



Engaged learners approach and acquisition of social skills by preschoolers in public childhood centres in Rivers east Senatorial district of Rivers state, Nigeria

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Abstract

This study examined the effect of engaged learners approach by caregivers on preschoolers' social skills acquisition in public early childhood centres in Rivers East Senatorial District of Rivers State. Quasi-experimental design was employed for the study. Four objectives, four research questions and four null hypotheses guided the study. Population of the study was 2,399 preschoolers; while sample size for the study was 47 preschoolers. Simple random sampling and purposive sampling techniques were used to draw the sample size. Instrument for data collection was the researcher-designed 20 items preschoolers' social skills acquisition checklist titled: "Preschoolers' Social Skills Acquisition Checklist (PSSAC)". The instrument was validated by experts in early childhood and primary education. The test-retest method was employed for obtaining the reliability index score of 0.69, using Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC). Instrument was administered with the help of the caregivers who served as research assistants. The research assistants were trained for three days to get them acquainted with the objectives of the study, the mode of instrument administration and how to retrieve the instrument. The administration exercise lasted for four weeks so as to determine the effect of engaged learners approach on preschoolers' social skills acquisition; as well as determine the difference in acquisition of social skills between preschoolers of experimental and control group. Data collected were analyzed using mean and standard deviation for the research questions, and analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) for testing the null hypotheses. The findings of the study revealed among others that there is a significant difference between engaged learners approach and traditional or conventional teaching method on the acquisition of preschoolers' social skills in public childhood centres in Rivers East Senatorial District of Rivers State. Based on the findings, it was concluded that there is significant impact of engaged learners approach on cooperation, truth, turn-taking, friendliness and interdependence skills among preschoolers in public childhood centres in Rivers East Senatorial District of Rivers State. Some recommendations were also made, among which is that early childhood education centres should ensure that there is an enabling environment for caregivers and preschoolers to employ engaged learners teaching approach that can develop social skills such as friendliness, cooperation, turn-taking, truth saying, among others.

Keywords: Acquisition of social skills, engaged learners approach, preschoolers and public childhood centres.

Introduction

Preschool forms the foundation of childhood education. Preschool is an organized programme for children between the ages of 3-5 years of age where children get their first experience with the objectives of preparing them for primary education. In the preschool centres, children acquire social skills such as cooperation, turn-taking, friendliness, interdependence, trust, respect, obedience, among others. Not only these in preschool, preschoolers also acquire domains like cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains. For the above mentioned social skills and domains to be harnessed properly at the preschools, both conscious and concerted efforts of caregivers and likely other stakeholders are required.

Preschool programme is a programme that is fundamental to the overall development of the child, and critical to shaping the child's life, especially the child's social skills. Social skills are essential in building both personal and professional relationships. Demonstrating strong social skills can help the preschooler accomplish career goals, contribute to life's achievements, perform well during teaching and learning processes and expand in knowledge.

Social skills are life skills and therefore crucial for children to acquire. The acquisition of social skills is an essential developmental process by which children from infancy learn to act and respond appropriately in social interactions, form

and maintain healthy relationships with others (Ogden, 2015) [6]. Socially skilled children often have more positive attitudes toward school, adjust more smoothly to their rules, and have better grades than their less socially skilled peers (Hamre & Pianta, 2001) [4].

For some children, the skills needed for acquisition of social skills develop naturally through the process of interactions with family and the community in which they live. For some other children however, the intervention of caregivers is needed. These caregivers cannot intervene in a vacuum; some strategies should be adopted in teaching social skills to the preschoolers. Among these strategies is engaged learners approach. Using the engaged learners approach for teaching by caregivers will go a long way to develop and imbibe social skills in preschoolers. Engaged learners approach is a teaching strategy that enables the caregiver to organize children in small groups so that they can work together to maximize the learning of others. Particularly, engaged learning approach is to education, the place where children are organized in pair or in small groups to help each other in learning the assigned material (Trowbridge, Bybee & Powell cited in Utong, 2023) [10]. Conventional methods refer to those traditional and routine methods employed often in teaching children at the preschools.

