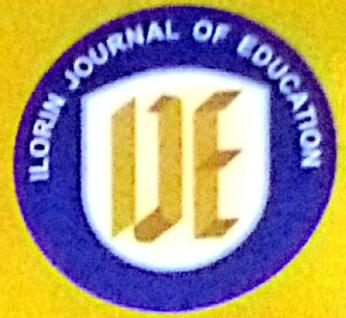




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PARENTS ATTITUDES TOWARDS GOVERNMENT INVOLVEMENTT IN PRE-SCHOOL EDUCATION IN KWARA STATE

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Abstract

This research study focused on examining the attitude of parents towards government involvement in Kindergarten in Kwara State adopting descriptive research design with 250 parents as sampled population for the study, 124 males and 126 females, in three local Government Area of Kwara State: Ilorin West LGA, Ilorin South LGA and Ilorin East LGA using simple random sampling technique. With the aid of a Researcher's constructed Questionnaire, the data was collected from the respondents which was analyzed with Statistical Packages for Social Scientist (SPSS) 22.00 version. Frequency counts, percentage distribution, mean and standard deviation were used to analyze the data demographic information and the research question respectively while ANOVA was used to test the hypothesis generated. The researcher found out that attitude of the parents towards government involvement in kindergarten is negative in Kwara State and there is no significant difference in the attitude of parents towards government involvement in kindergarten based on their educational qualification ($0.53 > 0.054$). It was recommended that parents should endeavour to develop positive attitude towards government involvement in kindergarten so as to support the success of the program while government should make necessary provisions for the smooth running of Kindergarten programme both at the federal level and state level of the country.

Keywords: Attitude, kindergarten, early childhood education, government Involvement

Introduction

Education in the second half of the twentieth century was featured by rapid increases in the provision of educational programs for preschool age children which include nursery education, kindergarten, pre-primary education, day care, infant school, crèche etc., whereby the largest beckon of preschool education activity has been the federally funded Head Start program, established in the 1960s to help children overcome the cognitive, social, emotional, and physical deficits that frequently accompany growing up in economically deprived homes. However, there has been an increasing figure of young children enrolling in early care and education programs. The Children's Defense Fund (2001) reports that 13 million preschoolers participate in child care each day. This includes 6 million infants and toddlers.

The U.S. Census Bureau (2002) also indicates that in 1997, 63% of children fewer than 5 years of age attended some form of regular early care and education arrangement an average of 37 hours each week. In Kentucky, 103,000 children access the child care system on a daily basis, including approximately 16,000 children ages 3-4 serviced by Head Start

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and about 21,000 children serviced by KERA Preschools (K. Townley, personal communication, July 22, 2003). As a result of this vast enrolment in early care and education program in and around the world including Nigeria has a country, it is pertinent for the Government to develop full involvement in the program so as to prepare toddlers and young children for primary education. Therefore, this research study examined the involvement of government in provision of Kindergarten education also parent should be ready to promote government school by registering their children and wards into public primary school.

It is no news that several social-psychologists have tried to define and explain attitudes, which is noteworthy and indispensable for psychology. To keep it simple, Attitude is a positive or negative assessment of an object. It is generally thought that attitude has to be studied as a whole in terms of emotions, ideas, past experiences and behavioral intentions while recent studies revealed that the presence of an attitude does not require the simultaneous presence of all the aforementioned elements, causing attitudes to be dealt with as a kind of mental assessment (Fazio & Olson, 2003; Zanna, 1990, Kağıtçıbaşı, 2010). However, in the process of conceptualizing on attitude parents are also important. The attitude of the parents signifies that the supporting nature of family in their children's education. The parental attitude can be negative or positive. The negative attitude of the parents regarding education and schooling can prevent their children from getting education. With less parental support in school work, low level of motivation and poor self-esteem of children can result. Positive attitude of the parents can be beneficial to their children in many cases and can be reflected in improvement in class performance, creating interest among children to learn, and higher achievement scores in reading and writing.

