

## INFLUENCE OF TEACHERS' SKILLS AND COMPETENCES ON EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION IN ABIA STATE

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### Abstract

This study investigated the influence of teacher's skills and competences on early childhood education in Abia State. Four (4) research questions and four (4) hypotheses (which were formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance) guided the study. The study adopted a survey design. A sample size of 200 teachers were randomly selected out of 1,000 as population of the study. The instrument for data collection was a questionnaire titled "Influence of Teachers' Skills and Competence on Early Childhood Education Questionnaire (ITSCECEQ)" comprising 40 items measured on a 4 – point rating scale of Very Important, Important, Slightly Important and Not Important. The instrument was face validated by experts and educationists and reliability co-efficient of 0.88 was ascertained using Cronbach Alpha while data collected were analyzed using mean and standard deviation; Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) was used to test the relationship. The findings of the study revealed that majority of the respondents were female, had appreciable level of experience, acquired B.Ed/B.Sc in Education certificates from institutions, had specific subject matter knowledge and extensive preparation. The teachers of early childhood possessed appreciable skills and competences (which are keys for effective early childhood education and development); effective communication, social balance, trust,

psychophysical development, character formation, individuality, overall happiness; pedagogic knowledge, socio-emotional personality and learning behaviour of the pupils. There was a positive and significant ( $p < 0.05$ ) effect of the skills and competences of early childhood educators on early childhood education. The study further recommended effective and continuous appraisal process with emphasis on all teacher competence factors such as qualification, professional development and experience.

**Keywords:** Early Childhood, Education, Skills, Competences and Qualification.

### Introduction

Generally, it is accepted that effective education is a pivot to rapid social, economic and political development of any given nation. Hence, it is the only escape route from mediocrity and a sure link for advancing the populace cognitively, affectively and psychomotively (Julkifli, 2016; Ollonen & Kangas, 2024). However, teaching is a reformed strategy of imbibing knowledge from the teacher to the learner for the sake of behavioural

modification as well as skill acquisition. In addition, teaching is a profession that combines a body of information, a system of values, codes of ethics, and a technique to benefit humanity by means of an informed populace. Teaching therefore is deliberated as an honorable field of study and the teachers are viewed as nation builders (Rustiyanti, 2021).

The teacher is a pivot tool in teaching and learning process, as such the level of skills and competences possessed by a teacher has the tendency to improve or mal teaching and learning process, advancing the child's knowledge, skills, abilities and capabilities of achievement in future. The relevance of the teacher in early childhood education and development in Nigeria in any given context cannot be over-emphasized. This is due to the fact that the teacher is a very indispensable personality in any given teaching and learning process (Rustiyanti, 2021). Supporting a child's complete development in the early years of education with emphasis on physical, cerebral, speech-communication and socio-emotional skills are huge task for aspiring teachers. This is due to the fact that any delay or breach in these areas have the tendencies of impacting on their output in later years. Early childhood education environments are highly specialized settings where kids (ages 0–5) can learn about and become proficient with digital technology (Danby, Fler, Davidson & Hatzigianni, 2018; Kewalramani, Palaiologou, Arnott & Dardanou, 2020; Palaiologou, Kewalramani & Dardanou, 2021; Mohamad, Saidin, Amdan, & Janius, 2024)). Early childhood

education is seen as a bedrock of successful start in life, improved sensory experiences, stimulation and language exposure (Aleksandra, 2018). However, early childhood education entails caring for and educating young children. It could be regarded also as a form of extra help rendered to certain children or as a strategy of providing childcare for parents who are working with the mandate of stopping poverty cycle through effective provision of education to the children and influencing the families parenting style (Garcia, 2011; Shafiq, Devercelli & Valerio, 2018; Corcoran, Cheung, Kim & Xie, 2018; Williamson, Hedges, & Jesson,. 2023). Furthermore, evidence suggests that teacher-child interactions have been most consistently and strongly associated with children's development. Children won't benefit from early childhood education if quality isn't given enough attention, which could waste system resources at best and lower cognitive and socio-emotional outcomes at worst (Biersteker, Dawes, Hendricks & Tredoux, 2016; Marope & Kaga, 2015).

