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Availability and Utilization of Preschool Play Equipment

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the availability and utilization of preschool play equipment. A descriptive survey research design was used. The population consists of 151 teachers, covering both private and public schools, according to the 2018/2019 Kwara Public Schools Census Report. The study sample was 108 preschool teachers from private and public schools in Ilorin West, Kwara State. A simple random sampling technique was used. Data collection was carried out using a research instrument entitled "Play Equipment Availability Checklist" (CAPE) and "Play Equipment Utilization Assessment Scale" (RUPE). The face and content validity of the instrument was determined by research supervisors and knowledgeable lecturers in the Department of Early Childhood Education and Basic Education. Restructuring and deletion of irrelevant items is done as necessary. Instrument reliability was determined by the test-retest method and Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) was used to compare the two sets of scores. Two hypotheses were tested at the 0.05 significance level. The findings show that school play equipment is available, while the utilization rate of preschool play equipment is very low. There were no significant differences in the availability or utilization of preschool play equipment by school type. Based on the research results, it is recommended that the government and the private sector provide play equipment to schools. In addition, the government should encourage the use of play equipment and ensure that teachers incorporate it into their teaching practice.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Play is central to the requirements for a child's healthy development. It consists of those activities performed for self-amusement that have behavior, social and psychomotor rewards. It is a major source of learning and a promoter of orderly growth and development in children. Play provides children the opportunity to explore their environment. Physical activities through play allow children to exercise their bodies, build strong bones, and muscles and promote physical fitness. The ability to perform fine motor skills and gross motor skills is related directly to physical fitness. When children run, play with toys, jump and play games such as hide and seek and tag, they engage in physical play which in turn gives them physical fitness. Fine motor skill is the coordination of small muscles in movement with eyes, hands, and fingers. Fine motor skills aid in the growth of intelligence and develop continuously throughout the stages of human development. Gross motor skill development play offers children a chance to exercise and develop strength, assist/teach them to take turns, and accept outcomes such as winning and losing.

Young children are born with an innate urge to grow and learn (Chi, 2009). They continually develop new skills and capacities, and if they are allowed to set the pace with a bit of help from the adult world, they will work at all this playfully and tirelessly. Rather than respecting this innate drive to learn, however, we treat children as if they can learn only what we adults can teach them (Chi, 2009). As a result of this approach, Henninger concluded that these children are stripped of their innate confidence in directing their learning.

Through the tool of play, children gain knowledge. They learn to think, remember, and solve problems. Play gives children the opportunity to test their beliefs about the world. Play also helps the child to develop language and socialization skills. It allows children to learn to communicate emotions, think, be creative, and solve problems.

Oncu and Uluer (2010) believed that play is one of the major activities that promote children's imagination and creativity through which they can learn basic and social skills. However, the authors reveal that several research reports exist that show that most children were unable to exhibit creativity with play materials. They also found that most children were unable to use real objects for creative play. Their findings seem to be supported by the current practice of reducing play periods in early childhood education institutions and introducing in its place such activities as literacy, numeracy, and computer skills development. Similarly, play is rapidly disappearing from kindergarten and early childhood education as a whole. They believe that stifling play in early childhood education has dire consequences for both the children and the entire nation. This shift in emphasis is the practice in vogue in many "high-brow" early childhood education establishments in Nigeria, where terminal school achievement matters more than the school leavers well-being.

Oyeniran (2009) reviewed the literature on the educational benefits of toys and concluded that the Nigerian National Policy on Education 2013 recommended the use of toys to inculcate creativity among children in early childhood education in Nigeria. This is similar to UBEC 2016 prescription. The scholarly literature review showed that children's play activities harbored serious learning processes similar to those of scientists in discovery learning. The author cited support from the work of Horning (2009) and the American Toy Institute in 2013. Children's play as activities that should be supported because play activities promote the physical, intellectual, and emotional development of children. The development literature is clear that play stimulates physical, social, emotional, and cognitive development in the early years (2006). This position is also supported by Anderson-McNamee and Bailey (2010) who

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documented similar research findings. Aderoumu (2014) found that a relationship exists between participation in games training and motor skill development.

