

Group, Circle Time Strategies and Pre-Primary School Pupils Acquisition of Social and Motor Skills in Akwa Ibom State

Kingsley Ezechinyere Nwachukwu & Ekanem Samuel Umoffia

Department of Early childhood and Special Education, University of Uyo, Uyo Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the effect of group and circle time teaching strategies on pre-primary school pupils' acquisition of social and motor skills in Akwa Ibom South Senatorial District. six hypotheses were formulated to guide the study. The study adopted the pre-test, post-test quasi experimental research design. The population of the study was all the 5091 pre-primary school pupils in public primary schools in Akwa Ibom South Senatorial District. A sample of 240 pre-primary school pupils was selected to take part in the study using multi-stage sampling procedure. Two instruments entitled "Social Skill Observation Scale (SSOS) and Motor Skill Observation Scale (MSOS)" were used in collecting data for the study. The instruments were face validated by three experts. Inter-rater reliability was conducted for the two instruments, and Pearson Product Moment Correlation was used to determine the reliability of the instruments, which yielded coefficients of .85 and .81 for SSOS and MSOS respectively. Analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) was used to test the hypotheses. All the hypotheses were tested at .05 level of significance. The findings of the study indicated that there is no significant difference in the acquisition of social and motor skills among pre-primary school pupils taught using circle time and group teaching method. It was concluded that circle time and group method of teaching are effective methods in developing social skills among pre-primary school pupils. It was recommended among others that teachers should make use of both group method of teaching and circle time in teaching social and motor skills among pre-primary school pupil.

INTRODUCTION

Social skills are critical to successful functioning in life. These skills enable individuals to know what to say, to make good choices, and how to behave appropriately in different situations. Social skills are components of behaviour that help an individual understand and adapt across a variety of social settings. A child develops such qualities of behaviour by observing people and the environment around him/her. It is very easy for the individual who has adequate social skills to establish and maintain relationships in his / her life (Sharma et al., 2016). Social skills are the skills facilitating interaction and communication with the society i.e. the people of the society through the use of appropriate language, eye contact, and relevant questions. Social skills have an important role in establishing and maintaining good relationships with other people and obeying social rules. Basically, social skills are the components of behaviour that help us to adapt across the variety of social settings and enable us to get adjusted in the society. In the words of Walker (2017), social skills are the set of competencies that allow us to initiate and maintain positive social relationships, contribute to peer acceptance and to a satisfactory school adjustment, and allow us to cope effectively with social environment. The development of social skills are very important for proper functioning in life. These skills help us to know how to make good decisions in life, what to say to others, how to ask others for help and how to maintain good relationships in the society. Social skills enable an individual to behave in diverse situations.

Children's social skills are constantly developing at different ages and stages. Skills build upon earlier skills, are often inter-related and affect other areas of development such as language, thinking, planning and decision making. Children's development of social skills is also dependent upon development in these other areas associated brain growth. Babies and toddlers engage in more concrete thinking based on what they can see. Preschoolers begin to have more conscious control and use abstract thinking, such as understanding of the past and the future to guide their thoughts, feelings and actions (Sharma et al. 2016). However, it is useful to

remember that these skills are just beginning in preschoolers and that they may find it difficult to make responsible decisions and do the right thing on their own. Aside from social skills, motor skill is another important skill that children need to develop in order to function effectively in the society.

The development of motor skills is considered important for children's physical, social, and psychological development and may even be the foundation for an active lifestyle, since several studies have shown a positive association between the development of motor skills and higher levels of physical activity (Lubans et al., 2017; Fisher et al., 2015). Consequently, there is evidence of many health benefits to be gained from an improvement in motor skills. For instance, it has been demonstrated that good motor skills positively influence cardiorespiratory fitness and body weight as well as sports participation (D'Hondt et al., 2016; Krombholz, 2013, Nwachukwu, Idongest, & Johnson 2021). all suggesting that early competency in motor skills may have important health implications. Furthermore, there are indications of relationships with language development and general wellbeing (Hestbaek et al, 2017; Viholainen, et al., 2014). There are also indications that the level of motor skills remains stable over time and motor development deficits observed in early childhood are still apparent in adolescence (Branta, et al., 2013). Therefore, toddler and preschool age appears to be a particularly important period for the development of motor skills. Early childhood is also the age where practicing fundamental movement skills is necessary to create a foundation for more complex movement activities of daily living, recreation, and sports in later childhood (Gallahue and Ozmun, 2015). The development of social and motor skills is such a key issue with young children that a number of teaching methods such as group activities and circle time have been advocated to help young children develop these skills.

