

Early Childhood Education and Inculcation of Peaceful Co-Existence Skills in Nigeria Society

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Abstract

The study investigated early childhood education and inculcation of peaceful co-existence skills in Nigeria society. The study adopted the correlational research design. The population of the study was 572 headteachers and the sample size was 57 representing 10% of the total population of the study. Two instruments were used for the study titled (ECTCRQ) and inculcation of peaceful co-existence questionnaire (IPCQ). The reliability coefficient obtained was 0.71. Three hypotheses were formulated and used for the study simple linear regression was used to analyze the research questionnaire and hypotheses. Findings revealed that teaching of tolerance ($P = 0.002 < 0.05$) and teaching of co-operation ($P = 0.02 < 0.05$) all had significant relationship with inculcation of peaceful co-existence, while teaching of respect ($P = 0.84 > 0.05$) was not significantly related. Based on the findings, it was recommended that teachers in special education centres, parents and significant others should continue to teach the younger ones' tolerance since it has been found to have a significant relationship with peaceful co-existence.

Keywords: Tolerance, co-operation, respect, co-Existence.

Introduction

The need for peaceful co-existence cannot be overemphasized in a sustainable society, because it brings a harmonious living among individuals in the society. Peace, as a concept, is primarily concerned with the creation and maintenance of a just order in a society. Mbaegbu and Umezina (2012) suggested that sustainable peace simply means a long-lasting peace. Morgan as cited in Enu and Ugwu (2011) advanced that sustained peace occurs when an individual understands the true nature of things in the society – class, gender, ethnic equality and much more.

Enu and Ugwu (2011) further mentioned that peaceful co-existence means building a society in which positive peace is secured; peace without structural violence such as poverty, and discrimination or a society which guarantees human security. It is all about how to transform a conflicting society characterized with conflict; violence, civil strife into peaceful society in which human beings can live freely.

Peaceful co-existence is an absence of war and deliberate avoidance of violence (Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English, 2000). Additionally, man as cited in Bakut (2016) subdivided peace into six different meanings as follows:

- i. The absence of War (absence of direct violence);
- ii. Justice and development (absence of structural violence);

- iii. Respect and tolerance between people;
- iv. Gaia Harmony or balance in, and with, the ecosystem- ecosphere);
- v. Tranquility or inner peace (spiritual peace); and
- vi. Wholeness and making whole (being complete).

Another relevant component to understanding peace as inferred by Graltung as cited in Bakut (2016) is the classification of peace into negative, it means that the peace in existence includes only, the absence of direct violence, war, fear and conflict at individual, national, regional and international level. On the other hand, when peace is said to be positive, it means that the peace in existence includes the absence of unjust structures, unequal relationship, justice and inner peace at individual levels. Thus, Gutung (2016) cited in Bakut asserted that it is the real or complete peace, since it includes both the absence of war (direct violence) and absence of unjust structure (indirect violence). Nowadays, violence and conflicts pose the greatest development challenges in the world. Children and education system are often on the front line of these violent conflicts. Children are very important for the survival of any society. Their importance emphasizes the need for proper development. Children are highly valued in Nigeria. The care provided for children at early childhood plays a fundamental role in their development to adulthood, that is why the federal republic of Nigeria in the National Policy on Education Document (FRN, 2014) emphasized among its objectives the development of sense of co-operation and team-spirit which will lead to inculcation of peaceful co-existence skills. When children have this sense of co-operation and team-spirit in them from the early stage it will help them develop the skills of tolerance and peaceful co-existence.

Conversely, in a situation where immorality is the order of the day, peaceful co-existence becomes difficult for early inculcation of peaceful co-existence to take place in early childhood education is expedient. Major players in this early childhood education are the caregivers. The care giver is responsible for molding the character of children towards peaceful co-existence in Nigeria and else where. At infancy, the child's mind is still vacant, that is what John Lock called "tabula rasa. It is at this stage that good values are instilled in the child and attitudes formed at this early age are often difficult to eradicate at adulthood. Childhood is a very delicate period which forms the basis upon which the total personality of an individual is built in life. Childhood is like the foundation of a house. Much of what a person becomes in future therefore depends largely on how his childhood is formed. Early child undergoes a process of learning and socialization till adulthood. During the process, he acquires and learns a lot of values, attitudes, norms beliefs, fact, languages, technical skills, among others. He then grows up with these and as a result, he makes his contributions to the society based on these precious learning. If a child has been helped to lay a sound and solid peaceful foundation, he will later be an asset to himself, his parents and the society at large.