A school with a good play environment is expected to have pleasurable playthings which will attract children to get involved with the play; thereby promoting their development of motor skills. Even when play facilities abound in a school, provision has to be made for the children to use them adequately. Researchers have found that the development of motor skills by both children and adolescents has a positive effect on the way young people view themselves, particularly in the aspect of physical awareness (Nesser, 2005; Salakun, 2005).

According to these researchers training for physical development is an aspect of fitness that enables an individual to perform daily work or activities without undue fatigue. In children particularly, physical development is achieved through play using various play materials. It is therefore important that the observed reduction in play periods in early childhood education facilities be checked. Play activities and materials are often intended to enhance the social, emotional, cognitive, and physical development of children.

UBEC has found that there are different types of play materials available for different skills development but the organization has not contrived any strategy to ensure that available play materials are to put effective use. Play materials are balls of different sizes, tricycles, rocking horses, including swings, slides, pull-up ropes, counters, the building of blocks, an abacus, clay, and plasticize (UBEC, 2013). Play equipment is not just recreational materials but is designed to help children learn to accomplish specific educational and developmental goals while employing active and pleasurable play.

The importance of play equipment is to provide opportunities for children to practice a range of social, emotional, physical, and mental skills. By understanding additional stimulating and challenging "Through play, all children discover their world and how to be successful in it. The more they play, the more they develop skills necessary to engage, change and impact the world around them".

The movements children perform on a playground build both gross and fine motor skills, along with core strength. Gross motor skills development gives children the opportunity to exercise and develop muscle strength. Gross motor skills development mostly involves physical play such as outdoor plays; such plays that require the child to interact with playthings outside the classroom or home environment. Outdoor activities provide the opportunity to come closer to nature and have enough space.

Availability of facilities, equipment, and supplies in schools should be a matter of importance to meet the demand for the minimum standard for the establishment of schools (National Policy on Education). Schools should spare no effort to set up well-structured physical education programs. Therefore, availability is the degree to which facilities, services, or functional materials are provided and made ready for use (James, 2015). Availability of school facilities is a holistic term that is directed toward education as an entity. Utilization of facilities is the process of using procured and accessible facilities tools, components equipment, and appliances to make the teaching and learning process easier, more interesting, and more rewarding.

Nuoh (2015), utilization of school facilities is the frequency with which the available school facilities such as laboratory facilities, library facilities, textbooks, set books, and other reference materials are used during respective class lessons. According to Alimi (2004), the main purpose of school establishment is for teaching and learning. Schools, therefore, need to have adequate facilities to enable teachers and learners to achieve the set objectives at the end of the course. This is the essence of the school plant and facilities. The importance of the availability of resources cannot be over-emphasized in the teaching of preschool pupils.

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Adequate facilities are a condition in which something is enough or good enough in quantity for a particular purpose or need. Adequate availability of equipment and facilities and their proper utilization have been positively correlated to good performance in examinations while poor performance has been blamed on inadequacies. Utilization as making use of available services at the individual's disposal. These resources include the facilities, equipment, and experienced personnel.

Olagunju and Abiona (2008) opined that the process of managing and organizing resources is resource utilization. They added that in a school, the available resources should be utilized in such a way that it enables the pupils to acquire desirable learning competencies. Utilization of resources in teaching brings about fruitful learning since it stimulates students' senses and motivates them.

UBEC in 2013 recommended that there should be an adequate variety of play materials or equipment in pre-schools that are to be used for children's play for promoting child development and various skills in children. For children to develop motor skills, they must actively participate in play activities including games, exercises, and sports.

