

## Impact of Social and Academic Skills of Pre-Primary School Children for Scaling Up Childhood Education in Pankshin Local Government: The Stakeholder's Roles

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### **Abstract**

*This research therefore examines the impact of social and academic skills development of pre-primary school children for scaling up the status of childhood education in Pankshin Local Government Area. The study adopted a descriptive survey design. This study employed an interactive model data analysis included: data validating, data collection, data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The population of the study were all the teachers of pre-primary schools in Pankshin LGA numbering 750 comprising class helps, head teachers and parents. Simple random sampling technique was used to draw 750 teachers from the 48 public primary schools. 1-30 item questionnaire titled 'Teachers' Classroom social and academic skills development questionnaire (TCSACDQ) was developed by the researcher and used to obtain relevant data from respondents. Three research questions guided the study. The instrument yielded reliability co-efficient of 0.86. Cronbach Alpha method. The results showed that the instrument was reliable. The data was analyzed using mean scores and standard deviation. Any item with a mean score of 2.50 and above was accepted value while items with a mean rating below were not accepted value. It was discovered that: the cooperation aspect, children may collaborate well; the assertion aspect, children may get along with new friends and communicate with others; the responsibility aspect, children understand their role and responsibility to guide themselves, others, and society; the empathy aspect, children may feel others' feeling and problem; the self-control aspect, children can control their mental state so that they can avoid anger and bad influences in order to scale up early childhood development and education in Nigeria for qualitative acquisition of skills and sustainability. Based on these findings, recommendations were made.*

**Keywords:** Social, Academic Skills, Pre-primary Schools, Stakeholders

### **Introduction**

The major problems facing the world today can be solved only if there is improvement in our understanding of human behavior" (Peterson, 2018). Educational leaders, teachers, school counselors, social workers and school psychologist who are stakeholders whom have long argued that some pupils were under-performing academically because they lack proper social skills (inattentiveness and unpreparedness during instructional periods, show of aggressive behavior toward classmates and educational staff, inability to engage cooperative learning and disruptive behavior in classroom) which affected their academic skills (studying skills, problem-solving skills, critical and decision-making skills, mastery and performance skills, task management skills). Pupils who struggled to master social skills at pre-primary school faced more disciplinary consequences when they failed to engage in appropriate behavior. Pupils need to be taught directly and systemically skills to succeed in schools (Leigh, 2020). In some cases, the combination of a lack of social and academic study skills have precluded the pupils' quest to experience academic success during their high school matriculation. "Under the realm of behaviorism the intellect, feelings, and emotions of a person's inner life are not observable or measurable and therefore not investigated. Thus, a behavioral educator would advocate that effective learning is best accomplished by a change on behavior and relies heavily upon behavioral objectives to accomplish the teaching learning task" (Mercer, 2017).

Classroom teachers have long recognized the importance of social and behavior skills, viewing cooperation, self-control, and other social skills as critical to achieving academic and behavioral success (Zaretta, 2020). Still, others have argued that pupils' lack of social skills affected their ability to acquire proper academic skills that would have allow them to experience a successful educational experience during their years

of matriculation in grade K-12. Because the pupil's social skills are absent, the pupils are constrained mentally to wonder about during the instructional period, unable to understand and this concentrated on the subject matter being taught unable to formulate proper questions (Kems&Brumariu, 2020). The pupils inability to follow along; unable to (or fearful to) ask question clarify illustrations or demonstrations out of shame or embarrassment (Wong & Lee, 2020). Some of these pupils have minor to severe trouble grasping the new knowledge. Maths, Science, Language, Arts and Social Studies. Understanding and comprehending concept like themes and notions are also elements needed to be successful in the high school and succeed on the state wide mandated proficiency examinations or other state or federal sponsored proficiency examinations.

Toward off embarrassment in front of their peers, some pupils, because of their lack of academic skills and their inability to constructively engage in classroom learning, engaged in the improper behavior such as inattentiveness during instructional periods, and aggressive behavior toward classmates and teachers. Being unprepared for class is common because the pupil fails to understand the content area. Since the child is incapable of engaging in classroom work, this child may be susceptible to an admonishment by the teacher, removal from the classroom, disciplinary referral or faced with the possibility of being expelled from school. Some researchers have ventured to conclude that this defensive behavior, on the child's part, is because the child lacks the ability to function academically, socially, constructively, and or contribute to classroom learning, thus leading to an unsuccessful educational experience (Allan, 2020). While educational leaders, teachers, school counselors, social workers and school psychologist are focused on the major core subjects as Math, Reading and Language, Arts, and Science. They all agree that the knowledge and understanding derived from these content subjects are instrumental in creating the whole children and life-long learners.

