



Effectiveness of Early Childhood Education on Student Learning Outcomes in Tehsil Rahim Yar Khan

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Abstract

The research aims to determine the association between Early Childhood Education (ECE) and mental, societal, and emotional development. The objectives of this study are: 1) To assess how well ECE affects the students' learning results. 2) To promote the holistic development of a child. 3) To investigate issues and also create suggestions about the execution of ECE programs. 4) To increase the literacy rate and decrease the dropout level. 5) To encourage a child's curiosity about his/her environment. A descriptive quantitative design was used for this study. The hypotheses predict a positive effect of ECE on learning outcomes. The results support the hypotheses, showing a significant positive impact of ECE on Student Learning Outcomes (SLO) and improved cognitive, communal, and demonstrative development. The population of this study is all ECE government schools of Tehsil Rahim Yar Khan. 140 ECE schools were selected using a simple random sampling technique. ECE teachers, ECE caregivers, and head teachers were selected from each school and 420 (male and female) individuals participated as a sample. For data collection, one self-structured questionnaire was used which consists of 65 items. After data collection, it was examined with the help of SPSS. The findings suggest that effective ECE is crucial for enhancing SLOs. It is strongly associated with successful learning outcomes for students and plays a vital role in a child's entire life. ECE creates an environment that develops interest, boosting children to discover learn, and grow. ECE also encourages inspiration, imagination, and investigation crucial for lifelong learning.

Keywords: Effectiveness, Early Childhood Education, Student Learning Outcomes



Introduction

Early childhood education (ECE) is important for children in the initial years of life to improve language, communication skills, and problem-solving ability. Running, hopping, climbing, and catching a ball are activities that help to improve gross motor abilities. Through practice and play with the gadgets, children can now improve their speaking and listening skills by using smaller, simpler tools for cutting, painting, drawing, and writing. Mental Process the straightforward ECE patterns improve cognitive and mental skills. Early childhood programs that are traditional, academic, cognitive, and developmental provide high outcomes in both the classroom and in later life (Chambers et al., 2014).

Education is a procedure that is socially controlled and managed. It transmits socially important experiences from one generation to the next. Education is not limited to the classroom. It begins with childbirth. It is the most fundamental requirement for an individual's development and advancement. On the other hand, preschool education begins at the age of two or three and continues until the child is between the ages of five and eight. Children learn through connection with their peers in a play environment.

Our Prophet (S.A.W) has stressed the need “to teach whatever you know to other people”. When people lack skills and abilities, they struggle in both their personal and professional lives. In the past twenty years, research on the social brain and formative brain science has been taken into consideration in early childhood education; youth studies social humanities, history, and philosophy (Johnson & de Haan, 2015).

Education is also a natural cycle that allows for the achievement of goals, and the learning of concepts and knowledge made possible by each learner's unique experiences, emotions, and thoughts. Most people consider early childhood education to be primarily focused on the physical childhood and teaching of young children. A youngster learns with adults and other children in a setting that was purposefully created to support growth and learning. Thus, high-quality early childhood education reduces the effects of home environment disparities and allows each child to develop their unique abilities (Eshetu, 2015).

In short, a child’s early years of life is a critical period for parents, educators, and supervisors to provide skills that will positively impact the child's future. Thus, early childhood education requires a setting that is conducive to learning, qualified educators, a wide range of educational



materials, and appropriate teaching techniques. The teacher will raise the children's love and passion for learning. It begins at the young age of a child and continues until the age of five. Children are sent to kindergarten once they reach the age of five. ECE is recognized as nursery education. It is concerned with the official or unofficial teaching of children from a young age to the eight years of a child (Shah, Rafique et al., 2022).

Rationale of the Study

Observing the effects of ECE, its efficiency on learning, and how early childhood education can play a vital role in improving the literacy rate and decreasing dropout levels. In what way, does ECE change the whole life of a child? Examining the impact of the effectiveness of early childhood education on student learning outcomes in Tehsil RYK is the goal of this study.

Researchers are interested in selecting this topic to convey the effectiveness of ECE with strategies that support them to improve the emotional, social and cognitive, ethical skills that are necessary to become lifelong learners and also provide interest, personal information, and holistic development about children. To explore how their needs, abilities, and their environment affect their personality.

