

Classroom Environment And Learning Outcomes In Social Studies Subject In Nursery Schools In Rwanda A Case Of Kicukiro District

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Abstract:

This study aimed to analyze the influence of classroom environment on learning outcomes in nursery schools within the Kigarama Sector of the Kicukiro District. The objectives were to assess the suitability of the classroom environment in facilitating learning outcomes in the social studies subject in Rwandan nursery schools, evaluate the level of achievement of learning outcomes in the social studies subject in these schools, and examine the effect of classroom environment on learning outcomes in social studies. The study employed descriptive survey and causal research designs. The target population consisted of teachers and head teachers from five public schools and two international schools in the Kigarama Sector of Kicukiro District, totalling 51 individuals. The study utilised all the population without taking a sample. Data collection methods included questionnaires technique. Data analysis involved the use of IBM SPSS version 22, with descriptive statistics such as frequencies and percentages, means and standard deviation being computed. Inferential statistics, particularly beta coefficients, was also calculated. The findings were presented in tables, graphics, and narrative descriptions. The study is expected to provide valuable insights to head teachers, the Ministry of Education, pupils, and parents on improving classroom environments to enhance children's learning outcomes. The study findings did indicate that 55-65% of teachers agreed that the classroom setting is suitable and that teachers of nursery are competent while 35-45% did disagree. Additionally, the instructional materials availability was supported by 85-95% of teachers except the case of availability of text books for nursery schools which was supported by 60%. The mean for classroom suitability was averagely 3.5-4.4 which means average suitability of classroom environment to facilitate achievement of learning outcomes in social studies subject. Secondly, 55%-65% of teachers did support achievement of learning outcomes in nursery schools in Rwanda while 35%-45% were not in support. Lastly, the study found that classroom environment had positive influence on learning outcomes achievement in social studies subject with beta coefficients for classroom setting, teacher competence and instructional materials being positive as 0.0.329, 0.298 and 0.0.357 respectively with p values less than 0.05. The study concluded that classroom environment is moderately suitable to facilitate achievement of learning outcomes on social studies subject in nursery schools, the learning is achieved to a moderate level or extent and lastly there is positive influence of classroom environment particularly classroom setting, teacher competence and instructional materials on learning outcomes in social studies subject in Rwanda nursery schools. The study recommends that the government to improve classroom setting by building more spacious classrooms, paints, ventilation, chairs and desks among others, continuously offer training s to teachers and allow paid leave for those who want to further their education and lastly purchase more textbooks for nursery schools to facilitate learning.

Keywords: Classroom environment, Learning Outcomes, Social Studies, Nursery school

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I. Introduction

Background of the Study

In our interconnected world, individuals engage in continual social interaction within various groups, wherein they acquire and exchange social skills essential for cohesive communal living. This process, as noted by McClelland and Morrisson (2003), underscores the significance of cultivating adept social abilities across diverse contexts, thereby fostering enduring bonds and collective harmony in future endeavours. Indeed, the cultivation of social skills during formative years is pivotal, serving as a cornerstone for subsequent academic accomplishments and the cultivation of virtues such as punctuality, generosity, respect, cooperative engagement, and collaborative teamwork. This pivotal role underscores the importance of social studies education within

school curricula. The importance of developing skills such as cooperation, unity, sharing, respect, turn-taking, and team spirit is underscored by the National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS, 2017) in the United States. They assert that engagement in social activities during foundational years aids learners in comprehending past events, which proves beneficial in their present circumstances. Failure to acquire this foundational understanding during early education may impede teachers' ability to adequately prepare students for higher academic levels, potentially leading to the development of irresponsible citizens. Thus, a robust early development of social studies can equip learners with the necessary social skills to navigate real-world social environments effectively. Studies worldwide suggest that effective teaching of social studies necessitates teachers creating rapport and fostering learners' interest in their immediate contexts. In Canada, Umameh (2011) highlights the imperative connection between classroom environment and student academic performance. Similarly, Linda's (2007) research in Colombia emphasizes the need for comprehensive teaching, reflective planning, and integrated instruction and assessment in social studies education. In Nigeria, inadequate learning resources in schools have been linked to poor performance in social studies, highlighting the importance of utilizing instructional materials for effective teaching and learning. In Ghana, Dadzie (2010) elucidates how insufficient teaching resources and inadequate classroom infrastructure negatively impact the quality of social studies education. Isola (2010) conducted research in West Africa, revealing the significant influence of material resources on academic performance across subjects. In Kenya, studies by Lilian (2015) and Wambua (2018) demonstrate the positive correlation between physical facilities in the learning environment and academic achievement in social studies. Nursery teachers, according to Njoki (2014), possess the necessary skills and knowledge to facilitate interactive social studies activities, promoting balanced learning. Uwezo Education Kenya's (2014) research findings indicate a positive relationship between classroom context setting and literacy skills development, advocating for supportive learning environments. In Kenya, the government's commitment to Education for All (EFA) underscores the importance of social studies education in early childhood development. The National Cohesion and Integration Commission (NCIC) in Kenya identifies deficiencies in social skills as potential contributors to ethnic conflicts and discrimination. They recommend educational institutions as crucial platforms for promoting peaceful coexistence through effective socialization and multi-ethnic integration. Accordingly, the classroom environment plays a vital role in shaping students' social behavior and facilitating social studies education. Obaki (2017) emphasizes the significance of classroom environment and instructional strategies in fostering responsive learning environments and desired social behaviors. Given the limited research on the influence of classroom setting on social studies learning in nursery schools, further investigation is warranted, particularly in districts like Kicukiro in Rwanda, where efforts to improve nursery education are on-going. This study aims to explore the impact of classroom environment factors on social studies learning outcomes in nursery schools in Rwanda, focusing on factors such as physical layout, adequacy of instructional materials, and appropriateness of teaching strategies. Given the challenges facing nursery education programs, including the shortage of qualified teachers and inadequate infrastructure, this research seeks to provide insights into enhancing the quality of early childhood education

