



## The Impact of Quality Early Childhood Education Centers on Pre-schoolers' Social Interaction

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### ABSTRACT

The development of children can be harmed by low-quality early childhood education centers (ECEC), as these centers may hurt the children's overall well-being as well as their social, emotional, educational, physical, and behavioral results. It is challenging to pinpoint strategies. It could foster social interaction skills in young children due to a lack of agreement among educators regarding the strength of the relationship between relevant factors like teachers' qualifications, training, physical facilities, staff-child ratio, and the general standard of the ECE Center. In the Isin Local Government Area of Kwara State, the study looked at how preschoolers' social interactions were influenced by the quality of the ECE center. The research deliberately took into account schools having ECCDE centers. The observational evaluation scale on the impact of high-quality early childhood education centers on pre-schoolers' social interactions was one of two validated research instruments used to gather data. The other was the early childhood education center quality. The study recommends that schools provide extra hands-on materials, more playtime, and adequate space for play activities to foster children's social interaction through quality ECE Centers. The results showed that quality ECE Center had a positive influence on preschoolers' social interaction and overall development.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The concept of social interaction focuses on people's capacity for social exchange with one another or with others. Each child's success depends on this relationship, which is the cornerstone of social structure. Children can connect with their environment and communicate effectively thanks to the abilities they learn. When children can freely exhibit their abilities, learning comes naturally to them. Social interaction is one of the most crucial elements for everyone's health and development, from infants to seniors, and it has a variety of positive effects on the body and mind, including improved cognitive function, mental health, communication skills, independence, and physical health, especially in older people. Playing games with children improves their capacity to cooperate, take turns, or restrain their impulses (Rusyani et al., 2021; Cabrillos et al., 2023). The thoughts and interests of children foster their social engagement. Young children have a plethora of learning possibilities when they interact and play with peers and adults. Even young children and newborns gain cognitively and emotionally from social interaction. Children who grow up in an atmosphere that encourages social interaction will have better language abilities, creativity, social intelligence, and self-assurance.

Additionally, social interactions can relate to how we behave and respond to individuals in our immediate surroundings. From the moment of conception until death, relationships between two or more people are based on the people or things in our immediate surroundings. Interactions assist children to learn new information and abilities because they give them feedback, generate verbal responses from them, and encourage interest in and enjoyment of learning. Physical activity, discussion, playing together, sharing, cooperating, and a lot more are all examples of interactions. It's interesting to note that early social interaction benefits a child's development, and the right environment can support a child's growth in language proficiency, creativity, empathy, communication, and confidence, all of which could set the stage for the rest of the child's development into adulthood. Teachers that participate in exciting interactions that promote learning and are emotionally sympathetic are most beneficial to the students. The early years of a child's life are recognized across the world as a time of considerable development and growth. The early years of a child's life are recognized across the world as a time of considerable development and growth. Children go through a phase of physical, cognitive, language-perceptual, and social-emotional development throughout this time (Amelia et al., 2019).

According to Oduolowu and Olowe (2016), the basis for well-being and growth must be laid during these formative years since they are a time of high sensitivity and enormous potential. This explains why this period required to be handled with the utmost care because it could have a favorable or bad impact on the child's future academic success. It is time for the proper development required for success in the future. Social interaction abilities are one of the qualities that should be acquired during the early years. Children develop physically, cognitively, linguistically, and perceptually, as well as socially and emotionally. Whatever a child is exposed to throughout her early years has a significant impact on her total development and future success (Amelia et al., 2019). In the early years of life, positive social connection is crucial. Children in preschool are in a vulnerable stage of development; they range in age from 18 months to three years. The Early Childhood Center, a formal educational setting, will care for children during this period. A concern of an educator is also the need for social interaction in a child's development. Quality Early child care is indeed appreciated globally as the right of children.