Early childhood education on its own connotes the education given in an institution to children 0-5 years old, prior to their entering into primary school. It is the first education given to a child, though not as formed as primary education. Even if education at this level is regarded as informal, it forms the basis upon which successful primary education. Some of the activities that take place during early childhood education are mainly through play. During play, the caregiver has to involve the children in activities that promote peace,

respect, tolerance, co-operation and teamwork. This implies without doubt that early childhood education has a great role to play in the inculcation of peaceful co-existence in any given society, including Nigeria.

Peace education is highly essential to achieve in the Nigeria educational system, this is because schools remain an epicenter of knowledge transmission, and must be used as a channel to inculcate the right type of values, skills and attitude to peace and conflict resolution to these children from cradle. Peace education has to do with the planned timely prevention and management of conflict, violence, adequate human relationship, peaceful co-existence, mutual understanding, tolerance, humanity, respect, for life and sanity of blood, unity and internal cooperation among various tribes. Early childhood education therefore must be targeted at the removal of destructive attitude such as prejudice, stereotype and hatred which make people choose war to peace, violence to non-violence, segregation to cooperation and destruction to production and much more Ogundele et al (2014).

A peaceful environment is needed for the development of any nation. Falade, Adeyimi And Olawo (2010) cited in Ikenga (2021) postulated that peace education encourages peaceful co-existence, mutual understanding, tolerance, respect, co-operation, obedience, violence management, and discourages conflicts. No nation can thrive in a state of conflicts, violence in line with the foregoing the Nigeria government should introduces the study of peace education in schools as a panacea to the issue of conflicts in Nigeria. The national policy on education stated that education is an instrument for change and can be used as an instrument to achieve a self-sufficient, sustainable and United Nation, peaceful environments are essentials for the development of any nation. No nation can thrive in a state of conflicts, violence and bloodshed, Falade et al (2010) cited in Ikenga (2021).

Early Childhood Education and Inculcation of Peaceful Co-existence

As earlier inferred, early childhood education is the education offered in an institution to children aged 0-5years who have not attained the age of primary education. When children are caught early in the knowledge of peace and the significance of peaceful co-existence in any sustainable society such society is bound to succeed because there will be peace, harmony, love for one another, respect for one another and interpersonal tolerance. Falade et al as cited in Ikenga (2021) revealed that peace education which starts from early childhood level deals with the teaching of skills and behaviours that promote tolerance, mutual understanding, peaceful co-existence and ability to resolve interpersonal and violence amicably; Kester (2008) opined that early peace education is very vital because it will enable children to acquire the skill to embrace a positive attitude of handling their daily activities with peace. Hence, early childhood education is a great asset in inculcating peaceful co-existence through the caregivers in any society.

The Caregivers and Inculcation of Peaceful Co-existence

No early childhood education can successfully be operated without the caregivers. The caregivers are the resource persons in the care centers, hence, the importance and roles of the caregivers cannot be over emphasized. Children need to develop their knowledge and skills to enable them understand the world around them, as well as dwell in peace with people around

them. The caregivers are to be well informed in order that they can impact these knowledge and skills to children. Based on this, one can say that caregivers' role in inculcating peaceful co-existence to children is enormous. Some of the roles include:

Exposing the Children to Understand Cultural Practices

Caregivers are to expose children to understand their cultural practices that encourage peaceful co-existence, not only their own cultural practices, but also that of others. This will instill the skill of tolerance and respect for peaceful co-existence. Through the caregivers, children are to be taught how to work co-operatively with others; they are to be taught how to work in teams and how to resolve differences without involving in conflicts. They are to be taught how to embrace other peoples' ideas, cultures and tradition with love.

A child who has been taught to be peaceful tolerant and loving, is in no doubt morally fit. In the past, when moral instruction was part of the school curriculum in Africa, children were refined and embraced peace with ease. There existed patriotism, ethics, caring, compassion and co-operation. In recent time, it seems that attention has shifted from peaceful co-existence to violent acts among people (children inclusive). There are issues of school riots, cultism, arson, kidnapping, murder, bombing, armed robbery, among others. When children are taught the virtues of honesty, kindness, perseverance and fairness in dealing with others in early childhood by caregivers, they grow up in the direction of the above virtues. In the view of Kohlberg et al cited in Njoku (2012), goodness in terms of peaceful co-existence is developed from the inside of an individual rather than being imposed from the outside; hence the caregiver is the centre player here.

