

Integration of Psychosocial and Transport Safety Considerations in the Management of Early Childhood Care and Development Education in Rivers State

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DOI: [10.36348/jaep.2021.v05i08.004](https://doi.org/10.36348/jaep.2021.v05i08.004)

| Received: 29.06.2021 | Accepted: 04.08.2021 | Published: 09.08.2021

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Abstract

The study examined integration of psychosocial and transport safety considerations in the management of early childhood care and development education in Rivers State. The study used the descriptive survey design. Two research questions as well as two corresponding hypotheses guided the study. The population of the study comprised of all the 620 approved private early childhood care and development education centres in Rivers State, Nigeria. The stratified random sampling technique was used to draw up a sample of 347 head teachers, representing 56% of the population (110 head teachers in urban and 237 rural areas as well as 215 experienced and 132 inexperienced head teachers. One instrument was used for collection of data for this study titled 'Integration of Safety Considerations Management of Early Childhood Care and Development Education Questionnaire. The face and content validity of the questionnaire was ensured, the reliability of the questionnaire was determined using Cronbach alpha statistics. The reliability co-efficients of 0.86 and 0.92 were obtained. Weighted criterion mean, weighted mean and standard deviation scores were used to answer the research questions while z-test was used to test hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The finding of the study shows that to a high extent psychosocial and transport safety considerations are integrated in the management of early childhood care and development education in Rivers State. Further findings showed that there was no significant difference between means scores of the responses of teachers on the extent of integration of psychosocial and transport safety considerations in the management of early childhood care and development education in Rivers State. Based on the findings, it was recommended among others that private school managers should endeavour to provide safety facilities like close circuit television cameras in the schools for management of early childhood care and development education.

Keywords: Integration, Psychosocial, Transport Safety and Management of Early Childhood Care and Development Education.

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INTRODUCTION

The early childhood care and development education is the level of education that is designed for infants between the ages of 0-5 years. It is the first form of education that prepares infants for schooling in a formal setting. Anuna (2006) conceptualizes early childhood care and education as a type of education that is set aside in order to meet the unique needs of pre-school children and promoting their physical, mental and social growth, individually and as a group. Early childhood care and development education as a system of education that applies formal and informal approaches towards developing infants in all ramifications so that they become fit for social interactions and ready for formal education at various stages (Asodike, 2011). Learning at early childhood

care and development education is therefore characterized with fun activities such as singing, chanting, rhythms, simulations, poems, basic counting and physical activities such as dancing, jumping and playing. The classrooms in early childhood care and development education are designed to be colourful, spacious and filled with pictures and toys. The early childhood care and development education therefore is supposed to provide infants with quality care and safety while they are away from home and under the auspices of their parents. It is expected that early childhood care and development education upholds certain safety considerations in schools. Sequel to this, an essential goal of delivery of early childhood care and development education in Nigeria is to ensure that infants can be can receive care and kept safe while their parents engage in economic activities for the welfare of

their families (Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN), 2014).

Safety considerations are factors that can influence the level of comprehensiveness of the safety of policies and programmes in early childhood care and development education (Jain & Rao, 2014). Safety considerations are guidelines for safety that determines what should be included when planning and formulating policies to guarantee safety of life and property in a school (Republic of Maldives, 2018). They are also factors that are used as criteria for evaluating the level to which safety in early childhood education centres comply with legislated statutory conditions for safety in early childhood care and development education. The government has set minimum standards for operation and management of school. The minimum standard addresses the various crucial aspects of school-safety or the various safety considerations of a school. Both staff and pupils of early childhood care and development education have safety needs. Those considerations that must be provided and managed in order to cater for the safety needs of staff and pupils is what constitute safety factors (India Today, 2018). Some of these safety considerations include psychosocial safety and transport safety considerations.