Objectives of the Study

- To investigate ECE's impact on learning outcomes.
- To examine ECE's effect on holistic development.
- To determine the impact of teacher training, parental engagement, and resources on ECE's implementation.
- To analyze the relationship between ECE participation and literacy/dropout rates.
- To explore the impact of play-based ECE on children's curiosity and creativity.

Literature Review

Early childhood education describes the educational experience of a child from birth to age eight (Otto, 2015). ECE is critical for children, with experts testifying that the starting eight years of a child's existence lay the groundwork for future success. Students who use Early Childhood Education perform significantly better than students who are unable to use the program. Every



child has an intrinsic desire to be interested, which may be stimulated by providing him with early education to maximize his potential.

Children have several possibilities to develop their verbal, cognitive, social, emotional, and particular skills in a supportive learning environment. In comparison to public sectors, the early years of education provide a far more dynamic environment for children in private industries. Nonetheless, public schools provide better treatment and support for kids from low-income families, neglectful social environments, and disadvantaged origins than private schools. The commercial sector outperforms the public sector in terms of teacher-child interaction, instructional methods, and high-quality early childhood education. The private sector is structured far better than the public sector in terms of administrative conduct, learning environment, task completion, communication and language proficiency, social and individual development, and learning skills (Tahira et al., 2021).

ECE extremely alters children's physical, social, emotional, and cognitive growth. People are developed through education in all choices of life, containing the collective, ethical, non-physical, political, and financial. It is an energetic strength that makes it possible for every country to accomplish its primary goals. Countries that have constructed strong educational systems are known to have a stable political and social structure (Ahmad, et al., 2014). Due to many challenges and limited sources of early treatments, Globally 250 million children do not reach their progressive potential in the first five years of life. Our nation and other lower and medium-income countries tolerate the impact of this problem. One way to prevent this from happening is to use an extensive curriculum such as this one as part of early involvement (UNICEF, 2021).

According to the Asian Development Bank, ECE programs offer preschoolers the chance to address health and nutrition issues that could hinder their learning and have an impact on their memory, reasoning, and accomplishment. The World Health Organization believes that improving a child's chances in life requires parenting education, the development of parental skills and support, a satisfactory diet, improved health situations, and health education. The early years of life are recognized as the most crucial time when children "experience cognitive, language, perception, socio-passionate, and cognitive development", all of which are foundations



for future success and social work. As a result, the purpose of the formative years should be approached with great care and specific information (Akinrotimi et al., 2016).

The keystones set throughout the child's pre-school years have a major role in ensuring their successful education throughout their school years. Early childhood is a critical time for meaningful communication between parents, caregivers, educators, and the administration. This communication will have a lasting effect on the child's future (Gordon & Browne, 2007).

Students who use Early Childhood Education (ECE) perform significantly better than students who are unable to use the program. According to research on cognitive development, early childhood education gives children a favorable start to a child (Magnuson & Waldfogel, 2005). Analysis of Children in Pakistan (2017), ECE is sometimes referred to as pre-primary, Katchi, Paki, pre-nursery, nursery, KG-1, KG-2, and prep. It includes everything up to class one. Each educational policy in Pakistan has placed emphasized the value of learning and the goal of attaining a 100% literacy rate (Kamran et al., 2019).

The physical, reasoning, emotional, and social progress of young children (birth near age eight) must be fostered since they are integral parts of their families, communities, and cultural values. These abilities will help them to survive and thrive as they grow older (Adnan et al., 2016). ECE primarily supports parental employment and raises positive social and cognitive development to address achievement disparities during the school years (Burchinal et al., 2020). At the primary level, especially at the ECE level, the quality of instruction and learning is impacted by inappropriate language and ineffective communication. Early language, Maths, and socializing skill development can have a significant impact on the quality of care and instruction that children receive in early childhood education programs (Thornton, 2019).

Youngster learns in a setting that was purposefully created to support growth and learning, both for them and for adults and other kids. As a result, high-quality early childhood education reduces disparities brought about by the homes in which the children grow, every child has unique abilities, ways of thinking and learning styles (Eshetu, 2015). The implementation of early-year teachers is strongly impacted by a teacher's perceptions of teaching and learning. The preschool education system that must be implemented is carefully monitored by the teachers and provides a home environment for children (Kern et al., 2007). A child's learning outcomes are significantly impacted by the ECE program in particular which is important for children's overall



development. These initiatives could enhance social, emotional, and motor development in addition to physical well-being (Nawaz et al., 2021).