The growing awareness regarding education makes many families' value their children's education and act favorably towards schooling and education of their children. They become a part of the decision making process of school, and decide their children's future regarding higher education. Numerous conducted studies revealed that parental attitudes are influential on a wide range of issues, from education to motivation, from the sense of discipline to nutrition, from self-control to daily life, from development to academic success. With parental attitudes having such an influential effect, various models were developed in order to describe their effects on behavioral outputs of the child (Dietrich & Salmela-Aro, 2013; Özdemir *et al.*, 2013; Ishaket *et al.*, 2012; Oncu & Unluer, 2012; Sawalha, 2012; Serinkan, 2012; Hoeve *et al.*, 2011; Bolkanet *et al.*, 2010; Huver *et al.*, 2010; Nekkeboeck *et al.*, 2010). Furthermore, Sheehy (2006) investigated parents' attitudes towards kindergarten education programs at schools and determined that a few parents adopted a negative attitude towards kindergarten education courses due to their negative experiences in the past, while many mothers did not have knowledge about the kindergarten education course programs of their children. Stewert & Gren (1987) also conducted on parents' attitudes towards kindergarten education course, they concluded that parents adopt a positive attitude towards kindergarten education courses in terms of emotional and cognitive development, and socialization. Based on the above studies, it can deduced that parental attitudes in education; Kindergarten Program Education is very crucial to the success of the programs in the society.

According to the National Policy of Education (2013), Kindergarten programme and other related program such as the crèche, nursery, day care, infant are Early childhood/pre-primary education which is fashioned for preschoolers or those children who are not upto primary school age in Nigeria.), it is the education which is given in an educational institution to children aged 2 to 5 plus prior to their entering the primary school. Although this assertion is, to a great extent, consistent with that of the National Policy on Education (NPE) in Nigeria, some pre-primary education facility providers admit less than 6-month old children into their schools.(Asaya, Ehigie & Igbinoghene, 2006).The Kindergarten is the type of preschool in Nigeria- is sometimes interchangeably used with the nursery school. However, it essentially means a school or class for young children, immediately before they begin primary education. Practically, all the kindergartens in Nigeria are owned by private bodies or quasi government agencies.

Furthermore, it is a pre-kindergarten school for children between the ages of three and five, staffed wholly by trained preschool teachers who encourage and supervise educational play rather than simply providing childcare. Asaya, Ehigie & Igbinoghene (2006) affirm that nursery schools/kindergarten are generally credited with being more educational than childcare centres. In Nigerian, virtually all the nursery schools and kindergarten are privately owned and run by interested individuals or business concerns whose tuition fees are prohibitively expensive. There is no government or publicly run nursery programmes to cater for the larger populace which do not belong to the upper-income families bracket. Besides, these preschool facilities operate at the whims and caprices of the owners who may not be abreast with best global practices in that level of education. More often than not children are coerced into learning concepts well beyond their age and capacities in these nursery schools all in the name to grow intelligent pupils.

Nevertheless, in the past Kindergarten enrollment has also increased dramatically. While only seven states mandate kindergarten attendance, about 95 percent of all children currently attend kindergarten (Sava 1987), and 23 percent of these attend full-day programs (Karweit 1988). In addition to the generally recognized need to provide some kind of extra support to children from low-income homes, there is another reason for the dramatic increase in educational programs for children before first grade. This is the increase, alluded to above, of mothers in the workforce. Many parents who are not at home with their children in the daytime are not satisfied with unstructured day care or babysitting, preferring that their children participate in more formal learning experiences. Finally, some of the increased interest in and push for structured preschool programmes come from the unfortunate notion, held by some, that education is a race to be won, and those who start first are more likely to finish ahead. Commenting on this source of pressure for preschool education, Elkind (1988) says that the choice of the phrase "Head Start" was unfortunate. "Head Start" does imply a race. And not surprisingly, when middle income parents heard that low-income children were being given a "Head Start," they wanted a similar "Head Start" for their children.

