

PARENTAL LITERACY AS A DETERMINANT OF EARLY CHILDHOOD CARE AND EDUCATION EFFECTIVENESS IN ABEOKUTA, NIGERIA.

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Abstract

This study examined parental literacy as a determinant of Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) effectiveness in Abeokuta, Nigeria. A descriptive survey research design was adopted for this study, where questionnaire was used to acquire necessary data for the research work. The population for this study consists all parents in Abeokuta metropolis. Simple random sampling technique was used to select three (3) local governments where parents of children enrolled in selected ECCE centres in which fifty (50) parents were chosen from the selected local governments to make a total of three hundred (300) respondents for the study. Four (4) research questions were raised and answered in this study, three (3) hypotheses were used and tested for this study, data were collected using a structured questionnaire. The instrument measured parental literacy, children's learning outcomes, programme effectiveness, and parental involvement. A self-developed questionnaire was used as instrument for data collection. It was developed in closed-ended of agree or disagree. The instrument was moderated by experts to affirm its validity. Reliability of the instrument was determined using Cronbach Alpha and the value was 80% which was reliable enough for the study. Data were analyzed using mean and standard deviation to answer the research questions, while Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) was used to test the hypotheses at the 0.05 level of significance. Findings revealed that parents possess a high level of literacy (grand mean = 4.00). The results further showed that parental literacy has a significant positive relationship with children's learning outcomes ($r = 0.68, p < 0.05$), ECCE programme effectiveness ($r = 0.72, p < 0.05$), and parental involvement in children's learning activities ($r = 0.65, p < 0.05$). The study concluded that parental literacy is a key determinant of effective early childhood education delivery and plays a vital role in promoting children's holistic development. It was therefore recommended that adult literacy programmes be strengthened and that parent-school collaboration be enhanced to improve ECCE outcomes.

Keywords: Effectiveness, Literacy, Outcomes, Parental, Involvement

Introduction

The early years of a child's life constitute a critical period in the development of intelligence, personality, and social behaviour. This stage, which precedes formal enrolment into elementary education, plays a foundational role in shaping children's cognitive abilities and overall learning outcomes. Scholars have consistently emphasized that experiences during early childhood significantly influence later academic achievement and lifelong development (UNESCO, 2021; UNICEF, 2019). This perhaps explains why modern societies place considerable emphasis on the provision of quality Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE), ensuring that children are adequately prepared for formal schooling (Ejeh, 2006; World Bank, 2018). In practice, many societies have institutionalized various forms of pre-primary education for children below the official school age typically under six years to facilitate school readiness and holistic development.

In Nigeria, the importance of Early Childhood Care and Education has been formally recognized by the Government and it is enshrined in the National Policy on Education (Federal Ministry of Education Nigeria, 2014). The major goal of Early Childhood Care and Education is to foster the total development of the child by identifying and addressing

developmental challenges, nurturing potentials, shaping character, and equipping children with the foundational skills that are essential for lifelong learning and productive living (UNESCO, 2021). Apart from the development of the recipients, education is universally acknowledged as a crucial investment in human capital development, contributing significantly to poverty reduction, national development and improved life outcomes. Basically, education enhances individuals' opportunities and socio-economic mobility, as well as play significant roles in promoting healthier lifestyles and reducing inequality.

However, in spite of the significance of education, access to and quality of Early Childhood Care and Education remain major concerns, particularly in developing countries such as Nigeria. In most instances, anecdotal evidences have shown that, millions of children either lack access to schooling or are enrolled in institutions of questionable quality. Reports such as the global education monitoring updates (UNESCO, 2022) reveal that even when children are enrolled, issues such as low retention rates and poor learning outcomes persist, undermining the effectiveness of educational programmes. These challenges are further exacerbated by socio-economic problems, poor infrastructure, and disparities in educational provision across regions (World Bank, 2020).