Psychosocial safety consideration is a critical safety consideration that are present in early childhood care and development education. The term psychosocial is made up of two words, 'psycho' and 'social'. Psycho refers to inert psychological dynamics (personality and idiosyncratic needs) of an individual and how it affects the individual uniquely. On the other-hand, the term 'social' refers to the social dynamics (group or interpersonal interactions) in which a person participates in and how it uniquely affects the person. The psychosocial safety consideration in early childhood care and development education refer to the extent to which the psychological and social dynamics of infants in early childhood care and development education affects the safety of the infants.

The psychosocial safety considerations includes all social interactions in the school that can affect the spiritual, emotional, social, mental and physical development of the infants placed under the auspices of their caregivers. The interaction amongst infants and their interaction with their caregivers are critical safety factors. This is because social interactions affect the development of values and behaviour in infants (Anuna, 2006). The early childhood care and development education is expected to offer households a place where their infants are protected rather than exposed to behaviours, social interaction and materials (print, audio and audio-visual) that are capable of truncating the safety and development of infants. Infants learn by observation and imitation. They can imitate negative and positive values and behaviour. If

infants imitate positive behaviours, it is likely to bring about sound emotional, social, spiritual and mental development. On the contrary, if infants imitate negative behaviours, it is likely to impede sound emotional, social, spiritual and mental development. Parents and society want infants to be protected from imitating negative behaviours and values in school.

Caregivers are critical social agents that infants learn from. It appears that part of the responsibilities of caregivers is to model the right personality and behaviour before the infants. Infants learn by observation and imitation. It will be a disservice for caregivers to exhibit unethical behaviours before the infants. Psychosocial safety considerations also deals with protection of infants from being abused, molested or traumatized by their caregivers. The media appears to be filled with saddening reports of adults and caregivers who sexually and physically molest infants. Infants should be protected from paedophiles, drug addicts or persons with questionable behaviour and values. Infants also need protection from pornographic materials and drugs. This is because of their clinically perceived negative effect on the psychosocial development.

Transport safety consideration is another safety factor. Transport safety consideration in early childhood care and development education refer to the aspect of safety that addresses infants' need to be safe while they are transported from their homes to the school and back to their homes (Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN) 2014). Infants who are taken to school and brought back from school needs to be conveyed in a safe vehicle and by a capable driver who knows and respects transport laws. Transportation is a critical aspect of early childhood care and development education. This is because the infants are dependent and therefore cannot go to the school all by themselves. The period of transporting infants to and from schools requires caution. When infants are transported as a group in a vehicle, the services of a caregiver is required to ensure that they do not engage in activities (in the vehicle) that will expose them to risk and harm. A watchful eye is needed to ensure that while in the vehicle, the infants do not use sharp objects to hurt themselves or others kids being conveyed with them. This perhaps explains why early childhood care and development education centres who have vehicles to transport learners tend to engage the services of a children handlers and drivers.

Transport safety consideration also include the safety of car parks (for schools with car parks). Some schools tend to recruit a staff member who is responsible for controlling of traffic (movement of people and cars) in the school parking space. This is done as a deliberate effort to promote safety when learners are dropped off at the school and picked up after school hours. Transport safety consideration

covers an inventory of the availability, maintenance and utilization of vehicles, car parks and other facilities and personnel that are directly or indirectly involved with transportation services in early childhood care and development education. The government through her ministry of transportation and other transport agencies formulate and overview public adherence to road safety rules and regulations (Ekpa, 2018). The early childhood care and development education exists as a microcosm of the macro-society. As an institution that offers education to infants, transport safety also covers the extent to which adherence to road safety rules and regulations are modelled before the infants. Drives and child handlers in vehicles conveying infants are required to realize that infants would imitate whatever behaviours they exhibit while the infants to and from schools.

There are concerns that there are little or no safety consideration in most early childhood education centres. Parents and guardians worry about the safety of their children school. We hear of media reports of infants being kidnapped, sexual molestation, rape of infants, and collapse of school buildings. There are concerns over the increased rate of road accidents involving children and the prevalent cases of communicable diseases among children. Therefore, this study examined integration of psychosocial and transport safety considerations in the management of early childhood care and development education in Rivers State.

