



Teachers' Perception of Leadership Role in Promoting Early Childhood Care and Education in Sierra Leone

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ABSTRACT

The current study focuses on assessing teachers' perception of leadership roles in promoting ECCE programs in Sierra Leone. A quantitative approach was employed in which cross-sectional survey design was used to study 170 ECCE teachers to find out their level of perception of the leadership role in ECCE programs and find out the difference in teachers' perceptions. A Google Form was used to collect data and Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 26 used to analyse the data. The study found moderate teachers' perception on the leadership roles for promoting ECCE with an overall mean of 3.03. ECCE stakeholders need to provide leaders resources, in-service training and techniques on how to carry out ECCE programs in Sierra Leone. The study concluded that leadership has greater influence with direct effects on admissions, learning ability of the child, classroom management, provision of child friendly classroom environment, learning process, awareness, advertisements and stakeholders' engagement through parent teachers' meetings.

Introduction

Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) program is the education provided to children from birth to 8 years old. ECCE is now a central topic in the global discussion because of its importance in the holistic



development of the child to nurture and develop different skills of children such as literacy, critical thinking, language, self-control and confidence, social interaction, emotional regulations, numeracy and reading (Chiang, 2022). Children who benefited from ECCE programs are said to have better academic performance. Education stakeholders should pay greater attention during this period because the period is critical for thinking and development of children (D'Angelo et al., 2023). In the same view, it has been reported that 90 percent of the brain formation and development of children take place to facilitate thinking, environmental adaptation (Center on the Developing Child, 2010). In order to create an ECCE learning environment and program, effective leadership is required (Patel, 2024). Patel added that ECCE leaders are charged with the responsibility to advocate, participate in community engagement, implement vision, control and regulate practices, and mediate parents, community, policy makers and government. ECCE leadership provides early learners with the required services to prepare their career for a sustainable education through joint and collaborative effort with education stakeholders in all early learning centers (Harrison et al., 2024). Furthermore, vibrant ECCE leaders contribute immensely in curriculum development, create a child friendly environment, provide professional and administrative development, mentoring of caregivers and teachers. To achieve the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG4) by 2030, ECCE leadership and other stakeholders require collective collaboration for a successful transition from stage to stage in the academic leather through transformative policies for preparing flexible leaders for all purposes to maintain values, ethics and cultural transformation (Chikuvadze et al., 2025). The study by Kaddoura (2025) emphasised that ECCE leadership required a non-fragile knowledge but abundant built-in skills to accommodate readiness. Making ECCE programs more viable, leadership takes the centre stage with factors like integration of information technology, strong policy advocacy, salary and bonus to teachers, caregivers, head teachers, inclusive curriculum, exposure, experience sharing, support and training (Rasli et al., 2021). In recent times, the ECCE program has become not only a topic but a subject of reformations in nation-building contexts. Despite the numerous pullbacks like inadequate funds, infrastructure, electricity, information technology, ineffective practices, in-service training, lack of advocating policy, conflict of interest among stakeholders, ill-motivation of school leaders, low knowledge on documentation and its applicability, leaders should be well fortified to face future challenges (Movahedazarhouligh et al., 2022; Udayanga, 2024). For leaders to overcome the leadership challenges, they should be guided by standing regulations and instructions (Fonsén et al., 2025).

Additionally, Rao et al. (2024) describe education stakeholders to be teachers, caregivers, parents, head teachers, government and the community who host the learning process.



Fonsén et al. (2025) and Apriyansyah et al. (2024) connoted on the activation of a competency-based leadership to strengthen their capacities. Digging deeper, Fonsen et al. (2025) underscored how to modify leadership training to be pegged on give and take and feedback. They further advanced for the empowerment of teachers who are the door step for success. In empowering them, teacher qualification is vital to become a competent leader to shape their conduct and reform their actions (Hanley & Garrity, 2024).

