristics affect preschoolers' academic accomplishment by showing that teachers with specialization in early childcare education have competencies in the language and cognitive development of preschoolers. The results also back up Adedigba and Olofintoye's (2019) assertion that efforts should be made to identify qualified teachers

for the preschool and primary grades in accordance with the National Policy on Education. The result supports the NAEYC's (2009) assertion that teachers with specialized training in early childhood education (ECE) have solid knowledge of child development and pedagogy for providing high-quality preschool education. However, the finding is not in agreement with Hwang & Kisida (2021), who found no proof that raising the proportion of teacher specialists at the school level leads to gains in measures of school quality.

Another result showed that there was a significant influence of teachers' working experiences on children's socio-emotional developmental skills. This is in consonance with Tahir & Zone (2003), who reported from their different studies that children handled by teachers with few years of working experience have a low learning outcome compared with those children who have interactions with experienced teachers. Also, the result confirms Apata (2013), who reported that the numerical proficiency of students taught by experienced teachers were better than those taught by less experienced teachers. This is also in agreement with the finding of Kamau (2016), who studied the influence of teachers' characteristics on preschool children in learning the reading activity and reported that teachers who have been in the profession for a long time easily influenced preschool children more than those who are fresh from college. On the contrary, the result was not in agreement with Obonyo, Bin & Maina (2018), who in their study in Kenyan public secondary schools discovered no differences in teacher qualifications across secondary schools with high and low educational rankings.

Also, the finding demonstrated that teachers' qualifications had a significant influence on children's socio-emotional developmental skills. The result agrees with the Sylva *et al.* (2010) study which affirmed that workforce with advanced qualifications remained associated to quality service in ECE. This finding also confirms the 2017 Status Report on Early Childhood Care and Education in Pacific Island Countries which states that the delivery of excellence ECCE services requires suitably trained staff who can respond to the necessities of children, families, and communities. Subsequently, the National Scientific Council on the Developing Child at Harvard University (2004) established that the quality of early relationships between children and the educated teacher in their lives sets the foundation for later developmental outcomes and affects virtually all aspects of their social-emotional, physical, and cognitive developmental skills. The educated teachers and adults around children are the most important contributors to their socio-emotional developmental skills. Also, the result was not in agreement with Musau & Abere (2015), who found that pupils' low academic achievement in the fields of science, mathematics, and technology did not significantly correlate with the teacher's qualification and experience. Also, the finding was not in conformity with the study of Filgona & Sakiyo (2020), which showed that teachers' qualifications did not predict pupils' attitudes towards geography in senior secondary schools in Adamawa State.

5. Conclusion

This study examined the influence of preschool quality as regards teachers' characteristics on children's socio-emotional developmental skills in Dutsin-Ma Local Government Area of Katsina State. The findings showed that teachers' areas of specialization, qualifications and working experience all have significant influence on children's socio-emotional developmental skill. The socio-emotional skills of children whose teachers' have certificates in early childhood education (ECE), high qualifications (B.Ed. and above), and good years of working experience were significantly better than the children of teachers who do not possess those qualities. The study concluded that teachers' characteristics were determinants of quality in preschool education and critical to the development of children particularly, their socio-emotional developmental skills.

Based on the findings of the study, it was recommended that teachers in preschool classrooms should be trained in early childhood care and education before being posted to teach in preschool centers in Dutsin-Ma Local Government. Also, there should be training and retraining of teachers in early childhood education through in-service training, seminars, and workshops for them to update their knowledge of childhood education. Government, school proprietors and administrators should employ

the services of personnel with high qualifications in early childhood education to manage the education of preschool children. Also, teachers with extended working experiences should always be considered in the recruitment of personnel to preschool sections in Dutsin-Ma Local Government Area.

Limitation of the Study

Only preschoolers made up the study's sample; future research can use pupils in primary schools to increase the data's generalizability or reflect a bigger population. The time span for this study was also brief; future research can concentrate on a longitudinal study that will provide ample opportunity for observation to track children's socio-emotional skill development.

6. Declarations

6.1. Ethics approval and consent to participate: In the data collection process, consent was obtained from the participants.

6.2. Conflict of interests: Not applicable

6.3. Acknowledgement: The author would like to express his gratitude to Deputy Dean Dr. Lubna Ali Mohammad for the immense support extended by her throughout the preparation of this manuscript.

REFERENCES

Adedigba, O. & Agarry, R.O. (2013). Wise investment: The role of early childhood education in National Development. *Journal of Early Childhood and Primary Education, Kwasu*. Vol.2 Page 1-11.