It is also a well-known fact that no educational system can rise beyond the quality of its teachers. This emphasizes how important it is for teachers in Abia State to receive proper training and ongoing skill development. Most private schools in Abia State that operate early childhood education like crèche, day care or kindergarten employ teachers below minimum standard in knowledge, care for children, educational experience, required teachers qualification, potent skills and competency for

managing the children; instead of employing and adopting the services of teachers of early childhood education with a multidimensional potentials, interesting facets of consistent knowledge sharing, good communication skills, subject knowledge, teaching skills and attitude (Muzenda, 2014) for effective teaching and coaching of children (Solihin, Iqbal & Muin, 2021).

In Abia State, it is an acceptable fact that teachers' professional requirements and experiences are core components of code of conduct which serve a mirror to help teachers carry out their obligations effectively so as to influence or affect learning results of children (Hafiyusholeh, Lubab, Asyhar, Fanani & Farida, 2020). In the bid of the above, Murti dan Prasetyo (2018), emphasized that competence is an array of knowledge, skills and behaviour that a teacher must showcase, adopt and acquire to carry out his or her professional tasks. No wonder Ritonga, Yulhendri and Nora (2021) pointed out that improved teachers' skills and competencies are required in Abia State education setting. Skills are related to methodological aspects of multi-tasking at work as well as an individual's emotional intelligence (Wang, Chen & Chang, 2020) implying that skills are principally influenced by cognitive capability and intelligence quotient (Mohajan, 2016). Hence, it could be generally said that an individuals' capability to initiate an idea, comprehend, and solve related issues are anchored on skills (Ratnasari & Thiyarara, 2020). Additional skills needed by

educators include subject-matter expertise, pedagogy, skill processes, resourcefulness, behaviour motivation, and assessment.

According to Tobón (2013), competencies are essential behaviours that connect context-specific traits with knowledge of being, coexisting, knowing, and acting. From this angle, it is clear that the term "competences" is polysemic and that the elements that are involved in identifying an educator's competences—knowledge, abilities, attitudes, values, ethics, and vocation, among others—make it even more complex in the context of teacher education. Competence, according to Kulshrestha and Pandey (2013), is a cognitive framework that supports particular behaviours and is typically linked to excellent work performance. Pedagogical skills, knowing the student, monitoring and evaluation of learning and development, school family and society relationships, knowledge of curriculum and content, teamwork, communication, problem solving, and understanding the culture are among the competences listed by Zhu, Wang, Cai and Engels (2013). Professional development is another term for the increase of teacher competency.

Buttressing the above requirements by early childhood teachers, National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) (2020) reviewed that some teachers in most early childhood education centres in Abia State do not possess the required early childhood education professional preparation standards for developing

appropriate practices. Furthermore, NAEYC (2020) listed the following requirements as the detailed description of five major categories of requirements to be possessed by these early childhood educators’:

- i. Establishing a compassionate learning community by applying contextual understanding of learning and child development;
- ii. Establishing mutually beneficial relationships with families and strengthening ties throughout the community;
- iii. Observing, recording, and evaluating the growth and education of children;
- iv. Educating to improve every child's growth and understanding; and
- v. Planning and implementing an engaging curriculum that meets goals that are significant and relevant for children, families, and the community in the present and the future requires an understanding of content areas.

The construct for skills required by teachers of early child education are expected to be multi-directional cutting across interpretation, analysis, evaluation, inference, description, self-discipline, while the construct for competence expected from them include personal characteristics, experience, attitude, knowledge and skills (Murray-Webster and Hillson, 2002; Tran & O’Connor 2023) which create foundation for success on emotional expression, literacy,

regulation, gross motor and effective learning of concepts.

