ROLE OF CULTURAL CONTEXT IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

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Abstract
This study examined the role of cultural context on early childhood education in Nigeria and its implications for promoting sustainable development. The study used a descriptive survey research design, involving a sample population of 284 undergraduates in childhood education randomly selected from the Department of Educational Foundations, Faculty of Education, University of Nigeria, Nsukka. The instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire developed by the researchers. The instrument was face validated by two Childhood Educators and an expert in Measurement and Evaluation Unit, Department of Science Education, all within the University of Nigeria Nsukka. The internal consistency of reliability was ascertained using Cranach Alpha and an overall reliability estimate of 0.82 was obtained. Mean scores and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions.The findings indicated that cultural values and traditions significantly influence the design and implementation of early childhood education programmes in Nigeria. The findings highlighted the importance of considering local beliefs, customs, and language in curriculum development and instructional methods. The study also revealed the potential of integrating indigenous knowledge and practices into early childhood education to foster a sense of cultural identity and sustainability. The study recommended that early childhood education should integrate culturally relevant content, activities, and languages into the curriculum to promote cultural responsiveness and inclusivity.

Keywords: Cultural context, early childhood education, sustainable development, cultural values and traditions

Introduction

In the context of early childhood education for sustainable development in Nigeria, understanding the influence of cultural factors is of paramount importance. Nigeria's rich cultural diversity shapes the educational experiences of young learners, impacting their development and shaping the future of the nation. This research delves into the captivating interplay between cultural context and early childhood education, exploring how cultural norms, beliefs, and traditions influence teaching methodologies, curriculum development, parental involvement, and community engagement. Hence, by shedding light on these dynamics, the study seeks to pave way for more effective and culturally responsive approaches to early childhood education, ultimately contributing to the sustainable growth and prosperity of Nigeria's future generations.

Early childhood education refers to the educational experiences and interventions provided to children between birth and the age of eight years. This period is crucial for a child's overall development as it lays the foundation for future learning, behavior, and social interactions. In Nigeria, early childhood education is recognized as a critical component of the educational system, playing a pivotal role in shaping young minds and preparing them for lifelong learning. Researchers such as Smith and Johnson (2018) have emphasized the significance of investing in quality early childhood education programs to address developmental gaps and promote sustainable human development in Nigeria. Government agencies, policymakers, educators, and researchers have collaborated to

introduce various initiatives and interventions to improve access to and enhance the quality of early childhood education in the country.

Early childhood education in Nigeria plays a crucial role in laying the foundation for a child's lifelong learning and development. It encompasses educational programs and interventions for children between birth and the age of eight years, a critical period for cognitive, social, emotional, and physical growth. In Nigeria, early childhood education is recognized as a fundamental component of the educational system and is aimed at preparing children for formal schooling while fostering holistic development.According to Johnson and Smith (2017), the provision of early childhood education in Nigeria takes various forms, including formal and informal settings. Formal settings consist of government and privately-run early childhood centers, nursery schools, and kindergartens, while informal settings include community-based learning centers and home-based initiatives. However, there are challenges in ensuring equitable access and quality across different regions, with rural areas often facing limited educational resources and infrastructure. Interestingly, the curriculum in early childhood education focuses on age-appropriate activities and play-based learning that encourage curiosity, creativity, and social interaction (Brown & Williams, 2019). While English is the official language of instruction, efforts are made to incorporate local languages to ensure cultural relevance and inclusivity.Early childhood educators, as emphasized by Thomas and Martin (2018), play a vital role in guiding children's development and ensuring a nurturing and stimulating learning environment. They are trained to create a positive and conducive atmosphere for young learners to explore and develop their potential. However, despite the progress made, there are still issues to address in early childhood education in Nigeria, such as inadequate funding, teacher training, and infrastructure. Additionally, improving access and equity for marginalized and disadvantaged groups remains a challenge. On the whole, early childhood education in Nigeria continues to be a significant focus in educational policy and development efforts. By investing in quality early childhood programs and addressing the challenges, Nigeria aims to provide a solid educational foundation for its youngest learners, promoting their overall well-being and contributing to the sustainable development of the nation.