In Sierra Leone ECCE program was omitted in the government education system and it was in operation under private schools. The recent declaration of a compulsory “Free Quality School Education” (FQSE) Project in the year 2018 formally included the establishment of an ECCE program for all children from 3 to 8 years. This move was a humble beginning to bring dignity to education (Conjoh et al., 2024). The declaration of the “FQSE” project has enhanced school enrollment and ECCE awareness. The study conducted by Conjoh et al. (2024) in Sierra Leone highlighted the challenges of ECCE leaders faced in implementation of ECCE programs. Potential among them include lack of pedagogical training on the relevant classroom and administrative approaches, financial inadequacy, lack of electricity and internet facility, inadequate teaching and learning materials and lack of infrastructure to provide ECCE leadership the administrative environment to discharge their duties and responsibilities. Similarly, Nwokeocha et al. (2023) and Quartey et al. (2024) further underscore success made in enrollment, teacher retention, ECCE programs awareness, provision of learning materials.

Studies in Sierra Leone by Nwokeocha et al. (2023), Quartey et al. (2024) and Conjoh et al. (2024) showed different areas of success like transformative leadership, training of leaders, formulation of curriculum by leaders, leading as a role model, challenges faced in leadership and parental roles been investigated by researchers and academicians, and they proffer solutions, such that teachers’ practices, parent teacher relationships, classroom management are fostered. There have been achievements in ECCE program implementation, such as an increased enrolment and awareness about the importance of ECCE in nation building. However, little is known about teachers’ perceptions of leadership roles in promoting early childhood care and education in Sierra Leone. The present study focused to find out the level of teachers’ perception of leadership roles in the ECCE program, and to find out the difference in teachers’ perceptions. Investigating such topics at a time of need would provide recommendations to ECCE stakeholders, leaders, teachers and policy makers on strategies on how to provide leaders to be fully equipped to promote ECCE programs and education.

Review of Literature



Perception of Teachers on the Leadership Role

A study by Shah et al. (2023) premised the importance of the role of leaders to promote ECCE in Pakistan. From their study, ECCE leadership needs a collaborative effort in planning the teaching and learning activities to increase the confidence of the learner and create strategies for effective learning. The successful implementation of ECCE programs of activities is solely on the qualities of the leader. Collaborative coordination is a meeting point of action (Kahila & Heikka, 2025; Ranta et al., 2025) and teamwork to be the answer for overcoming classroom leadership challenges. Ridza et al. (2024) expanded for professional development skills training for leadership capability in executing their duties.

Secondly, Cortázar et al. (2020) underscored that the relevance of ECCE can only be achieved through sound leadership qualities. Their study showed that leadership burden becomes manageable with children with ECCE background compared to those without. Furthermore, their academic performance proved well while children without ECCE background outputs were reported less and sometimes prompted them to leave school.

Fast forward, the study by Isaac (2024) highlighted that “national security” and leadership, administration are directly correlated. A sound leader with a well-grounded ECCE principle, policies, regulations is security threat free in administering responsibility.

Thirdly, leadership roles cannot be performed effectively without a working policy. Considering that, Chin et al. (2021) and White (2023) uncovered the non-clarity of ECCE policies, weak policies and difficulties in school centre registration, which negatively affected consistency in requirements. Noting studies by Khan et al. (2020), Okonkwo and Ifesiokwu (2022), Modise (2021) and Haider et al. (2025) emphasise the high need for a strong presence of policies that dialogue in favour of the ECCE family and its implementation to guide not only teachers and headteachers but curriculum reviewers, teachers' welfare, interpersonal parent teacher relationship and the learner. Similarly, to achieve policy implementation with the expected result, Soukakou et al. (2024) further proffered solution for commitment, sensitisation and teamwork from parents, local communities, school leaders, teachers, policy reviewers, visible explanation on individual position towards promotion of ECCE at local, national and global.

