PERCEIVED INFLUENCE OF STUDY HABITS ON THE ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OF EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION POSTGRADUATE STUDENTS OF UNIVERSITY OF NIGERIA, NSUKKA

Ezeali., M.M
Department of Early Childhood Care and Education, Federal College of Education Okene, Kogi State. ezealimaryann@gmail.com

Abstract
The paper was designed to investigate the perceived influence of study habits on the academic performance of early childhood education postgraduate students of University of Nigeria, Nsukka. Four research questions guided the study. A descriptive survey research design was utilized and it was carried out at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka. The population for the study consisted of 96 early childhood education postgraduate students registered for the 2022/2023 session. Due to the manageable size of the population, the entire population was studied. Hence, there was no need for any sampling or sampling technique. Two instruments were utilized for data collection namely: "Perceived Influence of Study Habits on the Academic Performance of Early Childhood Education Postgraduate Students Questionnaire (PISHAPECEPGSQ) and Preferred Study Time Checklist (PSTC)". The instruments were validated by five lecturers of Early Childhood Education. Cronbach alpha was used to determine the internal consistency of the PISHAPECEPGSQ which yielded a coefficient of 0.86 while PSTC yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.78. Data collected were analyzed using mean and standard deviation for P ISHAPECEPGSQ while data from PSTC was analyzed using frequencies and percentages. The findings revealed: eight environmental factors that facilitate quick understanding when studying, the preferred reading time of early childhood education postgraduate students was early morning (5:00 AM – 8:00 AM) with the highest frequency (22) and percentage (24.4%), ten personal habits that enhance quick understanding when studying and nine the collaborative ways that enhance quick understanding by students among early childhood education post-graduate students of UNN. Based on the findings, the study recommended among others that UNN should provide dedicated and well-designed study spaces that prioritize a serene and distraction-free environment; and the Head of the Department of Early Childhood Education in UNN should organize workshops to encourage the integration of educational technology, such as e-books, educational apps, and online learning platforms, into the curriculum to aid in visualizing and comprehending complex concepts

Keywords: Study habits, academic performance, early childhood education, postgraduates

Introduction

Education is a cornerstone of human development, fostering personal growth, societal advancement, and economic prosperity. Within the educational realm, the foundation laid during the early years of a child's academic journey plays a crucial role in shaping their future learning outcomes. Early Childhood Education (ECE) is recognized worldwide as a pivotal stage in a child's educational journey, where educators are tasked with nurturing young minds to develop the necessary cognitive, social, and emotional skills for success throughout their lives (Barnett, 2018). Early Childhood Education encompasses the formal and informal learning experiences designed to cater to the developmental needs of young children, typically from birth to eight years old (Bredekamp& Copple, 2020). It is a crucial phase in a child's educational journey, focusing on cognitive, social, emotional, and physical development. ECE programs, which may include preschools, daycares, kindergartens, and early primary grades,

aim to provide a nurturing, safe, and stimulating environment for children. The primary objective is to equip them with fundamental skills, knowledge, and attitudes that serve as the cornerstone for their future learning (Hohmann & Weikart, 2012).To achieve this objective, it is imperative that ECE postgraduate students, who are the future educators and leaders are adequately trained.

Postgraduate students, often referred to as postgraduates or graduate students, are individuals who have completed their undergraduate education, typically earning a bachelor's degree, and have chosen to pursue advanced studies at the graduate level. According to Göncü, Johnson, Aksu-Koç, Rubman and Weber, A. E. (2019), postgraduate education is characterized by a higher level of specialization and academic rigor, often leading to the attainment of master's degrees, doctoral degrees (Ph.D.), or other advanced qualifications. Contextually, Early Childhood Education (ECE) post-graduate students are individuals who have completed their undergraduate education and have chosen to pursue advanced studies in the field of early childhood education. These students have typically earned a bachelor's degree and are now engaged in graduate-level coursework and research related to early childhood education. As the current and future experts in the field of early childhood education, it is important that they demonstrate exemplary academic performance.