Aims of ECE:

- Teach and develop children's independence, strength, and ability to share.
- The growth of kids morally, spiritually, and cognitively.
- Teaching hygienic and healthful behaviors, like how to dress, and use the bathroom.
- Obtaining socially appropriate manners and etiquette.
- Raise the child's interest in learning about his surroundings.
- Pay attention to gross motor abilities.
- Evolving linguistics and understanding of correct and incorrect.
- Encourage kids to explore their artistic and creative side through extracurricular activities.
- Highlight the importance of "learning by doing" according to the needs of children.

ECE Domains

Three major domains of learning education by Benjamin Bloom (on the cognitive domain), David Krathwohl (on the affective domain), and Anita Harrow (on the psychomotor domain) are:

i. Cognitive Domain

The cognitive domain includes children's abilities to think, learn, and solve problems. These comprise the ability to remember, pay attention, perceive, and reason (Dorji et al., 2020).

ii. Affective Domain

It's about children developing relationships with their culture, people, and environment also expressing emotions as well as development of self-esteem. This also includes understanding social norms and creating a sense of morality. Attitude, values, and emotions are all under the affective domain's purview as the "valuing" region. The affective domain includes our inclination to emotionally shape things, such as emotions, values, admiration, hobbies, sources of inspiration, and attitudes (Bloom, 2010).



iii. Psychomotor Domain

The “doing” or psychomotor domain is concerned with manual or physical skills. The application of motor abilities, coordination, and physical movement are all included in the psychomotor domain. Gross motor abilities are the development and application of both large and small muscles. They are the basic motions or actions involved in walking, running, leaping, pushing, pulling, and manipulating (Dorji et al., 2020).

Key Learning Areas of ECE

According to SNC (2020), the latest curriculum for early childhood education has been divided into the following key learning areas.

Figure 1

Key Learning Areas of Early Childhood Education



Early Childhood Philosophers and their Effects on Education

Froebel's idea of self-activity which involves an organized, planned curriculum centered on gifts, professions, songs, and educational games has a big impact on modern classrooms. Knowledge through play is a brilliant contribution of Froebel (Morrison, 2013). Froebel also created toys for kids intending to encourage learning via play. By creating objects like sticks and rings, balls, wooden blocks, tiles, and more, he was able to fulfill his aim of encouraging play (Bowlby, 2016).



Maria Montessori, a physician and educator, developed a technique in which children were given educational resources and a setting that supported their innate desire to learn new things.

Montessori created a system that was centered on children's innate curiosity and interests. Early childhood education was impacted by Montessori's method with the establishment of Montessori Schools. Teachers receive certification in the Montessori framework as part of their training to help kids become more curious about what they are learning. Numerous "public and private Montessori schools utilize her methods and approach" in the modern era (Ahmetoğlu, 2015).

Education, therefore, is a process of living and not a preparation for future living (Boyles, 2020).

According to John Dewey, a supporter of the child-centered method, students' interests should determine what they learn in school (Haran, 2015). According to Dewey's progressive approach theory, students learn best when they can connect the material to their experiences or other real-world situations (Ültanır, 2012). According to Dewey, students should have access to courses that are career-focused in order to encourage relevant learning and the application of concepts acquired in the actual world.

ECE in Punjab Province

Punjab has become the first province of Pakistan to introduce the ECE Policy (2017) to achieve the settled targets of ECE. QAED, GOP, PHCIP, and SED were handed over the responsibility of launching ECE in public schools of Punjab by the government of Punjab in the year 2013 (Malik et al., 2022). Introduction of ECE in Primary Schools in Punjab with High Admission and Development of School Environment to change them into Child-Friendly Schools (CFSs) is the term under which QAED, 2018 has been providing the Early Childhood Education (ECE) platform in all Punjab divisions and regions.

These NGOs are involved in the ECE at the grassroots level, but it is important to connect them with the public sector to have a significant impact on future policy development. The public sector can also learn from these private-sector NGOs and their associations could advance the situation (Zada, 2014).