Fourthly, ECCE programs are best implemented in an inclusive environment. A well-planned child friendly environment provides children the opportunity to play freely by involving themselves into different activities through group work, with partners or individually. The environment is supportive to



leadership exhibition through an interactive activity. The environment means school and home where children are prepared for future growth. A stimulus environment is a comforter to the learner, and lessens the burden for leaders (Shah et al., 2023; Vashisth et al., 2024). Play is an effective method for child learning and development of their cognitive, social, emotional, moral and motor development. Children use energy in play and it is a hub for children's learning (Mansaray, 2019). Mansaray re-echoed that play is appropriate in a spacious classroom, environment both internally and externally friendly. The classroom and environment are designed to meet the requirements standards for child learning to accommodate play and freedom with sufficient natural light and attractive to the children. Moreover, the inclusion of play in the classroom will lead to children's happiness. The study of Kaur and Sharma (2021) established that there is a solid relationship between play and happiness in promoting the child's social and emotional competency. Children with happiness learn willingly, develop their confidence, and increase learning outputs. Kaur and Sharma further highlight the importance of teachers in directing children's learning activities towards the use of toys. Exclusion of students, parents, and other ECCE stakeholders on the leadership undermines capability of leaders (Udayanga, 2024). Udayanga underpinned that the environment should welcome all and sundry to aid the leaders carry out their duties.

Furthermore, besides professional skills and academic achievement, it is generally considered that gender is an important factor that helps to modify leadership qualities. Leadership for promoting ECCE cannot be disconnected from the role performed by women in leadership positions. A study by Mulawarman et al. (2021) showed that females were rejected to occupy leadership positions. A similar study by Washington (2020) reports that gender in leadership gap is found to be narrowing. In contrast, several studies (Ali et al., 2020; Netto, 2020) found female and male teachers have no significant difference in their perception of leadership roles.

Additionally, teaching and leadership experience is a brain developer to help ECCE leaders to carry out their responsibilities for promoting ECCE (Buskila & Chen-Levi, 2021). Experience improves leaders' self-confidence, positive thinking and knowledge guided principles to help implement ECCE curriculum (Kutluca, 2021; Mohebi & Meda, 2021). Mohebi and Meda added that leaders with wealth of experience can coordinate not only the human resources but can also manage the materials resources for the achievement of the set goals. To build their experience, in-service training, workshops, knowledge exchange sessions among teachers, caregivers and head teachers are necessary to guide the children on their daily classroom activities, and develop their confidence to choose the activity of their choice (Ghani et al., 2025).



In Sierra Leone however, ECCE programs are provided to children from birth to age five to develop their early education fundamental skills (Ministry of Basic and Senior Secondary Education, 2023). The ECCE program is segmented into three stages wherein age 0-2 years is a stage at which the child is stimulated, age 3-5 years is the stage for the child to be provided with a pre-primary learning, and age 5-6 years is the readiness stage for formal primary school learning, which is compulsory for all Sierra Leonean children (Ministry of Basic and Senior Secondary Education, 2021). The report from the Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education Sierra Leone (2021) further revealed that children are provided with an age appropriate and stimulating environment for early learning regardless of gender and socioeconomic background. Early learning cultivates their holistic development to enable them to achieve their potential in communication, reasoning, development of social skills and physical fitness (Ministry of Basic and Senior Secondary Education, 2021). Several policies in Sierra Leone such as the Education Sector Plan (2014-2018), the Child Right Act (2022) and the Ministry of Basic and Senior Secondary Education (2020) are advocating for the development of the child in the first year of life and to promote young children's survival growth in all aspects. According to the Annual School Census (ASC) (conducted by the Ministry of Basic and Senior Secondary Education, 2022) report, ECCE leadership is compounded by challenges such as lack of electricity, inadequate teacher training, lack of teacher motivation, inadequate infrastructure which hamper the provision of quality early learning. The ASC further revealed that 24 percent were ECCE enrolment while 76 percent children cannot access pre-primary education, 37 percent are ECCE centres with access to electricity while 63 percent do not have electricity access, 10 percent have access to a computer while 90 percent do not have computer access for pedagogical skills training.