In early childhood establishments, some of the essential play activities that children require for skills development include: swinging, sliding on the platform, jumping, skipping, pulling, merry-go-round, running, sand-pit plays, chin-up, access ladders, and stairways, scramble and scaling walls, tunnels, slides, bridges and ramps, climbing arches and hoop climber, horizontal ladders and roman rings, springs, and others. These activities are performed for self-amusement that has behavioural, social, emotional, and psychomotor rewards. It is a major source of learning and a promoter of orderly growth and development in children. Play provides children the opportunity to explore their environment.

However, because many of the preschool proprietors and heads of the schools do not know the importance of some of these facilities to child development, they don't make them available for the use of children in their schools.

A study conducted by Johnson *et al*. (2021) investigated the availability of play equipment in public and private preschools. Researchers conducted on-site observations and interviews with administrators in 50 public and 50 private preschools. The findings indicated that private preschools had significantly higher availability of play equipment compared to public preschools. Private preschools offered a greater variety of outdoor play equipment, such as swings, slides, and climbing structures. They also had better-equipped indoor play areas with a wide range of developmentally appropriate toys and materials. The study highlighted the potential influence of funding sources and parental contributions on the availability of play equipment in different school types.

A comparative analysis study was conducted by Anderson *et al*. (2011) to examine the utilization of play equipment in public and private preschools. The study employed direct observations and teacher surveys in 60 public and 60 private preschool classrooms. Findings revealed that both types of preschools had similar levels of play equipment utilization during structured and unstructured play times. However, private preschools showed slightly higher utilization rates, particularly in outdoor play areas. The study also identified factors such as teacher training, class size, and available space that influenced the utilization of play equipment in preschool settings.

The importance of play in early childhood education has been amply documented in educational literature. However, the provision and utilization of play equipment in early childhood education in Nigeria have remained in the main paper policy. Hence this study set out to find out the availability of preschool play equipment mentioned above and the extent of their utilization in the Ilorin West Local Government Area of Kwara State.

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The availability and utilization of preschool play equipment in the Ilorin West Local Government Area of Kwara State present a significant concern. Preschools play a crucial role in the early development and education of children, and the provision of adequate play equipment is essential for fostering their physical, cognitive, and social development. However, there are evident issues surrounding the availability and utilization of such equipment in the area. Firstly, there is a lack of comprehensive data on the current availability and condition of preschool play equipment in Ilorin West Local Government Area. Without accurate information on the quantity, quality, and suitability of the equipment, it is challenging to assess the extent of the problem and plan appropriate interventions.

Secondly, even if preschools have some play equipment, there may be significant disparities in their distribution and accessibility. Certain areas or schools may have an insufficient supply of equipment, leaving children with limited opportunities for active play, exploration, and skill development. This inequality could lead to disparities in children's overall development and educational outcomes. Furthermore, the utilization of available play equipment is another aspect that requires attention. Inadequate training and awareness among preschool teachers and caregivers regarding the importance of play and how to effectively incorporate play equipment into the curriculum can hinder the optimal use of these resources. Insufficient knowledge about age-appropriate activities, safety protocols, and maintenance can contribute to underutilization or misuse of the equipment.

Two research questions were raised for this study. The questions provided a guide for the study.

(i) What is the availability of preschool play equipment in Ilorin West Local Government Area of Kwara State?
(ii) What is the level of utilization of preschool play equipment in Ilorin West Local Government Area of Kwara State?

Research hypotheses are

(i) **Ho1:** There is no significant difference in the availability of preschool play equipment in Ilorin West Local Government Area of Kwara State based on school type.
(ii) **Ho2:** There is no significant difference in the utilization of preschool play equipment in Ilorin West Local Government Area of Kwara State based on school type.

2. METHOD

A descriptive survey research design was adopted to investigate the Availability and Utilization of Preschool Play Equipment in the Ilorin West Local Government Area of Kwara State. A descriptive survey method allows the researcher to pose a series of questions to willing participants, summarize their responses with percentage frequency counts or more rigorous statistics, and draw inferences about a particular population from the responses of the sample.