Problem statement

Previous studies focused on social issues have demonstrated that social education plays a vital role in improving children's social skills and preparing them for active participation in community activities. Research conducted on a global and regional scale indicates that children who receive social education demonstrate competence in moral values and are better equipped to tackle academic challenges compared to those who do not receive such education. Furthermore, pre-primary education is essential for fostering the social, emotional, physical, and psychological well-being of children, while also boosting their self-esteem and confidence (Gray Group International, 2023). Additionally, the implementation of effective teaching methods has been identified as a significant factor in promoting children's academic performance, leading to improved grades in higher education levels and facilitating sociability with various individuals, including peers, parents, and teachers (Oguejiofor, 2021). The Rwandan government recognizes the importance of fostering peaceful coexistence within society. This is exemplified by the inclusion of the social studies subject in the Rwandan educational curriculum at the pre-primary level, aimed at nurturing a generation grounded in moral values to promote harmony. Despite the recent implementation of pre-primary education, it faces challenges such as a shortage of qualified teachers, inadequate instructional resources, and ineffective teaching methods, all of which can hinder the intended learning outcomes, including academic performance and the acquisition and application of social skills.

According to Awinja and Kamau (2020), the classroom environment plays a crucial role in the effective delivery of social studies lessons, encompassing factors such as instructional resources, teacher competence, and the condition of classroom infrastructure. A conducive classroom environment facilitates successful achievement of learning objectives. Therefore, based on this premise, the researcher aims to

investigate how classroom environmental factors influence the learning outcomes of social studies in pre-primary schools in Rwanda, with a specific focus on the Kicukiro District.

Objectives of the Study

The study aimed to achieve the following specific objectives:

- i. To assess the suitability of classroom environment in facilitating the attainment of learning outcomes in social studies subject in Rwanda nursery schools.
- ii. To evaluate the level of achievement of learning outcomes in social studies subject are accomplished in Rwandan nursery schools.
- iii. To investigate the influence of classroom environment on learning outcomes in social studies subject in Rwandan nursery schools

Research Questions

This research was conducted to answer the following questions:

- i. How suitable is classroom environment in achieving learning outcomes in social studies subject in nursery schools in Rwanda?
- ii. What is the level of achievement of learning outcomes in social studies subject in nursery schools in Rwanda?
- iii. How does classroom environment influence learning outcomes in social studies subject in nursery schools in Rwanda?