Teacher's factor could affect children's social and academic reasoning skills acquisition. García, Jorge, and Luis, (2016) observed that lack of commitment by the teachers and inappropriate teaching methods constitute major problems associated with poor social and mental reasoning skills of pre-primary school children. Lack of teachers' commitment and inappropriate teaching method appears to undermine children's social and mental reasoning skills which are part of the worries of the present research, This is because traditionally, schools have focused on teaching content-area, knowledge and abilities, such as, social habits, Basic Science, Physical Education, Mathematics and English Language among others leaving out the teaching of skills, needs and interest (Joshua, Brandon, & David, 2019) which presumably leads to poor social skills development. However, the issues of the lack of academic and social skills are both stressful to the children and teachers because the children, in some cases, are precluded/ and hampered their ability to process the information which may affect the teachers' awareness of the learner's non-educational problem. The process of learning occurs because children's learning is associated with a condition and that condition is the environment (Vermeulen, & Van, 2020). As such, children learn from their interactions with environment or surrounding. Lacking in either or both social and academic study skills, at the pre-primary level of education constitute failure for children to achieve and enjoy a successful educational experience.

Stake holders' expectations of their pupils suggest that it is important and imperative that pupils demonstrated and displayed cooperation and self-control skills during school hours. Astuti (2021) studied the expectations of teachers with regard to students' behavior in class. Each year, many educators expect their pupils to listen carefully and attentively, follow direction and turn in assignments that are done correctly and adequately (Crawford, 2020). Pupils who lack these skills or expectations during pre-primary levels may be at risk for pejorative outcomes including poor school adjustment in the form of impaired relationships with teachers and peers, academic underachievement and high rates of disciplinary contact (Allan, 2020). However, it must be first recognized and noted whether the teacher's goals and expectations are explained clearly and identified prior to the beginning of the school year. Teaching and Teacher Education (TTE, 2020 & Asisigan & Samuel (2021), writes that if the expectations are not clear, either because the skills are not explicitly taught in early years or consistently enforced through a pupil educational experience, was difficult for learners to meet the teacher's expectations in the classroom. In addition, if children are given variation of rules and expectations from subject class to subject class, to grade level to grade level and from teacher to teacher, children's transition may become difficult (Caldwell, 2020). Early investigations related to teacher expectations regarding students in educational setting by Walker and Herse (1992), led to the development of the Model of Interpersonal Social-Behavior competence with School Settings.

## Statement of the Problem

Educational researchers and social educational theorist noticed a steady increase of pupils exhibiting a lack of social and academic skills. The lack of social skills has been identified as inappropriate pupil's classroom behavior, inattention during instructional periods, aversive relationships and interactions with educators and fellow classmates, and disruptive classroom behavior are found. The lack of social skills has produced negative consequences in the pupil's classwork and homework or assignments; examinations, tests, and quizzes; the lack of organization surrounding school work; tardiness, absenteeism, and the inability to maintain or sustain social relationships among classmates. In addition, the impact of the lack of social skills on the pupils' academic skills have shown to exist in the pupil's ability to engage in proper studying skills, problem-solving, decision-making, content mastery, performance skills, and task management skills. Astuti, Rusilowati, and Subali, (2021), offered that most high school students engaged in inappropriate classroom behavior because they lacked the basic educational foundations to be in the classroom and as a consequence, these students, to avoid looking unintelligent in front of their classmates or peers, engaged in inappropriate behavior they know will get them tossed out of class, into detention, suspended from school, or created aversive interactions with the teacher resulting in the teacher avoiding the student (and unlikely to provide direct education instructions). Hence, this study examines the relationship between social and academic skills development

## Purpose of the Study

This study explored and examined the impact of social and academic skills development of pre-primary school children for scaling up childhood education in Nigeria. Stakeholder's role. Specifically, the objectives are to:

- examine if there exists a relationship between social and academic skills of pre-primary school children in Pankshin LGA;
- determine the extent of the relationship between social and academic skills of children in pre-primary school in the study area;
- investigate if educational stakeholders assist the pre-primary school children in making improvement in social and academic skills in the study area.

