

Impact Of Preschool Education On The Social And Communication Skills Of Primary School Students

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Abstract

Preschool education is the primary stage of a child's educational voyage where the environment plays a pivotal role in their social and communication skills. Preschool education provides opportunities to engage children in activities where they may work on intellectual ability, expand the social circle, and also develop communication with others in a conducive atmosphere. The existing quantitative study aimed to investigate the impact of preschool education on children's social and communication skills at public and private schools in Lahore. The data was collected from 45 schools (23 Public and 22 Private). The sample contained 502 Grade I students where 251 (168 P & 83 non-p) from public and 251(210 P & 41 non-p) from private schools were selected. For data collection, two instruments were developed; (a) a questionnaire for the teachers adapted from the Social Skill Rating System (SSRS) developed by Gresham and Elliot (1990) for assessing students' social skills, and (b) an interview protocol for the students to evaluate their communication ability. The instruments were validated through experts relevant to the field and the reliability of the pilot testing was at 0.87 points. Descriptive statistics were utilized to define the frequency of the data where inferential statistics consisted of independent sample t-test, ANOVA, and Post-hoc was applied to examine the variability between the students who had experienced preschool education with those who had not. The findings of the study revealed that students with preschool experience were significantly better in the development of social and communication skills with peers and teachers than the students who did not experience. The results indicated that preschool education nourishes students socially and trains them to communicate in a better way. The

study also concluded that preschool education has positive effects on students' social and communicative development.

Keywords: Pre-school education, social skills, preschool experience, communication,

Introduction

Social skills are indispensable for the individuals to get success their cognitive abilities and prosperity from early age to youth. In case of continuing without having proper social skills, children may confront several problems related to their academic, behavioural and socialization i.e. friends' rejection, poor academic achievement, and depression. Bierman and Erath (2006) also emphasized that the deficits of social skills may compel the children to face difficulties in the areas i.e. communication, cooperation, emotions and feelings, controlling aggression and problem-solving abilities. Teachers and parents, may play their effective role to provide adequate instruction and direction to modify the children's behaviour into acceptable and productive manners. In the words of Ergenekon (2012), Social skills are the learned manners that enable individuals to walk positively and avoid negative rejoinders. Another author (Gresham, 1997) defined social skills into three perspectives which is based on "fellow acceptance, behavioural manners, and social validity". The authors (Sucuoglu & Cifci, 2001) additionally explained that fellow acceptance is referred to individuals' friendship and the individuals who avail acceptance from their fellows, possess satisfactory social skills; and in terms of behavioural manners (Ergenekon, 2012), social skills become the learned etiquettes that enable the individuals to acquire positive outcomes and protect them from negative reactions; and social validity (Sucuoglu & Cifci, 2004) is referred as the social skills that enable the persons to avail positive results in the areas i.e. academic abilities and social acquaintance.

Environment plays a vital role in human life as they develop communication from birth till death. This communication is directly influenced by life situations. Humans must maintain their life patterns and norms through making connections with the environment and these connections are necessary to ensure peace, harmony, and survival of a society. Social skills trigger healthy connections among individuals (Gordon, et al, 2008; Samanci & Ucan, 2017). Preschool education takes place when a child gets engaged in the instructional activities at a place other than his or her home setting. To expand students' abilities, preschool education programs are designed to make long-term effects on their achievements. The primary difference, between the children who experienced preschool education with those who have not, is the tendency to learn instantly and have better literacy, language, and mathematics skills. In actuality, academic and literacy achievement is associated with preschool attendance.

Goodman and Sianesi (2005) specified that children's nourishment is greatly influenced by preschool education. They additionally advocated that children having preschool experience are better in behaviour, effective interaction with others, better confidence level, and social skills than those children without preschool experience. Loeb. Et al., (2005) suggested that there is a strong connection between pre-schooling and social adjustment which are necessary for the children to get involved in classroom activities. The traits i.e. cooperation, moods, feelings, likes and dislikes, making good choices and decisions, delightful and fair relationships with parents and peers help the children to develop an effective acquaintance with others (Slimmer, 2003).

