

Attitudes of Pre-Service Teacher's Toward the Study of Early Childhood Care Education (ECCE) and Primary Education Studies at the College of Education and Legal Studies Ringim, Jigawa State

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Abstract

The study aims to assess the attitudes of pre-service teachers toward Early Childhood Care Education (ECCE) and Primary Education Studies at the College of Education & Legal Studies, Ringim, Jigawa State. It specifically examines the extent to which pre-service teachers perceive ECCE as a foundational preparation for primary education, their awareness of ECCE's role in facilitating a smooth transition from home to school, attitudes toward the adequacy of care and supervision in ECCE programs, beliefs about ECCE's role in inculcating social norms and values among young children, and variations in attitudes based on demographic factors such as gender, age, and course of study. A descriptive survey design was employed to gather data from a representative sample of 120 pre-service teachers selected through stratified random sampling to ensure proportional representation across different academic levels. The sample comprised 30 final-year students undergoing teaching practice and 90 students from other levels of the programs. Stratifying by academic level was justified as attitudes toward ECCE and Primary Education Studies may differ according to stages in teacher preparation. Data collection was conducted using a structured questionnaire titled "Assessing Pre-Service Teachers' Attitudes toward the Study of Early Childhood Care Education (ECCE) and Primary Education Studies" (APTOECELRL). The instrument consists of 20 carefully developed statements designed to capture multiple dimensions of pre-service teachers' attitudes toward these education programs. Content validity was established through a review by a panel of three experts' two specialists in measurement and evaluation and one in mathematics education with a Content Validity Index (CVI) of 0.87, indicating strong relevance and clarity. Reliability testing via a pilot study involving 25 pre-service teachers not included in the main sample yielded a Cronbach's alpha of 0.83, demonstrating good internal consistency. The questionnaire was administered in person, with support from trained research aides to ensure thoroughness and comprehension. A full response rate (100%) was achieved as questionnaires were collected immediately after completion. Descriptive statistics, including means and standard deviations, were used to analyze the data and address the research questions concerning pre-service teachers' attitudes.

Keywords: Pre-Service Teachers, Attitudes, ECCE, Primary Education.

Introduction

Education is considered as the tool or instrument of change through which our cultural norms and values can be preserved and transmitted to the younger generations and liberate the masses from

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the clutches of ignorance and prejudices. It makes them aware of their fundamental rights and responsibilities towards their family, society and also the nation at large. Education is an effective means of social reconstruction, it is fundamental for achieving full human potential; and developing an equitable, egalitarian and just society. It seeks to develop the innate capacities of the individuals. It is a potential tool for creating awareness among people and enabling them to lead a happy and peaceful life. Providing universal access to quality education is the key to government's continued ascent and leadership on global development in terms of economic growth, social justice and equality, scientific advancement; and cultural preservation. Universal high-quality education is the best way forward for developing and maximizing our country's rich talents and resources for the good of the individual, the society, the country and the world. (Raju 2023).

The year before a child reaches Kindergarten are among the most critical in his or her life to influence learning. That is why modern societies show serious concern for the education of their young ones by providing needed support to prepare them to succeed later in school (Ejieh, 2006). It is common practice in most societies to make provision for early childhood education programs of various sorts for children below the official school-going age (usually 6years) mainly to prepare them for education in primary schools (Obidike, 2012).

