FACTORS HINDERING EARLY CHILD EDUCATION IN MOST DEVELOPING COUNTRIES: ARE THEY APPLICABLE TO NIGERIAN CHILD? PERSPECTIVES IN BWARI AREA COUNCIL, ABUJA.

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Abstract

The study investigated the question, Factors Hindering Early Child Education in most Developing Countries: Are they applicable to Nigerian Child? The study is a descriptive survey design with a questionnaire to elicit response from respondents and the response was analyzed using mean, standard deviation and rank order to answer the research questions while z-test was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The findings indicates that the following factors: Childhood Nutrition, Dietary Deficiencies, Parental behaviour, Parenting Factor, and Environmental Factors that hinder Early Child Education found in most developing countries are confirmed to be working on the Nigerian child. Based on the findings, some recommendations which are very pertinent were made that social and cultural values should be respected by parents and children, and all environmental issues be handled adequately. Parental behaviour towards the growth and development of children should be positive in line with positive morals. Good foods filled with adequate nutrition should be provided and consumed by the child to enhance all needed and required nutrients by the child.

Introduction

According to Carter, Neville, and Newton (2003), Childhood development undergoes patient and rigorous stages which are handled basically with many factors. Though these factors could be human or natural they have to do with the environment. Child development is an unfolding gradual biological characteristics trait that arises as the child begins to develop the internal and physical organs. These factors are often present in all environments hence the natural features are present in every child despite the child's parental status or achievement (Grantham, Cheung, Cueto, Glewwe, Richter, and Strupp, 2001). God created all humans equal and they must undergo the same developmental process. Basically some children are exposed to malnutrition, poor health, un-stimulating homes and environment which are detrimental to the child's development. It has been revealed that health associated to poverty, nutrition and social factors hinders the child from attaining full potentials. The other factors are during pregnancy (antenatal being compromised) and after birth (the parents' behaviour), dietary deficiencies, chronic infections, exclusive breast feeding, inadequate feeding practice and lack of stimulations. The factors hindering child development in most developing countries are as follows;

Childhood Nutrition*:* This is also known as breastfeeding. Breast milk is the best food for the child from ages 0-1 years hence it contains and provides the necessary and required nutrients for the child's development and such nutrients are proteins, carbohydrates and fats required for the child growth and cell building that enhances the system functionality and efficiency optimally. Exclusive breast feeding helps the child to live healthy and develop rapidly without being obsessed, lowers cholesterol level of every child, breast feeding helps the brain development and enhances the cognitive development and visual acuity of the child (Dick, 1999; Lima and Guerrant, 2003; 2008, Nutrition Program.).

Dietary Deficiencies: These are macro and micro nutrients. Nutrients are very essential during pregnancy hence vitamins are vital for vision, cellular differentiation, immune functions and remodelling. Iodine is an essential trace element to prevent goitre and cretinism. Its deficiency results to developmental delay and other health challenges; though vitamins and iodine deficiencies are also risk factors. In Sub-Saharan Africa with 98% coverage of iodized salt at the households, it is revealed that 87.8% of babies have received one dose of vitamin A in the last 6 months. Basically, it is imperative to understand that these deficiencies lead to anaemia which is also as a result of lack of adequate nutrients and these deficiencies are common and easily found in developing countries. Anaemia during pregnancy does not only influence the growth of the foetal but also affects immunological, cognitive and social-emotional development of children at birth (Gersten, Coster, Schneider-Rosen, Carlson, and Gcchtti, 1987*).*

Parental Behaviour: Frequent alcoholic content consumption or the environmental tobacco smokes by fathers and mothers during pregnancy has great consequences on the child and mother with an estimated risk level of 2.04. Alcoholic consumption has a magnitude effects on the foetal during pregnancy which is the formation stage of the child within the first 8 weeks and it leads to cranio-facial, limb and cardiovascular defects which is known as foetal

alcohol syndrome (FAS). An exposure to the later pregnancy may be affected with the foetal growth which is associated with behavioural and cognitive development. Series of studies have revealed that the amount of alcohol consumed by pregnant women had led to foetal growth of the baby. As a matter of fact, all pregnant women should stay away from the substance within this specific period (UNICEF, 200; Escalona, 1987).

Parenting Factor: Child development and growth are dependent on the level of care and love showed on the child by parents and caregivers. Lack of personalized care to the child within the early age keeps the child in devastating state which also influences the child's health, personality, adjustment and cognitive capacity. Sensitivity and responsiveness are the key features of caregiver's behaviour which leads to positive health and developmental outcome of the children. Language and cognitive development are rudiments within the child's first six months to three years of the life cycle of every child. When children spend their early years in a less stimulating environment their brain development gets affected and it leads to social, cognitive and behavioural malady (Clarke-Stewart, 1973; Jacobson, and Willie,1986; Perry,1993; Petit and Bates, 1989*).*

Environmental Factor: Children exposed to lead and arsenic before birth may be born early or underweight after birth and this compromises child development. The prevalence rate of child exposure to lead and arsenic in the world is 40% and children in developing countries are at a higher risk; at least 30 million people in South Asia and Sub-Saharan African are exposed to arsenic via drinking unclean water. Infectious disease in children can affect development directly or indirectly. Unhealthy and un-sanitized environment remains a hindrance or a critical factor affecting child development because an unhealthy environment is unsafe for the child and such might lead to sickness that will hinder the developmental stages of the child (Eladora, Bradley and Caldwell, 1977; Judge and Douglas, 1998).

