

# Caregivers Leveraging on Standards as Agents of Change in Early Childhood Education in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Dynamic Society

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## **Abstract**

*The study assessed caregivers leveraging on standards as agents of change in early childhood education in the 21<sup>st</sup> century dynamic society. In doing this, four research questions guided the study. The study adopted the descriptive research design for the population of all the 975 caregivers in Port Harcourt metropolis. A sample of 200 trained caregivers participated in the study. A 32 item instrument and an expert validated self-structured 4-point rating scale instrument titled “Caregivers Leveraging on Standards for Changing Early Childhood Education Inventory” (CLSCECEI) with a reliability coefficient of .704 (using Cronbach Alpha ( $r_a$ ) method) was used to collect the data analyzed using mean, standard deviation and Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) was used to answer the research questions at 0.05 level of significance. The study revealed that: caregivers creativity (with a Pearson Correlating Coefficient ( $r$ ) of 0.826 and  $p$ -value of  $0.001 < .05$ ), caregivers as an assessor (with a Pearson Correlating Coefficient ( $r$ ) of 0.803 and  $p$ -value of  $0.001 < .05$ ), and caregivers as safety officer (with a Pearson Correlating Coefficient ( $r$ ) of 0.841 and  $p$ -value of  $0.001 < .05$ ) positively, very strongly and significantly facilitated the development, transformation and schooling respectively of the child in early childhood education centres in Port Harcourt metropolis. The study recommended amongst others that caregivers should creatively initiative programmes and incorporate activities that would stimulate the interest and enthusiasm of the children to effectively learn and socialize.*

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**Keywords:** Caregivers, Standards, change, early childhood education, dynamic society

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## **Introduction**

Early childhood education is aptly characterized as that educational level with somewhat unique and definite instructional methods, techniques, and strategies expected to be utilized by caregivers. In view of this, the extent to which caregivers integrate the requisite instructional methods could be ascribed as compliance with the laid down procedures and standards for stimulating learners' school interest, enthusiasm, participation, and performance in that school level. Corroborating this view, Obiweluzor (2015) asserts that certain competencies are required from a caregiver in order for them to optimally excel whilst performing and accomplishing their responsibilities of facilitating an activity-based instructional delivery process targeted at helping the child experience the expected change (conceptualized as behavioral,

cognitive, motor, and language development) required for both their current and future social interactions and academic engagements.

Early childhood education is defined as a formal schooling program that is designed to cater to the care, nurturing, and training of children ages 1–5+, particularly during weekdays (Mondays through Fridays) away from the home environment. It is also ascribed to as the non-parental care settings that are organized for preschoolers or children in educational centres like crèche, day care, pre-nursery, playgroups, kindergartens, nursery schools, and the likes under a stipulated curriculum content and standard. A caregiver is defined as an individual (both male and female) who has received academic and/or on-the-job training in a career or profession of instructing, guiding, caring, nurturing, and teaching learners or pupils in early childhood education centers (ECEC). This explains why caregivers are regarded as professional "Early Childhood Educators."

Although the National Policy on Education prescribes the play-way method as the main teaching method in early childhood education centres (FFN, 2013), However, Akinrotimi and Olowe (2016) stated that the knowledge and skills exhibited by caregivers as early childhood care providers (i.e., university-trained and certified Early Childhood Educators) in methodically integrating activities is very crucial to the school's interest, successful learning, and development of the preschoolers in ECEC. According to Winner (2014), play as an instructional technique entails a series of safe activities that could help the child develop the physical, social, intellectual or cognitive, linguistic, psychological, rational, imaginative, inquisitive, and communicative capacity required to improve their performance in ECE schools and beyond.

Conversely, Nwamae and Kayii (2018) and Akinrotimi and Olowe (2016) stated that the effectiveness of the instructional techniques in ECEC is dependent on their conformity with the stipulated preschool curriculum and standards. In addition, Madhiri (2016) emphasized that caregivers are expected to know and proactively understand the specific, situational, and specialized instructional techniques that they would utilize in instructing, guiding, caring, nurturing, and teaching each pupil in early childhood centers. Ukala and Agabi (2017) stated that the extent this is done is extremely important because the childhood stage is when the brain is said to develop rapidly in stimulating, accessing, and internalizing skills (linguistic, numeracy, and phonological), learning strategies, and activities that could enhance their academic and social transformation at virtually all educational levels.

