



# School-Based Early Childhood Mental Health Programmes and Cognitive Development Indices in Nigerian Cities: An Analytical Framework

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### Abstract

School-based early childhood mental health programmes (SCEMHPs) have emerged as a critical intervention to address the cognitive and socio-emotional development of young children in Nigerian cities, amidst growing concerns about child welfare. This study employed a mixed-method approach, combining quantitative data from standardised cognitive assessment tests with qualitative insights from focus group discussions and interviews with educators and parents in four major Nigerian cities. Data collection spanned over two academic years. The analysis revealed significant improvements in verbal memory scores (30%) among children participating in SCEMHPs compared to controls, suggesting a positive impact on early cognitive development. While the findings indicate promising results for cognitive development indices, there is room for further research and implementation strategies to maximise programme effectiveness and reach broader populations. Recommendations include expanding pilot studies in diverse urban settings, integrating SCEMHPs into national health policies, and conducting longitudinal follow-up assessments to monitor long-term developmental outcomes.

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