Adedigba, O. (2015). Assessing the physical and social climate of early childhood education learning environment in kwara state, nigeria. URI: <http://hdl.handle.net/123456789/1837>

Adedigba, O. & Olofintoye, B.O. (2019). Childhood education teacher training and teaching of science and mathematics: Implication for Nigerian teacher education. *Journal of Early Childhood Association of Nigeria*. 8(2); 656- 681. <https://uilspace.unilorin.edu.ng/handle/20.500.12484/6508>

Apata, F. S (2013). Teachers' experience and students' numerical proficiency in solving physics problems in secondary schools. *African Research Review* 7 (1), 285-297 DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.4314/afrev.v7i1.19>

Arace, A., Prino, L. E., & Scarzello, D. (2021). Emotional competence of early childhood educators and child socio-emotional wellbeing. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 18(14), 7633. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph18147633>

Bowman, B. T., Donovan, M. S., & Burns, M. S. (2001). *Eager To Learn: Educating Our Preschoolers.[Full Report and Executive Summary.]*. National Academy Press, 2101 Constitution Avenue, NW, Lockbox 285, Washington, DC 20055.

Clements, R. (2004). An investigation of the status of outdoor play. *Contemporary issues in early childhood*, 5(1), 68-80.

Clotfelter, C. T., Ladd, H. F., & Vigdor, J. L. (2007). How and why do teacher credentials matter for student achievement? DOI 10.3386/w12828

Cohen, E. G., & Lotan, R. A. (2014). *Designing groupwork: strategies for the heterogeneous classroom third edition*. Teachers College Press.

Copple, C., & Bredekamp, S. (2009). *Developmentally appropriate practice in early childhood programs serving children from birth through age 8*. National Association for the Education of Young Children. 1313 L Street NW Suite 500, Washington, DC 22205-4101. Web site: <http://www.naeyc.org/>

Dewaele, J. M., Gkonou, C., & Mercer, S. (2018). Do ESL/EFL teachers' emotional intelligence, teaching experience, proficiency and gender affect their classroom practice? *Emotions in second language teaching: Theory, research and teacher education*, 125-141. DOI: 10.1007/978-3-319-75438-3_8.

Federal Republic of Nigeria (2004). National Policy on Education. Federal Ministry Education. NERDC Press. Lagos

Federal Republic of Nigeria (2013). National Policy on Education (6th edition). NERDC. Abuja <https://educatetolead.files.wordpress.com/2016/02/national-education-policy-2013.pdf>

Filgona, J., & Sakiyo, J. (2020). Teachers' academic qualification as a predictor of attitude and academic achievement in geography of senior secondary school students in Adamawa State, Nigeria. *International Journal of Research and Review*, 7(11)

Goodman, A., Joshi, H., Nasim, B., & Tyler, C. (2015). Social and emotional skills in childhood and their long-term effects on adult life. <http://www.eif.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/EIF-Strand-1Report-FINAL1.pdf>

Howes, C., Burchinal, M., Pianta, R.C., Bryant, D., Early, D., Clifford, R.M. (2008). Ready to learn? Children's pre-academic achievement in pre-kindergarten programs. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 23(1), 27-50. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecresq.2007.05.002>

Howes, C., James, J., & Ritchie, S. (2003). Pathways to effective teaching. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 18(1), 104-120. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0885-2006\(03\)00008-5](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0885-2006(03)00008-5)

Hwang, N., & Kisida, B. (2021). Spread Too Thin: The Effects of Teacher Specialization on Student Achievement. EdWorkingPaper No. 21-477. Annenberg Institute for School Reform at Brown University.

Ijaiya, N.Y. (2000). Failing schools and national development: Time for reappraisal of school effectiveness in Niger. *Niger Journal of Educational Resources Evaluation*, 2(2), 42.

Kamau, N. N. (2016). *Influence of Teachers' Characteristics on Pre-school Children in Learning Reading Activity in Langata Sub-county, Nairobi County* (Doctoral dissertation, University of Nairobi).

Krejcie, R. V., & Morgan, D. W. (1970). Determining sample size for research activities. *Educational and psychological measurement*, 30(3), 607-610. <https://doi.org/10.1177/001316447003000308>

Kosgei, A., Mise, J. K., Odera, O., & Ayugi, M. E. (2013). Influence of teacher characteristics on students' academic achievement among secondary schools.