Academic performance, often measured by grades, is influenced by a myriad of factors, including innate abilities, socioeconomic background, and educational resources (Barnett, Friedman-Krauss, Weisenfeld, Horowitz, Kasmin, Squires & Briggs, 2017). Academic performance can be defined as the measure of a student's achievements and accomplishments in an educational setting, typically represented by grades, examination scores, and other quantitative indicators of learning outcomes(Hattie & Timperley, 2017). According to Sikhwari (2014), academic performance is the extent to which a student has met the goals, standards, or expectations set by an educational institution, program, or curriculum, which can encompass not only grades but also factors such as attendance, class participation, and overall engagement in learning activities. However, one key determinant that has garnered increasing attention in recent years is the role of study habits.

Study habits refer to the behaviours and practices students employ to enhance their learning experience, encompassing aspects such as time management, note-taking, and study techniques (Rashid & Asghar, 2016). Study habits refers to the systematic practices and routines adopted by students to enhance their learning and academic performance, encompassing techniques for effective time management, note-taking, information retention, and strategies for comprehension and retention of study materials(Vukovic, Kieffer, Bailey, & Harari2010). According to Kumar and Bansal (2018), study habits refer to the behaviours, practices, and strategies that students engage in to organize and structure their learning process, including methods for time allocation, effective reading, and information retrieval. In the opinion of Richardson, Abraham and Bond(2012), study habits are the learned behaviours and routines that students adopt to facilitate efficient and productive studying, encompassing skills such as setting specific goals, managing distractions, and employing various cognitive and meta cognitive strategies. These definitions highlight the importance of study habits in the context of learning and academic success, emphasizing the various aspects of students' behaviours and practices that contribute to effective studying. The significance of study habits in shaping academic success cannot be overstated, as they are considered to be a bridge between innate abilities and actual achievement (Tella, Ayeni& Popoola, 2017). The authors further posited that the study habits of postgraduate students are usually linked to environmental factors, reading time, personal habits and collaboration among postgraduate students of early childhood education.

Environmental factors can significantly impact reading and comprehension abilities in individuals. These factors encompass the physical and social conditions in which reading takes

place. According to Epstein, Dauber and McMullen (2019), the availability of reading materials in one's environment plays a crucial role. Individuals who have access to a wide range of books, magazines, and digital resources are more likely to engage in reading and have the opportunity to improve their comprehension skills. On the other hand, limited access to reading materials can hinder reading development. Furthermore, Ginsburg (2017) posits that the physical surroundings where reading occurs can influence comprehension. A quiet, well-lit, and comfortable space is conducive to focused reading and better comprehension. Distractions, such as noise or playing music might disrupt concentration and hinder understanding. Aside the environmental factor, reading time could also affect study habits and comprehension abilities (Haugland& Wright, 2017).

The time at which postgraduate students choose to read can significantly influence the extent of their understanding of the material (Kumashiro, 2018). The author further posited that the timing can affect their cognitive readiness, focus, and retention of information. In the opinion of U.S. Department of Education (2015), the human body has natural circadian rhythms that regulate alertness and cognitive performance throughout the day. Some individuals are "morning people," while others are "night owls." Understanding one's own circadian rhythm and scheduling reading during times when they are most alert can enhance comprehension. For example, morning people might find early morning reading sessions more productive, while night owls may benefit from late-night study sessions. Furthermore, Jones (2020) posited that freshness of the mind usually comes after a good night's sleep which helps the mind better able to absorb and process information. Morning reading sessions can take advantage of this mental freshness, leading to improved comprehension. Postgraduate students may find that they retain information more effectively when they read during the early hours of the day. Although time of reading could affect performance, so also do personal habits (Rashid& Asghar, 2016).

Personal habits can have a significant impact on reading comprehension, both positively and negatively. According to Pressley and McCormick (2015), reading by writing can affect level of understanding. The authors further posited that reading by writing is often referred to as active note-taking or annotating which can enhance comprehension. When individuals write notes, underline key points, or jot down questions as they read, they actively engage with the material, which promotes deeper understanding (Jones, 2020). Reading by repetition is another personal habit that can affect level if understanding. According to Kornell and Bjork (2018), repetition can be a useful learning strategy because when individuals read the same material multiple times, it can reinforce memory and comprehension, especially for complex or unfamiliar content. According to Higbee (2021), the use of acronyms or mnemonic devices can aid memory and understanding by simplifying complex information. By condensing information into memorable abbreviations or phrases, individuals can recall key concepts more easily. Kleykamp (2021) further posited that some students read under the influence of drugs which can have various effects, depending on the type of drug and its impact on cognitive function. Some drugs may impair attention, memory, and comprehension, leading to reduced understanding, while others may temporarily enhance focus but may not be conducive to sustained, meaningful learning (Kleykamp, 2021). Collaborative strategies aside personal habits can also affect the performance of students.

