

A Comparative Analysis of Reading skills of Early Childhood Education Students and Non-Early Childhood Education Students

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Abstract

This research aimed at grounding a comparative analysis of reading skills of Early Childhood Education Students and Non-Early Childhood Education Students. Schooling is a systematic way to advance a person's mental, social, and behavioral abilities in order to cultivate a well-rounded individual who contributes positively to society. It has been noted that in the contemporary period, there is a significant demand for not just teaching, but for effective teaching that enhances learning performance. In order to cultivate a more efficient learning experience, it is imperative to establish a solid foundation of knowledge among students, which is primarily rooted in Early Childhood Education. In basic education, reading abilities are given greater emphasis compared to other aptitudes.

The current research study employed a descriptive survey research methodology and a quantitative approach, within the positivist philosophical paradigm. Two distinct questionnaires were designed specifically for educators. There are two questionnaires: one for instructors who teach Early Childhood Education classes and other for teachers who teach Non-Early Childhood Education individuals. The AGRA Tool was utilized to assess the children's reading proficiency. The data was analyzed using SPSS 26. It was found that the majority of the students can read and understand the word which proves that reading, writing and understanding the words at the early stage can be developed successfully. Simultaneously this research study also revealed that there is a significant difference between Early Childhood Education Students' and Non-Early Childhood Education Students' Reading Skills. It was proved that the Early Childhood Education has a positive effect on Students' Reading Skills.

Key words: Early Childhood Education Students, Non- Early Childhood Education Students, Early Childhood Education Teachers, Reading Skills.

Introduction: Early childhood education is a crucial domain in an individual's life. The commencement of this instruction occurs when the child attains the age of two to three. It provides the basis upon which a child's learning occurs. When children receive comprehensive instruction on academic concepts, engage in play activities, arts and crafts, maintain good health, participate in physical exercises, sports, games, learn about the environment, develop communication skills, and practice good manners and etiquettes, they are able to actively participate in learning and acquiring education. The development and attention on kids' reading abilities are crucial for the progress of the child. Teachers and staff workers at the Early Childhood Education Level must have sufficient knowledge, a friendly and compassionate behavior, and an accessible temperament. They should adequately address the needs and requirements of the children (Alper, 2013).

Early childhood encompasses the time span up until the age of eight years. Early childhood, up to the age of eight, is considered important because it allows children to develop a comprehensive understanding of education, starting from playgroup to pre-primary and then to primary level. During this time, the development of reading skills is particularly crucial. Early childhood education is highly structured and organized, while institutions that do not offer early childhood education have a different nature and environment. The teachers and other members of the early childhood must exhibit a planned and systematic approach in their work and behavior. Efficiency is necessary in both the format and implication of this. When conveying knowledge, whether by

reading, comprehension, or acting to enhance students' learning, teachers must recognize the importance of thinking. Preschool children, due to their young age, necessitate comprehensive care across various domains such as literacy, education, recreation, well-being, emotional development, dietary habits, nutrition, and psychological analysis. These factors are essential for the comprehensive development and progress of the young individual (Anderson-Butcher, Bates, Lawson, Childs, & Iachini, 2022).

The main goal of early childhood education is to promote the effective development and growth of young children. It provides the foundation for developing reading competence in children, allowing them to effectively improve their abilities and talents from a young age. The primary objective of early childhood education is to impart information and knowledge to families and communities, with the specific goal of fostering the optimal growth and advancement of students, especially in relation to their reading skills. Learning at pre-schools commences through play, as children derive enjoyment from engaging in play activities. Subsequently, they are introduced to drawing and coloring techniques, fostering an inclination towards the field of art. At the next stage, pupils are instructed in the cultivation of reading skills, including the mastery of alphabets, numerals, and other related concepts.

