SUPPORT PROGRAMMES FOR PROMOTING EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AS CORRELATES OF TEACHERS' JOB PERFORMANCE IN ANAMBRA STATE

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Abstract

This study examined support programmes for promoting early childhood education as correlates of teachers' job performance in Anambra State. Three research questions guided the study while three null hypotheses were formulated. A correlational research design was adopted for the study. The population of the study consisted of 1628 ECE teachers in the 21 LGEAs in Anambra State. A sample of 300 teachers were used in this study using the multi-stage sampling procedure. Data for this study was collected using a structured questionnaire. The first questionnaire was titled "Questionnaire on Support Programmes" (QSP); the second questionnaire was titled "Teachers' Job Performance Scale (TJPS). Cronbach Alpha was used to assess the instrument's internal consistency after the data were gathered, and reliability coefficient values of 0.75 and 0.88 were obtained for QSP and TJPS respectively. Pearson Product Moment correlation was used to answer the research questions while linear regression was used to test the null hypotheses at 0.05 alpha level. The finding revealed that there was a weak positive and non-significant relationship between parental involvement programmes for promoting early childhood education and teachers' job performance in Anambra State. It was found out that there is a strong positive and significant relationship between professional development programmes for promoting early childhood education and teachers' job performance in Anambra State. Based on the findings, it was recommended amongst others that educational authorities in Anambra State should invest heavily in high-quality, tailored training programs. These should focus on practical skills such as innovative teaching methods, classroom management, and child-centered pedagogies

Keywords: Support Programmes, Early Childhood, Education, Teacher, Job Performance

Introduction

The concept of support programmes in Early Childhood Education (ECE) has evolved significantly over time. Historically, early childhood education was primarily the responsibility of families, with little structured intervention from educational systems or governments. However, during the 19th and early 20th centuries, pioneers like Friedrich Froebel and Maria Montessori emphasized the importance of early childhood learning environments, advocating for programmes and strategies that support the holistic development of young children (Epstein,

2018). These early efforts highlighted the need for play, exploration, and structured guidance in ECE, laying the foundation for modern support programmes such as capacity building programmes, professional development grants and fellowships among others.

In the mid-20th century, global recognition of the importance of early childhood education led to the establishment of formal support programmes. For instance, the Head Start Program in the United States, launched in 1965, provided comprehensive services such as health, nutrition, and early education to low-income children and their families (Zigler and Styfco, 2018). Zigler and Styfco stressed further that this program set a benchmark for integrating support services into early childhood education. Similarly, in other parts of the world, UNESCO and UNICEF initiated policies and programmes that promoted access to quality ECE, particularly in underprivileged communities. These historical milestones underscore the growing recognition of the critical role of support programmes in fostering children's development and preparing them for lifelong learning.

To strengthen ECE, various support programmes have been developed and implemented globally. These programmes are designed to complement formal education and promote the holistic development of children. Support programmes refer to structured interventions, services, or initiatives aimed at enhancing early childhood education outcomes by addressing the needs of children, parents, and educators. According to Harms, Clifford, and Cryer (2015), support programmes in ECE encompass strategies that ensure children receive adequate stimulation, care, and learning opportunities in their formative years. These programmes also aim to bridge the gap between home and school by involving families and communities in the education process. Operationally, support programmes in ECE refer to organized initiatives that provide resources, training, and services to improve the quality of early childhood education and ensure that every child receives adequate developmental support.

Support programmes in ECE are vital for several reasons, primarily because early childhood is a critical period for cognitive, emotional, and social development. According to Shonkoff and Phillips (2020), the experiences and environments provided during the early years of life shape the foundation for a child's lifelong learning and behaviour. Support programmes help to create stimulating environments that nurture these aspects of development. One

significant importance of support programmes is that they help address developmental disparities. Children from low-income or disadvantaged backgrounds often face barriers that hinder their cognitive and social growth. Through targeted interventions, such as nutrition programmes, access to learning materials, and teacher training, support programmes can level the playing field for these children (Heckman, 2021). For example, nutrition programmes ensure children are healthy enough to engage in learning activities, while teacher training programmes improve instructional quality, ultimately enhancing learning outcomes.