Since the 20th Century, Nigeria has made series of attempts at improving access to basic education through diverse initiatives such as the Universal Primary Education (UPE) programme introduced in the western region of Nigeria under the then regional government in 1955 and later in 1976 under the federal military government. In a similar manner and with the same intent, the Universal Basic Education (UBE) programme was also launched at the beginning of this millennium. Initially, these interventions led to increases in enrolment, however, because of policy somersault, economic challenges, rising poverty levels, and unanticipated school-related costs and many more have made the sustenance of both access and quality problematic (Universal Basic Education Commission, 2019). Consequently, many households face difficulties regarding children's schooling.

Series of research works have confirmed that the determinants of children's educational participation and success transcend school-related factors and government policies. It equally includes household characteristics especially parental attributes. Socio-economic status, parental level of education, and the home environment have been pointed out as significant determinants, when it comes to children's educational outcomes. As an illustration, research findings have confirmed that children from robust educational background especially educated families are most likely to be enrolled in school, put up impressive performances and exhibit lower attrition rates (UNESCO, 2020; Huisman and Smits, 2009). In the same manner, parents who are well educated have a higher tendency of attaching greater premium to education and schooling, offer quality academic support, and create enabling learning environments at the home (UNICEF, 2019). This position has been aptly supported by series of empirical studies in Nigeria. As an illustration, Adeyemi and Adebajo (2018) posit that the home environment and parental support play significant roles in the readiness of pre-schoolers' for elementary education. In the same vein, Ogunna and Majebe (2025) were of the view that parental factors, which often include educational level and qualifications, is a strong predictor of school readiness.

The implication is that, parental literacy invariably becomes a crucial yet often an unexplored factor in determining the effectiveness of Early Childhood Care and Education. Parental literacy transcends attainment of formal education, it encompasses the ability to read, write and communicate effectively as well as engage in meaningful learning interactions with children. Fundamentally, parents who are literate are usually in a better position to support early learning through creative activities such as reading, effective communication with teachers, school tasks supervision and storytelling. These practices contribute in no small ways to language development of children, their cognitive growth, and overall readiness for

formal schooling, thereby enhancing the overall effectiveness of Early Childhood Care and Education programmes (UNESCO, 2021; UNICEF, 2019).

Some studies carried out in Nigeria lend credence to the relevance of parental literacy in relation to early learning outcomes of children. As an illustration Uzosike (2018) is of the view that there is a strong connection between the literacy levels of parents and their literacy-related practices. This according to him encompasses home reading sessions, provision of reading materials and shared reading, all which when individually practice or at best combined significantly contribute to early literacy development in children., especially in pre-school settings. In the same manner, Ojo et al. (2026) while corroborating the position of Uzosike, concluded that parents with a clear understanding of the significance of early learning processes and with a strong belief in literacy-supportive engagement can to a great extent offer significant support for pre-school learning in their respective families. These earlier positions were further confirmed by Ogunna and Majeji (2025) with the claim that parental factors can significantly determine school readiness among pre-school children.

In Nigeria, especially in urban centres, differences in the literacy levels of parents may have serious implications for children's access to quality Early Childhood Care Education as well as their learning outcomes. The rationale behind this argument is that, while some parents have the requisite literacy skills necessary to support their children's education, others may not have such capacity, thereby creating gaps in educational experiences and outcomes among children. This situation makes it imperative to examine parental literacy not as a background characteristic alone but as a determining factor affecting the success of Early Childhood Care and Education.

Therefore, this study attempts to examine parental literacy in relation to Early Childhood Care and Education effectiveness in Abeokuta, Nigeria. By focusing on this relationship, the study seeks to contribute to existing bodies on literature on Early Childhood Care Education and provide insights that can inform educational policies formulation and implementation, parental engagement and intervention strategies channeled towards improving learning outcomes in Early Childhood Care and Education environments.