## Research Question

The following research questions guided the study:

- What is the Impact of social and academic skills development of pre-primary school children in Pankshin LGA?
- What is the extent of the relationship between social and academic skills development of children in pre-primary school in the study area?
- What is the stakeholder's roles in assisting children in making improvement in social and academic skills in the study area?

## Methodology

This study is a descriptive survey research design which aimed at examining the impact of social and academic skills development of pre-primary school children for scaling up childhood education in Pankshin LGA: The stakeholder's roles. The study was carried out in Pankshin Local Government Education Area of Plateau State. Pankshin Local Government Area is located in Plateau Central Senatorial Zone; Pankshin Local Government Area is made up of eight autonomous communities namely: Pankshin, Chip, Langkang, Tal, Kadung, Dokpai, Wokkos and Fer. Pankshin is popularly known for its trade hub. Majority of Pankshin people are farmers. Pankshin Local Government is made up of 20 education supervisory zones, two tertiary institutions, federal college of education and state college of health; Pankshin-North is the headquarters of the education supervisory zones. Each zone is unique and tends to impact on children's social and academic skill development. The population for this study comprised all the 750 teachers, head teachers, class helps and parents in 48 public primary schools (Statistics Unit PPSMB, Pankshin Zone, 2023). The entire 750 stakeholders in Pankshin Education Zone were used as the sample of this study. The instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire titled 'Teachers' Classroom Social and Academic Skills Development Questionnaire (TCSASDQ). The questionnaire was developed by the researcher and has two sections, A and B. Section A dealt with the biodata of the respondents, while section B dealt with information on the impact of social and academic

skill development of children in pre-primary schools, it has 30 items built in three clusters. Cluster A had 10 items on social skills and cluster B had, 10 items on relationship between social and academic skills development and Cluster C had 10 items on stake holder's roles. A four point rating scale with assigned value was used to rate the responses to the questionnaire items as follows: strongly agreed,(SA)-4 points, Agreed (A)-3points, Disagreed (D)-2points, Strongly Disagreed(DA)-1 point. The criterion mean of acceptance was 2.50. The instrument was validated by two experts in Childhood Education and another from Measurement and Evaluation all from the federal college of education, Pankshin. The Cronbach Alpha method was used to reliability. The instrument yielded a reliability of co-efficient of 0.86 which showed that the instrument was reliable. The data was analyzed using mean scores and standard deviation. Any item with a mean score of 2.50 and above was accepted value while items with a mean rating below were not accepted value.

### Results

Research Question 1: What is the Impact of social and academic skills of pre-primary school children for scaling up early childhood education in Pankshin?

To answer the question, teachers, head teachers and parent's responses on social and academic skills was used as the independent variables, while scaling up early childhood education was used as the dependent variable. These were subjected to test using mean and standard deviation and the results are presented in the following table.

**Table 1: Mean response and the standard deviation of the Impact of social and academic skills of pre-primary school children in Pankshin LGA of Plateau State. Nigeria**

Impact of social and academic skills of pre-primary school pupils in Pankshin LGA of Plateau	Mean (x)	Std	Decision
Children often share toys with others	3.50	0.11	Agreed
Children take turns in games	3.00	0.30	Agreed
They show kindness to friends	3.00	0.30	Agreed
They often cooperate with other children during play	2.88	0.21	Agreed
Pupils resolves conflict with ease	2.50	0.11	Agreed
Pupils express their feelings with words	3.00	0.22	Agreed
They Listen to others always in the classroom	3.00	0.33	Agreed
They often engage in conversation with other children	2.98	0.28	Agreed
They use polite Language when communicating with peers	3.00	0.33	Agreed
Children recognize and express emotions in a good way	3.50	0.31	Agreed
<b>Grand mean 2.99</b>	<b>Srd.0.32</b>		

N= 750

The table presents mean and standard deviation on the impact of social and academic skills of pre-primary school children in Pankshin Local Government. Ten items were presented and all the question items were agreed to base on 2.50 decision point set in the study. The accepted items were sharing of toys with others, taking turns in games, showing kindness to friends among others. The overall mean was 2.99 this implies that, the social and academic skills has impact on pre-primary school children in Pankshin Local Government Area of Plateau State.