Basically, this study examines the effect of engaged learners approach and preschoolers' acquisition of social skills in

public early childhood centres in Rivers East Senatorial District of Rivers State. The rest of the paper is divided into the following subheadings namely: conceptual clarification, theoretical clarification, empirical literature review, methodology, data presentation and analysis, conclusion and recommendations.

Conceptual Clarifications

Social Skills

Social skills are life skills which one learned and is affected by the characteristics of the context which they develop. Social skills are observable indicators of the larger social competence construct (Zsolna cited in Utong, 2023) ^[10]. Social skills have been differently defined by Masteropieri and Scurgs also cited in Utong (2023) ^[10] as those specific behavioural strategies that allow an individual to initiate and maintain positive interactions with others; develop friendships and support network; as well as cope effectively with the environment. Social skills are the ability to communicate with others. Social skills are essential in building both personal and professional relationships. Good social skills are important for day-to-day living. They help preschoolers navigate social interactions effectively and smoothly.

Social skills gradually evolve through childhood and adolescence (Beauchamp & Anderson, 2010) ^[2]. Children with well-developed social skills may more readily enter into positive relationships with peers, caregivers, parents and siblings, which in turn reinforce their social skills. Conversely, children who act inappropriately or awkwardly towards others may more often experience confrontation or rejection and thus, miss out on positive interpersonal experiences. School related factors, such as the psychosocial classroom environment may have impacts on preschoolers' social skills trajectories. Classrooms characterized by positive relationship between peers likely create contexts more conducive to positive social skills acquisition. Spivak and Farran (2016) ^[8] found that children in preschool classrooms with more positive and cooperative interactions between peers showed greater gains in positive social behaviour in first grade. Isakson, Higgins, Davidson and Cooper cited in Utong (2023) ^[10] reported that child development professionals across disciplines have continued to recognize social skills as important to a child's wellbeing and development, with the area of social competency continuing to gain momentum and public interest. In simple term, social skills are the skills used every day to interact and communicate with others; by understanding both written and implied rules when communicating with others.

Engaged Learners Approach

Engaged learners approach is a way of learning in which learners of different ability levels brought together to work in small groups to achieve a goal. It involves the use of variety of learning activities to improve the understanding of a social skill. To buttress this, Ajala and Eravwoke cited in Utong (2023) ^[10] further defined engaged learners approach as a way of learning in which preschoolers and children of different ability levels are brought to work together in small groups to achieve common objectives and shared goals.

Theoretical Clarifications

This study is anchored on two theories, namely, Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory (1978) and Bandura's social learning theory (1977)

Lev Vygotsky's theory (1917) was interested in how cultural elements which a particular society deems important (for example, customs, beliefs, skills and values) are passed on to new generations. His socio-cultural theory declares that social interactions within the family and with knowledgeable members of the community is the primary means by which children acquire behaviours and cognitive processes relevant to their own society. Adult or peer intervention in this context is thus an essential part of the development process.

Vygotsky claimed that initial development was prompted by the child's immediate social interactions, but that, as learning becomes internalized, there is a shift to the individual level. For Vygotsky, children are apprentices who learn from and alongside those with greater experience. Two particular insights were drawn from Vygotsky's work are important on childcare thus: Vygotsky described the zone of proximal development as the distance between the actual development level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem-solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers.

Part of Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory account for children who appear to lack certain skills when tested, often perform more competently in the presence of someone who has the necessary knowledge. Skills displayed in this social context, but not in an isolated setting, fall within the zone of proximal development (ZPD). This concept underpins the notion of 'scaffolding' in which a more knowledgeable other (MKO) provides support to provide a child's cognitive development. Vygotsky's work also examined the inter-relationship between language development and thinking process. He believed that younger children primarily used speech to think out loud, but then gradually evolved a silent inner speech as they acquired mental concepts and cognitive awareness. According to Vygotsky, inner speech – though derived from oral language, develops as concepts are internalized and is a more condensed version of normal speech used to interact and develop social skills as well as friendliness.

This theory is relevant to this study in the sense that it claimed that initial social development was prompted by the child's immediate social interactions, but that, as learning became internalized; there was a shift to the individual level. This means that children were apprentices who learned from and alongside those with greater experience and who understood their abilities and needs. This is achievable also as children get involved in engaged learners approach.

