

## Compliance of Early Childhood Care Education Centre Providers to the Minimum Standard on Early Childhood Care Education in Afikpo Education Zone of Ebonyi State, Nigeria

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### ABSTRACT

The study assessed the extent of compliance of Early Childhood Care Education Centre providers to the minimum standard on early childhood care education in Afikpo Education Zone of Ebonyi State. Two research questions and two null hypotheses guided the study. The design of the study was descriptive survey. The population of the study comprised all the 243 approved public Early Childhood Care Education (ECCE) Centers in Afikpo Education Zone of Ebonyi State (Ebonyi State Ministry of Education, 2022). There was no sampling technique because the population was measurable. All the 243 Early Childcare Education Centres were utilised. The instrument for data collection was Checklist titled, ‘Compliance to Minimum Standard of Early Childhood Care Education Checklist’ (CMSECEC). The questionnaire was validated by three two lecturers from the Department of Educational Foundations and one from Department of Science Education, Ebonyi State University Abakaliki. The scorer reliability method was applied using Kendal’s W Test of Concordance with the aid of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS), which yielded the overall reliability index of 0.63. Frequency table and the percentage were used to analyse the data collected through the checklist. Chi-Square test was used to test the null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The study revealed among other things that most of the ECCE Centres in Afikpo Education Zone of Ebonyi State complied with the recruitment of qualified caregivers, requirements of Federal Government of Nigeria’s minimum standards to low extent (28.57%); and that most ECCE Centres comply with the provision of instructional materials requirements of Federal Government of Nigeria’s minimum standards to low extent (29.45%). Based on these findings, the study recommended among other things that the Federal Government that initiated the National Minimum Standard for establishment of Early Childhood Care Education Centres should recruit more qualified caregivers to preschools or Centres for quality learning outcomes. One of the implications of the findings is that if qualified teachers are not adequately provided, it would negatively affect the compliance of the minimum standard of 1:15 children-caregiver ratio of the Federal Government of Nigeria. Suggestions for further studies were also made therein.

**Keywords:** Compliance, Childhood, Early Childhood Care Education, Centre Providers, Minimum Standard

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### INTRODUCTION

The position of early childhood care education in the overall development of human society cannot be underestimated. This is because early childhood education helps in preparing children’s future achievements, national peace and development. According to [1,2,3], proper planning and investment in children’s education early enough could bring about better living for the children later in life, consequently, bring about national peace and development. Thus, a child is

educated in order for him/her to be inculcated with the values of the society.[4,5] maintained that in America, for instance the state and local expenditures for child education exceed \$23 billion annually while federal expenditures is over \$17 billion, yet, the need for child educational care remains inadequate. In Nigeria, literacy level is 61.3% and illiteracy level is 38.7% [1,6], and this requires why the education of the young children should be given utmost

attention. The children need to know that fundamental to happiness and success is healthy, supportive and successful relationships. Therefore, the value and importance of educating the child can never be over emphasized [7,8,9].

A child is a young human being between birth and puberty. According to [10], a child is a person whose parents and caregivers, foster parents, public or private homes, institutional or agency is responsible for taking care of them. The child is somebody under a legally specified age who is considered not to be legally responsible for his or her actions. Biologically, a child is a person between birth and puberty, or between the developmental period of infancy and puberty [11]. Therefore, a childhood is the state or period of being a child. Childhood is a period of the human lifespan between infancy and adolescence. A person's childhood is the period of their life when they are a child. [12,13] further stated that a childhood (being a child) is a broad term usually applied to the phase of human development between infancy and adulthood. [14,16,17] adds that a childhood is a period when people develop their physical bodies and mental their abilities. It is a crucial time, for if development goes wrong or growth does not occur within a critical time period the damage is often difficult to repair if not irreversible. Yet it is also a time of freedom from the responsibilities of adult life, a time in which parents, or other responsible adults, take care of the child, fulfilling his or her needs and keeping them safe. However, in this study a childhood is defined as a period in life of a person from the age of zero to six years under the care of caregivers, helpers and securities in Early Childhood Care Education (ECCE) Centres (Nursery schools).

ECCE is the type of education that is directed towards the whole development of the child without any form of bias.