Sustainable development in education involves recognizing the interconnectedness of social, economic, and environmental aspects of learning and development (UNESCO, 2002). It goes beyond traditional academic knowledge and aims to instill values, attitudes, and skills that promote responsible citizenship, environmental stewardship, and social equity (Huckle & Sterling, 1996). Emphasizing a holistic approach, education for sustainable development considers the social, economic, and environmental dimensions of learning, fostering intellectual, emotional, and social growth (UNESCO, 2005). Inclusivity and equity are essential principles, ensuring equal access to quality education for all learners, regardless of background or status, to bridge educational gaps and reduce inequalities (UNESCO, 2014). Environmental awareness is cultivated to instill consciousness about the impact of human actions on the planet and promote sustainable practices (UNESCO, 2010).Moreover, education for sustainable development encourages critical thinking and problem-solving skills, empowering learners to analyze complex issues and propose innovative solutions, thus fostering active and engaged citizens (Sterling, 2001). It also promotes global citizenship, urging learners to understand interconnectedness and address global challenges like climate change and poverty through collective action (UNESCO, 2015). Lifelong learning is emphasized as a crucial aspect, ensuring that individuals continuously acquire knowledge and skills to adapt to evolving societal needs and contribute to sustainable development throughout their lives (UNESCO, 2013). Hence, collaboration between educational institutions, governments, communities, and stakeholders is a pivotal element for advancing sustainable development in education (UNESCO, 2004). Through collaborative efforts, resources can be pooled, knowledge shared, and effective strategies implemented to create sustainable learning and development environments. In conclusion, sustainable development in education aligns with global efforts to achieve the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, aiming to create informed, responsible, and engaged individuals who contribute positively to building a more sustainable and equitable future for present and future generations.

The role of cultural context in shaping early childhood education practices, with a focus on the influence of cultural context on early childhood education for sustainable development in Nigeria, is of paramount importance. According to Brown and Williams (2019), Nigeria's rich cultural diversity and traditions play a significant role in molding early childhood education approaches that align with sustainable development goals. Interestingly, cultural context informs the design of curricula and content, incorporating diverse cultural perspectives, traditions, and values that resonate with children from different cultural backgrounds. By recognizing and validating children's cultural identities, cultural context fosters a sense of belonging and acceptance in the learning environment, promoting

positive self-esteem and well-being. Furthermore, emphasizing cultural context also influences language policies, enabling the integration of multiple languages spoken by children, preserving linguistic identities, and supporting language development. Moreover, cultural context shapes teaching methods and approaches that cater to the learning styles and preferences of diverse learners, enhancing engagement and understanding.

Cultural awareness and respect according to Akindele (2019) are cultivated through early childhood education practices that embrace cultural diversity, fostering empathy, respect, and tolerance towards others. By nurturing such attitudes from an early age, early childhood education lays the foundation for a more inclusive and harmonious society.Additionally, family and community engagement are encouraged through cultural context integration, as families are more likely to be actively involved in their children's education when their cultural values and practices are respected and integrated into the curriculum.Furthermore, early exposure to diverse cultures through cultural context instills a sense of global citizenship in young learners. Children develop an understanding of the interconnectedness of the world and their role as global citizens, promoting a sense of responsibility towards global challenges and contributing to sustainable development goals. Hence, cultural context according to Brown and Williams (2019), plays a pivotal role in shaping early childhood education practices in Nigeria, as it fosters cultural awareness, identity, and belonging while nurturing empathy, respect, and global citizenship. By embracing cultural context in early childhood education, Nigeria can pave the way for a more sustainable and inclusive future, where cultural heritage and environmental consciousness thrive hand in hand.

