



Cognizance Of Early Childhood Education Among Educators In Preschools

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Abstract

The period from birth to eight years of age is defined as Early childhood. Early child development encompasses physical, socio-emotional, cognitive and motor development between 0-8 years of age. The early years are critical, because this is the period in life when the brain develops most rapidly and has a high capacity for change, and the foundation is laid for health and wellbeing throughout life. Nurturing care is provided in a stable environment, that is sensitive to children's health and nutritional needs, with protection from threats, opportunities for early learning, and interactions that are responsive, emotionally supportive and developmentally stimulating is at the heart of children's potential to develop.

Children who get early childhood education (ECE) have a strong foundation, which increases the effectiveness and productivity of every subsequent educational stage. The goal of the current study was to determine the pre-primary teachers' level of awareness regarding early childhood education. To determine the level of knowledge of early childhood education (ECE) among educators in preschools in Shivamogga city, the study used a survey approach and a custom application. A sample of 110 teachers were drawn through cluster sampling. The study found out that the demographic variables like locality, marital status and teaching experience have no influence on the awareness of ECE among pre-primary teachers. The study found that 11% of teachers have average awareness, 32% have good awareness, 38% have very good awareness and 23% have excellent awareness of ECE. Thus, close to 90% of them are found to have better awareness of ECE. This implies that pre primary teachers are well aware of the nature, learning needs etc. of children and also methodology of teaching and evaluation. In spite of better awareness of ECE found in teachers, the study comes out with few of educational implications in order to regulate and sustain the awareness of ECE among the educators few educational implications inculcated in proper handling of children.

Keywords: Early Childhood Education (ECE), Pre-Primary School Children, Cognizance of ECE, Preschool Teachers

Introduction

It is important to realize that children's learning affects the future of society as well as children's individual lives. The welfare of a society depends on it using all facilities to raise and develop healthy children for whom society is responsible. Children recognizing and using their rights is important for society because protecting and developing children's personalities and abilities requires protecting the rights of the child in all environments, especially at home and school. Therefore, children need to be aware of their responsibilities and their rights as citizens, which only happens when children know their rights as stated in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).

Early child development encompasses physical, socio-emotional, cognitive and motor development between 0-8 years of age. The early years are critical, because this is the period in life when the brain develops most rapidly and has a high capacity for change, and the foundation is laid for health and wellbeing throughout life. Nurturing care is provided in a stable environment, that is sensitive to children's health and nutritional needs, with protection from threats, opportunities for early learning, and interactions that are responsive, emotionally supportive and developmentally stimulating is at the heart of children's potential to develop. Research and experience have repeatedly demonstrated that early childhood development programmes and opportunities for early learning improve child outcomes during subsequent schooling. Coordination across preschools and primary schools promotes smooth transitions, enables children to build on their preschool skills, and facilitates a coordinated, sequential strategy for promoting early learning, which provides support for children across the life course.

Early Childhood Education

Early childhood refers to the period between birth and 8 years of age, wherein a child's brain is highly sensitive to the environment around them. This time of "remarkable growth" requires a specialized educational approach to ensure that children learn key skills and foundational concepts to prepare them for later life.

Early childhood education is focused on the critical developmental milestones, skills, and concepts that children attain during this period of their lives, from social-emotional skills to the beginnings of numeracy, literacy, and critical thinking. In addition to preparing children for future academic success, the development of high-quality early childhood care and education is considered by the OECD to be a key economic indicator when assessing the health and future positioning of a nation. Furthermore, UNESCO supports high-quality early childhood education as one of its sustainable development goals. This foundational aspect of education directly contributes to better lives for children, which resounds through national improvements to prosperity, social inclusion, and economic development.

Need and Importance of the Study

- Early childhood is a period of life not just quantitatively different from that of an adult but also qualitatively different. 0-6 years in a child's life are formative years for his/her development. Development research consistently links higher quality child care with a child's wellbeing, developing skills and subsequently adjustment in life. It claims that the first six years after the birth

of a child is the period of optimum growth in the child's life. It is also stressed that neglect of children in these years of life impairs their learning capacity even when the conventional intelligence is within normal range. The adverse effect may last throughout life and cannot be changed by subsequent remedial measures (Montessori).