According to [18], early childhood education includes the crèche, nursery and kindergarten classes among others. This programme came into being so that children between the ages of zero and five years can have access to basic education as stated in National Policy of Education in the Federal Republic of Nigeria [19,20]. Early Childhood Care Education Centres (ECCEC) is an institution established to offer quality education to children aged 3-5 years plus prior to entering primary schools. These centres could also be described as Early Childhood Care Education Centres (ECCEC). According to [21], ECCEC is the term commonly used to describe an environment for formal teaching and caring of young children by people other than their family or in setting outside of their homes. The early care education giving in these centres spans the human life from birth to age 8 and this is the period of greatest growth and development, when the brain develops most rapidly almost at its fullest [22].

Childhood care education age corresponds to a critical period of rapid physical, cognitive and psychosocial development of the child. [23] noted that childhood care education is crucial because the years between birth and age 5 are the foundation upon which successful lives are built. According to the United Nation Education, Science and Cultural Organisation [24], the quality and intensity of the care, nutrition and stimulation the child receives during this period determines to a large extent the level of physical and cognitive development a child can attain. Nevertheless, it seems that childhood care education fall short of the expectations that will help Nigeria to attain the desired position among other nations of the world. This was the reason for the federal government policy issuance on national minimum standard for quality assurance in 2007.

In this study, early childhood education is the education given to children at early stage of life to inculcate in them the norms and values of the society as well as good habit and virtues of life in *crèche*, nursery, kindergarten and early Basic Education level (Primary 1-3). Therefore, Early Childhood Education is the foundation for the development of a child, it is evident that the experiences which the child comes across during the early stage could have an influence which may either negative or positive on the later life of the child. The objectives of early childhood education ECCE according to [25,26,27] are as follows:

- i. Effect a smooth transition from home to school
- ii. Prepare the child for the primary level of education
- iii. Provide adequate care and supervision for the children while their parents are at work (on the farm, in the market or offices)
- iv. Inculcate social norms
- v. Inculcate in the child the spirit of inquiry and creativity through the exploration of nature, the environment, art, music and playing with toys and so on.
- vi. Develop a sense of cooperation and team spirit
- vii. Learn good habits, especially good health habits and.
- viii. Teach the rudiments of numbers, letters, colours, shapes, forms and so on through play.

Bearing the above objectives in mind, it is envisaged that the teaching and learning in childhood care education centres requires special attention to ensure its attainment. These preschool educational objectives could only be achieved through meeting the necessary requirement for the establishment of preschool centers. This is vital because this type of education is the bed rock of the nation's educational system; hence,

every educational system stands on that early foundation. The quality of such educational system must be of utmost priority to everyone concerned. Nevertheless, in Nigeria, there is high proliferation of preschools centers in flats of rented buildings, batchers, churches, and institutions as demonstration schools [27,28,29,30]. These situations could affect the standard of preschool education in Nigeria. [31] maintained that low standard of early childhood education is as a result of little or no government supervision, because of gap of absence of uniformity in curriculum and standard. Some of the preschool centers are being run in flats, batchers, under the trees and the content of what they learn were decided by the owners of such schools. However, [32] held that in modern time, quality Early Childhood Care Education Centres are very expensive that poor people cannot afford it. Many of the pupils who could not afford it were left out. Early child care development (ECCD) survey conducted by Federal Government of Nigeria in the year 2000, reported that there was a disparity between the expected and actual enrolment of preschool children. The expected enrolment according to Federal Ministry of Education [33] was 22million pupils against 2.02 million children in school with 19.98 million out of school. Based on this gap, a directive was issued by Federal Government of Nigeria to State Universal Basic Education (SUBEB) through Federal Ministry of Education to attach Early Child Care Education Centers (ECCEC) to every public primary school in the country. This was in line with UBE acts of 2004 (Federal Ministry of Education, FME, 2012). In addition 5% of UBE intervention fund was set aside for the provision of preschools in Nigeria.