Statement of the Problem

Nigerian education system since independence can best be described as a system riddled with crisis. It is not strange for this to be so, because the country had inherited the system from our colonial master (Eriba, 2011). Judged against this premise, it becomes very challenging for Nigerians to manage the educational system passed to them by the British. So the system becomes inundated with diverse crises since independence. According to Eriba (2011), the educational system has been in a state of permanent crisis that it has lost quality, efficacy and functionality over the years. Early childhood education in Nigeria is not left out in these crises which tend to make the gains of education less spectacular. It is becoming customary to operate an early childhood institution in every household. Currently, early childhood education institutions are located in various places and buildings-campuses of some universities and colleges, premises of some industrial and business organizations, church premises, residential buildings some part or the whole of which are hired for use as early childhood schools (Ejieh, 2006). The flip side of this proliferation of early childhood institutions is that, the issue of standard and "regulations" have been waved off. The end result is that the young minds are offered "substandard" and "irregular" education that cannot breed egalitarianism and self-reliant individuals of the society and leaders of tomorrow. The significance of Early Childhood Care Education (ECCE) and Primary Education Studies in laying the foundational blocks of lifelong learning cannot be overstated. In recent years, there has been a growing recognition of the role of early childhood education in promoting cognitive, social, emotional, and physical development in children. However, one critical determinant of the effectiveness of ECCE delivery is the attitude of pre-service teachers toward the study and teaching of these fields. Unfortunately, there exists a noticeable gap in empirical studies that assess how pre-service teachers perceive ECCE and Primary Education Studies, particularly in teacher education institutions in Northern Nigeria.

This research was therefore necessary to fill this gap by investigating the attitudes of pre-service teachers at the College of Education and Legal Studies, Ringim. Understanding their perceptions can serve as a diagnostic tool for teacher training institutions to identify areas of improvement in pedagogy, course content, and field experiences. It can also help policymakers, curriculum planners, and

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stakeholders develop strategies to motivate, train, and retain teachers in this crucial sector of education.

Objectives of the Study

The following objectives of the study are formulated to guide the research;

1. To assess the extent to which pre-service teachers perceive Early Childhood Care Education (ECCE) as a preparatory foundation for primary education.
2. To determine the level of awareness among pre-service teachers regarding the role of ECCE in ensuring a smooth transition of children from home to school.
3. To evaluate pre-service teachers' attitudes toward the adequacy of care and supervision provided in ECCE programs.
4. To investigate the extent to which pre-service teachers believe ECCE contributes to the inculcation of social norms and values among young children.
5. To examine the differences in attitudes of pre-service teachers toward ECCE and Primary Education Studies based on demographic factors such as gender, age, and course of study.

Research Questions

The following research questions are formulated to guide the research;

1. To what extent do pre-service teachers perceive Early Childhood Care Education (ECCE) as a preparatory foundation for primary education?
2. How aware are pre-service teachers of the role of ECCE in ensuring a smooth transition of children from home to school?
3. What are pre-service teachers' attitudes toward the adequacy of care and supervision provided in ECCE programs?
4. To what extent do pre-service teachers believe ECCE contributes to the inculcation of social norms and values among young children?
5. Are there significant differences in the attitudes of pre-service teachers toward ECCE and Primary Education Studies based on gender, age, and course of study?

The literature highlight the critical role of ECCE in shaping children's developmental trajectories. While countries like India have integrated ECCE into national policy frameworks (Raju, 2023), Nigeria's historical context reveals a delayed but evolving recognition of its importance (Sooter, 2013). Future research should explore comparative studies on ECCE implementation across different socio-economic contexts to identify best practices and challenges.

The Concept of Early Childhood Care & Education (ECCE)

Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) is generally defined as the care and education of children from birth to eight years. It refers to all programs for children between ages zero to the start of primary education. This includes both early childhood educational development (ECED) and pre-primary education.

Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) is a critical foundation for lifelong learning and development. It encompasses educational and caregiving programs designed for children from birth to eight years, with a focus on holistic development across physical, cognitive, socio- emotional, and ethical domains (Raju, 2023; Sooter, 2013). The National Education Policy-2020 in India highlights ECCE as a pivotal area in school education, emphasizing its role in laying the groundwork for future academic and personal success (Raju, 2023). Similarly, in Nigeria, the recognition of ECCE as an

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official educational stage emerged relatively recently, with its roots tracing back to missionary efforts in the early 20th century (Sooter, 2013). This review synthesizes key concepts, historical developments, and the significance of ECCE, while addressing gaps in the literature and providing corrected grammatical structures where necessary.

Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) refer to educational programs provided to children aged 0-8 years, particularly those aged 3-5 years, before they enter primary school (Sooter, 2013; Federal Republic of Nigeria [FRN], 2004). Raju (2023) describes ECCE as a foundational stage in the educational structure, emphasizing its importance in fostering cognitive, social, and emotional development. The curriculum typically includes play-based and inquiry-based learning, covering areas such as language, numeracy, arts, and physical activities (Raju, 2023).

