

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SOCIO-EMOTIONAL COMPETENCE AND LITERACY SKILLS OF PUPILS IN OGBOMOSO SOUTH, OYO STATE

By

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Abstract

Children are important national asset of every nation because they serve as the future of the society. Educational success of pupils is not only affected by their cognitive and intellectual ability, but by the social and emotional competence they possess. This study examined the relationship between socio-emotional competence and literacy skills of primary school pupils in Ogbomosho South. One research question and three hypotheses guided the study. This study adopted a descriptive correlational research design. The population for this study was made up of all primary six (6) pupils in public schools in Ogbomosho South, Oyo State. There are 28 public primary schools in Ogbomosho South of Oyo State, with a population of 3,360 primary six (6) pupils (OYO SUBEB). A simple random sampling technique was used to select 10 out of the 28 schools and 12 pupils totalling 120 respondents. Two instruments were used for data collections which include a checklist on socio-emotional competences (CSC) and literacy skills achievement test (LSAT). The face and content validity of the instruments were established by experts in the field of childhood education. For the reliability of the instrument, the test-retest method was employed with an interval of two weeks which was then correlated using Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) and yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.67. Frequency counts and percentage was used to answer the research questions while Pearson product moment correlation was used for all the hypotheses. The study found out that socio-emotional competence has a significant negative correlation with literacy skills. The study recommended that Teachers should make an effort to understand the social and emotional reactions of pupils to learning environment, and identify areas where assistance may be required to develop their literacy skills.

Keywords: Socio-emotional competence, Self-awareness, Social-awareness, self-management, Literacy skills

Introduction

Primary education is the learning phase in which children receive basic education from the age of about five to twelve years. It is the stage whereby children are exposed to the literacy and numeracy skills. This is evident from the objectives of primary education in the national policy on education (FGN, 2013) which states the inculcation of permanent literacy and numeracy and ability to communicate effectively. For this objective to be achieved, children must have a well-developed socio-emotional competence. One of the pinnacle priority objectives in Nigeria primary education is the development of the literacy skills. Adeyemi & Ajayi (2021) noted that the development of these skills enables pupils to interact meaningfully with their environment, enhances problem-solving, and supports cognitive and socio-emotional growth. Literacy, defined as the ability to read and write, includes the capacity to understand simple statements related to daily life (Murry, 2021).

Children are important national asset of every nation because they serve as the future of the society. Educational success of pupils is not only affected by their cognitive and intellectual ability, but by the social and emotional competence they possess. When children acquire the right education, attitudes, values and norms, they tend to make the society great. To ensure that children acquire these competence, adults (parents and teachers) must support the progress and development of their socio-emotional competence, which are of great importance to the children's education as well. Adequate socio-emotional competences are decisive for great educational achievement in school. Socio- emotional competence refers to the abilities to regulate one's thoughts, emotions and behaviour. Wu, Hu, Fan, Zhang, and Zhang (2018) defined socio-emotional competence as a person's ability to initiate, develop and respond to others and to form relationships with others in a respectable manner. It further encompasses the interactions with both familiar and unfamiliar people, communication management, coping with stress, adversity or trauma.

Socio-emotional competence determines how well people adapt and adjust to their immediate environment and how much they achieve in their lives. But the development of these competences is important not only for the well-being of individuals, but also for wider communities and societies as a whole. Socio- emotional competence also helps children to live healthy safe lives. It is a promising scheme for improving the achievement of pupils in school and in life (Zins & Elias, 2006). Socio-emotional competence is the foundation for developing children's skills and ability

to work together with their environment more broadly. It is very important that children develop many skills in their early years, such as communicating with adults, express feelings and emotions, interacting with their peers in the classroom, forming relationships with peers, show empathy, be motivated, engage socially and self-regulate.

A child who is socio-emotionally competent will exhibit less problematic behaviour; they can easily make friends, and can interact with adults productively (Poulou, 2014). They can put together their thoughts, emotions, and actions into achieving life tasks through self-awareness, social awareness, responsible decision making, self-management, and relationship management skills (Dominguez & LaGue, 2013). Every competency connects the intrapersonal and interpersonal skills essential for positive behaviours. The competence include self-awareness is the ability to evaluate emotions, identify strengths and weaknesses, and have a high sense of self-confidence. social awareness consists of perspective taking, empathy, appreciating individual differences, and the ability to predict feasible social product. self-management which refers to the control of emotions, motivation, goal setting, coping skills, and ability to overcome difficulty. Relationship management, which includes working together with other people, opposing wrong social pressures, managing conflicts, and seeking help when needed and responsible decision making, which has to do with the ability to fairly and morally assess situations to resolve trouble, respect social norms, and contribute to the welfare of other people (Bird & Sultmann, 2010; Dominguez & LaGue, 2013).