Admittedly, the skills and competences possessed by teachers of early childhood education in Abia State provide avenue for formative assessment processes, influence the process of teaching and learning in early childhood education as such stimulate interest and performance characteristics like gross motor, fine motor, speech-language, cognitive and social-emotional among these children which are basis for measuring the effect of skills and competence of the teachers (Lambriex-Schmitz, Van der Klink, Beusaert, Bijker & Segers, 2020). According to Ummatqul Qizi (2020), early childhood educators’ proficiency and skill levels have a direct and indirect positive impact on the learning activities, motor-related factors, speech-language, cognitive and social-emotional factors of the children.

They also help prepare the children for the business and industry after graduation, which will boost their competitiveness. A competent early childhood educator is one who possesses the required traits or abilities and demonstrates sufficient skills during the teaching process. This individual must also be professionally educated and trained to teach young children. A proficient educator specializing in early childhood education participates in conferences, workshops, and seminars; exhibits enthusiasm for teaching; maintains good classroom management; possesses effective communication skills; and possesses sufficient subject matter knowledge (Aleksandra,

2018). Hence this study is carried out to ascertain the influence of early childhood teachers' skills and competences on early childhood education as well as the qualifications possessed by these teachers in Abia State.

### **Statement of the Problem**

In Abia State, it is a generally accepted fact that teaching and learning which run concurrently not often run efficiently. Sometimes issues relating to school environmental factors, ineffective learning strategies as well as diminishing children's skills and others often emanate. However, the teacher is the focal person faced with the responsibilities of interacting, managing and developing the children, hence a faulty and questionable attribute of the teacher will either mal or decrease learning results of the children.

Evidences abound that the increase in the demand for early childhood education services in Abia State has also necessitated the increased number of early education teachers in the field (Djarot, Tri Kuat, and Sayuti, 2023). It is very disheartening and heart-breaking that irrespective of the funds invested by government of Nigeria through series of education policy making, implementation and in the bid of developing early childhood education there is no corresponding advances in actualizing the aim of early childhood education in Abia State. It is also suspected that most teachers of early childhood education in most schools in Abia State are not competently trained with respect to having scientific and academic knowledge, knowledge of

early childhood developmental period, curriculum, pedagogical, and other methodological techniques that support early childhood education; social competence such as growth of tolerance, respect, and coexistence, handling the moral and ethical principles in early childhood education guidelines, etc as well as being skillful in the areas of encouraging educational practices, encouraging the community to form strategic partnerships and resources to improve early childhood education, being able to recognize the assistance required of kids, utilizing various methods, tools, and procedures for assessment in order to address the requirements of the kids, managing classroom climate and achieving cohesion, organizing and creating appropriate modifications to guarantee fair conditions for every child among other skills to handle these children, provide adequate care and deliver good instructions to these pupils which could lead to proper development.

It is also likely that most teachers in the study area lack the competencies and professionalism in early childhood education, instructional planning and strategies, communication and advocacy and skillful use of technologies to impact knowledge, arrest the various developmental milestones of children which cut across the gross motor, fine motor, speech-language, cognitive and social-emotional. It is against this background, that this study was carried out to ascertain the influence of teachers' skills and competence on early childhood education in Abia State. Specifically, the objectives of the study were to identify the level of

qualifications, various skills, competencies possessed by early childhood teachers and their impact on the children.

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions guided the study:

- i) What are the level/type of qualifications possessed by teachers of early childhood education?
- ii) What are the various skills possessed by teachers on early childhood education?
- iii) What are the various competence possessed by teachers on early childhood education? and
- iv) What are the effect of skills and competencies possessed by these teachers on the early childhood education?

### **Research Hypothesis**

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

- i) There is no significant difference on the effect of the level/type of qualifications possessed by teachers on early childhood education.
- ii) There is no significant difference on the effect of the various skills possessed by teachers on early childhood education.
- iii) There is no significant difference on the effect of the competence

possessed by teachers on early childhood education.

- iv) There is no significant difference on the effect of the skills and competences possessed by teachers on early childhood education.