The literature reviewed has reported a variety of teachers' perceptions on the leadership role for promoting ECCE programs. Geographically however, little is known about teachers' perceptions of leadership role for promoting ECCE in Sierra Leone. Therefore, the present study focused on assessing teachers' perception on the leadership role for promoting ECCE in Sierra Leone. The results of the present study may be used by future researchers and scholars. Additionally, it will provide government and education stakeholders the basic information on the need for the integration of information technology, strong policy, raising awareness and sensitise political leaders and citizens about the importance of the role of leadership in ECCE implementation. This study was squarely guided by the following objectives and hypothesis as follows.

Objectives



The study aimed to achieve the following objectives:

1. To find out the level of teachers’ perception of leadership roles in ECCE.
2. To find out the difference in teachers’ perceptions.

Hypotheses

H1: There is a significant difference in teachers’ perceptions of leadership roles in promoting ECCE by gender.

H2: There is a significant difference in teachers’ perception of leadership roles in promoting ECCE by working experience.

Methodology

Research Design

The researchers used a quantitative method approach with a cross-sectional design to assess the teachers’ perception of leadership role for promoting ECCE in Sierra Leone.

Participants

The study used 170 ECCE teachers, which comprised 90 (52.9%) males and 80 (47.1%) females, who willingly participated in the study by providing their knowledge skills, experiences, and perception on the leadership role for the promotion of ECCE in Sierra Leone. Table 1 shows 170 teachers who participated in the study with 90 males (52.9%) and 80 females (47.1%). Among the respondents, 73 (42.9%) were below 30 years, 47 (27.6%) were 31-35 years, 26 (15.3%) were 36-40 years, 24 (14.1%) were above 40 years. Recounting teaching experience, 52 had less than 5 years, 66 had 6-10 years, 29 had 11-15 years, and 23 had 15 years or more of experience.

Table 1: Demographic information of respondents

		<i>Count</i>	<i>Total (n%)</i>
<i>Gender</i>	Male	90	52.9
	Female	80	47.1
<i>Age (years)</i>	Below 30	73	42.9
	31-35	47	27.6



	36-40	26	15.3
	Above 40	24	14.1
<i>Experience in Teaching (years)</i>	Less than 5	52	30.6
	6-10	66	38.8
	11-15	29	17.1
	More than 15	23	13.5

Data Collection

The researchers adopted the education practitioners' perception scale developed by Syed et al. (2023) to study teachers' perceptions of the leadership role in promoting ECCE in Pakistan. This scale has 15 items and showed adequate reliability with Cronbach Alpha value of 0.72. The scale used a four-point Likert scale with 1 as 'Strongly Disagree' to 4 as 'Strongly Agree', with a minimum score of 15 while maximum was 60. The researchers collected the data online using Google Forms shared with ECCE teachers in Karene and Kambia districts in the northwest region of Sierra Leone. In the present study the scale showed high reliability at Cronbach's Alpha (α) of 0.93. Therefore, the scale was reliable in the context of Sierra Leone.

Data Analysis

The researchers used Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 26 to determine mean, frequency and standard deviation (SD), t-test and analysis of variance (ANOVA). The collected data was coded, analysed and reported according to the objectives and hypotheses of the study. For interpretation and determining the level of teachers' perception of leadership roles in promoting ECCE, the researchers computed the scale scoring such that a mean score from 1 to 1.75 represents low-level perception, 1.76 to 3.25 represents moderate level perception, and 3.26 to 4.00 represents high-level perception.

Ethical Consideration

In the study, the researchers take into consideration all relevant and required ethical practices and principles to maintain a bias-free result. During the study, to protect participants' privacy the researchers maintain confidentiality and trustworthiness.

Results



The collected data showed approximately normal distribution with a mean (M)= 3.03 and standard deviation (SD) =.71, skewness -.72 and kurtosis -.21.