Peace education enables children (learners) to develop the basic abilities such as tolerance, non-violence, conflict resolution and uphold culture of peace (Akunole, 2010). Noah and Desunmu as cited in Ikenga (2021) believe that peace education helps all sorts of learners with the essential knowledge, ability and standard required in eliminating violence and injustice in order to promote peaceful co-existence in a sustainable society (Nigeria inclusive).

Tolerance and Inculcation of Peaceful Co-existence

In reality, there might not be any education branded as 'tolerance education'. However, when tolerance is encouraged, indirectly, it is taught and can be referred to as tolerance education. teaching children the virtue of tolerance is a good one. This will make them to be less judgemental, more appreciative of others, their cultures, their tradition and beliefs. From personal experience when in far Greece in the 1980's white children were actually scared about the blacks and called them different names. Today however, that notion has changed because from early childhood, children are now taught the blacks are as human as they themselves. When children see the blacks, they no longer run away. Same is applicable to Nigerian children. In the past, when white people passed on the streets, one would hear children shout "Oyibo pepper", but today, the tide has changed. Children no longer attach importance to the appearance of the white on the street, this is because much education has been given on this issue. In Nigeria also, no one attaches importance anymore to the outcast system because it is now taught that all humans are the same, and are created by the same

God. Both those branded as outcast and those called free-born can now buy and sell in the same market, hence there is peaceful co-existence.

A study conducted by Nwaubari and Okafor (2015) found that peace education emanating from early childhood are very necessary in Nigeria because it teaches and promotes tolerance among children and grown-ups. It curtails the spirit of non-tolerance that causes conflict all over the world. Corroborating with the above findings, Ogunyemi (2013) from his study and findings concurred with Nwaubari and Okafor.

Co-operation and Inculcation of Peaceful Co-existence

Peace education and peaceful co-existence does not involve only knowing how to tolerate, it also extends to doing the right. To ensure that children co-exist peacefully, co-operation is highly maintained. A pluralistic nation like Nigeria needs such education for co-operative cohesion. When everybody does what is right and co-operates, peace, justice, progress and development become the climax of the day. Peace education teaches co-operation from the formative years and imperative because this stage is suitable to prepare children on how to co-operate with one another in to love and towards achieving a common goal. Doing this will lead to peaceful co-existence. For the skill of co-operation to exist in children, the caregiver is to encourage interaction and friendliness among them because no one is an island.

Interaction plays a key role in the development of co-operation skill. Co-operation deals with how children (and other humans) relate and work well with one another. Children should be encouraged to engage in activities that will enhance their acceptance of themselves and others towards achieving a common goal. They should be taught how to play with others co-operatively; how to share their toys and books with others. Children should also be encouraged to show sympathy, respect and wishes to one another. All these will enhance the children's ability to co-operate with others, hence, achieve peaceful co-existence (Njoku, 2012).

Respect and Inculcation of Peaceful Co-existence

The skill of respect is a social skill that is acquired gradually. This can be acquired from parents or from caregivers. The focus here is childhood education which takes part in early childhood centres; So, the caregiver is directly involved. The caregiver therefore is to be the role model to the children by respecting their rights so that in turn, they will learn respect for other children's rights and promote peaceful co-existence.

Children are to be taught that respect is reciprocal, and that mutual respect brings or promotes love and friendliness, which in turn promote peaceful co-existence. Maduiké et al (2013) states that respect helps children to play together in love; and that play is essential to children's all round development and acts as a natural medium; hence, it helps them to discover some challenges and difficulties of life together. Trying to find solutions to these challenges and difficulties leads to peaceful co-existence.

This study is centred on the role of early childhood education through the caregivers in inculcating peaceful co-existence in a sustainable society.

Peaceful co-existence is paramount in every sustainable society. For peaceful co-existence to be attained, it is imperative that peace education be introduced right from early childhood

years and in the early childhood education centres, geared by the caregivers. Undoubtfully, in Nigeria, the Federal Republic encouraged that there should be development of a sense of co-operation and team- spirit as one of her objectives of Early Child care Development and Education. this is to encourage and promote peaceful co-existence among the citizenry. Even sociologists, moralistic such as Kohlberg advocated a peaceful co-existence among people of all societies, meaning that peaceful co-existence is expedient. The question now is “in spite of all these advocations, are people tolerant, co-operative and respectfult for one another?” This is the problem that this study is set to find answer to.

Aim and Objectives of the Study

The general aim of this study is to investigate role of early childhood education on the inculcation of peaceful co-existence skills in a sustainable society. Specifically, the objectives of the study are:

1. Determine the relationship between the teaching of tolerance in early childhood education centres and inculcation of peaceful co-existence in Nigeria;
2. Ascertain the relationship between the teaching of co-operation in early childhood education centres and inculcation of peaceful co-existence in Nigeria, and
3. Find out the relationship between the teaching of respect in early childhood education centres and inculcation of peaceful co-existence in Nigeria.