### **Methodology**

The research adopted a survey design for the study. This design was considered suitable due to the fact that the opinion of a representative sample of respondents was sought using questionnaire. The population consisted of all teachers of early childhood education and head mistresses in Abia State. The size of the population was 1,000 teachers and headmistresses of early childhood education randomly selected from private schools in Abia State from which a sample size of 200 was adopted. The instrument for data collection was a questionnaire titled “Influence of Teachers’ Skills and Competence on Early Childhood Education Questionnaire (ITSCECEQ)” consisting of 40 items measured on a 4 – point rating scale of very important, important, slightly important and not important. The ITSCECEQ was anchored on teacher’s resourcefulness, classroom management, utilization of variety of teaching methods, regular attendance to classroom teaching, evaluation process and utilization of instructional materials. The instrument was face validated by experts and educationists from the Department of Guidance and Counselling Education, Michael Okpara University of Agriculture Umudike. Reliability of the instrument was determined using Cronbach

Alpha and the results showed a reliability coefficient of 0.88. Data on teacher was on qualification(s) (of professionally qualified and non-professionally qualified) and experience (experienced based on at least five years and non-experienced based on less than five (5) years

teaching exposure). Data collected were analyzed using mean and standard deviation while Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) was used to test the relationship. All hypotheses were tested at .05 alpha level of significance.

## RESULTS

**Research Question 1:** What are the level/type of qualifications possessed by teachers of early childhood education?

**Table 1: Socio-Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents**

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
<b>Sex</b>		
Males	90	45.0
Females	110	55.0
<b>Total</b>	200	100.0
<b>Years of Experience</b>		
5-10 Years	13	6.5
11-15 Years	36	18.0
16-20 Years	101	50.5
21-25 Years	24	12.0
26-30 Years	18	9.0
31-35 Years	8	4.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Level of Formal Education</b>		
B.Ed/B.Sc in Education	76	38.0
NCE	24	12.0
PGDE	47	23.5
M.Sc.	24	12.0
Ph.D	29	14.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Early Childhood Care Exposure</b>		
Centre-based care	114	57.0
Family day care services	50	25.0
Outside school hours care services	36	18.0
<b>Level of in-field preparation</b>		
Content Knowledge	86	43.0
Specific Subject Matter Knowledge	114	57.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Level of Pedagogical Studies</b>		
Conventional Pre-service	63	31.5
Extensive Preparation	137	68.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Source of Certification/Licensing</b>		
Certificate from an institution	65	32.5
Certificate from an institution and Teacher Registration Council	135	67.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 1 showed level/type of qualifications possessed by teachers of early childhood education. The results revealed the female gender dominate the gender of teachers in early child

education, and the ages of teachers' ranges from 16-20 with B.Ed/B.Sc in Education holders topping the list of qualification, with Centre-based care as the means of exposure.

**Research Question 2:** What are the extent the teachers possess various constructs of skills on early childhood education?

**Table 2: Mean ratings of respondents on the extent the teachers possess various constructs of skills on early childhood education**

S/ N	ITEMS	Mean	S.D
1	Encouraging educational practices that incorporate all kids	2.96	0.91
2	Encouraging the community to form strategic partnerships and resources to improve early childhood education	3.34	0.81
3	Being able to recognize the assistance required of kids	3.35	0.85
4	Utilizing various methods, tools, and procedures for assessment in order to address the requirements of the kids	3.33	0.87
5	utilizing the assessment as a tool to enhance early childhood education-related instructional activities	3.53	0.79
6	Establishing a cooperative project with instructors of special assistance	3.39	1.09
7	Promoting a culture of early childhood education that is ready to participate	3.48	0.74
8	Organizing and creating appropriate modifications to guarantee fair conditions for every child	3.43	0.96
9	Encouraging all kids to learn collaboratively	3.72	0.62
10	Recognizing and removing obstacles to learning and engagement for every child	3.46	0.80
11	Managing classroom climate and achieving cohesion	3.19	0.99
<b>Total</b>		<b>3.38</b>	<b>0.86</b>

The result in Table 2 showed the mean rating of various skills possessed by teachers on early childhood education. The results revealed that all eleven (11) items were greater than the cut-off

value of 2.50 with a pooled mean of 2.96 - 3.72 indicating that respondents possessed the eleven (11) items as various skills possessed by teachers on early childhood education.