Bandura's Social Learning Theory (1977)

Albert Bandura's social learning theory explained that "except for elementary reflexes, people are not equipped with inborn repertoires or behaviour", "they must learn them". According to Bandura, new responses pattern can be acquired either by direct experience or by observation. Though Bandura is not rejecting biological views by the above assertion, because he goes on to say that biological factors such as hormones or inherited properties (such as temperament presumably) can affect behaviour. Bandura

however, clearly comes down hard on the side of the environment as the major “cause” of the behaviour we observe. Bandura’s three basic prepositions are as follows:

1. Behaviour that is strengthened by reinforcement;
2. Behaviour that is reinforced on a “partial schedule” should be even stronger or more resistant to extinction than behaviour that is consistently reinforced.
3. Children learn new behaviour largely through modeling.

These three basic prepositions describe the fundamental “rule” for learning any behaviour. These include behaviours that are typically thought of as part of personality. The theory maintains that children are gregarious, shy, aggressive, nurturant, generous, or strong because they have been reinforced for behaving that way.

This theory is relevant to this study as Bandura observed that personality, environment and cognition are important factors in development. Children are exposed to many opportunities in which they may observe the self-evaluation standards of others, one of which is social interaction in the class during the engaged learners approach.

Empirical Literature Review

This study anchors on the following review of empirical studies:

Haq, Khurram and Bangash (2019) ^[5] investigated the outcome of using engaged learners approach on the acquisition of reading skills of Grade-VI students. The study employed pre-test, post-test equivalent group experimental design, with a population that consisted all 6 grade students of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. A sample of 50 students was randomly selected from Government Shaheed Waseem Iqbal High School, Tarkha. Experimental and control groups were formed by equal distribution of students (25 each) on teacher made pre-test scores. In the same groups, low and high achiever students were also identified. While the experimental group was taught using engage learners approach, the control group received routine teaching instructions. For data analysis, t-test for independent samples was used. Data analysis revealed that both groups had almost the same reading competency before the treatment as evidenced by the pre-test scores. However, the experimental group showed better results in reading than the control group on post-test. Based on the findings revealed from the data analysis, it was recommended that teachers need to involve students in reading by conducting meaningful and demanding activities.

Aseri (2018) ^[1] explored the significance of engaged learners approach in the classroom and to determine whether the approach can enhance the metacognitive competencies, core competencies and language competencies among preschool children of Saudi Arabia. The study used the mixed method approach to find how preschoolers and their caregivers (teachers) interact with information and communication technology (ICT) and consequentially to understand how engaged learners approach can be introduced for teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL) to preschool children in Saudi Arabia. Data for the study were collected by conducting (1) English tests with the two groups of children before and after intervention; (2) interviews with the caregivers in the preschool to understand their perception, concerns and attitudes; and (3) observational analysis of the children and

caregivers in the class during the intervention. Findings of the study confirmed the initial conceptual framework but qualitative findings suggest two more aspects which play a role in the effectiveness of using engaged learners approach for teaching EFL to Saudi preschool children. The findings therefore confirm that the use of Engaged Learners Approach (ELA) in the language learning process for the preschool children can enhance their language learning skills. It was recommended that this approach be employed by preschool teachers (caregivers) to teach language skills in preschools.

Orji (2013) ^[7] conducted a study to determine the influence of Engaged Learners Approach on the cognitive development of preschool children in Anambra State. Four research questions and three null hypotheses guided the study. The ex-post-facto research design was used for the study. The study was specifically carried out in Awka Educational Zone of Anambra State. Population of the study was 5,000 preschoolers of 3-5 years old, with a total of 40 preschool children, 20 from private preschools and 20 from public preschools as the sample for the study. Stratified sampling technique was adopted to select two intact groups from the 65 registered 97 preschools, based on school ownership. Two instruments were used for data collection. The first instrument was titled: “Preschool Children Cognitive Development Rating Scale (PCCDRS)” and the second instrument was titled: “Preschool Children Oral Test (PCOT)”. Mean, standard deviation and t-test were used in analyzing the data. The following major findings were made: Engaged Learners Approach influenced language skills acquisition of preschool children when they can speak in sentences of five or more words about toys, recite poems with increasing construction activities and name favourite toys. Engaged Learners Approach influenced social skills acquisition of preschool children through their ability to tell stories about friends, toys construction, sing and dramatize with toy parts, share, take turns and learn concept of fair play. Findings of the study revealed among others that there was significant difference between the mean scores of preschool children in private and public preschools on the use of Engaged Learners Approach for social skills acquisition. There was no significant difference between the mean scores of male and female preschool children on the use of Engaged Learners Approach for problem-solving skills acquisition. Engaged Learners Approach was therefore recommended as one of the best methods of teaching both male and female learners.

