



RESEARCH ARTICLE

KINDERGARTEN TEACHERS' AWARENESS AND PRACTICES ABOUT THE PSYCHOSOCIAL DESIRES OF EARLY CHILDHOOD CHILDREN: THE CASE OF METTU TOWN KINDERGARTEN SCHOOLS.

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Abstract

This study was conducted to investigate the awareness and practices of preschool teachers about the psychosocial desires of early childhood and the strategies they apply for supporting the Children. Qualitative research design is employed for this study. Data were collected through interview and observation from 30 preschool teachers who were purposely selected from two preschools. The collected data were analyzed through description/ narration. The results indicated that teachers had awareness on the different psychosocial problems of early childhood children from their experience. The teacher has good awareness about psychosocial desire of early childhood children. The teacher poses practically in fulfilling the children's need but the practice comes not from training or education but from experience year of staying. Teachers did know how to help the children in organized way and some of the problems that children have are beyond their capacity to help. Teachers need to include the multiple perspectives of early childhood development into early childhood teaching settings. The school needs to use incentive for early childhood teachers since the profession requires a lot of patience and persistence. Effective teachers in giving psychosocial support need to be encouraged using incentives. The teachers should be motivated in helping the child to get children's psychosocial need also the governments have to facilitate the environment which is better to teacher's motivation.

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Background of the study:-

The kindergarten years they are indeed, a time when children develop a confident self-image, beliefs, attitudes, more effective control over their emotions, new social skills, the foundations of morality, and a clear sense of themselves as boy or girl. The primary caregivers, including teachers, parents, grandparents, or other family members, deeply affect the young child's brain development and the psychosocial need through their interactions (Winter, 2010). Repetitive, positive experiences like singing, cooing, touching, holding, talking and reading are essential expressions of love that positively affect the way a young child's brain and psychosocial need develops.

Teachers have major roles in creating their student's positive socialization, academic curiosity, rigor and their emotional wellbeing (Woodhead, 2009). Teachers can communicate lifesaving messages to children, model caring

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adult behavior and have the potential to create classroom climates that help children thrive and develop. Hattie (2003) explained teachers account for about 30% of the variance in students' achievement. It is what teachers know, do, and care about which is very powerful in the learning of early childhood. Once children have a sense of autonomy, they become less contrary than they were as toddlers. Their energies are freed for tackling the psychological conflict of the preschool years: initiative versus guilt. As the word initiative suggests, young children have a new sense of purposefulness. They are eager to tackle new tasks, join in activities with peers, and discover what they can do with the help of adults.

The importance of early psychosocial need and education is not only to children who are in the mainstream but also to the special population of young children. Early childhood programs could bring these special children into the mainstream of society in their early stages of development with minimum cost. Reviewing the works of different researchers Essa, (1999) stated that: Modern early childhood education in Ethiopia is predominantly provided by the private sector followed by non-government organizations, religious institutions, etc. (ILO, 2012, Woldehanna, 2011) the government has a very little involvement in this level of education. Preschool education and the budget fixed by the government for it is not enough, although it's dominated by fee charging nursery schools and kindergarten which is set in the needs of middle class parents. Though there isn't enough public awareness on the importance of pre-school education to the child psychosocial need of children, its development nationwide is very rife, it has shown change. For instance, in 1994 E.C, some 341,315 children were enrolled in kindergarten education. Of which, 118,986 were male and the rest 165,738 were female as compared to the result in the year 2003 E.C. 382, 7. There is different between 1994 E.C and 2003 E.C. by the teacher awareness and practice about the psychosocial need of the children in the kindergarten. Research works demonstrated the importance of early care and education, family support, and innovative educational curriculum in preparing high risk and normal children for initial success in school (Currier, 2001; Kagan&Neuman, 2005; Lynch, 2007; Ramey &Ramey, 2005; Flett, 2008; Blatchford &Wood head, 2009; Wood head, Ames, Vennam, &Workineh, 2009).

Statement of the problem:-

Teaching is a unique occupation in its emphasis on establishing long-term, meaningful connections with the students. Workers in health professions (e.g., physicians, nurses, psychologists) or in business settings (e.g., sales representatives) may form deep and meaningful relationships with patients or clients, but rarely do workers in these fields spend the number of hours that most teachers spend with their students.