In the words of Rothbart and Rueda (2005), the child's disposition including the extent to regularity and reactivity, plays a significant role in the children social development. One main element is the strenuous control that support them to maintain their emotions and feelings and behaviours and it also improves self-regulation and social-adjustment. The authors (Collins, Maccoby, Steinberg, Heterington, & Bornstein, 2000) suggested that in controlling the emotions and behaviour of children, parents can support, and also provide them an undeniable form of direction and guidance which may beneficial for them throughout their life span. The sound relationships among the parents and their children may the cause of the prediction of sound social skills in the children. In the words of the author (Calkins, 2004), the parents and their children's attachment enlighten the most productive aspect of behaviours in them which is responsiveness.

Children with preschool experience are better in emotional control while making connections with others i.e. family, peers, teachers, and colleagues; energetically participate in classroom activities than those children who are short-tempered which is one of the crucial hurdles in the development of social skills (Chang, et al., 2009). Another important aspect of social skills is its essential components that influence children's behaviour directly are related to learning-related skills, self-control, interpersonal skills, internalizing and externalizing problem behaviour. 1) learning-related skills are those skills that enable a person to respond to new tasks actively. These are also called operational or functional skills, self-regulatory, mastery, and social- proficiency skills. The skills help the children in; 1) gaining attention, solving a task, accessing the new responsibilities, and cooperating with others; and 2) Self-control is considered as to act appropriately according to the situation when it is more likely to behave inappropriately and these skills inclined to respect others, control temper, to agree with peer ideas and respond properly; 3) Interpersonal abilities enable individuals to get along and work together to communicate or make relations with other peers and persons. To sustain these traits in the children, the focus on subscales of social skills should be taken i.e. how to manage and form a friendship, how to help others in critical times, how to make expressions, generate ideas, work on them, make opinions, and most importantly how to act sensibly in the various situations (Kagan, et al, 1995; McClelland and Morrison, 2003 & 2006; Chang, et al, 2003).

Primarily the authors (Knight and Hughes, 1995) identified that students' academic and social abilities are better nurtured through pre-school education because it help them in character building. They further explained that preschool education not only fosters the development of social skills but also make them aware about their deficits and the school may organize such activities in which little children may get opportunities to experience new tasks. Consequently, schools are the only place where students can learn about social skills along with academic skills. Students may learn to focus their attention towards interacting positively with their fellows and teachers through control over their emotions (Lopes & Salovey, 2006).

Generally, researchers detached interpersonal skills with learning-related skills or abilities due to the involvement of people-relation and pro-social attitudes and behaviours, while learning related abilities are primarily concerned with classroom activities like attention, independence of work (McClelland & Morrison, 2003; McClelland et al., 2000); 4) external-problem behaviours are concerned with the overt feeling of individuals due to the under-controlled and outer-directed forms of behaviours e.g. argue/disagree, conflicts, angry,

spontaneous acts, talking during silence, making disturbance; 5) Internal-problem behaviours are concerned with covert acts as these are developed over-controlled and show inner-directed forms of behaviour like low self-esteem, sadness, aggressiveness (Chang, et al., 2009; Sui, 2007).

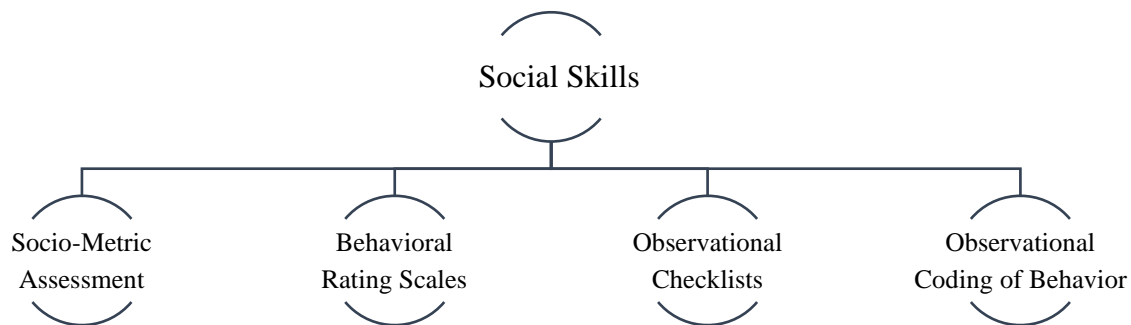
The importance of teacher's existence in the teaching learning process of education may not be denied. In the words of (Gordon, et al., 2008), teacher play most effective role in the development of social skills compulsory for school adjustment. The authors made the following recommendations with respect to the teachers' strengths in this regard:

- They may provide help to the children to recognize their needs and desires.
- They may create social awareness in the children regarding social norms and traditions.
- They may guide the children to develop such traits i.e. sharing, helping, coordinating, and coping.
- They may provide proper guidance to the children to learn how to act and react.
- They may monitor the children's behaviour in order to diagnose deficiencies and make proper amendment.
- The traits of friendship may develop into the children by the encouragement of the teachers
- They may tackle the disturbing situation effectively among the children and may educate them properly to overcome those by different strategies.
- They may nourish the conducive environment where children may flourish well.
- They may create self-confidence in the children by treating them well and involve them in the productive tasks or activities.

Assessing Social Skills

An assessment is used to determine a person might possess skills or not. He/she would be able to display behaviours adequately, proper physical appearance, and the use of the skills according to need and interest (Perry, et al, 2005). Various methods are utilized to assess children's social skills. In order to identify the method for assessment, it is compulsory to choose assessment tools that must be consistent, valid, and easy to handle along with cost and time limitations. It is also essential to select measurements that are most adequate with the age and developmental stage, and special needs of the target population (McClelland & Scalzo, 2006). The authors additionally commented that observations are the conditional and most using instrument that are conducted at the institutions where the inspecting and witnesses the children's behaviours and their interaction with the teachers and peers is more feasible. For this purpose, the observers should be prepared for the coding and measuring frequencies, duration, and interval of attitudes that are being observed. The following techniques, provided by Schumaker & Hazel (1984), are used to assess the social skills of children:

Figure 1: Social Skills Assessment Techniques (Resource: Schumaker & Havel, 1984)



To state the individual's social interaction of concern, a systematic observational and coding of behaviour is applied. It is, then, recorded and observed for later use. There are some pros & cons related to this, pros are; it affects the behaviors when utilized in natural settings, observers get trained due to its reliability, and it may also be used repeatedly, the cons are; less valid, difficult to code, and observe the quality of behaviors, and time-consuming process.

Observational checklists are utilized to inspect the behavior of interest. The way interaction occurs in a natural setting under the role-playing situation and then evaluations and readings are to be measured in terms of checking specific behavior of each child under observation. To measure a rapid and realistic view of occurring behaviors, role-play is an adequate technique. On the other hand, a role-playing technique only displays behaviors that occurred in specific characters but are not real, that is why this technique may lack reflective power. The socio-metric assessment scale is typically utilized to check the socialization of persons. For this purpose, Lickert-type scales are used to describe the social acceptance of the persons. Behavioral rating scales are generally used to check whether a specific skill relevant to the behavior, exists in the individual or not. This scale is quick responsive and easy to handle. For better results, targets may be made in this and normative data also be utilized.

An overview of early-childhood education status in Pakistan

The report illustrated that Pakistan is also one of those developing countries where the worth of early childhood education is merely limited to oral debates and records. However, students are identified to have high-level capabilities for cognitive progress during their early ages (Ministry of Education, 2008). Another report (Ministry of Education, 2007) also mentioned the importance of occurring experiences at early ages which remain everlasting in the mind of children at their adult ages. The identity of early childhood education is also highlighted in the national plan of action or Education for All (Ministry of Education, 2003b). In the early decades of Pakistan came into being, the early childhood education (ECE) concept was limited to the Katchi class, though government policy introduced the early childhood education (ECE) curriculum and its formulation but with the beginning of the public school system in Pakistan. The children of age 3-4 are taught in Katchi-classes, however, 5-6 years old children were also accommodated.

The government suggested in the National Plan for Action (NPA), that possible efforts will be made to promote basic and early education through Education for All (2001). To achieve this goal, the report was prepared and in the sixth goal, it was documented about pre-school, early childhood care, and education. The report of Education Sector Reforms (ESR,

2006) was designed to minimize the gaps in the discrepancies of services in ECE. The main parts of funds allocated for ESR were for the development of primary education whereas ECE was limited to only 2% of the funds and was only curbed to documentation. US-AID and UNICEF were the only donor companies or organizations which made efforts in the shape of donations and fix for primary and middle education (ECCE Report, 2002).