**Research Question 3:** What are the extent the teachers possess various constructs of competence on early childhood education?



**Table 3: Mean scores of various competences possessed by teachers on early childhood education**

S/N	ITEMS	Mean	S.D
<b>Competencies Related to Knowledge (Scientific and Academic)</b>			
12	Recognizing the early childhood developmental period, spanning from birth to age eight, in terms of cognitive, social, emotional, and physical development	3.03	0.99
13	Understanding the ideas and tenets of early childhood education	3.32	0.91
14	Understanding the evolution of early childhood education and the notion of diversity	2.93	0.89
15	Being aware of the curriculum, pedagogical, and other methodological techniques that support early childhood education	3.38	0.87
16	Being aware of children's educational needs	2.89	0.99
17	Understanding the obstacles that prevent kids from participating and learning	3.12	0.94
18	Being aware of the various curriculum flexibility and/or adaptations for kids	3.25	0.76
19	Being able to organize curriculum and instructional activities to support early childhood education	2.96	0.89
20	Possessing enough information to create action research procedures	2.99	0.92
21	Understanding the collaborative model	3.49	0.69
<b>Social Competency</b>			
22	Working ability that is both interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary	3.31	0.98
23	Ability to interact and communicate with members of the children's immediate family	2.93	0.92
24	Ability to interact and communicate with youngsters in an aggressive manner	3.24	0.98
25	Ability to create a cooperative project	2.98	0.89
26	Growth of tolerance, respect, and coexistence	2.88	0.78
27	Handling the moral and ethical principles in early childhood education guidelines	3.29	0.95
28	Ability to listen	2.84	1.02
29	Establish and maintain the practice of deliberate and introspective behavior in their day-to-day interactions with young children and as early childhood professionals.	2.87	0.97
30	leveraging community resources to assist families and young children's learning and development while fostering collaborations across early learning environments, educational institutions, and neighborhood associations and agencies	3.60	0.49
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>3.12</b>	<b>0.89</b>

Table 3 above showed data of the various competencies possessed by teachers on early childhood education. Results showed that items 12 to 30 had mean ratings ranging from 2.84-3.60

which were greater than the cut-off value of 2.50, indicating the acceptance of all the items by the respondents as various competences possessed by teachers on early childhood education.

**Research Question 4:** What are the levels of performance of the pupils taught by the teachers?

**Table 4: Level of Performance of the pupils taught by the teachers**

S/No.	Effect of skills and competencies possessed by these teachers on the early childhood education	Mean	S.D
31	Improves emotional expression of the pupils	3.42	0.78
32	Increases the emotional literacy	3.39	1.05
33	Promotes effective regulation of emotion thereby enabling co-ordination	3.24	0.86
34	Balances crucial roles in translation of early childhood education policy into actions and principles based during teaching-learning	2.98	1.20
35	Play vital roles in the transmission of knowledge such as understanding signs, direction, problem solving, reading comprehension and writing	3.62	0.59
36	Promotes gross motor development and mastery of early childhood subject matter	3.02	1.17
37	Promote mastery of object counting and letter naming	3.12	1.20
38	Facilitate childhood development and educational progression	3.34	1.00
39	Enhances commitment towards teaching-learning process as well as object dominance	3.06	1.10
40	Creates foundation for success on printing awareness, reading comprehension and writing	2.93	1.06
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>3.21</b>	<b>1.00</b>

The data in Table 4 showed the mean scores of the respondents on the effects of various skills and competencies possessed by teachers have on early childhood education. Result revealed that all the items (31-40) had mean scores greater than the cut-

off mean of 2.5, and ranged from 2.93-3.62. The results showed acceptance of all the items as the effects various skills and competencies outlined in Tables 2 and 3 have on early childhood education.

