

# TEACHERS BACKGROUND AS DETERMINANTS OF PRE-SCHOOL CHILDREN'S WRITING SKILLS IN SOUTHWESTERN NIGERIA

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## Abstract

The study examined teacher background training as determinants of pre-school children's writing skills in Southwestern Nigeria. The study adopted mixed design that consisted of observation and correlational design. A self-designed instrument was used for this study. The population for the study consisted of all the pre-school children and their teachers in Southwestern Nigeria. The sample size for the study consisted of 120 pre-school teachers and 600 pre-school children. The study adopted a multi-stage sampling procedure. Three states were selected from six states in Southwestern Nigeria using simple random sampling technique through a ballot system. The instrument used was "Preschool Children Writing Skill Rubric" (PCWSR). Data for PCWSR was administered by checking children's' note books. The data were analysed using Independent Sample T-test. Results indicated that teacher background training significantly influenced preschool children's writing skills ( $df = 598$ ;  $t = 11.476$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ). The study concluded that teachers' training background was found to be the factor that could influence the writing skills of preschool children.

**Keywords:** Teacher's Background, Pre-School Children, Writing Skills.

## INTRODUCTION

It is impossible to exaggerate the importance of teachers in a child's development since they foster an environment of emotional support and act as learning architects. Teachers are critical components of every educational business and teachers' quality determine the system's effectiveness. A good teacher is necessary for an excellent education to exist. Odewumi, Ajibewa, and Ajibade (2015) assert that teachers determine educational quality since it affects students' overall growth.

There is ample evidence that teachers are the single most critical factor in determining how a school will be for children. For instance the teachers are to prepare children for examinations and motivating them to enhance their social, personal, and professional skills to the best of their abilities (Machin & Richardson (2015). In addition, the teacher is crucial to a preschool child's writing skills. Many teachers have traditionally been regarded as noble human beings and as children's second parents.

Since pre-schoolers spend the majority of their time in school being watched, teachers typically have an impact on them. As a result, teachers are in a position to aid learners in comprehending what is being taught. Teachers classify efforts to develop learners' writing as both a social and

meaningful activity and a technical skill. As a result, researching teacher background that can influence preschool children's writing skills is crucial if teachers are to help children understand what is being taught, particularly in writing. Teacher background training refers to the type of pre-service education teachers had, whether in early childhood education or not.

According to observations, some preschool teachers are not early childhood professionals, and some are even high school dropouts; this means that trainers who are to help pre-schoolers develop their writing skills are not early childhood educators if they lack the requisite experience; they may have little or no knowledge of how to direct and introduce basic pre-writing activities to help the children write legibly but lack of professional experience (Gündomuş 2018).

When teaching preschool classes, a lack of professional experience, especially among preschool teachers, may lead to stress and tension. The level of experience of the teachers is based on their education and preceding work history. It will take some time for new teachers to become very well adapted to their students. Teachers may only design acceptable activities if they have received the necessary training.

In order to make sure that all children receive adequate help, Gunilla and Norling (2018) claimed that qualified knowledge about the development of writing skills, as well as how obstacles might be avoided, is crucial. This explains why the teacher is so important in helping preschool children in developing their writing skills.

Previous research has found a correlation between a teacher's background and a student's academic achievement. For instance, Khalid, Yasmin and Azeem (2011) found that teachers' backgrounds and behaviours are significant elements that predict students' academic success. However, there is a dearth of research particularly in Nigeria on the impact of teachers' training backgrounds on preschool children's writing skills. As a result, this study offers the much-needed empirical information on the influence of teachers' backgrounds on preschool children's writing skills.

### **Research Question**

To what extent does teacher's background affect the writing skills of preschool children?

### **Hypothesis**

Teacher background has no significant influence on preschool children's writing skills.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The study adopted mixed design that consisted of observation and correlational design. The populations for this study consist of all the preschool children and their teachers in the Southwestern States of Nigeria. Three states were used in this study. They are Oyo, Ondo, and Ekiti States. The sample size for the study consists of 120 preschool teachers and 600 preschool children. 40 teachers and 200 hundred preschool children were selected for the study in each State. The study adopts a multi-stage sampling procedure.

Three States were selected from six States in Southwestern Nigeria using a simple random sampling technique through a ballot system. The instrument used was a self-designed tagged Preschool Children's Writing Skill Rubric (PCWSR).