Statement of the Problem: Education is a vast and all-encompassing discipline. It includes a broad spectrum of attributes, such as expertise, understanding, mindset, behavior, communication, reasoning skills, logical aptitudes, sagacity, shrewdness, integrity, and truthfulness. These factors are essential for cultivating the mindset of students and also contribute to their personality development. The children's reading skills are crucial at the elementary level. Research has shown that students who have a background in Early Childhood Education demonstrate stronger reading skills compared to pupils without such a background. Early Childhood Education in Sindh, Pakistan requires greater attention and there is a momentous disparity executing Early Childhood Education in public schools (Bourque, & Goldstein, 2020).

Children must possess adequate preparation in order to enter the formal school system. For students to gain admission to formal schools, it is crucial that they have a sufficient grasp of academic concepts. This will enable them to effectively adapt to the teaching methods employed by their teachers and improve their reading, writing, and other skills. Unfortunately, this is often lacking among students attending public schools in Sindh. Early childhood education has a significant role in promoting and supporting educational outcomes. Hence, this study intended to devise A Comparative Analysis of Reading skills of Early Childhood Education Students and Non-Early Childhood Education Students.

Objectives of the Study:

1. To Examine the Students' Reading skills studying in public primary schools.
2. To compare the reading skills of Early Childhood Education students with Non-Early Childhood Education students
3. To investigate the impact of Early Childhood Education on Students' Reading skills.

Hypothesis of the Study:

1. There is no significant difference between reading skills of Early Childhood Education students and Non-Early Childhood Education students
2. There is no significant impact of Early Childhood Education on Students' Reading skills.

Literature Review: Early Childhood Education is highly regarded as being of paramount importance. This is a basic need to be accomplished by every member of the community, regardless of their origins and jobs. The initial three years of an individual's life are regarded as essential. During this stage, the infant establishes the neural connections necessary for progress and development. Regardless of the parents' level of education, it is crucial for them to have proficient understanding of how to carry out the processes of growth and development and to acknowledge the importance of education. When individuals possess knowledge of diverse tactics related to child development, they are capable of making a meaningful contribution. Home based education is a crucial part in the effective growth and advancement of the children, demonstrating dedication and responsibility. During the first three years of life, children have a strong bond with their mothers and rely on them for carrying out all tasks and functions (Krcmar, & Cingel, 2014).

At the age of four, children start to comprehend that there exists a world beyond their house that they need to become familiar with. The area of ECE facilitates in the enhancement of students' cognitive abilities and fosters the development of their literacy and comprehension skills. The social demands placed on an individual increase as they mature. Early Childhood Education (ECE) is crucial since it imparts knowledge and information with the goal of fostering comprehensive personal growth. This region has fostered the creation of several theories, studies, educational professionals, and economists. Individuals and groups with a strong interest and excitement

in this field have made efforts to progress. The issues pertaining to economic growth and productivity have been a cause for concern, and the field of ECE is directly relevant since it makes a substantial contribution to the growth of future citizens (Broemmel, Moran, & Wooten, 2015).

Sigmund Freud's theory primarily centers on the importance of functions and experiences that occur throughout early childhood. Significant emphasis is placed on mental problems rather than typical functioning. Freud coined the term "psychosexual stages" to describe the sequential phases of child development. The stages have been classified as oral, phallic, latency, and genital. Furthermore, it is crucial for the young individual to effectively complete the stage. If the stage fails to reach completion, it would lead to fixation, which would then affect the personality and behavior of adults. This exerts an influence on the behavior of youngsters, whether it is directed towards their family or their academic performance. Early childhood development has a profound influence on children's reading skills.

Erik's notion embraced the process of human development across the entire span of an individual's existence. He believed that growth and development involve overcoming opposing situations. As a human matures, they acquire the capacity for wisdom and discernment, recognizing that conflicts can be peacefully handled rather than engaging in fights. The functioning of the idea relies on addressing situations characterized by competing elements. This fosters the innate characteristics of students, which are manifested in their individuality. These traits are particularly evident in their academic pursuits, particularly in their reading proficiency, writing abilities, and comprehension of study materials (Elkind, 1967).