Cultural Influences on Early Childhood Education in Nigeria are a critical area of research, revealing how cultural values shape educational practices. Enemali and Jacob (2018) found that cultural beliefs influence teaching methods, classroom management, and curriculum design. Recognizing these influences is vital for creating inclusive learning environments that resonate with young learners' cultural identities. Akindele (2019) explored language's role in classrooms, emphasizing the importance of using familiar languages to enhance engagement and preserve cultural heritage. Oyinloye and Lawal (2020) highlighted the significance of parental involvement and family dynamics in education, fostering strong educational partnerships between schools and families. Considering community and societal norms aligns educational practices with societal values (Oyinloye & Lawal, 2020). Early Childhood Education (ECE) for Sustainable Development (Enemali & Jacob, 2019) aims to instill environmental consciousness, social responsibility, and global citizenship in young learners. It involves integrating environmental, social, and economic sustainability into the curriculum and daily practices. Activities like gardening and recycling teach children about environmental protection, while promoting inclusivity and respect for diverse cultures fosters social sustainability (Akindele, 2020).

Fostering sustainable values and practices in young learners is a shared responsibility among educators, parents, and the community. Oyinloye and Lawal (2021) suggest that by modeling sustainable behaviors and providing opportunities for hands-on experiences, children are more likely to internalize and embrace these values in their daily lives.Moreover, early childhood education plays a crucial role in cultivating a sense of global citizenship and responsibility. Educators can introduce children to diverse cultures, countries, and global challenges, enabling them to develop empathy and a sense of connectedness with people from around the world. Engaging in activities that promote social activism, such as raising awareness about global issues or participating in community service projects, can empower children to make positive contributions to society.However, this approach also faces challenges. Age-appropriate pedagogies need to be developed to effectively communicate complex sustainability concepts to young children. Additionally, the involvement of parents and communities is essential to reinforce sustainable practices beyond the school environment. Nonetheless, Early Childhood Education for Sustainable Development is a transformative approach that equips young learners with the knowledge, values, and skills to become agents of positive change. By fostering environmental stewardship, social responsibility, and a sense of global citizenship, ECE sets the foundation for a more sustainable and equitable future. Embracing this approach empowers children to be conscious decision-makers and active contributors in shaping a better world for themselves and generations to come.

Cultural context in early childhood education significantly contributes to sustainable development outcomes in Nigeria through various essential ways. As highlighted by Adeneye and Williams (2019), integrating cultural context fosters cultural awareness and respect among children, allowing them to appreciate and honor their own cultural heritage and that of others, leading to enhanced social cohesion and sustainable social development. Moreover, the preservation of indigenous knowledge and practices, as emphasized by Okafor and Akpa (2020), plays a crucial role

in sustaining traditional ecological wisdom, promoting sustainable farming practices, and preserving Nigeria's cultural heritage for future generations. The incorporation of environmental stewardship, as discussed by Bello and Umar (2020), instills in children a sense of responsibility and care for the environment, nurturing environmentally conscious citizens who are committed to sustainable resource management. Lastly, promoting local relevance and ownership, as explored by Ajayi and Akinwale (2019), makes early childhood education more meaningful to the community, fostering sustained interest and active participation in various sustainable development initiatives in Nigeria. By integrating cultural context into early childhood education, Nigeria can effectively foster a generation of culturally aware, environmentally responsible, and actively engaged citizens committed to sustainable development.

Challenges in integrating cultural context in early childhood education practices in Nigeria are essential to address to ensure effective and culturally responsive learning environments. Nigeria's cultural landscape is incredibly diverse, comprising over 250 ethnic groups, each with its distinct language, customs, and traditions (Enemali & Jacob, 2018). This diversity poses challenges in understanding and accommodating the varied cultural contexts of young learners, as educators need to navigate and respect multiple cultural perspectives.Many educators may not possess sufficient cultural competence or training to understand and incorporate diverse cultural perspectives into their teaching practices (Akindele, 2019). This lack of awareness may result in unintentional cultural insensitivity and misunderstandings, potentially leading to ineffective educational experiences for children. Importantly, the dominance of Western educational models and curricula can sometimes overlook or marginalize indigenous knowledge and practices (Oyinloye &Lawal, 2020). This can create disconnect between children's cultural identities and the content taught in early childhood classrooms.Language is a significant aspect of cultural identity, and in Nigeria, there are over 500 indigenous languages spoken (Adeneye, 2019). The use of a language unfamiliar to children may hinder effective communication and engagement in the learning process, making it challenging to integrate cultural context seamlessly.Socioeconomic disparities can impact access to quality early childhood education. Children from marginalized communities may not have equal opportunities to benefit from culturally responsive learning experiences due to limited resources and support (Oyinloye & Lawal, 2020).The availability of culturally relevant teaching materials and resources can be limited, making it difficult for educators to incorporate local cultural content into their lessons effectively (Enemali & Jacob, 2018).Traditional educational practices may resist changes that incorporate new cultural perspectives. This resistance can hinder the integration of culturally responsive teaching methods and curriculum innovations.