According to Sooter (2013, FRN 2004) refers to Early childhood care and Education (pre- primary education) as an education given in an educational institution to children aged 3-5 plus prior to their enrollment in the primary school. According to Raju (2023), Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) is one of the thrust areas in school education as envisaged by National Education Policy-2020. This is the foundation on which the entire structure of education rests. Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) is generally defined as the care and education of children from birth to eight years. It refers to all programs for children between ages zero to the start of primary education. This includes both early childhood educational development (ECED) and pre-primary education.

ECCE programs aim to achieve comprehensive developmental outcomes, including:

- Physical and motor development,
- Cognitive and problem-solving skills,
- Socio-emotional and ethical growth,
- Cultural and artistic appreciation,
- Early literacy and numeracy (Raju, 2023).

A key objective of ECCE is to ensure universal access to high-quality early education, particularly in socio-economically disadvantaged regions (Raju, 2023).

Importance of Teacher Attitude in Education

Teacher Attitude in Education and play great role in teaching and learning processes. According to Bagudo (2008 in Sooter 2013), posited that reports across the globe revealed that an estimated figure of one hundred million children, struggle daily for survival in villages and cities, and are exposed to the risks of hunger, poverty, disease, illiteracy and abuses.

In a situation where most of the teachers in our early childhood institutions are unqualified and/or unprofessional, effective teaching and learning cannot be achieved. In support of this view, Mahuta (2007) stresses that the need to address the problems and salvage these children and the next generation of children from these menace, has necessitated the program of Early Childhood Care Development and Education (ECCDE). Mahuta (2007) also stated that the aim of ECCDE is to foster the proper development of the children, identify and address their problems, harness their potentials, mould their character, enhance their learning, equip them for life, so that their actions are channeled towards positive personal, communal and global development in all ramifications of life.

Historical Background of ECCE & Primary Education in Nigeria

The introduction of infant schools in Nigeria can be traced back to missionary activities in the

early 20th century, primarily in the Western and Eastern regions (Sooter, 2013). These early institutions laid the groundwork for formal ECCE in the country, though systematic government attention to this stage of education emerged much later. Organized education for children below primary school age was not officially recognized in Nigeria until recently (Sooter, 2013). The concept of infant schools was introduced in Nigeria by the missionaries in the early 20th century when such schools were set up in the Western and Eastern regions of Nigeria. Early Childhood education in the form of nursery school or pre-primary education as we know it today in Nigeria is largely a post-colonial development. The semblances of it during the colonial era were the Kindergarten and infant classes, which consisted of groups of children considered not yet ready for primary education. As groping for instruction in schools was not age-based during that period, some children aged six or even more, could be found in some of the infant classes (Tor- Anyiin, 2008). With the phasing out of infant classes, some parents began to feel the need for nursery schools. During that period, (pre-independence) all efforts for provision of early childhood education were confined to the voluntary sector and received little or no support from the government (Tor- Anyiin, 2008). It was for the first time in 1977 with the introduction of National Policy on Education by the then military government of Nigeria that the importance and need for early childhood education was given official recognition and linked with the child's educational performance in primary school. Gradually, early childhood institution stayed, and by 1985, Nigeria had about 4200 early childhood educational institutions. While by 1992 the number increased to about 8,300 (Federal Government of Nigeria/UNICEF 1993). According to Sooter (2013) Nowadays, early childhood educational institutions are located in various places and buildings campuses of universities and Colleges, premises of some industries and business organizations, church premises, residential buildings with unprecedented expansion owing to the high demand for early childhood care and education by parents (Ejieh, 2006).