The federal government intervention in early years learning and development

which is premised on the development of the individual into a sound and effective citizen, and the need for quality of educational opportunities to all Nigerian children irrespective of any real or imagined disabilities. Although ECCEC has been in operation for many years, the 1998 national policy on education does not specify the guidelines for its operation in Nigeria. It did not specify the care and support requirements for children aged 0-3 years. This was a major gap that has left the operation of ECCC and preprimary education more in the hands of private operators without adequate guidelines or standard. [34] held that most of the ECCEC were far from being child friendly. This was one of the reasons why the issue of national minimum standard of establishment of ECCEC became necessary. To bridge that gap of standard, the federal government through brought out a national minimum standard for the establishment of preprimary school centers [35]. According to the minimum standard, the centers for teaching children should be conducive, there should be availability of teachers and utilization of instructional materials, the method for teaching should be play method, National Certificate in Education (NCE) should be the minimum standard for teachers among others [36]. This minimum standard also serves as the guideline for the operators and stakeholders so that both the practice and operation of childhood care education will become standardized nationally. For the Early Childhood Care Education to be effective, it is good to note that it is not just the role of the teachers and the parents alone, the government has to play the role of giving support to the centres via care, love, creating a holistic environment, effective policies and many more [37,38,39]. A caregiver is different from teacher because caregiver takes intensive care of children like mothers in terms of

Aja-Okorie and Etu ensuring the needs of the children at all time. However, in this study, the compliance of ECCE minimum standard refers to the extent to which stakeholders adhere to the standard for conducive learning environment, health needs of children, availability of instructional materials and facilities, staff recruitment requirement and the use of methods in learning in ECCE centres in preprimary and early basic primary schools in Nigeria.

The nature of childcare education environment is very essential in the attainment of the goals of early childhood care education in Nigeria. In reality, conducive learning environments do not just happen, they are the result of effective classroom management that establish and maintain work systems for pupils to engage in their learning. According to [40,41], a conducive learning environment is one that has all the facilities and materials that support collaborative learning. Therefore, pupils in these classrooms are consistently engaged in the learning tasks that their teachers have set for them and very few pupils' behaviours interfere with those tasks. There is need for a positive correlation between engaged time, appropriate academic activities, and high academic achievement, and the need to structure classrooms to promote on task behaviours in early childhood Care education programmes. This shows that a conducive learning environment is a precursor for effective teaching and learning in preschool education centers. It is important to note that in all aspects of the school and its surrounding education community, the rights of the whole child, and all children, to survival, protection, development and participation are at the centre. [42,43,44,45] maintained that early child care environment (centre) must promote the wellbeing and health of a child. To ensure that the learning centres

are conducive, the minimum standard for early childhood education stipulated that the centres must ensure that there are learning space with proper ventilation, good sitting arrangement, electrical appliances, game centres and adhere to teachers/children ratio of 1:15 [46]. However, if teachers are not adequately recruited, it would hamper the compliance to the minimum standard on teacher/children ratio.

Teacher recruitment is very important in the attainment of goals and objectives of ECCE. According to [47], teacher recruitment policy is the guiding precept that guides and governs recruitment of teachers into the educational sector of any nation. Employment of teachers in early childhood education without recourse to the minimum requirement for teacher employment will most certainly impede on the quality required to attain the set objectives of early childhood education in Nigeria. Appointment of teachers in the early childhood education centres must consider the teachers knowledge in the art of teaching children as well as methodology of teaching preschool children. Nevertheless, the researchers observed from the schools visited in the area that teachers (caregivers) usually teach more than the required number of children as stipulated by the national minimum standard for early childhood care education in Nigerian. This situation could affect the either of education he young ones at the early stage of life. However, ensuring the recruitment of teachers are important but instructional materials plays an important role the implementation of any educational policies particularly in ECCE.

Instructional materials are resources available in schools for effective and realistic teaching and learning process. According to [40], instructional materials are teaching materials or facilities which a

teacher utilized in the course of presenting a lesson in order to make the content of the lesson understandable to the learners. Instructional materials are categorized into diagrams, models, charts toys, cartoons, and maps among others. Other materials include radio, television, chalkboard or marker boards. The above implication is that when instructional materials are used in teaching in early childhood care centres, it makes them to have the ability of gaining information, retention, recall, thinking, reasoning, interest, imagination as well as better assimilation. Nevertheless, the researcher observed that most ECCE centres lack basic instructional materials that support children's learning despite the guidelines of the minimum standards. The minimum standard stipulated that instructional materials like computers, pictorials, maker board and television set must be in ratio of 1:30 while textbooks, story books, alphabet chart, art work and drawing, children' books, story books must be in the ratio of 1 per child. Nevertheless, the researcher observed that most of the learning centres do not have these materials and even the available ones are no adequate. Nevertheless, the extent to which instructional materials are available in ECCE in Nigeria may vary depending on the location of centres.