Furthermore, support programmes facilitate family and community involvement, which is essential for the success of ECE. Parental involvement programmes, such as parenting workshops and home visits, empower families to contribute meaningfully to their children's education. Epstein (2018) emphasized that strong partnerships between families, schools, and communities create a supportive ecosystem for children. These programmes not only benefit children but also strengthen the bond between parents and educators, fostering collaboration and trust. Support programmes in ECE are multifaceted and can be categorized into several dimensions. According to Heckman (2021) and Shonkoff and Phillips (2020), the following dimensions of support programmes include: parental involvement programmes, professional development programmes, and resource provision programmes. This study made use of these support programmes.

One key dimension is parental involvement programmes, which emphasize the critical role of parents in fostering children's development. According to Epstein (2018), such programmes create opportunities for parents to actively participate in their children's learning processes, thereby strengthening the connection between home and school. These initiatives may include parent workshops, community meetings, and resource-sharing platforms that educate parents about effective child-rearing practices and the importance of supporting learning at home. When parents actively engage in their children's education, it can enhance teachers' job performance by fostering a supportive home-school connection. This involvement can also help reduce stress and improve teachers' work-life balance, as they feel more supported in their efforts.

Another dimension is the professional development programmes. The quality of ECE is largely determined by the competency and preparedness of educators. Härkönen (2018) highlighted that continuous professional development equips teachers with the skills and knowledge required to provide stimulating and inclusive learning environments. Teacher training programmes focus on areas such as child psychology, innovative teaching techniques, and classroom management strategies. By participating in these programmes, teachers can improve their effectiveness and confidence in the classroom, leading to better job performance. Additionally, enhanced skills can help teachers manage their workloads more effectively, contributing to a healthier work-life balance.

Resource provision programmes represent a third dimension of support initiatives in ECE. The availability of age-appropriate learning materials, safe play environments, and adequately equipped classrooms significantly influences the quality of early childhood education. According to UNICEF (2021), investments in infrastructure and resources are vital for creating stimulating environments that encourage exploration and active learning. These programmes often involve the provision of books, toys, and digital tools, as well as the construction and renovation of childcare centers. Such initiatives enable children to engage with diverse learning materials, laying a strong foundation for their academic journey. Access to resources reduces the burden on teachers to seek out materials themselves, allows for more dynamic and engaging teaching methods, and improves the overall educational experience for children. This support can alleviate stress, contributing positively to teachers' job performance.

Teachers' job performance refers to the effectiveness with which teachers carry out their responsibilities, including instructional delivery, classroom management, and fostering a positive learning environment. It is a multifaceted construct that encompasses the ability to plan, organize, and execute educational activities in a manner that achieves desired learning outcomes. According to Adeyemi (2020), job performance is the extent to which a teacher is able to achieve set goals and objectives through the efficient utilization of resources. Similarly, Ololube (2019) defined teachers' job performance as the execution of teaching responsibilities in ways that promote pupils learning and development. Operationally, teachers' job performance refers to their ability to effectively teach, manage their classrooms, assess pupils' progress, and contribute

to the overall development of children in early childhood education (ECE). It also includes their ability to innovate, adapt to challenges, and maintain professional standards while achieving educational goals.

These programmes provide the resources, training, and support necessary to improve instructional delivery and classroom management. For instance, professional development initiatives equip teachers with modern pedagogical skills, enabling them to deliver lessons more effectively and foster better learning outcomes. As highlighted by Darling-Hammond *et al*. (2017), professional development that is content-focused, collaborative, and sustained over time has a significant positive impact on teachers' instructional practices and pupil achievement. In Anambra State, where early childhood education teachers often face resource constraints and limited training opportunities, the implementation of well-structured support programmes is essential. Programmes that provide access to teaching aids, technology, and updated curricula enable teachers to deliver high-quality education, which directly improves their job performance. In addition, anecdotal evidence and interactions with teachers reveal a gap in the implementation of support programmes that address their specific needs. For instance, while professional development programmes exist, they are often generic and fail to consider the unique challenges of ECE teachers. Similarly, while parental involvement programmes are encouraged, the lack of structured frameworks makes it difficult for teachers to integrate these effectively into their daily routines. These gaps prompted the researchers to investigate support programmes for promoting early childhood education as correlates of teachers' job performance in Anambra State.