The population of the study comprised all teachers in preschools in Ilorin West Local Government Area of Kwara State. There are one hundred and fifty-one teachers in preschools in Ilorin West Local Government Area of Kwara State. This covers both teachers in private and public preschools in Ilorin West Local Government Area of Kwara State (Kwara state schools census report 2018/2019).

The Simple size comprised one hundred and fifty-four as advised by the research advisor. The researcher adopted a simple random sampling technique to allow the sample to have an equal opportunity of being selected for the study. The researcher developed two research instruments, a Checklist and a Rating Scale for preschool children, the checklist was used to obtain data on the Availability of play equipment in the Ilorin West Local Government Area of

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Kwara State while the Rating scale was used to rate the Utilization of play equipment. The instrument was titled Checklist for Availability of Play Equipment (CAPE) and Rating Scale for Utilization of Play Equipment (RUPE). The instruments were validated and tested for reliability and a reliability score of 0.87 was obtained using the test-retest method. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics of frequency counts and percentages for demographic data and research questions while inferential statistics of T-test were used for the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Basic Data

Table 1 shows the gender respondents on the availability and utilization of preschool play equipment. Sixty-five (65) of the respondents representing 42.2% were male while eighty-nine (89) of the respondents representing 57.8% were female. From the analysis above, it was indicated that male teachers were found to be more in number than female respondents. Therefore, because of the above result, male teachers prevailed among teachers' respondents in Ilorin West Local Government Area, Kwara state.

Table 1. Distribution of respondents based on gender.

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	65	42.2%
Female	89	57.8%
Total	**154**	**100**

3.2. Research Question One: What is the Availability of Preschool Play Equipment in Ilorin West Local Government Area of Kwara State?

Table 2 shows the responses of the respondents on the availability of preschool play equipment. It was indicated that the following equipment was available: Turning and turnover bar (Mean=1.34), Swings (Mean=1.56), Access ladders and stairways (Mean=1.38), Tyre tunnels (Mean=1.53), Slides (Mean=1.69), Horizontal ladders and roman rings (Mean=1.40), Playhouse (Mean=1.47), Sand and water games (Mean=1.38), Balancing facilities (Mean=1.31), Sea saw (Mean=1.39), Blockhouse (Mean=1.34), Plastic cars (Mean=1.63), Plastic horse(Mean=1.38), Plastic balls(Mean=1.54), and Sand area(Mean=1.33). In light of the above results, it was indicated that the preschool play equipment was available. The weighted mean (1.44) is the numeric indicator that the preschool's play equipment was available in Ilorin West Local Government Area, Kwara state.

3.3. Research Question Two: How Often do Preschool Teachers Utilize Play Equipment in Ilorin West Local Government Area of Kwara State

Table 3 shows the responses of the respondents on the level of utilization of preschool play equipment. It was indicated that teachers sometimes used play equipment: Turning and turnover bar (Mean=1.26), Swings (Mean=1.31), Access ladders and stairways (Mean=1.29), Horizontal ladders and Roman rings (Mean=1.28), Playhouse (Mean=1.38), Sand and water games (Mean=1.14), Blockhouse (Mean=1.38), Plastic cars (Mean=1.28), plastic horse (Mean=1.12), and Sand area (Mean=1.33). While the utilization of the following items was high: Tyre tunnels (Mean=1.71), See-saw (Mean=1.66), Balancing facilities (Mean=1.68), and Plastic ball (Mean=1.51), and Slides (Mean=1.86). In light of the above results, it was indicated that the level of utilization of preschool play equipment was low. The weighted mean (1.41)

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which is the numeric indicator that preschool teachers sometimes utilize play equipment in Ilorin West Local Government Area, Kwara state.

Table 2. Frequency, count, mean, and percentage of availability of preschool play equipment.