Collaborative learning strategies, such as reading with friends, engaging in teaching others, and participating in discussion groups, can have a significant positive impact on understanding and learning (King, 2022; Barkley, Cross, & Major, 2015). Reading with friends allows individuals to share their perspectives, insights, and interpretations of the material. This exchange of ideas can lead to a deeper understanding of the content as different viewpoints are considered (King, 2022). According to Barkley, Cross and Major (2015), reading with others can provide a sense of accountability. Knowing that others are relying on you for discussion or

analysis can motivate individuals to read more attentively and critically, thereby improving comprehension. Furthermore, friends can help clarify concepts or passages that may be challenging to understand. Discussions can lead to a better grasp of complex topics through peer explanations and discussions (Tinto, 2017). Incorporating collaborative learning strategies into one's study routine can lead to enhanced comprehension, critical thinking, and a more holistic understanding of complex subjects(Tinto, 2017) but how this affects early childhood education postgraduate students in the University of Nigeria is yet to be ascertained.

The University of Nigeria, Nsukka (UNN), is a renowned institution dedicated to excellence in education. Its Early Childhood Education post-graduate program attracts aspiring educators who are poised to make a significant impact on the ECE landscape in Nigeria and beyond. As such, it is vital to explore the influence of study habits on the academic performance of these post-graduate students to ensure that they are equipped with the necessary skills and knowledge to be effective educators. This research aims to investigate the relationship between study habits and the academic performance of post-graduate students in Early Childhood Education at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka. By gaining a deeper understanding of how study habits impact academic success in this specific academic context, it can inform educational policy, curriculum development, and instructional practices to better prepare future ECE professionals.

Purpose of the Study

The general purpose of the study was to investigate the perceived influence of study habits on the academic performance of early childhood education postgraduate students of University of Nigeria, Nsukka. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. Ascertain environmental factors that facilitate quick understanding when studying among early childhood education postgraduate students of UNN
2. Investigate the most appropriate time that is suitable for understanding when studying among early childhood education postgraduate students of UNN
3. Ascertain the personal habits that enhance quick understanding when studying among early childhood education postgraduate students of UNN
4. The collaborative ways that enhance quick understanding by students among early childhood education postgraduate students of UNN

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study;

1. What are the environmental factors that facilitate quick understanding when studying among early childhood education postgraduate students of UNN?
2. What is the most appropriate time that is suitable for understanding when studying among early childhood education postgraduate students of UNN?
3. What are the personal habits that enhance quick understanding when studying among early childhood education postgraduate students of UNN?
4. What are the collaborative ways that enhance quick understanding by students among early childhood education postgraduate students of UNN?

Methodology

A descriptive survey design was adopted for the study and was carried out at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka. The population for the study consisted of the 96 early childhood education postgraduate students registered for the 2022/2023 session. Due to the manageable size of the population, the entire population was studied. Hence, there was no need for any sampling or sampling technique. Two instruments were utilized for data collection namely: "Perceived Influence of Study Habits on the Academic Performance of Early Childhood

Education Post-Graduate Students Questionnaire (PISHAPECEPGSQ) and Preferred Study Time Checklist (PSTC)".The PISHAPECEPGSQ was developed from literature and used to obtain data for research questions 1, 3 and 4. The questionnaire had four response options of Strongly Agree (SA) - 4, Agree (A) - 3, Disagree (D) -2 and Strongly Disagree (SD) - 1. The questionnaire was face validated by two experts from the Department of Early Childhood Education, University of Nigeria, Nsukka and three experts from the Department of Early Childhood and Primary Education, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. Cronbach alpha was used to determine internal consistency of the questionnaire which yielded a coefficient of 0.86. PSTC had options and respondents were expected to tick only one option out of the 10 reading times provided as their preferred reading time. Cronbach Alpha was also used to test the reliability of the PSTC and it yielded a coefficient of 0.78.