Group activities or group work is a method of instruction that gets pupils to work together in groups. Working in groups' techniques in primary education can be efficiently applied to teach lots of subjects. Experimental learning comes true in group workings and a student can learn more efficiently and permanently with his/her own experiences. Children cannot just be put into groups and expect them to work well together. It is well known that pupils need to have the skills to communicate effectively through listening, explaining and sharing ideas. But effective group work involves more than this; pupils have to learn to trust and respect each other (Gillies, 2013). They also need skills on how to plan and organize their group work, make considerable group decisions, reach a compromise and avoid petty disputes. Group studies techniques have an important place especially in primary education. According to Veldman et al. (2020), pupils who are highly active in group studies can learn more effectively and improve friendship and the ability of cooperation; so he/she is socially developed. The group studies, planned according to the subject which will be discussed, take attention of pupils to the subject, provide pupils to be active and enrich education activities. A pupil can learn better by doing and taking part in group studies. Aside from group activities, circle time also bring pupils together.

Circle time is a time for important social interactions among young children. It helps develop positive relationships between pupils through engaging in fun activities. It is also used to address certain issues identified in the class such as too much noise and talking during class lessons. Preschool circle time activities keep pupils occupied. It helps them transit from one part of the day to the next. During circle time, the teacher sees to it that each child is given the opportunity to be involved. Children are seated in a circle either on their chairs or the floor. Most of the time, an object is passed around the circle to show whose turn it is to speak. Some of the activities in a circle time include musical games, cooperative games, talking and listening exercises, drama activities and a lot more! (Children Central, 2018).

One of the greatest benefits a child can get from circle time is the opportunity to socialize. The activities are excellent ways for pupils to get along with other pupils and adults. They get to learn more about themselves as they relate to their fellow pupils as well as teachers. Nurturing a child's social skills early is important. It will prepare them for kindergarten and elementary school. It will help them in their future academic and professional performance (Children Central, 2018).

Considering the perceived effectiveness of group techniques and circle time, one could wonder why some children who have completed the pre-primary level of education still appear reserved and hardly mix with others. Could it be that these methods of instructions are not used by their teachers or that they are not effective as expected in developing social skills among pupils? This study is conducted to determine the effectiveness of

group teaching technique and circle time on the development of social and motor skills among pre-primary school pupils in Akwa Ibom South Senatorial District.

Statement of the Problem

One's achievement in life depends not only on one's cognitive ability, but also on the development of acceptable social and effective motor skills. The development of social skills is important as the success or failure of our day-to-day relationship with others greatly depends on it. Individuals with acceptable social skills who relate effectively with others are likely to be loved, needed and accepted by others. Motor skills on the other hand are important as our ability to manipulate various aspects of our environment depends on it. At tender age, some of the expected motor skills one should develop are writing, drawing, colouring, assembling of toys among others.

In our society today, many parents and caregivers believe that when children are sent to school at a very early age, the child is going to develop various skills early in life that would help in the child's life long education and development. This belief prompts many parents to enrol their children in the pre-primary education section of the school at a very early age. At this level of education, many teachers make use of educational videos, songs and rhymes to keep these young ones busy, which in turn helps in the cognitive development of these children. However, some of these children still cry when they are dropped at school by their parents and find it difficult to write alphabets even after the pre-primary section, which could be a deficiency in the development of social and motor skills among these children.

Teaching strategies affect the response of pupils and could determine to a great extent a positive or negative outcome. Educational researchers have recommended group, circle time as effective teaching methods for all-round development of pre-primary school pupils. However, little attention has been paid to the use of these methods in teaching pre-primary school pupils. To determine the effectiveness of group, circle time as a method of teaching in the acquisition of social and motor skills among pre-primary school pupils in Akwa Ibom South Senatorial District, this study was conducted.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study was to determine the effect of group, circle time and pre-primary school pupils' acquisition of social and motor skills in Akwa Ibom South Senatorial District. Specifically, the study sought to;

determine the difference in the acquisition of social skills between pre-primary school pupils taught with group activities and those taught with circle time.

determine the difference in the acquisition of social skill between male and female pre-primary school pupils taught using group activities.

determine the difference in the acquisition of social skill between male and female pre-primary school pupils taught using circle time.

determine the difference in the acquisition of motor skills between pre-primary school pupils taught with group activities.

determine the difference in the acquisition of motor skill between male and female pre-primary school pupils taught using group activities.

determine the difference in the acquisition of motor skill between male and female pre-primary school pupils taught using circle time.