Statement of the Problem

In Anambra State, preliminary observations and reports indicate that many ECE teachers work under conditions that hinder their effectiveness. Schools, particularly in rural areas, often lack essential teaching materials, infrastructure, and access to training programmes. According to a report by UNICEF in 2017, only a small percentage of schools in Nigeria met the minimum standards required for early childhood education, and Anambra State is no exception. Teachers frequently cite a lack of professional development opportunities, limited access to emotional and financial support, and overwhelming workloads as barriers to their performance and well-being.

Informal conversations with ECE teachers and school administrators in Anambra State reveal significant gaps in the existing support systems. Teachers frequently mention the lack of tailored professional development programmes, with many of the available training sessions being generic and not addressing the specific challenges faced in early childhood education. Programmes for parental involvement are encouraged, but they are frequently ill-planned, leaving instructors to handle these interactions on their own without much help. Moreover, teachers express frustration over the absence of workplace initiatives that address their well-being, such as stress management workshops or flexible work schedules. School administrators also acknowledge the challenges faced by teachers but often cite funding constraints and a lack of government support as barriers to implementing effective support programmes. These findings point to a systemic issue that requires urgent attention to improve the quality of ECE in Anambra State.

While existing literature highlights the importance of support programmes in improving educational outcomes, there is limited research on how these programmes specifically impact the job performance and work-life balance of ECE teachers in Anambra State. Most studies either focus on the broader challenges of ECE in Nigeria or examine the professional development of teachers in general without considering the unique needs of those in early childhood education. Furthermore, there is a lack of empirical data on the effectiveness of existing support programmes in addressing the dimensions of job performance in the context of Anambra State.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study is to determine support programmes for promoting early childhood education as correlates of teachers' job performance in Anambra State. Specifically, this study seeks to determine;

1. The relationship between parental involvement programmes for promoting early childhood education and teachers' job performance in Anambra State.
2. The relationship between professional development programmes for promoting early childhood education and teachers' job performance in Anambra State.
3. The relationship between resource provision programmes for promoting early childhood education and teachers' job performance in Anambra State.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What is the relationship between parental involvement programmes for promoting early childhood education and teachers' job performance in Anambra State?
2. What is the relationship between professional development programmes for promoting early childhood education and teachers' job performance in Anambra State?
3. What is the relationship between resource provision programmes for promoting early childhood education and teachers' job performance in Anambra State?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were tested and formulated at 0.05 alpha level:

1. There is no significant relationship between parental involvement programmes for promoting early childhood education and teachers' job performance in Anambra State
2. There is no significant relationship between professional development programmes for promoting early childhood education and teachers' job performance in Anambra State
3. There is no significant relationship between resource provision programmes for promoting early childhood education and teachers' job performance in Anambra State

Methods

A correlational research design was adopted for the study. The population of the study consisted of 1628 ECE teachers in the 21 LGEAs in Anambra State. A sample of 300 teachers were used in this study using the multi-stage sampling procedure. Data for this study is collected using a structured questionnaire. The first questionnaire is titled "Questionnaire on Support Programmes" (QSP); the second questionnaire is titled "Teachers' Job Performance Scale (TJPS). The QSP is a self-developed questionnaire designed into four clusters (parental involvement programmes; professional development programmes; and resource provision programmes). The response was structured on the scale of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD) with values 4, 3, 2, and 1 respectively. The TJPS is a developed questionnaire by Hanif and Pervez in 2004. This instrument aims to provide a systematic and objective way to assess various aspects of teaching performance, including instructional strategies, classroom management, and student engagement. The response was

structured on the scale of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Neutral (N), Disagree (D) Strongly Disagree (SD) with values 5, 4, 3, 2, and 1 respectively.

Cronbach Alpha was used to assess the instrument's internal consistency after the data were gathered, and reliability coefficient values of 0.81, 0.81 and 0.70 were found for clusters I - III for QSP, it yielded an overall co-efficient of 0.75. The TJPS was also subjected to test of internal consistency using the Cronbach Alpha method and coefficient value 0.88 was obtained. Pearson Product Moment correlation was used to answer the research questions while linear regression was used to test the null hypotheses at 0.05 alpha level.