Research Questions

The following research questions were asked to guide the study

1. What is the mean difference in the social skills acquisition of preschoolers taught using engaged learners approach instructional strategy and those taught using the conventional methods in public preschools in Rivers East Senatorial District of Rivers State?
2. How does social skills acquisition of preschoolers taught using engaged learners approach instructional strategy differ from those taught using conventional methods with respect to gender in public preschool centres in Rivers East Senatorial District of Rivers State?

3. What is the mean difference in the social skills acquisition of preschoolers taught using engaged learners approach instructional strategy and those taught using conventional method with respect to location in public early childhood centres in Rivers East Senatorial District of Rivers State?
4. What is the interaction effect of engaged learners approach instructional strategy (gender and location) on the socials skills acquisition of preschoolers in public early childhood centres in Rivers East Senatorial District of Rivers State?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were tested to further guide the study at 0.05 level of significance:

Ho₁: There is no significant difference in the social skills acquisition of preschoolers taught using engaged learners approach instructional strategy and those taught using conventional methods in public childhood centres in Rivers East Senatorial District of Rivers State.

Ho₂: Social skills acquisition of preschoolers taught using engaged instructional strategy do not differ significantly from those taught using conventional methods with respect to gender in public childhood centres in Rivers East Senatorial District of Rivers State.

Ho₃: There is no significant mean difference in the social skills acquisition of preschoolers taught using engaged learners approach instructional strategy and those taught using conventional methods with respect to location in public childhood centres in Rivers East Senatorial District of Rivers State.

Ho₄: There is no significant mean difference of the effect of engaged learners approach instruction strategy with respect to gender and location in the social skills acquisition of preschoolers in public childhood centres in Rivers East Senatorial District of Rivers State.

Methodology

Research Design: This study adopted the quasi-experimental design of non-randomized pre-test, post-test design.

Area of the Study: Rivers East Senatorial District of Rivers State

Population of the Study: 2,399 preschool children in the 521 public early childhood care centres in Rivers East Senatorial District.

Sample and Sampling Technique: 47 preschoolers drawn from 2 intact classes of two public early childhood education centres in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers State; chosen using simple random sampling technique, while purposive sampling technique was used to select the intact classes. Out of the two schools chosen, one was used for the experimental group, while the other was used as the control group. The control class consisted of 25 preschoolers exposed to the traditional approach, while 22 preschoolers consisted of the experimental class exposed to the Engaged Learners Approach.

Instrumentation: The researcher-designed checklist titled: “Engaged Learners Approach and Preschoolers Social Skills Acquisition Checklist (ELAPSSAC)” with 20 items and a demographic data that took into consideration the personal data of the respondents, including school centres, among others.

Validation of the Instrument: Validation was done by experts in early childhood education who certified it valid for the study.

Reliability of the Instrument: The test-retest method was used to obtain a reliability index score of 0.69, using Pearson Product Moment Correlation to correlate the two tests conducted on 20 preschoolers from Rivers West Senatorial District within the interval of two weeks.

Administration of the Instrument: The instrument was administered by the researcher and caregivers who were used as the research assistants after being trained for five days on how to administer, score and retrieve the instrument. This was however done after permission was sought from the headteachers.

Duration of Interaction for both the Experimental and Control Group: Six weeks. The experimental group was taught using engaged learners approach, while the control group was taught using the traditional method. After the fourth week of interaction, the post-test was administered to both the experimental and control groups, using observation. Data obtained from the pre-test and post-test were analyzed to determine the effect of Engaged Learners Approach on preschoolers’ social skills acquisition.