II. Review Of Related Literature

Classroom Learning environment and Learning Outcomes in Social Studies

According to Makau and Gakii (2018), the learning environment encompasses various elements such as teaching and learning materials such as textbooks, charts, classrooms, libraries, and playgrounds, among others. Focusing specifically on the classroom environment, it comprises factors within the classroom that facilitate learning, including both human and physical resources. Therefore, an effective classroom environment is characterized by the presence of these factors to ensure smooth learning (Janet, 2008). Furthermore, the physical appearance of the classroom, including structures, decorations, and lighting, promotes the social and emotional development of learners, thereby enhancing their concentration and motivation to learn. Nursery schools, whether private or public, are obligated to establish a conducive classroom environment by ensuring the availability of teaching materials, adequate physical infrastructure, and competent teachers to improve the suitability of the classroom environment for learning, thereby achieving the desired learning outcomes. A conducive classroom learning environment encourages learners to grasp various concepts effectively, including those in social studies. The presence of learning materials within the classroom also promotes inclusive education by catering to the needs of learners with diverse capabilities, including those with special needs. In this study, the classroom learning environment is perceived as comprising the classroom setting, teacher competence, and instructional materials available within the classroom, all of which contribute to the effective achievement of learning outcomes. Global studies have emphasized that for the effective attainment of social studies learning outcomes, teachers need to have a strong understanding of the subject matter and create a conducive learning environment through the provision of adequate instructional materials and physical infrastructure, which ultimately engage learners and enhance their concentration during the learning process (Linda, 2007). Regionally, studies have identified inadequate instructional materials and physical infrastructure as major obstacles to achieving educational learning outcomes. Many schools, particularly public ones, have been reported to lack teaching and learning facilities, thereby compromising the quality of education (Adayemi, 2008). Additionally, Makau and Gakii (2018) noted in Kenya that learning materials are still below average and the student-teacher ratio is very high, thus adversely affecting the quality of learning, particularly in the social studies subject.

Empirical Review

Makau and Gakii (2018) conducted a study in Kenya aimed at assessing the physical facilities and instructional approaches utilized by teachers in lower primary schools to enhance learning outcomes in the social studies subject within Makueni County, Kenya. The research involved data collection from lower primary schools and subsequent descriptive analysis. The results revealed that the availability of physical facilities fell below average, leading to pupils contending for the limited resources. Additionally, student performance in social studies was subpar, suggesting that the inadequately equipped classroom environment hindered effective acquisition of learning concepts, resulting in below-average performance.

Adamu (2015) investigated the influence of the learning environment on students' academic performance in public and private secondary schools in Taraba State, Nigeria. The study uncovered a notable

disparity in the performance levels of the two groups (Experimental and Control). Public schools were found to lack sufficient learning materials and had poor physical infrastructure compared to private schools. Consequently, the learning environment in public schools was deemed unsuitable for effective learning, leading to divergent outcomes in learning achievement compared to private schools.

Hitimana and Mukamazimpaka (2022) undertook a study in Rwanda to examine the impact of early childhood education on students' readiness for primary one learning. Utilizing a descriptive survey design, the study targeted teachers from public Early Childhood Development (ECD) centers. The findings indicated that ECD learners were ill-prepared for primary education due to challenges such as a shortage of qualified teachers, inadequate infrastructure, and insufficient learning materials. Consequently, these factors negatively influenced their academic performance, indicating a lack of readiness for primary education.

Ademike and Olowe (2016) in Nigeria identified the obstacles hindering the implementation of Early Childhood Education (ECE) through a descriptive approach. The study focused on various ECE centers in Nigeria and gathered data from teachers and parents. The findings revealed major challenges including inadequate facilities, the absence of a standardized ECE curriculum across all centers, insufficient professional development opportunities, and high child-to-teacher ratios. These findings underscored the critical importance of addressing these factors for the successful implementation of ECE.

Minde (2015) suggests that inadequate teaching methods in classrooms can lead to the development of negative behaviors among learners, including disorderliness, disruptiveness, dependency, lack of cooperation, conflicts, and a deficit in empathy. These behaviors may ultimately result in low academic achievement and life outcomes. Therefore, Minde recommends that teachers adopt child-centered teaching approaches.

Twagirayezu and Andala (2023) conducted research on the relationship between instructional materials and academic performance in nursery schools located in Rwanda's Nyamagabe district. Employing a descriptive research design, the study revealed that insufficient instructional materials in these nursery schools contributed to low pupil performance, as teachers struggled to effectively impart skills to learners.

Globally, research has indicated that creating visually appealing classrooms can effectively engage learners, as emphasized by Kostelnik, Soderman, & Whiren (2011). They suggest organizing learning activities to encourage interaction with instructional materials, noting that an attractive environment stimulates children's senses and encourages participation in activities, leading to later reflection. A well-designed classroom fosters a sense of connection and well-being among children, promoting engagement with learning.

In Turkey, Halil (2011) conducted a survey on the use of Internal Communication Technology (ICT) in social studies teaching, finding that access to technology positively impacted performance, while its absence hindered teaching and learning. However, the study also identified a need for intensive in-service training for teachers lacking ICT skills, with 22 teachers identified as needing additional support in integrating technology into their lessons.

Annova (2014) emphasized the significance of lighting in Pre-primary settings, highlighting its often overlooked status by interior designers. It stressed the importance of designing electric lighting in conjunction with natural light levels in the classroom, considering factors such as quantity, quality, and placement. The presence of ample natural light was found to be preferred by children, as it encourages movement, interaction with peers and materials. Natural light's gradual changes throughout the day and across seasons offer children varied experiences with objects and spaces (Olds, Anita & Rui, 2001).