It has been established that socio-emotional competence is associated with the ability to relate with others in the classroom (e.g., teachers and peers) and outside of school. This competence influence how children interact with others, how they deal with their feelings, emotions, and how they respond to the events that happen around them. In numerous studies, researchers have established that there are links between children's socio-emotional competence and their academic achievement. In order to ensure encouraging educational outcomes, there is need to focus on fostering healthy growth in children's socio-emotional competence. According to Nix et al., (2013), the development of children's socio-emotional competence influences their engagement in learning which as a result facilitates their present and future academic achievement. Furthermore, to guarantee strong academic achievement and favourable test scores, more social and emotional support for students is needed. Children socio-emotional competence can affect the

acquisition of literacy and numeracy skills. Early literacy and numeracy skills are not only predictive of later academic but they are also the foundation upon which more advanced literacy and mathematical skills are developed (Duncan et. al., 2007).

Wang et al. (2019) investigated the effects of social-emotional competency on pupils' academic achievement, academic emotions and attitudes, and interpersonal relationships. He found out that socio-emotional competence has positive effect on pupils' academic achievement, academic emotions and attitudes, including learning anxiety and interest. Socio-emotional competency also had a positive effect on pupils' interpersonal relationships, including peer relationships and teacher–student relationships. According to Denham, Bassett, Thayer et al. (2012), various researchers have pointed out that child social and emotional competences can promote their cognitive development and improve their classroom learning. Young children face difficulties in school adjustments when they have experienced poor social competence. They further mentioned that children's capacity for emotional regulation affects their adjustment to school and their academic success. Children who experience negative emotions are not always able to focus on learning but that children who experience positive emotions are more easily able to focus on learning. Hence, when children experience more positive relationships and interactions, they have stronger academic achievement, learning outcomes, and classroom-task engagement.

Summa (2018) discovered that student attitudes, motivation, and cultural factors significantly influenced English language performance. He reported that 85% of secondary school students scored below the expected merit level, stressing that this widespread issue required urgent intervention to avoid further resource wastage and meet educational goals. Comprehensive review of above studies clearly indicates that social emotional competences play a pivotal role in enhancing the pupils' literacy skills and as well as make individuals socially and emotionally competent. Mella et al. (2021) in France found that social-emotional competencies are central to socialization, involving the understanding of social norms, managing negative emotions, and expressing positive emotions. In Tanzania, Sospeter et al. (2020) observed that students may lose interest in learning due to difficulties in self-identification, stress management, and controlling their aggression.

In another study Carolyn and Jamila (2014) carried out an investigation on strengthening social and emotional competence in young children—the foundation for early school readiness and

success in Washington. The ability of young children to manage their emotions and behaviours and to make meaningful friendships is an important prerequisite for school readiness and academic success. Socially competent children are also more academically successful and poor social skills are a strong predictor of academic failure. Valiente et al., (2011) also posited that emotionally competent students may achieve greater academic outcomes because they are better at initiating, sustaining, and regulating their motivation for goal-directed learning compared to those with poor emotional skills.

Some studies revealed no significant relationship between socio-emotional competence and students' academic performance. Zirak (2015) revealed that there is no relationship between emotional intelligence as well as its dimensions (self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management) and academic performance. Kashani, Azimi, and Vaziri (2012) indicated that there was no significant association between emotional intelligence and students' achievement scores. Pope, Roper, and Qualter (2012) did not find a relationship between emotional intelligence and academic performance among undergraduate psychology students in the UK.

It has been observed that pupils' socio-emotional competences are becoming poorer by the day and may consequently affect their literacy skills acquisition. However, review of above studies clearly indicates that social emotional competences play a very positive and significant role in enhancing the academic achievement of pupils. Socio-emotional competences have been seen as an indispensable skill that supports pupils to meet up and manage their academic goals. Researchers have affirmed that pupils' socio-emotional competences can predicts higher academic achievement in examinations. In essence, students with strong socio-emotional competences are more successful, effective and efficient in their schools and consequently, are able to achieve higher academic scores. Hence, it is necessary for students to be equipped with the skills of socio-emotional competences as to achieve academic success.

However, what these researches lack is an investigation on the relationship between socio-emotional competence and literacy skills of public primary school pupils in Ogbomosho South, Oyo State. Most of the studies cited in the background of the study were conducted in developed countries and as such cannot be generalized for country like Nigeria due to the culture and economic instability. Another gap is that none of these studies examine the socio-emotional

competence in relation to pupils' literacy skills. This has indeed created a gap which the researcher intends to fill by investigating the relationship between socio-emotional competence and literacy skills of public primary school pupils in Ogbomosho South, Oyo State.