The two instruments were administered to 96 respondents and there was 94% return rate which equated to 90 early childhood education postgraduate students. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions 1, 3 and 4. Real limit of numbers were applied in decision making. Any item that had mean values ranged from 3.50 to 4.0 was regarded as SA. Items that had mean value ranged from 2.50 to 3.49 were regarded as A. Items that have mean value ranged from 1.50 to 2.49 were regarded as D. Items that had mean values ranged from 1.00 to 1.49 were regarded as SD. The standard deviations (SD) of the items were also taken into consideration. Any item with mean value of 1.96 or below indicated that the respondents are near to the mean and to each other in their responses or vice versa. As for the PSTC, frequency and percentages were used to ascertain the preferred reading time of the students. The option with the highest frequency was the preferred option of the respondents while the option with the lowest was the least preferred option of the respondents.

Results

Research Question 1: What are the environmental factors that facilitate quick understanding when studying among early childhood education postgraduate students of UNN?

Table 1: Mean ratings and standard deviations of respondents on the environmental factors that facilitate quick understanding when studying
n= 90

S/N	ITEMS	$\overline{X}$	SD	REMARKS
1	A serene study environment minimizes distractions enabling students to quickly grasp and comprehend complex concepts	3.87	0.39	SA
2	Adequate lighting reduces eye strain and ensures that students can read and process study materials with ease	3.06	0.41	A
3	Ergonomically designed chairs provide comfort during extended study sessions, allowing students to focus on learning	3.88	0.32	SA
4	A well-equipped library offers easy access to essential materials, aiding in efficient research and understanding.	3.51	0.56	SA
5	Access to the internet enables post-graduate students to explore online materials to enhance comprehension.	3.92	0.27	SA
6	The availability of stationery and study aids such as whiteboards supports active learning and understanding	3.83	0.38	SA
7	Establishing a dedicated study schedule and routine allows students to allocate time for focused learning and revision	3.90	0.35	SA
8	Customizing the study environment with personal touches, such as inspirational quotes enhance understanding	1.94	0.29	D

9	Exposure to natural light or outdoor settings can have a calming effect, reducing stress and enhancing cognitive functioning	1.96	0.23	D
10	Educational technology, such as e-bookstand educational apps, can aid in visualizing and comprehending complex concepts.	3.29	0.86	A

$\overline{X}$ **= Mean, SD = Standard Deviation, n = Population, SA = Strongly Agree, A= Agree, D= Disagree, SD = Strongly Disagree**

Data in Table 1 revealed that 6 out of the 10 items had mean values ranged 3.51 - 3.92. The values were within the real limit of 3.50 - 4.00 indicating that the six items were in the category of Strongly Agree. Two out of the eight items had mean values of 3.06 and 3.29. Each of the values of the 2 items were within the real limit of 2.50-3.49; indicating that the 2 items were in the category of Agree. The remaining two items had mean values of 1.94 and 1.96. Each of the values of the 2 items were within the real limit of 1.50-2.49indicating that the 2 items were in the category of Disagree. Generally, the respondents agree that the eight items in the category of strongly agree or agreewere the environmental factors that facilitate quick understanding when studying among early childhood education postgraduate students of UNN. The standard deviation of all the 10 items ranged from 0.27 – 0.86. Each of the values was below 1.96 indicating that the respondents were near to the mean and to each other in their responses.

Research Question 2: What is the most appropriate time that is suitable for understanding when studying among early childhood education postgraduate students of UNN?

