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IMPACT OF AFTER-SCHOOL PROGRAMS ON ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE AND SOCIAL SKILLS DEVELOPMENT OF PRIMARY SCHOOL PUPILS IN ANAOCHA LOCAL GOVERNMENT EDUCATION AUTHORITY OF ANAMBRA STATE

Mbachi, Roseline Anurika
Department of Early Childhood and Primary Education
Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka

Ogechukwu, Jane Okonkwo
Department of Early Childhood and Primary Education
Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka
Oj.okonkwo@unizik.edu.ng

Apiti, Anthony Ahuruezenma (PhD)
Department of Adult and Continuing Education
Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka
aa.apiti@unizik.edu.ng

ABSTRACT

This paper investigated the impact of after-school programs on academic performance and social skills development of primary school pupils in Anaocha Local Government Education Authority of Anambra State. Three research questions guided this study. A descriptive survey design was adopted for this study. The population of the study comprise of 50 public primary schools and 685 teachers in Anaocha Local Government Area. The sample size for the study is 100 primary school teachers using the simple random sampling technique. The instrument for data collection was a structured validated questionnaire titled "Impact of After-school Programs on Academic performance and Social Skills Development of Primary School Pupils Questionnaire (ASP-APSSDPSPQ)" developed by the researcher. The copies of the instrument were collected and the reliability was established using Cronbach Alpha method and the test yielded an overall reliability coefficient of 0.80. The data collected from the questionnaire were analyzed using Mean and standard deviation. This study found that structured academic support (e.g., homework help, tutoring) and enrichment activities (e.g., arts, sports, STEM) in after-school programs enhance primary school pupils' academic and social skills. The study also found that after-school programs improve academic performance by providing personalized attention for assignments and fostering critical thinking through activities like STEM. Based on the findings, it was recommended amongst others that policymakers and curriculum planners in Anambra State should encourage schools to integrate and implement structured after-school programs into their curriculum.

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Keywords: After-School Programs, Academic Performance, Social Skills, Development, Pupils, Primary Schools

Introduction

Primary school is the bedrock of formal education systems worldwide. It serves as the first stage of structured learning, where children are introduced to essential academic subjects, such as reading, writing, mathematics, and basic sciences. Beyond academic instruction, primary education is instrumental in fostering the social and emotional development of young learners. According to Gove and Cvelich (2019), primary school education is instrumental in shaping a child's cognitive and socio-emotional development, providing essential skills and knowledge that are fundamental for lifelong learning and adaptation in a rapidly changing world.

It is during these formative years that children develop critical thinking skills, learn to interact with their peers, and acquire the foundational knowledge necessary for future educational pursuits. Given the significance of primary education in a child's development, it is essential to explore various ways to enhance the learning experiences of pupils. One such approach is the implementation of after-school programs, which have become an increasingly vital component of the educational landscape. After-school programs offer additional learning and development opportunities beyond regular school hours, providing a structured environment where children can engage in academic, social, and recreational activities. According to Abdulrasheed and Hassan (2016), after-school programs are extracurricular activities provided by educational institutions to complement the regular school curriculum. These activities include academic support, sports, arts, and cultural engagements designed to enhance the holistic growth of children

The above after-school programs in primary schools, are designed to complement the formal curriculum, offering activities such as homework assistance, reading sessions, arts and crafts, sports, and social skill-building exercises. These programs aim to support the holistic development of children by reinforcing classroom learning and providing opportunities for social interaction and personal growth. According to Zhang, Fu and Zheng, (2021) after-school programs offer numerous benefits for working parents' added benefit of ensuring that their children are engaged in productive and supervised activities during the critical after-school hours.

The impact of after-school programs on primary school children has been the subject of extensive research, with studies such as Vandell, Pierce, and Dadisman, (2020) highlighting their potential to improve academic performance and enhance social skills. For example, after-school programs that focus on academic support, such as tutoring and homework assistance, can help reinforce the concepts taught during regular school hours, leading to better academic outcomes. Moreover, Mahoney, Vandell, and Simpkins, (2020) stated that these programs provide a safe and structured environment where children can develop important social skills, such as communication, teamwork,

and problem-solving, through interactions with their peers.