Method of Data Analysis: The research questions were answered and analyzed using mean and standard deviation, while the null hypotheses were tested using analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) at 0.05 level of significance.

Results

Research Question One: What is the mean difference in the social skills acquisition of preschoolers taught using engaged learners approach instructional strategy and those taught using the conventional methods in public preschools in Rivers East Senatorial District of Rivers State?

Table 1: Mean and Standard Deviation on the mean difference in social skills acquisition between preschoolers taught using engaged learners approach and those taught using conventional method

Group	N	Pretest		Posttest		Gain	
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
ELA	22	27.27	14.20	61.36	13.20	34.09	13.33
TM	25	29.60	13.69	48.00	12.91	18.40	14.91

Key: ELA= Engaged Learners Approach
TM= Traditional Method

Table 1 shows the mean and standard deviation on the mean difference in social skills development of preschoolers taught using Engaged Learners Approach and those taught using Traditional method in public early childhood centers in Rivers East Senatorial District. The table showed that the preschoolers exposed to Engaged learners Approach had mean gain of 34.09, SD=13.33, while those exposed to Traditional Method had a mean gain of 18.40, SD=14.91.

Research Question Two: How does social skills acquisition of preschoolers taught using engaged learners approach instructional strategy differ from those taught

using conventional methods with respect to gender in public preschool centres in Rivers East Senatorial District of Rivers State?

Table 2: Mean and Standard Deviation on the mean difference in social skills acquisition between preschoolers taught using engaged learners approach and those taught using conventional method with respect to gender

Instructional strategies	Gender	Sample Size	Pre-test \bar{x} SD		Post-test \bar{x} SD		Mean Difference
Engaged learners approach	Male	10	32.45	12.05	51.27	13.25	18.82
	Female	12	32.31	12.44	56.81	17.49	24.50
Traditional method	Male	9	27.57	11.22	46.42	15.99	18.85
	Female	16	28.28	12.13	49.30	21.25	21.02

The results in Table 2 show that the male and female pupils taught using engaged learners approach had pre-test – post-test mean difference of 18.82, 24.50 respectively. While those taught with conventional method had 18.85, 21.02. This observation shows that female preschoolers taught using engaged learners approach perform better than their male counterparts in social skills development. With the conventional method, male preschoolers performed less in

social skills development than their female counterparts.

Research Question Three: What is the mean difference in the social skills acquisition of preschoolers taught using engaged learners approach instructional strategy and those taught using conventional method with respect to location in public early childhood centres in Rivers East Senatorial District of Rivers State?

Table 3: Mean and Standard Deviation on the mean difference in social skills acquisition between preschoolers taught using engaged learners approach and those taught using conventional method with respect to location

Instructional strategies	Location	Sample Size	Pre-test \bar{x} SD		Post-test \bar{x} SD		Mean difference
Engaged learners approach	Urban	14	34.58	12.87	61.16	14.23	26.58
	Semi urban	8	30.00	11.13	47.97	15.52	17.97
Traditional method	Urban	15	33.31	10.17	58.68	14.35	25.37
	Semi urban	10	25.37	11.40	43.02	14.35	17.65

The results in Table 3 show that the preschoolers from urban and semi-urban taught using engaged learners approach had pre-test – post-test mean difference of 26.58, 17.97 respectively. While those taught with conventional method had 25.37, 17.65. This observation shows that preschoolers in urban area taught using engaged learners approach perform better in social skills development than those taught with the conventional method. Moreover, preschoolers in urban area, irrespective of the treatment,

performed better than the preschoolers in semi-urban area in social skills development.

Research Question Four: What is the interaction effect of engaged learners approach instructional strategy (gender and location) on the socials kills acquisition of preschoolers in public early childhood centres in Rivers East Senatorial District of Rivers State?