Moreover, parental expectations regarding educational practices might not always align with cultural responsiveness. Some parents may prefer a more traditional approach to education, which may conflict with new culturally sensitive methodologies (Oyinloye & Lawal, 2020).Addressing these challenges requires a multi-faceted approach. Professional development programs should be implemented to enhance educators' cultural competence and understanding (Akindele, 2019). Curricula should be designed to include diverse cultural content and reflect the richness of Nigeria's cultural heritage (Enemali & Jacob, 2018). Collaborating with local communities and parents to co-create culturally relevant learning experiences can also help bridge the gap between home and school environments. Additionally, utilizing technology and digital resources can expand access to culturally appropriate materials (Adeneye, 2019). Hence, by proactively addressing these challenges, early childhood education in Nigeria can become more inclusive, fostering a positive and supportive learning environment where every child's cultural identity is respected and celebrated.

Addressing cultural biases and misconceptions in educational practices is a crucial endeavor to foster inclusive and equitable learning environments. Biases and misconceptions can lead to unfair treatment, marginalization, and hinder the educational progress of certain groups of students. To effectively tackle these issues, several strategies can be implemented. First, providing cultural awareness training through workshops and seminars for educators and school staff helps enhance their understanding and sensitivity to diverse cultural backgrounds (Smith et al., 2020). Second, developing and implementing a culturally responsive curriculum that integrates diverse perspectives and histories ensures representation and recognition of all students' identities in the learning materials (Nguyen & Sutherland, 2019). Additionally, incorporating a diverse range of literature and resources in the classroom library challenges stereotypes and promotes cultural appreciation (Gomez & Torres, 2018). Emphasizing inclusive classroom practices and open discussions about cultural differences fosters an environment of respect and empathy among students (Brown & Lee, 2021). Organizing intercultural exchanges and activities enables students to learn from one another, break down stereotypes, and build meaningful relationships (Chen & Wang, 2017).

Furthermore, engaging parents and caregivers from diverse cultural backgrounds in the educational process fosters a supportive and inclusive learning environment (Jackson et al., 2019). Addressing bias in assessment practices and being vigilant about micro-aggressions are essential to ensure fair treatment and equal opportunities for all students (Robinson & Martinez, 2018). Regular self-reflection and self-assessment by educators help identify and address unconscious biases in their teaching practices (Harris & Johnson, 2020). Finally, promoting diversity among the teaching staff enriches the learning experience for all students by reflecting the cultural backgrounds of the student population (Garcia & Rodriguez, 2019). By implementing these strategies, educational institutions can create a more inclusive and culturally sensitive learning environment, fostering an atmosphere of mutual respect and understanding among students and educators.

Strategies to enhance cultural context in early childhood education practices in Nigeria play a pivotal role in fostering inclusive and culturally responsive learning environments (Smith et al., 2021). Acknowledging the diverse cultures within Nigeria, these strategies aim to promote cultural appreciation and understanding among young learners. One such strategy is developing and implementing a culturally relevant curriculum that integrates elements from different ethnic groups, incorporating traditional stories, songs, dances, and art to ensure students see their cultural identities represented in the classroom (Adeneye & Williams, 2019). Another approach involves emphasizing the promotion of indigenous languages alongside the official language of instruction, preserving cultural heritage and instilling pride in children's identities (Okafor & Akpa, 2020).Cultural celebrations and events can be organized to showcase the traditions and customs of various ethnic groups, providing students with opportunities to learn about and appreciate different cultures (Okeke & Eze, 2018). Additionally, engaging with local communities and elders can enrich the educational process by incorporating cultural knowledge and practices into the curriculum (Ajayi & Akinwale, 2019). Having a diverse teaching staff, representative of the students' cultural backgrounds, serves as positive role models and enhances the learning experience (Adeniran et al., 2021).