In Nigeria, there is no well-organized pre-primary education sector which predicts their involvement in the kindergarten and the few agencies/organizations that currently run pre-primary education facilities operate without putting the tender age of the children into

consideration. The children are constantly exposed to materials that are way beyond their abilities and capabilities. To worsen the issue, the government does not even play the critical supervisory role it ought to play at this level of education. In this regard, the Communiqué of the National Forum for Policy Development Workshop on National Education Reforms (2007) notes that: At this level, there is no government involvement in supervision and funding. Children aged between 2 and 5 years who should be in school at the pre-primary level are about sixteen (16) million but only 1 million are in school, representing 6.25%, whereby, Nigeria Educational Research Development Council (NERDC) (2004) clearly stipulates government involvement in Early Childhood Education Care (ECEC) as licensing, supervision/monitoring for quality control, training of suitably qualified personnel and provision of infrastructure, personnel and gender-fair instructional materials.

Quality control is expected to be instituted by supervision/monitoring. This can be attained through the Ministry of Education, supervisors, school heads and other designated personnel. Regulatory policies are instituted and compliance ensured for quality control. An effective ECEC cannot function in a vacuum. There needs to be a conducive school environment. In order to provide the needed quality and intensity of care and stimulation children need, attention must be paid to details in the school environment. Although the government has set up a policy framework for ECEC, Amadi (2010) revealed in his study that quality control is always compromised as government officials are "sorted" out with huge sums of money, leaving innocent children at the mercy of their teachers. He also revealed the inability of the state arm of government to provide the required checks and balances for quality control in primary schools of which the ECEC is a part.

Taking a careful look at the Nigerian situation, it is evident that majority of these preschools are poorly run. Besides the dangerous trend of pushing small children too hard, too fast to grasp concepts and the "nuisance" of unqualified and inexperienced teachers in most of these educational centres, the learning environment, which is called the third teacher in the Reggio Emilia schools (Gandini, 2002), is hardly put into consideration in Nigeria. This is against the backdrop of the fact that researches indicating that the physical environment of preschools has an important influence on the education and development of children are resonating globally (Greenman, 1988; Bailey and Wolery, 1992; Caples, 1996; Inan, 2009). In many early childhood education centres in Nigeria, the physical/learning environment is poorly designed, without ample space, furniture, toys, wholesome pictures and other materials which a child needs for stimulation, exploration and simulation. This is particularly regrettable because a critical element in the pre-primary education philosophy is the idea of educational play.

More so, the physical environment and the curriculum together enhance and support the child's ability to play, do something himself/herself, initiate and complete activities, take control of his/her own actions and responsibilities, communicate and interact with others easily, and have better perceptual and motor skills (Inan, 2009). While, (Osakue, 2011) lays the greatest blame of Early childhood Education at the doorsteps of the Nigerian government which has refused to play its supervisory, funding and inspection roles effectively at that level of education. It further backs up its claims by reviewing standard examples from other

countries and submits that there is an urgent need to reposition the Nigerian early childhood education sector. The government was not involved in the training and retraining of ECECs staff, maintenance of facilities, provision of adequate fund for ECECs and the use of professionally trained security personnel (Igbinedion, Abraham & Nwogu, 2016).

Purpose of the Study

Kindergarten education is one of the stages of early childhood education, it is to be a beneficial to young children of age 5-6 years for their educational development, it is also to assist a smooth transition to primary school. It used to be left in the hand of private individual but now government has shown interest in providing just a year program which will equally help enrollment into public primary school. The major purpose of this study is to examine the attitude of parents towards government involvement in kindergarten program in Kwara State.

Research Question

1. What are the attitudes of parents towards government involvement in Kindergarten Program in Kwara State?

Research Hypotheses

H_{01} : There is no significant difference in the attitudes of parents towards government involvement in Kindergarten education in Kwara State.