The annual status of Education Report (ASER) also explored the condition of early childhood and pre-school education. The estimates were provided that a larger number, 67.6% children are getting the education in public schools whereas 29% of children are taught in private schools. There is a dire need for the effective development of individuals in Pakistan to emphasize early childhood education or preschool education. The early childhood education (ECE) curriculum also needs to be stimulated according to the 21st century (Sayeed, Annual report-2011).

Statement of the problem

Preschool education possess the worth of unavoidable element for the educational development of any country. Until or unless the salt of preschool education is not added to the dish of academic achievement, the appetite of education remains untested. Early childhood education is comprised of three levels; kindergarten (KG), prep, and nursery classes. The purpose of pre-school education is to instil basic education and social development into young children of age 3, 4, and 5 for the betterment of their lives which they are usually provided at their homes. Due to the overburden and stuck in various tasks relevant to the betterment of lifestyle, the most of the parents remain unable to provide their needed attention to the youngsters, therefore pre-school education provided by the schools is formalized in a way that young children may avail better time to spend, make socializations, learn fundamental necessities of life, and develop social interaction with others. In the context of Pakistan, many children are confronting the lack of sufficient financial support by which they may get admission in the schools of their choice. The primary objective behind conducting the current research was to investigate whether preschool education is fulfilling its major goals or not. The study explains the significant effects of preschool education on the students' social development of public and private schools in district Lahore Pakistan.

Rationale of the Study

The children of age 3 to 5 have the maximum level of energy to learn and groom in society. The only need is to provide them with a platform where their fundamental academic progress and social betterment may be channelled. Preschool education formally provided by the schools prepares children in a better way so that enables them to embellish well. The fundamental purpose behind conducting the current study is to make an effort in recognizing and discovering the vivacious influence of pre-school learning on the social development of children. Little effort is made in the form of the current study to highlight the significant value of preschool education in the proper advancement of young children in Pakistan.

Significance of the Study

A society desires to transfer its traditions, norms, and customs to the next generation in a crystal candid mode so that individuals may become not only patriotic but also beneficial citizens of the country. The mentoring of young children possesses serious attention along with their academic progress. The mind of age 3 and 4 years children grasp the stuff provided by their parents, and other close relatives so immediately. To bring them up well and make them the prosperous individuals of the society, the children must be given a better environment in the creation of social norms and values. The emphasis of the existing research was to investigate the impact of preschool education on the social and communication skills of primary school students. The existing study may be valuable for the primary school teachers for getting awareness about the social compatibility of young children and overcoming the discrepancies in the field of making socialization. The study also may be fruitful for novice researchers in terms of adding material needed in their relevant studies literature. The current study may open the doors for other researchers in investigating this phenomenon in other domains of research. With the variety of attitudes towards career and work, parents may desire the need of conducive environment for their children in grooming and special care. The study may also be beneficial for them to get awareness regarding social harmony with their children while knowing the worth of preschool education in the government sector especially. The study may also be helpful for the policymakers to make possible efforts while funding early childhood education programs in Pakistan at the maximum level.

Objectives of the Study

The following objectives are outlined for the current study:

1. To find out the impact of preschool education on the students' social and communication skills in public and private schools in district Lahore.
2. To compare the significant difference of pre-schoolers' and non-pre-schoolers' social and communication skills in public and private schools of district Lahore.

Research Hypothesis of the Study

The following hypotheses are outlined for the study:

- H₀1: There is no significant difference between the social and communication skills of grade one students with preschool experience and the students without preschool experience.
- H₀2: There is no significant difference in the social and communication skills of girls and boys with preschool education and their companions without preschool education.
- H₀3: There is no significant difference between the social and communication skills of grade one students with preschool experience and the students without preschool experience age-wise.

Research Methodology

The research design of the present study encircled the positivist domain and within this, a quantitative approach was utilized. Within the parameters of the quantitative approach, a

causal-comparative method was used. In the words of the authors (Gay, et al., 2011), causal-comparative is the type of research where the purpose of conducting the research is to explain the reason for the prevalent differences in the behaviour or position of the group of individuals. The following figure elaborates the research design of the current study:

Figure 2: Research Design of the Study (Source: Researcher)



Sampling Design

All the public and private sector schools from the centre zone of district Lahore is the population for this study. 45 schools (23 Public and 22 Private) were selected through using cluster sampling technique and the sample was comprised of 502 students. The public and private sector-wise proportion of the sample is as follows:

Table 1

Schools	N	Preschoolers	Non-preschoolers	N
Public	23	168	83	251
Private	22	210	41	251
Total	45	378	124	502

Total sample in Public and Private Schools

Table 1 shows the total frequency of students concerning public and private schools sampled for the study. A total of 45 schools were taken as a sample in which the total number of public schools was 23 (168 preschoolers and 83 non-preschoolers) whereas a total of 22 private schools (210 preschoolers and 41 non-preschoolers) were sampled. Total 502 students (251 from Public and 251 from private schools) were taken as a sample of the study.