- The domains of young children's development revolve around physical, motor, emotional, psycho-social and cognitive/intellectual areas.
- ECCE programmes organized in good preschools provide the best chance of permanently enhancing children's cognitive skills, social attitudes, behavior and personality. Activities given at home, and in the immediate environment enables the children's sensory development which in turn organize the pathway for neurons in the brain during 0-6 years.
- In the area of motor development, children master the skills of walking, running and balancing, etc., by the age of three. And by the age of four, five and six, they are genuinely accomplished to face increased physical challenges, eye-hand co-ordination, fine-muscular co-ordination and large muscular co-ordination are at an accelerated speed.
- Preschool age is the crucial stage of emotional development too. A child learns to control and express his/ her emotions in an acceptable manner.
- "Every child deserves access to quality early childhood education," says UNESCO. Parents, teachers, and other caregivers must provide a child with the loving attention they require in order for them to thrive and grow up to be a happy adult. As a result, a child's educational journey starts with a top-notch pre-primary education, as the outcome of this education determines the direction of all other educational levels. A diploma in early childhood education is a must for pre-primary teachers, but they also need to have other attributes including creativity, patience, classroom management, communication skills, and the required educational background to thrive in their responsibilities. Their main duty is to provide a safe and secure learning environment so the children may experiment, learn new things, and encounter new things when they're not at home.

Review of Related Literature

Amosun and Bankole (2018) found that, reading skills provide a solid foundation for children's academic success. The findings revealed a significant relationship between teachers' awareness, content knowledge and the level of children's emergent literacy respectively, but there was no significant relationship between teachers' pedagogical skills and the level of children's emergent literacy in Ibadan metropolis.

As Santrock (2005 as cited in Enti 2008) explains, there are five sequential periods in a child's development: There is the prenatal period, followed by infancy and toddlerhood, early childhood, middle childhood, late childhood, and adolescence. The prenatal period spans the time from conception to birth, while infancy and toddlerhood spans the period from birth to about three years of age. Brain growth to its peak also occurs in three distinct spurts: from eight weeks after conception through to the thirteenth week; from ten weeks before birth until age two; and between conception and age five which constitute the critical years of the child's development (Wenger & Poe, 1995). This growth period therefore presents an invaluable window of opportunity through which children can be properly prepared to give them an unparalleled early

advantage in life. This suggests that the study of child development can be tackled from any of these stages. Because children's brains can be significantly modified through training and conditioning, parents and teachers can intervene dramatically in children's intellectual growth and development by regulating nutrition, stimulation and other environmental factors (Wenger & Poe, 1996).

There isn't enough research on pre-primary teachers' awareness of ECE in India. This study aimed to determine pre-primary teachers' understanding of early childhood education (ECE) in light of the implementation of NEP 2020 and the post-Covid-19 situation

Objectives of the Study

- To create and content validate the questionnaire used to measure pre-primary school teachers' understanding of early childhood education.
- To study how instructors employed in pre primary schools notice the importance of early childhood education in relation to demographic factors.
- To ascertain the level of early childhood education awareness among pre-primary school instructors.

Variables of the Study

Demographic Variables: Locality (Urban/Rural); Teaching Experience (1-5 Years and Above 5 years); and Marital Status (Married and Single)

Dependent Variable: Cognizance of Early Childhood Education

Operational Definitions

- **Pre-Primary School Teachers:** It implies teachers who are working in pre-primary school in Shivamogga city. They handle the classes for children whose age ranges from 3 to 6 years. They include teachers from urban and rural places, married and single, and beginners and experienced.
- **Cognizance of Early Childhood Education:** It implies to pre-primary school teachers being aware of the early child education, characteristics of pre-primary school students, indoor and outdoor activities, methods of teaching and evaluation for assessing their performance etc.

Method of Research

In the present study descriptive method (survey method) towards collecting the data from the chosen sample was followed.

Population and Sampling

All of the pre-primary school instructors in Shivamogga were included in the study's population. The method of cluster sampling was employed to choose 110 pre-primary teachers for the sample.

Research Tool

The researcher has constructed awareness questionnaire and subjected it to content validation from B.Ed. teacher educators, experienced pre primary school teachers, Subject experts and language experts. On the basis of their advice few items were removed and few items were modified. The tool was also given to fifteen pre-primary school teachers for try out. They were not included as a part of sample for the later study. Their suggestions were taken towards difficulty level of the items etc. The final tool has 22 multiple choice questions, each with four options. One mark was given for choosing a correct option and zero mark was given for incorrect option or omitted question.

