

SCHOOL READINESS: A COMPETENCE OF SOCIAL- EMOTIONAL SKILLS AMONG PRIMARY ONE PUPIL IN SOUTHEASTERN, NIGERIA

BY

Nkechi Ngozi Ewunonu Ph.D

Department of Early Childhood Care and Education
Alvan Ikoku University of Education, Owerri, Imo State
nkechin2000@yahoo.com 08035939137

Moses Dele Amosun Ph.D

Department of Early Child Educational Foundation
University of Ibadan, Nigeria

and

Chioma Florence Njoku Ph.D

Department of Early Childhood Care and Education
Alvan Ikoku University of Education, Owerri, Imo State

Abstract

School readiness is not only centered on a child been cognitively or physically ready for school. A child needs social- emotional skills that will enable him or her to succeed in school. Social-emotional skills are critical foundation for academic success and overall well- being in primary school. This study viewed the extent to which primary-one pupils in Southeastern, Nigeria show competence in social-emotional skills (self-awareness, social-awareness and relationship skills) when they enrolled in primary school. The choice of chosen primary one pupil is because; they had finished one year pre- primary school and transit to primary school. So, it was important to view the extent to which primary one pupils showed competence in social- emotional skills as they enrolled into primary school. Previous studies showed that children lack social –emotional skills when they enrolled in formal school. Erikson’s Social-Emotional Human Development theory provided the scheme. Survey design of the correlation approach was applied. Simple random sample technique was applied to pick three (Abia, 320; Anambra’ 416 and Imo, 418) states in southeastern Nigeria. The disproportionate sampling technique was applied to select four Local Government Areas (LGAs) from each of the selected states making 12 LGAs. Five public primary schools that have been existing for not less than twenty years were purposely selected through the use of purposive sampling from each LGA. Simple random sampling technique was applied to select entire class from each school, all having 1200 pupils. Research instruments used were

children Socio-emotional Skills ($r=0.92$) rating scales. Analysis of data was conducted with the aid of descriptive statistics. Socio-emotional skills of primary one pupil in Southeastern, Nigeria were (65.0%). It recommended that parents should try harder to inculcate socio-emotional skills in their children at home which will help them later in life. Towards the end of one year pre-primary school, Government should set a standard assessment test for all pre-primary school pupils in each state to know the extent to which primary one pupils show competence in social-emotional skills before they transit to primary one. The result of the test will qualify them to primary school.

Keywords: Social-emotional skill, Social-awareness, self-awareness, Relationship skill, School readiness, Primary one pupil, Southeastern Nigeria.

Introduction

The transition to primary school is a significant milestone in a child's life, marking the beginning of formal education and social interactions within a structured environment. While academic readiness is often emphasized, social-emotional readiness is equally crucial for a child's success and well-being in this new setting. Social-emotional skills such as self-awareness, social awareness and relationship skill are essential for children to handle the complexities of school life, build positive relationships and thrive academically. Children who have quality pre-primary education should acquire the basic social-emotional skills in addition to good behaviour and basic knowledge necessary to transit him or her effectively to primary education. Children need to develop social-emotional skills during the early years that will help them as they climb the educational ladder and beyond. Related research shows that children, who focus, control their emotions, and their interactions with peers / adults, and their willpower in the face of difficulties are more likely to attend class and learn more, has been shown in (Cybele-Raver 2002). Children need to start acquiring these basic skills in early years with the help of their parents even before they start pre-primary school.

Pre-primary school is education given to children in a formal setting from the ages of 5 and 6 with the goal of preparing them for primary school and beyond (FRN, 2013). Preschool education is generally recognized as children's education under the age of six. This education occurs before primary education or the typical age for children to start school (Maduweri & Agusiobo, 2005). According to Oduolowu (2010), pre-primary school is the most charming and yet hazardous period in the child's development as experience gained at this stage may make or spoil the child permanently. Some of the objectives of this programme include preparing the children for primary level of education, instilling social, moral norms, and values, fostering cooperation, fostering teamwork and so on. This primarily helps prepare children for primary school as stated by (Obidike, 2012). Pieterse (2015) is of the view that the first five years of a child is crucial since these years prepare the stage for their lifelong growth and development that will help them later in life. Ochoyi & Danladi (2009) stated that the general goal of education is to implant good values such as information, skills, and planned actions that can increase learners' capacity for societal advancement. Children need to be well prepared in terms of social-emotional skills such as self-awareness, social-awareness and relationship skills before they transit to primary school.

