

PLAY FACILITIES AS PREDICTORS OF PRE- READING SKILLS ACQUISITION AMONG PRESCHOOLERS IN CHANCHAGA LOCAL GOVERNMENT EDUCATION AREA OF NIGER STATE

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Abstract

The study investigated play facilities as predictor of pre-reading skills acquisition among preschoolers in Chanchaga Local Government Area of Niger State. Two research questions and two null hypotheses guided the study. The study adopted a correlation survey research design. The population of the study is 4087 preschoolers in the 29 early child care centers in all the public primary schools in Chanchaga Local Government Area of Niger state. A sample of 356 preschoolers were used for the study. Play Facilities Questionnaire (PFQ) and Pre-reading Skills Acquisition Rating Scale (PSARS) were used for data collection. The two sets of instrument were face-validated by three experts from Faculty of Education, University of Nigeria, Nsukka. Internal consistency reliability through Cronbach alpha gave a reliability coefficient for pre-reading rating scale as 0.886. The internal consistency reliability coefficients for the clusters of C and D are given as 0.81 and 0.74 respectively in pre-reading skills. Linear regression was used in answering the research question while t-test associated with linear regression was used in testing the formulated hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The finding showed that play facilities have a high predictive power on the acquisition of phonological awareness skills among preschoolers in Chanchaga Local Government Education Area. The finding showed that play facilities have a significant predictive power on the phonological awareness skills acquisition among preschoolers in Chanchaga Local Government Education Area. It was also shown that play facilities have a high predictive power on the acquisition of vocabulary skills among preschoolers in Chanchaga Local Government Education Area. Lastly it was found out that play facilities have a significant predictive power on vocabulary skills acquisition among preschoolers in Chanchaga Local Government Education Area. Based on the findings and conclusion, the following recommendations were made, that school authorities should provide audio-visual materials with phonological contents in order to help preschoolers acquire phonological awareness skills. Cartoons with word match and pronunciation content should be constantly used in the teaching of vocabularies in the preschools, for the acquisition of vocabulary skills.

Keywords: Play Facilities, Pre-schoolers, Pre reading skills, Phonological awareness, Vocabulary Skills Acquisition

Introduction

Phonological awareness is the ability to recognize and manipulate sounds in spoken language (Collins 2023). This foundational skill is essential for learning to read, as it supports the understanding of the relationship between sounds and letters children are better equipped to begin writing after being able to break down words into their component sounds, making it easier to represent those sounds with letters. Phonemic awareness involves recognizing and manipulating individual sounds in spoken language. Collins (2023) assert that preschooler can

be engaged in various phonemic awareness Activities, rhyming games, sound blending exercises, and identifying the beginning and ending sounds in words.

Phonological awareness is a critical early reading skill that involves the ability to recognize and manipulate the sounds of spoken language, such as syllables, rhymes, and individual phonemes (the smallest units of sound). According to Ehri (2023) it plays a foundational role in a preschooler's ability to learn to read and write in the school. Phonological awareness is one of the strongest predictors of future reading success for pupils, it also enables children to understand the relationship between sounds and letters, which is essential for decoding words during reading. Nicholas. and Rouse (2021) emphasize that by developing phonological awareness, children learn to recognize that words are made up of a series of sounds. This skill helps them in sounding out words and in recognizing familiar words more quickly when they begin reading.

As children play with sounds and words, they develop a deeper understanding of language, which in turn supports their vocabulary growth. Nicholas and Rouse observed that this expanded vocabulary is crucial for reading comprehension and overall language acquisition. Phonological awareness is also important for spelling. Understanding how sounds correspond to letters, allows children to spell words phonetically, even before they have mastered conventional spelling. Ehri (2023) point out that Preschoolers with strong phonological awareness are better equipped to begin writing because they can break down words into their component sounds, making it easier to represent those sounds with letters that will build a robust vocabulary, so that children can understand and use a wide range of words.

Vocabulary Skill Acquisition and Pre-reading skill acquisition also involves the expansion of vocabulary and the development of oral language skills. According to Albuquerque and Martins (2022) children with a broader vocabulary and better oral language skills, are more prepared to understand and engage with texts, when they begin formal reading instruction. These skills form the basis for reading comprehension and overall literacy. Building a strong vocabulary is essential for comprehension and communication. According to Albuquerque and Martins (2022) this exposes preschoolers to a diverse range of words through storytelling, discussions, and interactive word games. Vocabulary skill acquisition plays a crucial role in the development of preschoolers and significantly impacts their future reading abilities and overall academic success. Vocabulary skill acquisition in preschoolers lays the groundwork for reading comprehension. According to Throne (2020) a rich vocabulary allows children to make sense of the words they encounter in texts, leading to better understanding and retention of information.