A research conducted by Raju et al (2023) entitled “A Study on the Attitude of Primary School Teachers towards Implementation of Early Childhood Care and Education in School Curriculum”, the researchers used a well prepared and standardized questionnaire as the tool for collection of data from a sample of 100 teachers (30 Headmasters and 70 Secondary Grade Teachers) selected from 30 Primary schools located in Visakhapatnam District of Andhra Pradesh using Stratified Random Sampling technique. Mean score values, standard deviations and independent t-tests were used for analysis of data. The findings of the study revealed that the demographic variables - Gender, Age and Location of the school have no influence on the attitude of teachers towards introduction of ECCE in school curriculum.

Study conducted by Sooter, (2013). The topic of the research titled “Early Childhood Education in Nigeria: Issues and Problems” the paper discusses the issues and problems of early childhood education in Nigeria. It establishes that the Federal Government of Nigeria in its National policy on Education has given official recognition to the development and provision of early childhood education in the country. This combined with a number of factors to give rise to an unprecedented expansion in the provision of child care and early childhood education institutions in the country. However, nearly all the early childhood education in the country is provided by private proprietors. It also identifies the inability of government among others to put to effect most of the measures it stated in the National Policy on Education aimed at ensuring that the policy objectives are achieved. It has also established that the provision of early childhood education will have positive influence on the educational development of children in later life.

Research conducted by Chukwuemeka 2021 on “the Assessment of Early Childhood Care

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Education Pre-Service Teachers' Challenges of Improvisation and Utilizing Instructional Resources in Mathematics Classroom". The study assessed the Early Childhood Care Education Pre-Service Teachers' Challenges of Improvisation and Utilizing Instructional Resources in Mathematics Classroom. This study was carried out in Alvan Ikoku Federal College of Education in Owerri Municipal Council Area of Imo State. Based on the purpose of the study, three research questions guided the study. The study adopted descriptive research design. The population of the study comprised of 1,057 Pre-service teachers. A sample size of 235 pre- service teachers were randomly drawn for the study. The instrument used for the collection of the data was structured Questionnaire titled; Assessing Pre-service Teachers' Challenges of Improvisation and Utilizing Instructional Materials scale (APTCIUIMS). The reliability co- efficient(r) of 0.83 were obtained using Cronbach alpha method for internal consistency of the items. Data collected were analyzed using mean, standard deviation for the research questions. The results revealed that there are challenges of improvisation and utilizing of instructional resources. It was recommended that Pre-Service teachers of early childhood care education should see the improvisation of instructional materials as a matter of urgency during teaching to improve the quality of education in Nigerian schools.

Methodology

The study adopted a descriptive survey design to investigate the attitudes of pre-service teachers toward the study of Early Childhood Care Education (ECCE) and Primary Education Studies at the College of Education & Legal Studies, Ringim, Jigawa State. The target population for this study comprises all pre-service teachers enrolled in ECCE and Primary Education programs at the College of Education & Legal Studies, Ringim. The college currently has an estimated total population of 350 pre-service teachers undertaking various levels in the mentioned programs. A representative sample of 120 pre-service teachers was selected for the study. The sample includes 30 final-year students (student teachers) and 90 students from other levels of the programs. The sample size was determined to ensure adequate representation while considering the manageable scope of the study. The stratified random sampling technique was employed to select respondents from different academic levels (strata) within the population. This technique was chosen because it ensures that each subgroup of the population (e.g., level of study) is proportionally represented in the sample, enhancing the generalizability of the findings. Stratification based on academic level is justified as attitudes toward ECCE and Primary Education Studies may vary across different stages of teacher preparation. The primary instrument used for data collection was a structured questionnaire titled "Assessing Pre-Service Teachers' Attitudes toward the Study of Early Childhood Care Education (ECCE) and Primary Education Studies" (APTOECELRL). The questionnaire comprises 20 statements designed to gauge various dimensions of pre-service teachers' attitudes toward these education programs. To ensure the content validity of the instrument, the questionnaire was reviewed by a panel of three experts: two specialists in measurement and evaluation and one specialist in mathematics education. Using their assessment, the Content Validity Index (CVI) for the instrument was calculated to be 0.87, indicating high content relevance and clarity of the items. The reliability of the instrument was tested through a pilot study involving 25 pre-service teachers outside the main study sample. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient was calculated to be 0.83, demonstrating good internal consistency and reliability. The researchers administered the questionnaire personally to the selected respondents, with assistance from trained research aides to ensure

clarity and completeness. A 100% return rate was achieved as the questionnaires were collected immediately upon completion. Descriptive statistics, including mean and standard deviation, were used to analyze the responses and answer the research questions related to the attitudes of pre-service teachers.