Research Methodology

This research study adopted descriptive survey research design. According to (Eneanya, 2012), this research design is the one which provides a plan for quantitative or numeric description of trends altitude or opinions of a population by studying a sample of that population. The purpose of descriptive survey is to collect detailed and factual information that describes an existing or a just concluded event (Oshodi, Asikhia & Asikhia, 2009).

A sample of two hundred and fifty parents was used in three local government Area of Kwara State; Ilorin West LGA, Ilorin South LGA and Ilorin East LGA Using simple random sampling technique, fifty parents were randomly selected in each of the Local Government Area of Kwara State.

Researcher's constructed Questionnaire was used to collect the data for the study. Researchers and Experts in measurement and evaluation validated the instrument in order to be sure that ambiguous items were corrected and irrelevant ones was removed to suit the objectives of the study into the final copy of the instrument before proceeding to administration of the questionnaire To determine the reliability of the instrument, internal consistency of the instrument by using Cronbach's alpha to determine the reliability value Cronbach's alpha method was used which gives 0.72 as the reliability value.

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Data Analysis

Analysis of Demographic Data of the respondents

Table 1: Frequency and percentage distribution showing the demographic characteristics of the respondents

Demographic Data	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Female		
Male	126	50.4
Total	124	49.6
Age	250	100
25 – 35 years		
36 – 45 years	70	28.0
46 – 55 years	66	26.4
56 years above	51	20.4
Total	63	25.2
Educational Qualification	250	100
Primary School Certificate		
N.C.E. /OND	55	22.0
HND/B.Sc./B.A/B.Ed./B.Tech.	67	26.8
Postgraduates	64	25.6
Total	64	25.6
Occupation	250	100
Civil Servants		
Trader	93	37.2
Others	77	30.8
Total	80	32.0
	250	100

Field Survey, 2017

Table 1 indicates the demographic data of two hundred and fifty (250) respondents in the study. the table show that 124(49.6%) respondents were male while female dominates with 124(50.4%). It also shows the age of respondents, where 25 – 35 years of ages dominates with 70(28.0%), 35 – 45 years are 66(26.4%) , 46 – 55 years are 51(20.4%) while 56 years above are 63(25.2%) in the study. It further indicated respondents education qualification where Primary School certificate holders are 55(22.0%), OND/NCE holders dominates with 67(26.8%), HND/B.Sc./B.A/B.Ed./B.Tech holders. are 64(25.6%) while respondents status of occupation of respondents, civil servant respondents dominates with 93 (37.2%), trades are 77(30.8%) while Others are of 80(32.0%) in the study.

Research question one: What are the attitudes of parents towards government involvement in Kindergarten Program in Kwara State?

Table 2: Showing the attitude of parents towards government involvement in kindergarten

S/N	Items	Mean	SD	Decision
1	Government equips kindergarten with necessary facilities and infrastructures in schools	2.58	1.12	Agree
2	Many parents registered their children in public private school	2.44	1.15	Disagree
3	Government is not supplying enough toys material in kindergarten school	2.45	1.19	Disagree
4	There are no available of professional and trained staffs for pupils	2.56	1.12	Agree
5	It is absolutely a free paying school	2.38	1.13	Disagree
6	Lack of parent activities in the School program	2.51	1.15	Agree
7	Public kindergarten Schools lacks funding from government	2.53	1.07	Agree
8	The idea of kindergarten in public school is more of paper work Government institutes regulatory and updated policies on kindergarten program in school. There have been constant training and retraining of staffs of public kindergarten by government	2.23	1.21	Disagree
9		2.40	1.10	Disagree
10		2.21	1.12	Disagree
Total Weighted Mean		2.43		