Early development of vocabulary is crucial as it enables smoother transitions into more complex reading tasks during elementary school years. Vocabulary acquisition also enhances oral language skills, which are integral to effective communication. Preschoolers with a robust vocabulary can express themselves more clearly and participate more actively in conversations, which fosters their social and emotional development. The process of learning new words, helps children develop cognitive abilities, such as memory, problem-solving, and critical thinking (Albuquerque & Martins 2022). When children acquire new vocabulary, they not only learn new words but also enhance their ability to categorize, label, and organize their thoughts and experiences. A rich vocabulary enables preschoolers to engage more effectively in social interactions, allowing them to express their needs, thoughts, and emotions more precisely.

Earlier writers posit that vocabulary skill is essential for building relationships and succeeding in social settings, such as school environments. Vocabulary acquisition is not only vital for reading but also for writing. As preschoolers learn new words, they begin to use them in their early writing attempt which helps them develop their ability to communicate through written language. According to Albuquerque and Martins (2022), this early exposure to writing reinforces their understanding of how language works, recognizing letters, knowing their names, and understanding that letters represent sounds in spoken words. Children who can recognize letters and associate them with their corresponding sounds are better equipped to learn how to read. Recognizing and naming letters are key early literacy skills.

Statement of the Problem

The acquisition of pre-reading skills among preschoolers is essential for their future literacy and academic success. However, several challenges have hindered this development. Perhaps many preschoolers do not have access to a rich language environment, which consists of stories, books, and talks that encourage vocabulary development. Their capacity to acquire crucial pre-reading abilities like vocabulary and comprehension may be hampered by this restricted exposure.

Purpose of the Study

The general purpose of this study is to investigate play facilities as predictors of pre reading skills acquisition among preschoolers in Chanchaga Local Government Education Area in Niger State, specific purposes, of this study are to determine the:

1. predictive power of play facilities on phonological awareness (skills acquisition) among preschoolers in Chanchaga Local Government Education Area, Niger State.
2. predictive power of play facilities on vocabulary skills acquisition among preschoolers in Chanchaga Local Government Education Area, Niger State.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study.

1. What is the predictive power of play facilities on phonological awareness (skills acquisition) among preschoolers in Chanchaga Local Government Education Area, Niger State.?
2. What is the predictive power of play facilities on vocabulary skills acquisition among preschoolers in Chanchaga Local Government Education Area, Niger State.?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses guided the study and were tested at 0.05 level of significance.

H₀₁: Play facilities has no significant predictive power on the phonological awareness (skills acquisition) among preschoolers in Chanchaga Local Government Education Area, Niger State.

H₀₂: Play facilities has no significant predictive power on vocabulary skills acquisition among preschoolers in Chanchaga Local Government Education Area, Niger State.

Methodology

The study adopted a correlation survey research design. The design seeks to establish the relationships between play facilities and phonological awareness as well as vocabulary skills. The population of the study is 4,087 preschoolers in the 29 early child care centers in all the public primary schools in Chanchaga local government area of Niger state. A sample of 356 preschoolers was used for the study. The sample size was ascertained using Krejcie and Morgan sample table. Through the multi stage sampling technique to determine the sample size. Two self -designed instruments were used for the purpose of data collection. The instruments are Play Facilities checklist (PFQ) and Pre-reading Skills Acquisition Rating Scale (PSARS)”. The instruments were face validated by three experts, two from the Department of Early Childhood and Primary Education and one from Measurement and Evaluation Unit, Department of Science Education all from Faculty of Education University of Nigeria, Nsukka. Cronbach Alpha statistics was used to determine the internal consistency reliability coefficient of play facilities to be 0.18. The reliability coefficient for pre-reading rating scale is 0.89. The internal consistency reliability coefficients for the clusters of C and D are given as 0.81 and 0.74. Linear regression analysis was used in answering the research questions, while t-test associated with linear regression was used in testing the formulated hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance.

Analysis and Discussion of Finding

Research question 1: What is the predictive power of play facilities on phonological awareness (skills acquisition) among preschoolers in Chanchaga Local Government Education Area, Niger State?

Table 1

Linear regression analysis of the predictive power of play facilities on print phonological awareness skill acquisition among preschoolers

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.831 ^a	.691	.690	2.80154

Data table1 shows that the regression and regression square coefficients are 0.831 and 0.691 respectively. The regression square coefficient value of 69.1% showed that play facilities, to a high extent, has a predictive power on phonological awareness skill acquisition among preschoolers in Chanchaga Local Government Education Area, Niger State.

H₀₁: Play facilities has no significant predictive power on the phonological awareness (skills acquisition) among preschoolers in Chanchaga Local Government Education Area, Niger State.