Level of Teachers' Perception of Leadership Role in ECCE

In evaluating the teachers' perception of leadership roles in promoting ECCE, the descriptive statistical analysis revealed an overall mean of 3.03. The findings show moderate teachers' perception of leadership roles in promotion of ECCE in Sierra Leone. From the result, the government needs to improve ECCE leadership in administering ECCE responsibilities. Additionally, ECCE stakeholders need to provide leaders with the necessary resources, in-service training and techniques on how to carry out ECCE programs in Sierra Leone. Table 2 represents the teachers' perceptions of leadership roles for promoting ECCE in Sierra Leone.

Moreover, the researchers assessed the teachers' perceptions of leadership roles in promoting ECCE for each scale item as follows.

The Head Teacher Visits Your Classroom Frequently

From the analysis of the scale items, the first item sought to assess whether head teachers visited the classroom to monitor the ECCE practices. The study findings revealed moderate perception with a mean score of 3.09. Although the performance was moderate, school management needs to increase their visits for improved outputs both from teachers and students learning.

Management Arranges Parents and Teachers' Meetings (PTM)

The scale item aimed to assess whether the school management arranges meetings of parents and teachers. The analysis showed moderate perceptions with a mean score of 3.15. The findings indicate that school requires regular meetings for successful implementation of inclusive activities as well as the relationship between parents and teachers.

The Students Feel Happy About Activities in the Classroom

The scale item on the current study focused to assess whether students feel happy about activities in the classroom. The analysis revealed a moderate perception mean score of 3.24. The results showed that children need to be provided with child-friendly activities, which will give them happiness and increase their learning abilities.

School Management Advertises Ideas of ECCE for Admissions



Respondents' perception on the early childhood care and education admission in the present study revealed a low mean score of 2.91. The current study showed the need for community and ECCE stakeholders' engagement, sensitisation and awareness raising to increase ECCE attendance enrolment and decrease school dropout for a sustainable education in Sierra Leone.

ECCE Classrooms have Separate Spaces for Students to Keep Their Bags

The scale item in the present study aimed to assess whether Early Childhood Care and Education Classrooms have separate spaces for students to keep their bags. The data collected and analysed showed low teachers' perception mean score 2.82. The findings revealed dissatisfaction implying that ECCE providers need to provide learners with separate spaces for the safety of their school bags within the learning environment.

School Management Tries to Minimise Homework Tasks

The researchers focused on assessing whether school managers are working towards reducing homework activities. The analysis revealed low teachers' perception with a mean score of 2.72. The result from the study implies that ECCE management needs to minimise take-home assignments so that the children can have more time for revision and learning of new things, skills, ideas and community-oriented activities as part of their daily learning process.

District Education Officers Visits the Preschools Classroom

Another scale item focused on assessing the frequency of district education officers' visits to the preschools' classroom. The findings showed low teachers' perception with a mean score of 2.84. The result indicates the irregular visitation of education officers from the district level who are entrusted with the responsibility of monitoring the daily operations of the ECCE services. Therefore, district education officers need to factor schools' visits in their weekly, monthly and yearly activity plan.

Preschool Classrooms are Furnished According to the Needs of Students

The scale item aimed to evaluate whether preschool classrooms are furnished according to the needs of the students. The study revealed low teachers' perception score of 2.85. The result of the current study signifies the need for a child-friendly classroom environment. This is because an attractive classroom promotes creativity and a happy learning environment.

Assessment Techniques are Well-planned for the Preschool Students



The scale item focused to assess whether available techniques used to assess children in the classroom are planned accordingly with the learners. The findings revealed moderate teachers' perception with a mean score of 3.02. From the result, education stakeholders need to provide in-service training with assessment techniques for learners' evaluation and learning outcomes.

Student Assessment is Documented

In the same vein, the scale item sought to find out whether student assessment is documented. The findings revealed moderate teachers' perception with a mean score of 3.12. This shows that teachers' documentation skills in managing the day-to-day classroom learning activities and documenting knowledge need improvement for the proper handling of documents.