Table 2: Frequency and percentages of respondents on most appropriate time that is suitable for understanding when studying

S/N	Preferred Reading Time	Frequency (F)	Percentage (%)
1	Early morning (5:00 AM - 8:00 AM)	22	24.4
2	Morning (8:00 AM - 11:00 AM)	6	6.7
3	Mid-Morning (10:00 AM - 12:00 PM)	4	4.4
4	Afternoon (1:00 PM - 4:00 PM)	2	2.2
5	Late Afternoon (3:00 PM - 5:00 PM)	2	2.2
6	Early Evening (6:00 PM - 8:00 PM)	15	16.7
7	Evening (8:00 PM - 10:00 PM)	14	15.6
8	Night (10:00 PM - 12:00 AM)	9	10.0
9	Late Night (12:00 AM - 2:00 AM)	10	11.1
10	Weekends (Flexible)	6	6.7
		90	**100**

Findings from Table 2 revealed that the preferred reading time of early childhood education postgraduate students was early morning with the highest frequency (22) and percentage (24.4%), followed by early evening (16.7%) and evening (15.6%). Theleast preferred time was afternoon (1:00 PM - 4:00 PM) and late afternoon (3:00 PM - 5:00 PM) with frequency of 2 and percentage of 2.2% for both reading times.

Research Question 3: What are the personal habits that enhance quick understanding when studying among early childhood education postgraduate students of UNN?

Table 3: Mean ratings and standard deviations of respondents on the personal habits that enhance quick understanding when studying

n= 90

S/N	ITEMS	$\overline{X}$	SD	REMARKS
1	Developing time management skills to allocate dedicated study time can enhance efficiency and understanding	3.95	0.22	SA
2	Taking concise notes during lectures and readings helps students retain information and facilitates comprehension	3.97	0.17	SA
3	Cultivating critical thinking skills allows students to analyze, and synthesize information, leading to a deeper understanding	3.26	0.84	A
4	Defining specific learning objectives for each study session provides direction aiding in efficient comprehension.	3.95	0.22	SA
5	Establishing a regular review schedule to revisit previously learned material helps maintain understanding over time	3.80	0.43	SA
6	Utilizing strategies such as scanning enhances the ability to quickly grasp key information from texts.	1.80	0.92	D
7	Creating visual representations of concepts using concept maps can aid in organizing and understanding complex topics	3.91	0.32	SA
8	Engaging in practice tests helps students assess their understanding and identify areas that require further study	3.92	0.31	SA
9	Participating in discussions with peers reinforces comprehension and encourages a deeper understanding	3.91	0.26	SA
10	Maintaining focused attention during study sessions can improve concentration and understanding	2.67	1.17	A
11	Prioritizing physical health through regular exercise and sufficient sleep contributes to cognitive function	3.60	0.82	SA

Data in Table 3 revealed that 8 out of the 11 items had mean values ranged 3.60 - 3.97. The values were within the real limit of 3.50 - 4.00 indicating that the 8 items were in the category of Strongly Agree. Two items had mean values of 2.67 and 3.26 which were within the real limit of 2.50 – 3.49 indicating that they were in the category of Agree. The last item had mean value of 1.80 which was within the real limit of 1.50 – 2.49 indicating that it was in the category of Disagree. Generally, the respondents agreed that 10 out of the 11 items were the the personal habits that enhance quick understanding when studying among early childhood education postgraduate students of UNN. The standard deviation of all the 11 items ranged from 0.17 – 1.17. Each of the values was below 1.96 indicating that the respondents were near to the mean and to each other in their responses.

Research Question 4: What are the collaborative ways that enhance quick understanding by students among early childhood education postgraduate students of UNN?

Table 4: Mean ratings and standard deviations of respondents on the collaborative ways that enhance quick understanding by students

n= 90

S/N	ITEMS	$\overline{X}$	SD	REMARKS
1	Forming study groups allows for discussion of course materials, leading to a deeper understanding of complex topics.	3.96	0.21	SA
2	Collaborating with fellow students encourages the sharing of knowledge accelerating understanding	3.22	0.86	A
3	Engaging in collaborative problem-solving sessions enables students to approach challenging assignments collectively, leveraging each other's strengths and insights.	3.38	0.67	A
4	Participating in interactive workshops organized by the university promotes a faster understanding of subject matter.	3.43	0.78	A
5	Utilizing online platforms for academic discussions and knowledge sharing allows students to access a wider pool of information and insights.	3.75	0.61	SA
6	Teaching course material to peers reinforces one's own understanding and helps others grasp the content more quickly.	3.56	0.65	SA
7	Working in teams to create and deliver presentations on course topics encourages research and clear communication, enhancing understanding among both presenters and audience.	3.84	0.52	SA
8	Engaging in argumentation exercises challenges students to critically evaluate and articulate their viewpoints, resulting in a deeper understanding of complex issues.	2.42	1.11	D
9	Participating in learning communities with shared interests leads to continuous learning and quick understanding.	3.91	0.28	SA
10	Leveraging collaborative online tools such as Google Docs enables real-time collaboration and information exchange.	3.80	0.53	SA