Table 2 Comparison of Social Skills of preschoolers and non- preschoolers

	School type	N	Mean	S.D	Sig.	t-value
Social Skills	Preschool	380	73.10	15.62	.008	-10.604
	Non-Preschool	122	58.00	11.06		-9.722
Communication skills	Preschool	380	3.42	0.735	.000	-9.905
	Non- preschool	122	2.57	0.871		-11.772

Table 2 indicates that preschoolers have better communication skills than non-preschoolers. Preschoolers are better at displaying social skills than non- preschoolers. Table shows significant at (p = .008) levels.

Table 3 Effect of number of years of pre-schooling on social skills of children

	Pre-years	pre-years	Mean- Diff (pre- non)	Sig.
Communication- Skills	1	0	.837	.000
	2	0	.836	.000
	3	0	1.426	.010

Table 3 indicates that several years of preschool education play a vibrant part in the development of social and communication skills. A significant difference in the number of years of preschoolers with non-preschoolers is presented in the table. Table 3 indicates that pre- years are highly significant before getting admission in grade one. This table indicates that there is a difference in pre-years education on social skills of students. This table compares a significant difference between attending pre-years of preschoolers and non-preschoolers. The significant value is .000 for one and two pre-years.

Table 4 Comparison of Social & Communication Skills of boys' preschoolers and non-preschoolers

	School type	N	Mean	S.D	df	Sig.	t-value
Social Skills	Preschooler	188	69.40	15.77	215.67	.000	-7.364
	Non-Preschooler	80	55.21	10.65	266		-8.572
Communication skills	Preschooler	188	3.45	.740	155.22	.741	-9.062
	Non- preschooler	80	2.56	.709	266		-9.222

Table 4 depicts that boys preschoolers are significantly better at debuting social skills and they communicate well than non- preschoolers. It shows obviously that preschoolers are better in confidence level than non-preschoolers. The difference of mean scores is at (p= .000) levels

Table 5 Comparison of Social & Communication skills of girls' preschoolers and Non-preschoolers

	School type	N	Mean	S.D	df	Sig.	t-value
Social Skills	Preschooler	192	76.72	14.632	232	.006	-5.652
	Non-Preschooler	42	63.33	9.8937	85.425		-7.216
Com-Skills	Preschooler	192	3.40	.731	232	.000	-5.802
	Non- preschooler	42	2.60	1.127	48.803		-4.432

Table 5 indicates that girls having preschool experience are highly better at exhibiting social skills and communicating well than girls without preschool experience. The significant difference is at .006 levels.

Table 6 Comparison of Social & Communication skills of preschoolers and Non-preschoolers at Private sector

	Students	N	Mean	S.D	df	Sig.	t-value
Social Skills	Preschooler	327	75.07	15.243	368	.508	-6.150
	Non-Preschooler	43	60.023	13.81			
Com-Skills	Preschooler	327	3.49	.717	368	.053	-2.773
	Non-preschooler	43	3.16	.843			

The table shows that there is an obvious difference in exhibiting social and communication skills of preschoolers and non-preschoolers at the private level. The students having preschool education are more confident and communicate better with teachers and their peers than non-preschoolers.

Table 7 Comparison of Social & Communication skills of preschoolers and Non-preschoolers at Public sector

	School type	N	Mean	S.D	df	Sig.	t-value
Social Skills	Preschooler	53	60.98	12.161	130	.019	-2.192
	Non-Preschooler	79	56.91	9.145	90.281		
Interview	Preschooler	53	3.00	.707	130	.050	-5.951
	Non-preschooler	79	2.25	.707	111.607		

Table 7 candidly indicates the highly significant difference in exhibiting social and communication skills of preschoolers and non-preschoolers at public schools which shows that preschoolers performed better in exhibiting social and communication skills. The high difference is at .050 levels