Table 4: Mean and Standard Deviation on the mean difference in social skills acquisition between preschoolers taught using engaged learners approach and those taught using conventional method with respect to gender and location

Instructional strategies	Gender	Location	Sample Size	Pre-test SSD \bar{x} SD		Post-test SSD \bar{x} SD		Meandifference
Engaged learners approach	Male	Urban	6	35.67	10.48	60.22	11.02	24.55
		Semi-urban	4	30.23	12.95	45.08	11.17	14.85
	Female	Urban	7	34.14	13.93	61.55	15.57	27.41
		Semi-urban	5	29.81	9.96	50.31	18.35	20.5
Traditional method	Male	Urban	6	34.66	8.14	56.83	11.49	22.17
		Semi-urban	4	24.73	11.22	42.27	15.91	17.54
	Female	Urban	9	32.69	11.97	59.54	15.86	26.85
		Semi-urban	6	25.78	11.75	43.52	22.01	17.74
Total	Male	Urban	12	34.94	8.79	59.53	11.44	24.58
		Semi-urban	8	27.80	10.50	49.54	18.37	21.73
	Female	Urban	16	32.02	12.76	62.90	15.75	30.88
		Semi-urban	11	27.45	10.61	48.17	21.85	20.73

The result in Table 4 show that the male urban and semi-urban preschoolers, and female urban and semi-urban preschoolers taught using engaged learners approach had pre-test – post-test mean difference of had pre-test – post-test mean difference of 24.55, 14.85 and 27.41, 20.5. The male urban and semi-urban preschoolers and female urban and semi-urban preschoolers taught using traditional method had pre-test – post-test mean difference of 22.17, 17.54 and 26.85, 17.74. This observation shows that female urban preschoolers taught using engaged learners approach

perform better in social skills development than their male counterparts under the experimental method and the traditional method.

Hypothesis One: There is no significant difference in the social skills acquisition of preschoolers taught using engaged learners approach instructional strategy and those taught using conventional methods in public childhood centres in Rivers East Senatorial District of Rivers State.

Table 5: Summary of Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) on the difference between Engaged Learners Approach and Traditional Method on the development of social skills

Tests of Between-Subjects Effects					
Dependent Variable: POSTTEST1					
Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p-value
Corrected Model	2901.227 ^a	2	1450.613	9.321	.000
Intercept	18578.270	1	18578.270	119.375	.000
PRETEST1	811.381	1	811.381	5.214	.027
GROUP	2300.912	1	2300.912	14.785	.000
Error	6847.710	44	155.630		
Total	148100.000	47			
Corrected Total	9748.936	46			

a. R Squared = .298 (Adjusted R Squared = .266)

Table 5 shows the summary of Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) on the difference between the Engaged Learners Approach and Traditional Method on the development of social skills of preschoolers in public early childhood centers in Rivers East Senatorial District. The result showed that there is a significant difference between the Engaged Learners Approach and Traditional Method on the development of social skills of preschoolers in public early childhood centers in Rivers East Senatorial District

(F1, 44=14.785, p<.05). The null hypothesis was rejected at 0.05 alpha level.

Hypothesis Two: Social skills acquisition of preschooler taught using engaged instructional strategy do not differ significantly from those taught using conventional methods with respect to gender in public childhood centres in Rivers East Senatorial District of Rivers State.

Table 6: Summary of analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) of preschoolers’ post-test score classified by treatment groups and gender with Pre-test as covariate

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Pre- Test	3330.710 ^a	2	1665.355	9.560	.000
Treatment	25867.210	1	25867.210	148.487	.000
Gender	6.420	1	6.420	.037	.849
Treatment * Gender	3330.590	1	3330.590	19.119	.000
Error	7665.035	44	174.205	-	-
Total	135600.000	47	-	-	-
Corrected Total	10995.745	46	-	-	-

In Table 6 the calculated F-ratio for the effect of instructional strategies on the development of social skills of preschoolers with df 1,44 is 148.487 while its corresponding calculated level of significance is .00 alpha level. The F-cal 19.119 is greater than the F-crit 3.09 at .05 alpha, indicating that instructional strategies used had statistically significant effect on the development of social skills of male and female preschoolers. Hence hypothesis two which assumed a no significant difference in the social skills development of preschoolers taught using engaged learners approach

instructional strategy and those taught using conventional method with respect to gender in public early childhood centers in Rivers East Senatorial District is rejected.