Furthermore, Oduolowu and Olowe (2011) noted that the early years of children are periods of extreme susceptibility and extraordinary potential that could make or mar such a child. With this in mind, it is expected that efforts should be made towards adequately caring for, protecting, and stimulating the child's perspective and vision as a basis for their articulation, wellbeing, and development. Ukala and Agabi (2017) emphasized that early childhood education programs have standards and curriculum that make caregivers positioned to effectively teach more skills than most parents/guardians can individually do informally at home. Thus, Early Childhood Education (ECE) aptly fits as a strategic program that would be leveraged based on standards and curriculum in providing this cognitive foundation needed during the child's early ages and beyond.

McGee (2012) stated that laying a viable and strong early literacy and scholastic foundation underlines the engagement of caregivers that would skillfully, intelligently, and professionally perform their duties by creating a play-based learning environment that facilitates the provision of adequate strategies and safe space for the production of socially and ethically cognizant pupils in ECEC. In this regard, Akinrotimi and Olowe (2016) emphasized that the

instructional methods adopted in ECEC should be packed with activities like sounding, playing, dramatizing, reciting, and role-playing, among others, that would help children benefit from this foundational educational level. This aligns with the earlier position of Okeke (2001) that caregivers are positioned as the most effective agents of change because they function as administrators, curriculum developers, instructors, guides, care providers, and mediators in the upbringing of children in early childhood centres.

As a result, early childhood education is viewed as the foundation or bedrock upon which other educational ties are built. According to National Policy on Education (Egbeh, 2019; Kayii & Dambo, 2018; FRN, 2013), early childhood education is the form of education given in a formal educational centre (like a crèche, day care, nursery, or kindergarten) to children ages 1–5+ prior to their entering primary school. In view of this, it is incumbent of the caregivers who Oke (2016) termed the backbone of the entire educational system to be proactive, professional, resourceful, and committed in abiding by standards inculcated in designing and implementing programmes and curriculums that would help them inculcate the requisite social, cognitive, affective, behavioral, and academic skills that enhance their performance and success in the present and future schooling.

Instructively, Osakue (2011) noted that early childhood education is central to the all-round development of the child and, as such, should be repositioned to effectively and continuously develop the brain functions that are needed for deciphering, processing, and applying instructions and information that are taught and communicated respectively by caregivers based on the ECE curriculum and standards. In other words, an effective caregiver is one who adheres to and leverages standardized practices and instructional techniques required for effectively guiding, teaching, and caring for the individual child while their parents or guardians are engaged in their various vocations or work.

In a nutshell, standards relate to the principles, ideas, and strategies that caregivers could adopt or leverage upon in order to enhance the schooling, orientation, and transformation of every human being, including children. Hence, patience, creative, interpersonal skills, assessor, safety officer, role model, and professionalism suffice as standards that caregivers could leverage in order to effectively play their roles as agents of change in society (Egbeh, 2019). This implies that an effective caregiver needs to meet all the necessary requirements; skills, roles, qualities, and competencies, which are all imbedded in the standards required for teaching, guiding, caring, orientating, and transforming or changing the attitude, mindset, and views of today's children to align with the learning, socialization, and behavioral standards requisite in the 21st century.

From the foregoing, it could be deduced that early childhood education centres (ECEC) are supervised by either an academically or professionally trained caregiver, or both, who is expected to tutor, guide, care, administer, and instruct the learners in ECEC in accordance with the stipulated curriculum content and standard practices. Thus, Egbeh (2019) stated that the level of competence caregivers demonstrate in the discharge of their caregiving roles suffices why they are termed as agents of change in the formation, transformation, orientation, development, and holistic education of the child. In view of this, it presupposes caregivers to adopt and leverage effective and practical caregiver standards alongside professional instructional techniques in order to not be sanctioned and/or culpable for a preschooler's failure or underperformance. Hence, it can be succinctly stated that caregivers' leveraging on standards is manifest in their increasing subject-matter knowledge, guidance, mastery of specific strategies, and pedagogical skills applied in instructing and changing (transforming or developing) pupils enrolled in ECEC (FRN, 2013).