Research Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were formulated

- i. There is no significant difference in the acquisition of social skills between pre-primary school pupils taught with group activities and those taught with circle time.
- ii. There is no significant difference in the acquisition of social skill between male and female pre-primary school pupils taught using group activities.
- iii. There is no significant difference in the acquisition of social skill between male and female pre-primary school pupils taught using circle time.
- iv. There is no significant difference in the acquisition of motor skills between pre-primary school pupils taught with group activities.
- v. There is no significant difference in the acquisition of motor skill between male and female pre-primary school pupils taught using group activities.
- vi. There is no significant difference in the acquisition of motor skill between male and female pre-primary school pupils taught using circle time.

Scope of the Study

This study was delimited to the use of group activities including circle time in teaching pre-primary school pupils. Only pre-primary school pupils in public primary schools in Akwa Ibom South Senatorial District were used in the study. Only acquisition of social and motor skills were to be considered in the study.

METHODOLOGY

Quasi-experimental research design was used for the study. Specifically, the study employed a non-randomized pre-test post-test control group design.

The structural representation of the design is as shown below;

O1 X O2 (Experimental group)

O3 C O4 (Control group)

Where O1, is pre-test score for experimental group.

O2, is post-test score for experimental group.

O3, is pre-test score for control group.

O4, is post-test score for control group.

The study was conducted in Akwa Ibom South Senatorial District. Akwa Ibom South Senatorial District also known as Eket Senatorial District in Akwa Ibom State in Nigeria covers 12 Local Government Areas. These areas include Ikot Abasi, Mkpato Enin, Eastern Obolo, Onna, Eket, Esit Eket, Ibeno, Okobo, Oron, Udung Uko, Urue offong/ Oruko and Mbo. Eket Local Government Area occupies the South Central portion of Akwa Ibom State territorial expanses spanning Northwards between Latitudes 4o33'1" and 4o45'1" and Eastwards between Longitudes 7o52'1" and 5o02'1". The population of the study was made up of all the 5091 pre-primary school pupils in public primary schools in Akwa Ibom South Senatorial District. The sample for this study comprised 240 pre-primary school pupils in Akwa Ibom South Senatorial District. Multi-stage sampling procedure was adopted in selecting the sample.

Two researcher made observation instruments tagged "Social Skill Observation Scale (SSOS) and Motor Skill Observation Scale (MSOS), were used for data collection. Face validation was conducted for the instrument. The instruments were given to three experts to validate. Inter-rater reliability was conducted for the instrument. The instrument was administered to a sample of 20 pupils that were not part of the study sample,

but from the population and rated by two teachers. The scores were subjected to Pearson Product Moment Correlation to determine the reliability coefficient of the instrument, which yielded values of .85 and .81 for the Social Skill Observation Scale (SSOS) and Motor Skill Observation Scale (MSOS) respectively. Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) was used to test the hypotheses. All the hypotheses were tested at .05 level of significance.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Hypothesis 1

There is no significant difference in the acquisition of social skills between pre-primary school pupils taught with group activities and those taught with circle time.

Table 1: Analysis of Covariance of the Difference in Social Skills between Male and Female Pre-primary School Pupils Taught Using Group Activities

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	3.067a	2	1.533	.116	.891
Intercept	2481.227	1	2481.227	186.982	.000
Pretest	.771	1	.771	.058	.810
Group	1.073	1	1.073	.081	.776
Error	2985.718	225	13.270		
Total	195143.000	228			
Corrected Total	2988.785	227			

a. R Squared = .001(Adjusted R Squared = .008)

The results in Table 1 show the summary of analysis of covariance of the difference in social skills between pre-primary school pupils taught using group activities and those taught using circle time. As shown in the table, the F-value of .081 is not significant since the p-value of .776 is greater than .05 level of significance at 1 and 225 degrees of freedom. Therefore, the null hypothesis which stated that there is no significant difference in the acquisition of social skills between pre-primary school pupils taught with group activities and those taught with circle time is retained.

Hypothesis 2

There is no significant difference in the acquisition of social skill between male and female pre-primary school pupils taught using group activities.

Table 2: Analysis of Covariance of the Difference in Social Skills between Male and Female Pre-primary School Pupils Taught Using Group Activities

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	76.123a	2	38.062	2.895	.060
Intercept	1959.785	1	1959.785	149.038	.000

Pretest	70.780	1	70.780	5.383	.022
Gender	7.887	1	7.887	.600	.440
Error	1433.305	109	13.150		
Total	95238.000	112			
Corrected Total	1509.429	111			
a. R Squared = .050 (Adjusted R Squared = .033)					

The results in Table 2 show the summary of analysis of covariance of the difference in social skills between male and female pre-primary school pupils taught using group activities. As shown in the table, the F-value of .600 is not significant since the p-value of .440 is greater than .05 level of significance at 1 and 109 degrees of freedom. Therefore, the null hypothesis which stated that there is no significant difference in the acquisition of social skills between male and female pre-primary school pupils taught with group activities is retained.