It covered the preschoolers' writing skills. It contained 11 items that sought information on preschool children's writing skills. Data was subjected to a reliability test using intraclass correlation. The coefficient and reliability index yielded 0.80. Data was analysed using The Independent Sample T-test.

## RESULT

**Research Question:** To what extent do professional early childhood teachers affect the writing skills of preschool children?

**Table 1**

Profile of children based on background training of their teachers		
Background Training	Frequency	Per cent
Early Childhood	135	22.5
Non-Early Childhood	465	77.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>600</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Table 1 shows the children's profiles based on the background training of their teachers. The table shows that only 135 (22.5%) of the children were taught by teachers with background training in early childhood education. In contrast, a more significant percentage of them (465, or 77.5%) were taught by teachers with background training in other fields.

## Hypothesis

Teacher background has no significant influence on preschool children's writing skills. In testing this hypothesis, the data collected was subjected to the inferential statistic of an Independent Sample T-test.

**Table 2**

Summary of independent sample t-test showing influence of teacher training background on pre-school children’s writing skills.							
Test Variable	Grouping Variable (Background Training)	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Df	t	Sig.
Pre-school Children’s Writing Skill	Early Childhood Education	135	30.87	5.25	598	11.476	.000*
	Non-Early Childhood Education	465	24.78	5.48			
* Significant at 0.05 level							

Table 2 shows the influence of teacher background training on preschool children's writing skills. The table shows that the overall mean score for writing skills of the children taught by teachers with background training in early childhood education is 30.87, while that of the children taught by teachers with background training in non-early childhood education fields is 24.78. The mean scores reveal a difference of 6.09 in favour of the children taught by teachers with background training in early childhood education.

It means that the children taught by teachers with background training in early childhood education had better writing skills than those taught by teachers with background training in non-early childhood education fields. The table reveals that the mean difference reached a statistically significant level ( $p = 0.00$ ). Therefore, teacher background training significantly influenced preschool children's writing skills ( $df = 598$ ;  $t = 11.476$ ;  $p 0.05$ ). Hence, the null hypothesis 1 was rejected while the alternate hypothesis was accepted: there is a significant influence of teacher background training on preschool children's writing skills.

## DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

In testing the hypothesis, which states that there is no significant influence of teacher background training on preschool children's writing skills, the result revealed a significant influence of teacher training background on preschool children's writing skills. The result revealed that the overall mean score for writing skills of the children taught by teachers who had training background in early childhood education is 30.87, while that of the children taught by teachers with a training background in non-early childhood education fields is 24.78.

This study is consistent with Khalid et al. (2011), who found that the impact of teachers' backgrounds and behaviours on student learning are both significant elements that predict students' academic success. This outcome is also consistent with Kishwar's (2016) assertion that outstanding teachers not only help students feel good about learning and studying, but that their efforts also lead to greater student achievement. Also the study is in line with the socio-cultural theory of Vygotsky, (1978) which state that children's planning and problem-solving skills increase more when their partner is either an "expert" peer or an adult. The sociocultural theory believes that children's experiences, knowledge, and learning are influenced by their social interactions; this suggests that, from a sociocultural standpoint, the interactions that teachers provide during the writing skill processes are crucial to the development of children's writing skills. It could be why the children taught by teachers with background training in early childhood education have better writing skills than those taught by teachers in fields other than early childhood education, because the teachers might have been exposed to some training that could assist the children in their classroom.

In sociocultural theory, proximal processes like writing with adults and peers can be called development engines (Bronfenbrenner and Morris, 2007). Therefore, sociocultural theory supports teachers in guiding children and allowing them to interact with a range of pre-writing materials in the classroom so that they might produce legible writing as a result of the numerous activities they are exposed to.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

According to the study's conclusions, the following conclusions are drawn: The teachers' background training significantly and positively influences preschool children's writing skills. Children who are taught by teachers with background training in early childhood education have better writing skills than their counterparts taught by teachers without background training in early childhood education fields.

The study, therefore, has some recommendations for school stakeholders and preschool teachers.

1. The government and private school owners should make sure that they employ qualified teachers that can handle the teaching of preschool children and ensure that the classrooms are equipped with necessary prewriting materials that can enhance the development of preschool children's writing skills.
2. The SUBEB in the states should organize special workshops and short courses on writing skills for preschool teachers.
3. Training and retraining programs on writing skills for preschool teachers are needed to keep them in touch with effective teaching strategies that could enhance the writing skills of preschoolers.

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