In addition, how well these caregivers are able to utilize instructional techniques towards spurring the child's mental faculties, interest, and disposition to early reasoning, school attendance, and learning, respectively, is indeed important. This is because early childhood education provides the learning background and foundation (like segmenting words, rhyming, singing, sounding, etc.) that today's children can leverage upon to facilitate their quickness in spelling, pronouncing, sounding, and reading, including transforming their perspective of seeing learning as a fun exercise in any level of education. This is the crux of the study.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Caregivers are instructors or educators with the requisite academic and on-the-job training, including certification, that makes them employable and remunerated in early childhood education (ECE) centres (such as crèches, playgroups, day cares, kindergartens, and nursery schools) to teach, guide, motivate, and assist children (age 1–5+ years) based on specified curriculum and standards. In this regard, caregivers are expected to leverage on these standards to measure the requisite knowledge, skills, and competencies that could aid children in their early years and all through their life endeavours. However, the subjectivity in the interpretation of the extent of curriculum implementation and requisite standards that could stir the desired change in children is indeed a concern, especially in a dynamic society. This concern could affect or drop caregivers' performance of their duties of guiding, mediating, and training pupils to experience lifelong learning that improves their literacy, literary, reading, linguistic, emotional, and intellectual skills.

Furthermore, the dynamism of society is predicated on the fact that humans, especially children from their cradle or foundation studies, need to understand that life comes with challenges, situations (like pandemics) and circumstances that could alter or change the course of life and even the schooling process. In view of this, humans (like caregivers) are likewise aptly positioned and endowed with the skills, knowledge, and competencies needed to help children receive and internalize the learning that would enable them to respond to such changes whilst still not losing focus on acquiring education and its concomitant socialization, intellectualism, and development or transformation that is commensurate with the trends in a dynamic society.

The National Policy on Education (FRN, 2013) stipulated that the competencies required to help caregivers optimally perform their roles in ECE centres include: pedagogy, subject-matter knowledge, objectivity, motivator, mastery in teaching, proficient evaluation, guidance, psychotherapy, confidant, rational, planner, and leadership. Also, caregivers' internationalization of these competencies manifests in their passion, dedication, and commitment to religiously adhering to the standardized and curriculum-prescribed instructional delivery methods that are required to effectively teach, direct, and guide pupils in early childhood education centres acquire the knowledge, skills (like social, emotional, intellectual, linguistic, etc.) and competence required for lifelong learning experiences. It is based on the foregoing that this study examined caregivers' leveraging of standards as agents of change in early childhood education in a 21st century dynamic society.

### **Aim and Objectives of the Study**

The main aim of the study was to examine caregivers leveraging on standards as agents of change in early childhood education in the 21<sup>st</sup> century dynamic society in Port Harcourt metropolis. Specifically, the objectives includes to:

1. ascertain the extent caregivers creativity would facilitate the social transformation of the child in early childhood centres in Port Harcourt metropolis.

2. examine the extent caregivers role as an assessor would enhance the social transformation of the child in early childhood education centres in Port Harcourt metropolis.
3. determine the extent caregivers role as safety officer improve the schooling outcomes of the child in early childhood education centres in Port Harcourt metropolis.
4. Ascertain the extent caregivers role as a model improves the schooling outcome of the child in early childhood education centres in Port Harcourt metropolis.

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions guided the study:

1. To what extent does caregivers creativity facilitate the social transformation of the child in early childhood centres in Port Harcourt metropolis?
2. To what extent does caregivers' role as an assessor enhance the social transformation of the child in early childhood education centres in Port Harcourt metropolis?
3. To what extent does caregivers role as safety officer improve the schooling outcome of the child in early childhood education centres in Port Harcourt metropolis?
4. To what extent does caregivers role as a model improve the schooling outcome of the child in early childhood education centres in Port Harcourt metropolis?