Table 8 Multiple Comparisons of Ages regarding social & communication skills between preschoolers and Non-preschoolers

Subjects	Age difference		Mean- Diff	Sig.
Social skills	6	8- 9 - 10	5.13 - 11.148 - 11.13	.047-.009-.037
	7	8 - 9 -10	6.73 - 12.75 - 12.73	.000-.001-.012

	5	9 - 10 - 12	.897 - 1.050 - 1.583	.048 - .029 - .011
	6	10 - 12	1.300 - 1.833	.040 - .014
Interview	6	8 - 9	.353 - 1.139	.009 - .000
		10 - 12	1.292 - 1.826	.000 - .000
	7	9 - 10 - 12	.920 - 1.073 - 1.606	.000 - .000 - .001
	8	9 - 10 - 12	.787 - .940 - 1.473	.000 - .001 - .002

Table 8 indicates clearly that there is a significant difference between the ages of preschoolers regarding social and communication skills. The students of age 7 showed better results than the students of age 8, 9, 10, 11 & 12. This is indicated clearly in the table that students above 7 years old are mentally weak.

Findings

1. The male preschoolers are significantly better at exhibiting social skills and they communicate well than non-preschoolers. Preschoolers have a better confidence level than non-preschoolers. The mean score difference is at ($p=.000$) levels.
2. The female preschoolers are highly better at exhibiting social skills and they communicate well than the non-preschoolers. The significant difference is at ($p = .006$) levels.
3. The preschoolers' depiction of social skills are significantly better than non-preschoolers ($p=.000$). In communicating phase, the performance of preschoolers in the interview are significantly better than the performance of non-preschoolers ($p=.018$).
4. The private school children exhibited social skills are significantly better than the public school children ($p=.000$). Private school children's communication was significantly better in interviews than the public school children ($p=.000$).
5. The preschooler boys having social skills are significantly better than the non-preschooler boys ($p=.000$). The communication of preschooler boys in the interview was significantly better than the non-preschooler boys ($p=.000$).
6. The preschooler girls having social skills are significantly better than the non-preschooler girls ($p=.000$). The communication of preschooler girls in the interview is significantly better than the non-preschooler girls ($p=.000$).
7. There is an obvious difference in exhibiting social and communication skills of preschoolers and non-preschoolers at the private level. The students having preschool education are more confident and communicate better with teachers and their peers than non-preschoolers. The significant difference is at ($p = .053$) levels.
8. There is a significant difference in exhibiting social and communication skills of preschoolers and non-preschoolers. Preschoolers performed better in exhibiting social and communication skills. The high difference is at .050 levels.
9. There is a significant difference in exhibiting social and communication skills of both genders. The results show that girls exhibited well in having social and communication skills than boys. The significant difference is at (Social Skills: $p= .050$, Interview: $p= .573$) levels.

10. The students of private schools are better at exhibiting social and communication skills than the students of public schools. It clearly shows in the above table that private schools develop social and communication skills better in children than private schools. The significant difference is at (Social Skills: $p=.000$, Interview: $p=.700$) levels.
11. There is a significant difference between the ages of preschoolers regarding social and communication skills. The students of age 7 showed better results than the students of age 8, 9 10, 11 & 12.

Discussion

The findings elaborated the certain effects of preschool education on the social and communication skills of children. The outcomes of the study revealed that the students with preschool experience are significantly better in communication and in exhibiting social skills than the students without experience. The findings of the study also supported with the results of numerous researches reported that preschool education vigorously influences a child's life in their social adjustments (Kagan, et al., 1995; McClelland & Morrison, 2003; McClelland et al., 2000; Chang, et al., 2003). The children who attended preschool behaved better, have positive interactions with peers, parents, teachers, had high confidence levels, and social skills than those children who did not attend preschool (Goodman & Sianesi, 2005).

Conclusion & Recommendations

Upon the groundwork of findings, the following conclusion and recommendations are framed for the study:

1. The findings revealed that in exhibiting social and communication skills, preschoolers performed better than non-preschoolers.
2. The pre-years in preschool are important in the development of children's later educational and social life.
3. The children of ages 1, 2, and 3 are significantly better than the students of the same age having no preschool experience.
4. Proper provision of pre-school education should be made possible so that dropout rates may be decreased and maximum attendance of children could be possible. There is a need to focus on the induction of trained teachers and a conducive environment where children may provide education.

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