The center of excellence It is impossible to overstate the importance of early childhood education for children's skill development. A lot of people are concerned about how young children will develop their social skills and how they will perform in the future, especially in early childhood settings. Researchers have been looking for ways to harness ECE's strengths to help children improve their social skills. Numerous studies have employed one style of play or another to help children acquire a variety of skills while some of these studies were done to look at the growth of various While many of these studies, according to research, have examined various programs, including (crèche, playgroup, kindergarten, and so on), and their influences on the children's domains of development, the researcher observed that none of these studies has been able to examine the use of quality ECE on children's social interaction in Kwara state, where some of these studies were conducted to address the development of different skills without the use of quality ECE. Based on the aforementioned, the study examined the impact of high-quality ECE on pre-schoolers' social interactions in the Nigerian state of Kwara's Isin Local Government Area.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1. Concept of Social Interaction**

Pre-schoolers may engage when a teacher deliberately planned and carefully considers how she approaches and responds to them. Through these positive interactions, the children may acquire a strong sense of security and well-being. According to the developmental psychologist, cognition leads to the conclusion that a child's exposure to peer relationships will help them acquire the competence that results from their relationship with their parents, surroundings, and facilitators, and that will help them adjust socially. According to research, relationships and engaging interactions are the most conducive to early learning. To learn, children need to have stimulated relationships with others. Children's learning, according to researchers, depends on developing their cognitive abilities through meaningful interactions (Cabrillos *et al.*, 2023). Asserts that young children can learn a great deal from interacting and playing with both peers and adults. The cognitive and emotional advantages of social interaction extend to infants and pre-schoolers. Strong language abilities, inventiveness, social intelligence, and self-assurance can all be developed in children in the correct socially engaging setting. Social connection is crucial for learning, and connecting with others is very helpful in helping learners organize their thoughts, reflect on their understanding, and identify any holes in their thinking (Suroto & Nandiyanto, 2021). When evaluating high-quality ECE, social interaction results are frequently employed as the most significant dependent variable.

### **2.2. The Relationship Between Children and Social Interaction**

Children range in age from the day of birth to the age of eight. Young children playfully interact with people by passing toys back and forth, rolling a ball back and forth, and pressing buttons on toys (Aprilia & Wantoro, 2021). It could be how a youngster learns and displays interaction. Turn-taking is an important communication skill for children to acquire because it is one of the cornerstones of effective and positive connection. Interacting with children should result in several opportunities for turn-taking. This can be done by facing children, getting down on their level, and making eye contact. When used this straightforward technique on 1- and 2-year-olds, the children appeared to turn a switch. As others assisted and shared with the babies, they started to respond to their new playmates. If children simply played with strangers, there was no such effect. Additionally, preschoolers who played games with high-quality materials later displayed gains in their capacity to engage with others and

consider other people's perspectives. The aforementioned finding motivated the researcher to investigate the impact of high-quality ECE centers on preschoolers' social interactions in Nigeria's Kwara State's Isin Local Government Area.

### **2.3. Concept of Early Childhood Education (ECE) and Early Childhood Education Centers (ECEC)**

The main goal of ECE centers in this study is to promote social connection among preschoolers to support all other early development. The goal of this essay is to protect children from social deprivation. As it is a fundamental human need, a youngster who is socially isolated will experience this as a threat to their health. A high level of isolation is therefore seen as a threat and could rob the child of interactions throughout her life, including as an adult. Children who experience social isolation run a higher risk of developing health issues as adults. Studies on social isolation have shown that a lack of social connections has a detrimental effect on how the brain develops (Makinodan et al., 2012). It is asserted that social connection is essential for a child's development. However, a lot of children are unable to engage in or experience social interaction, which is essential for their development and well-being for a variety of reasons. There are several ways in which the lack of social connections might impact a child's development. For instance, prior research has shown that socially isolated children are more likely to experience psychological distress as adults, have poorer educational attainment in maturity, and belong to a less privileged socioeconomic class (Lacey et al., 2014).

### **2.4. Early Childhood Education Centers (ECEC) and Their Qualities**

The creche, kindergarten, and daycare facilities are examples of Early Childhood Education Centers (ECEC). Children between the ages of zero and four are catered for in ECEC facilities. The idea of "quality" in ECE is continuously being thought about by researchers. The judgment of quality takes values into account. Quality ECEC can also be determined by the education and training provided to caregivers on how to handle children with care while keeping in mind their differences. ECE is a result of the way quality is defined and how it is measured. According to Barret (2019), receiving a quality education generally means practicing the ideal behavior in the ideal circumstances and upholding the standard or expected learning that helps students compete worldwide. It might also be seen as a measure of how well students achieve academically. A high-quality education is dependent on the kind of teachers, the way they teach, their level of expertise, the subject matter, and the way they assess what students have learned. Countries with low and lower-middle income levels typically have education standards that are of a minimum quality.

