



Analysing Early Childhood Development Programmes' Impact on Reducing School Dropout Rates in Ethiopia

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Abstract

Early childhood development (ECD) programmes are interventions designed to support children's cognitive, social-emotional, and physical development from birth to age five. In Ethiopia, despite significant efforts in ECD, school dropout rates remain high among early learners. The study employed an RCT design with pre- and post-intervention assessments to measure changes in children's developmental outcomes. A total of 500 schools were randomly assigned, with half receiving ECD programmes and the other half serving as controls. Children who participated in ECD programmes showed a statistically significant improvement in cognitive skills ($p < 0.01$) compared to those without such support. The findings suggest that ECD programmes can effectively mitigate school dropout rates by enhancing children's foundational learning and social-emotional competencies. Public health authorities should prioritise funding for integrated ECD services, especially in underserved regions of Ethiopia. Schools and communities must be involved to ensure the sustainability of these initiatives.

Keywords: *African geography, Early childhood development, Dropout rates, Interventions, Methodology, Socio-educational policies, Theory of change*

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