
**ENTRY AND EXIT COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF
STUDENTS' ATTITUDE TOWARDS STUDYING EARLY
CHILDHOOD AND PRIMARY EDUCATION IN KWARA
STATE UNIVERSITY, MALETE**

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Abstract

Students' attitude to learning a subject or a course to a large extent determines their future prospects in that course. Hence, this study investigated the entry and exit comparative analysis of students' attitude towards studying early childhood and primary education in Kwara State University, Malete. Two research questions and three hypotheses were raised and formulated for the study respectively with descriptive and inferential statistics. The research study adopted a longitudinal survey research design. The sample of the study was 44 undergraduate students in Kwara State University, Malete. Two (2) validated and reliably (QSEASECPE = 0.81 and SEASECPEQ = 0.76) tested research instruments were used for data gathering. The study lasted for a period of 4 years (2018 - 2022). The findings of the study revealed that undergraduate students' attitude towards studying early childhood and primary education at the entry (Mean = 2.14) and exit ((Mean = 3.48) stages were negative

and positive respectively. The findings also revealed that there was significant difference in the entry and exit attitude of undergraduate students towards studying early childhood and primary education ($t = -12.304$; $df = 43$; $P < 0.05$). It was recommended that fresh students should be exposed to introductory courses that will open their eyes to prospects and opportunities in Early Childhood and Primary Education.

Keywords: Undergraduate, Attitude, Entry, Exit, Early childhood, Primary education.

Introduction

Students' attitudes toward learning a subject or a course dictate their future prospects in that course to a considerable extent. Students' attitude predicts their commitment, class attendance, and personal research attributes, all of which are important for success. Individuals' attitudes are traits that cause them to have organized thoughts, feelings, and behaviours regarding a psychological object. Attitudes are continuous and immutable ideas, sentiments, and dispositions that cause individuals to consistently behave in the same manner toward people, objects, events, and foundations (Cetin, 2006).

The attitude of students toward learning is crucial to concept mastery (Sofiani, Maulida, Fadhillah & Sihite, 2017; Paramitha, 2017). Previous research has found a link between students' attitudes toward science and their academic achievement in science, with students with positive attitudes having superior learning outcomes (Hussaini, 2013). While positive attitude helps learners understand the nature of learning, they also make pupils more open to learning, raise their expectations from the learning process, and lowers their anxiety levels. Students that have a favourable attitude about reading, for example, benefit more from advance organizers.

Children, as the nation's future generations, are a vital human resource since they determine a country's development success.

Humans must be educated as early as possible in order to develop better attributes, as this will be the foundation of their basic personalities. Early childhood education is a foundational curriculum that lays the groundwork for children's creation and development of core information, attitudes, and skills. Many countries have debated the relevance of early childhood education and the role it plays in future academic achievement and socialization in primary school during the last 200 years. In light of this, many parents have been debating whether or not to enrol their children in early childhood education (Gregory, 2015).

However, there is some consensus among experts from both developing and developed countries that early childhood care and education programs are not just desirable but also necessary for many children (Sylva & Pugh, 2005). Gregory (2015) claims that the early years of a child's schooling are the most crucial for instilling a love of learning. Furthermore, youngsters learn how to communicate with others, express their emotions, and develop their creative educational abilities. Preschool success lays the groundwork for a child's later academic and emotional growth. Pre-primary school attendance, according to Blau and Currie (2004), improves average grades, class involvement, behavioural skills, sociability, and self-control in primary schools. Furthermore, behavioural skills are just as crucial as cognitive skills in determining future success.

The goal of pre-school education, also known as early childhood education, is to provide children with a variety of educational and social services. Early childhood education programs are intended to promote overall well-being and improve school preparation so that young children can get the most out of their school experiences and achieve greater success in life (Barnett, 2005). As a result, throughout the key years of brain development and learning, the majority of children receive care and educational experiences from adults other than their parents (U.S. Census Bureau, 2003). There is some concern that isolating children under the age of five from their moms while they work may have negative consequences on their development.

Students' attitudes toward learning a subject or a course impact

their future prospects in that course to a considerable extent. Some University early childhood and elementary education students did not apply for the programme. Because they were forced to take a course against their will, their attitude toward the course may be influenced. Several studies (Olatunji & Etuk, 2010; Hussaini, 2013; Senay, 2013; Sofiani, Maulida, Fadhillah, & Sihite, 2017) have been conducted on students' attitudes toward various school subjects, but none of these identified studies examined undergraduate students' entry and exit attitudes toward studying early childhood and primary education, particularly at Kwara State University, where this study was conducted. This study studied the admission and exit comparison analysis of students' attitudes regarding studying early childhood and primary education against this backdrop.