According to him, the size and effectiveness of such measures depend on how developed a nation is; they track, assess, and check the caliber of educational services offered to increase educational accountability. Learners who receive high-quality education can develop the skills necessary to become economically productive, create sustainable means of subsistence, support democratic and peaceful societies, and improve well-being. According to him, learning outcomes must vary depending on the setting, but at the end of the basic education cycle, they must contain thresholds for literacy, numeracy, and life skills, such as awareness and illness prevention. According to Barret (2019), determining high-quality education involves five factors: what learners bring to the learning process, learning environments, material, methods, and outcomes. The following three aspects of learning environments, material, and procedures are associated with what students encounter in classrooms and are thought to be under the control of educational systems (Barret, 2019). The various

components of quality education will be influenced by the overall standards of education. The safety, health, and general well-being of the students may be enhanced by adherence to school infrastructure and environment, for instance, and this may encourage positive interactions between pre-schoolers.

However, if these qualities are not intended, the learning outcomes may be impacted. In general, educational quality encourages the harmonization of educational policies and can enhance each child's pleasant interactions and behavior. How much early childhood programs benefit children depends in large part on their quality. Programs of a high caliber foster children's growth and learning and setting up a top-notch application is neither simple nor automated. Despite their best efforts, many children in the United States and around the world participate in subpar early learning programs. This has led to a need for identifying, defining, and putting into practice the qualities of high quality as a crucial first step in making these programs more accessible to young children. Children naturally learn at their rate, and they learn best when accessible materials are used. Described early childhood education as the care, protection, stimulation, and learning encouraged in children from birth to eight years old in a crèche or nursery. This perspective may help to explain why. It went on to explain that it is the foundation upon which the rest of the educational system is built and that it holds the key to the overall success or failure of the system.

The child's early years serve as a foundation for their primary level of schooling. This means that it serves as the cornerstone upon which all subsequent educational levels are built. The best way to achieve this is to model the Early Childhood Care Development Education (ECCDE) system's ideal performance of its objectives, or what ECCDE's accomplishments are, which include facilitating a seamless transition from home to school, preparing the child for primary-level education, providing sufficient care and security for the children while their parents are at work, instilling social, moral norms and values, and encouraging the child's spirit of inquiry and critical thinking. Through a high-quality early childhood education center, you can help your child learn the fundamentals of math, the alphabet, colors, shapes, and forms as well as cooperation and teamwork. You can also encourage positive habits in them, like good health (ECE). However, the social constructivist theory of learning and behavior is supported by this. He contends that children create their surroundings, and knowledge develops from there. They believe that constructivism is crucial to both teaching and learning.

## **2.5. Concept of Gender and Quality ECEC**

Since so many variables could affect the effectiveness and efficiency of the Centers, the quality of ECEC varies. The subject of gender disparities in children has been the focus of numerous studies. Both males and females engage in similar general activities and social interactions that have elements of flight behavior. Gender inequalities in early childhood education exist in academic achievement and other areas, according to [Mulyahati and Rasiban \(2021\)](#), who also looked at the impact of early childhood care and education in the early grades. As a result, the researcher put forth the notion that variations between boys and girls in early learning are due to differences in academic performance and social influences. Boys and girls learn differently in ECCE or preschool, although no discernible difference can be shown in their accomplishment test results, which can be linked to their ECCE experiences, particularly in the area of interaction. With 160 boys and girls in the early grades, [Kwankwaso \(2019\)](#) did a study to examine the effects of ECCE. The results showed substantial disparities in academic accomplishment and achievement motivation, which suggests that girls may place a higher value on their verbal and cognitive skills.

Academic success and the will to succeed are probably related to a person's early life, including their environment or gender bias. To better understand how toddlers' social interactions are influenced by gender, this study looked at the Isin Local Government Area in Kwara State, Nigeria. Most research has concentrated on the effects of ECCE on academic achievement, but this study also looked at gender and social interaction among preschoolers in addition to ECCE.

## 2.6. Research Hypotheses

The following research hypotheses were postulated for this study:

- (i)  $H_{01}$ : There is no significant influence of quality Early Childhood Education Centers on children's social interaction in the Isin Local government area of Kwara State, Nigeria.
- (ii)  $H_{02}$ : There is no significant difference in children's social interaction based on gender in the Isin Local government area of Kwara State, Nigeria.
- (iii)  $H_{03}$ : There is no significant difference in children's social interaction based on location in the Isin Local government area of Kwara State, Nigeria.