Location denotes the physical attributes of a place which distinguished it from another place in terms of buildings, materials, access road and pipe borne water, electricity, human beings among others. From his perspective, the location of a school could be an urban or rural area where school is cited. According to [6], urban areas are those thickly populated towns or cities with the basic amenities and facilities that make life comfortable, while rural areas are those places distinguished from towns and cities with little or no basic amenities or facilities.

[8,9] defined school location as a particular place, in relation to other areas in the physical environment (rural or urban), where the school is sited. Human beings have unlimited capacity to learn, but many however are limited by the behavior patterns and facilities that the immediate school environment offers [12]. These behaviour patterns and facilities that the immediate school environment offers could invariably vary in accordance to school location. For instance, [13,16] held that students (children) from rural areas performed better than their urban counterparts in urban areas due to some differences that exist in various location. Inversely, the study of [20,21] affirmed that children from urban schools perform better than those in rural schools. However, there is still no clear evidence that the quality of early childhood centers in rural area are better than their urban centers in terms of compliance of the minimum standard for teaching and learning in childhood care education centers.

Therefore, there is need to access the differences between rural and urban

#### **Statement of the Problem**

Despite the government and the international agencies policies on ECCE globally, it seems that there is still lack of total compliance to the minimum standard for teaching and learning by some of the Childcare Education Centres in Nigeria. The researcher's interactions and observation of most of the centres in Afikpo Education Zone shows that most of the ECCEC are not adhering to the Minimum Standards stipulated by the National Policy on Education for caring of these children. There seems to be apparent lack of qualified teachers (caregivers) and conducive classroom with adequate instructional materials in compliance to the minimum standard for the implementation of ECCE in Nigeria. In

Aja-Okorie and Etu school environment in shaping and reshaping intellectual ability of children particularly in early childhood centers. It is imperative to note that supportive and favorable school environment enriched with enough learning facilities, and favorable climate makes pupils more comfortable, more concentrated on their academic activities that resulted in high academic performance [15]. The forces of the environment either rural or urban begin to influence growth and development of the pupils' right from the womb of his mother. The educational process of development occurs in physical, social, cultural and psychological environment in school. Nevertheless, a proper and adequate school environment whether rural or urban is very much necessary for a fruitful learning of the child in early childhood learning centers. It is against this background that this study is designed to determine the extent of compliance of Early Childhood Care Education Centre providers to the minimum standard on early childhood care education in Afikpo Education Zone of Ebonyi State.

addition, most of the centers have caregivers that lack the knowledge of the psychology of children. It was observed that some children sat on the ground or mat while learning in most of the ECCE Centres in Afikpo Education Zone. This situation seems to affect the emotional, psychological and physical wellbeing of these children. The researcher therefore wonders what could be the problem? Could it be that the ECCE providers are not following the minimum standard requirement for effective teaching and learning in the centres? Are there lapses in staff recruitment of ECCE centres? Therefore, the thrust of this study is to determine the extent of compliance of Early Childhood Care Education Centre

providers to the minimum standard on early childhood care education in Afikpo Education Zone of Ebonyi State.

### Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study was to determine the extent of compliance of Early Childhood Care Education Centre providers to the minimum standard on early childhood care education in Afikpo Education Zone of Ebonyi State. Specifically, the study was designed to;

1. ascertain the extent qualified teachers are recruited by ECCE Centre providers in compliance

with the requirements of Federal Government of Nigeria's minimum standards in Afikpo Education Zone of Ebonyi State.

2. ascertain the extent to which ECCE Centre providers in Afikpo Education Zone of Ebonyi State provide instructional materials as stipulated in the Nigerian's minimum standards.

### Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. To what extent are qualified teachers recruited by ECCE Centre providers in compliance with the requirements of Federal Government of Nigeria's minimum standards in Afikpo Education

Zone of Ebonyi State?

2. To what extent are ECCE Centre providers in Afikpo Education Zone of Ebonyi State provide instructional materials as stipulated in the Nigerian's minimum standards?

### Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses tested at 0.05 level of significance guided the study:

**H<sub>01</sub>:** there is no significant difference between rural and urban nursery schools on the extent qualified teachers recruited by ECCE Centre providers in compliance with the requirements of Federal Government of Nigeria's minimum standards in

Afikpo Education Zone of Ebonyi State.

**H<sub>01</sub>:** there is no significant difference between rural and urban nursery schools on the extent ECCE Centre providers in Afikpo Education Zone of Ebonyi State provide instructional materials as stipulated in Nigerian's minimum standards.