### **Scope of the Study**

The study focused on caregivers' leveraging of standards as agents of change in early childhood education in a 21st century dynamic society. In terms of geographic scope, the study would focus on the private Early Childhood Education Centres in the Port Harcourt metropolis, while in terms of content scope, the study would focus on the caregivers in the early childhood education centres in the study area. Furthermore, the independent variable was caregivers' standards (measured via creativity, assessor, safety officer, and model), while the dependent variable was change (measured via social transformation and schooling outcome).

### **METHODOLOGY**

The study adopted the descriptive survey design. Nwankwo (2013) stated that the descriptive survey design is adopted when the researcher intends to sample a subset of a population with similar characteristics or features and thereafter present the findings of the study to the entire population. In this case, the caregivers constituted the population with similar characteristics or features from which a subset would be drawn or selected to determine their integration of standards that would likely improve their role as caregivers in early childhood education centers. The population of the study consisted of all the nine hundred and seventy-five registered caregivers (Early Childhood Educators) in Port Harcourt metropolis (comprising 588 caregivers in Port Harcourt and 468 in Obio-Akpor Local Government Areas). In all the registered 136 early childhood education centres (84 in Port Harcourt and 52 in Obio-Akpor Local Government Areas) that make up Port Harcourt metropolis, A sample size of four hundred and fourteen (414) trained caregivers in early childhood education centres in Port Harcourt metropolis participated in the study. The sampling was done in two phases. Firstly, purposive sampling was used in the selection of Port Harcourt and Obio-Akpor Local Government Areas where the Early Childhood Education Centres are located. In the second phase, a random sampling technique was used in



the selection of 69 early childhood education centers from among the 136 registered early childhood education centers. Thirdly, a quota sampling technique was used in assigning the ratio of 2:1 to the caregivers in Port Harcourt and 52 in Obio-Akpor Local Government Areas respectively. This implies that out of the 69 sampled Early Childhood Education Centres in this study, Port Harcourt Local Government Area was assigned 46 Early Childhood Education Centres while Obio-Akpor Local Government Area was assigned 23 Early Childhood Education Centres. In the fourth and final phase, a random sampling technique was used in the selection of 5 caregivers from each of the 69 sampled Early Childhood Education Centres. This constituted a sample of 276 caregivers from the selected 46 early childhood education centres in the Port Harcourt Local Government Area and 138 caregivers from 23 Early Childhood Education Centres in the Obio-Akpor Local Government Area. A total of 414 respondents were used for the study.

The instrument for data collection was a self-structured 36-item questionnaire titled "Caregivers Leveraging on Standards for Changing Early Childhood Education Inventory" (CLSCECEI). The CLSCECEI instrument was patterned after a four point rating scale of "Very High Extent" (VHE, 4 points), "High Extent" (HE, 3 points), "Low Extent" (LE, 2 points), and "Very Low Extent" (VLE, 1 point). Furthermore, the CLSCECEI instrument is comprised of three sections. Section A (which was not scaled) elicited information on the demographic variables (via gender, experience, nature of training, location, educational qualification, and years of experience) of the respondents. Section B (which was scaled) consisted of 24 items on caregiver standards (via 6 each for creativity, assessor, safety officer, and model), while Section C consisted of 12 items on the variables of change (via 6 each for transformation and schooling or education). The face and content validity of the CLSCECEI instrument was ascertained by two experts or Early Childhood Educators in the Department of Early Childhood Education at Ignatius Ajuru University of Education. In order to achieve this, two draft copies of the CLSCECEI instrument comprising the topic, objectives, research questions, and the items in the questionnaire were given to experts for validation, and suggestions received were incorporated into the final draft of the instrument. The reliability and internal consistency of the non-cognitive CLSCECEI instrument were determined using the Cronbach Alpha method. In doing this, 40 equitably and randomly selected respondents comprised caregivers in Asari-Toru and Akuku-Toru Local Government Areas (which were excluded from the study areas considered in this study). Then 40 copies of the CLSCECEI instrument were administered to the respondents and, upon completion, were retrieved, coded, and analyzed using the Cronbach Alpha (ra) method to obtain a reliability coefficient of 0–704. The obtained reliability coefficient necessitated the use of the CLSCECEI instrument for administration. The face-to-face method of administration was adopted in the distribution of the CLSCECEI instrument to the 414 caregivers in the 69 Early Childhood Education Centres in the Port Harcourt metropolis. This method was expected to give the researcher the opportunity to formulate some explanations for questions that were raised by the respondents. Of the 414 copies of the CLSCECEI instrument that were administered to the respondents, only 371 copies (representing approximately 90% of the sample) Collected data was retrieved, coded, and analyzed using mean, standard deviation, and Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) was used to answer the research questions of the study (with a criterion mean cut off of 2.5 and 0.05 level of significance).