Statement of the Problem

Despite the widely acknowledged importance of Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) in laying a solid foundation for children's cognitive, social, and academic development, its effectiveness remains a major concern in many parts of Nigeria, including Abeokuta South Local Government Area. While efforts have been made to expand access to Early Childhood Care and Education, the quality of learning outcomes and overall programme effectiveness continue to vary significantly among children. One critical factor that appears to influence this variation is parental literacy. Parental literacy level plays a vital role in shaping children's early learning experiences, particularly through communication, support, and engagement in educational activities. However, in many households, low levels of parental literacy pose significant challenges to the effectiveness of Early Childhood Care and Education programmes. Parents with limited literacy skills often experience difficulties in communicating effectively with Early Childhood Care and Education providers and teachers, thereby weakening the home-school connection that is essential for reinforcing children's learning.

Furthermore, limited parental literacy constrains parents' understanding of basic child development principles and appropriate educational practices. This lack of understanding reduces their ability to make informed decisions regarding their children's education, including the selection of quality Early Childhood Care and Education schools and active participation in their children's learning processes. Consequently, children from such backgrounds may not receive adequate support at home to complement what is taught in

Early Childhood Care and Education settings. In addition, inadequate parental involvement—often associated with low literacy levels—undermines the effectiveness of Early Childhood Care and Education programmes. When parents are unable to engage in activities such as reading, monitoring school tasks, or providing learning guidance, children's cognitive and socio-emotional development may be adversely affected. This situation can manifest in poor school readiness, low academic achievement, and, in some cases, early withdrawal from the education system.

The cumulative effect of these challenges is not only reduced effectiveness of Early Childhood Care and Education but also the risk of perpetuating a cycle of low educational attainment, intergenerational illiteracy, and poverty. Despite these implications, there is limited empirical evidence specifically examining the extent to which parental literacy predicts the effectiveness of Early Childhood Care and Education in Abeokuta South Local Government Area. It is against this backdrop that this study seeks to investigate parental literacy as a determinant of Early Childhood Care and Education effectiveness in Abeokuta, Nigeria, with a view to providing evidence-based insights for improving Early Childhood Educational outcomes.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this study is to examine parental literacy as a determinant of Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) effectiveness in Abeokuta, Nigeria.

The specific objectives are to:

1. assess the literacy level among parents of children enrolled in ECCE centres in Abeokuta.
2. examine the influence of parental literacy on children's learning outcomes.
3. determine the relationship between parental literacy and ECCE effectiveness,
4. investigate the extent to which parental literacy affects parental involvement in children's learning activities in ECCE programmes.

Research Questions

1. What is the level of literacy among parents of children enrolled in ECCE centres in Abeokuta?
2. How does parental literacy influence children's learning outcomes in ECCE
3. What is the relationship between parental literacy and the effectiveness of ECCE programmes in Abeokuta?
4. To what extent does parental literacy affect their involvement in children's learning activities in ECCE programmes?

Research Hypotheses

H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between parental literacy and children's learning outcomes in ECCE centres in Abeokuta.

H₀₂: There is no significant relationship between parental literacy and the effectiveness of ECCE programmes in Abeokuta.

H₀₃: Parental literacy does not significantly influence parental involvement in children's learning activities in ECCE programmes.

Methodology

A descriptive survey research design was adopted for this study, where questionnaire was used to acquire necessary data for the research work. The population for this study consists all parents in Abeokuta metropolis. Simple random sampling technique was used to select

three (3) local governments where parents of children enrolled in selected ECCE centres in which fifty (50) parents were chosen from the selected local governments to make a total of three hundred (300) respondents for the study. Four (4) research questions were raised and answered in this study, three (3) hypotheses were used and tested for this study, data were collected using a structured questionnaire. The instrument measured parental literacy, children's learning outcomes, programme effectiveness, and parental involvement. A self-developed questionnaire was used as instrument for data collection. It was developed in closed-ended of agree or disagree. The instrument was moderated by experts to affirm its validity. Reliability of the instrument was determined using Cronbach Alpha and the value was 80% which was reliable enough for the study. Data were analyzed using mean and standard deviation to answer the research questions, while Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) was used to test the hypotheses at the 0.05 level of significance.

Research Question 1: What is the level of literacy among parents of children enrolled in ECCE centres in Abeokuta?