**Research Question 2:**What is the extent of the relationship between social and academic skills of children in pre-primary school for scaling up childhood education?

To answer the research question two, teachers, head teachers and parent's responses on the extent of the relationship between social and academic skills questionnaire was used as the independent variables, while



scaling up early childhood education was used as the dependent variable. These were subjected to test using mean and standard deviation and the results are presented in the following Table 2.

**Table 2: Mean response and Standard deviation of the relationship between social and academic skills of pupils in pre-primary school in Pankshin LGA of Plateau State, Nigeria.**

S/N	Relationship between social and academic skills of pupils in pre -primary school are that:	Mean (x)	Std.	decision
11.	Pupils often cooperate well with others in group work	3.00	0.30	Agreed
12.	Show empathy towards friends	2.95	0.29	Agreed
13.	Resolve conflicts peacefully	2.59	0.22	Agreed
14.	Pupils communicate effectively with peers	2.50	0.28	Agreed
15.	Pupils reading comprehension is high	3.00	0.30	Agreed
16.	Pupils social skills help them with their academic skills	3.00	0.30	Agreed
17.	Pupils academic skills affect their social relationships	2.85	0.91	Agreed
18.	They have strong ability to follow instructions	3.00	0.30	Agreed
19.	Pupils social skills helps them with difficult academic task in class	3.00	0.30	Agreed
20.	Social skills helps pupils with Mathematics problem solving	2.50	0.28	Agreed
<b>Grand mean: 2.85 Std: 0.57</b>				

**N=750**

Table 2 shows the relationship between social and academic skills of pre-primary school pupils for scaling up childhood education in Pankshin. Ten items were presented and all the question items were agreed to base on 2.50 decision point set in the study. The accepted items were show empathy towards friends, Pupils academic skills affect their social relationships and Pupils social skills helps them with difficult academic task in class. The overall mean was 2.85 this implies that, the relationship between social and academic skills has impact on pre-primary school children in Pankshin Local Government Area of Plateau State for scaling up childhood education.

**Research question 3:** What have educational stakeholders do to assist the pupils in making improvement in social and academic skills for scaling up childhood education?

To answer these question, stakeholder's roles in assisting children to make improvement in social and academic skills for scaling up childhood education in pre-primary schools in Panksin LGA were subjected to mean and standard deviation test and the results are presented in the following Table 3.

**Table 3: Mean response and the standard deviation of Stakeholders roles in assisting pupils in making improvement in social and academic skills for scaling up childhood education in Pankshin Local Government Area in Plateau State.**

S/N	Stakeholders roles for assisting pupils in making improvement in social and academic skills in Pankshin LGA. .	Mean(x)	Std	decision
21.	Teachers always observes pupils engaging in social skills like sharing and cooperation with others.	3.00	0.01	Agreed
22.	Teachers always engage pupils with Maths games, reading aloud and writing activities.	2.80	0.80	Agreed
23.	Teachers often encourage pupils to take risk and try new thing	3.00	2.01	Agreed
24.	Teachers often communicate with parents/ guardians about pupils progress	3.00	0.30	Agreed
25.	Parents often engage in activities with their pupils that promotes social and academic skills	3.00	0.30	Agreed
26.	Parents sometimes communicate with teachers for their pupils academic progress.	3.50	0.30	Agreed
27.	Head teachers always implement initiatives to support social and academic skills development pre-primary school pupils.	3.00	0.88	Agreed
28.	Pupils do feel supported by their teachers and parents in their learning.	2.50	0.21	Agreed
29.	Teachers use different resources to teach social and academic skills development.	3.50	0.31	Agreed
30.	Parents often engage in using different strategies in providing resources in the school.	3.00	0.30	Agreed
<b>Grand mean</b>		<b>3.32</b>	<b>Std: 0.43</b>	

**N= 750**

Table 3 shows the stakeholder's roles in assisting pupils in making improvement in social and academic skills for scaling up childhood education in Pankshin Local Government Area in Plateau State. Items number 21-30 were presented and all the question items were agreed to base on 2.50 decision point set in the study. The accepted items were Teachers always observes pupils engaging in social skills like sharing and cooperation with others, Teachers often communicate with parents/ guardians about pupils progress and Parents often engage in using different strategies in providing resources in the school. The overall mean was 3.32, this implies that, the stakeholder's roles has impact in assisting pupils in making improvement in social and academic skills for scaling up childhood education in Pankshin Local Government Area in Plateau State.