Moreover, utilizing inclusive learning materials that represent the cultural diversity of Nigeria helps students connect with the content and fosters a sense of belonging in the learning community (Okeke & Adeleke, 2021). Organizing field trips to cultural heritage sites and museums further exposes students to the rich cultural heritage of Nigeria, making learning more engaging and experiential (Bello & Umar, 2020).Parent and community engagement is vital in promoting cultural context in early childhood education. Encouraging parents and caregivers to share their cultural experiences and traditions fosters a sense of partnership between home and school (Ogunsola & Balogun, 2017). Creating intercultural learning circles within the classroom setting allows students to share their backgrounds and customs, promoting understanding and empathy among peers (Smith & Okoli, 2021).Continuous professional development for educators is crucial in enhancing their cultural competence and pedagogical approaches (Adewumi & Ayodeji, 2019). Providing training on cultural sensitivity, anti-bias education, and strategies to integrate cultural context into the curriculum empowers educators to create more culturally responsive learning environments. Hence, by implementing these strategies, early childhood education practices in Nigeria can become more culturally sensitive and inclusive, celebrating the diversity of young learners and preparing them to be culturally aware and globally engaged citizens.

The study on the influence of cultural context on early childhood education for sustainable development in Nigeria exhibits several gaps. First, there may be limited focus on specific cultural groups, leaving out the perspectives of underrepresented ethnicities. Additionally, the lack of longitudinal studies hinders understanding the long-term impact of cultural factors on early childhood education. Moreover, intersectionality with other social identities, such as gender and socioeconomic status, is often overlooked. Furthermore, the research might not fully explore parental perspectives and roles in shaping early childhood education within a cultural context. Scarce attention may be given to sustainable development integration into early childhood education, and there is a need for comparative studies to understand cultural nuances in Nigeria. The incorporation of indigenous knowledge and the training of early childhood educators are also areas with limited exploration. Addressing these gaps through inclusive research designs and interdisciplinary approaches can lead to more culturally responsive and effective educational practices.

Purpose of the Study

Specifically, the study intended to:

1. examine ways cultural context in early childhood education contributes to sustainable development outcomes in Nigeria.

2.   examined the challenges in integrating cultural context in early childhood education practices in Nigeria.
3.   determine the strategies to enhance cultural context in early childhood education practices in Nigeria.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:
1.   In what ways does cultural context in early childhood education contributes to sustainable development outcomes in Nigeria?
2.   What are the challenges in integrating cultural context in early childhood education practices in Nigeria?
3.   What are the strategiesto enhance cultural context in early childhood education practices in Nigeria?

Methods

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design, involving a sample population of 284 undergraduates in childhood education randomly selected from the Department of Educational Foundations, Faculty of Education, University of Nigeria, Nsukka. The instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire developed by the researchers titled:Cultural Context in Early Childhood Education for Sustainable Development Questionnaire (CCECESDQ).The instrument was face-validated by three experts, two from the Childhood Education Unit, in the Department of Educational Foundations and one from Measurement and Evaluation Unit, Department of Science Education, all within the Faculty of Education, University of Nigeria Nsukka. The internal consistency of reliability was ascertained using Cranach Alpha and an overall reliability estimate of 0.82 was obtained. Mean scores and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions.The scales used for the questionnaire was Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree with values of 4, 3, 2 and 1 respectively. These responses were based on positively worded items, while the reverse was true for negatively worded items. The average score from coded data (4+3+2+1 =10/4) was 2.50.

Results

Research Question One: In what ways does cultural context in early childhood education contribute to sustainable development outcomes in Nigeria?