The primary level of education is globally recognized as Nigeria's formal educational level. This is the level of education that children from age 6 to 12 receive according to the National Policy on Education (FRN, 2013). This level of education is critical to a child's learning as it relies on other formal levels of education. According to Akinbote (2010), a child in Nigeria must be six years old to begin his/ her formal education and attend six years of school to complete her primary education. The objective of primary education is to shape the personalities and foster the development of a good attitude and morality in pupils among others. The listed objectives would not be achieved if pupils are not well-prepared for primary school in terms of social- emotional skills. The primary-one pupils were selected for this study because these pupils have completed the one-year, compulsory pre-primary school programme recommended by the government. It is important to know the extent to which primary one pupils show competence in social- emotional skills in terms of self-awareness, social- awareness and relationship skills when enrolled into primary school. Children are considered to be ready for school if they can learn well and without any social- emotional problems.

Thus, child's readiness for primary school is referred to as school readiness. School-ready children have the background knowledge, abilities, and experiences to successfully adapt to new environments (Maxwell & Clifford, 2004). School readiness is the capacity of a youngster to demonstrate basic behaviours and skills in specific areas that prepare children to learn from elementary school through subsequent educational levels. (Snow, 2006) defined school readiness as the competencies children need to succeed in school. Children emotional, social, and cognitive development level is used to determine how ready children are for school, (Kleeck & Schuele, 2010). The prerequisites for a child to successfully move from pre- primary school to the primary school setting constitute school readiness (Zhang, Sun & Gai, 2008). (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development OECD, 2006) claims that school readiness is essential for the successive attainment of a child in schooling as the child transits from one level of education to another with proficiency to read, write, follow established school rules, interact with peers and adults, and conform to those rules. Children who are adequately prepared and ready for school are more likely to go through school without much stress adjusting to the teaching and learning environment.

Despite the importance of school readiness in terms of social-emotional skills, research showed that some children still lack social – emotional skills when they enrolled into primary school. Kato, Yanagawa, Fujiwara & Morawska, (2015) stated that some children displayed behavioural problems in school. According to a study by the Fox & Dudu, (2004) during the conference on Center on the Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning (2008), report shows that some kids lack the social-emotional skills required to succeed in school. Various studies on children's socio-emotional skills concerning school readiness in various areas have not examined it within the Southeastern, Nigeria, and the group of learners is not primary one pupils. The need for this investigation was caused by these gaps that were established.

Research Questions

Three questions were discussed in this study:

1. To what extent do primary one pupils in Southeastern, Nigeria show competence in self-awareness when they are enrolled in primary school?
2. To what extent do primary one pupils in Southeastern, Nigeria show competence in social-awareness when they are enrolled in primary school?

3. To what extent do primary one pupils in Southeastern, Nigeria show competence in relationship skills when they are enrolled in primary school?

Method

This study used a survey design of the correlation type. A multi-stage sampling technique was used to select pupils for this study. Simple random sampling technique was applied to select three (3) states in Southeastern, Nigeria out of five states namely Imo state, Abia state and Anambra state for this study. Four Local Government Areas from each of the states selected for this study were chosen using a disproportionate sampling technique. This makes it a total of twelve (12) Local Government Areas covered within the Southeastern, Nigeria for this study. Five public primary schools were used from each Local Government Area in each selected State using a purposeful sampling technique. The schools were chosen based on the following criterias: the schools used for this study were in each of the LGA selected, the schools were all public primary school. Hence, twenty public primary schools were selected from each state, which made a total of sixty schools for this study. To choose a class from the existing primary one class arms, a simple random sample technique was used, and entire class was used. Hence, the total number of pupils from the three states selected was 1,200 pupils.

