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ASSESSING PSYCHOSOCIAL CHALLENGES OF PERSONNEL IN COMMUNITY-BASED EARLY CHILDHOOD CARE CENTERS IN OYO STATE, NIGERIA

BY

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Abstract

The early childhood period is highly important in the life of every child. This study therefore assessed the psychosocial challenges of personnel in Community-based early childhood care centers in Oyo State, Nigeria. Descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. The population of the study consisted of 66 personnel in childhood care centers in Oyo State and a sample of 50 respondents purposively selected from Ibadan metropolis. Purposive sampling technique was used to select Fifty (50) personnel that participated in the study. Researcher self-designed questionnaire titled: Questionnaire for Assessment of Psychosocial Challenges of Personnel in Childhood Care Centers (QAPCPCCC) consisting 17 items (r=0.7426) was used to collect data for the study and data collected was analyzed. The findings of this study revealed high prevalence of psychosocial challenges of personnel in community-based early childhood care centers in Oyo State, Nigeria. It was as well revealed that gender did not have influence on the psychosocial challenges of personnel in childhood care centers but level of education has influence. Based on the findings of this study it was recommended that qualified and competent personnel should be employed to solve the issue of the unqualified workers a, teachers should be trained and retrained on new trends in early childhood education.

Keywords: Psychosocial Challenges, Personnel, Community-Based Early Childhood and Care Centers

Introduction

Early years in life are the most crucial period in the life of every child. It is a period that provides the basis for future development and achievement. Whatever children experience during this period has tremendous impact on their learning, development and future achievements. This is simply because children witness tremendous growth and development during this period. It is during this stage of life that the foundations for cognitive, physical and emotional development are built. Oduolowu and Olowe (2011) remark that the early years of children are years of extreme vulnerability and tremendous potentials, during which adequate protection, care and stimulation are essential to provide the foundation for well-being and development. Ayoola, Ojoko and Olowe (2018) is of the opinion that early childhood period is a remarkable and critical period of growth and development. In view of the importance of early childhood period, authors and relevant groups around the world have consistently reiterate the fact that children should be provided with care and learning opportunities that can support their full potentials and holistic development (Asia- Pacific Regional Network for Early Childhood, ARNEC, 2014; European Union, 2014; Olowe, Omotuyole & Oloyede, 2015; Osanyin, 2012). This substantiates the reason why every country of the world seeks to provide Early Childhood Education (ECE) for children during the period.

Early childhood education (ECE) is about molding the holistic child. It is a term used to explain any type of educational programme that serves children in their preschool years. Akinrotimi and Olowe (2016) describe Early Childhood Education as the education given to children from birth to eight years, which enhances intellectual, socio-emotional, language, and physical development in children. Nakpodia (2011) defines Early Childhood Education as a formal education given to children from age one to five-plus before entering into the primary level of education. Classify early childhood into Creche, Day care, Playgroup, Nursery and Kindergarten. Aguh and Olutola (2023) described Early Childhood Education as an essential formal education given to children from conception to eight years for cognitive, social, and emotional development, language and speech development, and the development of fine and gross motor skills.Olowe, Kutelu, and Majebi (2014) submit that it is a wide range of programmes, activities and experiences which are planned to enhance the cognitive, social, emotional, moral and physical development of children.

The Early Childhood Care Education (ECCE) as contained in the National Policy on Education (Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN 2013) is the first formal Education for children aged between 2 to 6 years of life in

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preparation for primary schooling. ECCE was intended to be provided under the care, love, protection and supervision of well-trained and skilled preschool teachers and care-givers. Early Childhood Education (ECE) is a unique and indispensable programme that is planned to enhance the cognitive, social, emotional, moral and physical development of children. Olowe and Ayoola (2016) observed that ECE has gone through one intervention or the other in Nigeria because of the many opportunities that it has for helping children to achieve their full potentials and for national development. One of such interventions according to Olowe and Ayoola (2016) is the development of a policy referred to as National Policy for Integrated Early Childhood Development (IECD). The policy integrates interventions from various sectors to promote an integrated holistic approach to the development of the child in its very earliest years. Also, the Federal Government of Nigeria (2007) submits that interventions in health, training, nutrition, care, stimulation, protection and participation of the child would be converged. The IECD Policy clearly lays out coordination mechanisms at the national, state, local government area (LGA) and community levels to ensure effective delivery of Early Childhood Development (ECD) services (The World Bank, 2013). It is stated in the policy that several strategies will be employed to ensure effective implementation of the policy. Among the strategies stated for its implementation are awareness campaign and capacity building for teachers and parents.