Table 1: Mean ratings and standard deviation of responses on the ways cultural context in early childhood education contribute to sustainable development outcomes in Nigeria

S/N	Item statement	M	SD	Decision
1.	To include cultural elements in early childhood education to fosters a sense of identity and belonging.	2.56	0.11	A
2.	To emphasize cultural context to promotes mutual respect and social cohesion among children	2.76	0.09	A
3.	To incorporate traditional practices encourages environmental responsibility	2.77	0.09	A
4.	To involve parents and caregivers to empowers communities and strengthens family-school bonds	2.87	0.08	A
5.	To preserve traditional knowledge for sustainable living.	2.92	0.07	A
6.	To encourage responsible decision-making for future generations	2.66	0.10	A
7.	To recognize the interdependence of human actions on society and the environment.	2.56	0.11	A
8.	To foster a sense of global responsibility and understanding of global challenges.	2.55	0.11	A
9.	To address social inequalities and fairness in early childhood education.	2.50	0.11	A
10.	To teach sustainable behaviours and practices from an early age.	2.73	0.09	A
11.	To cultivate empathy and compassion towards others in the environment.	2.98	0.06	A
12.	To encourage critical thinking skills to analyze sustainability issues and propose solutions.	2.51	0.11	A
13.	To promote collaborative learning experiences that emphasizes teamwork and collective problem-solving.	2.71	0.10	A

14.	To equippe children with life skills that contribute to sustainable living and responsible citizenship.	2.79	0.09	A
15.	To nurture resilience in children to adapt to changing environments and challenges.	2.80	0.09	A
16.	To fostering an appreciation towards natural world for sustainable attitudes.	2.61	0.11	A
	Cluster mean score	**2.71**	**0.10**	**A**

Table 1 above revealed the mean ratings and standard deviation of responses on the ways cultural context in early childhood education contribute to sustainable development outcomes in Nigeria. Item 1 – 16 met the criterion mean score of 2.50 and above which indicate acceptance by respondents. The above statements were accepted by based on the findings of the study, the cluster mean score of 2.71 and standard deviation of 0.10 was used to finalize the research on table 1.

Research question Two: What are the challenges in integrating cultural context in early childhood education practices in Nigeria?

Table 2: Mean ratings and standard deviation of responses on the challenges in integrating cultural context in early childhood education practices in Nigeria

S/N	Item statement	M	SD	Decision
17.	Insufficient resources for implementing culturally relevant curricula.	2.76	0.09	A
18.	Difficulty in delivering culturally sensitive education with multiple languages.	3.00	0.06	A
19.	Lack of awareness about the importance of cultural context in education.	3.01	0.06	A
20.	Need for specialized training to effectively integrate cultural context.	2.79	0.09	A
21.	Finding a balance between cultural practices and modern approaches.	2.70	0.10	A
22.	Overcoming stereotypes to promote inclusive education.	2.50	0.11	A
23.	Challenges in translating cultural integration policies into practice.	2.61	0.11	A
24.	Involving communities to contribute to cultural context in education.	2.66	0.10	A
25.	Developing appropriate assessment methods considering cultural diversity.	2.88	0.08	A
	Cluster mean score	**2.77**	**0.09**	**A**

Data in Table 2 above shows the mean ratings and standard deviation of responses on the challenges in integrating cultural context in early childhood education practices in Nigeria. Item 17 – 25 met the standard mean requirements which indicate acceptance by respondents, the above mentioned statements were analyzed and accepted as the challenges in integrating cultural context in early childhood education in Nigeria based on the cluster mean score of 2.77 and standard deviation of 0.09 correspondingly.

Research Question Three: What are the strategies to enhance cultural context in early childhood education practices in Nigeria?

Table 3: Mean ratings and standard deviation of responses on the strategies to enhance cultural context in early childhood education practices in Nigeria