Aim and Objectives of the Study

The study examined the integration of psychosocial and transport safety considerations in the management of early childhood care and development education in Rivers State. Specifically, the study sought to achieve the following;

1. Determine the extent of integration of psychosocial safety considerations in the management of early childhood care and development education in Rivers State.
2. Ascertain the extent of integration of transport safety considerations in the management of early childhood care and development education in Rivers State.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What is the extent of integration of psychosocial safety considerations in the management of early

childhood care and development education in Rivers State?

2. What is the extent of integration of transport safety considerations in the management of early childhood care and development education in Rivers State?

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were raised and tested at 0.05 level of significance:

1. There is no significant difference between means scores of the responses of headteachers in urban and rural areas on the extent of integration of psychosocial safety considerations in the management of early childhood care and development education in Rivers State.
2. There is no significant difference between means scores of the responses of experienced and inexperienced head teachers on the extent of integration of transport safety considerations in the management of early childhood care and development education in Rivers State.

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted the descriptive survey design. The population of the study comprised of all the 620 approved private early childhood care and development education centres in Rivers State, Nigeria. The schools had 620 head teachers (which consist of head teachers in urban 196 and 424 rural areas as well as 384 experienced and 236 inexperienced head teachers. The stratified random sampling technique was used to draw up a sample of 347 head teachers, representing 56% of the population (110 urban and 237 rural areas as well as 215 experienced and 132 in experienced head teachers. One instrument was used for collection of data for this study; 'Integration of Safety Considerations Management of Early Childhood Care and Development Education Questionnaire. The face and content validity of the questionnaire was ensured, the reliability of the questionnaire was determined using Cronbach alpha statistics. The reliability co-efficients of 0.86 and 0.92 respectively. Weighted criterion mean, weighted mean and standard deviation scores were used to answer the research questions while z-test was used to test hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Research Question 1: What is the extent of integration of psychosocial safety considerations in the management of early childhood care and development education in Rivers State?

Table 1: Mean (\bar{x}) and Standard Deviation (SD) on the Responses of urban and rural Head Teachers on the extent of integration of psychosocial safety considerations in the management of early childhood care and development education in Rivers State

S/N	Items	Urban Teachers \bar{x}	SD	Rural Teachers \bar{x}	SD	Weighted Mean	Remark
1	There is proper profiling of persons that are recruited as caregivers in order to determine their suitability for the job.	3.07	0.89	2.84	0.94	3.11	High Extent
2	There are policies that are made to control social interactions amongst members of the school	2.23	0.95	2.38	0.90	2.90	Low Extent
3	The caregivers are always supervising the interactions between the infants	3.12	0.90	3.02	0.85	2.37	High Extent
4	Instructional materials meant to be used to teach the infants are scrutinized to determine that they do not contain materials (like pornography) that will truncate the development of the infant	3.05	0.89	2.95	0.84	2.90	High Extent
5	The school encourages respect for diversities existing amongst the infants	2.92	0.83	2.93	0.83	3.05	High Extent
	Average	2.88	0.95	2.82	0.91	2.85	

Data on Table 1 shows that items 1, 3, 4, 5 had weighted mean scores above the criterion mean of 2.50 and were seen as the extent of integration of psychosocial safety considerations in the management of early childhood care and development education in Rivers State. In summary, with an aggregate weighted mean of 2.85 which is above the criterion mean of 2.50, the respondents agreed that to a high extent there is the

integration of psychosocial safety considerations in the management of early childhood care and development education in Rivers State.

Research Question 2: What is the extent of integration of transport safety considerations in the management of early childhood care and development education in Rivers State?