Field Survey, 2017

It can be deduced in the above table 2 that, parents disagree on most of the items on the government involvement in kindergarten programmes, some of these items include: use of professional and trained security personnel ($2.44 < 2.50$), lack of availability of professional and qualified staffs ($2.56 > 2.50$), presence of adequate maintenance of school facilities ($2.38 < 2.50$), lack of regular supervisions ($2.51 > 2.50$), constant training and retaining of staffs ($2.21 < 2.50$) and lack of updated policies and implementation in the program in the kindergarten program ($2.40 < 2.50$). Therefore, the research reveals that both the government and the parents involvement in kindergarten program in Kwara state is below expectation. This assertion is justified with the mean value of all items in table 2 lesser than 2.5. The weighted mean value of $2.43 < 2.5$ also justifies that attitude of the parents towards government involvement in kindergarten is low.

HIN

0.1 – 2.49 Low*
2.50 – 5.0 High

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Table 3: Analysis of variance showing the significant difference in attitude of parents towards government involvement in kindergarten based on their qualifications

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	P-value	Decision
Between Groups	22.009	18	1.223			
Within Groups	294.781	230	1.304	.937	.534	Accept
Total	318.800	248				

$P < 0.05$

Table 3 shows the df (248) and F value yielded .937 which is significant at 0.05 alpha level. Hence, the null hypothesis is accepted since the P-value .534 is greater than 0.05. This means that, there is no significant difference in the attitude of parents towards government involvement in kindergarten based on their educational qualification. The implication of this is that, regardless of the educational qualifications of the respondents parents have same attitude towards government involvement in kindergarten program in Kwara State.

Discussion of finding

Based on the finding in this study, it is an evident that the importance of kindergarten education cannot be over emphasized, it gives a child opportunity to be independence and build confidence it widen scope of understanding, enables child to fell free and sharpen the child's cognitive domain through learning of rhymes and songs (NPE 2013).

Hence, the attitude of parents reveals that government involvement in kindergarten program in Kwara State is low. This finding affirms the study of Igbinedion, Abraham & Nwogu (2016), which reveal that government was not involved in the training and retraining of ECECs staff, maintenance of facilities, provision of adequate fund for ECECs and the use of professionally trained security personnel.

Furthermore, the greatest blame of kindergarten education in public primary school as refused to play its superiority due to funding and inspection. Government is not funding kindergarten education as expected (Osakue, 2011), the study is also supported by the study of salami (2016) he investigated on parents' attitude towards kindergarten education program, is stated that many parent don't have knowledge of kindergarten education in primary school. Finally, this findings also reveal that there is no significant difference in the attitude of parents towards government involvement in kindergarten based on their qualification. Hence, the educational qualifications of the respondent's parents have same attitude towards government involvement in kindergarten program in Kwara State.

Conclusion

This study focused on the attitude of parents towards government involvement in kindergarten in Kwara State. It was found that parents hold negative attitudes towards

government involvement in kindergarten program whereby government involvement in kindergarten is low. Therefore, this empirically reveals the attitude of parents towards the way government engage in the organization, implementation of policies, funding, supervision and others keys structure of kindergarten program is not encouraging due to the lack of government proper involvement in the program. Conclusion can be drawn that, attitude of the parents towards government involvement in the kindergarten is not encouraging in the early childhood education/pre-primary education which can predict a lot of emotional, social and academic damages to young children and toddlers before their enrolment into primary schools.

Recommendations

It was recommended that parents and guardians of the young children or toddlers in kindergarten should endeavour to exhibit positive attitude towards government little effort towards early child education especially at the kindergarten level in order to support the progress and standardization of the program. In addition, Nigeria Government at federal and state level should provide adequate fund for kindergarten education for its effective and smooth operation; train and retrain of kindergarten staff to update their knowledge on issues concerning child care; use of professionally trained personnel to beef up school security and maintain of school facilities to ensure facilities relevance in providing safe school environment. Also government should create awareness of the existence of kindergarten school in free fee paying institution

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