Students who study early childhood education are more prepared to work with young children. It offers appropriate developmental programs for kids ages one through eight. The curriculum for early childhood education was first created in 2002 and then updated in 2007 (Shah et al., 2011). According to numerous research studies, High-quality early childhood education and care can



lay a solid basis for future success in school and life. In the era of globalization; all nations must uphold their written and unwritten international obligations to maintain their standing in international forums. The Pakistani government has signed several international agreements to guarantee that everyone has access to basic education and literacy (UNESCO, 2012).

ECE aims to build up self-esteem and self-confidence among children as well as transfer culture and values through education. They carried out a SWOT analysis to highlight the current state of ECE in Pakistan and make recommendations for strengthening the curriculum by tying it into basic education, developing ECE human resources, and changing the focus from literacy instruction to self-reliance instruction (Syed et al., 2011). The success of ECE in Punjab and supports the application of ECE policy, 2017 along with the ECE project's execution by QAED. Throughout the province, QAED has set up more than 5,000 ECE classrooms in government schools. In public schools with more than 5,000 qualified instructors and an equal number of caregivers posted in the ECE centers, there has been a significant increase in enrollment (almost over 300,000) as a result of the Punjab ECE program's first appearance.

In order to help the kids, QAED has placed ECE kits in the classrooms but the gap between policy and implementation is very noticeable in Punjab. The clear differences in facilities between private and public schools have encouraged parents to enroll their children in distant institutions (Arshad & Zamir, 2018).

The national ECCE curriculum framework (SNC) 2020 aims to:

- Assure the children's complete development, which includes their moral, intellectual, social, emotional, and physical maturation.
- Spread awareness and knowledge of Islamic culture.
- Give knowledge and respect for the policies and customs of all other faiths.
- Promote appreciation for variety, critical thinking abilities, and tolerance.
- Encourage children to be proud of their Pakistani identity and sense of self.
- Encourage self-sufficiency, morality, ethics, values, and civic awareness.



Research Methodology

The study was descriptive and a specially designed questionnaire was used as a tool. The quantitative research was carried out to investigate the effectiveness of Early Childhood Education (ECE) on student learning outcomes in tehsil Rahim Yar Khan. SPSS was used to examine the acquired data, and the results were recorded and explained. The number of total schools in Tehsil Rahim Yar Khan is 784 and ECE is present in approximately 700 schools of Tehsil Rahim Yar Khan. All ECE educators, caregivers, and school head teachers in the Tehsil Rahim Yar Khan both male/female and rural/urban schools made up the study's population.

Simple random sampling was used as the sampling method for this investigation. Randomly 140 ECE Schools' Head Teachers, ECE teachers, and caregivers were selected as a sample and the sample size was 420. A questionnaire is considered a very effective and easy tool for the collection of data. A 5-point Likert scale was used in the questionnaires. The questionnaire that is used for ECE teachers, head teachers, and caregivers' data collection consists of 65 items. The researcher personally surveyed and collected data with the help of questionnaires. SPSS version 26.0 was used to input all of the data that was collected.

The data were double-verified to guarantee that they were entered correctly. To provide an accurate portrayal of the data and answers to the research questions posed by the study, descriptive statistics, such as the percentage, frequency, standard deviation, mean, and inferential statistics, such as the t-test was utilized. The value of the T-test is less than 0.5 which is significant so, reject the null hypothesis. The tool's reliability and validity were checked before finalizing it. For its validity, the researcher consulted with experts, and a pilot study was also conducted. Cronbach's alpha value was .919 that shows the reliability of the correlation coefficient between variables.

Data Analysis

This part deals with the data analysis. The factors were shown through percentage, frequency, standard deviation, mean score, and t-test. This part deals completely with the quantitative data gathered from 420 teachers (males and females) from 140 schools (urban and rural) Tehsil Rahim Yar Khan.



Demographic Variables of Teacher

Table 1
Locality-Wise Distribution of Sample

Area	Frequency	Percentage
Rural	230	54
Urban	190	45
Total	420	100

Table 1 shows that 54% of ECE schools are in rural areas and 45% of ECE schools are located in urban areas.