Table 1: Demographic Variables

Variables		Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Student Teachers	Male	21	70%	Female	09
Student		52	57.78%		38
Total =		30		90	

Source: Research Questionnaire, 2025.

Table 1 above shows, demographic representations of Students Teachers and students in the study area, with total of thirty (30) student teachers (21 Male and 9 Female Student Teachers) which represents (70% and 30%) and 52 Male Students (52% and 38%) respectively. Findings on demographic variables shows that, there are total of thirty Student teachers (21 Male and 9 Female Student Teachers) which represents (70% and 30%) and 52 Male Students (52% and 38%) respectively in the study area.

SECTION B: Decision Rule: To decide either to accept or reject the statement, mean value that is greater than 3.0 is “accepted” and mean value less than 3.0 is “rejected”.

Table 2: ECCE as a Preparatory Foundation for Primary Education

S/N	Statements	Mean	Std. D	Decision
1.	ECCE provides a solid foundation for learning in primary education.	4.30	0.70	Accepted
2.	Children who attend ECCE perform better in primary school.	4.37	0.67	Accepted
3.	ECCE adequately prepares children for the challenges of primary education.	4.30	0.70	Accepted

Sources: Research Questionnaire, 2025

Table 2 above shows all items measured exhibited means greater than 4.0, exceeding the acceptance threshold of 3.0. This indicates that pre-service teachers strongly agree that early childhood education and care (ECCE): Provides a solid foundation for effective primary school learning. Enhances children’s academic performance. Adequately prepares children for future educational challenges. The relatively low standard deviations (ranging approximately from 0.67 to 0.70) suggest a high degree of consensus among respondents. These results align with prior research emphasizing ECCE’s pivotal role in cognitive readiness for primary education.

Table 3: Awareness of ECCE's Role in Transition from Home to School

S/N	Statements	Mean	Std. D	Decision
1.	ECCE helps children adapt smoothly from home to school life.	1.90	1.06	Rejected
2.	ECCE reduces the difficulty of adjusting to a formal school environment.	4.27	0.69	Accepted
3.	ECCE builds children's confidence for entry into primary school.	4.07	0.87	Accepted

Sources: Research Questionnaire, 2025

Table 3 above shows that, among the items assessed: "ECCE reduces difficulty in adjusting to formal schooling" (Mean = 4.27) and "ECCE builds children's confidence" (Mean = 4.07) were accepted. "ECCE helps children adapt smoothly from home to school life" (Mean = 1.90), which falls below the 3.0 threshold are rejected. This suggests that while ECCE is perceived to boost confidence and ease certain adjustment challenges, respondents are unconvinced about its effectiveness in promoting direct adaptation from home settings to formal school routines. Such nuanced findings echo emerging literature that distinguishes confidence building from broader adjustment processes.

Table 4: Adequacy of Care and Supervision in ECCE Programs

S/N	Statements	Mean	Std. D	Decision
1.	ECCE provides adequate care and supervision for children.	4.27	0.69	Accepted
2.	Teachers in ECCE pay attention to children's safety and well-being.	3.63	0.81	Accepted
3.	ECCE helps to monitor children while their parents are at work, farm, or market.	4.33	0.66	Accepted

Sources: Research Questionnaire, 2025

Table 4 above shows that, all measured items within this section recorded means above 3.6 (approximately 3.63 to 4.33), and so were accepted. Pre-service teachers agree that ECCE programs: Ensure children's safety and adequate care. Provide peace of mind to working parents and guardians. The lower standard deviations (around 0.66 to 0.81) underscore strong inter- respondent agreement. These findings are consistent with evidence highlighting the essential caregiving role of ECCE, beyond its academic contributions.

