

Influence of Nursery Education on the Academic Performance of Primary School Pupils in Rivers State: Implications for Counselling

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Abstract

This study examined the influence of Nursery Education on the academic performance of primary school pupils in Rivers State: Implications for counselling. A total number of 100 primary one pupils were randomly selected from 5 public primary schools in Port Harcourt and Obio-Akpor Local Government Areas of Rivers State. The main instrument used for the study was an achievement test comprising of three subjects, Mathematics, English Language and Basic Science to test the cognitive abilities, social skills and motor skills of primary school pupils. Five research questions and five hypotheses guided this study. Data analysis was done using predictive statistics of mean to answer the research questions. While t-test statistics technique was used at $p < 0.05$ Level to find out whether there was a significant difference between primary school pupils who had nursery education and those without nursery education. The result showed that, there was a significant difference at $p < 0.05$ in mathematics, English Language and Basic Science between pupils who attended nursery school and those without nursery education. In conclusion Nursery Education influenced the performance of primary school pupils in all the subjects tested. It is suggested that children should attend nursery schools before being admitted into primary one. Counseling application suggested that Government should employ the services of the guidance counselors to all the Nursery and primary school as counselors at this level will help the pupils cope with their everyday worries such as examination stress, issues with friends, family members and teachers alike.

Keywords: Nursery education, Primary school, Academic performance, Cognitive skill, Social skill, Motor skill, Counselling, Implication.

Introduction

Education being an indispensable tool in nations building is a process of systematic training and instruction designed to transmit knowledge and acquisition of skills potentials and also abilities which will enable an individual to contribute efficiently to the growth and development of his society and nation. It involves all round development of an individual social, physical, moral and intellectually (Osakwe, 2006). It is therefore glaring that early childhood education has influence in a child later academic achievement. This has motivated the development of a number of pre-school institutions. More recently, formal kindergarten programmes have been designed to prevent high drop-out and low levels of intellectual functioning that are found in disadvantaged children as early as two or three years of age (Fafunwa, 2012). Ministry of Education knowing extensively the importance of nursery education on the achievement of pupils in Nigeria and in the world at large.

Nursery education as defined by Omozeghian (2014) is the education meant for children between the ages of 3-5. The National policy on education (2014) sees pre-primary education as the education given in an institution to children aged 3-5 years plus prior to their entering the primary school. It means it is a special kind of education provided in an institution prior the children entering the primary school.

Having known the importance of pre-school or nursery education, the government encouraged private efforts in the establishment of these institutions. Also, in recent years the government sponsors the pre-primary school levels in public primary school in the country (Nigeria).

Learning according to Osakwe (2006) is a natural process of pursuing meaningful goals, discovering and constructing meaning from information and experience filtered through the learners unique perceptions, thoughts, and feelings. Hence, when the child is born into the world learning commences immediately to enable the child get adapted to the new environment. The child learns to feed, hear, see and respond to stimuli, before learning to sit, walk, talk and behave like people around him. The drive for curiosity is innate in every child and can be developed to yield greater results by given him early education. Nursery education experience according to Barnard (2001) positively affects later home and school involvement in education. A child who fails to acquire early childhood education may suffer emotionally, socially, intellectually and even physically if he is taking to the primary school without nursery education experience that will give him a solid foundation in the primary school. Therefore, for effective and efficient unlocking and development of the child's later abilities, attitudes and other forms of behaviour of positive values in the society in which he lives early childhood education becomes very important. This is important because researches on early childhood education experiences have great impact on all areas of the child's development and had suggested that the first teaches is extremely an important person in the child's life.

According to *Feeney et al.* (2012) early childhood is an asset of immense value in the later academic pursuit of a child and much more later in life. This early experience exposes the child to all fields which give him an edge over those who did attend nursery school in the primary school as the confidence in his learning capability which he acquired from the nursery school is lifted to the primary school. This eventually aids and facilitates his learning. The early childhood institution aims at developing the cognitive and affective potentials of the child at an early age. Anderson (2002) is of the view that when children are exposed to early childhood education, they develop superior communication skills, necessary physical abilities and social unit needed in adult life and an increased cognitive and effect educational balance.