Table 1

S/N	Item Description	Mean ($\bar{x}$)	SD	Decision
1	Reading and understanding simple materials	4.12	0.88	High
2	Ability to write simple messages	3.98	0.91	High
3	Communication with teachers	4.05	0.85	High
4	Regular reading habit	3.76	0.94	High
5	Understanding school instructions	4.10	0.87	High

Grand Mean = 4.00

The findings on the level of literacy among parents of children enrolled in ECCE centres in Abeokuta present a clear and encouraging picture, as the grand mean score of 4.00 indicates that parents generally possess a high level of literacy. The results show that parents are comfortable with basic literacy skills, as evidenced by their ability to read and understand simple materials ($\bar{x} = 4.12$) and write simple messages ($\bar{x} = 3.98$), reflecting functional competence needed for everyday communication. The study also reveals that parents communicate effectively with teachers ($\bar{x} = 4.05$), which suggests active involvement in their children's schooling. Although slightly lower, the mean score for regular reading habits ($\bar{x} = 3.76$) still indicates a high level, showing that many parents maintain some reading culture. Furthermore, parents demonstrate a strong ability to understand school instructions ($\bar{x} = 4.10$), which is essential for supporting their children's learning at home. The relatively low standard deviation values across the items suggest consistency in responses among parents, thereby strengthening the reliability of the findings. Overall, the results confirm that parents in Abeokuta ECCE centres are not only literate but also possess the practical literacy skills necessary to effectively support their children's early education.

Research Question 2: How does parental literacy influence children's learning outcomes in ECCE?

Table 2

S/N	Item Description	Mean ($\bar{x}$)	SD	Decision
6	Child's enthusiasm for learning	4.20	0.82	High

S/N	Item Description	Mean ($\bar{x}$)	SD	Decision
7	Adherence to teachers' directives	4.08	0.86	High
8	Identification of the various letters in the alphabetical table and numbers give my child no problem at all.	4.15	0.84	High
9	Communication skills	4.02	0.89	High
10	Social relationship	4.18	0.81	High

Grand Mean = 4.13 | SD $\approx$ 0.84

The findings indicate that parental literacy has a strong and positive influence on children's learning outcomes in ECCE centres, as reflected in the high grand mean score of 4.13. Children of literate parents show a high level of enthusiasm for learning ($\bar{x} = 4.20$), suggesting that parental support helps to motivate them academically. The results also reveal that children adhere well to teacher directives ($\bar{x} = 4.08$), which may be linked to guidance and reinforcement received at home. In addition, children demonstrate strong cognitive abilities, particularly in the identification of letters and numbers ($\bar{x} = 4.15$), indicating effective early learning development. Their communication skills ($\bar{x} = 4.02$) and social relationships ($\bar{x} = 4.18$) are also well developed, reflecting the broader impact of parental literacy on both academic and social competencies. The relatively low standard deviation values suggest consistency in responses, reinforcing the reliability of the findings. Overall, the results show that parental literacy significantly enhances children's academic performance, behaviour, and social development in ECCE programmes.

Research Question 3: What is the relationship between parental literacy and the effectiveness of ECCE programmes in Abeokuta?

Table 3

S/N	Item Description	Mean ($\bar{x}$)	SD	Decision
11	Need for adult education programmes	4.30	0.79	High
12	Parent-teacher communication	4.22	0.83	High
13	School-parent synergy	4.25	0.80	High
14	Home involvement in academics	4.18	0.85	High
15	Continuous literacy engagement	4.27	0.78	High

Grand Mean = 4.24

The findings reveal a strong and positive relationship between parental literacy and the effectiveness of ECCE programmes in Abeokuta, as indicated by the high grand mean score of 4.24. The high mean score for the need for adult education programmes ($\bar{x} = 4.30$) suggests that improving parental literacy is widely perceived as essential for enhancing educational outcomes. Similarly, effective parent-teacher communication ($\bar{x} = 4.22$) and strong school-parent synergy ($\bar{x} = 4.25$) highlight the role of literate parents in fostering collaboration that supports programme success. The results also show that parents are actively involved in their children's academic activities at home ($\bar{x} = 4.18$), which contributes to better learning experiences. Furthermore, continuous engagement in literacy activities ($\bar{x} = 4.27$) reflects a sustained commitment to learning that positively impacts ECCE effectiveness. The relatively low standard deviation values indicate consistency in responses among participants. Thus, the findings suggest that higher levels of parental literacy

significantly enhance the effectiveness of ECCE programmes through improved communication, collaboration, and active involvement in children's education.