## Test of Hypotheses

**Hypothesis 1: There is no significant relationship between the level/type of qualifications possessed by teachers on early childhood education**

Correlations		Early childhood education	Level/type of qualifications
Early childhood education	Pearson Correlation	1	.964**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	200	200
Level/type of qualifications	Pearson Correlation	.964**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	200	200

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

(\*\* = 5%) denotes significance of coefficient; df = 200,

**Source: Field Survey, 2025 (Version 23 of SPSS computation)**

The Pearson product moment correlation coefficient matrix shows the relationship between the level/type of qualifications possessed by teachers on early childhood education. The level/type of qualifications had p-values of 0.000 which is less than 0.05 alpha level of significance. The result shows that, there is positive and significant relationship between the level/type of

qualifications possessed by teachers on early childhood education. The result revealed that, increase in level/type of qualifications possessed by teachers leads to increase in early childhood education by 0.964. This implies that, 96.4% increase in early childhood education is influenced by level/type of qualifications possessed by teachers, holding other variables constant.

**Hypothesis 2: There is no significant relationship between the various skills possessed by teachers on early childhood education**

Correlations		Early childhood education	Various skills possessed
Early childhood education	Pearson Correlation	1	.731**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	200	200
Various skills possessed	Pearson Correlation	.731**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	200	200

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

(\*\* = 5%) denotes significance of coefficient; df = 200

**Source: Field Survey, 2025 (Version 23 of SPSS computation)**

Table 6 shows the Pearson product moment correlation coefficient result on the relationship between the various skills possessed by teachers on early childhood education. The various skills

possessed by teachers had p-values of 0.000 which is less than 0.05 alpha level of significance. The matrix result revealed that a positive and significant relationship between the various skills

possessed by teachers on early childhood education. The statistical result shown that, a unit increase in various skills possessed by teachers leads to 0.731-unit increase in early childhood

education. This implies that, 73.1% increase in early childhood education is attributed to various skills possessed by teachers holding other variables constant.

**Hypothesis 3: There is no significant relationship between the various competence possessed by teachers on early childhood education**

**Correlations**

		Early childhood education	Various competence possessed
Early childhood education	Pearson Correlation	1	.714**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	200	200
Various competence possessed	Pearson Correlation	.714**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	200	200

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

(\*\* = 5%) denotes significance of coefficient; df = 200

**Source: Field Survey, 2025 (Version 23 of SPSS computation)**

The relationship between the various competence possessed by teachers on early childhood education was analyzed in Table 7 with Pearson moment correlation coefficient model. The statistical coefficient of 0.714 and p-value of 0.000 which is less than 0.05 alpha level of significance was observed from the result. This signifies that, a unit increase in various competence possessed by

teachers leads to 0.714-unit increase in early childhood education. Thus, 71.4% increase in early childhood education is attributed to competence possessed by teachers, holding other variables constant. In effect, there is a significant relationship between various competence possessed by teachers on early childhood education.

**Hypothesis 4: There is no significant effect of the skills and competences possessed by teachers on early childhood education.**

Correlations		SKILLS AND COMPETENCES	EFFECTS ON EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION
SKILLS AND COMPETENCES	Pearson Correlation	1	.485**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.007
	N	200	200
LEVEL OF PERFORMANCE OF THE PUPILS	Pearson Correlation	.485**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.007	
	N	200	200

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Analysis of the null hypothesis using Pearson product moment correlation revealed that teachers' skills and competences have a positive and significant ( $p < 0.05$ ) effect on level of performance

of the pupils. This positive correlation observed means that as teachers' skills and competences increase, effect/impact on early childhood education increase as well.

## Discussion

The findings of this study as presented in Table 1 shows the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents in the study area. The study revealed that majority of the respondents were female, had appreciable level of experience, acquired B.Ed/B.Sc in Education certificate from an institution, had specific subject matter knowledge and extensive preparation. This therefore revealed that teacher's qualification is an indispensable tool and a very significant, positively correlated with learning outcomes in any given subject (Salman, 2009; Ollonen & Kangas, 2024). This observation is in agreement with the findings of Abe and Adu (2013) and Wiki (2013) who revealed that a teaching qualification or teacher qualification has the tendency of making him/her effective both in academics and personal qualities; and have the ability to assist the learners towards attaining high academic performance. Furthermore, this finding is also in agreement with the findings of Cascado and Lezcano (2012) and Imbemon (2014), who

observed that the level of socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents serve as potent cornerstones for the promotion of early childhood education.