Having realized the importance of nursery education, the government encouraged private efforts in the establishment of this institution. Also, in recent years the government now sponsors the pre-school levels of public primary schools in the country. Also the government has a deliberate attempt to raise the quality of education at all levels in order to make the product of our educational system more useful to our society.

Therefore, early childhood education will provide that vital physical, psychomotor, affective, cognitive, social potentials which are fundamental to human life that will play essential role in the primary and even more in later life of the individual. This study attempts to analyse this problem.

Statement of the Problem

Psychologist such as Sigmund Freud and Erik Erikson have the opinion that early childhood experiences have a lot of influence on the later life of an individual. The rearing practices which the child is exposed to influence the value, norms and belief of the individual even in later life. The content of the knowledge which the child is exposed to early in life is the bedrock

to later education. There is a scriptural injunction that says “train up the child in the way he should go and when he is old, he will not depart from it”. *Proverbs 22 verse 6*. from this injunction, the manner of teaching a child in the pre-primary school days go a long way to help him develop his cognitive, social and motor skills early enough as these would be lacking in children who did not attend nursery school. Therefore the problem of this study is to find out the extent to which early childhood education affect the later educational life of the child.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to determine whether nursery education can influence the academic performance of primary school pupils. Specifically the study attempted to achieve the following:

1. Identify if attention as an aspect of cognitive ability can influence the performance of pupils in primary school who had nursery education and those without nursery education.
2. Examine whether reasoning as an aspect of cognitive ability can influence the performance of primary school pupils who had nursery education and those without nursery education.
3. Find out whether group interaction as an aspect of social skill can influence the academic performance of primary school pupils who attended nursery school and those who did not attend.

Research Questions

The following research questions were posed for this study.

1. To what extent does attention as an aspect of cognitive ability influence the performance of primary school pupils who had pre-primary education and those without pre-primary education?
2. How does reasoning as an aspect of cognitive skill influence the academic performance of primary school pupils who had nursery education and those without nursery education?
3. How does interaction as an aspect of social skill influence the academic performance of primary school pupils who attended nursery school and those who did not attend nursery school?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were formulated for this study:

1. There is no significant difference of attention on academic performance of primary school pupils who had nursery education and those without nursery education.
2. There is no significant difference of reasoning on academic performance of primary school pupils who attended pre-primary school and those that did not attend.
3. There is no significant difference of group interaction as an aspect of social skills on the academic performance of primary school pupils who had nursery education and those without.

Review of Related Literature

Theoretical Framework

A theory is a set of abstract concepts developed about a group of facts or events in order to explain than. According to Akinade (2016), Jean Piaget’s theory of cognitive development is a comprehensive theory about the nature and development of human intelligence. It was propounded in (1936). He believed that children construct understanding of the world around

them, experience discrepancies between what they already know and what they discover in their environment, and then adjust their ideas accordingly.

Piaget theorized that all children develop linearly through four stages: the sensory and motor stage (birth to 2 years old) preoperational stage (2 to 7 years). Concrete operation stage (7-11 years) and formal operation stage (above 11). During this sensory and motor stage, the child assimilates knowledge about her environment and learns to differentiate between herself and the world. She learns to accommodate for unexpected objects and outcomes, and classifies objects according to their basis features during the pre-operational stage. In the concrete operational stage, she developed the ability to think abstractly and to conceptualize ideas to explain her own experiences.

Developmental system theory of Sigmund Freud, propounded in (1949). This theory is focused on how children develop a sense of independence and mastery. Sigmund Freud believed that children develop psychologically based on how their parents react to their early childhood experiences with toilet training, aggression and sexuality. His “psychosexual” theory proposed that children progress through several distinct stages on their way to adulthood: oral, anal, phallic, latency and Genital. According to Freud if the other stages have been completed successfully, the individual will be well balanced, warm and caring.

Erik Erikson theory of early childhood behaviour was propounded in (1950). He stated that each psychosocial stage of development places certain demands which individuals must overcome before transiting to the next stage. Each stage of Erikson’s theory is concerned with becoming competent in an area of life. If a stage is managed poorly, the person will emerge with a sense of inadequacy in that aspect of development.