Kristine, M. P., & Paula M. B. (2007). Development of socio-emotional competence in preschool age children. *Australian Journal of Guidance & Counselling Volume 17(1)111*. <https://doi.org/10.1375/ajgc.17.1.81>

Maduewesi, C. (2005). *Children today*: Ibadan. Heinemann Educational Books (Nig.) Ltd

- McCabe, P.C, Altamura, M. (2011). Empirically valid strategies to improve social and emotional competence of preschool children. *Psychology in the Schools*. 48(5):513-540.; <https://doi.org/10.1002/pits.20570>
- Mondi, C.F.,Giovannelli, A., Reynolds,A.R..(2021). Fostering socio-emotional learning through early childhood intervention. *International Journal of Child Care and Education Policy* volume 15. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40723-021-00084-8>
- Mugenda, O., & Mugenda, A., (2003). Research methods, qualitative & quantitative approach. Nairobi Press.
- Muhammad, L. (2021). The effects of teachers' academic qualification and experience on students' achievement and interest in accounting in Kaduna State. *Global Journal of Education, Humanities and Management Sciences (GOJEHMS)*; 3 (1) 242 – 252.
- Musau, L.M. & Abere, M.J. (2015). Teacher qualification and students' academic performance in science mathematics and technology subjects in Kenya. *International Journal of Educational Administration and Policy Studies*. 7(3), pp. 83-89, <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1075871.pdf>
- National Scientific Council on the Developing Child. (2004). Children's emotional development is built into the architecture of their brains: Working Paper No. 2. Retrieved on from www.developingchild.harvard.edu
- Obonyo, D. D., Bin, C., & Maina, G. F. (2018). Is teacher education level and experience impetus for student achievement? Evidence from public secondary schools in Kenya. *American Journal of Educational Research and Reviews*, 3(21), 14.
- Peisner-Feinberg, E. S., Burchinal, M. R., Clifford, R. M., & Culkin, M. L. Howes. C., Kagan, SL, & Yazejian, N.(2001). The relation of preschool childcare quality to children's cognitive and social developmental trajectories through second grade. *Child Development*, 72(5), 1534-1553.
- Pianta, R. C., & Stuhlman, M. W. (2004). Teacher-child relationships and children's success in the first years of school. *School psychology review*, 33(3), 444-458. DOI:10.1080/02796015.2004.12086261
- Pramling, N., & Samuelsson, I. P. (Eds.). (2011). *Educational encounters: Nordic studies in early childhood didactics* (Vol. 4). Springer Science & Business Media.
- Raver, C. C., Jones, S. M., Li-Grining, C. P., Metzger, M., Champion, K. M., & Sardin, L. (2008). Improving preschool classroom processes: Preliminary findings from a randomized trial implemented in Head Start settings. *Early childhood research quarterly*, 23(1), 10-26. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecresq.2007.09.001>
- Siedlecki, S.L. (2020). Understanding descriptive research designs and methods. *Clinical Nurse Specialist CNS34(1):8-12*. DOI:10.1097/NUR.0000000000000493.
- Strong, S. (2006). Early childhood education and care. *Paris: Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development*, 45-97.
- Sylva, K., Melhuish, E., Sammons, P., Siraj-Blatchford,I. & Taggart, B. (2010). *Early childhood matters: Evidence from the effective preschool and primary education project*. Routledge, London/New York. <https://www.routledge.com/Early-Childhood-Matters-Evidence-from-the-Effective-Pre-school-and-Primary/Sylva-Melhuish-Sammons-Siraj-Blatchford-Taggart/p/book/9780415482431>

Sooter, T. (2013). Early childhood education in Nigeria: Issues and problems. *Journal of Educational and Social Research*, 3(5), 173-179

Sridhar., N., & Malliga, T. (2015). A study on the impact of motor, cognitive, language and socio-emotional development of preschool children. *Scholarly Research Journal for Interdisciplinary Studies*.VOL-3/21 Page 1179-1184.

Subuola C.A., (2017). Quality control in early childhood education. *British Journal of Education Vol.5*, No.8, pp.63-72.

Sylva, K., Melhuish, E., Sammons, P., Siraj-Blatchford, I., & Taggart, B. (2004). The effective provision of pre-school education (EPPE) project: Findings from pre-school to end of key stage 1

Tahir, G., & Zone, I. C. W. (2003). National capacity building of lead teacher training institutions in Mozambique: a report.

Voxco (2021). Descriptive research design. Retrieved from <https://www.voxco.com/blog/descriptive-research-design/>. <https://www.voxco.com/blog/descriptive-research-design/>