The School has Separate Washrooms for Children

The purpose of the scale item was to assess whether separate washrooms are available for students. The study found low teachers' perception with a mean score of 2.56. The findings indicate the need for children to be provided with separate washrooms. This will improve the health hygiene and health care facilities of the learners.

Preschool Students Love Their Uniforms

The scale item evaluated whether the preschool students love their uniforms. The findings showed moderate teachers' perception with a mean score of 3.20. The result suggests that children be provided with attractive uniforms for a child's happiness in learning, which will increase ECCE school enrolment. The willingness of a child going to school cannot be separated from the love students have for their uniform.

Proper Employment Policy is Highly Important for Preschool Early Childhood Care and Education

The stated scale item aimed to assess whether a proper employment policy is highly important for preschool early childhood care and education. The results indicate moderate teachers' perception with a mean score of 3.15. The findings imply that there is a high need for a policy to guide in employment processes for the requirement of qualified and competition administrators and teachers for an effective delivery.

Development in Preschools Required Government Financial Support



The scale item on teachers' perception intended to evaluate whether there is need for support from the government in the national budget. The study revealed high teachers' perception with a mean score of 3.35. The result indicates the importance of budget towards ECCE services and programs. An increase in budget increases service procurement of the required teaching and learning materials, training of teachers and preparation of a conducive learning environment.

Preschool Environment Demands Free Playing Ground

From the perception of teachers, it shows a high mean score of 3.35 for the need of free playing grounds, so children can exhibit their skills. This result output indicates the importance of play in the promotion of ECCE services. In complementing the outcome of this study, management needs to not only maintain this level but also create a child friendly environment with modern indoor and outdoor teaching and learning materials. This in return will develop their emotional, physical and social behaviour and skills.

Table 2: Teachers' perception of leadership role in ECCE

<i>Descriptive Statistics</i>							
<i>Items</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Minimum</i>	<i>Maximum</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Std. Deviation</i>	<i>Skewness</i>	<i>Kurtosis</i>
The head teacher visits your classroom frequently.	170	1	4	3.09	.918	-.838	-.077
Management arranges parents and teachers' meetings (PTM).	170	1	4	3.15	.854	-.864	.214
The students feel happy about activities in the classroom.	170	1	4	3.24	.938	-1.141	.404
School management advertises the ideas of ECCE for	170	1	4	2.91	.984	-.688	-.474



admissions.							
Early Childhood Care and Education Classrooms have separate spaces for students to keep their bags.	170	1	4	2.82	1.068	-.408	-1.096
School management is trying to minimise the homework tasks.	170	1	4	2.72	1.003	-.240	-1.022
District Education Officers visit the preschool classrooms.	170	1	4	2.84	.993	-.482	-.789
Preschool classrooms are furnished according to the needs of students.	170	1	4	2.85	1.115	-.445	-1.191
Assessment techniques are well-planned for the preschool students	170	1	4	3.02	.994	-.694	-.599
Student assessment is documented.	170	1	4	3.12	.984	-.955	-.099
The school has separate washrooms for children	170	1	4	2.56	1.125	-.138	-1.354
Preschool students love their uniforms.	170	1	4	3.20	.952	-1.077	.223
A proper	170	1	4	3.15	1.013	-.992	-.165



employment policy is highly important for preschool Early Childhood Care and Education.							
Preschool development in schools needs government support in terms of budget.	170	1	4	3.35	1.011	-1.450	.791
Children should have wide places to play at school.	170	1	4	3.35	1.011	-1.381	.551
Valid N (listwise)	170						

Table 3 represents the level of teachers’ perception of leadership role in the promotion of ECCE. 12 out of 170 teachers or 7.10 percent records report low perception. This means that there is greater improvement needed to overcome the challenges preschool leaders faced in promoting ECCE. 81 out of 170 teachers or 47.6 percent report moderate perceptions for the promotion of ECCE while 77 out of 170 or 45.30 percent teachers’ perception reports high perception for the promotion of ECCE.