Research Questions

The following research questions will guide this study.

1. What is the level of literacy skills of primary school pupils in Ogbomosho South, Oyo State?

Research Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were formulated for the study

H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between self-awareness competence and literacy skills of primary school pupils in Ogbomosho South, Oyo State.

H₀₂: There is no significant relationship between social awareness competence and literacy skills of primary school pupils in Ogbomosho South, Oyo State.

H₀₃: There is no significant relationship between self- management competence and literacy skills of primary school pupils in Ogbomosho South, Oyo State.

Methodology

This study adopted a descriptive correlational research design. This design is suitable for this study because it is a non-experimental quantitative research approach used to describe the nature and direction of relationships between two or more variables such as socio-emotional competence indices which includes self-awareness, social awareness and self-management and literacy skills without manipulating the variables (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The population for this study was made up of all primary six (6) pupils in public schools in Ogbomosho South, Oyo State. There are 28 public primary schools in Ogbomosho South of Oyo State, with a population of 3,360 primary six (6) pupils (OYO SUBEB, 2025). A simple random sampling technique was used to select 10 out of the 28 schools and 12 pupils totalling 120 respondents. Two instruments were used for data collections which include a checklist on socio-emotional competences (CSC) and literacy skills achievement test (LSAT). The face and content validity of the instruments were established by experts in the field of childhood education. For the reliability of the instrument, the test-retest method was employed with an interval of two weeks which was then correlated using Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) and yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.67. Frequency counts and percentage was used to answer the research questions while Pearson product moment correlation was used for all the hypotheses. All the ethical and moral procedure was

considered in the course of the study. Before commencing the study, the researcher sought the permission and authorization of the selected schools and respondents and assured them of the privacy of all the details provided.

Results

The research question was answered using frequency counts and percentage.

Research Question 1: What is the level of literacy skills of primary school pupils in Ogbomoso South?

Table 1: Level of literacy skills of primary school pupils in Ogbomoso South

Literacy skills	Frequency	Percentage (%)
High`	22	18.3
Low	98	81.7
Total	120	100.00

Out of the one hundred and twenty (120) pupils sampled, twenty-two (22) or (18.3%) had high literacy skills while the rest ninety-eight (98) or (81.7%) had low literacy skills. This implies that more than half of the primary six pupils sampled were in the category of low literacy skills.

H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between self-awareness competence and literacy skills of primary school pupils in Ogbomoso South.

Table 2: Pearson Product Moment Correlation showing the relationship between self-awareness competence and literacy skills of primary school pupils in Ogbomoso South

VARIABLES	N	MEAN	SD	CORRELATION INDEX R	DF	SIG (P)
Literacy Skills	120	14.0250	4.28298		118	.000
Self -Awareness	120	8.4750	2.59917	-.354		

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

The first finding of the study revealed that significant negative correlation exists between self-awareness competence and literacy skills. This is because the calculated significant (p) value of 0.000 is lower than 0.01 alpha level of significance at a correlation index r value of -.354 at df of 118. This shows that the self- awareness competence significantly affects pupils' literacy skills negatively. This implies that the higher the level of self- awareness competence, the lower their

literacy skills. This could suggest that individuals with higher self-awareness may assess themselves more critically, leading to lower scores in literacy skills acquisition. Therefore, the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant relationship between self-awareness competence and literacy skills of primary school pupils in Ogbomoso South is hereby rejected.

H₀₂: There is no significant relationship between social awareness competence and literacy skills of primary school pupils in Ogbomoso South.

Table 3: Pearson Product Moment Correlation showing the relationship between socio-awareness competence and literacy skills of primary school pupils in Ogbomoso South

VARIABLES	N	MEAN	SD	CORRELATION INDEX R	DF	SIG (P)
Literacy Skills	120	14.0250	4.28298		118	.000
Socio-Awareness	120	8.4333	2.16827	-.245		

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

From the finding reflected in the above Pearson Product Moment Correlation statistics revealed that significant negative correlation exists between socio - awareness competence and literacy skills. This is because the calculated significant (p) value of 0.000 is lower than 0.01 alpha level of significance at a correlation index r value of -.245 at df of 118. This shows that the socio-awareness competence significantly affects pupils' literacy skills negatively. This implies that the higher the level of socio - awareness competence of pupils, the lower their literacy skills. This may imply that individuals with greater social awareness competence might be more self-critical or less focused on achieving higher literacy skills. Therefore, the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant relationship between socio-awareness competence and literacy skills of primary school pupils in Ogbomoso South is hereby rejected.

H₀₃: There is no significant relationship between self- management competence and literacy skills of primary school pupils in Ogbomoso South.

