Exploring Early Childhood Development Education Through Playful Environment

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Abstract

This study aims to explore the knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors related to early childhood development and education through a descriptive research approach. The educator recognized the significance of establishing environments that are conducive to children's needs and incorporating stimulating activities to foster the growth of young learners. The researchers conducted an assessment of knowledge, attitude, and practices through interviews and conversations. The variables of race, age, and education had a notable influence on the level of knowledge among individuals. Teachers in educational institutions possess a broader range of knowledge regarding school nutrition and health compared to students. The respondents' knowledge, behavior, and perspectives were shaped by a range of factors, such as their educational attainment, occupation, religious beliefs, and racial background. The study findings emphasize the importance of school health, nutrition, and recreation, and recommend that educators, students, parents, and other stakeholders actively promote these aspects. Creating a favorable and supportive learning environment is crucial in the field of Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE), risk reduction initiatives, Nepal's child-friendly education programs, and the improvement of school environment.

Keywords: Preschool, Childhood care, Child development, Playful practice, Nepalese education system

Inroduction

Educational strategies that emphasize play help young children develop fully. The framework tailors hands-on activities, interactive learning, and creative discovery to early childhood needs and development. Play often improves cognitive, social, emotional, and physical skills. Curiosity, problem-solving, and imaginative play are essential for critical thinking, communication, and emotional intelligence. This approach emphasizes the importance of early experiences in shaping a child's future and creates a nurturing and stimulating environment where children can learn through active engagement rather than dull instruction.

The emerging and industrialised nations invest more in early childhood education. Early creche, parental-free child care, and forced education removal are quantifiable triumphs. Female job flexibility has boosted maternal employment and non-parental child care (Bianchi, 2000). Infant poverty persists in several countries despite economic improvement after WWII (Svensson, 2007). Bradbury et al. (2011) found early childhood outcomes vary. UNICEF (2000) supports government assistance for low-income and single-parent children to bridge opportunity gaps. Migration increases GDP and decreases births. To reduce age gaps and create knowledge-intensive jobs, governments must invest in education (Yunus, 2003).Knudsen et al. (2006) suggest early infancy development affects physical, intellectual, and vocational achievement.

Public financing supports early childhood development (Cleveland &Krashinsky, 2003; Esping-Andersen, 2005; Rolnick& Grunewald, 2003). Many governments struggle with childcare. Public creches seldom obtain government financing without documentation. Government agencies prioritise childcare facility growth above quality due to oversupply. Community and early childhood development require cognitive, emotional, social, and physical support. Education affects adolescent language, literacy, psychomotor, cognitive, social, and emotional development. ECCE helps youngsters grow, states the Ministry of Education (2012). Fun and meaningful ECCE may help kids' mental and emotional development. Recent study shows early interventions boost results. A good diet, stimulating environment, and medical care are recommended.

Early childhood care and education promote the development of all children, according to the Jomtien Declaration (1990). According to the Dakar Framework for Action, early childhood care and education begin at birth and last 10 years after the first global conference in Moscow. Singh (2010) stresses the need for low- and middle-income nations to help 200 million under-5s. These kids struggle with hunger, poverty, and inaccurate information. Professionals who work with children prefer curriculum-aligned schools. Play must be emphasized in early education. Nepal provides skilled and experienced youth education and support. Preschools are regularly assessed. Many people split academic and professional costs.The primary focus of this study is to analyze early childhood care and education through the playful environment.

Literature Review

A thorough analysis has been carried out on the relevant theoretical framework and previous research studies. The discussion has covered different aspects related to policy provisions, the socio-economic cultural framework, child and teachers/facilitators preparation and readiness, as well as the psychological context and categorization of practice behaviors. The aim of this study is to examine the existing research on the effects of different services on children enrolled in early childhood care and education (ECCE) programs.

The Jomtien World Conference (1990) inThailand established Education for All (EFA)'s main goal for improving ECCE in member nations. The World Education Forum (2002) in Dakar, Senegal, endorsed six goals, including expanding and improving early childhood care and education. Nepal has committed to educating 80% of its 3–5-year-olds under EFA-NPA 2001–2015 (Department of Education, 2012). These included under-3 classes, community-based programming, and school-based pre-primary classes. Pre-primary courses are the part of Nepal's ECCE system. For early childhood education to succeed, educators and carers must collaborate (Mayer, 1997).

