

# TEACHER PROFESSIONALISM AS A PREDICTOR OF THE CHILD'S ATTITUDE TO LEARNING IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION IN IBADAN METROPOLIS, OYO STATE

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## Abstract

*The effect of professionalism on children's attitude to learning in early childhood education is a topic that has been studied more internationally than nationally. Thus, with the ever-growing interest in early childhood education globally, this study was undertaken to address this gap by applying statistical theory and questionnaire analysis to investigate the relationship between teacher professionalism, continuous professional development and play based -activities on children's learning attitudes in the early childhood education classroom setting.*

*A questionnaire was sent to 150 early childhood educators in Ibadan schools to obtain data, however, only 146 respondents completed the questionnaire. A regression analysis was used to test the hypotheses and findings show the following: that there is a significant relationship between teacher professionalism and a child's attitude to learning; there is a significant relationship between playful activities and a child's attitude to learning; there is a significant relationship between a child's interaction with fellow classmates and a child's attitude to learning; there is a significant relationship between a child's interaction with adults and a child's attitude to learning and there is a significant relationship between classroom discussions, textbooks and other learning materials and a child's attitude to learning. Findings of this research indicate that the male children performed better than their female counterparts in early childhood education learning.*

*The findings of this study provide useful suggestions to the Federal Ministry of Education, Women Affairs and private owners of early education centres and nursery schools and offer recommendations for future research nationally*

**Word Count:** 247

**Keywords:** Teacher, Professionalism, Attitude, Learning, Childhood, Education.

## **Background To the Study**

In order to achieve quality education in our present age, a well-educated workforce is required and as such professionalism is highly relevant. Globally, there is a major focus on achievement test scores in the literacy of various subjects such as reading literacy, mathematics literacy and science literacy. Early childhood education is of vital importance in improving the quality of education globally not only by observing and compiling test scores results but also by paying close attention to the attitudes of children to learning in the classroom setting.

All professionals that are employed in both the education and care services are responsible for continuous improvement to ensure the best outcomes for children (Cole & McCormilla, 2012).

Teachers and other educators have a vital role to play. Educators need to set the right tone of safety and showing care by using positive language. What educators say and the manner in which it is said is of vital importance since positive adult language is the professional use of words and the tone of voice to enable students learn in an engaging and active way, including social skills (Responsive Classroom.com 2017). Verbal praise, recognition and other forms of rewards should be given to children for excellent achievements and excellent grades in school. (Family Education. Com 2017). Positive reinforcement helps children to develop a positive attitude towards school and learning (Minger, 2014).

In education, there is a vital role that teachers play in the establishment of educational programmes and tools and environments. The teachers' role in education is very significant as they have great responsibilities. Professionalism and finding its place in the early education classes in Ibadan Metropolis, Oyo State will be the focus of this study.

## **Research Questions**

In order to achieve the objectives of this study, the following research questions were formulated to guide the study:

1. What is the level of teachers' professionalism on a child's attitude to learning in early childhood education?
2. Do playful activities have an influence on a child's attitude to learning in early childhood education?
3. Does a child's interaction with fellow classmates have an influence on a child's attitude to learning in early childhood education?
4. Does a child's interaction with adults have an influence on a child's attitude to learning in early childhood education?

5. Do classroom discussions have an influence on a child's attitude to learning in early childhood education?
6. Do the availability of textbooks and other learning materials have an influence on a child's attitude to learning in early childhood education?
7. What are the challenges encountered by early childhood educators?
8. Are there differences between a male and a female child's attitude to learning in early childhood education?

### **Research Hypotheses**

- H01. There will be no significant relationship between teacher professionalism and the child's attitude to learning in early childhood education.
- H02. There will be no significant relationship between playful activities and the child's attitude to learning in early childhood education.
- H03. There will be no significant relationship between a child's interaction with fellow classmates and the child's attitude to learning in early childhood education.
- H04. There will be no significant relationship between a child's interaction with adults and the child's attitude to learning in early childhood education.
- H05. There will be no significant relationship between classroom discussions, textbooks and other learning materials and the child's attitude to learning in early childhood education.
- H06. There will be no significant relationship between a male child's attitude to learning than a female child's attitude to learning in early childhood education.
- H07. There is no significant gender difference of teachers on a child's attitude to learning in early childhood education.
- H08. There is no significant gender difference of children on their attitude to learning in early childhood education.