The instrument used for this was Children Socio-Emotional Skills Rating Scale (CSESRS). This research instrument was adapted from the Study of Social-Emotional Development of Kindergarten- 2nd Grade Students (SSDKSGS) developed by Brenchley (2017). The original version of this research instrument had eighty (80) items and was developed to aid teachers in creating the screening tool's items based on the behaviour they saw in their students. The research instrument was adapted in a simple and clear language in such a way that the teachers and research assistants understood it without too much explanation. The items were reduced to twenty-one (21) so that it would not be too cumbersome for the teacher and research assistants to assess each child. The research instrument had three (3) dimensions of socio-emotional skills: self-awareness, social awareness and relationship skills. In scoring this rating scale, four levels were identified from 1 to 4, to show the extent primary one pupils in Southeastern, Nigeria show competence in social-emotional skills in terms of self-awareness, social- awareness and relation skills when they enrolled in primary school, (1 point) –None of the time, (2 points) – some of the time, (3 points) – Most of the time and (4 points) - All the time.

To validate this research instrument, the draft was given to five experts in department of Early Childhood and Educational Foundations, University of Ibadan, who subjected it to face and content validity to ensure the structuring and appropriateness. Their observations were made known and useful suggestion for improvement of the research instrument was noted and effected appropriately, before the final copies were produced. Field-testing of the research instrument was conducted in order to test the reliability of the research instrument. The research instrument's revised version was used by class teachers and research assistants on 20 primary one pupils in the public schools who were not part of the study. These respondents were not included in the main research. The research instrument's dependability was carried out using inter-rater technique and it yielded 0.92 co-efficient. The acquired data for this study were analyzed using descriptive statistics such as frequency counts and percentages.

RESULTS

Demographic data analysis

Table 1: States and Local Government Areas Distributions of the Pupils

State	LGA	Freq.	State % (Total %)
Imo State	Orlu	119	28.47 (0.10)
	Owerri North	118	28.23 (0.10)
	Ngor-Okpala	64	15.31 (0.05)
	Owerri Municipal	117	27.99 (0.10)
	State Total	418	(34.83)
Abia State	Aba South	104	32.50 (0.09)
	Osisoma Ngwa	106	33.13 (0.09)
	Umuahia North	57	17.81 (0.05)
	Umuahia South	53	16.56 (0.04)
	State Total	320	(26.67)
Anambra State	Aguata	114	24.68 (0.10)
	Iheala	126	27.27 (0.11)
	Idimmiri North	110	23.81 (0.09)
	Oyi	112	24.24 (0.09)
	State Total	462	(38.5)
Grand Total		1200	100.0

Table 1 revealed that the pupils were from three states namely, Imo (34.8%), Abia (26.7%) and Anambra (38.5%) states. Pupils from Imo state were from Orlu (28.5%), Owerri North (28.2%), Ngor-Okpala (15.3%) and Owerri municipal (28.0%) LGAs. Those from Abia state were from Abia South (32.5%), Osisoma Ngwa (33.1%), Umuahia North (17.8%) and Umuahia South (16.6%) LGAs. Those from Anambra state were from Aguata (24.7%), Ihiala (27.3%), Idimmiri North (23.8%) and Oyi (24.2%) LGAs.

To answer these three research questions, descriptive analysis of frequency count, percentage, mean, standard deviation and weighted average were computed.

Table 2: Observed Self-awareness Skills of Primary I Pupils

SELF- AWARENESS					
S/N	ITEM	N	MEAN	Std.D	REMARK
1.	Manager anger when hurt	1200	2.413	.917	LT
2.	Appreciate oneself	1200	2.773	.869	MT
3.	Can tell how they feel or express their feelings	1200	2.756	.829	MT
4.	Seat calmly when they ought to	1200	2.617	.928	MT
5.	Follow instruction and order	1200	2.622	.894	MT
6.	Do things on his/her own without seeking for help (Self-dependent)	1200	2.442	.911	LT
7.	Ability to do things well without anyone support	1200	2.429	.894	LT
8.	Express his/her feelings easily in a way that people understand	1200	2.590	.868	MT
9.	Do not cry in class and get upset when they lose in a game	1200	2.502	.967	MT
Weighted Average		2.572(64.3%)		Most of the time	

Table 2 revealed the self- awareness skills of primary one pupils when given admission. The pupils self- awareness weighted Average was **2.572** with **(64.3%)**. The answer to research **question 1** is that primary 1 pupils have average self- awareness skills when gaining admission into primary school in Southeastern, Nigeria.