S/N	Play Equipment	Available	Not Available	Mean
1.	Turning and turnover bar	53(34.4)	101(65.6)	1.34
2.	Swings	86(55.8)	68(44.2)	1.56
3.	Access ladders and stairways	46(29.9)	108(70.1)	1.38
4.	Tyre tunnels	81(52.6)	73(47.4)	1.53
5.	Slides	106(68.8)	48(31.2)	1.69
6.	Horizontal ladders and Roman rings	62(40.3)	92(59.7)	1.40
7.	Playhouse	73(47.4)	81(52.6)	1.47
8.	Sand and water games	49(31.8)	105(68.2)	1.38
9.	Balancing facilities	47(30.5)	107(69.5)	1.31
10.	Sea saw	60(39.0)	94(61.0)	1.39
11.	Blockhouse	52(33.8)	102(66.2)	1.34
12.	Plastic cars	97(63.0)	57(37.0)	1.63
13.	Plastic horse	59(38.3)	95(61.7)	1.38
14.	Plastic balls	83(53.9)	71(46.1)	1.54
15	Sand area	51(33.1)	103(66.9)	1.33
	Weighted Mean			**1.44**

Decision rule: Not Available=00-1.00, Available=1.01-2.00
Note: The figures in parentheses are in percentages

Table 3. Frequency, count, mean, and percentage of the level of utilization of preschool play equipment.

S/N	Play Equipment	Always	Sometimes	Never	Mean
1.	Turning and turnover bar	12(7.8)	16(10.4)	126(81.8)	1.26
2.	Swings	18(11.7)	12(7.8)	124(80.5)	1.31
3.	Access ladders and stairways	13(8.4)	18(11.7)	123(79.9)	1.29
4.	Tyre tunnels	32(20.8)	46(29.9)	76(49.4)	1.71
5.	Slides	40(26.0)	53(34.4)	61(39.6)	1.86
6.	Horizontal ladders and Roman rings	14(9.1)	15(9.7)	125(81.2)	1.28
7.	Playhouse	19(12.3)	21(13.6)	114(74.0)	1.38
8.	Sand and water games	7(4.4)	7(4.5)	140(90.9)	1.66
9.	Balancing facilities	31(20.1)	42(27.3)	81(52,6)	1.68
10.	Sea saw	31(20.1)	39(25.3)	84(54.5)	1.14
11.	Blockhouse	8(5.2)	42(27.3)	104(67.5)	1.38
12.	Plastic cars	1(.6)	41(26.6)	112(72.7)	1.28
13.	Plastic horse	3(1.9)	13(8.4)	138(89.6)	1.12
14.	Plastic balls	4(2.6)	70(45.5)	80(51.9)	1.51
15	Sand area	6(3.9)	39(25.3)	109(70.8)	1.33
	Weighted Mean				**1.41**

Decision rule: always=00-1.49, sometimes = 1.50- 2.49 High=2.50-3.00
Note: The figures in parentheses are in percentages

3.4. Ho1: There is No Significant Difference in the Availability of Preschool Play Equipment Based on School Type

Table 4 shows the significant difference in the availability of preschool play equipment in the Ilorin West Local Government Area of Kwara State based on school type. There was no

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significant difference in the availability of preschool play equipment in Ilorin West Local Government Area of Kwara State based on school type (t = -.075; df = 152; P >0.05). Therefore, in light of the result, the hypothesis is not rejected, hence there was no significant difference in the availability of preschool play equipment in Ilorin West Local Government Area of Kwara State based on school type since the significant level (.941) is greater than 0.05.

Table 4. Summary of independent sample t-test showing the difference in the availability of preschool play equipment in Ilorin West Local Government Area of Kwara State based on school type.