There is a critical period in the development of human life and that is the early childhood period which is from birth to eight years. This period is very important in terms of cognitive growth and socio-emotional and physical development (Dutta et al 2013). Despite the fact that the Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN) National Policy on Education emphasises the support required for school children, little emphasis is placed on the early education age group. A major gap exists which has led to an influx of private operators handling our young ones without adequate guidelines or standards (Obiweluzor 2015).

## **Professionalism**

Professionalism is the conduct of an individual at work. This quality not only involves conduct but also, the aims that characterise a profession or professional person. In other words, there is a quality of workmanship or service. A professional and ethical reputation is the difference between success and failure in the organisation. Professionalism is a quality. It is a valued quality that has characteristics that are business oriented, friendly and polite and requires that one completes tasks and responsibilities at the expected time (Aklahyel, Ibrahim and Bawa, 2015). It is also a quality which includes “the professions” that are essentially careers that involve a lot of education and are associated with good pay. It has been observed that maintenance workers and cashiers exhibit this trait but little training is required in comparison and the pay is low. On the other hand, doctors, lawyers and engineers, commonly referred to as professionals may display little of this trait and yet receive high earnings. The quality of professionalism is required and if it is lacking it has grave consequences career wise (McKay, 2017).

Professionalism is one of the most important traits sought in the corporate world since workers who show professionalism have a high value placed on them. (Askren, 2013). Professionalism requires conforming to a code of professional ethics which sets the standard of integrity, professionalism and confidentiality which all members of the profession are expected to adhere to (International Association of Conference Interpreters 2012). Professionalism is an epithet that has been modified over the years and currently includes educational professionalism. This includes workers in all levels of the teaching profession – teachers, lecturers, academicians, educational leaders and educational managers. Ethics education that is known to exist in most professions internationally does not feature much in teacher education. Findings of a study showed that ethics education is not offered as a course on its own but is found in various areas of the curriculum. Challenges to providing ethical education include resistance from student teachers, insufficient time and external factors (Walters, Heilbronn & Daly, 2017). A professional teacher uses constructive criticism and advice as an opportunity to grow as an educator (Orlando, 2013)

## **Research Methodology**

### **Research Design**

This study was carried out with the aid of the descriptive research design which is, a systematic plan executed in order to study a scientific problem (Jalil, 2013). It is aimed at obtaining information on the current state of phenomena and provides an accurate profile of people, situations and events (Rahi, 2017). The descriptive method enables the

researcher to make an observation of a large number of a target population, even within a short period of time (Ritchie et al 2013). As a result, this study entails determining the sufficient sample size for the target population (i.e. Childhood teachers) existing within Ibadan metropolis, Oyo State. Data collection was carried out from these teachers with a questionnaire based on the research objectives of the study. The data collected was thereafter analyzed using both descriptive (i.e. frequency and percentage) and inference statistics methods (i.e. Pearson Correlation Co-efficient and Independent Sample Test). Utilizing this descriptive design enables the researcher to measure the results rather than exploring the result (Rudison, 2015). As such, it paved way for interpretation of findings, discussion and conclusion about the study which is shown therein. At the end, recommendations are suggested based on the findings and conclusions of the study.

### **Population of the Study**

The target population for this study included all the nursery/primary school teachers offering teaching services in Ibadan metropolis, Oyo State.

### **Sample and Sampling Techniques**

One hundred and forty-six nursery/primary school teachers currently teaching at early childhood levels constituted the sample population of this study. Based on this sufficient sample size requirement, nursery/primary school teachers were selected from nursery/primary schools located within the Ibadan metropolis. For this survey, 5 public nursery/primary schools, secondary schools and 36 private nursery/primary schools were used. In total, 41 schools were used. The names of the early education centres and schools used are listed below:

### **Research Instrument**

The instrument used for this research study was a self-developed, semi-structured questionnaire .