Paxson and Schady (2007) found that early childhood institutions and families interact to increase parental participation in program governance and institutional decision-making. Teacher-student connections improve student education and socialization. New teachers receive more positive reinforcement than those with 5-10 years of experience. Teachers with less than five years of experience may struggle to show their passion (Van, 1997). Experienced professors motivate pupils more. Teachers with moderate experience (6-10 years) score worst than those with general experience (0-5 years) or ten years or more.

Tikly (2008) advised early nutrition and growth identification and intervention. Nutritionally dense meals are prioritized to maximize catch-up progress. Early childhood education curriculum might confuse concepts, pedagogies/learning philosophies, and standards/skills. The study found that formal and standardized curricula don't meet young children's developmental needs. Nepal had little academic or empirical study on child care centres' ECCE functions (Curriculum Development Center, 2012).

MacNabb (2017) highlighted that complex activity systems create conflict and resources. The workplace has parental, teacher, and speech therapist activity systems. Features and classifications of high-quality early childhood education and care in that location. UNICEF education quality standards like the Child Friendly School Framework. Shami et al. (2008) present a unique early childhood education model. The framework covers context, learner characteristics, enabling inputs, teaching and learning tactics, and outputs.

UNICEF (2008) states that the Department of Education, under the Ministry of Education and Sports, implements early childhood development programs as part of the Education for All (EFA) program. The organization's funding of Department of Education Early Childhood Care and Education projects may explain service expansion. The main resources were an Early Childhood Care and Education strategy plan, curriculum development, training manuals, and DOE training courses (UNICEF, 2008).

Leak et al. (2010) examined child nursery time and age that boosts growth in children under three years. Barnett and Lamy (2006) found that permanent preschool enrollment improved language and cognition. Paxson and Schady (2007) found a positive link between middle school cognitive development and lengthier pre-primary education in 54 nations. Del Carmeun Huerta et al. (2011) compared five OECD countries' longitudinal data. Despite more women working outside the home, research shows that both parents benefit from increased quality time with their children (Bianchi, 2000).Moore (2010) stated that early infancy affects brain development that related to brain, cognition, imagination, behaviour, and skill development are affected. The classroom acceptance can help cultivate these traits. Personal and professional growth of educators affects students' ability, self-confidence, and classroom conduct more than any other educational aspect. Socialisation promotes kids cooperation, civility, and friendship(Lee, 2013).

Edgington (1998) advises promoting student inquiry and engagement to create a child-centered classroom where teachers should see youngsters as strong and capable rather than weak and defenceless to create a positive environment.Kirp (2007) remarked that physical punishment hinders learning and lowers self-esteem and confidence. Similarly, Kaplan (2006) also highlighted physical punishment causes depression and anxiety as well as physical punishment harms children's mental health.

Dean (2003) highlighted that school-based and home-based learning must be compatible when most of a child's education is outside of schools and parents coordinate with teachers. Developmentally

appropriate care improved cognitive performance in children, according to Click and Shaunessey (2001). Alexander (2008)claimed that the educational system was flawed. This strategy assumes time and schedules limit learning, which is problematic.

Children's academic underachievement has often linked to time management. Angrist and Krueger (2001) discovered several characteristics that worsen grade retention.Communication without inter-subjectivity and comprehension is difficult. Determining the intended relevance of a notion in a study permits numerous analyses. It is necessary to utilize a qualitative research index, scale and measuring instrument (Cresswell&Cresswell, 2017).The enduring consequences of early decisions are ascertained by Skouteris et al. (2022). Blewitt et al. (2021) investigated the social and emotional development beliefs of early childhood educators in Australia. Teachers' social and emotional development practices and preschoolwere investigated where the researchers had discovered that educators conceive, execute, and assess the social-emotional development of children. Mayar (2022) investigated the ways in which early childhood education enhances comprehension and outlook.