In Nigerian Government at all levels, development partners and other stakeholders appreciated the role that CBCCs were playing in the cognitive development of children, the exact number of these CBCCs, numbers of children enrolled in the CBCCs, and the number of caregivers still remained unknown in Nigeria and Oyo State in particular because of its ever-growing nature of the system. Eluwa (1985) stated that the objectives of the early childhood education can only be realized when preschool teachers are professionally prepared and humanly disposed in being patient with the kids, avoiding any of shouting with loud voice, scolding or unnecessary flogging as this may seriously interfere with their learning process. Preschool teachers should rather be very friendly, fun-loving, playful and ever-ready in storytelling, these being qualities that characterize the preschools ambient environment and which according to Botton (1976), is enjoyed by both normal and physically challenged children. Botton added that at this stage child with special needs are identified, problems diagnosed for possible remediation. It however depends on a well-qualified teacher of the preschooler to effectively take up these challenges. It therefore, requires that preschool teachers are given special training that grooms them to be caring and empathetic, teaching them the rudiments of numbers, letters, shapes, colours as well as inculcate in them social norms and values, spirit of enquiry, inquisition and creativity through play, and to develop a sense of cooperation, team spirit and to acquire good habits in some other socially acceptable dimensions (Amadi, 2010).

Teaching early childhood education provides a strong footing for young children development, it also helps to build the child's cognitive, physical, social and emotional proficiency which will prepare them for life challenges. However, we can't ignore the difficulty in finding qualified trained early educators in Nigeria. Early childhood education is unique in its requirement of trained teachers. The reason why it is hard to find capable teachers to teach early childhood education in Nigeria is that competent educators won't accept the low salary offered by institutions in the country. Therefore, this forces preschools in Nigeria into cutting corners, by hiring unqualified teachers that may not be suitable for the job. This definitely affects the quality of education being served to the children. NAEYC stipulates that early childhood teachers must have an in-depth knowledge of DAP in educating young children. Most early childhood centers in Nigeria are managed by unqualified and incompetent teachers who lack the instructional skills of teaching and imparting knowledge to the children. Amadi (2013) affirm that government-owned public schools are characterized by a lack of competent and unqualified teachers and caregivers. In line with the above assertion, the lack of qualified and incompetent teachers in early childhood education is another major issue. Psychosocial challenges are referring to the psychological and social problems that may or mar the performance or output of a teacher in and out of school. In Nigerian society, both work and living environments can be major sources of adverse psychosocial challenges which result in stressful experiences. Adverse occupational psychosocial problems, however, have become increasingly significant.

Level of education has been subject of discussion among variables that have impact on the psychosocial challenges of the personnel in early childhood centres. Schaufeli, Bakker & Salanova (2006) reported that

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people who have low education are more likely to experience elevated level of psychosocial stress. and more likely to have negative manifestation of stress than their counterpart while Geetika and Harish (2015) holds the opinion that when level of education increases, stress experienced also increases due to increase in the responsibilities.

Statement of the Problem

According to NAEYC (2005), there are standards for serving a good quality of education. Therefore, there is the need for teachers to meet those standards. In this sense, as a researcher identifying the challenges pre-school teachers face during the cause of discharging their duties is a necessity because once the challenges were detected precisely, it is easier to deal with those challenges by finding ways of managing those challenges. In this light and since many remains to be understood about what early childhood teachers/care givers are experiencing, it is then highly imperative to conduct an empirical study to ascertain the challenges that pre-school personnel face in community-based early childhood care centers. This study was therefore conducted in order to assess the prevalence of psychosocial challenges encountered by the teachers/caregivers in the cause of discharging their duties in various centers in Oyo State, Nigeria.

Purpose of the Study

This study was purposely carried out to assess the level of psychosocial of personnel in community-based early childhood care centers in Oyo State, Nigeria. The study also aimed to find out the association between the level of psychosocial challenges with gender and level of education.

Research Questions

The following research questions were generated to guide the study;

1. What is the level of psychosocial challenges of personnel in community-based early childhood care centers in Oyo State, Nigeria?

Research Hypotheses

Ho^1: There is no statistically significant difference in the response regarding the psychosocial challenges of personnel in community-based early childhood care centers in Oyo State, Nigeria based on gender.