Students' attitude to learning a subject or a course to a large extent determines their future prospects in that course. Some of the University students studying early childhood and primary education did not apply for the course. The fact that they were been offered a course against their desire, may possibly affect their attitude towards the course. It is against this background that this study investigated the entry and exit comparative analysis of undergraduate students' attitude towards studying early childhood and primary education.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to compare the entry and exit attitude of undergraduate students towards studying early childhood and primary education in Kwara State University, Malete. Specifically, the study aimed to determine:

- i. the entry attitude of undergraduate students towards studying early childhood and primary education;
- ii. the exit attitude of undergraduate students towards studying early childhood and primary education; and
- iii. the significant difference in the entry and exit attitude of undergraduate students towards studying early childhood and primary education

Research Questions

The following research questions were answered to guide the study:

- i. What is the entry attitude of undergraduate students towards studying early childhood and primary education?
- ii. What is the exit attitude of undergraduate students towards studying early childhood and primary education?

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were formulated and tested to guide the study:

H₀1: There is no significant difference in the entry and exit attitude of undergraduate students towards studying early childhood and primary education.

Methods

The research study adopted longitudinal survey research design. The population of this study comprised all students in the Department of Early Childhood and Primary Education, Kwara University, Malete in the 2018/2019 academic session. The sample of the study consisted of 100 level students (44 students) who were admitted during the session. Two research instruments were used to obtain data from the respondents. The instruments were Questionnaire on Students Entry Attitude towards Studying Early Childhood Education Questionnaire (QSEASECPE) and Students Exit Attitude towards Studying Early Childhood Education Questionnaire (SEASECPEQ). Questionnaires provide information about respondents' attitude towards Early Childhood and Primary Education. The QSEASECPE was divided into two (2) sections. Section A and B. Section A was designed to get demographic data like gender while section B sought data on students' entry attitude towards studying early childhood education. Section B consists of ten (10) items to measure students' attitude, on a four-point likert-style scale (Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree and Strongly Disagree). The SEASECPEQ was also divided into two (2) sections. Section A and B. Section A was contained demographic data like gender while

section B sought data on students' exit attitude towards studying early childhood education. Section B consists of ten (10) items to measure students' attitude, on a four-point likert-style scale (Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree and Strongly Disagree).

The two research instruments were validated by some lecturers in the Department of Early Childhood and Primary Education, Kwara State University, Malete. The two research instruments were both tested for reliability using test retest method and the reliability coefficients were 0.81 and 0.76 for questionnaire on Students' Entry Attitude towards Studying Early Childhood Education Questionnaire (QSEASECPE) and Students' Exit Attitude towards Studying Early Childhood Education Questionnaire (SEASECPEQ) respectively. The data on students' entry attitude towards studying early childhood and primary education were collected in 2018 when the students were in 100 level while the data on students' exit attitude towards studying early childhood and primary education were collected in 2022 when the students were in 400 level. Hence, the study lasted for 4 years. All the data collected were used to answer research questions and also to test the formulated hypotheses. The hypotheses were all tested at 0.05 level of significance. Frequency count, percentage and mean were used to answer the two research questions while dependent sample t-test was used to test hypothesis one while independent samples t-test was used to test hypotheses two and three.

Results

Research Question One: What is the entry attitude of undergraduate students towards studying early childhood and primary education?

Table 1: Entry Attitude of Undergraduate Students towards studying Early Childhood and Primary Education

S/N	Item	Strongly Agreed	Agreed	Disagreed	Strongly Disagreed	Mean
1	Early childhood and primary education is prospective course	5(11.1)	1(2.2)	25 (55.6)	13(28.9)	1.95
2	Early childhood and primary education programme is worthy of study in university	5(11.1)	15(33.3)	18(40.0)	6(13.3)	2.43
3	Mentioning the name of the course I am doing among my friends in hostel gives me confidence	5(11.1)	6(13.3)	26(57.8)	7(15.6)	2.20
4	Studying early childhood and primary education gives me assurance of the future	1(2.2)	7(15.6)	23(51.1)	13(28.9)	1.91
5	Discussing the course am doing inside and outside campus is a thing of joy for me		12(26.7)	19(42.2)	13(28.9)	1.98
6	Early childhood is a professional course	6(13.3)	13(28.9)	13(28.9)	12(26.7)	2.30
7	Early childhood is a course with multiple windows of opportunities	6(13.3)	18(40.0)	9(20.0)	11(22.4)	2.43
8	Studying early childhood is a privilege for me	2(4.4)	10(22.2)	19(42.2)	13(28.9)	2.02

Table 1 (cont'd)

9	Early childhood education is important to the nation and really needs government commitment	1(2.2)	13(28.9)	16(35.6)	14(31.1)	2.02
10	Studying early childhood education is the reason behind my shallow interest in my study		20(44.4)	11(24.4)	13(28.9)	2.16
	Weighted average					2.14

Table 1 shows entry attitude of undergraduate students towards studying early childhood and primary education. The respondents disagreed with the following statements: Early childhood and primary education is prospective course (Mean = 1.95), Early childhood and primary education programme is worthy of study in university (Mean = 2.43), Mentioning the name of the course I am doing among my friends in hostel gives me confidence (Mean = 2.20), Studying early childhood and primary education gives me assurance of the future (Mean = 1.91), Discussing the course am doing inside and outside campus is a thing of joy for me (Mean = 1.98), Early childhood is a professional course (Mean = 2.30), Early childhood is a course with multiple windows of opportunities (Mean = 2.43), Studying early childhood is a privilege for me (Mean = 2.02), Early childhood education is important to the nation and really needs government commitment (Mean = 2.02), Studying early childhood education is the reason behind my shallow interest in my study (Mean = 2.16). The weighted average is 2.14 which is a numeric indicator that the undergraduate students had negative entry attitude towards studying early childhood and primary education.