## 3. METHODS

The study used a descriptive survey research approach, which was deemed appropriate given its capacity to determine the impact of high-quality ECE centers on preschoolers' social interactions in the Isin Local Government region of Kwara State, Nigeria. The sample consists of 20 public schools out of 72 schools and 9 private schools out of 33 schools, with a total of 50 respondents (26 men and 24 women, respectively). The targeted population in the Isin local government region of Kwara State, Nigeria, is 25% of the private and public schools. The researcher carefully selects the schools that have ECCDE centers. Data were gathered using two approved study tools. These tools include an observational assessment scale for the impact of high-quality early childhood education centers on preschoolers' social interactions and the quality of such facilities. Two researchers with expertise in educational measurement and evaluation verified the instruments. The reliability coefficient of the instrument was calculated using the test-retest method, and the reliability coefficient index for the two instruments was 0.85 and 0.65, respectively. Descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyze the data collected. The investigation was quantitative, and the conclusions were obtained from what was seen regarding preschoolers' access to high-quality ECE as a factor in social interaction.

## 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 4.1. $H_{01}$ : There is no Significant Difference in Children's Social Interaction in Isin Local Government Area of Kwara State, Nigeria

In the Isin Local Government Area of Kwara State, Nigeria, children's social interactions are significantly influenced by quality early childhood centers, according to **Table 1**'s regression analysis. The findings showed a favorable link between quality early childhood centers and children's social interaction in Kwara State's Isin Local Government Area ( $R = 0.67$ ), with an R-Square of 0.68 indicating that the regression equation was well-fitted. This implies that children's social interactions in the Isin Local Government Area of Kwara State were influenced by quality early childhood centers ( $F(1,49) = 312.74, P 0.05$ ). In light of the outcome and the fact that the significant value is less than 0.05, the hypothesis is consequently rejected. Thus, in the Isin Local Government Area of Kwara State, Nigeria, Quality Early Childhood Center significantly affects children's social interaction.

**Table 1.** Summary of regression analysis showing the significant influence of quality early childhood centers on children's social interaction in Isin local government area of Kwara State, Nigeria.

Variable	Mean	SD	N	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	F	Sig.
Quality ECE	21.72	25.13	50.00	0.67	0.68	0.67	312.74	0.00
Social Interaction	60.32	48.06						

#### 4.2. H<sub>02</sub>: There is no Significant Difference in Children's Social Interaction Based on Gender in the Isin Local Government Area of Kwara State, Nigeria

In Isin Local Government Area of Kwara State, Nigeria, **Table 2** demonstrates the gender differences in the influence of Quality Early Childhood Center on children's Social Interaction. The results showed that there was no difference that was statistically significant ( $t = -0.42$ ;  $df = 49.00$ ;  $P > 0.05$ ). In light of the outcome, the hypothesis was therefore not rejected because the significant value is greater than 0.05. This suggests that the social interaction of female students (Mean= 10.71) is similar to that of male students (Mean= 11.52). This indicates that there is no appreciable gender-based difference in the impact of Quality Early Childhood Center on children's social interaction in Kwara State, Nigeria's Isin Local Government Area.

**Table 2.** Summary of T-test analysis showing the significant difference in children's social interaction based on gender in Isin local government area of Kwara State, Nigeria.

Gender	m	Mean	Std. Deviation	T	df	Sig.	Remark
Female	24.00	10.71	4.31	-0.42	49.00	0.17	Not Significant
Male	26.00	11.52	5.03				

#### 4.3. H<sub>03</sub>: There is No Significant Difference in Children's Social Interaction Based on Location in Isin Local Government Area of Kwara State, Nigeria

Based on location, **Table 3** demonstrates the major differences in how a quality early childhood center affects children's social interaction in the Isin Local Government Area of Kwara State, Nigeria. The results showed that ( $t = 1.11$ ;  $df = 49.00$ ;  $P > 0.05$ ) there was no difference that was statistically significant. In light of the outcome, the hypothesis was therefore not rejected because the significant value is greater than 0.05. This suggests that the social interaction of students in rural areas (Mean= 12.31) is similar to that in metropolitan areas (Mean= 13.05). The impact of Quality Early Childhood Center on children's Social Interaction in Isin Local Government Area of Kwara State, Nigeria is therefore not significantly different based on location.

**Table 3.** Summary of T-test analysis showing the significant difference in children's social interaction based on location in Isin local government area of Kwara State, Nigeria.