Table 3: Observed Socio-Awareness Skills of Primary one Pupils

SOCIAL – AWARENESS

S/N	ITEMS	N	MEAN	Std.D	REMARK
1.	Observe and know when other pupils are upset	1200	2.471	.907	MT
2.	Take turns	1200	2.599	.861	MT
3.	Relate well with children from different socio- Economic background.	1200	2.798	.907	MT
4.	Work effectively in a group work	1200	2.725	.924	MT
5.	Render helping hands to others in need of help	1200	2.591	.961	MT
6.	Uses words and action to imitate others during play	1200	2.729	.836	MT
Weighted average		2.652 (66.3%)		MT	

Table 3 revealed the social- awareness skills of primary one pupils when they enrolled in primary one. The pupils social – awareness weighted Average is **2.652 with (66.3%)**. The answer to research **question 2** is that primary 1 pupils had high social- awareness skills when gained admission into a primary school in Southeastern, Nigeria.

Table 4: Observed Relationship Skills of Primary I Pupils

RELATIONSHIP SKILLS

S/N	Items	N	Mean	Std. D.	Remark
1	Tell someone that he/she is up-set without yelling	1200	2.306	.776	LT
2	Do not yell at peers	1200	2.263	.811	LT
3	Uses words and action to imitate others during play activities	1200	2.765	.922	MT
4	Easily make friends	1200	2.977	.930	MT
5	Help peers when they are sad	1200	2.712	.937	MT
6	Considers other people opinion/ views	1200	2.403	.870	LT

Weighted Average

2.571 (64.3%) MT

Table 4 revealed the relationship skills of primary one pupils when they enrolled in primary one. The pupils Relationship skills weighted Average is **2.571 with (64.3%)**. The answer to research **question 3** is that primary 1 pupils had average relationship skills when gaining admission into a primary school in Southeastern, Nigeria.

Discussion of Findings

The result on the extent to which primary–one pupils in Southeastern, Nigeria show competence in social-emotionally skills in terms of self-awareness, social- awareness and relationship skills when they were enrolled in primary school revealed that, primary I pupils had higher social- awareness, average in self-awareness and average in relationship skills when gained admission into primary school in Southeastern, Nigeria. The reasons could be the environment these children grew up in; there could be other children of the same age group they might play and interact with in their neighbourhood. Also, the type of parents they had could be the ones that allowed their children to interact with other children at home and neighbourhood. Another reason could be pre-primary school they attended that helped to inculcate these skills in them. This is in line with (Unutkan, 2003; Yoleri & Taniş, 2014) that Children are ready for school in terms of basic skills and areas of development. This is also in line with (Bay & Bay, 2020), who reported that children assess in respect to school readiness were fairly prepared for school in terms of cognitive, affective, psychomotor, and self-care abilities. This also negate report of Center on the Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning, (2008) which submitted that children are enrolled in school without the social-emotional, and behavioural skills that are necessary for learning and success in school. In addition, this contradicts the finding of a study conducted by

Kato, Yanagawa, Fujiwara, & Morawska, (2015) that only 10 to 20% of children have behavioural issues that are clinically severe. Also, a survey of more than 3000 kindergarten teachers by (Rimm-Kaufman, Pianta, & Cox, 2000) revealed that 30% of the pupils in their classes lacked mental skills, had trouble following directions, and had trouble cooperating with others; and 20% reported that at least half of the class had issues with social skills (Rimm-Kaufman, Pianta, & Cox, 2000).

Conclusion

It has been proven empirically that those children who had undergone one year pre- primary school in Southeastern Nigeria and transit to primary school showed competence in social- emotional skills in terms of self- awareness, social- awareness and relationship skills when they enrolled in primary one.

Recommendations

Based on the result of this finding, the following recommendations are made.