Hypothesis 3

There is no significant difference in the acquisition of social skill between male and female pre-primary school pupils taught using circle time.

Table 3: Analysis of Covariance of the Difference in Social Skills between Male and Female Pre-primary School Pupils Taught Using Circle Time

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	77.536a	2	38.768	3.130	.048
Intercept	575.637	1	575.637	46.478	.000
Pretest	76.493	1	76.493	6.176	.014
Gender	1.362	1	1.362	.110	.741
Error	1399.524	113	12.385		
Total	99905.000	116			
Corrected Total	1477.060	115			
a. R Squared = .052 (Adjusted R Squared = .036)					

The results in Table 3 show the summary of analysis of covariance of the difference in social skills between male and female pre-primary school pupils taught using circle time. As shown in the table, the F-value of .110 is not significant since the p-value of .741 is greater than .05 level of significance at 1 and 113 degrees of freedom. Therefore, the null hypothesis which stated that there is no significant difference in the acquisition of social skills between male and female pre-primary school pupils taught using circle time is retained.

Hypothesis 4

There is no significant difference in the acquisition of motor skills between pre-primary school pupils taught with group activities and circle time.

Table 4: Analysis of Covariance of the Difference in the Acquisition of Motor Skills between Pre-primary School Pupils Taught with Group Activities and Circle Time

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	450.061a	2	225.030	47.294	.000
Intercept	440.032	1	440.032	92.480	.000
Pretest	449.301	1	449.301	94.428	.000
Group	30.774	1	30.774	6.468	.012
Error	1070.584	225	4.758		
Total	42831.000	228			
Corrected Total	1520.645	227			
a. R Squared = .296 (Adjusted R Squared = .290)					

The results in Table 3 show the summary of analysis of covariance of the difference in motor skills between pre-primary school pupils taught using group activities and those taught using circle time. As shown in the table, the F-value of 6.468 is not significant since the p-value of .012 is less than .05 levels of significance at 1 and 225 degrees of freedom. Therefore, the null hypothesis which stated that there is no significant difference in the acquisition of motor skills between pre-primary school pupils taught with group activities and those taught with circle time is rejected. Hence, there is significant difference in the acquisition of motor skills between pre-primary school pupils taught with group activities and those taught with circle time.

Hypothesis 5

There is no significant difference in the acquisition of motor skill between male and female pre-primary school pupils taught using group activities.

Table 5: Analysis of Covariance of the Difference in Motor Skills between Male and Female Pre-primary School Pupils Taught Using Group Activities

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	28.849a	2	14.425	2.285	.107
Intercept	559.555	1	559.555	88.641	.000
Pretest	27.845	1	27.845	4.411	.038
Gender	.378	1	.378	.060	.807
Error	688.071	109	6.313		
Total	20833.000	112			
Corrected Total	716.920	111			
a. R Squared = .040 (Adjusted R Squared = -.023)					

The results in Table 5 show the summary of analysis of covariance of the difference in motor skills between male and female pre-primary school pupils taught using group activities. As shown in the table, the F-value of .060 is not significant since the p-value of .807 is greater than .05 level of significance at 1 and 109 degrees of freedom. Therefore, the null hypothesis which stated that there is no significant difference in the acquisition of motor skills between male and female pre-primary school pupils taught with group activities is retained.

Hypothesis 6

There is no significant difference in the acquisition of motor skill between male and female pre-primary school pupils taught using circle time.

Table 6: Analysis of Covariance of the Difference in Motor Skills between Male and Female Pre-primary School Pupils Taught Using Circle Time

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	545.312a	2	272.656	119.579	.000
Intercept	45.044	1	45.044	19.755	.000
Pretest_M	536.484	1	536.484	235.287	.000
Gender	1.929	1	1.929	.846	.360
Error	257.654	113	2.280		
Total	21998.000	116			
Corrected Total	802.966	115			
a. R Squared = .679 (Adjusted R Squared = .673)					

The results in Table 6 show the summary of analysis of covariance of the difference in motor skills between male and female pre-primary school pupils taught using circle time. As shown in the table, the F-value of .846 is not significant since the p-value of .360 is greater than .05 levels of significance at 1 and 113 degrees of freedom. Therefore, the null hypothesis which stated that there is no significant difference in the acquisition of motor skills between male and female pre-primary school pupils taught using circle time is retained.