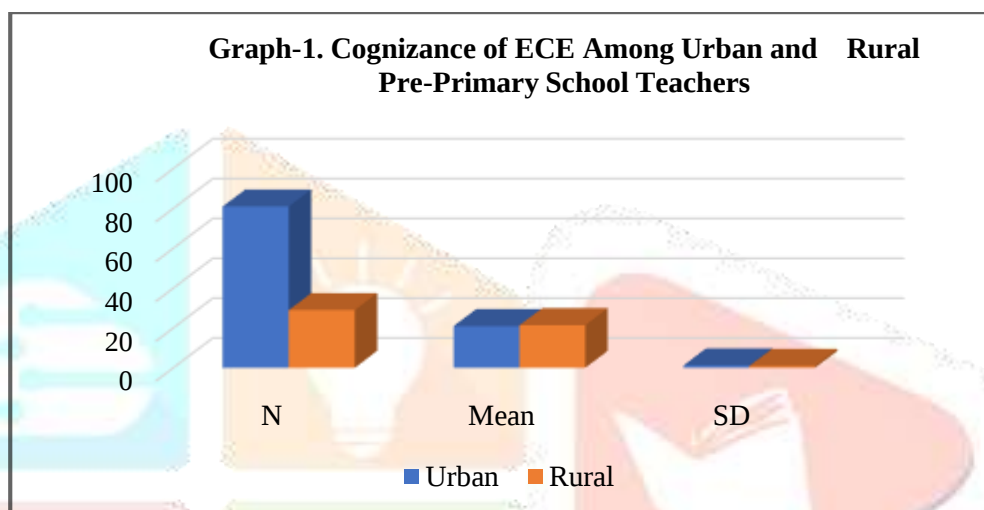
Statistical Analysis and Interpretation of the Data

H_0 1: Urban and rural pre-primary school teachers' understanding of early childhood education does not significantly differ from each other

Table 1. Cognizance of ECE Among Urban and Rural Pre-Primary School Teachers

Locality	N	Mean	SD	t-Value	Los at 0.05 Level
Urban	81	20.927	1.244	1.583	** NS
Rural	29	21.413	0.940		

**Non-significant at 0.05 level



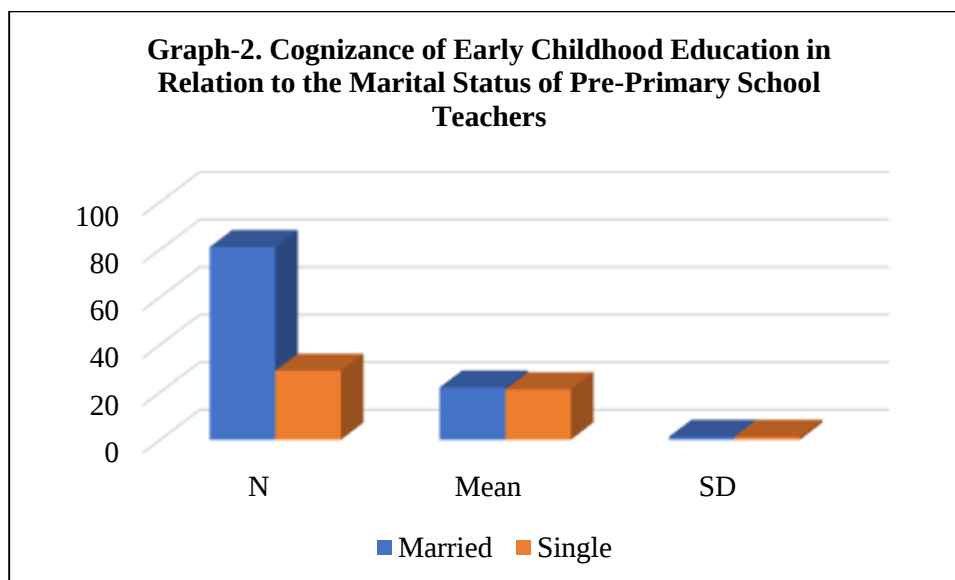
From the preceding table and graph, it can be determined that, the computed 't' value 1.583 is smaller than the table value 1.96 at 0.05 Level of Significance. As a result, the null hypothesis holds. It indicates that pre-primary school instructors in urban and rural areas are equally aware of the importance of early childhood education. This suggests that pre-primary school teachers' understanding of early childhood education was unaffected by their area.

H_0 2: Married and single pre-primary school instructors do not significantly differ in their degree of knowledge on early childhood education.

Table 2. Cognizance of Early Childhood Education in Relation to the Marital Status of Pre-Primary School Teachers.