## RESULTS

**Research Question 1:** To what extent does caregivers creativity facilitate the social transformation of the child in early childhood centres in Port Harcourt metropolis?

**Table 1: Mean, Standard Deviation and PPMC on the extent caregivers creativity facilitate the social transformation of the child in early childhood centres in Port Harcourt metropolis**

S/N	The extent caregivers creativity facilitate the social transformation of the child in ECEC include:	N = 371			Decision
		Mean	SD	r	
1	Introducing counting games to help pupils enhance their numeracy skill	3.43	.80	.817**	HE/VS
2	Providing site words to improve pupils language skills	3.49	.59	.814**	HE/VS
3	Updating programmes that can improve pupils interaction in the class	3.04	.95	.813	HE/VS
4	Inspiring each child to acquire skills in art, music or dance	2.78	1.08	.825**	HE/VS
5	Making each child to be conversant with using the computer-aided devices	3.32	.72	.802**	HE/VS
6	Using the play facilities to improve pupils creativity	3.16	.81	.824**	HE/VS
<b>Grand Mean</b>		<b>3.20</b>	<b>0.83</b>	<b>.826**</b>	<b>HE/VS</b>

**Decision Rule:** HE (High Extent) =  $\geq 2.50$  while LE (Low Extent) =  $< 2.50$ . Also VS (Very Strong)  $r = 0.800- 1.000$ , S (Strong)  $r = 0.600- 0.799$ , M (Moderate)  $r = 0.400- 0.599$  while W (Weak)  $r = \leq 0.399$

**Source:** Researcher's Fieldwork and SPSS Output, 2021.

Table 1 shows the mean rating, standard deviation and PPMC on the extent caregivers creativity facilitate the social transformation of the child in early childhood centres in Port Harcourt metropolis includes: providing site words to improve pupils language skills ( $\bar{x}=3.49$  and  $r = .814$ ) in item 2, introducing counting games to help pupils enhance their numeracy skill ( $\bar{x}=3.43$  and  $r = .817$ ) in item 1, making each child to be conversant with using the computer-aided devices ( $\bar{x}=3.32$  and  $r = .802$ ) in item 5, using the play facilities to improve pupils creativity ( $\bar{x}=3.16$  and  $r = .824$ ) in item 6, updating programmes that can improve pupils interaction in the class ( $\bar{x}=3.04$  and  $r = .813$ ) in item 3, while the least was inspiring each child to acquire skills in art, music or dance ( $\bar{x}=2.78$  and  $r = .825$ ) in item 6. Furthermore the grand mean score of 3.20 and  $r = .826$  therefore, indicates that caregivers creativity to a high extent and very strongly facilitated the social transformation of the child in early childhood education centres in Port Harcourt metropolis.

**Research Question 2:** To what extent does caregivers' role as an assessor enhance the social transformation of the child in early childhood education centres in Port Harcourt metropolis?

**Table 2: Mean, Standard Deviation and PPMC on the extent responsiveness relates with service delivery of deposit money banks in South-South, Nigeria**

S/N	The extent caregivers as an assessor enhance the social transformation of the child in ECEC include:	N = 371			Decision
		Mean	SD	r	
1	Watching how each child performs tasks in the class	3.02	.97	.812**	HE/VS
2	Observing each child during play time	3.44	.77	.804**	HE/VS
3	Observing each child during study time	3.07	.85	.811**	HE/VS
4	Keeping records of the true situation of each	2.95	1.00	.818**	HE/VS
5	Caregiver filling out the children's registers based on their progress	3.15	.81	.807**	HE/VS
6	Caregiver writing accurate report on the development of each child under their care	2.98	.92	.815**	HE/VS
<b>Grand Mean</b>		<b>3.10</b>	<b>0.89</b>	<b>.803**</b>	<b>HE/VS</b>