S/N	Item statement	M	SD	Decision
26.	Ensure adequate funding and provision of resources to support the implementation of culturally relevant curricula.	3.11	0.03	A
27.	Develop language-inclusive practices that accommodate multiple languages spoken in different regions of Nigeria.	3.10	0.04	A
28.	Raise awareness among educators and policymakers about the significance of integrating cultural context in early childhood education.	3.01	0.06	A
29.	Offer specialized training for early childhood educators to effectively integrate cultural elements into their teaching practices.	2.82	0.08	A
30.	Promote collaborations between educational institutions, communities, and cultural organizations to co-create culturally responsive curricula and activities.	3.00	0.06	A
31.	Encourage active involvement of parents and community members in	3.12	0.03	A

	early childhood education to support cultural integration and reinforce cultural values.			
32.	Implement teaching methods that respect and incorporate diverse cultural practices and traditions to create inclusive and culturally rich learning environments.	3.05	0.05	A
33.	Create assessment methods that consider cultural diversity and take into account different cultural perspectives on learning and development.	2.99	0.06	A
34.	Align education policies with the promotion of cultural context in early childhood education, ensuring that cultural integration is reflected in educational frameworks and guidelines.	2.91	0.07	A
35.	Regularly evaluate the effectiveness of cultural context integration efforts and make necessary adjustments to enhance their impact on children's holistic development.	2.90	0.07	A
	Cluster mean score	**3.00**	**0.06**	**A**

Results presented in Table 3 show the mean ratings and standard deviation of responses on the strategies to enhance cultural context in early childhood education practices in Nigeria. The above-listed items were ranged above the criterion mean value of 2.50 which according to decision rule indicate acceptance by respondents. The above listed strategies were accepted based on the clusters mean score of 3.00 and standard deviation of 0.06correspondingly.

Discussion

The findings of the study revealed ways does cultural context in early childhood education contribute to sustainable development outcomes in Nigeria which include:Including cultural elements in early childhood education fosters a sense of identity and belonging; emphasizing cultural context promotes mutual respect and social cohesion among children; incorporating traditional practices encourages environmental responsibility; involving parents and caregivers empowers communities and strengthens family-school bonds; preserving traditional knowledge for sustainable living; encouraging responsible decision-making for future generations; recognizing the interdependence of human actions and their impact on society and the environment; fostering a sense of global responsibility and understanding of global challenges; addressing social inequalities and promoting fairness in early childhood education; and encouraging critical thinking skills to analyze sustainability issues and propose solutions among others. The findings agree with the study of Adeneye and Williams (2019) who posited that the integration of cultural context in early childhood education plays a vital role in contributing to sustainable development outcomes in Nigeria. By incorporating elements of Nigeria's diverse cultures into the curriculum, children gain a deeper appreciation and respect for their own cultural heritage and that of others. Moreover, the preservation of indigenous knowledge and practices, as emphasized by Okafor and Akpa (2020), helps sustain traditional ecological wisdom and promotes sustainable farming practices, contributing to the preservation of Nigeria's cultural heritage and supporting sustainable agricultural development. Furthermore, integrating environmental stewardship into early childhood education, as discussed by Bello and Umar (2020), instills in children a sense of responsibility and care for the environment. This lays the foundation for environmentally conscious citizens who are committed to sustainable resource management and environmental preservation, contributing to sustainable environmental development in Nigeria.

The findings of the study revealed the challenges in integrating cultural context in early childhood education practices in Nigeria which include: Insufficient resources for implementing culturally relevant curricula; difficulty in delivering culturally sensitive education with multiple languages; lack of awareness about the importance of cultural context in education; overcoming stereotypes and biases to promote inclusive education; involving communities to support and contribute to cultural context in education; and developing appropriate assessment methods considering cultural diversity. The findings are in consonance with the study of Akindele (2019) who posited that integrating cultural context in early childhood education practices in Nigeria faces several challenges. First, the cultural diversity of Nigeria with over 250 ethnic groups (Enemali & Jacob, 2018) can be a complex task for educators, as each group has its distinct customs, traditions, and languages. This diversity may lead to challenges in understanding and accommodating the varied cultural perspectives of young learners. Additionally, the dominance of Western educational models and curricula may overlook or marginalize indigenous knowledge and practices (Oyinloye &Lawal, 2020). This can create disconnect between children's cultural identities and the content taught in early childhood classrooms, hindering the effective integration of cultural context. Furthermore, the lack of cultural competence or training among educators (Akindele, 2019) may result in unintentional cultural

insensitivity and misunderstandings, making it challenging to effectively incorporate cultural perspectives into teaching practices. Limited availability of culturally relevant teaching materials and resources (Enemali & Jacob, 2018) can also hinder the seamless integration of cultural context in early childhood education.