Kangaset al. (2020) observed that early childhood learning environments founded on play. They remarked that learning environments improve the cognitive and social-emotional development of children, thereby bettering their futures. Cepero et al. (2023) stated that child development may be enhanced if built environment remedies are disregarded.Farisia (2020) contends that the religious and moral values in early childhood education possess the ability to mould the character of young individuals. Fajri et al. (2022) investigated the period of accelerated development spanning from 0 to 6 years. During this phase of development, children acquire fundamental knowledge, attitudes, and abilities. Motivating and stimulating educational materials may aid students in concentrating. Young individuals can be captivated by realistic visual stimuli by means of interactive experiences and repercussions.

As per Kale et al. (2023), early childhood education prepares children for elementary school. The pre-school education enrollment by parents is not universal. The character education in the family, school as well as community were evaluated by Saroh et al. (2020). By instilling in children an understanding of societal values, this approach cultivates moral development.Considering the critical role that educators play in delivering education of superior quality, their viewpoints on quality have the potential to impact legislative processes(Sollars, 2020).

Weir (2014) laid the groundwork for long-term development. That study commenced by examining two prominent literature subjects, followed by obstacles, benefits, effective collaboration, and optimal approaches.Singh and Ngadni (2023) examined preschool parents' views on play-based learning. Williamson et al. (2023) examined teacher's expertise in humorous narrative reading with 3–5-year-olds. They emphasised language learning and child and pedagogy expertise. Phillips et al. (2019) explored the impact of aboriginal and values on children's personal and social development in early childhood settings in Australia and New Zealand. Heljakka et al. (2021) examined how real and artificial dogs improve preschoolers' social-emotional literacy.

The primary emphasis of the literature review has revolved around theories. The researchers' hypothesis was thus prompted. To assess the alignment between theoretical predictions and the practical execution of early childhood educational programs, the researchers gathered empirical data using a range of methodologies. We employ a variety of technologies and methodologies to collect field data. The researchers conducted a thorough analysis of narrative and oral tale data, along with the corresponding supplementary materials.

Research Methodology

This study seeks to explore individuals' understanding, attitudes, and actions towards the physical environment, along with their perception of community empowerment. This study has utilized a descriptive research approach. The different approaches were carefully integrated into the design to enhance comprehension, implementation, and perspective on the physical environment and its management. The researchers began the process of collecting data by gathering quantitative information. Later, the quantitative data was analyzed, and outcomes were obtained using an interpretative technique. The quantitative data related to the management of early childhood care and education (ECCE), along with other relevant materials, were collected and then analyzed using appropriate statistical techniques and tools.

The ECCE community in Nepal conducted research to derive their findings, which included the analysis of data. The researchers visited five Early Childhood and Care and Education Centers in the Kathmandu district to collect data. These centers are operated by community schools, local governments, and private organizations. The researchers reached out to 100 households to gather information. The researchers engaged in discussions with teachers, ECCE facilitators, head teachers, parents, students, and other relevant individuals, addressing their questions and inquiries.

Throughout the editing phase, a thorough evaluation was carried out on the questionnaires used for interviews to ensure their precision and thoroughness in terms of including all necessary information. The encoded responses were entered into the SPSS software for analysis. The interface for users is designed with menus that offer comprehensive information and dialogue boxes that are straightforward and user-friendly. Descriptive statistics, such as frequency and cross-tabulation, were used to achieve the research objectives and answer the predefined research questions.

Results and Interpretations

The sample included 100 respondents, with 35 (35%) being agricultural laborers. This means the agriculture industry's workforce were found mostly agricultural workers. Service workers (15) made up 15% of the population. Similar to this, 20% of participants were local businesspeople (20) and 20% were local workers and porters (20). In addition, 10% of participants worked in traditional vocations such as old people in retirement homes, industrial sectors, restaurants, and metal industries.

The findings showed that 30% of the sample, 30people were enthusiastic about dalits and other marginalized groups governing the early childhoodcare and education (ECCE) project in the community. The study shows that 50% participants were oversatisfied. However, 29% of participants, including 20% to 50% of the total, reported ultra-poor engagement. Additionally, 13% of participants said that some actions, such as hiring powerful people and distributing resources, exclude or fail to incorporate the ultra-poor. However, 27% of interviewees said that women and underrepresented demographics are seldom in important positions, with estimations ranging from 5% to 10%.