**Decision Rule:** HE (High Extent) =  $\geq 2.50$  while LE (Low Extent) =  $< 2.50$ . Also VS (Very Strong)  $r = 0.800- 1.000$ , S (Strong)  $r = 0.600- 0.799$ , M (Moderate)  $r = 0.400- 0.599$  while W (Weak)  $r = \leq 0.399$

**Source:** Researcher's Fieldwork and SPSS Output, 2021.

Table 2 shows the mean rating, standard deviation and PPMC on the extent caregivers role as an assessor enhance the social transformation of the child in early childhood education centres in Port Harcourt metropolis includes: observing each child during play time ( $\bar{x}=3.44$  and  $r = .804$ ) in item 2, caregiver filling out the children's registers based on their progress ( $\bar{x}=3.15$  and  $r = .807$ ) in item 5, observing each child during study time ( $\bar{x}=3.07$  and  $r = .811$ ) in item 3, watching how each child performs tasks in the class ( $\bar{x}=3.02$  and  $r = .812$ ) in item 2, caregiver writing accurate report on the development of each child under their care ( $\bar{x}=2.98$  and  $r = .815$ ) in item 6, while the least was keeping records of the true situation of each ( $\bar{x}=2.95$  and  $r = .818$ ) in item 4. Furthermore the grand mean score of 3.10 and  $r = .803$  therefore, indicates that caregivers role as an assessor to a high extent and very strongly enhanced the social transformation of the child in early childhood education centres in Port Harcourt metropolis.

**Research Question 3:** To what extent does caregivers' role as safety officer improve the schooling outcome of the child in early childhood education centres in Port Harcourt metropolis?

**Table 3: Mean, Standard Deviation and PPMC on the extent responsiveness relates with service delivery of deposit money banks in South-South, Nigeria**

S/N	The extent caregivers as safety officer improving schooling outcome of the child in ECEC include:	N = 371			Decision
		Mean	SD	r	



1	Making children to be aware of the effects of unsafe acts like spilling water on the floor, etc.	3.24	.80	.831**	HE/VS
2	Caregiver observing health and safety guidelines like lightening, cross ventilation, etc. in the class	2.98	.93	.819**	HE/VS
3	Making children understand the outcome of applying personal hygiene like bathing, brushing teeth, etc.	3.40	.85	.836**	HE/VS
4	Providing basic health and safety training like using exit door during fire outbreak etc. in the school	3.16	.82	.828**	HE/VS
5	Inculcates in children safe health tips that will make them avoid self-medication and drug abuse	2.92	1.02	.834**	HE/VS
6	Making pupils to know and avoid hazards like sharp objects, acid etc. as not part of their learning materials	3.08	.93	.832**	HE/VS
<b>Grand Mean</b>		<b>3.13</b>	<b>0.89</b>	<b>.841**</b>	<b>HE/VS</b>

**Decision Rule:** HE (High Extent) =  $\geq 2.50$  while LE (Low Extent) =  $< 2.50$ . Also VS (Very Strong)  $r = 0.800- 1.000$ , S (Strong)  $r = 0.600- 0.799$ , M (Moderate)  $r = 0.400- 0.599$  while W (Weak)  $r = \leq 0.399$