### METHODOLOGY

The design of this study was descriptive survey design. Descriptive survey is a type of design concerned with describing events as they are, without any manipulation of any variable. According to Shona (2019), descriptive survey design aims to accurately and systematically describe a population, situations or phenomenon. This design was used to collect data from the sample of the population on the extent of compliance of Early Childhood Care Education Centre providers to the minimum standard on

early childhood care education in Afikpo Education Zone of Ebonyi State. The choice of this design is because it would enable the researcher to collect data objectively and descriptively using a sample representation of the population without manipulation of independent variables. The population of the study comprised 243 approved public Early Childhood Care Education (ECCE) Centers in Afikpo Education Zone of Ebonyi State (**Source:** Ebonyi State Basic Education List, Ministry of Education, 2022). There are 288 primary

schools in Afikpo Education Zone of Ebonyi State. Out of 288 primary schools, 243 have childhood care education centres while 45 do not have. There were 102 Early Childcare Centres in urban areas and while 141 Early Childcare Centres in rural areas within the Zone. There was no sampling technique because the population of schools is manageable. All the 243 Early Childcare Education Centres were visited to understand the level of compliance level of compliance of Early Childcare Education Centres Providers to the National Minimum Standard. Out of these 243 early Childcare Education Centres, 102 schools were urban while 141 schools were rural schools. The instrument for data collection in this study was Checklist titled "Compliance to Minimum Standard of Early Childhood Care Education Checklist" (CMSECCEC). The checklist was formulated from literature related to the study by the researcher. The Checklist is divided into two sections, A and B. Section A contains items on demographic variables. Section B was used to collect data from the centers on the level of compliance of Early Childhood Care Education Centre providers to the minimum standard of

Aja-Okorie and Etu early childhood care education in Afikpo Education Zone of Ebonyi State. The keys for responses were High Extent (HE) and Low Extent (LE). The questionnaire was validated by three lecturers from faculty of education, Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki. The validated instrument was subjected to measures of internal consistency by applying scorer reliability method using Kendal's W Test of concordance with the aid of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) which yielded an overall reliability index of 0.73. Frequency table and the percentage were used to analyse the data collected through the checklist. Chi-Square test was used to test the null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. In answering the research questions, any frequency score from 50% and above was termed high extent of availability or used while frequency score with 49% and below was termed low extent of availability. In testing the hypotheses, the null hypotheses were upheld when the Sig. Value is greater than 0.05 level of significance ( $P > .05$ ), and were not upheld when the Sig. Value is less than 0.05 level of significance ( $P < .05$ ).

## RESULTS

**Research Question 1:** To what extent are qualified caregivers recruited by ECCE Centre providers in complying with the

requirements of Federal Government of Nigeria's minimum standards in Afikpo Education Zone of Ebonyi State?

**Table 1: Percentage qualified Caregiver recruited by ECCE Centre providers in complying with the requirements of Federal Government of Nigeria's minimum standards in Afikpo Education Zone of Ebonyi State**

S/N	Qualification of Caregivers	Available Caregivers		%	Not Available Caregivers	%	Number required	Decision
		Rural	Urban					
1	O' level	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
2	NCE/B.Ed	121	104	71.43	90	28.57	315	Qualified but Low Extent
4	B.A/B.Sc	13	14	8.57	0	0	0	Not Qualified
5	OND/HND	14	09	7.30	0	0	0	Not Qualified
	<b>TOAL</b>	<b>148</b>	<b>127</b>	<b>87.3</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>28.57</b>	<b>315</b>	<b>Low Extent</b>

Total number of ECCE Centres = 243

Total number of children 4721



Minimum standards = 15: 1 Caregiver

The data on **Table 1** showed the percentage of qualified caregivers recruited by ECCE Centre providers in complying with the requirements of Federal Government of Nigeria's minimum standards in Afikpo Education Zone of Ebonyi State. The data clearly showed that out of the 243 ECCE Centre observed, 225 (71.43%) of caregivers were qualified with NCE/B.Ed while 90 (28.57%) were number of qualified teachers required in line with the ratio of 15 children: 1 caregivers Minimum Standard of Early Childhood Care Education in Nigeria. The total number of children in the ECCE Centre was

4721 with the total of 315 caregivers. In addition, 27(8.57%) were caregivers with B.A/B.Sc and 23 (7.30%) were caregivers with OND/HND which were not qualified to teach at ECCE Centre for rural and urban respectively. Therefore, there was low extent of qualified caregivers recruited by ECCE Centre providers in complying with the requirements of Federal Government of Nigeria's minimum standards in Afikpo Education Zone of Ebonyi State.