Table 2
Gender-Wise Distribution of Sample

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	240	57
Female	180	43
Total	420	100

Table 2 presents that 57% were males and 43% were females in gender-wise distribution of the sample.

Table 3
Qualification-Wise Distribution of Sample

Qualification	Frequency	Percentage
Matric	96	22.9
Graduation	21	5.0
Masters	181	43.1
M. Phil	122	29.0
Total	420	100



Table 3 shows the qualification-wise distribution of the sample which includes 22.9% matric, 5.0% graduation, 43.1% masters, and 29.0% M. Phil present for ECE education.

Table 4
 Age-Wise Distribution of Sample

Age	Frequency	Percentage
Under25	50	10.9
26 to 40	309	67.2
41 to 60	61	13.3
Total	420	100

Table 4 presents the age-wise distribution of teachers as follows: 10.9% of students are aged under 25 years, 67.2% are aged 26 to 40 years, and 13.3% are aged 41 to 60 years old.

Analysis of Difference between ECE Teachers’ Opinions regarding Effectiveness of Early Childhood Education in Tehsil Rahim Yar Khan

This section discloses the analysis of data for obtaining a difference in ECE Teachers’ opinions according to gender, locality, and age-wise. Statistical analysis: Chi-square and one Way ANOVA were used to analyze the data.

Table 5
 Gender-Wise Comparison of Respondents

Variables	Category	N	Percentage	Df	Likelihood Ratio	Chi-Square-Value
Gender	Male	240	57	93	135.675	.003
	Female	180	43			

$P \leq 0.05$

Table 5 presents a gender breakdown of the sample, with 57% males and 43% females. The Chi-Square test yielded a statistically significant p-value of less than 0.000, indicating a strong departure from an expected equal distribution between genders ($p \leq 0.05$) indicating there is a statistical difference between male and female students' opinions based on gender.



Table 6
 Locality Wise Comparison of Respondents

Variables	Category	N	Percentage	Df	Likelihood Ratio	Chi-Square-Value
Locality	Rural	230	55	93	122.926	.021
	Urban	190	45			

Table 6 shows a significant difference in teachers' locality (55% rural, 45% urban). A chi-square test was conducted; resulting in a statistically significant p-value of 0.004 (less than the significance level of 0.05) indicating there is a statistically significant association between rural and urban teachers' opinions on the basis of residents.

Data Analysis

Findings

- 81.2% of the participants agreed that ECE is important for a child's mental development.
- 87.6% of the participants agreed that ECE impacts on child's educational learning process.
- 85.5% of the participants agreed that ECE affects the child's way of living life.
- 85.2% of the participants agreed that ECE helps to solve the child's educational problems.
- 81.2% of the participants agreed that ECE helps to recover the literacy level.
- 87.4% of the participants agreed that ECE reduces the dropout rate.
- 85.7% of the participants disagreed that ECE reform saves time and money.
- 85.2% of the participants agreed that ECE is helpful in the social and emotional development of children.
- 74.3% of the participants agreed that ECE reform is an effective way of learning for under five years children.
- 70.0% of the participants agreed that ECE develops the cognitive skills of students.
- 72.8% of the participants agreed that ECE develops children's creative thinking skills.
- 70.5% of the participants agreed that ECE enables immediate feedback for learners.



- 70.0% of the participants agreed that children in ECE programs have a low rate of absenteeism.
- 73.6% of the participants agreed that insufficient monitoring and training restrict ECE program progress
- 75.7% of the participants agreed that students have a favorable attitude towards ECE.
- 66.9% of the participants agreed that ECE improves a child's speaking, listening, and writing skills.
- 73.6% of the participants agreed that the ECE caregiver affects the student's learning process.
- 72.0% of the participants agreed that the responsibility of the ECE caregiver is to support the ECE teacher in children's learning.
- 79.6% of the participants agreed that the ECE caregiver is concerned with the personal care and mobility assistance of the child.
- 83.1% of the participants agreed that ECE is linked with culture.
- 82.8% of the participants agreed that ECE is crucial for educational success.
- 83.1% of the participants agreed that the National Curriculum of ECE is useful for children.
- 78.1% of the participants agreed that a 2-year-old child's brain is more active than an average adult.
- 80.3% of the participants agreed that abusive behavior affects the level of confidence of ECE kids.
- 82.6% of the participants agreed that in ECE learning, students read and write the alphabet in different interesting ways.
- 80.5% of the participants agreed that the child's sense of self-respect, self-sufficiency, and self-discipline are developed in ECE.
- 81.9% of the participants agreed that ECE fulfills Bloom's taxonomy.
- 78.0% of the participants agreed that ECE learning influences their surroundings.
- 87.1% of the participants agreed that formal tests and examinations are not always perfect for measuring a child's abilities.