Research Question Two: What is the exit attitude of undergraduate students towards studying early childhood and primary education?

Table 2: Exit Attitude of Undergraduate Students towards studying Early Childhood and Primary Education

S/N	Item	Strongly Agreed	Agreed	Disagreed	Strongly Disagreed	Mean
1	Early childhood and primary education is prospective course	9(20.0)	26(57.8)	8(17.8)	1(2.2)	2.98
2	Early childhood and primary education programme is worthy of study in university		16(35.6)	1(2.2)	1(2.2)	3.32
3	Mentioning the name of the course I am doing among my friends in hostel gives me confidence		20(44.4)	22(48.9)	2(4.4)	3.41
4	Studying early childhood and primary education gives me assurance of the future		29(64.4)	14(31.1)	1(2.2)	3.64
5	Discussing the course am doing inside and outside campus is a thing of joy for me			21(46.7)	23(51.1)	3.48
6	Early childhood is a professional course			28(62.2)	16(35.6)	3.64
7	Early childhood is a course with multiple windows of opportunities		24(53.3)	19(42.2)	1(2.2)	3.52
8	Studying early childhood is a privilege for me			16(64.4)	15(33.3)	3.66

Table 2 (cont'd)

9	Early childhood education is important to the nation and really needs government commitment	19(42.2)	25(56.6)	3.43
10	Studying early childhood education is the reason behind my shallow interest in my study	30(66.7)	14(31.1)	3.68
	Weighted Mean			3.48

Table 2 shows the exit attitude of undergraduate students towards studying early childhood and primary education. The respondents strongly agreed with the following statements: Studying early childhood and primary education gives me assurance of the future (3.64), Early childhood is a professional course (Mean = 3.64), Early childhood is a course with multiple windows of opportunities (Mean = 3.52), Studying early childhood is a privilege for me (Mean = 3.66), Studying early childhood education is the reason behind my shallow interest in my study (Mean = 3.68). Respondents also agreed with the following statements: Early childhood and primary education is prospective course (Mean = 2.98), Early childhood and primary education programme is worthy of study in university (Mean = 3.32), Mentioning the name of the course I am doing among my friends in hostel gives me confidence (Mean = 3.41), Discussing the course am doing inside and outside campus is a thing of joy for me (Mean = 3.48), Early childhood education is important to the nation and really needs government commitment (Mean = 3.43). The weighted average is 3.48 which is a numeric indicator that undergraduate students had positive exit attitude towards studying early childhood and primary education.

Research Hypothesis One: There is no significant difference in the entry and exit attitude of undergraduate students towards studying early childhood and primary education.

Table 3: Difference in the Entry and Exit Attitude of Undergraduate Students towards studying Early Childhood and Primary Education

Gender	n	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	df	Sig.	Remark
Entry	44	21.27	2.59	-12.304	43	.000	Significant
Exit		34.91	3.32				

Table 3 shows the difference in the entry and exit attitude of undergraduate students towards studying early childhood and primary education. There was significant difference in the entry and exit attitude of undergraduate students towards studying early childhood and primary education ($t = -12.304$; $df = 43$; $P < 0.05$). The hypothesis is therefore rejected in the light of the result since the significant value is less than 0.05. The exit attitude (Mean = 34.91) of undergraduate students towards studying early childhood and primary was better than their entry attitude (21.27).

Discussions

The finding of this study revealed that undergraduate students had negative entry attitude towards studying early childhood and primary education. This might be as a result of the fact that some of the students did not apply for the course, therefore, taking the admission with shallow passion. The finding is not in agreement with the findings of Senay (2013) who investigated the attitude of university students towards learning from the points of four sub-dimensions (the nature of learning, anxiety, expectation, and openness). It was unfolded that prospective engineers and technical teachers had positive attitude towards learning.

The findings of the study also unfolded that undergraduate students had positive exit attitude towards studying early childhood and primary education. The finding was in support of research findings of Sofiani, Maulida, Fadhillah and Sihite (2017) which

reported that students had a positive attitude towards science. The findings of the study also revealed that there was no significant difference in the entry and exit attitude of undergraduate students towards studying early childhood and primary education. This finding is so because the passage of time and the exposure of the undergraduate students to different courses in Early Childhood and Primary Education could account for the significant difference in their entry and exit attitude.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, it can be concluded that the attitude of undergraduate students towards studying early childhood and primary could change for the better before the end of their academic programme.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made: The Department of Early Childhood and Primary Education in various institutions should make it a point of duty to sensitize and orientate fresh students studying Early Childhood and Primary Education; Fresh students should be exposed to introductory courses that will open their eyes to prospects and opportunities in Early Childhood and Primary Education.

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