**Research Question 2:** To what extent are ECCE Centre providers in Afikpo Education Zone of Ebonyi State provide instructional materials as stipulated in Nigerian's minimum standards?

**Table 2: Percentage of ECCE Centre providers in Afikpo Education Zone of Ebonyi State that provide instructional materials as stipulated in Nigerian's minimum standards**

S/N	Provision of Instructional Materials	Population of Children (243 Centres)	Minimum Standards	CCE Centre with Instructional Materials		%	CCE Centre without Instructional Materials		%	Decision
				Rural	Urban		Rural	Urban		
11	Textbooks	4721	1 Per child	46	52	40.3	51	94	59.7	LE
12	Costumes for learning	4721	1:15	59	43	41.9	73	68	58.1	LE
13	Charts	4721	1:15	32	27	24.3	90	94	81.1	LE
14	Story books	4721	1 Per child	51	62	46.5	57	73	60.0	LE
15	Pictorials	4721	1:15	87	77	67.5	94	85	50.2	HE
16	Art works and drawings	4721	1:15	64	65	53.1	58	56	46.9	HE
17	Children's books	4721	1 Per child	48	41	36.6	76	78	63.4	LE
18	Computer with keyboard	4721	1:15	13	16	11.9	98	116	88.1	LE
20	Labels	4721	1:15	120	109	52.3	50	66	47.7	HE
21	Coupons	4721	At least 5	89	76	67.9	41	37	32.1	HE
22	Rhyme and Posters	4721	At least 5	46	55	42.8	63	76	57.2	LE
23	Reading Alphabet	4721	At least 5	97	71	67.9	32	43	32.1	HE
24	Children's Dictionary	4721	1 per child	50	38	36.2	70	85	63.8	LE
25	Music and Books on Tape /disc	4721	1:15	38	29	27.6	82	92	72.6	LE
26	Calendar	4721	1:15	105	81	76.5	22	35	23.5	HE
27	Maps	4721	1:15	85	91	72.4	38	29	27.6	HE
28	Television	4721	1:15	15	09	9.9	115	104	90.1	LE
29	Games	4721	At least 5	65	89	63.4	37	52	36.6	HE
30	Toys	4721	1:15	61	47	44.4	36	99	55.6	LE

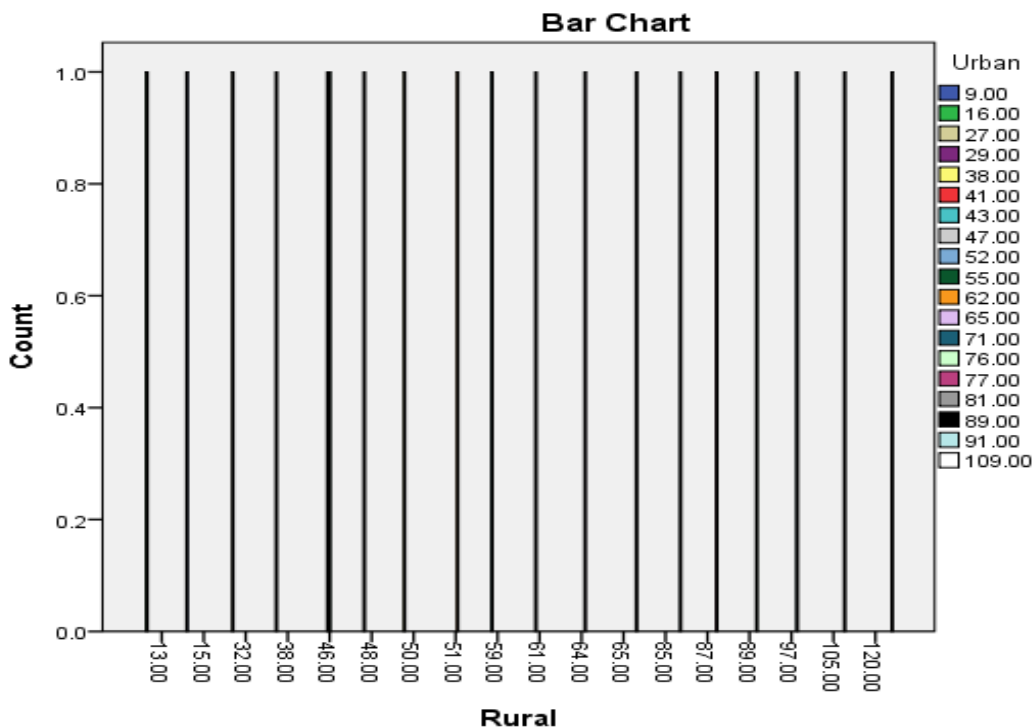
**Field Survey, 2022; Keys: Low Extent (LE), High Extent (HE)**