This study which is qualitative case study is important and needed for several reasons. First, a gap exists in the need to care of early childhood literature where perspectives of the teachers are integrated to understand the kindergarten teachers' psycho social support. Second the available literature has only focused on the needs to strengthen early childhood education (e.g. Kasahun, 2013, Woldehanna, 2011) Literatures that relate teachers kindergarten Teachers' awareness and Practices about the Psychosocial Needs of Early Childhood are based on high school and middle age school (Abeba, Misganaw, & Solomon, 2006). Third those studies that deal with preschoolers deal with those children that were thought to have behavioral problems (Teshome, 2012).

Objective of the study:-

General Objective:-

The general objective of this research was to explore kindergarten teachers' awareness and Practices about the Psychosocial Needs of Early Childhood in Mettu Town kindergarten.

Specific objective:-

The study specifically addresses the following specific objectives

1. To investigate how kindergarten teachers perceive the psychosocial desires of early childhood children
2. To examine kindergarten teacher's practices in fulfilling psychosocial desires of early childhood children.
3. To assess experience of kindergarten teachers in fulfilling of children's psychosocial needs of early childhood children.

Significance of the Study:-

The finding of the study is significant for the teacher, child, family and community as a whole for the country. The finding of this study is significant for the teachers to change their awareness and modify their practice. The finding also helps the children their psychosocial desires to be full filled. Moreover, the outcome of this study is useful for ministry of education to revise the training that is given for preschool teachers. To provide information for policy

makers to design sound policies for the country in children rights to treat, and educate, to grow so on. It might also use for other researchers as a source of data.

Delimitation of the study:-

Geographically, this study was delimited to Mettu town, Fetensa Ilu and Catholic kindergarten schools. On the other hand, conceptually, it was delimited to kindergarten teachers' awareness and practices about psychosocial desires of early childhood children.

Operational Definition of terms:-

Kindergarten Teachers:-Teachers who teach between three - eight years-olds children

Early Childhood Children:-Children who are between 2 and 8 years

Psychosocial:-emotion, personality and social expectation and interaction

Awareness:-teachers understanding.

Literature Review

General Condition of Early Childhood Education in Ethiopia:-

Unfortunately, there are major risks to sound child development in Ethiopia as a whole Africa, largely as a consequence of low levels of productivity and economic development, structural inequality, political mismanagement and conflict. The risks include child stunting, iodine and iron deficiencies, as well as low levels of cognitive and socio-emotional stimulation (Walker et al., 2007). Formally, compulsory education in Ethiopia starts at age seven in primary schools. Nevertheless, children can join pre-primary schools between age three to six depending on the availability of the program in their areas. Early childhood education is structured in the form of kindergartens and predominantly provided by the private sector, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO), communities and faith-based organizations. The government has very limited intervention on this regard. To be precise, in its 2007 report, the Ministry of Education (MOE) states that the government does not run preschool education program essentially for two main reasons. While one explanation, as stated in the document, is to enhance the involvement of the private sector in the education sector, the second justification is to maximize the government's effort in the other levels of the sector. The report concludes that as the result of government's limited intervention, enrollment rate for preschool education has remained very low, especially in rural areas of the country.

Theories of early child hood and education:-

Child development awareness has been so foundational to the field of early childhood education that erasing it would seem to leave us in a mindless limbo (Dahlberg, Moss, & Pence, 2005) stated that. The new paradigm of the sociology of childhood aligns itself with the constructivist perspective. This approach takes into account the child's "world of diversity" (Pence & Nesmenang, 2008), instead of looking at the child as a biological entity whose development is constructed in isolation, detached from the systems the child is growing. The new paradigm recognizes childhood as a social construction whose environment is constructed for and by children, within an actively negotiated set of social relations. Dahlberg, Moss, and Pence (2005) also noted the importance of examining social processes taking place in the child's everyday life.