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses are tested based on the objectives of the study and research questions:

- HO₁: There is no significant relationship between the teaching of tolerance in early childhood education centres and inculcation of peaceful co-existent in Nigeria.
- HO₂: Significant relationship does not exist between teaching of co-operation in early childhood education centres and inculcation of peaceful co-existence in Nigeria.
- HO₃: Teaching of respect in early childhood education centres does not significantly relate to inculcation of peaceful co-existence in Nigeria.

Methods

The study adopted the correlation research design, the population of the study is 572 head teachers and the sample size used was 57 representing 10% of the total population of the study. Two instruments were used to elicit response from the respondents. They were “Early Childhood Tolerance, Co-operation and Respect Questionnaire (ECTCRQ) and Inculcation of Peaceful Co-existence Questionnaire (IPCQ)”. The ECTCRQ contains 15 items divided into two sections, A and B. Section A dealt with the demographic data of the respondents while Section B contained 15 items (5 each) divided into 3 sub-sections, measuring tolerance, Co-Operation, and Respects. Also, the IPCQ was a 10 item 4-point likert scale which measured the level of inculcation of peaceful co-existence. The instruments validated by experts in the Department of Early Childhood/Primary Education, test-retest method was employed to obtain a reliability index of 0.71. Out of the 57 questionnaire items administered, there was a 100% retrieval, meaning that none got lost. The exercise lasted for 10 working days.

Data generated from the research questions and hypotheses were analysed using the simple Linear regression at 0.05 level of significance.

Results

Hypothesis One: there is no significant relationship between teaching of tolerance in early childhood education centers and inculcation of peaceful co-existence in Nigeria

Table One: Simple linear regression of relationship between teaching of tolerance in early childhood education centers and inculcation of peaceful co-existence.

Model	R	R ²	Adj. R ²	Std. Error		
1	.768	.578	.552	1.504		
Model	Sum of Sq.	Df	Mean Sq.	F	Sig.	Result
Regression	2.54	1	2.54	15.12	.002	Significant
1 Residual	1115.70	55	20.28			
Total	1118.24	56				

Analysis in table 1 shoes that relationship between teaching of tolerance in early childhood education centers and inculcation of peaceful co-existence is 0.76. The R² value is 0.57, adjusted R² is 0.55 while the standard error is 1.54. In answering the research question, the R² value has shown that teaching of tolerance account for 57.8% of the total variation in peaceful co-existence in Nigeria. In testing the hypothesis, the regression values have shown that F values after the regression was made was 15.12 while the sig. value was 0.002. hence, since the Sig value ($p=0.002<0.05$) is less than 0.05 alpha, the hypothesis was rejected meaning that there is a significant relationship between teaching of tolerance in early childhood education centers and inculcation of peaceful co-existence in Nigeria.

Hypothesis Two: There is no significant relationship between teaching of co-operation in early childhood education centers and inculcation of peaceful co-existence in Nigeria

Table Two: Simple linear regression of relationship between teaching of co-operation in early childhood education centers and inculcation of peaceful co-existence.

Model	R	R ²	Adj. R ²	Std. Error		
1	.575	.324	.310	4.496		
Model	Sum of Sq.	Df	Mean Sq.	F	Sig.	Result
Regression	6.230	1	6.230	.308	.021	Significant
Residual	1112.016	55	20.218			
Total	1118.246	56				

Analysis in table 2 shows that the relationship between teaching of co-operation in early childhood education centers and inculcation of peaceful co-existence is 0.57. The R^2 value is 0.32, adjusted R^2 is -0.310 while the standard error is 4.496. In answering the research question, the R^2 value has shown that teaching of co-operation account for only 32.4% of the total variation in peaceful co-existence in Nigeria. In testing the hypothesis, the regression values showed that F value is 0.308 while the sig. value was 0.021. Hence, since the Sig value ($p=0.021<0.05$) is less than 0.05 alpha, the hypothesis was rejected meaning that there is actually a significant relationship between teaching of co-operation in early childhood education centers and inculcation of peaceful co-existence in Nigeria.

Hypothesis Three: there is no significant relationship between teaching of co-operation in early childhood education centers and inculcation of peaceful co-existence in Nigeria.

Table 3: Simple linear regression of relationship between teaching of respect in early childhood education centers and inculcation of peaceful co-existence.