Ho^2: There is no statistically significant difference in the in psychosocial challenges of personnel in community-based early childhood care centers in Oyo State Nigeria based on level of education.

Methodology

This study adopted the descriptive survey research design. Survey research was chosen because the researcher collected data from respondents through the use of questionnaire. The population for the study consisted of 66 personnel in Community-Based Early Childhood Development Care Centers in Oyo State, Nigeria while target population for the study consisted of Community- Based Early Childhood Development Education Centers in Ibadan metropolis. Purposive sampling technique was used to select 25 Community-Based Early Childhood Development Care Centers and a sum of 2 personnel each were randomly selected from the selected 25 Community- Based Early Childhood Development Care Centers to participate in the study. Thus Fifty (50) respondents participated in the study. Researcher self-designed questionnaire titled: Questionnaire for Assessment of Psychosocial Challenges of Personnel in Childhood Care Centers (QAPCPCCC) was used to collect data from the participants. This questionnaire contained 17 items with a 4 points Likert-type scale of SA = Strongly Agree; A = Agree: SD - Strongly Disagree; D = Disagree. Validity according to Brown (2000) is the degree to which a test measures what it claims or purports to be measuring. Validity of this instrument was ensured by given it to experts in the fields of Early Childhood Education and Educational Research, Measurement and Evaluation and all suggestions and corrections were attended to. Reliability of this instrument was determined through administration of the instrument by the researcher on 20 personnel in Ten (10) other similar centers that were not selected for the study. Data collected from the pilot testing were subjected to analysis with Cronbach Alpha and the results of the reliability test shows reliability co-efficient of 0.7426, this means that the instrument was reliable for the study.

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The instrument was administered to the respondents by the researcher. Descriptive statistics in form of mean and standard deviation were used to provide answer to the research question 1, Decision rule of upper and lower limit are used, the lower limit for strongly disagree is 1.00 and the upper limit isl.50, the lower limit for disagree is 1.51 and the upper limit is 2.50, the limit for agree is 2.51 and the upper limit is 3.50, while the lower limit for strongly agree is 3.51 and the upper limit is 4.00. Therefore, 2.50 being the lower limit of 3 was considered as the decision point and any mean scores above 2.50 is considered as agree, while any mean scores below 2.50 is considered as disagree. To test two research hypotheses generated in the study inferential statistics i.e. t-test statistics and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) statistics were used to test and SPSS software was employed for the analysis.

Results

The data collected were analysed by the researcher using both descriptive and inferential statistical procedures. Mean and standard deviation were used to provide answer to research question 1 while t-test and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) statistics were used to test the two (2) null hypotheses at 0.05 alpha level.

Answering of Research Question

Research Question One: What is the level of psychosocial challenges of personnel in community- based early childhood care centers in Oyo State, Nigeria?

Table 1: Psychosocial challenges of personnel in community-based early childhood care centers

S/N	Indicators of Psychosocial Challenge	Mean	SD	Decision
	Psychological Challenges			
1	At times, I think am not good in Lesson Plan preparation	3.23	1.673	Agree
2	I always feel unpleased with my low income	3.16	1.619	Agree
3	I find it difficult to coping with numerous challenges of students	3.16	1.619	Agree
4	I often become emotionally exhausted	3.10	1.563	Agree
5	I sometimes find it difficult to sleep after work	3.09	1.559	Agree
6	I do experiences of irrational fears/phobia about the children behavior	3.00	1.506	Agree
7	At times, I feeling stressed having issues with parents	3.20	1.623	Agree
8	I often have disagreements with supervisor and co-workers	2.77	1.592	Agree
	Social Challenges			
9	I often find it difficulty matching home with teaching workload	2.85	1.523	Agree
10	I am often uncomfortable using different teaching methods	2.88	1.562	Agree
11	I rarely enrolling for training, seminars and In-service training	2.82	1.583	Agree
12	Poor center climate is worrisome to me	2.72	1.582	Agree
13	Often lacking welfare in my work place	3.05	1.592	Agree
14	Often lacking appropriate texts books and curriculum to use	2.88	1.562	Agree
15	At times, not feel comfortable with lack of clearly define roles	2.85	1.531	Agree
16	Lack of Learning Resources and Materials do affect my work	3.11	1.543	Agree
17	I often feel disturb with lack of job autonomy	3.05	1.592	Agree
Grand Mean		**2.81**		

From the above table the respondents for all the 17 items have the mean scores ranging from 2.72 to 3.23 which indicate that all the respondents have agreed as evidenced by a benchmark weighted mean score of 2.50, the table shows the responses for all the items as indicators of challenges facing them in childhood care centers and they have the mean scores that is above the cut-off point for the study, thus the decision to agree or disagree on the table meaning that greater number of respondents agreed with all the items as psychosocial challenges of personnel in community-based early childhood care centers in Oyo State, Nigeria.