In research conducted by Wambua (2018) in Kenya, investigating the influence of classroom environments on the academic performance of lower primary students in social studies within the Kibwezi zone, Makeni County, it was discovered that the classroom environment had a notable effect on students' underperformance. The study proposed engaging parents in discussions to champion for financial support from entities such as the Constituency Development Fund (CDF) and county administrations to enhance the availability of teaching resources and infrastructure.

Abotsi (2013) defines child-centered learning as an educational approach prioritizing students' needs over those of teachers and administrators. This method shifts the focus from the teacher to the learners, encouraging active participation through problem-solving, discussion, and cooperative learning. Learners work collaboratively on projects, ensuring both group cohesion and individual responsibility. Inductive teaching methods present challenges to students, who then learn course material in the context of addressing these challenges. This approach allows students to actively engage in the learning process, promoting discovery learning and accommodating diverse learning styles through hands-on activities and varied learning tools. This creates a conducive learning environment, enhancing student motivation and facilitating lifelong learning goals.

Ayeni and Masengesho (2019) conducted a study evaluating the impact of Early Childhood Development (ECD) Centers in Rwanda. They collected data from 127 participants representing 6 Cells in the Sector, with 65 in the experimental group and 62 in the control group. Data was gathered through survey questionnaires and observation checklists. The study revealed a high approval rate of the intervention, with over 98% satisfaction among the experimental group. Furthermore, 97% of beneficiaries felt that the ECD program

adequately prepared children for primary education, while 95% agreed that it helped parents enhance their parenting skills and child development. The study identified school feeding programs, free tuition, and a secure environment as key motivators for parents to enrol their children. It also found improvements in curriculum quality and cognitive development. Recommendations included increasing compensation for caregivers and maintaining school feeding programs and free tuition.

Kwizera, Oyebimpe, and Andala (2021) conducted a study in Rwanda to explore the impact of Early Childhood Education (ECE) on learners' academic performance. Using a descriptive survey design, they focused on teachers, head teachers, and pupils. The study revealed that 79.4% of respondents recognized the pivotal role of ECE in promoting moral, social, emotional, intellectual, and physical development among learners. It recommended adequate resourcing of ECE centers to ensure quality education for children.

Hitimana and Mukamazimpaka (2022) investigated the influence of early childhood education on pupils' readiness for learning in primary one in Rwanda. Using a descriptive research design targeting teachers and pupils, they found that ECD significantly impacted pupils' readiness, with a 64.9% R-square value. They noted that factors such as numeracy skills, language development, teaching resources, and qualified teachers improved pupils' readiness. The study suggested that the Ministry of Education should provide teaching facilities in ECD centers within primary schools to enhance learning. Additionally, effective educational design setups were recommended to boost pupils' readiness for learning, facilitating the effective implementation of ECE factors in public primary schools.

Critical Review and Research Gap Identification

From the previous studies reviewed in this study it is clear that an attractive classroom environment plays a great role in motivating children to learn. The classroom set up in terms of lighting, designing of structures, paints are very appealing to children and this enhances their motivation to learn. Additionally, instructional resources have proved to be major boosters of children senses hence reduces teachers' struggles to use limited instructional materials during learning. Furthermore, the use of child centred teaching method contributes in enhancing learners' participation in learning process and enables them to strengthen their thinking and criticism skills. This enables them to come up with new knowledge and offer critic to the existing concepts. Studies have been conducted in classroom as evidenced in the literature but little has been done with a focus on enhancing social skills at nursery level particularly in Rwanda. Therefore, the direct link between classroom environment and social skills acquisition is still lacking which this study identifies as a gap that it seeks to fill. Therefore, this study aims to analyse classroom environment factors and their link to social skills acquisition in nursery schools in Rwanda.

Social Development Theory

This study utilizes Lev Vygotsky's Social Development Theory, which was developed by the Russian psychologist during the early 20th century. Vygotsky's theory emphasizes three main components of social learning in children: social interactions, interaction with more knowledgeable individuals (referred to as MKO), and the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD).

Social interaction is highlighted as a crucial aspect of learning, particularly during the formative years of education. Vygotsky suggests that a child's cultural development initially emerges through social interactions before becoming internalized at an individual level. Furthermore, he posits that social learning precedes cognitive development in children and significantly influences subsequent psychological growth. Therefore, the teaching methods employed in early childhood education settings are pivotal in shaping the acquisition and practice of social skills among children.