Findings of the Study

1. There is no significant difference in the social skills of pre-primary school pupils taught using circle time and those taught using group activities.

2. There is no significant difference in the acquisition of social skills between male and female pre-primary school pupils taught using group activities.

There is no significant difference in the acquisition of social skills between male and female pre-primary school pupils taught using circle time.

There is no significant difference motor skills between male and female pre-primary school pupils taught using group activities.

Motor skills of male pre-primary school pupils taught using group activities is greater than that of their female counterpart.

There is no significant difference in the acquisition of motor skills between male and female pre-primary school pupils taught using circle time.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Social Skill of Pre-primary School Pupils Taught Using Group Activities and Circle Time

The result of the acquisition of social skills between pre-primary school pupils taught using group activities and those taught using circle time indicated that there is no significant difference in their acquisition of social skills. The finding of this study is in line with the words of Veldman et al. (2020) who stated that pupils who are highly active in group studies can learn more effectively and improve friendship and the ability of cooperation; so he/she is socially developed.

Social Skill of Male and Female Pre-primary School Pupils Taught Using Group Activities

The finding of the difference in acquisition of social skills between male and female pre-primary school pupils taught using group activities indicated that there is no significant difference in the acquisition of social skills between male and female pre-primary school pupils taught using group activities. The finding of this study is similar to that of Ekinci-Vural (2016) who conducted a study aimed at developing and supporting basic social skills of pre-schoolers taught by group teaching approach and reported no significant difference in the acquisition of social skills among male and female pupils.

Social Skills of Male and Female Pre-primary School Pupils Taught Using Circle Time

The finding of the difference in the acquisition of social skills between male and female pre-primary school pupils taught using circle time indicated that there is no significant difference in the acquisition of social skills between male and female pre-primary school pupils taught using circle time. As stated by Unamba et al. (2020), circle time helps to encourage the development of positive relationships, self-discipline, conflict resolution, assertive communication and democratic group processes alongside the skills of speaking, listening, observing, critical thinking and concentrating which are important social skills needed by all to function effectively in the society.

Motor Skill of Pre-primary School Pupils Taught Group Activities and Circle Time

The finding of the difference in the acquisition of motor skills by pre-primary school pupils taught using group activities and circle time indicated that there is a significant difference in the acquisition of social skills among pupils taught using group activities and those taught using circle time. This is supported by Strevig (2019) who stated that motor skills are not only critical life skills that enable us to go about our daily lives effectively and safely; motor skills are also important determinates of our ability to participate in our culture, and develop and maintain a physically active lifestyle.

Motor Skill of Male and Female Pre-primary School Pupils Taught Group Activities

The finding of the difference in the acquisition of motor skills between male and female pre-primary school pupils taught using group activities indicated that there is no significant difference in the acquisition of motor skills between male and female pre-primary school pupils taught using group activities. The finding of this study is similar to that of Sheikh et al. (2015) who reported no significant difference in the development of motor skills among male and female pre-primary school pupil.

Motor Skill of Male and Female Pre-primary School Pupils Taught Using Circle Time

The finding of the difference in acquisition of motor skills between male and female pre-primary school pupils taught using circle time indicated that there is no significant difference in the acquisition of motor skills between male and female pre-primary school pupils. The finding of this study is similar to that of Njoku et al. (2022) who conducted a study on circle time activities as correlates of language, motor and cognitive skills

development among preschoolers in Imo state and reported no significant difference in the motor skills of male and female pupils.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of the study on the effectiveness of group, circle time as a method of teaching in the acquisition of social and motor skills among pre-primary school pupils in Akwa Ibom South Senatorial District, it was concluded that circle time and group method of teaching are effective methods in developing social skills among pre-primary school pupils. This is also because the two methods are not gender sensitive in the development of social skills among pre-primary school pupil. It was concluded that group activities is more effective in the development of manipulative motor skills than circle time among pre-primary school pupils.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made.

Teachers should make use of both group method of teaching and circle time in teaching social skills among pre-primary school pupils. This is because the two methods are effective in the development of social skills.

Teachers should make use of circle time in teaching social skills to pupils regardless of their gender since the method is not gender sensitive.

Teachers should make use of group methods in teaching social skills to pupils regardless of their gender since the method is not gender sensitive.

School Administrators should ensure that teachers use group activities in teaching pre-primary school pupils in order to develop acceptable social and motor skills.

Female pupils should be encouraged to participate fully in group activities in order to develop effective motor skills.

Parents should encourage their children to take part in various school activities in order to develop effective life skills.

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