Data in Table 4 revealed that 6 out of the 10 items had mean values ranged 3.56 - 3.96. The values were within the real limit of 3.50 - 4.00 indicating that the six items were in the category of Strongly Agree. Three out of the remaining 4 items ranged 3.22 – 3.43 which were in within the range of 250 – 3.49 indicating they were in the category of Agree. The remaining item had a mean value of 2.42 which was within the real limit of 1.50 – 2.49 indicating that it was in the category of Disagree. Generally, the respondents agree that 9 out of the 10 items were the collaborative ways that enhance quick understanding by students among early childhood education post-graduate students of UNN. The standard deviation of all the 10 items ranged from 0.21 – 1.11. Each of the values was below 1.96 indicating that the respondents were near to the mean and to each other in their responses.

Discussion of the Findings

The findings of the study revealed that the environmental factors that facilitate quick understanding when studying among early childhood education postgraduate students of UNN include: A serene study environment minimizes distractions enabling students to quickly grasp and comprehend complex concepts; adequate lighting reduces eye strain and ensures that students can read and process study materials with ease; ergonomically designed chairs provide comfort during extended study sessions, allowing students to focus on learning; a well-equipped library offers easy access to essential materials, aiding in efficient research and

understanding; access to the internet enables post-graduate students to explore online materials to enhance comprehension; and the availability of stationery and study aids such as whiteboards supports active learning and understanding; establishing a dedicated study schedule and routine allows students to allocate time for focused learning and revision; and educational technology, such as e-bookstand educational apps, can aid in visualizing and comprehending complex concepts. The findings are in line with Barnett (2018) who found that adequate lighting which reduces eye strain and ensures that students can read and process study materials with ease; and ergonomically designed chairs that provide comfort during extended study sessions enhances learning and student's performance. The findings are also in cognisance with Brede amp and Copple (2020) who found out that well-equipped library offers easy access to essential materials, aiding in efficient research and understanding thereby improving student's performances in the long run.

Findings on the preferred reading time of early childhood education postgraduate students revealed that early morning (5:00 AM – 8:00 AM) was the preferred reading time of early childhood education postgraduate students followed by early evening (6:00 PM - 8:00 PM) and evening (8:00 PM - 10:00 PM). The findings that early morning, early evening, and evening were the preferred reading times among early childhood education postgraduate students align with the existing literature on optimal study times and individual circadian rhythms. The preference for early morning as the primary reading time corresponds with the concept of circadian rhythms. Many individuals experience peak alertness and cognitive performance in the early morning (Roenneberg, Wirz-Justice & Merrow, 2013). This aligns with the idea that studying during one's "biological prime time" can lead to better comprehension and retention of information. The preference for early evening as the second-choice reading time reflects the availability of natural light and reduced distractions after the day's activities have concluded. During the early evening, students may still have sufficient cognitive energy and concentration to engage effectively with study materials (Monk, 2015).The preference for studying in the late evening may be influenced by individual differences in circadian rhythms and daily schedules. Some individuals are "night owls" and experience heightened alertness and productivity during late hours (Adan et al., 2012). However, it's important to note that studying too late at night can lead to reduced sleep quality and cognitive performance the following day (Kerkhof, 2018).