Regarding the literacy among100 families, the literacy averaged 65% across study sites. Female students made up 20% of the studied families, while male students made up 18%. Diverse non-governmental and social organizations in the early childhood care and education (ECCE) and rural community empowerment sectors can boost community capacity. Table 1 shows families' views on organizations' Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) management support programs.

Table:1: NGOs to ECCE Centers

S.N	Supporting Programs	Households Number	Percentage (%)
1	Effective & sufficient	28	28%
2	Supportive	23	23%
3	Insufficient and Ineffective	49	49%
	Total	**100**	**100%**

Source: Field Survey, 2022.

Table 1 presents that 28% reported receiving effective and efficient non-governmental organization help. In addition, 23 participants (23% of the sample) agreed that non-governmental organizations (NGOs) helped them manage early childhood care and education (ECCE) centers for their own benefit. Insufficient and ineffective services given by non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and other community-based organizations were reported by 49 participants that is 49% of households. The community can support professional growth in early childhood care and education (ECCE) through financial and technical assistance, technical proficiency, and training. Table 2 shows families' expectations for Early Childhood Care and Education help.

Table 2: Support of Professional Development

S.N	Expect ations for Supporting	Households	Percentage (%)
1	Financial & technicalsupport	20	20%
2	Technical Skill & Training	14	14%
3	Advocacy	21	21%
4	Lobby	14	14%
5	Allabove	31	31%
	Total	**100**	**100%**

Source: Field Survey, 2022.

Table 2 displays that 31% expected complete financial supports and technical help, technical skill development and training, advocacy, and lobbying. Technical and training help was expected by 14% of respondents. The lobby was prioritized by 14% of families and financial and technical help by 20%. An additional 21% of respondents said advocacy was necessary. The playful educational activities, both inside and outside the curriculum, implemented with children from diverse sociocultural backgrounds help them unlearn and learn new things as they grow. Table 3 shows respondents' opinions on how much homework children at Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) institutions get to aid delearning and relearning.

Table3: Home Work Frequency

Home Work to Children	Respondents	Percentage (%)
Always	18	18%
Rarely	45	45%
No homework	37	37%
Total	**100**	**100%**

Source: Field Survey, 2022.

Table 3 depicts that out of 100 respondents, 45% (45) said instructors and facilitators sometimes gave assignments. A further 35% of participants said no homework was provided owing to worries about its influence on students' workload. In contrast, 20% of respondents said they always give homework to keep kids busy and engaged in schoolwork. The district education office needs frequent and complete reports to create and enhance Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) facilities. Table 4 illustrates the reporting method proposed for resource employees and supervisors in early childhood care and education (ECCE) facilities.

Table4: Mechanism of Supervisor

S.N.	Supervisor Response	Participants	Percentage (%)
1	Feedback to facilitator	30	30%
2	Explain to head teacher	18	18%
3	Discussion with facilitator and head teacher	32	32%
4	Report to parents/SMC	20	20%
	Total	**100**	**100%**

Source: Field Survey,2022.

Table 4 highlights that 30 respondents indicated resource workers and supervisors discussed the matter with facilitators and head teachers. A total of 25% of the participants said they had given facilitators comments to improve their skills and supported efforts to do so. In 18% of cases, participants only told the head instructor about their problems at ECCE facilities. During the observation period, 20% spoke to parents and SMC members. Sound pollution was judged 52% bad, 27% tolerable and 21% great. According to safety standards, the classroom and its surrounds scored 39% bad, 34% good, and 27% good. A survey found that 36% of students had a good sitting arrangement, 23% a normal one, and 41% an unfavorable one. The poll indicated that 31% of participants were dissatisfied with the learning materials. 39% stated the resources were utilitarian, while 30% said they were adequate.

This suggests that there is potential for further advancement in this particular domain. Similarly, it was found that 18% of the participants assessed the necessity of physical instruments in early childhood care and education (ECCE) settings. Additionally, 17% of the respondents rated the importance of providing a loving and nurturing environment in ECCE. Furthermore, 12% of the participants evaluated the significance of effectively managing and maintaining play areas in ECCE centres for their enhancement. About 7% of early childhood care and educationchildren were found to possess a discernible requirement for instructional and developmental interventions.