Model	R	R ²	Adj. R ²	Std. Error		
1	.027	.001	-.017	4.507		
Model	Sum of Sq.	Df	Mean Sq.	F	Sig.	Result
Regression	.841	1	.841	.041	.84	Not significant
Residual	1117.405	55	20.316			
Total	1118.246	56				

Analysis in table 3 illustrates that the relationship between teaching of respect in early childhood education centers and inculcation of peaceful co-existence is 0.027. The R^2 value is 0.001, adjusted R^2 is -0.017 while the standard error is 4.507. In answering the research question, the R^2 value has shown that teaching of co-operation account for only 0.18% of the total variation in peaceful co-existence in Nigeria. In testing the hypothesis, the regression values showed that F value is 0.041 while the sig. value was 0.84. Hence, since the Sig value ($p=0.84>0.05$) is greater than 0.05 alpha, the hypothesis was retained meaning that there is actually no significant relationship between teaching of co-operation in early childhood education centers and inculcation of peaceful co-existence in Nigeria.

Discussion of Result

Result From table 1 shows that there is a significant relationship between teaching of tolerance in early childhood education centers and inculcation of peaceful co-existence in Nigeria. This finding means that teaching individuals how to tolerate people especially at the early childhood is a significant predictor of peaceful co-existence. The implication here is that if individuals are taught adequate tolerance, they will be able to live peacefully with others in the society. On the other hand, if they lack education on tolerance, they may not be able to live peacefully with others in the society. This finding may come because majority of the respondents are quite aware of the efficacy of tolerance in maintaining peace and order. It

could also be that majority of the respondents have first-hand experience on the positive impact of tolerance in maintaining good relationships with others. From this, individuals who lack tolerance may end up having issues and problems with people around them and vice-versa. The finding of the study is very much expected by the researchers because they are aware of the need for tolerance in a peaceful society. This means that those with high level of tolerance are able to accommodate others with varied personalities and behaviours. They are also able to adjust properly and develop empathy to others and also try to understand why others act the way they act.

Research findings two, revealed that the teaching of co-operation among children in the early childhood is a significant predictor or has a significant relationship with the inculcation of peaceful coexistence in them. This, findings mean that when individuals are taught cooperation, this will stay with them and mould their character and teach them how to relate with others. The finding of the study may also come because as considered earlier majority of the respondents are aware of the need for cooperation in fostering peaceful coexistence. Implication of this is that individuals who lack co-operation or who are not able to work with others may not be able to coexist with them or leave peacefully. It therefore implies that individuals with appropriate knowledge of cooperation will certainly grow into those that are able to leave meaning fully well with others in society in the future irrespective of others personality makeup. The finding of the study just like the first findings is expected by the researcher because the importance of cooperation in peaceful coexistence can never be underestimated. The finding is also in line with that reported by John (2010) who reported that cooperation among individuals has a significant relationship with peaceful coexistence. From the findings in research question three, it is seen that the teaching of respect to children does not have any significant relationship with the inculcation of peaceful coexistence among them. This finding surprisingly means that irrespective of the fact that children may be taught how to respect their elders and others, this will not mean that they will be able to live peacefully with others. The implication of the finding is that respect does not determine peace. It means that children are taught how to respect others does not guarantee that they will be able to leave peacefully with others. The findings of the study is surprising to the researchers because to the best of their knowledge, it has been observed that those with high level of respect and regard for others will equally learn to respect and regard their differences which automatically breeds peaceful coexistence. The finding of this study may come because of the high level of moral decadence among the youth in the society today because even when they are taught how to respect their elders, this is not also manifested in their behaviours. That they are taught how to respect does not mean that they will respect and if they do not respect despite being taught, then they may not be peaceful coexistence among them. The finding of the study however disagrees with that reported by John (2015) cited earlier who noted that respect among individuals has a significant relationship with peaceful coexistence.

Conclusion

Base on the findings of the study, the following conclusion is made which is, the teaching of tolerance and co-operation contribute to peaceful co-existence in Nigeria. Conversely, irrespective of the teaching of respect, children not be able to show respect, hence, may not peacefully with others.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made;

1. Teachers in the special education centers, parents and significant others should continue to teach the younger ones tolerance since it has been found to have a significant relationship with peaceful coexistence.
2. Councillors, teachers and others as well should teach the children what co-operation is and how to cooperate among others and also ensure that they implement these while living with others.
3. Finally, irrespective of the fact that teaching of respect has an insignificant relationship with peaceful coexistence, counselors, teachers and significant other should continue to teach respect to children as the outcome of this result could have been influenced by other factors.

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