Section A: This section contained questions exploring information concerning the respondents' demographic characteristics such as gender, age, educational qualifications, teaching experience, the rate of professional development courses attended and the period when the Teacher Registration Council of Nigeria (TRCN) certificate was obtained.

Section B: This section explored the act of professionalism demonstrated in the classroom by teachers during the learning process.

Section C: This section explored the children's attitude to learning.

Section D: This section also examined the different aspects of the teaching and learning process and the challenges encountered by teachers in early childhood education.

### Method of Data Analysis

Data coding, further editing and analysis were subjected to computer software called Statistical Package for Social Services (SPSS). Both descriptive statistics (percentage, and frequency) and inferential statistics (Pearson Correlation Co-efficient Determination and Independent Sample t-Test) were applied on data collected for data analysis activity.

The formula for conducting the Pearson correlation coefficient value is given as:

$$r = \frac{N\sum xy - (\sum x)(\sum y)}{\sqrt{[N\sum x^2 - (\sum x)^2][N\sum y^2 - (\sum y)^2]}}$$

Where:

- N = number of pairs of scores
- $\sum xy$  = sum of the products of paired scores
- $\sum x$  = sum of x scores
- $\sum y$  = sum of y scores
- $\sum x^2$  = sum of squared x scores
- $\sum y^2$  = sum of squared y scores

The Independent Samples *t* Test compares the means of two independent groups in order to determine whether there is statistical evidence that the associated population means are significantly different. The Independent Samples *t* Test is a parametric test. The formula for conducting the Independent Sample t-Test value is given as:

$$t = (\text{Sample Mean A} - \text{Sample B}) / (\text{Variance of Sample A and B})$$

Where Variance of Sample A and B =

Square root  $\left[ \frac{[(\text{Population size of Sample A}) \times (\text{variance squared of sample A})] + [(\text{Population size of Sample B}) \times (\text{variance squared of sample B})]}{[(\text{Population size of Sample A}) + (\text{Population size of Sample B}) - 2]} \right] \times \left[ \frac{[(\text{Population size of Sample A}) \times (\text{Population size of Sample B})]}{[(\text{Population size of Sample A}) \times (\text{Population size of Sample B})]} \right)$ •

**Demographic Data Presentation**

Table 1: Distribution of Demographic Data of Respondents

<b>S/No</b>	<b>Variable</b>	<b>Response</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
1.	Gender	Male	22	15.1
		Female	124	84.9
		<b>Total</b>	<b>146</b>	<b>100.0</b>
2.	Age	21-30 years	60	41.1
		31-40 years	56	38.4
		41-50 years	26	17.8
		51-60 years	4	2.7
		Over 60 years	0	0.0
		<b>Total</b>	<b>146</b>	<b>100.0</b>
3.	Educational Qualification	NCE	83	56.8
		B Ed.	34	23.3
		BA (Ed)	8	5.5
		M (Ed)	0	0.0
		PhD Edu.	2	1.4
		Diploma(Montessori)	4	2.7
		Any other	15	10.3
		Pls specify .....	0	
		<b>Total</b>	<b>146</b>	<b>100.0</b>
4.	Teaching Experience	Under 5 years	44	30.1
		6-10 years	49	33.6
		11-15 years	26	17.8
5.	Course Attendance Rate	Once a month	11	7.5
		Once a term	55	37.7
		Once a year	41	28.1
		Once in two years	19	13.0
		Never	20	13.7
		<b>Total</b>	<b>146</b>	<b>100.0</b>
6.	TRCN Collection	Less than 5 years	34	23.3
		5-10 years ago	27	18.5
		11-15 years ago	14	9.6
		16-20 years ago	4	2.7
		Over 20 years ago	0	0.0
		I don't have it yet	62	42.5
		I have never heard	5	3.4
		<b>Total</b>	<b>146</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: Field Survey 2017

Table 1: Distribution of Teachers' Responses to Professionalism Disposition in Class.