Table 2: Mean (\bar{x}) and Standard Deviation (SD) on the Responses of experienced and inexperienced Head Teachers on the extent of integration of transport safety considerations in the management of early childhood care and development education in Rivers State

S/N	Items	Experienced Teachers \bar{x}	SD	In Experienced Teachers \bar{x}		Weighted Mean	Remark
1	Drivers of school vehicles are forbidden from using any gadget (like mobile phones or cameras) when conveying the infants.	2.30	1.09	2.21	0.97	2.25	Low Extent
2	A caregiver is assigned to watch over the infants whenever they are being conveyed by the school vehicle	3.03	0.92	3.02	0.78	3.03	High Extent
3	Medical personnel are assigned to travel with infants whenever they are being conveyed to excursion sites	2.94	1.00	3.05	0.77	3.00	High Extent
4	Electronic devices (like cameras and trackers) are installed in vehicles meant for conveying the infants	2.22	1.03	2.05	1.01	2.14	Low Extent
5	The school vehicles are taken to the mechanic for regular maintenance	2.84	0.92	3.04	0.79	2.94	High Extent
6	The school has a spacious car park	2.97	0.93	3.11	0.78	3.04	High Extent
	Average	2.72	1.03	2.75	0.96	2.73	

Data on Table 2 shows that items 2, 3, 5 and 6 had weighted mean scores above the criterion mean of 2.50 and were seen as the extent of integration of transport safety considerations in the management of early childhood care and development education in Rivers State. In summary, with an aggregate weighted mean of 2.73 which is above the criterion mean of 2.50, the respondents agreed that to a high extent there is integration of transport safety considerations in the

management of early childhood care and development education in Rivers State.

Hypotheses Testing

Hypothesis One: There is no significant difference between means scores of the responses of headteachers in urban and rural areas on the extent of integration of psychosocial safety considerations in the management of early childhood care and development education in Rivers State.

Table 3: Summary of z-test Analysis on the difference between means scores of the responses of headteachers in urban and rural areas on the extent of integration of psychosocial safety considerations in the management of early childhood care and development education in Rivers State

Head Teachers	N	\bar{X}	SD	Level of sig	Df	z-cal	z-critical	Decision
Urban	110	2.88	0.95	0.05	345	0.06	1.96	Not Significant (Failed to reject Ho ₃)
Rural	237	2.82	0.91					

Data on the Table 3 revealed the summaries of Subject, mean, standard deviation and z-test of difference between means scores of the responses of headteachers in urban and rural areas on the extent of integration of psychosocial safety considerations in the management of early childhood care and development education in Rivers State. The calculated z-test value used in testing hypothesis stood at 0.06, while z-critical value stood at 1.96 using 345 degree of freedom at 0.05 level of significance. At 0.05 level of significance and 345 degrees of freedom, the calculated z-value of 0.06 is less than the z-critical value of 1.96. Hence there is no significant difference between the responses of the respondents. Consequently, the researcher failed to

reject the null hypothesis, and concluded that there is no significant difference between means scores of the responses of urban and rural head teachers on the level of integration of psychosocial safety considerations in the management of early childhood care and development education in Rivers State.

Hypothesis Two: There is no significant difference between means scores of the responses of experienced and inexperienced head teachers on the extent of integration of transport safety consideration in the management of early childhood care and development education in Rivers State.

Table 4: Summary of z-test Analysis on the difference between means scores of the responses of experienced and inexperienced head teachers on the extent of integration of transport safety considerations in the management of early childhood care and development education in Rivers State

Head Teachers	N	\bar{X}	SD	Level of sig	Df	z-cal	z-critical	Decision
Experienced	215	2.72	1.03	0.05	345	-0.27	1.96	Not Significant (Failed to reject Ho ₄)
Inexperienced	132	2.75	0.96					

Data on the Table 4 revealed the summaries of Subject, mean, standard deviation and z-test of difference between means scores of the responses of experienced and inexperienced head teachers on the extent of integration of transport safety considerations in the management of early childhood care and development education in Rivers State. The calculated z-test value used in testing hypothesis stood at -0.27, while z-critical value stood at 1.96 using 345 degree of freedom at 0.05 level of significance. At 0.05 level of significance and 345 degrees of freedom, the calculated z-value of -0.27 is less than the z-critical value of 1.96. Hence there is no significant difference between the responses of the respondents. Consequently, the researcher failed to reject the null hypothesis, and concluded that there is no significant difference between means scores of the responses of experienced and less experienced head teachers on the level of integration of transport safety considerations in the

management of early childhood care and development education in Rivers State.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The findings of this study are summarized as follows:

1. Headteachers responded that to a high extent there is the integration psychosocial safety considerations in the management of early childhood care and development education in Rivers State
2. Headteachers responded that to a high extent there is the integration of transport safety considerations in the management of early childhood care and development education in Rivers State.
3. There is no significant difference between means scores of the responses of headteachers in urban and rural areas on the extent of integration of psychosocial safety considerations in the

management of early childhood care and development education in Rivers State.