Table 5: ECCE's Role in Inculcating Social Norms and Values

S/N	Statements	Mean	Std. D	Decision
1.	ECCE teaches children good social behavior.	2.07	1.08	Rejected
2.	ECCE helps children learn discipline and respect for elders.	2.07	1.08	Rejected
3.	ECCE plays a role in instilling cultural and moral values in children.	1.93	1.20	Rejected

Sources: Research Questionnaire, 2025

Table 5 above shows that, all three items under this domain were rejected, with means between roughly 1.93 and 2.07 well below the 3.0 criterion. This indicates prevailing skepticism among pre-service teachers regarding ECCE's effectiveness in instilling: Appropriate social behavior and discipline. Respect, cultural values, and moral conduct. Additionally, elevated standard

deviations (ranging approximately from 1.08 to 1.20) point to considerable divergence in perspectives. Such heterogeneity may reflect inconsistent curricular emphasis or variation in training experiences across institutions.

Table 6: Influence of Demographic Factors on Attitudes

S/N	Statements	Mean	Std. D	Decision
1.	Male and female pre-service teachers view ECCE differently.	4.33	0.66	Accepted
2.	Age affects pre-service teachers' attitudes toward ECCE.	4.33	0.66	Accepted
3.	Course of study influences attitudes toward ECCE and Primary Education Studies.	1.93	1.11	Rejected

Sources: Research Questionnaire, 2025

Table 6 above shows that, the items “male and female views on ECCE differ” and “age affects attitudes toward ECCE” both had means of approximately 4.33 (Accepted), indicating that gender and age significantly influence perceptions of ECCE. Conversely, “course of study influences attitudes” was rejected (Mean = 1.93), suggesting disciplinary backgrounds do not impact attitudes meaningfully. These demographic differentials are consistent with research that identifies age and gender as meaningful predictors in educational attitude formation.

Conclusion

The descriptive analysis reveals that pre-service teachers hold strongly positive attitudes toward ECCE as an academic and caregiving foundation for primary education. They appreciate its role in boosting confidence and ensuring child safety. However, ECCE's contributions to socialization, cultural values, and discipline are viewed as inadequate or underemphasized. Furthermore, attitudes are shaped by age and gender, but not by academic discipline. This suggests a need to re-evaluate how ECCE programs convey and enact their socio-emotional and cultural components.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were suggested for the study;

1. Redesign ECCE curricula to integrate social norms, discipline, and cultural values alongside academic readiness. This can involve modules on socio-emotional development, culturally responsive pedagogy, and positive behavior models.
2. Offer targeted training for pre-service and in-service ECCE educators focusing on character formation, social-emotional learning (SEL), and cultural competence, to better equip them for holistic child development.
3. Advocate for policy frameworks and assessment tools that equally prioritize ECCE's academic, emotional, and socio-cultural dimensions facilitating balanced implementation across institutions.
4. Conduct awareness campaigns highlighting ECCE's holistic value, engaging parents and community stakeholders to reinforce social and cultural learning outside formal settings.
5. Given the influence of gender and age on ECCE perceptions, tailor outreach and training initiatives to address these differences, for example, designing mentoring or reflective modules that consider diverse age groups and gender perspectives.

Recommendations for Curriculum Implementers, Policy Makers, and Researchers

Policy Makers ought to develop targeted policies that incentivize enrollment into ECCE and Primary Education programs through scholarships, grants, and employment opportunities. Establish clear career progression pathways for ECCE educators to attract and retain qualified personnel. Mandate the inclusion of ECCE-focused practicum in teacher education programs.

Researchers should further studies to explore the long-term impact of pre-service teacher attitudes on their classroom practices after graduation. Comparative research between different colleges or regions could highlight best practices and contextual challenges in ECCE implementation. Examine the impact of socio-cultural and economic backgrounds on pre-service teachers' disposition toward early childhood education.

Curriculum Implementers should revise ECCE and Primary Education courses to include more local content, storytelling, indigenous games, and community practices. Emphasize formative assessment and reflective practices in evaluating pre-service teachers. Encourage the use of inclusive and gender-sensitive pedagogies to ensure all children benefit from early education.

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