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Testing of Research Hypotheses

Ho[1]: *There is no statistically significant difference in psychosocial challenges of personnel in community – based early childhood care centers in Oyo State, Nigeria based on gender*

Table 2: Summary table of t-test analysis of Psychosocial challenges of personnel in community-based early childhood care centers on the basis of gender

Gender	No.	Mean	SD	DF	Cal.t.value	Sig.(2tailed)	Decision
Male	19	2.96	1.631	48	*0.59*	450	Accept
Female	31	2.81	1.628				

*Significant, P<0.05

The results in table 2 indicate a mean of 2.96 for male respondents and 2.81 for female respondents, t-calculated of 0.59 with df of 48. Since Sig (2-tailed) of 0.450 is less than 0.50 alpha level of significance. This implies that there was statistically significant difference in psychosocial challenges of personnel in community-based early childhood care centers in Oyo State, Nigeria based on gender.

Hypotheses Two

Ho[2]: *There is no statistically significant difference in psychosocial challenges of personnel in community based early childhood care centers in Oyo State, Nigeria based on level of education.*

Table 3: Analysis of variance (ANOVA) on psychosocial challenges of personnel in community based early childhood care centers on the basis of level of education

Level of Education	SS	DF	MS	Cal.F.Value	Crit.F-ration	Decision
Between group	556.524	2	278.262	10.33*	*3.00*	Significant
Within group	1265	47	26.924			
	1821.967	49				

*Significant, P<0.05

Table 3 indicates that the calculated F-value is 10.33 while, the critical F-value is 3.00 since the calculated F-value of 10.26 is greater than the critical F-value of 3.00 at 0.005 level of significance the hypothesis is rejected. This means that there was statistically significant difference in psychosocial challenges of personnel in community based early childhood care centers in Oyo state, Nigeria based on level of education.

Discussion of the Findings

The finding of this study indicated that there was high prevalence of psychosocial challenges of personnel in community-based early childhood care centers in Oyo State, Nigeria. The finding of this study also revealed that there was significant difference due to gender in psychosocial challenges of personnel in community-based+ early childhood care centers in Oyo State, Nigeria. This indicates that gender do influence psychosocial challenges face by the personnel in community-based early childhood care centers.These findings supported the findings of Melhinsh (1998) and Arroba and James (2002). Melhinsh (1998) concluded that since most women work longer hours than men and both do not share duties equally at home. Therefore, women tend to experience more psychological symptoms of occupational stress than men and the same direction Arroba and James (2002) reported that the relationship between gender and stress is complex and varied and that women are more affected by stress than men This could be as a results of other commitments woman need to meet on daily basis.

The finding of this study as well revealed that there was significant difference due to level of education in psychosocial challenges of personnel in community-based early childhood care centers in Oyo State, Nigeria. This finding is in agreement with the findings of Schaufeli, Bakker & Salanova (2006)and Geetika and Harish (2015). Schaufeli, Pakker & Salanova (2006) also found that people who have low cducation are more likely to experience elevated level of psychosocial stress. and more likely to have negative manifestation of stress than their counterpart. In the same direction Geetika and Harish (2015) asserted that when level of education increases, stress experienced also increases due to increase in the responsibilities. As per educational qualification, the present study reveals that personnel in early childhood care centers vary in their psychosocial

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challenges as their educational qualification varies. Less qualified personnel feel more stressed than highly qualified personnel.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, it was concluded that there was high prevalence of psychosocial challenges of personnel in community-based early childhood care centers in the study area, there was statistically significant difference in psychosocial challenges of personnel in community-based early childhood care centers in Oyo State, Nigeria based on gender and that there was statistically significant difference in psychosocial challenges of personnel in community-based early childhood care centers in Oyo State, Nigeria based on level of education.

Recommendations

In view of the conclusion of this study, the researcher recommended that:

1. Qualified and competent personnel should be employed to solve the issue of the unqualified workers in prevalence
2. Teachers should be trained and retrained on new trends in early childhood and that the government as well as policy makers should provide in-service training once or twice in a year.

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