In his opinion, children from their world view and sense of identity is based on their experiences during several stages Trust Vs Mistrust (birth to 18 months) Autonomy Vs shame or doubt (18 months to 3 years) Initiative Vs Guilt (3 to 5 years) and later cognitive development. How effectively children are stimulated during the various stages of development determine how well adjusted and productive academically they become as adults.

Conceptual Framework

Attention is a concept studied in cognitive psychology that refers to how we actively process specific information in our environment. As a reader reads, there are numerous sights, sounds, and sensations going on around him, the pressure of his feet against the floor, the sight of the street out of the window, the soft warmth of his shirt, the memory of the conversation he had earlier with a friend. All of these sights, sounds and sensations vie for our attention, but it turns out that our intentional resources are not limitless. How do we manage the experience all of these sensations and still focus on just one element of our environment.

According to Myers (2015), attention is the taking possession by the mind, in clear and Vivid form, of one out of what may seem several. Reasoning encompasses all thinking activities that involve making or testing inferences. This includes inductive reasoning (i.e. Concept formation) and deductive reasoning (i.e. logical argument). Reasoning is closely related to problem solving and creativity.

Concept formation has always been a central concern of learning theories over decades. Cognitive approaches such as Hunt proposed that concept learning was an active process of hypothesis generation and rule formation. There are a number of theorists who have attempted to develop a single framework that account for both inductive and deductive processes. For

example, Morgolis (1987) argues that all rule following processes can be reduced to pattern recognition sequences. Holland *et al.* (1986) used the concept of mental models to explain reasoning.

Interaction: The goal of interaction is to lead students to a point of reflection that causes them to evaluate existing assumptions and then chose to integrate or discard the new information. By itself, interaction has very little value. It is possible to interact at length with concepts, only to find out that everything read or heard is a blur why? Because active engagement is defined by reflection and validation of the content being explored. Effect interaction is a process of awakening a student's internal reflective processes.

Interaction can be defined as when objects and event mutually influence one another. An instructional interaction is an event that takes place between the learner and the learner's environment. Its purpose is to respond to the learner in a way intended to change his or her behaviour towards an educational goal (Wagner, 1994) from <http://seamonkey.ed.asu.edu/~mcisaac/emc703/leah5.html>.

Interaction plays the following roles:

1. Getting a learners attention
2. Keeping a learner's interest.
3. Transferring information
4. Aiding retention
5. Sparking reflection
6. Evaluation – both formative and summative.

Accommodating is part of the learning process that allows us the change our existing ideas in order to take a new information. Initially proposed by Jean Piaget, the term accommodation refers to part of the adaptation process, the process of accommodation involves altering one's existing ideas, as a result of new information, or new experience.

Accommodation does not just take place in children: adults also experience this as well. When experiences introduced new information or information that conflicts with existing schemas or ideas, one must accommodate this now learning in order to ensure that what's inside your head conforms to what's outside in real world. "There must be enough accommodation to meet and adapt to new situations and enough assimilation to use one's ideas quickly, and efficiently" Tuckman and Monetti suggest.

Coordination of body movement motor coordination is the combination of body movements created with the Kinematic such as spatial direction and kinetic force that result in intended actions. Motor coordination is achieved when subsequent parts of the same movement, or the movements of several limbs or body parts are combined in manner that is well timed, smooth, and efficient with respect to the intended goal. This involves the integration of proprioceptive information detailing the position and movement of the musculoskelete system with the neural processes in the brain and spinal cord which control, plan, and relay motor commands. The cerebellum plays a critical role in this part of the brain or its connecting structures and pathways results in impairment known as ataxia.

Examples of motor coordination are the ease with which people can stand up, pour water into a glass, walk, and reach for a pen. Coordination involves all of the eye-hand coordination processes. The brain interprets actions as spatial temporal patterns and when each hand performs a different action simultaneously, bimanual coordination is involved.

Bernstein proposed that individuals learn coordination first by restricting the degree of freedom that they use. By controlling only a limited set of degrees of freedom, this enable the learner to simplify the dynamic of the body parts involved and the range of movement options. Once the individual has gained some proficiency, these, restrictions can be relaxed so allowing them to use the full potentials of their body.