S/No.	Questionnaire Statement	SA	A	D	SD	Total
7.	I am always excited when teaching in my class.	96	49	1	0	146
	Percentage	65.8	33.8	0.7	0	100.0
8.	I know the name of all the children in my class.	105	39	1	1	146
	Percentage	71.9	26.7	0.7	0.7	100.0
9.	When a child in my class misbehaves, I discipline him or her.	50	79	13	4	146
	Percentage	34.2	54.1	8.9	2.7	100.0
10.	I give homework regularly to children and explain to them how to go about it.	108	38	0	0	146
	Percentage	74.0	26.0	0.0	0.0	100.0
11.	I give feedback to children in my class and use this feedback to improve teaching and learning.	90	54	2	0	146
	Percentage	61.6	37.0	1.4	0.0	100.0
12.	I reward children in my class when they answer questions correctly.	105	40	1	0	146
	Percentage	71.9	27.4	0.4	0.0	100.0
13.	I make use of examples and gestures when teaching children in my class.	96	48	2	0	146
	Percentage	65.8	32.9	1.4	0.0	100.0
14.	I maintain ed an open c ommunication with parents and keep them informed of what is going on in their children's education.	92	52	1	1	146
	Percentage	63.0	35.6	0.7	0.7	100.0
15.	I communicate with my fellow teachers on a regular basis.	67	77	2	0	146
	Percentage	45.9	52.7	1.4	0.0	100.0
	<b>Total Frequency</b>	<b>809</b>	<b>476</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>1314</b>
	<b>Percentage</b>	<b>61.57</b>	<b>36.23</b>	<b>1.75</b>	<b>0.45</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: Field Survey 2017



Table 1: Distribution of Responses of Teachers to Children's Attitudes in Learning.

S/No.	Questionnaire Statement	SA	A	D	SD	Total
16.	Children in my class are always willing to please me.	43	88	14	1	146
	Percentage	29.5	60.3	9.6	0.7	100.0
17.	Children in my class learn from corrections	56	83	7	0	146
	Percentage	38.4	56.8	4.8	0.0	100.0
18.	Children in my class ask question after every topic.	36	84	23	3	146
	Percentage	24.7	57.5	15.8	2.1	100.0
19.	Some children in my class cry when they are dropped off at school.	30	62	26	28	146
	Percentage	20.5	42.5	17.8	19.2	100.0
20.	Children in my class always do their homework.	67	71	7	1	146
	Percentage	45.9	48.6	4.8	0.7	100.0
21.	Sometimes, children in my class sleep off while I am still teaching.	16	38	44	48	146
	Percentage	11.0	26.0	30.1	32.9	100.0
	<b>Total frequency</b>	<b>248</b>	<b>426</b>	<b>121</b>	<b>81</b>	<b>876</b>
	<b>Percentage</b>	<b>28.3</b>	<b>48.6</b>	<b>13.8</b>	<b>9.2</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: Field Survey 2017

Table 2: Distribution of Teachers Responses to Different Aspects of the Teaching and Learning Process.

S/No.	Statement	SA	A	D	SD	Total
22.	Children in my class learn from playful activities	66	65	10	5	146
	Percentage	45.2	44.5	6.8	3.4	100.0
23.	Children in my class learn from interacting with one another	52	84	6	4	146
	Percentage	35.6	57.5	4.1	2.7	100.0
24.	Children in my class learn from interacting with	47	85	112	2	146