**Source:** *Researcher's Fieldwork and SPSS Output, 2021.*

Table 3 shows the mean rating, standard deviation and PPMC on the extent caregivers role as safety officer improve the schooling outcome of the child in early childhood education centres in Port Harcourt metropolis includes: making children understand the outcome of applying personal hygiene like bathing, brushing teeth, etc. ( $\bar{x}=3.40$  and  $r = .836$ ) in item 3, making children to be aware of the effects of unsafe acts like spilling water on the floor, etc. ( $\bar{x}=3.24$  and  $r = .831$ ) in item 1, providing basic health and safety training like using exit door during fire outbreak etc. in the school ( $\bar{x} = 3.16$  and  $r = .828$ ) in item 4, making pupils to know and avoid hazards like sharp objects, acid etc. as not part of their learning materials ( $\bar{x}=3.08$  and  $r = .832$ ) in item 6, caregiver observing health and safety guidelines like lightening, cross ventilation, etc. in the class ( $\bar{x}=2.98$  and  $r = .819$ ) in item 2, while the least was inculcates in children safe health tips that will make them avoid self-medication and drug abuse ( $\bar{x}=2.92$  and  $r = .834$ ) in item 5. Furthermore the grand mean score of 3.13 and  $r = .841$  therefore, indicates that caregivers' role as safety officer to a high extent and very strongly improved the schooling outcome of the child in early childhood education centres in Port Harcourt metropolis.

**Research Question 4:** To what extent does caregivers' role as a model improve the schooling outcome of the child in early childhood education centres in Port Harcourt metropolis?

**Table 4: Mean, Standard Deviation and PPMC on the extent caregivers role as a model improve the schooling outcome of the child in early childhood education centres in Port Harcourt metropolis**

S/N	The extent caregivers role as a model improve the schooling outcome of the child in ECEC include:	N = 371			Decision
		Mean	SD	r	
1	Caregiver participating in activities together with their learners	3.20	.96	.823**	HE/VS
2	Encouraging pupils of their capacity to accomplish	3.18	.85		

	challenging tasks			.826**	HE/VS
3	Organizing activities that helps children to improve their numeracy skills	3.14	.88	.840**	HE/VS
4	Organizing activities that improves pupils phonics	3.36	.81	.811**	HE/VS
5	Using storytelling and singing to attract pupils interest	3.25	.78	.832**	HE/VS
6	Caregiver using themselves as instructional material during learning process	3.00	.84	.803**	HE/VS
<b>Grand Mean</b>		<b>3.16</b>	<b>0.87</b>	<b>.849**</b>	<b>HE/VS</b>

**Decision Rule: HE (High Extent) =  $\geq 2.50$  while LE (Low Extent) =  $< 2.50$ . Also VS (Very Strong)  $r = 0.800- 1.000$ , S (Strong)  $r = 0.600- 0.799$ , M (Moderate)  $r = 0.400- 0.599$  while W (Weak)  $r = \leq 0.399$**

**Source: Researcher's Fieldwork and SPSS Output, 2021.**

Table 4 shows the mean rating, standard deviation and PPMC on the extent caregivers role as a model improve the schooling outcome of the child in early childhood education centres in Port Harcourt metropolis includes: organizing activities that improves pupils phonics ( $\bar{x}=3.27$  and  $r = .811$ ) in item 4, using storytelling and singing to attract pupils interest ( $\bar{x}=3.25$  and  $r = .832$ ) in item 5, caregiver participating in activities together with their learners ( $\bar{x}=3.20$  and  $r = .823$ ) in item 1, encouraging pupils of their capacity to accomplish challenging tasks ( $\bar{x}=3.18$  and  $r = .826$ ) in item 2, organizing activities that helps children to improve their numeracy skills ( $\bar{x} = 3.14$  and  $r = .840$ ) in item 3, while the least was caregiver using themselves as instructional material during learning process ( $\bar{x}=3.00$  and  $r = .803$ ) in item 6. Furthermore the grand mean score of 3.16 and  $r = .849$  therefore, indicates that caregivers role as a model to a high extent and very strongly improved the schooling outcome of the child in early childhood education centres in Port Harcourt metropolis.

### Discussion of Findings

The results in Table 1 revealed a grand mean score of 3.20 and  $r = .826$ , which indicated that caregivers' creativity to a high extent and very strongly facilitated the social transformation of the child in early childhood education centres in Port Harcourt metropolis. This was through caregivers' provision of site words to improve pupils' language skills; introducing counting games to help pupils enhance their numeracy skills; making each child conversant with using the computer-aided devices; using the play facilities to improve pupils' creativity; updating programmes that can improve pupils' interaction in the class; and inspiring each child to acquire skills in art, music, or dance. This finding is consistent with earlier findings by Obiweluzor (2015) that caregivers' competencies and creativity enhance their provision of site words, games, activities, and the introduction of programmes that can improve pupils' language skills, numeracy, classroom interaction, and art respectively.