The data in **Table 2** shows that Pictorials (67.5%), Art works and drawings (53.1%), Labels (52.3%), Coupons (67.9%) Teaching

Charts (67.9%), calendar (76.5%), maps (72.4) and Games (63.4) are the only instructional materials that were highly provided by

ECCE Centre providers in Afikpo Education Zone of Ebonyi State as stipulated in Nigerian’s minimum standards for rural and urban respectively. It also showed that Textbooks (40.3), Costumes for learning (41.10%), Charts (24.3%), Story books (46.5%), Children’s books (36.6%), Computer with keyboard (11.9%), Rhyme and Posters (42.8%), Children’s Dictionary (36.2%), Music and Books on Tape /disc

(27.6%), Television (9.9%), and Toys (44.4%) were provided to low extent as stipulated in Nigerian’s minimum standards for rural and urban Early Childcare Centres. It implies that ECCE Centre providers in Afikpo Education Zone of Ebonyi State do not comply with the stipulated minimum standards of instructional materials provision. This analysis was further explained by the bar chart below.



The Bar chart above shows the differences in the provision of instructional materials by ECCE Centre providers in Afikpo Education Zone of Ebonyi State as stipulated in Nigerian’s minimum standards. The dark bars showed the instructional materials that are highly provided in both rural and urban Childcare centres in Afikpo Education Zone of Nigeria while the light bars showed the

percentage of instructional materials that are lowly provided.

**Test of Hypotheses**

**H<sub>01</sub>:** there is no significant difference between rural and urban nursery schools on the extent qualified teachers recruited by ECCE Centre providers in comply with the requirements of Federal Government of Nigeria’s minimum standards in Afikpo Education Zone of Ebonyi State.

**Table 3: Chi-Square summary of the difference between rural and urban nursery schools on the extent qualified teachers recruited by ECCE Centre providers in comply with the requirements of Federal Government of Nigeria’s minimum standards in Afikpo Education Zone of Ebonyi State**

	Df	$\chi^2\alpha$	Sig.	Alpha Level	Remarks
Chi-Square	9	12.000 <sup>a</sup>	.213	0.05	NS
Number of valid Cases	4				

Df = degree of freedom,  $\chi^2\alpha$  = chi-square calculated, Sig. = P-value; P < .05, NS= Not Significant

Table 3 shows null significant Chi-square value of 0.213 which is greater than the

0.05 level of significance and with 9 degree of freedom. Therefore, the hypothesis which stated that there is no significant difference between rural and urban nursery schools on the extent qualified teachers are recruited by ECCE Centre providers in comply with the requirements of Federal Government of Nigeria's minimum standards in Afikpo Education

Zone of Ebonyi State was accepted. This  $H_{03}$ : there is no significant difference between rural and urban nursery schools on the extent ECCE Centre providers in Afikpo Education Zone of Ebonyi State provide instructional materials as stipulated in Nigerian's minimum standards.

**Table 4: Chi-Square summary of the difference between rural and urban nursery schools on the extent ECCE Centre providers in Afikpo Education Zone of Ebonyi State provide Instructional Materials as stipulated in Nigerian's minimum standards**

	Df	$\chi^2\alpha$	Sig.	Alpha Level	Remarks
Chi-Square	306	323.000 <sup>a</sup>	.241	0.05	NS
Number of valid Cases	19				

Df = degree of freedom,  $\chi^2\alpha$  = chi-square calculated, Sig. = P-value; P < .05, NS= Not Significant

Table 4 shows null significant Chi-square value of 0.241 which is greater than the 0.05 level of significance and with 306 degree of freedom. Therefore, the hypothesis which stated that there is no significant difference between rural and urban nursery schools on the extent ECCE

Centre providers in Afikpo Education Zone of Ebonyi State provide instructional materials as stipulated in Nigerian's minimum standards was accepted. This also indicates that instructional materials were provided in both rural and urban ECCE Centre to low extent.

#### DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The discussion of the findings was made based on the two research questions and two null hypotheses. The finding of the study revealed that most ECCE Centres in Afikpo Education Zone of Ebonyi State did not comply with the recruitment of qualified caregivers requirements of Federal Government of Nigeria's minimum standards. This finding was supported by the findings of [7,11] that submitted that 80% of the teachers have only TCII and secondary school certificate and did not have formal training in early childhood care education. The study is also in tandem with the [16] that there was poor recruitment of teachers in early childhood care education in Nigeria. The implication of this finding is that there would be poor teaching it is important to note that when there is higher caregiver-child ratio, caregivers are able to interact better with children, they experience less stress and they are able to provide more supports to

different children's developmental domains. This is in line with the view of [20] that higher caregiver-child ratio makes children become more co-operative in activities and interactions and children also tend to perform better in cognitive and linguistic assessments. On the contrary, lower staff-child ratio in ECE settings will make caregivers to give less attention to children and they will not give optimal performance. This will in turn affect children as children may experience neglect and poor development in all domains. The lower staff- child ratio is the scenario in Nigerian ECE at pre-primary school level. This has been reported in several research works on ECCE [19]. These studies reported that classrooms in early childhood development (ECD) centers in Nigeria are crowded, with an average of more than 130 children per classroom in the North. These similar situation need to be controlled to ensure quality outcome of

ECCE in Nigeria. The obvious implication is that if qualified teachers are not adequately recruited to care for these children, it would negatively hamper the development of these children through education. The findings of the study also revealed that Most ECCE Centres in Afikpo Education Zone of Ebonyi State did not comply with the provision of instructional materials requirements of Federal Government of Nigeria's minimum standards. This was also confirmed by the results of null hypothesis 3 which submitted that there was no significant difference ( $P>0.05$ ) between rural and urban nursery schools on the extent ECCE Centre providers in Afikpo Education Zone of Ebonyi State provide instructional materials as stipulated in Nigerian's minimum standards. This implies that both rural and urban ECCE centres were have similar cases of shortage of instructional materials for quality teaching in early childhood care in the survey area. This finding was supported by [23,28] whose findings submitted that most of the vital material for learning in early childhood care education centre were not available in preschools and teachers do not use them in teaching. The implication is that the issue of availability of instructional material and play facilities need serious attention. None of the schools visited have instructional materials as stated in the federal

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations were based on the findings of the study

1. The Federal Government that initiated the National Minimum Standard for establishment of Early Childhood Care Education centres should recruit more qualified caregivers to preschools or centres for quality learning

Aja-Okorie and Etu government national minimum standard of establishment. Such instructional materials like toys, educational charts, computers with appliances, TVs, Videos were never available in any of the schools. Few that were seen with the children were personal toys. In addition there were no play facilities in the schools. Such play facilities like swings, slides, merrygo round among others were never available. This issues need urgent attention, this is because children at this stage engage in play as a way of learning and to deprive the children of play facilities means to take away learning from them. This was supported by [29] whose findings stated that play is a natural activity which contributes to children development as well as gives them satisfaction and enjoyment. It gives children sense of belonging with the group. The federal government minimum standard of establishment of ECCC emphasized that an approved age appropriate curriculum must be available. This was a great problem because in all the centres visited, most head teachers and teachers have acknowledge of such curriculum but denied having seen it nor using it. No school met the standard guide line. One begins to ask what they teach these children. This calls for an urgent attention on the ministry of education to come to the aid of such schools and make curriculum available to them.

outcomes.

2. The preschool heads should create partnership programmes where the parents and other stockholders would help in providing instructional materials through for quality teaching and learning condition Early Childhood Care Centres.

### CONCLUSION

The study has shown that the early childhood care education (preprimary school) has a positive influence on a child's education in future. For this to be achieved the federal government policy on minimum standard must be implemented for quality childhood education. This involves the federal and state government must as a matter of urgency provide adequate teaching learning facilities, fund, organize in service training for the

teachers, have effective supervision machinery and insist on the implementation of the federal government national minimum benchmark for early childhood care education centres establishment in the country. In the line of the above, the researcher concluded that for the country to have quality future leaders, the education of the early child must be treated with every sense of seriousness for effective quality outcome.

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