Children also learn socially through pairing, where they're placed in groups with individuals who have more knowledge, often referred to as the More Knowledgeable Other (MKO). This could be a teacher or a peer who is more skilled in a particular area. Learning in this context is enhanced as the MKO guides the learner, leading to a better understanding of the concept. Additionally, social learning occurs within the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), which is the gap between what a learner can do with assistance and what they can achieve independently. Vygotsky emphasized the importance of the connection between individuals and their environment, suggesting that learning is facilitated through interaction with peers and engagement in various activities like experimentation and group discussions. Teachers play a vital role in this process by providing guidance, unlocking challenging tasks, and offering hints, which allows children to explore and comprehend better. Participation in group work also helps children develop social skills and build relationships with both teachers and peers. The absence of these skills can lead to difficulties in problem-solving and may contribute to mental health issues. Understanding these concepts is crucial, particularly in early education, as it prepares children for future educational challenges.

III. Methodology

Research Design

Descriptive survey and causal research designs were adopted. The study targeted teachers of nursery schools in Kigarama Sector in Kicukiro district. Kicukiro district is one of the districts in Kigali Province which hosts 65 nursery schools with a total population of 184 ECD teachers (Mineduc, 2019). However, in Kigarama Sector, the public nursery schools are five, namely EP Zuba, GS Bwerankori, GS Mburabuturo, and GS Kimisange. The population size was 51 comprising of 21 public nursery school teachers and 30 private nursery school teachers. The study adopted census sampling technique since the population size was too small.

Table 1: Population and Sample size for Schools in Kigarama Sector

School Type	Population size	Sample size
Public nursery Schools	21	21
Private nursery schools	30	30

Source: Kicukiro District Education Data

Data was collected using questionnaire which comprised of open and closed questions. Data was analysed using IBM SPSS version 21 and descriptive statistics such as means, percentages and standard deviation utilized in presenting findings. the study also utilized inferential statistics mainly regression coefficients and p values.

The regression equation adopted in this study was:

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1X_1 + \beta_2X_2 + \beta_3X_3 + \epsilon$$

Where: Y= Social studies learning outcomes

X₁, X₂, X₃= Classroom physical structures, instructional materials and teaching methodologies respectively

β₀= Constant Term;

β₁, β₂, β₃, = Beta coefficients;

ε = Error Term.

IV. Research Findings Interpretation And Discussions

Presentation of Findings

The research was driven by a comprehensive aim to explore the impact of classroom environment on the educational outcomes of social studies in Rwandan nursery schools. Specifically, the study sought to assess how well the classroom environment supported the attainment of learning objectives in social studies, to gauge the level of success in meeting these objectives within nursery school settings, and finally, to analyse the effect of the classroom environment on the achievement of learning outcomes in the subject of social studies in Rwandan nursery schools. This section outlines the results obtained from the respondents concerning these specified objectives.

Suitability of classroom environment in facilitating the achievement of the outcomes of learning in social studies subject in nursery schools

This is the first specific objective of this study and it aims to ascertain whether classroom environment is suitable for achievement of social studies subject learning outcomes. The researcher did gather information from respondents regarding classroom suitability. The key elements of classroom environment that were looked at includes classroom setting, teacher competence and instructional materials. Descriptive statistical tools were mainly utilized to achieve this objective involving percentages, means and standard deviation. The findings on descriptive statistics are summarized in the following tables for each element of classroom environment.

Table 2: Classroom setting in nursery schools in Kigarama sector

Classroom Setting	SD	D	N	A	SA	mean	St. Dev
1. The Classes are spacious enough conducive for learning	10%	30%		40%	20%	3.7	0.8
2. The classrooms have enough lighting for smooth learning	10%	25%		40%	25%	3.8	1.02
3. The classrooms are well painted with attractive colours	10%	25%		35%	30%	3.69	0.76
4. The classrooms have enough comfortable chairs and desks which supports learning	5%	40%		30%	25%	3.76	0.83
5. The classrooms are well ventilated conducive for learning	5%	40%		30%	25%	3.76	0.83

Source: primary data, 2024

In terms of classroom setting, the findings in table 2 indicated that the classroom setting is on average suitability. From the table, 60% of respondents did agree that classes are spacious enough conducive for

learning while 40% declined, 65% did opined that classrooms have enough lighting for smooth learning and are well painted with attractive colours while 35% were for the opposite opinion. Lastly 55% of respondents did also indicate that there are comfortable chairs and desks which supports learning and classes are well ventilated for continuous aeration while 45% did disagree. These findings indeed indicate that not all nursery schools have good classroom setting implying that there is inequality in terms of classroom setting in different nursery schools. The mean of the various elements of classroom setting was between 3.5-4 with a standard deviation of less than 1 indicating that the suitability of the classroom in terms of classroom setting was average.

Another aspect of the classroom environment that was assessed pertained to the competence of teachers. The findings regarding this aspect are outlined in the subsequent table, providing a summary of the results.