The structured environment offered by after-school programs enables children to participate in both academic and extracurricular activities. Durlak, Domitrovich, and Weissberg, (2020) opined that this structure is vital for working parents, as it provides a safe and supervised setting for their children during after-school hours. Recent studies have demonstrated that involvement in after-school programs can positively influence academic performance. For instance, a meta-analysis by Durlak, et al (2020) revealed that students who participated in these programs showed significant improvements in their academic achievements, including better grades and higher test scores.

Furthermore, the additional time spent on homework, tutoring, and academic enrichment activities in after-school programs reinforces classroom learning and enhances overall academic outcomes. Wang, Fredricks, Ye, Hofkens and Linn (2019) emphasized the role of after-school programs in narrowing the achievement gap for disadvantaged students. Their study found that these programs offer essential academic support that can mitigate the effects of socioeconomic disparities on academic performance. According to Wentzel and Miele, (2016) academic performance is indicative of a pupil's ability to meet or exceed the standards set by their educational institution. It includes understanding and applying knowledge, skills, and competencies that are necessary for success in further education or the workplace.

Beyond academic benefits, after-school programs are crucial for the social development of children. According to Olaleye and Omotayo (2019), social development involves learning and internalizing the norms, values, and skills needed to interact and coexist harmoniously with others. In the same vain, Mahoney, Vandell, and Simpkins, (2020) highlighted that participation in after-school programs allows children to interact with their peers in a less formal setting, fostering the development of social skills such as communication, teamwork, and problem-solving.

These social skills are vital for a child's overall development and can significantly impact their future success. Mahoney, Larson, and Watts (2021) highlighted that children who participate in after-school programs exhibit better social adjustment and fewer behavioral problems than those who do not participate. The structured social interactions and activities in these programs provide a unique opportunity for children to practice and develop their social skills in a supportive environment.

The holistic approach of after-school programs, which integrates both academic and social aspects, provides a comprehensive framework for child development. This dual focus helps nurture well-rounded individuals who are not only academically proficient but also socially competent. Vandell, Pierce, and Dadisman (2020) suggest that the balanced emphasis on academics and social skills in after-school programs can lead to better long-term outcomes for children, including enhanced academic success, social relationships, and emotional well-being.

Despite these positive intentions, there is no unanimous agreement on whether extended school hours uniformly enhance cognitive and non-cognitive skills. Some studies such as Fang, Sun, and Zhang, (2022) have indicated that merely extending school hours does not necessarily improve a child's cognitive development. Additionally, the effectiveness of after-school programs can vary significantly depending on factors such as program type (whether academic-focused or recreational), intensity and quality (frequency, duration, and overall quality), and resource availability (qualified staff, materials, and funding).

Currently, the research on after-school services in Anaocha Local Government Education Authority of Anambra State is limited. Much of the existing literature consists of theoretical discussions and experiential overviews, lacking strong empirical evidence. Consequently, the researcher is worried that pupils in Anaocha Local Government Education Authority may lack access to structured after-school programs, which may result in lower academic achievement and underdeveloped social skills. This motivated the researcher to investigate the impact of after-school programs on the academic performance and social skills development of primary school children in Anaocha Local Government Education Authority of Anambra State.

Statement of the Problem

After-school programs have emerged as critical components in the educational landscape, aiming to enhance academic performance and foster social skills development among primary school children. These programs, which encompass a range of structured activities such as academic tutoring, cultural and sports activities, recreational games, extended training, and club activities, are designed to support the holistic development of students. Policymakers advocate for after-school programs to promote educational equity, reduce the burden of caregiving on families, and maximize schools' roles in nurturing both cognitive and non-cognitive abilities of children.

Despite these intended benefits, there is considerable debate within the academic community regarding the effectiveness of extended school hours and after-school programs in enhancing cognitive and social development. In the context of Anaocha Local Government Education Authority of Anambra State, there is a notable lack of empirical research investigating the impact of after-school programs. The majority of existing literature is theoretical or experiential, lacking the rigorous scientific analysis necessary to provide clear evidence of the benefits of these programs. This research gap leaves the Anaocha Local Government Education Authority without the necessary data to make informed decisions about the implementation and optimization of after-school programs to support pupil's development effectively. Thus, the current study aims to fill this research gap by examining the impact of after-school programs on the academic performance and social skills development of primary school children in Anaocha Local Government Education Authority of Anambra State. Specifically, the study:

1. Determine the components of after-school programs that are most effective in enhancing academic performance and social skills
2. Ascertain how after-school programs affect the academic performance of primary school pupils in Anaocha Local Government Education Authority Education Authority
3. Examine how after-school programs influence the social skills development of primary school pupils in Anaocha Local Government Education Authority

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What components of after-school programs are most effective in enhancing academic performance and social skills?
2. How does after-school programs affect the academic performance of primary school pupils in Anaocha Local Government Area?
3. How does after-school programs influence the social skills development of primary school pupils in Anaocha Local Government Area?