Jean Piaget posited that children exhibit distinct cognitive processes from adults and developed a theory of cognitive development. He learned that it is crucial to gain knowledge about one's environment from early development. Children should engage in communication not only with their parents, but also with other family members, such as siblings, grandparents, or other relatives. However, it is necessary for individuals to hold the belief that engaging with the community members, teachers, friends, and neighbors is crucial for enhancing one's learning aptitude and reading proficiency, as well as for overall personal growth. It is imperative to interact with others beyond the confines of one's home (Howes, & Matheson, 1992).

Behavioral theories are founded on the premise that a child's conduct is shaped by their interactions with both their internal and external surroundings. These hypotheses are grounded in the noticeable behavioral features. Growth is assessed based on the individual's reactions to incentives, penalties, and reinforcements. It diverges from multiple theories due to its incorporation of previously overlooked experiences in academic pursuits, such as writing and reading skills, as well as emotions and insights.

Albert Bandura developed the social learning hypothesis. This idea posits that children acquire, comprehend, and develop consciousness of novel behavioral characteristics. This primarily occurs through the act of observing others. Learning occurs not just through external observations, but also through internal variables such as pride, satisfaction, enjoyment, happiness, achievement, and realization. Early childhood education has a crucial role in cultivating children's enthusiasm for reading and comprehending the curriculum, so fostering the development of their reading abilities (Howes, & Matheson, 1992).

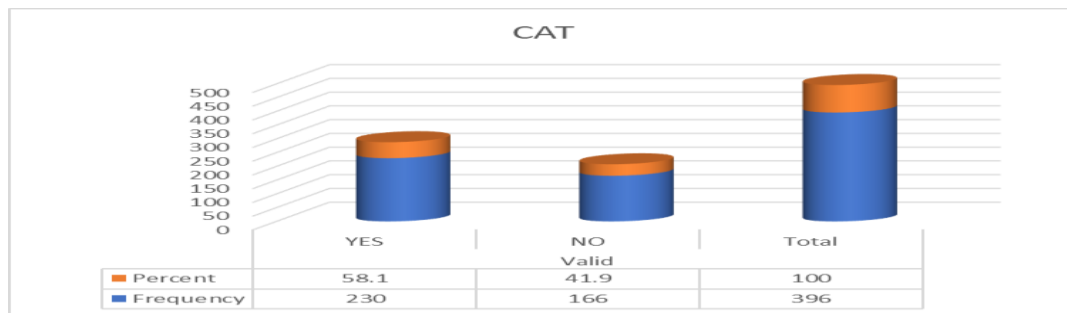
Lev Vygotsky developed the fundamental theory of learning. He believed that students are actively engaged in their learning and that their experiences play a significant role in shaping knowledge. His theory emphasizes the impact of society on shaping the growth of individuals. The exchange of information and ideas among individuals, as well as the shared standards, beliefs, and customs of different societies, are crucial elements. Family members, teachers, and peers have a fundamental character in fostering their cognitive growth, such as, enhancing their reading abilities and comprehension of academic content.

The Constructivist theory advocates constructivists believe that children are intrinsically motivated to increase their reading skills and comprehend the subject provided in school. The key factor in promoting learning is the dynamic interaction between the environment and humans. It is recommended that after children have acquired proficient interactive skills, they are well equipped for the process of learning. Learning resources are distributed to the children both in school and at home. When individuals encounter challenging topics, they seek help from their parents and teachers (Howes, & Matheson, 1992).