Empirical Framework

Osakwe (2009) studied the effect of early childhood education experience on the Academic performances of primary school children. The study revealed that there was difference between pupils who had pre-primary education and those without in their academic performances.

Oniwon (2015) studied an Examination of the role of Nursery Education on primary school pupils in Nigeria. The result showed a marking difference between the two sets of pupils with those who attended nursery school performing better.

Olaleye and Omotayo (2009) on “Assessment of quality in early childhood education in Ekiti-State Nigeria.” This study examined the concept of quality in early childhood education in Ekiti State. The researcher sought answers to the following research questions: What is the quality of learning activities in the nursery schools in Ekiti State?. What is the quality of teaching staff in the nursery school? To what extent have the proprietors/proprietresses of nursery schools provided conducive environments for teaching and learning? What is the quality of learning outcomes in the nursery school? To what extent have parents been participating in the education of their children?

A descriptive survey research method was used to elicit information from 120 randomly selected respondents which comprises of teachers and heads of twelve pre-schools selected in Ado Ekiti. The selection of the schools was by stratified random sampling and criteria for selection include the size of school include size of school and approval by government. The instrument tagged quality Assessment Questionnaire (QAQ) was used to collect data for the study.

The findings showed that learning activities in the pre-primary schools was averagely high. Individual scores of the items related to learning activities revealed skills as follows: (79.2%). Learning rudiment of numbers through play (45%) developing good health habit (66.7% were considered but the researcher as both high. However low quality was recorded in the use of mother-tongue (4.2%) and opportunity to develop artistic and realize skills (35%). Indicator of quality of staff was found to be of low quality (19%). Having a good knowledge of children development was (39.2%). Opportunities for re-training and self-development was very low (20.8%). Interest in teaching the young ones (30.8%) was found to be low. Remuneration in terms of salary for teachers was revealed to be very to be very low (26.7%). The result further revealed that the learning environment of the pre-schools using the subscale, scores was fairly good (62.5%) and provision of adequate classroom space/ ventilation (60%) was found to be average, low quality was however found in respect of provision of water (29.2%). Finding also revealed that the quality of learning outcomes is averagely high with aspects of continuous assessment (62.5%). Records keeping (72.5%) parents having access to learning outcome (81.7%), assessment covering a broad range of children’s learning activities (48.3%) while rewarding for good performance recorded high (73.3%). Finally, the result of the study revealed that parents’ involvement in the management of the pre-school was very low (40.8%). Opportunities for development parents given adequate information about their children was found to be average while parents involvement in academic activities such as field trips, etc was reported to be low (40%). Organization of parents’ forum score was reported as average

(55.8%) while parents' financial support for the school was low schools (29.2%). This study is relevant to the current one because it investigated issues related to early childhood education, which is partly part of the current study. However, the researcher failed to study the role of early childhood Education on primary school pupils. The current study will close this gap.

Eweniyi (2012) conducted a study on "Formal Kindergarten experience as a predictor of academic achievement of primary five pupils. In English Language" the researcher tested the following hypotheses: there is no significant difference between the English Language performance of pupils with and those without kindergarten experience.

There is no significant difference in male primary five pupils with and those without formal kindergarten experience. There is no significant difference between the academic performance of female primary five pupils with and those without formal kindergarten experience. The academic performance of pupils with and without formal kindergarten experience were compared while their achievement was based on their performance in the English Language tests. The sample consisted of one hundred and twenty pupils made up of forty-eight pupils with formal kindergarten education and seventy-five pupils without formal kindergarten education selected from ten public primary five classes. The sample consisted of boys and girls. The instrument used for data collection was English Language achievement tests. The scores obtained from the tests were analyzed using the t-test to find the significant difference between the means of the two groups. The results of this study revealed a significant difference between the English language performance of pupils with formal Kindergarten experience and those without such experience. The result also showed a significant difference between the academic performance of male primary five pupils with formal kindergarten experience and those without such experience and a significant difference between academic performance of female primary five pupils with formal kindergarten experience and those without it. This study is very related to the current study just that the researcher paid attention to only one subject (English Language). The current study will fill the gap.