Theoretical Underpinning

Jean Piaget's Theory of Cognitive Development (1920-1930)

Jean Piaget's theory of cognitive development, formulated between 1920 and 1930, is a cornerstone in understanding how children develop intellectually throughout childhood. Piaget proposed that children progress through four distinct stages of cognitive development:

Sensorimotor Stage (Birth to 2 years): In this stage, infants learn about the world through their senses and actions. They develop object permanence and begin to understand that objects continue to exist even when they are not visible.

Preoperational Stage (2 to 7 years): During this stage, children start using language to explore and understand their worlds. They engage in symbolic play and learn to manipulate symbols, but they still lack the ability to perform operations, or reversible mental processes.

Concrete Operational Stage (7 to 11 years): At this stage, children begin to think logically about concrete events. They gain a better understanding of the concept of conservation (the idea that quantity remains the same despite changes in shape or arrangement) and can classify objects according to several features.

Formal Operational Stage (12 years and up): In the final stage, adolescents develop the ability to think about abstract concepts. They can logically test hypotheses and think about hypothetical situations and outcomes.

This theory is relevant to the present study because, After-school programs, which offer structured activities outside of regular school hours, can play a significant role in supporting the cognitive development of children, especially those in the preoperational and concrete operational stages. By understanding the cognitive abilities and limitations of children at these stages, after-school programs can be designed to enhance learning and development effectively. After-school programs that reinforce concepts learned during the school day can be particularly

beneficial for children in the concrete operational stage. Piaget's theory suggests that children at this stage are capable of logical thought but may still struggle with abstract ideas. Therefore, programs that provide concrete, hands-on experiences can help solidify their understanding of academic concepts, leading to improved performance in school.

Methodology

A descriptive survey design was adopted for this study. The population of the study comprise of 50 public primary schools and 685 teachers in Anaocha Local Government Area (Source: Anambra State Universal Basic Education Board (ASUBEB). The sample size for the study is 100 primary school teachers using the simple random sampling technique. The instrument for data collection was a structured validated questionnaire titled "Impact of After-school Programs on Academic performance and Social Skills Development of Primary School Pupils Questionnaire (ASP-APSSDPSPQ)" developed by the researcher.

The copies of the instrument were collected and the reliability was established using Cronbach Alpha method and the test yielded reliability coefficient values of 0.89, 0.74 and 0.77 respectively. The overall test yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.80 which is high enough for the instrument to be considered reliable. The data collected from the questionnaire were analyzed using Mean scores. The decision point is 2.50. Therefore, any item with a mean of 2.50 and above is deemed agreed, while any item below a mean of 2.50 was disagreed.

Research Question 1: What are the components of after-school programs that are most effective in enhancing academic performance and social skills?

Respondents' rating on the components of after-school programs that are most effective in enhancing academic performance and social skills

S/N	Item Statement	X	SD	Decision
1	Structured academic support such as; home assistance, tutoring etc help improve children's academic performance	3.28	0.83	Agree
2	Enrichment activities, such as arts, sports, and STEM projects, which are essential for fostering both academic performance and social skills development	3.20	0.77	Agree
3	Constant participation in after-school programs	3.26	0.84	Agree
4	Social emotional learning component of after-school programs foster the development of social skills in children	3.35	0.78	Agree
5	A supportive environment with trained teachers	3.03	0.82	Agree
	Cluster mean	**3.22**		**Agree**

Data in table 1 above shows that the respondents agreed that all the items listed in the table above are the components of after-school programs that are most effective in enhancing academic performance and social skills of pupils with a total cluster mean score of 3.22.

Research Question 2: How does after-school programs affect the academic performance of primary school pupils in Anaocha LGEA?