Research Question 4: To what extent does parental literacy affect their involvement in children's learning activities in ECCE programmes?

Table 4

S/N	Item Description	Mean ($\bar{x}$)	SD	Decision
16	Sharing indigenous stories	3.85	0.92	High
17	Monitoring child's education	4.12	0.86	High
18	Provision of learning materials	4.25	0.80	High
19	Assisting with homework	4.05	0.88	High
20	Participation in school activities	4.10	0.87	High

Grand Mean = 4.07

The findings show that parental literacy greatly influences their involvement in children's learning activities in ECCE programmes, as indicated by the high grand mean score of 4.07. Parents actively support their children by monitoring their education ($\bar{x} = 4.12$) and providing necessary learning materials ($\bar{x} = 4.25$), which reflects strong commitment to their children's academic progress. They also assist with homework ($\bar{x} = 4.05$) and participate in school activities ($\bar{x} = 4.10$), demonstrating active engagement both at home and in school. In addition, the sharing of indigenous stories ($\bar{x} = 3.85$) suggests that parents contribute to their children's learning through cultural and informal educational practices. The relatively low standard deviation values indicate consistency in responses among the parents. Overall, the results imply that higher parental literacy enhances active participation in children's learning, thereby supporting effective early childhood education.

Analysis of Hypothesis

Hypothesis One (H_{01}): There is no significant relationship between parental literacy and children's learning outcomes in ECCE centres in Abeokuta.

Table 5: PPMC Analysis of Parental Literacy and Children's Learning Outcomes

Variables	N	Mean	SD	R	Sig. (2-tailed)	Decision
Parental Literacy	300	4.00	0.89			
Children's Learning Outcomes	300	4.13	0.84	0.68	0.000	Significant

The result shows a strong positive correlation ($r = 0.68$, $p < 0.05$) between parental literacy and children's learning outcomes. Since the p-value (0.000) is less than 0.05, the null hypothesis is rejected. This implies that higher parental literacy significantly improves children's academic performance, enthusiasm, and social development in ECCE centres.

Hypothesis Two (H_{02}): There is no significant relationship between parental literacy and the effectiveness of ECCE programmes in Abeokuta.

Table 6: PPMC Analysis of Parental Literacy and ECCE Programme Effectiveness

Variables	N	Mean	SD	R	Sig. (2-tailed)	Decision
Parental Literacy	300	4.00	0.89			

Variables	N	Mean	SD	R	Sig. (2-tailed)	Decision
ECCE Programme Effectiveness	300	4.24	0.81	0.72	0.000	Significant

The analysis reveals a strong positive relationship ($r = 0.72$, $p < 0.05$) between parental literacy and ECCE programme effectiveness. The null hypothesis is therefore rejected. This indicates that literate parents enhance programme effectiveness through improved communication, collaboration, and support for school activities.

Hypothesis Three (H_{03}): Parental literacy does not significantly influence parental involvement in children's learning activities in ECCE programmes.

Table 7: PPMC Analysis of Parental Literacy and Parental Involvement

Variables	N	Mean	SD	r	Sig. (2-tailed)	Decision
Parental Literacy	300	4.00	0.89			
Parental Involvement	300	4.07	0.87	0.65	0.000	Significant

The result indicates a strong positive correlation ($r = 0.65$, $p < 0.05$) between parental literacy and parental involvement. Since the p-value is less than 0.05, the null hypothesis is rejected. This means that parental literacy significantly influences how actively parents engage in their children's learning activities.