The findings of the study revealed that the personal habits that enhance quick understanding when studying among early childhood education postgraduate students of UNN include: Developing time management skills to allocate dedicated study time can enhance efficiency and understanding; taking concise notes during lectures and readings helps students retain information and facilitates comprehension; cultivating critical thinking skills allows students to analyze, and synthesize information, leading to a deeper understanding; defining specific learning objectives for each study session provides direction aiding in efficient comprehension; establishing a regular review schedule to revisit previously learned material helps maintain understanding over time; creating visual representations of concepts using concept maps can aid in organizing and understanding complex topics; engaging in practice tests helps students assess their understanding and identify areas that require further study; participating in discussions with peers reinforces comprehension and encourages a deeper understanding; maintaining focused attention during study sessions can improve concentration and understanding; and prioritizing physical health through regular exercise and sufficient sleep contributes to cognitive function. The findings are in agreement with Hohmann and Weikat (2012) who found that engaging in practice tests helps students assess their understanding and identify areas that require further study which invariably improves their performance in the long run. The findings are also in support of Sikhwari (2014) who found

out that cultivating critical thinking skills allows students to analyze, and synthesize information, leading to a deeper understanding.

The findings revealed that the collaborative ways that enhance quick understanding by students among early childhood education postgraduate students of UNN include: Forming study groups allows for discussion of course materials, leading to a deeper understanding of complex topics; collaborating with fellow students encourages the sharing of knowledge accelerating understanding; engaging in collaborative problem-solving sessions enables students to approach challenging assignments collectively, leveraging each other's strengths and insights; participating in interactive workshops organized by the university promotes a faster understanding of subject matter; utilizing online platforms for academic discussions and knowledge sharing allows students to access a wider pool of information and insights; teaching course material to peers reinforces one's own understanding and helps others grasp the content more quickly; working in teams to create and deliver presentations on course topics encourages research and clear communication, enhancing understanding among both presenters and audience; participating in learning communities with shared interests leads to continuous learning and quick understanding; and leveraging collaborative online tools such as Google Docs enables real-time collaboration and information exchange. The findings are in agreement with Vukovic, Kieffer, Bailey and Harari (2010) who found that Forming study groups allows for discussion of course materials, leading to a deeper understanding of complex topics. The findings are also in agreement with Kumar and Bansal (2018) who found that engaging in collaborative problem-solving sessions enables students to approach challenging assignments collectively, leveraging each other's strengths and insights.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the findings of this study shed light on several crucial factors and practices that significantly influence the quick understanding of early childhood education postgraduate students at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka (UNN). The study highlighted the importance of environmental factors such as a serene study environment, adequate lighting, ergonomic chairs and access to resources like well-equipped libraries and the internet, amongst others. These factors collectively contribute to an optimal learning environment that supports students in grasping and comprehending complex concepts quickly. Furthermore, the study identified the preferred reading times among postgraduate students in early childhood education, with early morning, early evening, and evening emerging as the most favoured periods. Additionally, the study highlighted personal habits that enhance quick understanding, including effective time management, active note-taking, critical thinking, goal setting, regular review, concept mapping and self-testing amongst others. These habits empower students to approach their studies systematically and engage with course materials effectively, ultimately leading to quicker comprehension. Lastly, the study underscored the value of collaboration in promoting quick understanding among early childhood education postgraduate students. Collaborative strategies such as study groups, peer teaching, problem-solving sessions, interactive workshops, online forums, and teamwork were identified as effective means of sharing knowledge, gaining diverse perspectives, and accelerating comprehension. In light of these findings, it is evident that a combination of conducive environmental factors, effective personal habits, and collaborative learning approaches plays a pivotal role in enhancing the quick understanding of postgraduate students in the field of early childhood education. These insights offer valuable guidance for both students and educators, emphasizing the importance of creating supportive learning environments and fostering practices that optimize the learning process. Ultimately, these findings contribute to the advancement of effective teaching and learning strategies in the context of early childhood education at UNN and beyond.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following were recommended;

1. UNN should provide dedicated and well-designed study spaces that prioritize a serene and distraction-free environment.
2. The Head of Department of the early childhood education in UNN should organize workshops to encourage the integration of educational technology, such as e-books, educational apps, and online learning platforms, into the curriculum to aid in visualizing and comprehending complex concepts.
3. University lecturers should recognize the diverse preferences in study times among students and provide flexibility in class schedules to accommodate early morning, early evening, and evening learners.
4. Early childhood education postgraduate students are encouraged to attend workshops and seminars on effective study habits, time management, and critical thinking skills to empower students with strategies for quick understanding.
5. Early childhood education postgraduate students should form study groups, discussion forums, and peer teaching sessions to promote collaborative learning.

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