Results

Table 1: Pearson r on the relationship between parental involvement programmes for promoting early childhood education and teachers' job performance in Anambra State

Sources of variance	N	Parental involvement (r)	Job satisfaction (r)	Remark
Parental involvement	300	1.00	0.43	
				weak positive relationship
Job performance	300	0.43	1.00	

Table 1 shows that there is a weak positive relationship of 0.43 existing between parental involvement programmes for promoting early childhood education and teachers' job performance in Anambra State.

Table 2: Pearson r on the relationship between professional development programmes for promoting early childhood education and teachers' job performance in Anambra State

Sources of variance	N	Self-awareness (r)	Information resources (r)	Remark
Professional develop	300	1.00	0.82	
				strong positive relationship
Job performance	300	0.82	1.00	

Table 2 shows that there is a strong positive relationship of 0.82 existing between professional development programmes for promoting early childhood education and teachers' job performance in Anambra State.

Table 3: Pearson r on the relationship between resource provision programmes for promoting early childhood education and teachers' job performance in Anambra State

Sources of variance	N	Resource provision (r)	Job satisfaction (r)	Remark
Resource provision	300	1.00	0.41	
				weak positive relationship
Job satisfaction	300	0.41	1.00	

Table 3 shows that there is a weak positive relationship of 0.41 existing between resource provision programmes for promoting early childhood education and teachers' job performance in Anambra State.

Table 4: Linear regression on the significant relationship between parental involvement programmes for promoting early childhood education and teachers' job performance in Anambra State

N	Pearson r	Df	Cal. T	p-value	α level	Remark
300	0.43	298	7.608	0.076	0.05	Not Significant

Table 4 indicated that at 0.05 level of significance and 298 df, the calculated t 7.608 with p-value 0.076 which is greater than 0.05 (t= 7.608; df 298; p > 0.05), the null hypothesis is not rejected. This means that there is no significant relationship between parental involvement programmes for promoting early childhood education and teachers' job performance in Anambra State.

Table 5: Linear regression on the significant relationship between professional development programmes for promoting early childhood education and teachers' job performance in Anambra State

N	Pearson r	Df	Cal. t	p-value	α level	Remark
300	0.82	298	22.930	0.000	0.05	Significant

Table 5 indicated that at 0.05 level of significance and 298 df, the calculated t 22.930 with p-value 0.000 which is less than 0.05 (t= 22.9302; df 298; p < 0.05), the null hypothesis is rejected. This means that there is a significant relationship between professional development programmes for promoting early childhood education and teachers' job performance in Anambra State.

Table 6: Linear regression on the significant relationship between resource provision programmes for promoting early childhood education and teachers' job performance in Anambra State

N	Pearson r	Df	Cal. t	p-value	α level	Remark
300	0.41	298	7.152	0.112	0.05	Not Significant

Table 6 indicated that at 0.05 level of significance and 298 df, the calculated t 7.152 with p-value 0.112 which is greater than 0.05 (t= 7.152; df 298; p > 0.05), the null hypothesis is not rejected. This means that there is no significant relationship between resource provision programmes for promoting early childhood education and teachers' job performance in Anambra State.

Discussion of Findings

The finding in research question one revealed that there is a weak positive relationship between parental involvement programmes for promoting early childhood education and teachers' job performance in Anambra State. These findings supported the findings of Wildmon, Anthony and Kamau (2024) who posits that while parental involvement in early childhood education positively affects student socio-emotional outcomes, its influence on teachers' job performance is minimal, primarily due to barriers such as time constraints and lack of teacher training to leverage parental support effectively. Similarly, Yulianti, Denessen, Droop and Veerman (2020) that found a modest positive correlation between parental involvement in school activities and teachers' self-reported job satisfaction, suggesting that while parental engagement may enhance teacher morale, its direct impact on performance metrics like productivity or efficacy is limited. The finding that there is no significant relationship between parental involvement programmes and teachers' job performance in early childhood education in Anambra State contrasts with Yulianti *et al*. (2020), who reported a positive association between the two variables. This disparity may be attributed to contextual and structural factors. In many schools across Anambra State, parental involvement remains limited and often informal, with most initiatives focusing on children's welfare rather than collaborative instructional support. Furthermore, weak school–parent communication structures and teachers' limited training on parent–teacher partnership may hinder the effectiveness of such programmes. Consequently, the level and nature of parental engagement in the study area may not be sufficient to exert a measurable influence on teachers' performance. Methodological and contextual differences between the present study and that of Yulianti *et al*. (2020) also provide plausible explanations for the contrasting outcomes.