Table 3: teacher competence in nursery schools in Kigarama Sector

Teacher Competence	SD	D	N	A	SA	Mean	St. Dev
I am trained professional nursery teacher	5%	40%		45%	10%	3.76	0.88
I attend regular teachers' trainings on professionalism	10%	30%		50%	10%	3.82	0.92
I understand how to manage small children effectively in classroom	5%	30%		45%	20%	3.91	1.05
I understand how to communicate effectively with small children	5%	30%		45%	20%	3.91	1.05
I understand how to resolve conflicts arising among small children	10%	10%		20%	60%	4.1	1.02
I am aware of various teaching methodologies and the most appropriate for young children	5%	40%		45%	10%	3.76	0.88
I use child centred approach in teaching	10%	10%	25%	20%	35%	3.76	0.89

Source: Primary data, 2024

The results from table 3 indicate that 55% of respondents did agree that they are trained professional nursery teachers and they are aware of various teaching methodologies appropriate for young children and that they use child centered approach in teaching while 45% did disagree. Secondly, 60% of respondents did agree that they do attend regular trainings on professionalism while 40% declined. The findings further indicated that 65% of respondents did opinion that they understand how to manage small children in a class and communicate to them effectively while 35% were of opposite opinion. Lastly 80% of respondents did agree that they understand how to resolve conflict arising among small children while 20% indicated they don't understand how to resolve conflicts among children. The mean of the elements of teacher competence were between 3.5-4 with a standard deviation of generally less than 1 an indication that the teacher competence as a classroom environment element was average among nursery school in Kigarama Sector.

The last element of classroom environment which the researcher looked at was instructional materials. The findings on various indicators of instructional materials are summarized in the following table.

Table 4: Instructional materials in nursery schools in Kigarama Sector

Instructional Materials	SD	D	N	A	SA	Mean	St. Dev
1. Chalks and markers are available to be used in class for teaching		25%		40%	35%	4.06	0.92
2. Charts and white/blackboards are available in our classrooms		15%		50%	35%	4.12	1.01
3. We have enough nursery textbooks for learning facilitation	10%	30%		40%	20%	3.78	0.86

Source: Primary data, 2024

The researcher did assess the suitability of classroom environment in terms of instructional material availability and the findings summary in table 4 above indicate that 75% of respondents agreed there are chalks and markers used for teaching while 25% did disagree, 85% agreed that charts and white/ blackboards are available in classrooms while 15% did disagree and lastly 60% opined that there are enough nursery textbooks while 40% were of opposite opinion. The mean was above 4 with standard deviation of 0.92 and 1.01 for availability of chalks and markers and white/blackboards in classrooms an indication of suitability while the mean for textbook availability was less than 4 meaning a considerable percentage of schools do not have enough nursery textbooks for teaching.

Level of achievement of learning outcomes in social studies subject in nursery schools in Rwanda

The second objective was to evaluate the level of achievement of social studies subject learning outcomes in nursery schools in Rwanda. The researcher did use questionnaires which contained questions on various learning outcomes related to social studies subject to collect the views of the respondents regarding the status of the same in their respective schools. The objective was achieved through descriptive statistical analysis using descriptive statistical tools namely percentages, mean and standard deviation. The findings are summarized the following table.

Table 5: Learning outcomes achievement in social studies subject in nursery schools in Kigarama Sector

Statements	SD	D	N	A	SA	Mean	St. Dev
1. Our nursery children have good communication skills	10%	30%		40%	20%	3.75	0.89
2. Our nursery children are aware and practice social norms	15%	30%		45%	10%	3.62	0.85
3. Our nursery children perform well in assessments	20%	20%		50%	10%	3.78	0.88
4. Our nursery children have acquired and practice social values	10%	35%		30%	25%	3.64	0.86
5. Our nursery children are knowledgeable about social virtues	25%	15%		45%	15%	3.75	0.89
6. Our children are able to freely socialise with different groups of people namely teachers, peers and others		35%		35%	30%	3.72	0.91

Source: Primary data, 2024

Table 5 presents the extent to which learning outcomes of social studies subject are achieved in nursery schools in Rwanda. From the table, 60% of teachers' respondents did agree that their children have good communication skills, perform well in assessments and are knowledgeable about social virtues while 40% did disagree. Secondly the table shows that 55% of teacher respondents indicated that their children are aware and practice social norms, nursery children have acquired and practice social values while 45% were of the contrary opinion. Lastly, the findings did indicate that 65% of teacher respondents were of the opinion that their children are able to freely socialize with different groups of people including teachers and peers while 35% of them did disagree. The mean for the various indicators of learning outcomes achievement were less than 4 but more than 3.5 with less than 1 standard deviation an indication that the level of achievement of learning outcomes of social studies subject was average.