The study conducted by Olusanjo (2013) on "Differences in children's school success and family backgrounds: A comparative case study of pupils' performance in entrance examination in Ibadan, Nigeria" Introducing a new dimension into his review. The researcher reviewed the socio-economic backgrounds of pupils from various family structures (Monogamous) polygamus, single-parent and Orphan children) against their academic performances in Ibadan North-east municipality of Ibadan, Nigeria. The study adopted both qualitative and quantitative data collection method. A total of two hundred and twenty pupils between the ages of 10 to 15. In Junior secondary schools were sampled, N = 220 and 8 teachers were interviewed from the various pupils' schools. Findings from this study revealed that no significant differences existed in the pupils' levels of academic attainment and ethnic background, while a significant differences was found between the monogamous and polygamous pupil's religions across the various family structures observed. However, majority pupils' level of computer literacy was found to be poor. No significant differences were also recorded in the pupils' parents' educational achievement and occupational status, as the majority of the parents were found to be at the waking class level, the result this study though comprehensive failed to provide insights on the role of nursery education on primary school pupils.

The last study investigated here is the one conducted by Adesina and Okewole, (2014) on "Survey of teachers' opinions on mother- tongue instruction in Nigerian nursery schools: Implication for education policy making". This study was carried out to find out teachers' views on the programme of mother-tongue instruction in nursery schools in Nigeria.

Questionnaire was used to seek the teachers' opinion on the issue of mother-tongue as language of instruction in nursery schools in Nigeria.

The result showed that 70% of the respondents supported the use of mother tongue while 30% objected it. Also that a programme of mother tongue instruction would allow students to easily interpret information obtained properly and correctly was supported by 65% of the respondents while 35% expressed contrary opinion. In the same vein 72% of the teachers supported the opinions that the programme of mother tongue would make students use information efficiently and effectively while only 66% of the sampled opinions supported that the programme of mother tongue instruction would allow student to develop practical and manipulate skills easily and quickly, 34% of the respondents expressed contrary view. Furthermore, the data revealed that more respondents (55%) expressed opinions that the programme of mother tongue would provide student information with ease and accuracy when required whereas 45% of the respondents were against the opinion. 77% supported the view that the programme of mother tongue would make students acquire and develop desirable attitude towards people, his country, issues. Etc. whereas only 23% of the respondents expressed contrary opinion.

It was found out that 51% out of the sampled teachers went against the opinion that the programme of mother tongue. Instruction would face the problem of general unacceptability by the parents of the students taught with the programme while. 44% agreed with the opinion. While majority (75%) of the respondents indicated that the multilingual values of Nigeria would not allow the programme of mother tongue to work properly only 25% of the respondents disagreed with the opinion. 52% of the teachers opined that there would be problem of training and retraining of teachers if the programme of mother tongue instruction is to work 45% of the respondents disagreed. This appears strange. One would normally expect a lower percentage on the negative side. Whereas, 26% of the sampled opinions support the view that the problem of inadequate teaching learning resources would confront the programme of another tongue instruction, 79% of the respondents however expressed contrary opinion. Furthermore, 65% of the sampled teachers indicated that there would be no problem of curriculum development in some subjects especially science subjects, whereas only 35% envisaged that there would be problem. Seventy-five percent of the respondents disagreed with the opinion that the programme of mother tongue instruction would be uneconomical while only 27% of the people disagreed. Ninety two percent of the respondents expressed the fear that only one local language would be adopted in Nigeria, whereas only 8% of the teachers did not see any problem along the line. The missing gap among is the absence of a study that investigated the role of nursery education on primary school pupils. The current study will fill this gap.

Effect of Nursery Education on Primary Education

Nursery education experiences according to Barnad (2001) affect later home and school environment in education. A child who fails to acquire early education may suffer emotionally, socially, intellectually and even physically if he is trusted into the primary school without a sustainable early childhood education experience that will give him a solid foundation in the primary school. Therefore, for effective and efficient unlocking and development of the child's latent abilities, attitude and other forms of behaviour of positive value in the society, early education is important.