The findings of this study as contained in Table 2 shows various skills possessed by teachers on early childhood education. All the items were greater than the cut-off value of 2.50 with a pooled mean of 2.96-3.72 indicating that respondents accepted all the items as various skills possessed by teachers on early childhood education. This finding is in correspondence with the findings of National Association for Education of Young Children (2019), who listed some professional standard skills for early childhood educators.

Further, the findings on various competences possessed by teachers on early childhood

education as shown in Table 3 revealed that each of the items were greater than the cut-off value of 2.50 indicating the acceptance of all the items by the respondents as various competences possessed by teachers on early childhood education. This finding is in conformity with the findings of Urban, Vanderbroeck, Lazzari, Laere and Peeters (2012) in a study titled competence requirements in early childhood education and care: Final Report.

The findings of this study on level of performance of the pupils as contained in Table 4 is in agreement with the findings of Kruszewka (2018), who observed that various skills and competencies possessed by early childhood educators are responsible for successful early child development, effective communication, social balance, trust, psychophysical development, character, individuality and overall happiness. This finding is also in agreement with the findings of Tazitabong (2021), who observed that teachers' skills and competences are potent tools for shaping the pedagogic knowledge, socio-emotional, personality and learning behaviour of the pupils,

Hypothetically, the finding show there was a positive and significant relationship between the level/type of qualifications possessed by teachers on early childhood education. This finding is in agreement with the findings of Manning, Garvis, Fleming and Wong (2017), who analyzed 48 studies and found that higher teacher qualifications are significantly correlated with higher quality in early childhood education and care. It also tallies

with the findings of Astiwi, Siswanto and Suryatama (2024), who observed a significant positive correlation between teacher qualifications and competencies and children's learning outcomes, highlighting the importance of well-qualified educators in early childhood settings in a study in which he examined the influence of teacher qualifications and competencies on children's academic achievement in early childhood education settings. The findings of the study also revealed positive and significant relationship between the various skills possessed by teachers on early childhood education. This is in agreement with the findings of National Association for Education of Young Children (2019) who listed some of the items as pre-requisite competence requirements in early childhood education and care.

Additionally, there is a significant relationship between various competence possessed by teachers on early childhood education. This conforms to the findings of Pinya-Medina, Morcillo-Loro, Ferrer-Ribot and Oliver (2024), who observed a significant relationship between essential professional competencies and effectiveness of early childhood educators. Lastly, there is positive and significant ( $p < 0.05$ ) effect between the skills and competences of early childhood educators on level of performance of the pupils. This finding agrees with the findings of Ugbe and Agim (2009) who observed similar results in their own study.

## **Conclusion**

On the basis of the findings, the following conclusions were drawn:

- a) Majority of the respondents were female, had appreciable level of experience, acquired B.Ed/B.Sc in Education certificate from an institution, had specific subject matter knowledge and extensive preparation.
- b) Majority of the respondents possessed appreciable skills and competences which are keys for effective early childhood education and development, effective communication, social balance, trust, psychophysical development, character, individuality, overall happiness; pedagogic knowledge, socio-emotional, personality and learning behaviour of the pupils,
- c) The skills and competences of experienced teachers of early childhood differ from those possessed by inexperienced as it is very obvious in the level of care, patience, co-ordination and classroom management.
- d) There was a positive and significant ( $p < 0.05$ ) effect between the skills and competences of early childhood educators on early childhood education.

### Recommendations

Based on the results of the study the following recommendations were made:

- a) For the professional growth of teachers, conferences, seminars, workshops, pre and in-service training programmes should be given adequate attention by the Ministry of Education.
- b) Abia State government and various early childhood administrators should ensure that teachers who are competent and skillful are adequately employed in various early childhood education centres.
- c) Abia State government and school administrators should ensure adequate monitoring and supervision of teachers for effective service delivery.
- d) Abia State government and school administrators should endeavour to organize effective and continuous appraisal process with emphasis on all teacher competence factors such as qualification, professional development and experience.

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