Management of the ECCE

Policy and program implementation for ECCE in community schools and across the community has been discussed extensively. Village Municipalities and Municipalities have registered early childhood care and education facilities as part of decentralization. Facilitators receive monetary and non-monetary incentives from the Ministry of Education. Both ministries carefully monitor and evaluate the centers per protocol. 44% of the 100 study participants were dissatisfied with current laws and practices. Most participants wanted to update and improve the rules. About 39% of participants said the policies were confusing and

ambiguous. Many interviewees said policy implementation, not just policy formation, is lacking. Since head teachers have little time for Early Childhood Care and Education, participants worried about the ECCE center management's leadership.

Management of Resources

Financial resources for ECCE institutions have been extensively studied. The government is moving forward with the plan, but feasibility concerns have been raised from the start. Better entities than Village Municipalities (VMs) and municipalities should fund local ECE facilities. Participants had to evaluate and rank funding sources and contributions. Support came from parents, schools, government funding, civic society, NGOs, and CBOs. In a comprehensive field survey, 39% of 100 participants said parents were the main source of funding for early childhood care and education facilities. In contrast, 24% said government grants funded ECCE institutions. It was surprising that only 21% knew the school funds ECCE centers. Few respondents reported receiving financial aid from civil society, donors, and nonprofits or community-based organizations. The lack of a standard prompted this decision. Another parent complained that the facilitator's pay is below the minimum wage.

Nutrition and School Health Care Management

The Early Childhood Care and Education center was near the unmaintained lavatory. In her time at the schools, the researcher found several waterless bathrooms. 15% of water came from wells and 15% from commercial jars. River water is drunk by 18% and tap water by 14%. Few participants manually transfer water from their homes to containers to hydrate their children. Many government school students bring water bottles from home. The study found that 42% of participants said facilitators or teachers kept the classroom clean and prioritized children's hygiene. The health curriculum required them to take responsibility for their actions. 35% said a school assistant cleaned and sanitized early childhood care and education (ECCE) facilities, while 22% said students did.

According to data analysis, 27% of respondents said their children get school lunches, while 21% said they feed them unhealthy market food. Additionally, 19% of respondents said the school offers a weekly lunch menu, but parents must provide the food. In addition, 18% of respondents said their children eat homemade local food or lunch at home. However, 14% of children reported limited midday food access, and 1% reported parental financial assistance. A large percentage of the 100 parents surveyed said their children's schools lacked first aid facilities. Many parents also prefer to take their children home during emergencies. 21% of respondents reported emergency hospital transfers of children, with 14% lacking health care skills and 11% seeking emergency and regular treatment.

Community Involvement on ECCE Management

Community groups like mothers' groups, community forest groups, and cooperatives managed ECCE institutions. ECCE facilities were monitored and evaluated by the head teacher, resource person, supervisors, teachers, parents, and SMC members. Table 5 displays participants' ratings of relevant sectors' monitoring and evaluation activities.

Table5: Involvement in Monitoring and Evaluation of Stakeholders

S.N	Monitoring and Evaluation	Respondents	Percentage (%)
1	Head teachers	20	20%
2	Teachers	21	21%
3	Resource Person	15	15%
4	School Supervisors	15	15%
5	Parents and SMC members	29	29%
	Total	**100**	**100%**

Source: Field Survey,2022.

Table 5 shows that 29% of 100 participants said parents and School Management Committee members were responsible for monitoring and evaluation. Similarly, 20% of participants rated the headmaster's ECCE monitoring performance and 21% rated the teachers. However, only 15% of participants thought educational administrators actively monitored and assessed Early Childhood Care and Education facilities. The study included Participants-Observers (RPs) and Supervisors (Supervisors) who actively participated in supervision and gave facilitators prompt feedback. The parents' efforts to finish homework show their genuine interest in their children, providing attentive care, facilitating recreational, educational, and instructive activities, and prioritizing enjoyment in their lives. According to data analysis, many participants reported that their parents actively provided appropriate home care for their children.