Location	m	Mean	Std. Deviation	T	df	Sig.	Remark
Rural	31.00	12.31	4.26	1.11	49.00	0.08	Not Significant
Urban	19.00	13.05	4.58				

The first research hypothesis examined if the standard of ECE centers in Kwara State, Nigeria's Isin Local Government Area, had a substantial impact on children's social interaction. The study's conclusions showed that children's social contact was significantly influenced by the standard of ECE Centers. This result used technique games to assess the interaction between ages one and two-year-old children and found that children appeared to flip a switch. According to [Lacey et al. \(2014\)](#), it has been demonstrated that social isolation has a variety of negative effects on a child's development. For instance, prior research has shown that socially isolated children typically have lower educational performance in adulthood and that adults who belong to a less privileged socioeconomic class are more likely to experience psychological distress. Preschoolers who used high-quality playthings afterward displayed advances in their capacity to engage and consider other people's perspectives. The foundation of ECE programs is the concept of quality and the tool used to measure it. The outcome is therefore consistent with the theory of social constructivism, which asserts that children's learning encourages social behavior and learning ([Vygotsky, 1978](#)). According to him, children shape their environment, and knowledge develops as a result.

Constructivism, in their opinion, is essential to both teaching and learning. The second hypothesis was then examined, and there was no discernible gender difference in the social interaction of children. There are no appreciable differences between men's and women's social interactions and general activities and both sexes exhibit flight-related behaviors. On the other hand, [Kwankwaso \(2019\)](#) conducted a study and looked into the impact of ECCE among 160 young children, both boys and girls in the early grades. The results showed a significant difference in academic achievement, and the motivation for achievement suggested that girls might use their verbal and cognitive abilities inappropriately as compared to boys since girls outperformed boys in verbal abilities. Neither men nor women significantly differ in their everyday activities and social interactions, and both sexes exhibit behaviors associated with flight. The third hypothesis, however, demonstrated that the location of the youngsters did not significantly affect their social interaction. This result is consistent with social-cultural theorizing, which came to the conclusion that young children do in fact point to fascinating events that are related to their interests.

Occasionally, youngsters don't find the equipment or materials intended for them to be engaging, so they search for alternatives. This is why it's crucial to raise children in supportive environments. Additionally, concluded that an individual's location is related to the purpose of their locality. On the other hand, [Amelia et al. \(2019\)](#) concluded that when there are tools to keep children interested, there is no discernible difference between education in rural and urban settings.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

Children's Social Interaction in Isin Local Government Area of Kwara State, Nigeria, has been greatly influenced by Quality Early Childhood Center. The impact of a quality early childhood center on young children's social interaction in the Isin Local Government Area of Kwara State, Nigeria is not significantly different depending on gender. The influence of Quality Early Childhood Center on children's Social Interaction in the Isin Local Government Area of Kwara State, Nigeria is not significantly different depending on location in Isin Local Government Area of Kwara State, Nigeria. In conclusion, a lot of children, especially those who were young, spent the majority of their time playing to burn off energy. Early on, youngsters become restless, but sadly, little to no thought has been given to how to impact play to promote or encourage social interaction among preschoolers. Quality ECE facilities offer children activities to explore new ideas and encourage inquiry, tolerance, curiosity, and



positive interaction. Although academic success has always been a key priority, teachers, parents, caregivers, and other early childhood education stakeholders must comprehend how children develop and learn social norms, skills, and interactions. This will significantly lessen or eliminate not having social advantages. Based on the study's findings, it can be said that preschoolers in the Isin Local Government Area of Kwara State, Nigeria, who attend high-quality ECE centers benefit from the opportunity to express their creativity and communicate with others verbally and nonverbally.

The following recommendations were made based on the study's findings:

- (i) Since the quality of early childhood education centers has a positive influence on preschoolers' social interactions in the Isin local government because they were already familiar with the limited resources available, it is important to make more provisions for quality materials, qualified teachers/caregivers, spacing, structure, and the learning process to improve and increase the numbers of.
- (ii) To assist the government in improving the state of their children's schools through the supply of teaching and learning facilities, the preschool directors should ask the parent organizations of their schools for assistance.
- (iii) To promote high-quality ECE Centers, the federal government should annually host capacity-building workshops for the instructors and caregivers to inform them of the most recent advancements in educational institutions, especially early childhood education.

## 5. AUTHORS' NOTE

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article. The authors confirmed that the paper was free of plagiarism.

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