School-type	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	T	Df	Sig.	Remark
Public	74	21.64	6.418	-0.075	152	0.941	Not Significant
Private	80	21.71	6.450				

3.5. Ho2: There is No Significant Difference in the Utilization of Preschool Play Equipment in Ilorin West Local Government Area of Kwara State Based on School Type

Table 5 shows the significant difference in the utilization of preschool play equipment in the Ilorin West Local Government Area of Kwara State based on school type. There was no significant difference in the utilization of preschool play equipment in Ilorin West Local Government Area of Kwara State based on school type (t = -1.385; df = 152; P >0.05). Therefore, in light of the result, the hypothesis is not rejected, hence there was no significant difference in the utilization of preschool play equipment in Ilorin West Local Government Area of Kwara State based on school type since the significant level (.168) is greater than 0.05.

Table 5. Summary of independent sample t-test showing the difference in the utilization of preschool play equipment based on school type.

School-type	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	T	Df	Sig.	Remark
Public	74	20.41	6.800	-1.385	152	0.168	Not Significant
Private	80	22.16	8.731				

The study revealed that preschool play equipment was available in the Ilorin West Local Government Area of Kwara State. This finding suggests that there is some level of provision for play equipment in the preschools within the area. The availability of play equipment is an essential aspect of early childhood education as it supports children's physical, cognitive, and social development.

Access to play equipment is crucial for children's active engagement, exploration, and skill development. Having adequate play equipment in preschools can enhance children's motor skills, creativity, problem-solving abilities, and social interactions (Ginsburg, 2007). It provides them with opportunities for imaginative play, cooperative play, and physical exercise, contributing to their overall well-being and development.

The presence of play equipment in preschools aligns with the understanding that play is an essential component of early childhood education. According to the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), play is recognized as a fundamental right of children and a powerful tool for learning (NAEYC). The availability of play equipment in preschools indicates a commitment to promoting holistic development and providing children with a stimulating environment. However, it is important to note that the mere availability of play equipment does not guarantee its effective utilization or suitability for children's needs.

The study found that teachers in preschools in the Ilorin West Local Government Area of Kwara State sometimes used play equipment. This finding highlights the recognition of

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teachers regarding the value and importance of incorporating play equipment into their educational practices. It indicates that teachers are utilizing play equipment as a means to enhance children's learning experiences and promote their overall development.

The utilization of play equipment by teachers aligns with the principles of developmentally appropriate practice (DAP) in early childhood education. According to the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), DAP emphasizes the significance of play in children's learning and encourages teachers to create play-based environments (NAEYC). Using play equipment provides children with hands-on, interactive, and engaging experiences that support their cognitive, social, and emotional growth.

Play equipment serves as a tool for facilitating various types of play, such as pretend play, constructive play, and physical play. Through these play experiences, children develop important skills and abilities. Pretend play, for example, promotes imaginative thinking, problem-solving, and language development. Constructive play with building blocks or puzzles enhances spatial awareness, fine motor skills, and logical thinking. Physical play using swings, slides, or climbing structures improves gross motor skills, coordination, and spatial awareness.

By utilizing play equipment, teachers can create enriched learning environments that support children's holistic development. Play equipment provides opportunities for open-ended exploration, experimentation, and discovery, fostering creativity and critical thinking. Moreover, it encourages social interaction, cooperation, and negotiation among children, promoting their social-emotional skills and empathy.

However, it is important to note that the study only revealed that teachers sometimes used play equipment. The frequency, consistency, and effectiveness of play equipment utilization by teachers were not thoroughly examined. Further research is needed to explore the extent to which teachers integrate play equipment into their daily practices and the strategies they employ to scaffold children's learning through play.

Additionally, the study did not address potential barriers or challenges that teachers might face in utilizing play equipment. Factors such as limited access to suitable equipment, lack of training or resources, and time constraints could impact the effective integration of play equipment into the curriculum. Investigating these challenges would provide valuable insights for improving the utilization of play equipment in preschool settings.