Discussion of Findings

From hypothesis one (H_{01}) that says, there is no significant relationship between parental literacy and children's learning outcomes in ECCE centres in Abeokuta. The findings revealed a strong and statistically significant positive relationship between parental literacy and children's learning outcomes, leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis. This implies that parental literacy plays a vital role in shaping children's academic performance and overall development in ECCE centres. Children of literate parents were observed to demonstrate higher enthusiasm for learning, better recognition of letters and numbers, improved communication skills, and healthier social relationships. This finding is consistent with the views of Lev Vygotsky (1978), whose Social Development Theory emphasizes that children's cognitive development is largely influenced by social interaction and guidance from more knowledgeable individuals, particularly parents. Similarly, Urie Bronfenbrenner (1979) posits in his Ecological Systems Theory that the family environment plays a central role in children's development. Thus, literate parents are better positioned to provide the intellectual support necessary for improved learning outcomes.

From hypothesis two (H_{02}) that reads, there is no significant relationship between parental literacy and the effectiveness of ECCE programmes in Abeokuta. The analysis showed a significant relationship between parental literacy and the effectiveness of ECCE programmes, leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis. This indicates that parental literacy enhances programme effectiveness through improved communication, collaboration, and active engagement between parents and teachers. Literate parents are more likely to understand school expectations, support educational activities, and contribute meaningfully to programme implementation. This finding aligns with the work of Joyce Epstein (2001), who emphasized that strong school-family partnerships are critical to educational success. Epstein's framework of parental involvement highlights that effective collaboration between parents and schools significantly improves learning outcomes and programme delivery. In this context, parental literacy strengthens ECCE programmes by fostering meaningful interaction and shared responsibility.

In the hypothesis three (H_{03}) which says, parental literacy does not significantly influence parental involvement in children's learning activities in ECCE programmes. The findings

revealed that parental literacy significantly influences parental involvement, leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis. This suggests that literate parents are more actively involved in their children's education through monitoring academic progress, assisting with homework, providing learning materials, and participating in school activities. This result supports the theory of Albert Bandura (1986), who argued that learning occurs through observation and interaction within the social environment. Literate parents tend to model positive academic behaviours, which children are likely to emulate. Furthermore, literate parents are generally more confident and capable of engaging with educational processes, thereby enhancing their level of involvement.

Conclusion

This study examined the relationship between parental literacy and key aspects of Early Childhood Care Education (ECCE) in Abeokuta, focusing on children's learning outcomes, programme effectiveness, and parental involvement. The findings clearly demonstrate that parents possess a relatively high level of literacy, which significantly contributes to positive educational outcomes among children. Parental literacy was found to enhance children's enthusiasm for learning, cognitive development, communication skills, and social interaction. Furthermore, the study established that parental literacy plays a crucial role in improving the effectiveness of ECCE programmes. Literate parents are more likely to communicate effectively with teachers, understand school expectations, and actively support school initiatives. The study also revealed that parental literacy significantly influences the level of parental involvement in children's learning activities, both at home and in school. Thus, the results confirm that parental literacy is a key factor in achieving quality early childhood education. It serves as a foundation for meaningful parent-school collaboration and contributes significantly to children's holistic development. Therefore, improving parental literacy is essential for strengthening ECCE programmes and ensuring better educational outcomes for children.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

1. Government and educational stakeholders should establish and strengthen adult education programmes to improve the literacy level of parents, particularly those with limited formal education.
2. ECCE centres should encourage regular communication and partnership between parents and teachers through meetings, workshops, and feedback systems to enhance children's learning experiences.
3. Schools should design structured programmes that actively involve parents in their children's education, such as homework support sessions, reading clubs, and school-based activities.
4. Government and non-governmental organizations should support parents by providing affordable or free learning materials to enable them to better assist their children at home.
5. There should be increased awareness on the importance of parental literacy and involvement in early childhood education through community outreach programmes, seminars, and media campaigns.
6. ECCE centres should organize periodic training and orientation programmes to equip parents with basic literacy and parenting skills necessary for supporting early learning.

7. Educational policies should emphasize parental engagement as a key component of ECCE programmes, with proper monitoring and evaluation to ensure effective implementation.

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