Table 2: Respondents' rating how after-school programs affect the academic performance of primary school pupils in Anaocha LGEA

S/N	Item Statement	X	SD	Decision
6	After-school programs such as STEM enhance critical thinking and problem-solving skills	3.14	0.80	Agree
7	After-school programs offer personalized attention which helps pupils better understand and complete their assignments, leading to improved academic outcomes	3.40	0.76	Agree
8	After-school programs create a structured environment that promotes regular study habits	3.39	0.72	Agree
9	After-school programs that maintain high standards of instruction help children learn time management skills	3.37	0.76	Agree
10	After-school programs help in better understanding of school subjects	3.43	0.75	Agree
	Cluster mean	3.34		Agree

Items in table 2 above shows how after-school programs affect the academic performance of primary school pupils in Anaocha LGEA. From the analysis in the table above, the respondents agreed that the above presented items are various ways after-school programs impact on pupils' academic performance with a cluster mean score of 3.34.

Research Question 3: How does after-school programs influence the social skills development of primary school pupils in Anaocha LGEA?

Table 3: Respondents' rating on how after-school programs influence the social skills development of primary school pupils in Anaocha LGEA

S/N	Items	X	SD	Decision
11	After-school programs foster social skills through group activities that encourage collaboration and interaction	3.39	0.71	Agree
12	After-school programs offer mentorship opportunities where children form bonds with adult role models	3.28	0.69	Agree
13	After-school programs expose children to new social situations which helps them develop better communication skills	3.36	0.57	Agree
14	The structured environment in after-school programs helps children learn tolerance	3.44	0.65	Agree
15	After-school programs provide opportunities for children to practice social skills in diverse settings	3.13	0.76	Agree
	Cluster mean	**3.32**		**Agree**

Items in table 3 above shows respondents rating on how after-school programs influence the social skills development of primary school pupils in Anaocha LGEA. From the ratings above, it can be seen that the respondents agreed that all the items listed above are various ways after-school program influence social skills development of pupils.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study revealed that the components of after-school programs that can enhance academic and social skills development of primary school pupils are; structured academic support such as; home assistance, tutoring etc help improve children's academic performance, enrichment activities, such as arts, sports, and STEM projects, which are essential for fostering both academic performance and social skills development, constant participation in after-school programs, a supportive environment with trained teachers and Social emotional learning component of after-school programs foster the development of social skills in children. This finding is in line with the findings of Amdi and Urho (2019) in their study on the effect of after-school programs on social skills development among primary school children in Rivers State. Amdi and Urho (2019) found out in their study that after-school programs that included group activities and social-emotional learning (SEL) components were particularly effective in fostering social skills development. It also supports Vandell, Simpkins, and Pierce (2015) whom in their study found out that participation in enrichment activities enhances children's critical thinking, problem-solving skills, and motivation to learn, which in turn supports academic achievement.

The findings of this study also revealed that after-school programs offer personalized attention which helps pupils better understand and complete their assignments, leading to improved academic outcomes, also after-school programs such as STEM enhance critical thinking and problem-solving skills thereby leading to improved academic performance. This finding corroborates the findings of Adeyemi and Adeyemo (2017) on the impact of after-school programs on the academic performance of primary school pupils in Oyo State. This finding also supports Wimer, and Weiss (2018) who revealed in their study that pupils who participate in after-school programs develop stronger organizational skills and a greater sense of responsibility toward their schoolwork, which in turn leads to better academic performance.

The findings of the study also revealed that after-school programs foster social skills through group activities that encourage collaboration and interaction, provide opportunities for children to practice social skills in diverse settings and expose children to new social situations which helps them develop better communication skills. This finding confirms the findings of Eze and Ogbuke (2020) on the Impact of after-school programs on academic performance and social behavior of primary school pupils in Enugu State. It also agrees with Pierce, Bolt, and Vandell (2018), who stated in their study that programs that provide a nurturing and supportive environment, with well-trained staff who can model and reinforce positive social behaviors, are more likely to produce significant improvements in children's social skills.

Conclusion

There are components or aspects of after-school programs that are most effective in

enhancing the academic performance and social skills development of pupils and they include; home assistance, tutoring etc help improve children's academic performance, enrichment activities, such as arts, sports, and STEM projects, which are essential for fostering both academic performance and social skills development, constant participation in after-school programs, a supportive environment with trained teachers and Social emotional learning component of after-school programs foster the development of social skills in pupils.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made:

1. Policymakers and curriculum planners in Anambra State should encourage schools to integrate and implement structured after-school programs into their curriculum.
2. Government should be organizing training and retraining for teachers for continuous improvement in after-school programs. They should also ensure proper allocation of funds for smooth running of the after-school programs.
3. Schools should collaborate with parents and community to ensure that pupils participate constantly in the after-school programs.

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