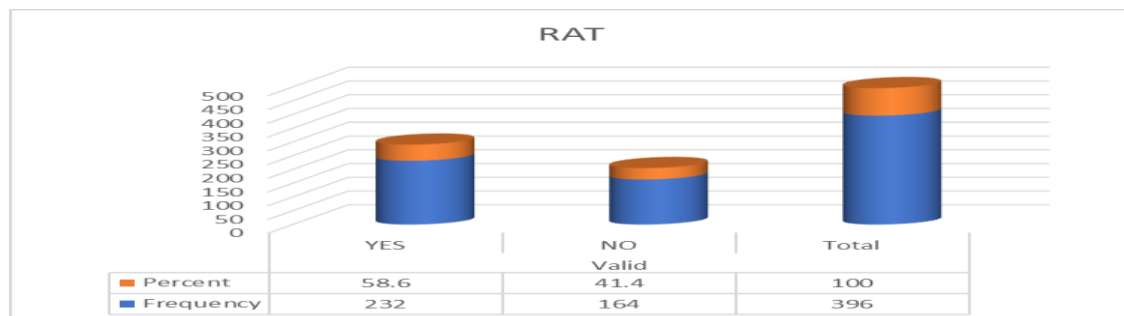
Methodology: The current research study employed a descriptive survey research design and a quantitative approach, within the framework of the positivist philosophical paradigm. Two distinct questionnaires with a Likert scale of 5.0 were created specifically for teachers. Two separate questionnaires were administered to get teachers' opinion. Additionally, the AGRA Tool was utilized to assess the children's reading Skills. The study included all the public primary schools in Hyderabad District. There were 1130 Teachers teaching Early Childhood Education, whereas the number of teachers Teaching Non-Early Childhood Education was 950. The cumulative amount was 2080. The Taro Yamani Formula $n = \frac{N}{1 + \sqrt{N}}$ was used to select teachers 335 and students 396 as sample/representatives.

The descriptive statistics was used to measure the students' reading skills whereas, the inferential statistics such as T-Test and Regression Analysis was used to test the hypothesis.

1. To Examine the Students' Reading skills studying in public primary schools.
AGRA Tool was used to measure the Students' Reading Skills.



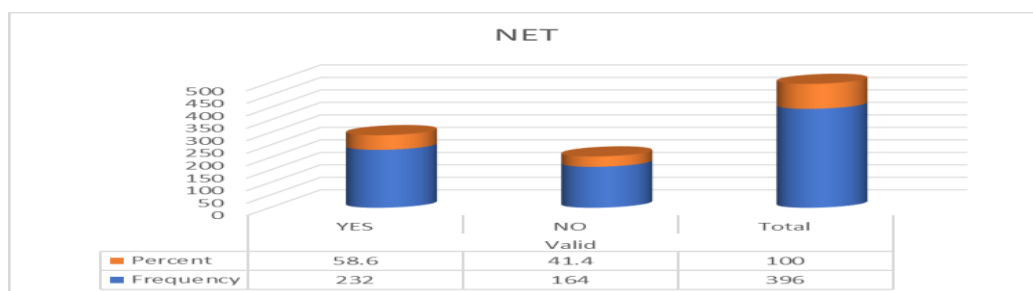
The table inside the figure revealed through descriptive analysis that majority 58% students read and understand the word CAT, which shows that reading skills in the early stage at ECE level can be developed.



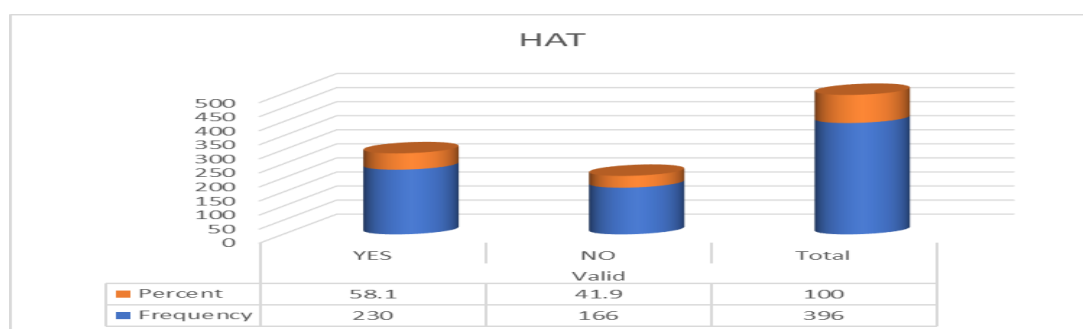
The table inside the figure revealed through descriptive analysis that majority 58% students read and understand the word RAT, which proves that reading skills in the early stage at ECE level can be developed.