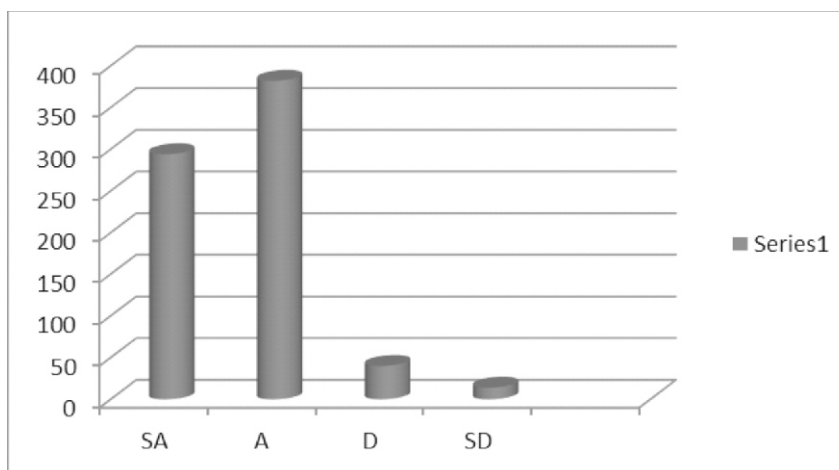


Figure 1: Illustration of Teachers' Responses to Different Aspects of the Teaching and Learning Process.

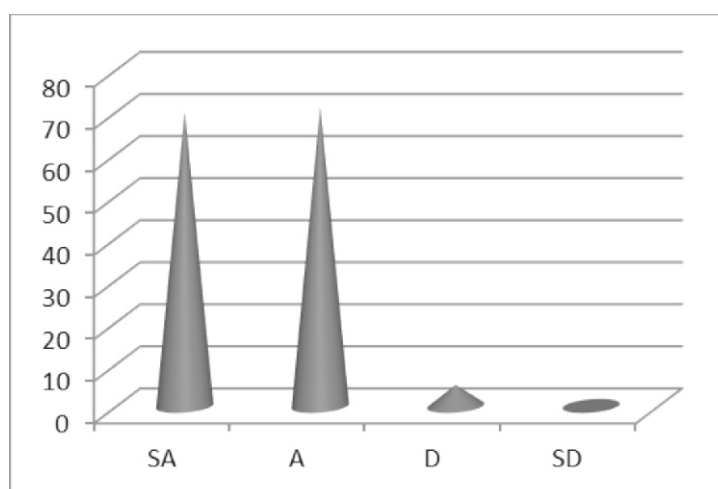


Figure : Illustration of Teachers' Responses to the Use of Textbooks and other learning materials as an influence on a child's attitude to learning in early childhood education.

Table 1: Distribution of Challenges Encountered by Educators in Early Childhood Education

S/No.	Challenge	Frequency	Percentage
i.	Parental related issues	48	14.8
ii.	Distractions in classes	41	12.7
iii.	Lazy attitudes disposition	39	12.0
iv.	Learning/teaching materials issues	33	10.2
v.	Communication barriers	27	8.3
vi.	Slow learning barrier	26	8.0
vii.	Excessive playful activities	21	6.5
viii.	Under age issues	19	5.9
ix.	Poor reading /writing issues	18	5.6
x.	Adaptation to school environment	15	4.6
xi.	School management issues	12	3.7
xii.	Absenteeism issues	10	3.1
xiii.	Resistance to corrections	9	2.8
xiv.	Eating habit issues	6	1.9
	<b>Total</b>	<b>324</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: Field Survey 2017

*Pearson Correlation Co-efficient Determination between Predictors of Child's Attitude and the Child's Attitudes to Learning in Early Childhood Education.*

Hypothesis	Variable	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Correlation (r)	Sig (p)
1.	Teacher professionalism	146	1.41	0.319	0.247	0.003
	Child's attitude to learning in early childhood education		2.04	0.379		
2.	Playful Activities	146	1.68	0.750	0.154	0.064
	Child's attitude to learning in early childhood education		2.04	0.379		
3.	Child's interactions with fellow classmates	146	1.79	0.665	0.238	0.004
	Child's attitude to learning in early childhood education		2.04	0.379		
4.	Child's interaction with adults	146	1.79	0.646	0.303	0.000
	Child's Attitude to learning in early childhood education		2.04	0.379		
5.	Classroom discussion, textbooks and other learning materials	146	1.68	0.662	0.271	0.001
	Child's Attitude to learning in early childhood education		2.04	0.379		
6.	Combination of predictors (item 2-4)	146	1.69	0.442	0.043	0.000
	Child's Attitude to learning in early childhood education		2.04	0.379		