Table 2

t-test associated with linear regression analysis of the predictive power of play facilities on print phonological awareness skill acquisition among preschoolers

Model		Un standardized		Standardized		
		Coefficients		Coefficiens		
		B	Std. Error	Beta	T	Sig.
1	(Constant)	3.701	1.117		3.314	.001
	Play facilities	.880	.031	.831	28.033	.000

Data in table 2 shows that the t-test value associated with linear regression is given as 28.033. The hypothesis is rejected because the significant value of 0.000 is less than the alpha value of 0.05. Therefore, it is accepted that play facilities have a significant predictive power on the acquisition of print phonological awareness (skills) among preschoolers in Chanchaga Local Government Education Area, Niger State.

Research question 3: What is the predictive power of play facilities on vocabulary skills acquisition among preschoolers in Chanchaga Local Government Education Area, Niger State?

Table 3

Linear regression analysis of the predictive power of play facilities on print vocabulary skill acquisition among preschoolers

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.800 ^a	.640	.603	6.08205

Data in table 3 shows that the regression and regression square coefficients are 0.800 and 0.640 respectively. The regression square coefficient value of 64.0% showed that play facilities, to a high extent has a predictive power on print vocabulary skill acquisition among preschoolers in Chanchaga Local Government Education Area, Niger State.

H₀₃: play facilities has no significant predictive power on vocabulary skills acquisition among preschoolers in Chanchaga Local Government Education Area, Niger State.

Table 4

t-test associated with linear regression analysis of the predictive power of play facilities on print vocabulary skill acquisition among preschoolers

Model		Un standardized		Standardized	T	Sig.
		Coefficients		Coefficients		
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	34.029	2.424		14.036	.000
	Play facilities application	.700	.068	.800	2.006	.005

Data in table 4 shows that the t-test value associated with linear regression is given as 2.006. The hypothesis is rejected because the significant value of 0.000 is less than the alpha value of 0.05. Therefore, play facilities has a significant predictive power on the acquisition of print vocabulary skills among preschoolers in Chanchaga Local Government Education Area, Niger State.

Discussion of Findings

It was revealed that play facilities have a significant predictive power on the phonological awareness skills among preschoolers in Chanchaga Local Government Education Authority, Niger State. The phonological awareness skills can be developed through instructional aides such as play facilities in the preschools. This is because play facilities will enable the preschoolers experience firsthand information on the ways and manner in the pronunciation of words as they engage in reading skills development. The finding of this study agrees with that of Heidecker (2021) which indicated that play-based learning was indeed an effective method for enhancing phonemic awareness and phonics skills in kindergarten students. In a similar situation, the finding of this study corroborated that of Tipan (2023) which revealed that phonemic awareness was achieved through the implementation of play-based learning activities. More so, -Ofiara (2015) indicated that two out of three students showed improvement in phonemes per minute through activities.

The finding shows that play facilities has a high predictive power on the acquisition of vocabulary skills among preschoolers in Chanchaga Local Government Education Area, Niger State. The result of the study is expected because preschoolers learn most by imitation, observation and modeling their peers and elders in a social setting. This social setting could have provides them with hands-on experience needed for observed vocabularies as well practices as to improve them in language speaking. The finding of this study is in agreement with that of McLeod, Hardy, and Ann (2017) who revealed that play-based intervention is effective in the vocabulary acquisition of preschoolers. The finding of this study buttressed that of Wang, Swanson, and Vaughn (2023) who revealed that play instruction improves vocabulary growth and content comprehension, among preschoolers.

1. The findings shows that play facilities has a high predictive power on the acquisition of phonological awareness skills among preschoolers in Chanchaga Local Government Education Area. The hypothesis showed that play facilities has a significant predictive power on the phonological awareness (skills acquisition) among preschoolers in Chanchaga Local Government Education Area, Niger State.

2. The finding shows that play facilities has a high predictive power on the acquisition of vocabulary skills among preschoolers in Chanchaga Local Government Education Authority. The hypothesis showed that play facilities has a significant predictive power on vocabulary skills acquisition among preschoolers in Chanchaga Local Government Education Area, Niger State.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, the researcher concluded that play facilities truly predict the promotion of preschoolers pre-reading skills in Chanchaga Local Government Education Area of Niger State. Seeing that play facilities predicted pre-reading skills acquisition among preschoolers, teachers are encourage to properly use play facilities in the classroom learning situation. This supports the policy of the government that skill should be used in teaching preschoolers.

Recommendations

1. The school authorities should provide audio-visual materials with phonological content in order to help preschoolers acquire phonological awareness skills.
2. Cartoons with word match and pronunciation contents should be constantly used in the teaching of vocabularies in the preschools, for the acquisition of vocabulary skills by the pupils.

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