According to Feeney *et al.* (1987), early childhood is an asset of immense value in the later academic pursuit of a child and much later in life. The early childhood is aimed at developing the cognitive and affective potential at an early age. Anderson (2002) is of the view that when

children are exposed to early childhood education, they develop superior communication skills, necessary physical abilities and social unity needed in adult life and an increase cognitive and affective educational balance.

Methodology

Research Design

The research design for this study is descriptive survey design type, it is designed to look into the influence of nursery education on the academic performance of primary school pupils in public schools in Rivers State. The choice of survey design for the study is because it allows for the use of test assessment scores.

Population of the Study

The population of the study comprised of 5 public primary school (primary one (1) pupils) in Port Harcourt and Obio-Akpor Local Government Areas in Rivers State.

Sample and Sampling Technique(s)

The sample size for this study comprised of 100 pupils drawn from five (5) public primary schools. Three from Port Harcourt Local Government Area and two from Obio-Akpor Local Government Area. The total sample size is 250 primary one (1) pupils from the five public primary schools. The sample technique used was simple random sampling technique in which 30% of the pupils in the 5 public primary schools were represented. The information obtained from the study would provide some insight into the general nature of how early childhood education experience would influence academic performance of primary school pupils.

Research Instrument

The data for this study was generated from the achievement test results in mathematics, English language and basic studies testing the pupils' cognitive ability, social skills and motor skills. The test was administered by the researcher with the help of the classroom teachers and heads of the schools. The papers were collected at the end of the exercise, each questions carry one mark.

Validation of the Instrument

The designed instrument by the researcher was given to professionals in the field of study and experts in research method and measurement and evaluation in the faculty of technical and science education for a face validity of the instrument. The instrument was subjected to screening and amendments were necessary by the lecturers.

Reliability of the Instrument

To establish the reliability of the instrument the researcher employed the test-retest method using 60 pupils who attended nursery school and 40 pupils who did not attend nursery school in 5 public primary schools in Port Harcourt and Obio-Akpor Local Government Areas of Rivers State. The result revealed reliability co-efficient of 0.80. The reliability coefficient indicated that the instrument is reliable and internally consistent, which implies that the instrument is suitable and valid for this study and other studies of this nature.

Administration of the Instrument

The researcher designed 30 achievement test questions titled achievement test on cognitive, social and motor skill of primary school pupils (A.T.C. S. M. P.S.P). 100 copies of test question papers were distributed to 5 selected primary schools in Port Harcourt and Obio/Akpor Local Government Areas of Rivers State.

The question papers were administered to the pupils on different days and collected for analysis. This implied that there was 100% response by the respondents. The researcher met with headmasters and mistresses for permission.

Data Analysis

Data analysis was done using the descriptive statistics of mean to answer the research questions while the t-test statistics technique was used at $p < 0.05$ level to find out whether there was a significant difference in the mean scores of the primary school pupils who attended nursery school and those who did not attend nursery school.

Results

Research Question 1:

To what extent does attention as an aspect cognitive ability influence the performance of primary school pupils who had nursery Education and those without Nursery Education?

Table 1: Mean Scores of the Performance of Primary One (1) Pupils who had Nursery Education in State School III Churchill Road Port Harcourt on Attention as an Aspect of Cognitive Ability

State School III Church Hill P/H	Mathematics	English Language	Basic Science	Total score
01	8	9	10	27
02	10	8	8	26
03	7	10	9	26
04	8	8	7	23
05	7	10	9	26
06	7	10	10	27
07	8	8	9	25
08	6	8	9	23
09	8	8	9	25
10	10	8	9	27
11	10	8	9	27
12	7	8	10	25
13	9	8	9	26
14	8	7	9	24
15	7	10	7	24
16	9	7	10	26
17	7	10	10	27
18	8	7	9	24
19	7	10	8	25
20	8	9	10	27
Mean	7.95	8.55	8.65	
Grand mean				8.38

Table 1 revealed that pupils performed highest in Basic Science with a mean of (8.7) followed by English languages (8.5) and the least was in Mathematics (7.95).