## Discussion of Findings

The findings of the study from research question 1 indicates that, the major indicator that without social skills; the pupil's academic skills will not mature to the necessary level to create a successful primary school experience. The need for the research is critical, in light of the sanctions that can be imposed on a state's educational system, if the academic standards and benchmarks are not met pursuant to the criteria set forth under the No Child Left behind Act of 2001 and Inclusive Learning by UNICEF of 2018. These often competing and conflicting skills – academic and social – have precluded some pupils from becoming life-long learners and successful members of our growing society. A pupil's lack of one or both skills - social skills and academic - in pre-primary school are a pressing concern to both those within and without the educational community because the absence of either skill has affected the pupils' academic success in primary school most importantly. Cowie (2018), declared that education consist of a series of interaction between a teacher and the learners, between groups of learners, or between learners and various school personnel. This is same concerning childhood education. Even with that explanation, a high-quality education is often described as the presence of standards-based curriculum taught by a highly-qualified teacher, and the effectiveness of even the best instruction hinged on the pupils' ability to engage in personal interaction. Without those skills, the pupil opportunities to learn effectively are likely to diminish greatly (Mercer, 2013; Herse, 2016,).

Research question 2 the relationship between social and academic skills of pre-primary school pupils are key to scaling up childhood education in Pankshin LGA: Pupils often cooperate well with others in group work, Pupils communicate effectively with peers, they have strong ability to follow instructions, Pupils reading comprehension is high, Pupils social skills helps them with difficult academic task in class and Social skills helps pupils with Mathematics problem solving Thus, with a grand mean of 2.85 and standard deviation of 2.57, it implies that social and academic skills has great relationship for scaling up childhood education in Pankshin LGA. The finding of the study is in line with the study of Joshua, Brandon and David (2019). By this finding, through quality relationship between social and academic skills of childhood education children will scale up in Pankshin as well as in Nigeria.

The findings of research question 3 showed that, the stakeholder's roles for assisting pupils in making improvement in social and academic skills development in Pankshin LGA. Table 3 revealed that Teachers always observes pupils engaging in social skills like sharing and cooperation with others, Teachers always engage pupils with Math's games, reading aloud and writing activities, Parents often engage in activities with their pupils that promotes social and academic skills, Head teachers always implement initiatives to support social and academic skills development pre-primary school pupils. Teachers use different resources to teach social and academic skills development and Parents often engage in using different strategies in providing resources in the school. By this, 21-30 were all above the criterion mean of 2.50, hence, they rated positive. Based on the analysis of the data in table 3, a great mean and standard deviation of 3.32 and 0.43 respectively, it is established that they are the major impact on social and academic skill development to the scaling up of childhood education in Nigeria. The finding are in line with Teacher and Teacher Education (ITE, 2020 & Asigigan & Samuel, 2021) which specifically anticipated the stakeholder's roles in supporting pupil's education attainment for scaling up childhood education in Nigeria.

## Conclusion

The study concluded that the scaling up of childhood education in Pankshin LGA is the major priority of government which is aimed at the supporting Pupils social and academic skills development. Stake holders have roles to play in this regard as it arms the citizens of the areas with the required knowledge and ability, skills and right values which adds to national cohesion in a heterogeneous nation like Nigeria. In the face of scaling up childhood education in Pankshin, quality relationship between social and academic skills must be strengthened. There is also need for Stakeholders so serious on a daily bases through provisions of teaching resources and checking on the activities of teachers and pupils in school. In offsetting these roles, the study made some useful recommendations.

## Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made:

- The Stake holders should provide more learning resources to pre-primary schools to enable Children learn to scale up their skills.

- Social and Academic skills development strategies should be integrated into the curriculum of Nigeria's education system.
- The government should provide functional and qualitative avenue for parley between schools and stakeholders especially at pre-primary schools to curb any unending issues that can hinder childhood education from scaling up.
- Stake holder's role should be included in the National Education curriculum of pre-primary school children in Nigeria.
- Efforts should be made by the ministry of education and their staff to set up a new programme of action that will help to checkmates the stake holder's attitudes in areas of their supervisory roles on children's learning as well as curriculum implementation in the various schools assigned to them.

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