Theories in developmental psychology underlined the importance of quality care giver-child interaction for cognitive and social development of children. Piaget and Vygotsky implicitly or explicitly, for example, acknowledged the indispensable contribution of social transaction between care givers and children to children's development. Carl (2005) also noted that it is the quality of the relationship created by the sensitive care giver that provides the framework for assistance and encouragement and promotes development. The concept of equilibration in Piaget's developmental theory, for example, presupposes the importance of active interaction between children and their environment. Accordingly, children assimilate new actions into existing schema and accommodate them into new groupings through active transaction with the environment. The forces that implicate development in children according to Piaget originate from within and without.

Teachers' awareness about early childhood stage:-

According to Smith & Shepard, (1988) most kindergarten teachers referred to either maturational or environmental influences; only a few explained student development as a complex interaction between the psychological nature of the child and the educational environments provided. A simplistic or restricted view of development may limit teachers' consideration of alternative ways to educate and intervene with children. Other studies suggest that rather than stressing individual differences in intelligence or personality as a factor in development, teachers believe that

family influences are the factor in development. Results of a study showed that parents often explain individual differences in achievement in terms of interactions between genetic and family influences; in contrast, teachers mainly attribute differences to family support (Erden, 2010).

In contrast, several studies have shown that parents embrace multiple theoretical perspectives on child development (ex., constructivist, social learning, psychoanalytic). For example, in one study, mothers accepted more than one possible explanation of a child's described behavior (McGillicuddy-De Lisi, 1992). That might be important because mothers who provide more complex explanations of child development have children with higher levels of intelligence (Sameroff, Seifer, Barocas, Zax, & Greenspan, 1987). In contrast to parents, teachers' developmental perspectives are often simple, inaccurate, and become more stereotyped and pessimistic with experience. However, a few studies indicate that educational programs designed to enlighten teachers can succeed (Camilli & Kelley, 2004). Studies indicate that novice teachers' views of children are often inaccurate because they assume that their students possess learning styles, aptitudes, interests, and problems that are similar to their own (Kagan, 1992).

Teachers practice about early childhood Psychosocial desires:-

The study by Kasahun (2013) revealed that the current kindergarten educational practices seem to promote ideology and practices from outside the country, with very little attention to traditional and cultural child-rearing the situation in Ethiopia, where long-standing indigenous realities, cultures, beliefs, thoughts, practices, events, and images are not being sufficiently valued. An example here would be the prevalence of the English language as a medium of instruction in most kindergartens in Addis. In line with this thinking, while discussing the notion of early childhood professionalism in Africa, Nsamenang (2010) has pointed out that it is important not to overlook culturally relevant and readily available indigenous values. Elaborating on his argument, Nsamenang (2010) stated that early childhood professionalism in Africa can be meaningful and respectful of children rights if they are viewed in the context of the local culture and with proper consultation of primary and stakeholders parents and the children themselves.

Psychosocial desires of early childhood:-

The stage of psychosocial development for preschoolers, according to Erikson, is initiative versus guilt. Preschoolers may take on many new experiences, despite not having all of the physical abilities necessary to be successful at everything. Guilt may occur when preschoolers are unable to accomplish a task and believe they have misbehaved. Guiding preschoolers to attempt activities within their capabilities while setting limits is appropriate (Davies, 2011). The child's experience in the first eight years of life has a critical bearing on later development. Young children require good health care, nutrition, warm and sensitive human interactions (particularly with those who care for them) and opportunities for stimulation and learning if they are to thrive and benefit from the opportunities provided in school (Alderman and Engel, 2008).

Kindergarten teachers in Ethiopia:-

In Ethiopia about a quarter of teachers are not qualified for the level at which they are expected to teach and the available qualified teachers are not evenly distributed across regions. (ILO, 2012) Kindergarten teacher education in Ethiopia is a shared responsibility between the government, nongovernmental organizations and private sectors (ILO 2012). According to Kasahun (2013) Preschool teachers training started in 1986 in Addis Ababa with three month training and a short practicum period. And he said that still this field is in question about the quality of the training starting from the beginning. As a result, the government is making an effort to shift away from private colleges and focus instead on expanding and capacitating state-owned training colleges in various regions of the country to train early year's professionals at the diploma level, both in regular and in-service training schemes. However, this is just a plan, and has not yet been put into effect (Kasahun, 2013). Policy gaps in turn have an impact on access and quality issues ,as for example in Ethiopia which lacks a national framework of policy and support and where less than 5 percent of the appropriate age group has access to preschool education which is exclusively limited to major towns.(ILO,2012). During their service time, teachers are given in-service training to upgrade themselves during summer time. And also other in-service programs are designed for those teachers who are teaching in public schools by the government. But private school teachers are not entitled (Kasahun, 2013).