Influence of classroom environment on outcomes of learning of social studies subject in nursery schools in Rwanda

The final objective of the study focused on examining the relationship between classroom environment and learning outcomes in the social studies subject within nursery schools in Rwanda. This objective was accomplished through the utilization of descriptive statistical methods as well as inferential statistics, including regression coefficients and p-values, to assess the impact of particular elements of the classroom environment on learning outcomes. The ensuing tables provide a comprehensive summary of the research findings in this regard

Table 6: Classroom environment and learning outcomes in social studies subject

Statements	SD	D	N	A	SA	Mean	St. Dev
1. Good classroom setting is effective for development of social skills		10%		40%	50%	4.2	1.01
2. Teacher competence is very crucial in development of social skills and attaining higher grade score		5%		50%	45%	4.45	1.02
3. Availability of instructional materials promotes social skills acquisition and achievement of higher-grade scores		15%		50%	35%	4.1	1.01

Source: primary data, 2024

The table 6 shows that good classroom setting is effective for development of social skills supported by 90% of respondents. Additionally, 95% has indicated that teacher competence is very crucial in development of social skills and attaining higher grade scores. Lastly, the table shows that availability of instructional materials promotes social skills acquisition and achievement of higher grade scores. These findings indeed indicate that classroom environment is very crucial and play big role in achievement of learning outcomes in nursery schools in social studies subject. Adamu (2015) in his study in Nigeria noted disparity in the performance levels of the two groups (Experimental and Control). Public schools were found to lack sufficient learning materials and had poor physical infrastructure compared to private schools. Consequently, the learning environment in public schools was deemed unsuitable for effective learning, leading to divergent outcomes in

learning achievement compared to private schools. Additionally, Sinyei, Mwonga & Wanyama (2012) sought to identify the challenges impeding the effective implementation of the early childhood music and movement curriculum in pre-primary schools. The study highlighted the prevalent inadequacy of instructional materials in most schools, which hindered the implementation of the curriculum. As a recommendation, the study proposed that the government should organize in-service training courses for teachers to teach them how to utilize locally available materials and integrate play as a learning resource in pre-primary education.

Regression analysis of influence of classroom environment on social studies subject learning outcomes

The three key elements of classroom environment of focus were classroom setting, teacher competence and instructional materials. The influence of each of these on learning outcomes of social studies subject was ascertained through inferential statistics by conducting regression analysis. The findings are in the following tables. This aided in coming up with a complete model which estimated in chapter three.

Table 7: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.828	.686	.675	.13709

Source: primary data, 2024

The model summary (table 7) indicate that the value of R is 0.828 and R squared is 0.686. R squared explains the percentage of variations of dependent variable that is explained by the model independent variables. Therefore, 68.6% of variations in learning outcomes in social studies is explained by variations in classroom setting, teacher competence and instructional materials.

Table 8: ANOVA

Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Squares	F	Sig.
Regression	4.214	3	1.405	26.019	.000
Residual	1.139	21	0.054		
Total	5.353	24			

Dependent variable: Social studies learning outcomes

The findings of the analysis of variance(ANOVA) in table 8 indicates that the f value is 26.019 with sig value of 0.000. This suggests that the linear regression model employed to elucidate the correlation between learning outcomes in social studies and the classroom environment is suitable and fitting for the analysis

Table 9: Model Coefficients

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
Constant	.329	.245		1.343	.176
Classroom setting	.298	.157	.206	1.898	.005
Teacher Competence	.186	.103	.182	1.806	.04
Instructional materials	.357	.246	.267	1.451	.001

Dependent variable: Social studies learning outcomes

Table 9 above shows the beta coefficients of regression and the p values. The table shows that regression coefficients for classroom setting, teacher competence and instructional materials are 0.298, 0.186 and 0.357 respectively with corresponding p values of 0.005, 0.04 and 0.001 respectively. This implies that these classroom environment elements have a positive influence on learning outcomes in social studies subject. The more conducive the classroom environment is the higher the chances of achieving high outcomes of learning of social studies subject in nursery schools. The model coefficients indeed imply that 1% change in classroom setting, teacher competence and instructional materials leads to 29.8%, 18.6% and 35.7% positive change in learning outcomes of social studies subject.