The finding in research question two revealed that there is a strong positive relationship between professional development programmes for promoting early childhood education and teachers' job performance in Anambra State. This finding was in line with Eze, Omeje and Ugwuanyi (2023) that professional development workshops for early childhood educators led to marked improvements in teaching quality and classroom management. This finding agreed with that of Darling-Hammond *et al*. (2017) that high-quality professional development programs significantly enhance teachers' instructional practices and classroom effectiveness, particularly in early childhood settings. The finding that professional development programmes significantly enhance teachers' job performance in early childhood education in Anambra State contrasts with Kennedy's (2016) assertion that many professional development initiatives fail to yield meaningful performance improvements due to their generic nature and weak alignment with teachers' specific needs. This divergence may be attributed to contextual and structural differences. In recent years, professional development programmes in Anambra State have become more needs-based and contextually grounded, addressing practical classroom challenges such as large class sizes, curriculum delivery, and child-centred pedagogy. Unlike the generic models criticised by Kennedy, these programmes adopt participatory and practice-oriented approaches, including workshops, mentoring, and collaborative learning, which enable teachers to apply new skills directly in their classrooms. Moreover, policy support and incentives from government and development agencies have enhanced teachers' motivation and commitment to professional growth. Consequently, the localized, relevant, and practice-focused nature of professional development in Anambra State likely accounts for its significant positive relationship with teachers' job performance observed in this study.

The finding in research question three revealed that there is a weak positive relationship between resource provision programmes for promoting early childhood education and teachers' job performance in Anambra State. This finding supported that of Adeyemi and Adeyinka (2020) that while the provision of teaching materials in Nigerian primary schools slightly improved teachers' morale and lesson delivery, the effect on overall job performance was limited due to inconsistent supply and poor infrastructure. The finding of Ogunyinka, Okeke and Adedoyin (2015) revealed that adequate resource provision, including instructional materials and classroom

facilities boosted teachers' productivity and job satisfaction in Nigerian early education settings. The corresponding hypothesis indicated that there is no significant relationship between resource provision programmes for promoting early childhood education and teachers' job performance in Anambra State. This finding contrasts with that of Ogunyinka *et al*. (2015), who reported that the availability of adequate instructional materials and functional classrooms significantly enhanced teachers' productivity and job satisfaction in Nigerian early education contexts. The disparity may be attributed to differences in implementation quality, contextual realities, and measurement focus. In many schools across Anambra State, resource provision initiatives are often inadequately implemented or unevenly distributed, limiting their practical impact on classroom instruction. Additionally, many teachers have developed adaptive strategies to cope with resource shortages, thereby sustaining their performance irrespective of resource availability. Furthermore, the materials supplied through such programmes may not always align with the pedagogical needs of early childhood education, reducing their usefulness. Consequently, the lack of a significant relationship observed in this study likely reflects the ineffective implementation and limited contextual relevance of resource provision programmes in the study area.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study highlighted varying degrees of influence that parental involvement, professional development, and resource provision programmes have on teachers' job performance in early childhood education in Anambra State. While parental involvement showed a weak and statistically insignificant impact, professional development emerged as a significant and robust predictor of teacher performance, aligning with global best practices. Resource provision, though mildly positive, was hindered by systemic limitations. These findings emphasize the critical need to prioritize sustained, context-relevant professional development and resource optimization over parental engagement alone, to achieve meaningful improvements in teachers' job performance and overall early childhood education quality in Anambra State.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made:

1. Given the strong positive and significant relationship between professional development and teachers' job performance, educational authorities in Anambra State should invest heavily in high-quality, tailored training programs. These should focus on practical skills such as innovative teaching methods, classroom management, and child-centered pedagogies
2. The weak positive relationship between parental involvement programs and teachers' performance, coupled with its lack of significance, suggests a need for recalibration rather than abandonment. Schools should integrate training modules for teachers on how to effectively collaborate with parents, addressing barriers like time constraints.
3. Anambra State government and school administrators should ensure reliable, equitable distribution of teaching materials and infrastructure upgrades. Moreover, resource provision should be paired with professional development to maximize its utility, ensuring teachers are equipped to leverage these tools effectively.

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