- 80.0% of the participants agreed that the ECE head teacher keeps a portfolio of each child.
- 86.4% of the participants agreed that ECE has a significant impact on the future career prospects of a child.
- 74.3% of the participants agreed that a well-designed learning environment promotes curiosity in children.
- 76.6% of the participants agreed that ECE teachers understand the children's complexities.
- 70.2% of the participants agreed that ECE is crucial for educational reform.
- 83.2% of the participants agreed that a child-centered approach in ECE supports attractive learning.
- 78.8% of the participants agreed that ECE promotes equality for all learners.
- 70.0% of the participants agreed that children feel happy in an ECE classroom.
- 80.7% of the participants agreed that ECE is beneficial for teachers and students.

Discussion and Conclusion

The study required to investigate the effectiveness of ECE as the primary goal learning process. Now a days, ECE is necessary for holistic development in every child. The results show that ECE plays a very vital role in a child's learning process. We enhance ECE skills with the help of different teaching strategies. There are also some factors and barriers that obstruct the improvement of ECE. The literature review of this study introduced the importance of ECE, different instructional strategies and needs of ECE, Domains of ECE, characteristics, and policies of ECE, barriers of ECE, and assessment, and evaluation of ECE. As per analysis, it is concluded that:

The first goal of this project was to assess how well ECE is affecting the student's learning outcomes. The majority of participants thought that early childhood education (ECE) plays a vital role in a child's entire life. Especially the early years of a child's development are the most significant to make a critical thinker. Their ability to think critically made instructional activities better in their comprehensive life. ECE also encourages inspiration, imagination, and investigation crucial for lifelong learning.



The second goal of this research work is to promote the holistic development of a child. Most respondents thought that only early childhood education increases a child's intellectual, social, expressive, legal, and moral development and a stronger foundation for future learning. A man can make a nation. So, firstly we make a man through their holistic development that is essential in early years of a child.

The third goal was to investigate issues and also create suggestions about the execution of the ECE program. The most of respondents suggest that if we find out the major issues that create hurdles to the implementation of early childhood education programs then we will get better results in the future. Shortage of experienced teachers, insufficient training, unsatisfactory policies, and the poor conversion process from ECE to primary education, lack of assessment and evaluation, and limited involvement and support from parents are some major issues. After solving these issues, we get better results.

The fourth goal was to increase the literacy rate and decrease the dropout level. Most of the participants believe that ECE reform is very fruitful in increasing the literacy ratio. In previous years graph of dropout rate has also decreased due to early childhood education. ECE lays the groundwork for literacy by developing critical skills; and also provides opportunities for children to engage with books in a friendly environment. ECE promotes a love for learning and establishing a solid foundation for future academic success.

The fifth goal is to encourage a child's curiosity about his/her environment. The majority of participants thought that early childhood education increases curiosity in children by providing practical experiences, inspiring them to investigate answers to their questions, raising curiosity about the natural world, embracing children's sense of wonder, offering choices to make decisions, encouraging children to take risks, offering access to books, technology educational toys. ECE creates an environment that develops interest, boosting children to discover learn, and grow.

In short, the findings revealed that early childhood education plays a crucial role in Holistic development in children throughout their lives. ECE is strongly associated with successful learning outcomes of students and it plays a fundamental function.



Suggestions

The following suggestions were made in light of the results:

- Policies should be planned according to ground realities.
- Must be an ECE teacher-sanctioned post.
- Build confidence in students to face new challenges.
- Arrange pre-service programs for ECE teachers that provide knowledge on how to build holistic development among students.
- To examine issues and resolve them for better execution of the ECE program.

Recommendations for Future Research

- Further research on ECE can be done on the divisional level.
- Further studies may use qualitative methods.
- Future research may use experimental research.

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