Table 4: Pearson Product Moment Correlation showing the relationship between self-awareness competence and literacy skills of primary school pupils in Ogbomoso South

VARIABLES	N	MEAN	SD	CORRELATION INDEX R	DF	SIG (P)
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Literacy Skills	120	14.0250	4.28298	118	.000
Self-Management	120	8.4417	2.73722	-.394	

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

From the findings reflected in the above Pearson Product Moment Correlation statistics revealed that significant negative correlation exists between self - management competence and literacy skills. This is because the calculated significant (p) value of 0.000 is lower than 0.01 alpha level of significance at a correlation index r value of -.394 at df of 118. This shows that Self - management competence significantly affects pupils' literacy skills negatively. This implies that the higher the level of self - management competence of pupils, the lower their literacy skills. This could imply that individuals who manage their emotions and behaviours well may either prioritize personal development over high performance in literacy skills. Therefore, the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant relationship between self - management competence and literacy skills of primary school pupils in Ogbomoso South is hereby rejected.

Discussion of Findings

The finding of the study revealed that significant negative correlation exists between self-awareness competence and literacy skills. This is because the calculated significant (p) value of 0.000 is lower than 0.01 alpha level of significance at a correlation index r value of -.354 at df of 118. This shows that the self- awareness competence significantly affects pupils' literacy skills negatively. This finding is in line with Zirak (2015) who revealed that there is no relationship between emotional intelligence as well as its dimensions (self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management) and academic performance. However, this finding is in contrast with Wang et al. (2019) who investigated the effects of social-emotional competency on pupils' academic achievement, academic emotions and attitudes, and interpersonal relationships. He found out that social emotional competency have positive effect on pupils' academic achievement, academic emotions and attitudes, including learning anxiety and interest. Furthermore, (Valiente et al., 2011) posited that emotionally competent students may achieve greater academic outcomes because they are better at initiating, sustaining, and regulating their motivation for goal-directed learning compared to those with poor emotional skills.

Another result showed that there was significant negative correlation between socio-awareness competence and literacy skills. This is because the calculated significant (p) value of 0.000 is lower than 0.01 alpha level of significance at a correlation index r value of -.245 at df of 118. This shows that the socio- awareness competence significantly affects pupils' literacy skills negatively. This finding contradicts with Carolyn and Jamila (2014) who carried out an investigation on strengthening social and emotional competence in young children—the foundation for early school readiness and success in Washington. The ability of young children to manage their emotions and behaviours and to make meaningful friendships is an important prerequisite for school readiness and academic success. Socially competent children are also more academically successful and poor social skills are a strong predictor of academic failure.

Also, findings revealed that a significant negative correlation exists between Self- management competence and literacy skills. This is because the calculated significant (p) value of 0.000 is lower than 0.01 alpha level of significance at a correlation index r value of -.394 at df of 118. This shows that self - management competence significantly affects pupils' literacy skills negatively. This finding negates the findings of Denham, Bassett, Thayer et al. (2012), who found out that young children face difficulties in school adjustments when they have experienced poor social competence. They further mentioned that children's capacity for emotional regulation affects their adjustment to school and their academic success. Children who experience negative emotions are not always able to focus on learning but that children who experience positive emotions are more easily able to focus on learning. Hence, when children experience more positive relationships and interactions, they have stronger academic achievement, learning outcomes, and classroom-task engagement.

Conclusion

This study examined the relationship between socio-emotional competences and literacy skills of primary school pupils in Ogbomoso South. The study found out that socio-emotional competence has a significant negative correlation with literacy skills. This implies that the higher the level of socio-emotional competence of pupils, the lower their literacy skills development. What this suggests is that pupils who manage their emotions and behaviours well may either prioritize personal development over high performance in literacy skills. Other related factors such as family, gender and nutrition which were not captured in this study may also likely be responsible

for the pupil's low literacy skills development. However, children need to learn various skills by interacting with their parents, teachers and peers so as to develop their literacy skills. Socio-emotional skills are essential, and the development of socio-emotional competence could lead to academic success. The development of the social-emotional skills could lead to better school outcomes, adaption of future learning, well-being, and ability to nurture good behaviours.

Recommendations

1. The school authorities with the support of teachers should train pupils on the best strategies to develop their literacy skills.
2. Teachers should make an effort to understand the social and emotional reactions of pupils to learning environment, and identify areas where assistance may be required to develop their literacy skills.
3. The school should hold capacity building forums for teachers, parents and counsellors on the importance of socio-emotional competence to literacy skills development.
4. Government through the Ministry of Education should support stakeholder-collaboration between parents and teachers in schools so to establish a clear common ground for an effective learner-support system which will enhance early literacy skills development in children.

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