Locality	N	Mean	SD	t-Value	Los at 0.05 Level
Married	81	21.928	1.245	0.478	** NS
Single	29	21.168	1.240		

**Non-significant at 0.05 level



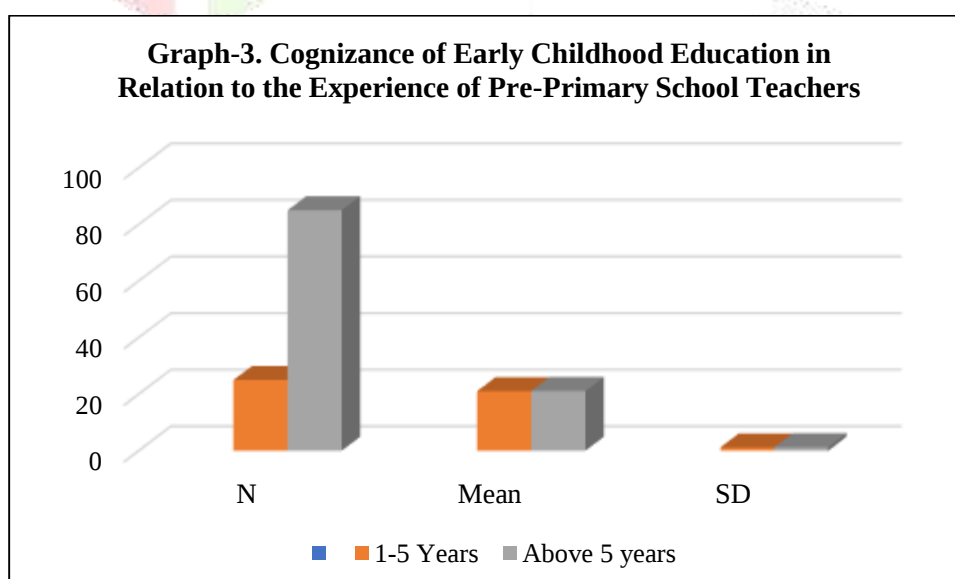
It is evident from the preceding table and graph 2 that, at the 0.05 Level of Significance, the derived “t” value of 0.478 is smaller than the table value of 1.96. As a result, the null hypothesis holds good. It indicates that married and single pre-primary school instructors have similar cognizance levels about early childhood education. This suggests further that pre-primary school teachers’ understanding of early childhood education is unaffected by their marital status.

H₀ 3: Pre-primary school instructors with up to five years of experience and those with more than five years of experience do not significantly differ in their understanding of early childhood education

Table-3. Cognizance of Early Childhood Education in Relation to the Experience of Pre-Primary School Teachers

Teaching experience	N	Mean	SD	t-Value	Los at 0.05 Level
1-5 Years	25	21.038	1.162	0.187	** NS
Above 5 years	85	21.092	1.219		

**Non-significant at 0.05 level



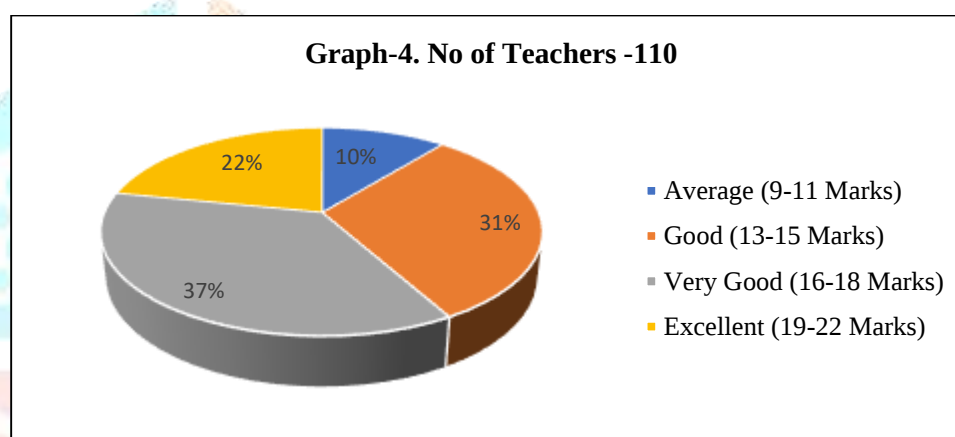
It is evident from the preceding table and graph 3 that, at the 0.05 Level of Significance, the derived “t” value of 0.187 is smaller than the table value of 1.96. As a result, the null hypothesis holds. This indicates that there

is no discernible difference in pre-primary school teachers' understanding of ECE between those with up to five years of experience and those with more than five years. This suggests that school instructors' understanding of ECE is unaffected by their prior teaching experience. This is mostly due to the fact that both types of pre-primary school instructors underwent pre-primary training.