Source: Field Survey 2017

Group statistics for teacher gender difference

teachers gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
attit male	22	11.6364	2.38139	.50771
female	124	12.3468	2.24530	.20163

Source: Field Survey 2017

Independent sample test for teachers' gender difference

	F	Sig.	t-Test for equality of means					
			T	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
							Lower	Upper
Equal variance assumed	0.000	0.996	-1.355	144	0.177	-0.71041	-1.7464	0.32559
Equal variance not assumed			-1.300	28.028	0.204	-0.7104	-1.8298	0.40856

Source: Field Survey 2017

Group statistics for gender difference of children

Item 26 (Student gender Question)		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
attit	Male	40	12.1000	2.08536	.32972
	Female	106	12.2925	2.34609	.22787

Source: Field Survey 2017

: Independent sample test for gender difference of children

	F	Sig.	t-Test for equality of means					
			T	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
							Lower	Upper
Equal variance assumed	0.782	0.372	-0.456	144	0.650	-0.19245	-1.00813	0.6423
Equal variance not assumed			-0.480	78.5	0.632	-0.19245	-0.99031	0.6054

Source: Field Survey 2017

## Conclusion

With reference to the analysis carried out and findings derived from this research work, the following conclusions are made.

1. The majority of the childhood educators operating within Ibadan metropolis are female teachers that have a NCE certificate and have not yet collected their TRCN certificate.
2. The teacher's professionalism has an influence on a child's attitude to learning in early childhood education
3. There are other relative influences of other predictors of the child's attitude to learning in early childhood education with respect to the pupil's interaction with fellow classmates, interaction with adults, active engagement in classroom discussions and learning from these discussions. This includes utilization of necessary textbooks and other relevant learning materials.
4. The male children, as concerning gender difference, show a more positive attitude to learning in early childhood education. This finding however, should not bring about the introduction of favouritism and discrimination by teachers into the teaching and learning process.
5. The childhood teachers are facing various challenges which can be factorized into the following issues: parental related issues, distraction in classes, lazy attitude dispositions by pupils, scarcity of learning and teaching materials, communication barriers between teachers and pupils, slow writing habits, excessive playful attitudes, poor reading and writing habits, adaptation to school environment issues, school management issues, absenteeism issues, resistance to correction and the children having poor eating habit issues. Under - age issues poses a great challenge. The problems associated with under-age entrants constrains the child's ability to comprehend and carry out classroom tasks and activities. The curriculum which is age- based has been structured for different academic stages. Some parents either ignorantly or overzealously enroll their children into school classes quite above their age and intellectual level.
6. Findings show that playful activities have an influence on a child's attitude to learning in early education.

## Recommendation

Based on all the findings and discussions in this study it is recommended that all the stake holders who are teaching or are in one way or the other involved with children in early childhood education, be sensitive to the requirement for more male teachers to be engaged in the teaching service of the Nigerian early childhood education programme.

Also, it is necessary for childhood teachers to start compulsory upgrading courses, which include continuous professional development (CPD), which will promote teaching professionalism when discharging duties in the classroom setting. These CPD programmes should contain relevant and recent information on enhancing the early childhood educators' workforce.

Considering TRCN has made it clear that unregistered teachers are likely to be sacked and that any teacher who failed to obtain his/her professional teaching certificate from TRCN by May 2017, would not be permitted to teach after 31st December 2017, teachers should be sensitized to the urgent need to get registered and to collect their TRCN certificates in order to ensure a quality service from them.

Also, the government and the childhood stakeholders should start compulsory training for childhood teachers on how to effectively apply their professionalism and maximize the usage of learning materials for their respective classes and teach them how they can motivate the pupils to interact positively with both classmates and adults. Children should be taught how to utilize the writing books and textbooks maximally.

However, the teachers should be sensitized to the fact that every pupil has an equal opportunity of developing the right learning attitude during their early childhood stages. Hence favouritism and discrimination should not be practiced by teachers while educating these young children.

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