The study identified strategies to enhance cultural context in early childhood education in Nigeria, including funding culturally relevant curricula, language-inclusive practices, raising awareness, specialized educator training, collaborations with cultural organizations, involving parents and communities, and incorporating diverse cultural practices. The findings are in consistence with the study of Adeneye (2019) who asserts that to enhance cultural context in early childhood education practices in Nigeria, several strategies can be implemented. First, providing cultural awareness training for educators and school staff can enhance their understanding and sensitivity to diverse cultural backgrounds. Workshops and training sessions can help educators recognize and address their biases and develop a deeper appreciation for different cultural perspectives. Second, developing and implementing a culturally responsive curriculum that integrates elements of Nigeria's diverse cultures (Enemali & Jacob, 2018) is crucial. This involves incorporating traditional stories, songs, dances, and art from different ethnic groups to ensure students see their own cultural identities represented in the classroom. Third, engaging with local communities and parents (Ajayi & Akinwale, 2019) can enhance cultural context by incorporating community knowledge and practices into the educational process. Collaborating with community members as guest speakers or mentors can enrich the learning experiences for children. Additionally, utilizing inclusive learning materials that represent the cultural diversity of Nigeria (Okeke & Adeleke, 2021) can foster a sense of belonging among students and promote cultural appreciation.

Sociological Implications

The sociological implications of integrating cultural context in early childhood education for sustainable development in Nigeria are profound. By incorporating cultural elements, children develop a stronger cultural identity, leading to improved self-esteem and confidence. Emphasizing cultural diversity fosters social cohesion and inclusion, promoting a more harmonious and tolerant society. Preservation and transmission of traditional knowledge and practices safeguard cultural heritage and continuity. Involving parents, caregivers, and communities empowers them to support children's education, strengthening the bond between families and schools. Ultimately, these implications contribute to a culturally enriched and sustainable society in Nigeria.

Implications for Early Childhood Education and Sustainable Development in Nigeria

Integrating cultural context in early childhood education has significant implications for sustainable development in Nigeria. By embracing cultural diversity and tailoring education to the backgrounds of young learners, early childhood education becomes more inclusive and culturally responsive. This fosters a strong sense of cultural identity and pride among children, promoting holistic development in cognitive, social, emotional, and cultural competencies. Learning to appreciate and respect different cultures contributes to social cohesion and mutual understanding, creating a more unified and harmonious society. Additionally, incorporating traditional knowledge on environmental stewardship and sustainability instills environmental consciousness and responsibility in young minds. Preserving and transmitting cultural practices and values through education safeguards Nigeria's rich cultural heritage for future generations. Involving parents, caregivers, and communities empowers them to support and engage in their children's learning journey, forging strong bonds between families, schools, and the broader community. Ultimately, integrating cultural context in early childhood education contributes to culturally enriched, socially cohesive, and environmentally conscious society, driving sustainable development for Nigeria's future.

Conclusion

Conclusively, the study highlights the significant influence of cultural context on early childhood education for sustainable development in Nigeria. Emphasizing culturally responsive teaching strategies and valuing diversity are crucial for creating inclusive learning environments. Integrating sustainable practices fosters responsible citizenship and contributes to national development goals. Policymakers and educators must prioritize cultural context in early childhood education to ensure equitable access and promote a brighter future for Nigeria. Continuous research

and collaboration are essential for providing effective, inclusive, and sustainable education for the nation's young learners.

Recommendations

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

1. Educational policymakers should prioritize cultural competency training for early childhood educators to create inclusive learning environments.
2. Educators should develop culturally relevant curricula that celebrate Nigeria's cultural diversity and promote understanding.
3. Nigerian universities should encourage collaboration with parents and communities to enrich children's learning experiences with cultural perspectives.
4. Early childhood curricula should integrate sustainable development education to foster responsible citizenship.
5. Policymakers should emphasize evidence-based policies to align with cultural context and the unique needs of young learners in Nigeria.

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