Methodology:-

Research Design:-

The purpose of this study was to assess kindergarten teacher awareness and practice about the psycho social desires of early childhood children. In order to achieve this goal cross sectional survey design was used.

Research method:-

Qualitative research method was employed to gain detailed and comprehensive understanding of kindergarten teacher awareness and practice about the psycho social desires of early childhood children.

Study Area:-

The study was conducted Illubabor zone at mettu town, in Fetensa Ilu and Catholic Kindergarten schools. This area is located southwestern part of Ethiopia at distance of 600kms from capital city of Ethiopia, Addis Ababa. Fetensa Ilu kindergarten currently teaches 400 students from 3-8 years as well as Catholic kindergarten teaches 320 students from 3-8 years. The total number of students in the both school is 720 students and 30 teachers are employed in the school out of them 12 female teachers and 8 are male.

Population, Samples and Sampling Technique:-

The target populations of this study are teachers in Fetensa Ilu and Catholic Kindergarten schools. The total target population of the study is 30 teachers, 10 male and 20 female. All of them were taken as a sample, because the number of the teachers is small.

Data gathering instrument:-

Both structured and unstructured interview and observation checklist was used to collected data. Structured and unstructured interview used to collect data from teachers. Leady and Ormrod (2001) stated that interviews have distinct advantage of enabling the researcher to establish rapport with potential participants and therefore, gain their cooperation. Semi structured Interview helps to understanding issues of interest from the stand point of the participants themselves is a driving concern of qualitative research method (Merriam, 1998). The purpose of the observation was to gain additional information about the psychosocial support to the children in their classroom and on play grounds.

Source of Data:-

Both primary and secondary data were used. The primary data collected from interview and observation checklist used for qualitative analysis, and also, secondary data was reviewing written, documents, books and journals.

Method of Data analysis:-

After the completion of the data collection, each data was organized and codes were given in order to be ready for description. The data analyzed using narrative approach. This approach searches for certain themes in relation to the research questions across the data and reports Merriam (1998) describes qualitative research as requiring "...a powerful use of the researcher's own mind and body in analysis and interpretation of the data". Accordingly, the analysis was done by transcribing the recorded interviews with the interview language (Amharic) and then translated to English as accurately as possible. Finally, the main themes were identified and the categories brought together and rearranged under the themes. This involves organizing the data in to major themes or patterns that can describe and explain the phenomenon being studied (Maxwell, 2005). The findings of the study finally presented in a narrative explanation including the direct quotes of the participants.

Ethical consideration:-

To make the participants felt independent and confidential, the researcher informed them the purpose of the study and stating that there response is used only for the research purpose and kept confidential .they were also oriented that the information they give would not be personalized in any part of the study.

Results and Findings:-

After collecting the relevant data from the respondents by using semi structured and unstructured interview and observation, researchers understanding and communicating the finding other relate with the teachers perception and practice for towards aging and its psychosocial need of early childhood implication.

Table 1:-Demographic characteristics of teachers

No	Items	Frequency	Percentage
1	Sex	M	10
		F	20
2	Age	18-40	24
		41-65	6
3	Educational Background	Certificate	11
		Diploma	19
4	Years of experience	<5	8
		5-10	11
		10-15	7
		>15	4

As indicated in table above, 10(33.33%) teachers are male and 20(66.33%) are female. 24 (80%) of the respondents age range from 18-40 which is early adulthood and 6(20%) respondent is 41-65 is middle adulthood. Moreover, the table shows the educational status of 11 (36.66%) respondents have Certificate and 19 (63.33%) of them are Diploma holders. Finally, table 1 shows 8(26.6%) have been a teacher for less than 5 years whereas 11(36.66%) of them are a teacher for 5-10 years and 7(23.33%) for 10-15 years followed by 4(13.33%) is a teacher for more than 15 years.