The study found that there was no significant difference in the availability of preschool play equipment in Ilorin West Local Government Area of Kwara State. This finding suggests that, overall, preschools in the area have a similar level of provision when it comes to play equipment. The absence of a significant difference indicates a degree of consistency in terms of the availability of play equipment across different preschools within the local government area. This finding aligns with the principle of equitable access to resources in early childhood education. Equitable access ensures that all children have equal opportunities to benefit from the learning experiences provided by play equipment (NAEYC). It suggests that efforts may have been made to ensure that preschools in Ilorin West Local Government Area have a comparable level of access to play equipment, promoting fairness and equal opportunities for children.

Furthermore, the absence of a significant difference in availability implies that the provision of play equipment may be guided by certain standards or guidelines. These standards could ensure that preschools meet certain criteria related to the availability and quality of play equipment. Such standards may be set at the local government or state level, or they could be informed by national or international guidelines for early childhood education. However, it is important to note that the finding of no significant difference in

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availability does not provide information on the quality, variety, or suitability of the play equipment. The study focused solely on the presence or absence of play equipment and did not explore the specifics of the equipment available in each preschool. It would be valuable for future research to assess the quality and appropriateness of the play equipment to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the learning opportunities provided to children. The study found that there was no significant difference in the utilization of preschool play equipment in the Ilorin West Local Government Area of Kwara State based on school type. This finding suggests that the utilization of play equipment was similar across different types of preschools within the local government area. The absence of a significant difference indicates a consistent level of play equipment utilization regardless of whether the preschool is public, private, or a specialized institution.

This finding aligns with the principle of equitable access and utilization of resources in early childhood education. Equitable utilization ensures that all children, regardless of the type of preschool they attend, have equal opportunities to engage with and benefit from play equipment (NAEYC). It implies that efforts may have been made to promote equitable practices and ensure that all children, irrespective of the type of preschool they attend, have access to and engage in play experiences facilitated by play equipment.

Furthermore, the absence of a significant difference in utilization may indicate that there are common guidelines or standards in place that guide the utilization of play equipment across different types of preschools. These guidelines could provide recommendations on integrating play equipment into the curriculum, promoting developmentally appropriate practices, and ensuring effective utilization of the resources. However, it is important to note that the finding of no significant difference in utilization does not provide insights into the quality or effectiveness of play equipment utilization. The study focused solely on the presence or absence of differences in utilization among different school types and did not explore the specific strategies or approaches employed by teachers or caregivers. Further research is needed to assess the quality of play experiences facilitated by the play equipment, as well as the effectiveness of utilization in promoting children's development and learning outcomes. Additionally, it is worth considering that the absence of a significant difference in utilization does not guarantee optimal utilization of play equipment. While the study suggests a similar level of utilization across different school types, it is crucial to ensure that play equipment is integrated effectively into the curriculum, aligned with children's developmental needs, and supported by well-trained teachers and caregivers. Further investigation into these aspects would provide a more comprehensive understanding of the quality and impact of play equipment utilization.

4. CONCLUSION

The availability and use of preschool play equipment are examined in this study. In this study, all private and public preschool teachers in the area were the target population for a descriptive survey research design. According to the 2018/2019 Kwara Public Schools Census Report, there are 151 teachers in total, working in both private and public schools. A sample of 108 preschool instructors from both private and public schools in Ilorin West, Kwara State, were chosen from the general community to take part in this study. To guarantee equal chances for all samples to be selected, a straightforward random sampling procedure is applied. A study tool called the "Play Equipment Availability Checklist" (CAPE) and "Play Equipment Utilization Assessment Scale" (RUPE) was used to collect the data. The study supervisor and several relevant lecturers from the Department of Early Childhood Education and Basic Education evaluated the instrument's face and content validity. When necessary,

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things are reorganized and irrelevant ones are removed. The results demonstrate that despite preschool play equipment is available, it is not being used at all. By school type, there were no appreciable differences in the availability or use of preschool play equipment. It is advised that play equipment for schools be provided by the public and commercial sectors based on the findings of the research. The government should also promote play equipment usage and make sure that instructors use it in their lesson plans.

5. AUTHORS' NOTE

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article. The authors confirmed that the paper was free of plagiarism.

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