4. There is no significant difference between means scores of the responses of experienced and inexperienced head teachers on the extent of integration of transport safety considerations in the management of early childhood care and development education in Rivers State.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Extent of integration of psychosocial safety considerations in the management of early childhood care and development education

The result of the study for research question one reveal that teachers in early child education responded that to a high extent the integration psychosocial safety considerations in the management of early childhood care and development education in Rivers State. Furthermore, the test for hypothesis one reveal that there is no significant difference between means scores of the responses of urban and rural head teachers on the extent of integration of psychosocial safety considerations in the management of early childhood care and development education in Rivers State. Therefore, the null hypothesis of no significant difference between the mean scores of the responses of headteachers in urban and rural areas on the extent of integration of psychosocial safety considerations in the management of early childhood care and development education in Rivers State was retained. The findings of the present study agrees with an earlier study by Oliver (2017) who found out that there are integration of psychosocial safety issues in management of early childhood care and education and this covers the protection of learners from bullying, discrimination, sexual molestation and injustice. This agrees with the finding of the present study. Therefore, implication of this is that since physiological and psychological stress among young learners can be caused by chaotic and disorganized school environmental layout, hence the integration of environmental safety factors into management of early childhood care and education requires that the school administrator must engage environmental management practices.

Extent of integration of transport safety considerations in the management of early childhood care and development education

The findings of the study for research question two show that headteachers in early child education responded that to a high extent the integration transport safety considerations in the management of early childhood care and development education in Rivers State. Furthermore, the test for hypothesis two show that there is no between means scores of the responses of experienced and inexperienced head teachers on the extent of integration of transport safety considerations in the management of early childhood care and development education in Rivers State. Therefore, the null hypothesis of no significant difference between the

mean scores of the responses of experienced and inexperienced head teachers on the extent of integration of transport safety considerations in the management of early childhood care and development education in Rivers State was retained. The findings of the present study is in agreement with an earlier study by Ejiogu, Nwachukwu and Madu (2016) who found out transport safety considerations are often integrated in the management of early childhood care and development education and that physical infrastructures' such as safe transportation guarantees safety of pupils, teaching and non-teaching staff. Jane and Rao (2014) also found out that security in transport service is often emphasized in the management of early childhood care and development education and that it covers wide range of issues such as personnel (drivers, caregivers and security personnel), automobiles (condition of vehicles and their maintenance, car parks and traffic control, traffic polices and regulations, supervision of transport services, and others). This deduction confirms the finding of the present study. This implies that transport safety deals with the efforts geared towards ensuring that vehicles are safe for usage. In other words, parents are not likely to enrol their kids to early childhood care and education centres if they are not convinced that their infants would be safe when they are transported to and fro the school.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of the study it is concluded that the integration of safety considerations in the management of early childhood care and development education in Rivers State in areas such as psychosocial safety and transport safety is to a high extent. There was no significant difference in the opinion of head teachers in the integration of both psychosocial safety and transport safety considerations in the management of early childhood care and development education in Rivers State.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study, the researcher recommended the following;

1. Government and administrators of early childhood care and development education should give priority attention to safety policies and implementation of such policies in early childhood care and development education in order to facilitate management of early childhood care and development education in Rivers State.
2. Private school managers should endeavour to provide safety facilities like close circuit television cameras in the schools for management of early childhood care and development education.
3. Teachers in early childhood care and development centres should participate in training programmes to get acquainted with safety practices needed for school safety.

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