Awareness of teacher's psychosocial support to early childhood:-

Attachment between the teacher and the children is important, enhancing the academic achievement, want to improve their ability and receive training on how to teach and enhance social and emotional skills of students, the development of student's social and emotional competency as important as subject such as English language, arts and math, believe their personality affect the children psychosocial development. All teachers express their duties including psychosocial supports except some of them.

Teacher's listed their duties as only teaching the students. Except few, all of the teachers express psychosocial support as one of the duties of a teacher of early childhood. They also have similar Perceptions about the psychosocial need of early childhood. Again some of them a little different from the others said that they believe, *"the students in private setting have a little psychosocial need than those students they used to teach before"*. "Some other teachers agree that most of their students have psychological and social problems that they, the teachers, help every day. (p2). Those a few teachers replied all students have psychosocial needs." In 1 interviews, teachers indicated that they had understood and experience psychosocial support to the children they were teaching there was little indication that the teachers were able to integrate the psychosocial support into their two day teaching. Some teacher's way of addressing psychosocial issues was generally to lecture the students on virtuous living and studying hard from the observation. Except for few cases, the teachers agree that the awareness they had about the psychosocial needs of early childhood was not enough. Some the teachers said that the course they took while training was insufficient when they compare it to the real psychosocial needs of early childhood. All teachers expressed that *"most of our awareness about the psychosocial needs of early childhood come from the experience that, they didn't get from the course training."*

Practice of teachers to promote students psychosocial desire:-

prepare an activity that improve children's interaction with their peers, Do you incorporate play and interactional activities in your instruction of different subjects, Do you give a chance for the students to speak in front of others, Do you use group activities or encourage individual activities, Do you encourage the children to ask you a question, Do you consider/ reevaluate your activities if they were good to enhance social development of children.

Observation:-

During observation all teacher listen attentively when a child speak to her and initiate conversation, gives time to respond, reacts in class and during play time, some of the teachers use different kinds of playing activities during their teaching. In pre KG and KG lessons were started using songs that lead the children into jumping, clapping and moving round. The children were so energetic in singing the songs that lets them move me so that I can play (Personal observation on May 05) from interview.

As the teacher said that almost all the teachers have the same procedures. The first way to help the children that the teachers suggest is storytelling, caring, playing and rewarding and it was identified that *“children with psychosocial problems are observed easily by the observation held at the class of teaching”* the other thing that the teacher said is through practice we also gain satisfaction pleasure and also refreshment.

Teaching Experience that promote early childhood psychosocial desires:-

All the teachers agree that play is one of the most important things in giving psychosocial support for early childhood. The teachers said that they use play for educational purposes. During the observation time, the children have been playing especially in the afternoon play in both schools. All the teachers agree that Pre KG students love to play on the swing and slide but not those in KG who love to play more the chasing and the running part.” One of the interview participant said that even those who don’t speak very well change after play and girls of this age love to play use materials to imitate as their mother, talking with a phone. And other participant said that *“It is not only the students that are advantaged with plays but also us, the teachers also refresh by playing with the children”*.

Play is very effective in decreasing depression from the children and also some said that the kind of play differs with each age. Children when they get older they start keeping rules and get used to take turns but not the ones in pre KGs. Also as we seen during observation it was observed that all teachers use different kinds of playing activities during their teaching. In Pre KG and KG lessons were started using songs that lead the children into jumping, clapping and moving round. The children were so energetic in singing the songs that lets them move. Then in pre KG for example the children were forced to sit on the mat folding their hands and crossing their legs. And there was an assistant to keep them still in this position as soon as they forget and start stretching.

All teachers mentioned that stories help children to be supported psychosocially. Those teachers mentioned that children love stories and it can be a good tool for helping the children mentioned about the power of story in easing the language difficulty. All teachers said that talking to the children is one of the supports that they give to early childhood. They all say that showing love and special attention is what children like. The teachers say that the children took teachers as role models and talking to children helps to make them listen to whatever the teachers tell them.

All the teachers agreed on giving rewards for children to develop good behaviors. The care givers said that if the children don’t eat due to some problem we told them that they will be given prize and most of the children are deceived by that. But some of teachers they refuses on giving prizes because they said, “you cannot explain for those who are not given why” showing a pity in her face. “ you know it is not only the children that cry but also their parents, so we would disagree on giving gifts rather making stars on their hands is easy and affordable to all children without hassle.