The model fitted in chapter three is now completed as

$$Y = 0.329 + 0.298X_1 + 0.186X_2 + 0.357X_3 + \epsilon$$

These results are in support of the findings of Annova (2014) who found a positive impact of classroom designing or setting on students' performance. He emphasized the significance of lighting in Pre-primary settings, highlighting its often overlooked status by interior designers. It stressed the importance of designing electric lighting in conjunction with natural light levels in the classroom, considering factors such as quantity, quality, and placement. Additionally, the study is in concurrence with the studies by Abotsi (2013)

who defines child-centred learning as an educational approach prioritizing students' needs over those of teachers and administrators. He emphasized that the method shifts the focus from the teacher to the learners, encouraging active participation through problem-solving, discussion, and cooperative learning. Learners work collaboratively on projects, ensuring both group cohesion and individual responsibility. Inductive teaching methods present challenges to students, who then learn course material in the context of addressing these challenges hence easily achieve learning outcomes expected. Lastly Hitimana and Mukamazimpaka (2022) did stress that ECD impact heavily on students' readiness for learning. They did note that factors such as numeracy skills, language development, teaching resources, and qualified teachers improved pupils' readiness. The study suggested that the Ministry of Education should provide teaching facilities in ECD centers within primary schools to enhance learning.

V. Conclusions And Recommendations

Conclusions

The study's conclusion indicates that learning outcomes in social studies remain at a moderate level, with many schools struggling to effectively achieve them due to issues like inadequate classroom conditions and unqualified teachers. Additionally, it emphasizes the positive impact of a conducive classroom environment on learning outcomes in social studies for nursery schools. It suggests that the better the classroom environment, the greater the likelihood of achieving desired learning outcomes, particularly in terms of fostering social skills, norms, and virtues. The findings highlight a concerning lack of essential resources and infrastructure in Rwandan nursery schools, indicating a significant gap in meeting the basic requirements for effective learning environments. The absence of adequate paints, chairs, desks, ventilation, and space is particularly noteworthy, as reported by teachers across numerous schools. This deficiency suggests that nursery classrooms, on average, fall short of providing the conducive settings necessary for optimal learning experiences. Such inadequacies pose a substantial barrier to achieving desired learning outcomes, especially in subjects like social studies which demand a supportive environment for comprehensive understanding and engagement.

The second question that the research sought to answer was what is the level of achievement of learning outcomes of social studies in nursery schools in Rwanda? The study reveals that learning outcomes in social studies within nursery schools are only moderately satisfactory, primarily due to systemic issues such as insufficient classroom conditions and a dearth of qualified educators. The presence of underqualified teachers compounds the challenges faced by these institutions, hindering their ability to effectively impart social studies education. This underscores the critical need for addressing not only the physical aspects of classroom infrastructure but also ensuring the proficiency of teachers in delivering quality education. Without competent instructors and conducive learning environments, the potential for achieving desired learning outcomes in social studies remains constrained.

The third research question was how does classroom environment affect social studies learning outcomes of social studies in nursery schools in Rwanda? From the findings of the study, the conclusion was that there is positive significant effect of classroom environment on learning outcomes in social studies subject in nursery schools. conducive classroom environment in terms of its setting like good paints, available chairs and desks, proper ventilation among others enhances students' morale to learn hence achievement of learning outcomes. Additionally, competent teachers with right skills and attitude towards teaching in nursery schools knows how to handle young children issues, motivates them and impacts the right knowledge on them thereby motivating them to learn resulting into achievement of learning outcomes. Availability of instructional materials such as books, charts, white or black boards and graphics are very essential towards students learning and ensures learning process take place without difficulty thereby enabling students to learn smoothly and achieve the intended learning outcomes.

In general, the research underscores the pivotal role of a nurturing classroom environment in fostering positive learning outcomes, particularly in subjects like social studies that emphasize the development of social skills, norms, and virtues. It advocates for comprehensive improvements encompassing classroom conditions, teacher proficiency, and the availability of instructional materials to enhance the effectiveness of nursery education. By addressing these deficiencies, nursery schools can better equip young learners with the foundational knowledge and skills necessary for success not only in social studies but also in their broader educational journey

Recommendations

This study aimed to investigate the influence of classroom environment on learning outcomes in social studies subject in nursery schools. The findings and conclusions indeed indicate that there is positive influence meaning that classroom environment boost enhances chances of achieving higher learning outcomes of social studies subject in nursery schools. Based on this, the researcher came up with some recommendations as follows

The study recommends that the government to offer support to enhance the setting of classroom. The nursery classes in public schools to be fitted with proper lights, better chares and desks, more space and better painting which attracts learners, motivates them hence they are able to develop social skills.

Secondly the government should provide trainings to the teachers of nursery schools to enhance their competence and give them also paid study leaves with scholarships possibly to enhance their skills and become professionals in their area of teaching hence able to handle children with professionalism and solve their issues hence motivating them to work towards achievement of expected learning outcomes.

Additionally, the government should also provide nursery schools with instructional materials more so adequate textbooks to be used in nursery schools particularly social studies textbooks which can enable young children to develop social skills hence become better future generations in terms of leadership, socialization and problem-solving skills acquisition.

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