- ❖ Towards the end of one year compulsory pre- primary school, Government should set a standard assessment test for all pre-primary school pupils in the state to test their social emotional skills; the result of the test will qualify them for primary school.
- ❖ Parents and caregivers, in addition to getting children ready for school cognitively and physically, they should also inculcate these social emotional skills in them as a way of getting them ready for primary school.
- ❖ SUBEB in each state in Southeastern, Nigeria should organise a workshop / seminars to caregivers and parents on regular bases to teach them how to inculcate social- emotional skills in children at the early stage which will help them later in life. Experts in early childhood education should be invited to carry out this training.
- ❖ Parents should take this Early Childhood Education seriously by enrolling their children/ wards in school as a way of getting them ready for primary school.

References

- Akinbote, O., Oduolowu, E., & Lawal, B. (2001). Pre-primary and primary education in Nigeria: A basic text. Stirling-Horden Publishers (Nig.).
- Bay, Y. & Bay, D. N. (2020). Determining children's primary school readiness level. *European Journal of Educational Science*. 7.4, 1857-6036. <http://dx.doi.org/10.19044/ejes.v7no4a6>.
- Brenchley, J. F. (2017). Social-emotional development assessment: Scale development for kindergarten through second grade youth universal screening.
- Cybele-Raver, C. (2002). Emotions matter: Making the case for the role of young children semotional development for early school readiness, *Social Policy Report*16.3
- Federal republic of Nigeria (2013). National policy on education (3rd) Lagos: NERDC press.
- Fox. L & Dudu. M,(2004). Center on the Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning What Are Children Trying to Tell Us?: Assessing the Function of Their Behavior What Works Brief #9. 2004.<http://csefel.vanderbilt.edu/briefs/wwb9.pdf> Volume: 9
- Kato, N. Yanagawa, T., Fujiwara, T. & Morawska, A. (2015). Prevalence of children's mental health problems and effectiveness of population-level family interventions. *Journal of Epidemiology*, 25(8), 507–516. Doi:10.2188/jea.JE20140198.
- Kleeck, A.V.& Schuele, C.M. (2010). Historical perspectives on literacy in early childhood. *American Journal of Speech-Language pathology*.

- Maduewesi, E.J.& Agusiobo, B. C. (2005). The development and education of African children, proceeding of OMEP Africa regional seminar.
- Maxwell, K.& Clifford, R. M. (2004). Research in review: School readiness assessment. *Young Children*, 59, 42-46.
- Obidike, I. V. (2012). Towards effective early childhood care and education programme in Nigeria. *Journal of teacher perspective* 6(3) 507-513.
- Ochoyi, U.E.& Danladi, P. (2009). Challenges for mathematics teachers in the teaching of measurement under the universal basic education (UBE) scheme in Nigeria. *J. Math. Assoc. Niger.* 34 (1) 85-90.
- Oduolowu, E.A. (2010). Early childhood care and education in Nigeria. Lagos: High scope press
- Organisation for Co-operation and development (OECD), (2006). Starting strong early childhood education and care, OECD publishing, Paris.2006.
- Pieterse, D. (2015). Childhood maltreatment and educational outcomes: Evidence from South Africa. *Health economic*, 24(7): 876-894. Doi.10.1002/hec.3065.
- Rimm-Kaufman, S.E., Pianta, R.C. & Cox, M.J. (2000). Teachers' judgment of problems in the transition to kindergarten. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 15, 147-166.
- Snow, K. (2006). Measuring school readiness: Conceptual and practical considerations. *Early Education and Development*, 17, 7-41.
- Unutkan, O. P. (2003). *Marmara Ilkogretim Hazir Oluş Olgeginin Geli^tirilmesi ve Standar dizasyonu* (Doktora Tezi). Marmara Universitesi, Istanbul.
- Yoleri, S. & Taniş, H. M. (2014). Primary School birinci sinif ogrencilerinin okula uyum duzeylerini etkileyen degışkenlerin incelenmesi. *Karabuk Universitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitusu Dergisi*, 4(2), 130-141.
- Zhang, X., Sun, L. & Gai, X. (2008). "Perceptions of Teachers' and Parents' Regarding School Readiness. *Front. Educ China*, 3(3): 460-471. DOI 10.1007/s11516-008-0030-6.