Research Question 2:

How does reasoning as an aspect of cognitive skill influence the academic performance of primary school pupils who had nursery education and those without nursery education?

Table 2: Mean Scores of the Performance of Primary One Pupils who had Nursery Education in U.P.E. Model School Abuloma on Reasoning as an Aspect of Cognitive Ability

U.P.E. Primary Abuloma	Model School	Mathematics	English Language	Basic Science	Total score
01		6	10	9	25
02		7	7	7	21
03		7	8	6	21
04		7	8	9	24
05		7	8	9	24
06		6	6	9	21
07		6	6	4	16
08		5	10	7	22
09		5	10	9	24
10		8	6	9	23
11		6	10	9	25
12		6	10	9	25
13		8	10	8	24
14		6	10	8	23
15		5	8	9	22
16		7	8	8	23
17		7	8	8	23
18		5	10	8	24
19		7	8	8	23
20		4	10	10	24
Mean		5.05	8.55	8.15	
Grand Mean					7.45

Table 2 indicated that the pupils performed highest in English Language with the mean score of (8.6) followed by Basic Science (8.2) and the least was in mathematics.

Research Question 3:

How does interaction as an aspect of social skill influence the academic performance of primary school pupils who attended nursery school and those who did attend nursery school?

Table 3: Mean Scores of the Performance of Primary 1(one) Pupils who did Attend Nursery Education in State School Bundu Port Harcourt on Interaction as an Aspect of Social Skill

State Sch. Bundu Port Harcourt	Mathematics	English Language	Basic Science	Total score
01	4	0	1	5
02	7	3	0	10
03	4	4	2	10
04	5	4	4	13
05	8	5	4	17
06	4	0	4	8
07	6	4	2	12
08	9	3	7	19
09	8	6	0	14
10	9	5	5	19
11	4	0	0	4
12	4	2	1	7
13	4	0	5	9
14	4	0	9	13
15	6	8	0	14
16	3	0	4	7
17	2	0	1	3
18	6	2	0	8
19	6	0	4	10
20	3	2	4	9
Mean	4.9	2.4	2.85	
Grand mean				3.4

Table 3 revealed that the pupils performed lowest in English Language with the mean of (2.4) followed by basic Science (.2.9) and the highest Mathematics (4.9).

Hypothesis 1:

There is no significant difference between attention and academic performance of primary school pupils who had nursery education and those without nursery education.

Table 4: T-test Analysis of Significant Difference in Attention as Aspect of Cognitive Skill of Pupil who had Nursery Education and those without Nursery Education

Status	No. of Respondents	X	SD	DF	t-cal	t-crit	Decision
Pupils with Nursery Education	60	24.12	3.19				
Pupils without nursery education	40	8.98	4.81	98	14.85	2.00	Rejected

Significant P < 0.05

The analysis obtained from table 4 revealed that t-cal (14.85) is greater than t-crit (2.00). This implies that there is a significant difference in the cognitive abilities of pupils who attend nursery school than in the pupils who did not attend nursery school. Therefore, hypothesis one (1) is rejected at 0.05 level of significant.

Hypothesis 2:

There is no significant difference between reasoning as aspect of cognitive abilities and the academic performance of pupils who had nursery education and those without nursery education.

Table 5: T-test Analysis of Significant Difference in Reasoning as Aspect of Cognitive Skill of Primary School Pupils with Nursery Education and those without Nursery Education

Status	No. Respondents	of X	SD	DF	t-cal	t-crit	Decision
Pupils with Nursery Education	60	8.58	1.18	98	12.48	2.00	Rejected
Pupils without nursery education	40	3.26	2.55				

Significant P < 0.05

Analysis on table 5 revealed that the t-cal (12.48) is greater than the t-crit (2.00). This implies that there is a significant difference in reasoning as aspect of cognitive skill in pupils who attended nursery school and those who did not attend nursery school. Therefore hypothesis 2 is rejected at 0.05 level of significant.

Hypothesis 3:

There is no significant difference between interaction as an aspect of social skill and the academic performance of pupils who had nursery education and those without nursery education.