Objectives

- To ascertain whether the Factors Hindering Early Child Education in most Developing Countries: are they also applicable to the Nigerian Child under the Perspectives of Public Schools in Abuja.

Research Questions

Are the Factors Hindering Early Child Education in most Developing Countries also applicable to the Nigerian Child under the Perspectives of Public Schools in Abuja?

Hypothesis

- There is no significant difference between the mean rating of the perceptions of foreign views and Nigerian views in Public Schools in Abuja on Factors Hindering Early Child Education in most Developing Countries.

. **Methodology**

Raw data was analyzed using means scores, standard deviation and rank to answer the research question while z-test of difference for independent sample was used to test the hypothesis at 0.05 level of significance.

Findings and Discussions

Research Question: Are the Factors Hindering Early Child Education in most Developing Countries also applicable to the Nigerian Child under the Perspectives of Public Schools in Abuja?

Table 1: Mean, Standard Deviation and rank order of the perception of foreign views and Nigerian views in Public Schools in Abuja on Factors Hindering Early Child Education in most Developing Countries.

	Are the Factors Hindering Early Child Development in most Developing Countries also applicable to the Nigerian Child under the Perspectives of Public Schools in Abuja?	foreign views **(n=397)**		Nigerian views **(n=33)**		**Mean Set**	**Rank Order**	**Decision**
		Mean ($\bar{x}_1$)	**SD**	**Mean** ($\bar{x}_2$)	**SD**			
1	Childhood Nutrition	**2.75**	0.84	**2.93**	0.98	2.**84**	1st	**Agreed**
2	Dietary Deficiencies	**2.58**	1.07	**2.73**	0.96	**2.66**	3rd	**Agreed**
3	Parental behaviour	**2.65**	0.73	**2.82**	0.85	**2.74**	2nd	**Agreed**
4	Parenting Factor	**2.65**	0.94	**2.51**	1.01	**2.58**	4th	**Agreed**
5	Environmental Factors	**2.51**	0.92	**2.81**	0.85	**2.66**	3rd	**Agreed**
	Aggregate Mean	**2.63**	**0.90**	**2.76**	**0.93**			**Agreed**

The data in Table 1 showed that respondents agreed on the following items 2, 4, 3, 5, and 4 with mean scores of 2.84, 2.74, 2.66, 2.66, 2.58 and rank orders of 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th from criterion mean of 2.5. The aggregate mean for foreign views is 2.63 and 2.76 for Nigerian Views showed that the respondents agreed on the list of items on the table as the Factors hindering Early Child Education in Nigeria **a**s calculated mean is greater than the criterion mean. The roles identified included: Childhood Nutrition, Dietary Deficiencies, Parental behaviour, Parenting Factor and Environmental Factors.

Hypothesis: There is no significant difference between the mean rating of the perceptions of foreign views and Nigerian views in Public Schools in Abuja on Factors Hindering Early Child Education in most Developing Countries.

Table 2: Mean, standard deviation and z-test scores on analysis of difference between the foreign views and Nigerian views in Public Schools in Abuja on Factors Hindering Early Child Education in most Developing Countries.

	N	**Mean**	**SD**	**Df**	**z-cal**	**Critical Value**	**Decision**
Foreign views	397	2.63	0.90	428	-0.72	±1.96	Accept H_0
Nigerian views	33	2.76	0.93				

In table 1, the mean ratings of 2.63 and 2.76 are so closely related to show no significant difference between them. And in table 2 at 0.05 level of significance and at 428 degrees of freedom, the calculated z value of -0.72 was far less than the critical value of ±1.96. From the analysis above, since the calculated z value was far less than the table value, thus researcher accepts the null hypothesis which indicates that no significant difference existed between the perceptions of foreign views and Nigerian views in Public Schools in Abuja on Factors Hindering Early Child Education in Nigeria.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The study concluded by revealing Factors hindering Early Child Education in Nigeria through the Perceptions of foreign views and Nigerian views in Public Schools in Abuja as Childhood Nutrition, Dietary Deficiencies, Parental Behaviour, Parenting Factor and Environmental Factors**.** The recommendations are as follows**;** that social and cultural values should be respected by parents and children and all environmental issues concerning the Nigerian child should be handled adequately. Parental behaviour and Parenting factors towards the growth and development of children in Nigeria should be positive in line with positive morals. Good foods filled with adequate nutrition should be provided and consumed by the child to enhance all needed and required nutrients by the child for him to be better educated.

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