Level of awareness of ECE in pre primary school Teachers.

Table-4. ECE Awareness in Secondary School Teachers

ECE Awareness Level	No of Teachers (110)	% of Teachers
Below Average (8 & Below Marks)	Zero	Zero
Average (9-11 Marks)	12	10%
Good (13-15 Marks)	34	31%
Very Good (16-18 Marks)	40	37%
Excellent (19-22 Marks)	24	22%



Of the 110 pre-primary school teachers, from the above graph-4, 10% have average awareness, 34% have good awareness, 37% have very high awareness, and 22% have exceptional awareness, according to the table and graph. It follows that over 90% of them are found to have greater knowledge of ECE. This indicates that they have a thorough understanding of children's personalities, learning styles, and needs, in addition to teaching and assessment techniques.

Educational Implications

- In spite of better awareness of ECE found in pre primary school teachers, the study comes out with few of educational implications in order to regulate and sustain the awareness of ECE among them and also proper handling of children in pre-primary schools.
- Pre-primary instructors are the first to teach children, and they play a crucial role in shaping their formative years.
- Regular in-service training, workshops, and seminars on curriculum implementation, evaluation, and indigenous approaches to early childhood education should be encouraged for pre-primary teachers.
- Pre-primary educators should provide physical affection to their students, such as hugs, holds, handshakes, and shoulder pads, since this fosters the children's cognitive and psychological development. Pre-primary students who form an emotional bond with their teachers are more capable learners because they are more at ease interacting with novel materials and tasks.

- Teachers of pre-primary students should modify their lesson plans to fit the individual needs of every student in the class. Children's ability to communicate should be fostered via both spoken and nonspoken interactions. Verbal interactions include things like asking open-ended inquiries, giving directions, making instructions explicit, and having conversations. Nonverbal cues include smiling, kneeling down to the child's level, embracing, hugging, and making eye contact.
- Pre-primary educators should provide a combination of adult-led and child-led experiences. Participating in outdoor games and activities from an early age helps develop children's motor skills and coordination.
- Pre-primary educators should use welcoming words, encouragement, and specific appreciation to motivate young learners.
- Pre-primary educators should establish relationships with families that reflect respect, collaboration, and shared responsibility in reaching common goals.
- Since creativity is vital for a young child's development, pre-primary teachers should regularly plan creative activities. Teachers can organize various art and craft projects, as well as music-related activities, that encourage children to apply their learning at different levels.
- A pre-primary teacher should attend to a child's basic requirements. They are responsible of making sure the kids eat at the appropriate times, providing clean water to drink, and even aiding them with their personal hygiene needs. While they go about actualizing themselves by meeting these basic wants on their own, they also teach them manners. For the sake of their growth, the pre-primary teacher must create a cozy and supportive atmosphere.
- Teachers of pre-primary students should assess each child's individual progress. If needed, teachers should provide additional classes and employ alternative teaching methods to support students who are struggling to adapt.

De-Limitations

- The scope of the study is confined to assessing how knowledgeable 106 pre-primary school teachers are about early childhood education.
- The research is restricted to a few pre-primary schools located in Shivamogga city, Karnataka.
- The study is limited to examining how factors such as place of residence, marital status, and teaching experience affect pre-primary teachers' awareness of early childhood education.

Conclusion

A child's childhood is a time of wonder, when everything is new and fascinating. The infant is fearless and has a broad curiosity about everything and everyone around them. As a result, it becomes crucial that the kid receives attentive nurturing from her family and educators in order for her to reach her full potential, form close emotional relationships with her parents and other family members, and grow up to be a physically, psychologically, and socially healthy adult. Even though teachers had a higher understanding of ECE, the study recommends that pre-primary school administration take periodic action to improve teachers' knowledge, attitudes, and other abilities so they can better nurture the children. The study on "Cognizance of Early Childhood Education among Educators in Preschools" reveals several critical insights into the

current state of early childhood education (ECE) awareness among preschool educators. The research indicates a varied level of cognizance among educators regarding the principles and best practices of early childhood education. While some educators demonstrate a robust understanding and application of ECE theories, others show gaps in knowledge, particularly in modern pedagogical approaches and developmental psychology.

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Web links:

- <https://ebooks.inflibnet.ac.in/>
- <https://www.indeed.com/career-advice>
- <https://www.unicef.org/india/what-we-do/early-childhood-education>
- <https://teach.com/careers/become-a-teacher/where-can-i-teach/grade-levels/early-childhood/>