Similarly, 27% of participants spent time doing things they enjoyed, like playing with kids. 14% prioritized enjoyment, 21% teaching and learning. 11% of participants assessed early childhood care and education assignments. About 34% of participants are concerned about research facilitators and helpers' lack of training. A survey found that 24% of respondents thought training in early childhood care and education (ECCE) facilities was difficult due to limited resources. 21% of respondents said they hadn't used their class training. Some participants (14%) use their training skills in the classroom. Only 7% consistently use their training knowledge and skills when teaching. Village staff and community members can better manage resources and improve ECCE institutions by working with multiple organizations.

ECCE Management

Numerous programs emphasize cross-sector collaboration. Key enterprises from different sectors collaborated through several measures. The District Child Welfare Board and National Early Childhood Care and Education Network are in charge. However, ECCE institutions are underrepresented on the Child Welfare Board (CCWB).Village Municipalities and municipalities can form networking committees following ECCE Council guidelines. The National Early Childhood Care and Education Network, which promoted government, international NGOs, and GO collaboration, failed.There is poor collaboration between child care, education, and development organizations. The respondents proposed a Council and a central board led by the Prime Minister or a National Planning Commission member. A comprehensive approach to early childhood health, education, and development. Representatives from well-known Early Childhood Care and Education organizations may improve the council's effectiveness.

Children's Care and Education

Participants in the discussion stressed the importance of ECCE centres going beyond education and instruction. Early childhood care and education must include the Early Childhood Care and Education Administration. According to participants, ECCE must consider children's emotional, psychological, and physical development. The educational environment should improve children's sensory and motor skills and accommodate their activities. Spiritual and moral education must be integrated into early childhood care and education. After consulting with the Village Municipalities (VMs) secretary, private residences will establish and manage Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) facilities. No universal standard exists for Montessori or any other Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) approach.

Discussion

Community management knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors regarding early childhood care and development were examined in this study. This study evaluates current practices and examines how certain factors affect people's resource optimization understanding, attitudes, and actions for environmental sustainability. Numerous initiatives have implemented education programs like the School Sector Reform Program. Montessori-inspired preschools, nurseries, and daycares are growing in popularity. These schools are known for their excellent curricula. As per the study, early childhood support boosts adult productivity. Primary school students had high graduation rates, fewer courses, and lower absenteeism and delinquency. This study found that consistent and nurturing maternal attention improves children's nutrition and reduces illness.

This study suggests that early exposure to diverse perceptual and motor experiences in childhood improves adult learning. Early childhood education centers can help integrate ethnic and religious groups. Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) boards and committees may consider centralizing services. A more efficient resource delivery method with a centralized access point could help these groups. There are several ways to choose and implement child center admission procedures. The children's lunch program emphasizes nutrition and health. National, state, and municipal policymakers lack competence, according to survey participants. This is essential for sustainable and effective program implementation.

Early childhood care and education (ECCE) programs should be promoted to parents and other stakeholders, participants stressed. For complete child development, the authors stressed Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) programs. To avoid redundancy, promote fair allocation, and improve community access, each center's needs must be assessed. Young people are enrolling despite impressive progress and modern facilities. Private ECCE facilities differ from schools and communities. The service meets discerning parents' payment needs. Financial aid helps parents pay tuition. These groups obtained infrastructure, programs, and resources thanks to their expertise. Dress code compliance, child development program knowledge, English proficiency, and ability to enroll children in authorized institutions are tested.

Conclusion

This study evaluates early childhood care and education (ECCE) environment, operational procedures, and events using the latest management theory and successful practices. To determine how the ECCE method design improved investigation accuracy and reliability, extensive data analysis was performed. Many local leaders, planners, stakeholders, and researchers contributed their insights and perspectives during the study. The study examined community leaders who are committed to resource management. By managing resources inclusively, these people engage with the community. Community leaders were tasked with raising awareness of early childhood care and education (ECCE). The goal was to maximize resource use while achieving excellence. T

he researchers' data analysis showed that community leaders' leadership skills improve community members' understanding of local Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) initiatives. The findings provide insights and suggestions for improving current configurations and future research. Development advocates aim to educate community members about resource mobilization and national potential. The critical perspective claims a subjective realm of ideas, experiences, observations, and abilities. People create subjective realities through observation, introspection, and cognitive inferences. The epistemological framework explains how people learn and its fundamentals.

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