Hypothesis Three: There is no significant mean difference in the social skills acquisition of preschoolers taught using engaged learners approach instructional strategy and those taught using conventional methods with respect to location in public childhood centres in Rivers East Senatorial District of Rivers State.

Table 7: Summary of analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) of preschoolers’ post-test score classified by treatment groups and location with Pre-test as covariate

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Pre Test	1249.226 ^a	2	624.613	3.052	.057
Treatment	21774.814	1	21774.814	106.383	.000
Location	308.998	1	308.998	1.510	.226
Treatment * Location	884.671	1	884.671	4.322	.043
Error	9006.093	44	204.684	-	-
Total	160800.000	47	-	-	-
Corrected Total	10255.319	46	-	-	-

In Table 7 the calculated F-ratio for the effect of instructional strategies on development of social skills with df 1,44 is 4.322 while its corresponding calculated level of significance is .981 alpha level. The F-cal 4.322 is greater than the F-crit 3.09 at .05 alpha, indicating that instructional strategies used had a statistically significant effect on preschoolers development of social skills. Hence hypothesis

three which assumed a no significant difference in the social skills development of preschoolers taught using engaged learners approach instructional strategy and those taught using conventional method with respect to location in public early childhood centers in Rivers East Senatorial District is rejected.

Hypothesis Four: There is no significant mean difference of the effect of engaged learners approach instruction strategy with respect to gender and location in the social

skills acquisition of preschoolers in public childhood centres in Rivers East Senatorial District of Rivers State.

Table 8: Summary of analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) of preschoolers' post-test score classified by treatment groups, gender and location with pre-test as covariate

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Treatment	2564.445	2	1282.223	4.098	.019
Gender	137.076	1	137.076	.438	.509
Location	3789.489	1	3789.489	12.110	.001
Treatment *Gender	12.878	2	6.439	.021	.980
Gender* Location	126.627	2	63.314	.202	.817
Treatment *Gender*	90.051	1	90.051	.288	.593
Location	284.099	1	142.059	.454	.636
Error	42244.898	44	312.925	-	-
Total	483837.000	47	-	-	-
Corrected Total	53996.177	46	-	-	-

In Table 8 the calculated F-ratio for the interaction effect of treatment, gender and location on the development of social skills of preschoolers with df 1,44 is .454 while its corresponding calculated level of significance is .636 alpha levels. The F-cal .454 is less than the F-crit 3.09 at .05 alpha, indicating that the interaction effect of treatment, gender and location had no statistical significant effect on the development of social skills of preschoolers. Hence hypothesis four which assumed a no significant effect of engaged learners approach instructional strategy, gender and location in the social skills development of preschoolers in public early childhood centres in Rivers East Senatorial District is retained.

Summary of Findings

The findings of the study revealed that

1. There is a significant difference between engaged learners approach and traditional (conventional) method of teaching on the acquisition of social skills among preschoolers.
2. There is significant difference in the social skills acquisition of preschoolers taught using engaged learners approach instructional strategy and those taught using conventional method with respect to gender in public early childhood centres.
3. There is a significant difference in the social skills acquisition of preschoolers taught using engaged learners approach instructional strategy and those taught using conventional method, with respect to location in public preschool centres.
4. There is no significant effect of engaged learners approach instructional strategy on gender and location on social skills acquisition of preschoolers in public early childhood centres in Rivers East Senatorial District of Rivers State.

Conclusion

Based on the result of the findings of this study, it was concluded that there is sufficient impact of engaged learners approach on the truth, cooperation, taking turns, friendliness and interdependence social skills of preschoolers in public

early childhood centres in Rivers East Senatorial District of Rivers State.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study and conclusion drawn, the following recommendations among others are made:

1. The use of Engaged Learners Approach to improve the acquisition of the social skills acquisition of truth, cooperation, turn taking, friendliness and interdependence should be encouraged in public early childhood centres in Rivers East Senatorial District.
2. Early childhood education centres should ensure that the enabling environment for utilization of Engaged Learners Approach is created for acquisition of the aforementioned social skills in the Senatorial District.

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