The results in Table 2 revealed a grand mean score of 3.10 and  $r = .803$ , which indicated that caregivers' role as assessors enhanced the social transformation of the child to a high extent and very strongly enhanced it in early childhood education centres in Port Harcourt metropolis. This enabled caregivers to observe each child during play time, fill out the children's registers based on their progress, observe each child during study time, watch how each child performs tasks in

the class, write an accurate report on the development of each child under their care, and keep records of the true situation of each. This finding aligns with Egbeh (2019) that Children's caregivers monitor children's progress by observing them during play time and study time, keeping records and filling out the children's registers and reports of the progress and development or not of each child that is in their care in the classroom.

The result in Table 3 revealed a grand mean score of 3.13 and  $r = .841$ , which indicated that caregivers' role as safety officers improved the schooling outcomes of children in early childhood education centres in Port Harcourt metropolis. This led to caregivers making children understand the outcome of applying personal hygiene like bathing, brushing teeth, etc.; making children aware of the effects of unsafe acts like spilling water on the floor, etc.; providing basic health and safety training like using exit doors during fire outbreaks etc. in the school; making pupils know and avoid hazards like sharp objects, acid, etc. as not part of their learning materials; caregivers observing health and safety guidelines like lighting, cross ventilation, etc. in the class; and inculcating in children safe health tips that will make them avoid self-medication and drug abuse. This finding is consistent with Winner (2014) that caregivers' adoption of safe activities increases pupils' awareness of health and safety guidelines; development of physical, social, intellectual or cognitive skills; and understanding of health and safety hazards that can affect their communicative and interactive capacity in the class.

The result in Table 4 revealed a grand mean score of 3.16 and  $r = .849$  which indicated that caregivers role as a model to a high extent and very strongly improved the schooling outcome of the child in early childhood education centres in Port Harcourt metropolis. This led caregivers to: organize activities that improves pupils phonics, use storytelling and singing to attract pupils interest, participate in activities together with their learners, encourage pupils of their capacity to accomplish challenging tasks, organize activities that helps children to improve their numeracy skills, and use themselves as instructional material during learning process. This finding is in agreement with Egbeh (2019) that child caregiver as role models encourage pupils to engage in activities that helps them develop number, language and singing skills including using themselves as examples or as instructional material to instill in pupils the belief to accomplish challenging or difficult task during the learning process.

## **Conclusion**

The study found that caregiver standards (dimensioned by creativity, assessor, safety officer, and model) were very strong enhancers of pupils' change (via social transformation and learning outcomes) in early childhood education centres in Port Harcourt metropolis. Thus, the study concludes that caregivers' provision of site words, counting games, and other play facilities improved pupils' language, numeracy, art, music, dance, computer, and interactive skills. This, to a high extent, facilitated caregivers' observance of each child's performance during play time and study time, alongside keeping accurate records of the child's progress in the class.

Consequently, caregivers instilling in children the culture of personal hygiene like bathing, brushing teeth, etc.; awareness of the effects of unsafe acts like spilling water on the floor, etc.; knowing and avoiding hazards like sharp objects, acid, etc.; and avoiding self-medication are health and safety guidelines that would enhance pupils' schooling outcomes. Hence, schooling outcomes manifest in pupils' improvement in phonics, singing skills, accomplishing challenging tasks, and numeracy skills from the learning processes.

## Recommendations

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

1. Caregivers should creatively initiative programmes and incorporate activities that would stimulate the interest and enthusiasm of the children to effectively learn and socialize.
2. Caregivers should provide site words, counting games and other play facilities that can improve pupils' language, numeracy, art, music, dance, computer, and interactive skills.
3. Caregivers are encouraged to professionally and ethnically evaluate, monitor and keep track of pupils extent of participation and performance in school activities and programmes with a view at introducing necessary interventions in order to ascertain pupils progress.
4. Children should imbibe the culture of personal hygiene like bathing, brushing teeth, etc., including avoiding self-medication and other hazardous or unsafe acts (like spilling water on the floor) in order to enhance pupils health and safety to effectively learn in the school.

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