Table 6: T-test analysis of significant difference in interaction aspect of social skill and the academic performance of primary pupils who had nursery education and those without nursery education

Status	No. Respondents	of X	SD	DF	t-cal	t-crit	Decision
Pupils with Nursery Education	60	8.5	1.75	98	14.14	2.00	Rejected
Pupils without nursery education	40	2.14	2.12				

Significant P < 0.05

Analysis on table 6 shows that the t-cal (14.14) is greater than the t-crit (2.00). This implies that there is a significant different in interaction as an aspect of social skills in primary school pupils who had nursery education and those without nursery education. Therefore, hypothesis three (3) is rejected at 0.05 level of significant.

Discussion of Findings

From the results shown on the tables, it was observed that State School III Church Hill Road had the best result with the grand mean of (8.38) followed by C.P.S. Rumueme with the grand mean of (7.78), then U.P.E Model Primary School Abuloma (7.45), followed by State School Bundu Port Harcourt (3.4) and the least was C.P.S. Rumuolumeni (3.06).

This study has shown that there is a significant difference in the cognitive ability between pupils with Nursery Education and those without nursery education. This is not surprising as several studies have shown that early childhood education has significant effect on pupils. (Barnard, 2001; Miedel and Reynolds, 1999). These authors opined that early childhood education have impact on the pupils performance in spoken and written English Language, mathematics, Integrated Science, Basic Studies etc as shown in the continuous assessment records.

Furthermore, this study has also revealed that there is a significant difference between pupils who had Nursery Education and those without in social skills. This findings is in line with the work of Anderson (2002) who said that when children are exposed to early education, they will develop superior communication skill necessary physical ability, social unity needed in Adulthood life and as increased cognitive and affective educational balance.

Moreso, the study observed that there is a significant difference between pupils who had nursery education and those without in motor skills. The result indicated that the pupils who had nursery education had greater tendency to perform better in motor skills than those without nursery education.

This study is in agreement with the research done by Olaleye and Omotola (2009) on assessment of quality early childhood education in Ekiti State Nigeria. The findings revealed that learning activities in pre-primary school was averagely high compared to pupils who did not attend nursery school. Also the work of Oweniyi (2012) on formal kindergarten experience as a predictor of academic achievement of primary five pupils in English Language. The result showed a significant difference between English language performance of pupils with formal kindergarten experience and those without such experience.

Conclusion

Based on the findings,

1. It was concluded that pupils who had nursery education performed better in their cognitive skills motor skills and social skills than those who did not attend nursery education.
2. Also the scores from the different schools in Port Harcourt and Obio-Akpor Local Government Areas in Rivers State clearly showed that pupils who attended nursery school before their commencement into the primary school performed better than those without nursery education before entering the primary schools.
3. The study also revealed that there was significant difference between the performance of pupils who had nursery education and those without nursery education in Mathematics English Language and basic Science.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were made from the findings:

1. Early childhood education should be encouraged by the government by providing pre-primary educational facilities (classroom, Instructional materials and equipments) need for the success of the programme.
2. There should be proper enlightenment campaign on the importance of early childhood education.
3. Parents should be involved in their children's early education experience by providing the necessary materials.
4. Educational planners should provide adequate programmes, policies and curriculum for early childhood education.
5. The government should adopt extra measures in making sure that all children have access to nursery education such as establishing at least six nursery schools in each of the local government areas.
6. Subsequent studies should be conducted to determine nursery school enrolment among children in rural areas in Rivers State.

Implication for Counseling

1. The counselor at this level of education can help the children in nursery schools cope with everyday worries like examination stress, issues with friends, issues with family members and teachers alike.
2. The counselor through counseling the nursery school children can help the children come out of emotional trauma such as grief, depression, anxiety and learning difficulties.
3. Counseling children in the nursery school will allow their talk freely if they have anything in their minds.
4. The counselor makes the children feel safe and have confidence without fear of being judged.
5. Counselors in the nursery schools can help the children manage issues such as:
 - a. Bullying
 - b. Behaviour problems
 - c. Bereavement /loss
 - d. Depression and anxiety
 - e. Learning difficulty

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