Discussion:-

This part of the report discusses the findings that were found through interview and Observation in accordance with the literature review. Attachment between the teacher and the children is important, enhancing the academic achievement, want to improve their ability and receive training on how to teach and enhance social and emotional skills of students, the development of student’s social and emotional competency as important as subject such as English language, arts and math, believe their personality affect the children psychosocial development.

Awareness of teachers on psychosocial need of children:-

Result of our finding from interview and observation shows that most of the teachers have good perception on the psychosocial need of children but the perception they have is not from training or education but from experience from year of staying or service of teaching year in the preschool. As teachers interview explain early childhood is also filled with changes that are caused by teachers psychosocial experience development. So the teacher is also expected to have awareness on the problem whether it is from experience developmental changes or psychosocial problem before proceeding to the psychosocial support. The finding of this research is agree with Woods (1996) in that, the teachers perception of psychosocial support that them to observe the children” need and help them appropriately. Our finding indicates that teachers has expectations on the child after fulfilling or helping the child in psychosocial need and other findings say the teacher holds higher expectation for students whom the perceive to be more competent in class room , although these do not seems as important as their generally they are (Battis –tich etal.1996).

Practice of teachers on psychosocial desires of early childhood children:-

Results from the interview and the observation show that the job of teachers of early childhood is not only teaching. Teachers help the children in eating their meals, clothing, training them how to use a toilet, giving them their shoulders to cry at, hugging them, being patient in listening and many others. The other finding that we get from interview the teachers said about their practical experience that their experience practice about the psychosocial support of early childhood this finding goes with the study by (McMullen, 1997; Hollingsworth, 1989; Kagan, 1992) that have found experience in the care setting becomes important because teachers, particularly those with low efficacy, find it difficult to maintain discipline using the child-centered practices they attest to believe in. The result of the present study goes with the studies by SelamawitTefaye(2015) who found that most kindergarten teachers referred to either maturational or environmental influences, only a few explained student development as a complex interaction between the psychological nature of the child and the educational environments provided. From the teachers interviews it is found that the teachers only focus on the parents.

Conclusions and Recommendations:-**Summary:-**

This study would be conducted to investigate the awareness and practices of kindergarten teachers about the psychosocial desires of early childhood and the strategies they apply for supporting the Children. The collected data were analyzed through description/ narration. The results indicated that teachers had awareness on the different psychosocial problems of early childhood from their experience. The teacher has good awareness or perception about psychosocial need of early child hood. The teacher poses practically in fulfilling the children's need but the practice comes not from training or education but from experience year of staying. Teachers did know how to help the children in organized way and some of the problems that children have are beyond their capacity to help. Teachers need to include the multiple perspectives of early childhood development into early childhood teaching settings. The school needs to use incentive for early childhood teachers since the profession requires a lot of patience and persistence. Effective teachers in giving psychosocial support need to be encouraged using incentives.\

Conclusions:-

The main focus of this study was to explore the preschool teachers' awareness and practice about the psychosocial need of early childhood. Psychosocial support to early childhood is a base for children to grow in a suitable environment and let the children to be healthy and resilient in their academically, socially, spiritually and later lives. The study shows that teacher's perception of psychosocial support is comparatively good in relation to their practice. Teachers while in observation do not practice what they said they do. And this study found out that teachers perception and practices are relatively different and this might be due to lack of training in preschool education. Children who have psychosocial problems can be treated by early childhood professionals from different disciplines are suggested by the teachers.

Recommendations:-

Based on the finding of this study the researcher recommended the following:

1. The school owners have to use incentive for early childhood teachers since the profession requires a lot of patience and persistence.
2. Schools should arrange training on the psychosocial desires of children for their teachers by working in collaboration with different stakeholders.
3. Mettu University, department of Early Childhood Care & Education has to design different continuous training programs for kindergarten schools on psychosocial desires of children.
4. The Ministry of Education should focus on early childhood education and should support the private sector with all the help that is expected from the school, community and government.
5. As it is pointed in the literature early childhood education plays a vital role in cost effective, decreasing crimes and at last developing country. So the government should set rules and supervise the rules especially on the early childhood teachers training.

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