The table inside the figure revealed through descriptive analysis that majority 53% students read and understand the word BAT, which proves that reading skills in the early stage at ECE level can be developed.



The table inside the figure revealed through descriptive analysis that majority 58% students read and understand the word NET, which also shows that reading skills in the early stage at ECE level can be developed.



The table inside the figure revealed through descriptive analysis that majority 58% students read and understand the word HAT, which proves that reading skills in the early stage at ECE level can be developed.

Objective two: To compare the reading skills of Early Childhood Education students with Non-Early Childhood Education students

Hypothesis two: There is no significant difference between reading skills of Early Childhood Education students and Non-Early Childhood Education students

T-Test (Variables)	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Lower	Upper
RSECE	111.908	335	.000	3.21611	3.1596	3.2726
RSN-ECE	105.116	335	.000	3.23589	3.1754	3.2964

The T-Test Analysis p-value .000>0.05 reveals that there is a significant difference between reading skills of Early Childhood Education students and Non-Early Childhood Education students.

Objective Three: To investigate the impact of Early Childhood Education on Students' Reading skills.

Hypothesis Three: There is no significant impact of Early Childhood Education on Students' Reading skills.

Hypothesis	Regression weight	Beta Coefficient	R Square	F	p-value	Null Hypothesis Accepted
Ho	ECE---SRS	1.354	.128	84.328	.000	Rejected

The Regression analysis p-value .000>0.05 reveals that there is a significant impact of Early Childhood Education on Students' Reading skills.

Findings: The descriptive analysis revealed that majority 58% students read and understand the word CAT, RAT, BAT, NET and HAT which proves that reading skills in the early stage at ECE level can be developed effectively. It was revealed that the students at the early stage of life can learn to attend schools and be able to Read, Write and identify the words. It was also revealed through the T-Test Analysis that there is a difference between reading skills of ECE and Non-ECE students. ECE students are trained at their initial stage to Read, Write and Identify the letters and words. Whereas, on some extent children at the early stage get aware of a few poems and regular sentences used in daily life which makes them more confident and their level of interest in learning increases which is hardly found in Non-ECE students. Hence, it is proved that there is a difference between ECE and Non-ECE students.

This study's results are supported by the findings of Binger, Kent-Walsh, King, & Mansfield, (2017). Early sentence productions of 3- and 4-year-old children who use augmentative and alternative communication, which reveals that at the early stage of learning children can develop their reading skills along with communication and understanding of the content taught during the school hours. It was also revealed through the Regression Analysis that the Early Childhood Education has a significant impact on Students' Reading Skills. The findings of Zhou, & Yadav, (2017). Effects of multimedia story reading and questioning on preschoolers' vocabulary learning, story comprehension and reading engagement, which reveals that the reading skills of students are better developed at the early stage. It also found that Early Childhood Education students are more capable to Read, Write and Understand the letters and words. Moreover, those students studying in Early Childhood Education institutions are found more capable, interested and confident in schooling, which makes their ways smoother and easier in future success,

Conclusion: On the basis of the findings it was concluded that at the level of ECE the majority of the students can read and understand the word which proves that reading, writing and understanding the words at the early stage can be developed successfully which makes them more confident and familiar with the schooling. Simultaneously this research study also revealed that there is a difference between ECE Students and Non-ECE Students' Reading Skills. It was proved that the Early Childhood Education has a positive effect on Students' Reading Skills, as, it develops students' interest in schooling, which is indeed worth to enhance students learning abilities.

Recommendations: It is recommended to develop Early Childhood Education at all the public primary schools either at urban or rural level across the Sindh Province. Recently Recruited Early Childhood Education Teachers should be trained to teach better at the early stage. More teachers should be recruited for Early Childhood Education for all the public primary schools of Sindh Province. As, many schools still have no Early Childhood Education Teachers, which cause lack of implementation of Early Childhood Education at different primary schools of Sindh Province.

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