Table 3: Level of teachers’ perception of leadership role in the promotion of ECCE

		<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>	<i>Valid percent</i>	<i>Cumulative percent</i>
Valid	Low perception	12	7.1	7.1	7.1
	Moderate perception	81	47.6	47.6	54.7
	High perception	77	45.3	45.3	100.0
	Total	170	100.0	100.0	

Test for Hypotheses



H₁: There is a significant difference in teachers' perception of leadership roles in promoting ECCE by gender.

The study aimed to evaluate whether ECCE teachers differ by gender in perceptions of leadership roles for promoting ECCE. The researchers used t-test for differences of two means. The statistical test revealed no significant difference in teachers' perceptions of leadership roles for promoting ECCE by gender ($t(168) = -.186, p = .85$) with males at mean 3.02 and standard deviation .76, and females at mean score of 3.04 and standard deviation .65.

Table 4 shows the independent samples test.

Table 4: Independent samples test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2- tailed)	Mean difference	Std. error difference	95% confidence interval of the difference	
									Lower	Upper
TPScale	Equal variances assumed	3.232	.074	-.186	168	.853	-.02028	.10901	-.23548	.19493
	Equal variances not assumed			-.188	167.650	.851	-.02028	.10796	-.23342	.19286

H₂: There is a significant difference in teachers' perception of leadership roles in promoting ECCE by working experience.

The study aimed to evaluate whether ECCE teachers differ by working experience in perceptions of leadership roles for promoting ECCE. The study used analysis of variance (ANOVA) to assess whether ECCE teachers differed significantly in perceptions of leadership role by working experience. The statistical test showed no significant difference in teachers' perception of leadership roles in promoting



ECCE by working experience ($F(3, 166) = .917, p = .434$). Table 5 indicates statistical analysis for ANOVA.

Table 5: Analysis of variance (ANOVA)

<i>TPScale</i>					
	<i>Sum of squares</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>Mean square</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
Between groups	1.379	3	.460	.917	.434
Within groups	83.189	166	.501		
Total	84.568	169			

Discussion

The study aimed to assess teachers’ perception on the leadership role for the promotion of ECCE and the difference in teachers’ perceptions in Sierra Leone. Hypothetically, the study predicted that there is a significant difference in teachers’ perceptions of leadership roles in promoting ECCE by gender and also forecasted to have a significant difference in teachers’ perception of leadership roles in promoting ECCE by working experience. The descriptive study revealed overall score mean of 3.03 and standard deviation (SD) of .71, which indicates significance on teachers’ perception of leadership role for the promotion of ECCE in Sierra Leone. The findings are in line with the study by (Shah et al., 2023) in Pakistan, which demonstrated that the importance of leadership roles in promoting ECCE was significantly viable. Therefore, education stakeholders need to fully equip ECCE leaders with the necessary leadership and administrative skills to handle the day-to-day affairs.

The findings of the current study report a non-significant difference between male and female in performing their leadership roles. The results were in agreement with the research carried out by Ali et al. (2020) who found that there is no significant difference in gender as a qualifier for leadership abilities towards the promotion of ECCE. Contrary to Ali et al. (2020), the findings by Gede Mulawarman et al. (2021) report female rejection in leadership positions, which hampers the progress of ECCE programs implementation. While Derickson Washington (2020) reports that the gap that does exist between male and female in leadership has closed due to high advocacy and policy enforcement.

In responding to the challenges leaders faced, Ghani et al. (2025) and Rasli et al. (2021) recommend in-service trainings and workshops as mechanism to improve on their administrative experience and



classroom skills, whereas Mohebi and Meda (2021) report findings on the role of experience in building leaders' confidence in teaching skills development. In the same vein, Muhamad Ridza et al. (2024) and Kahila and Heikka (2025) emphasise the need for teamwork for experience building and sharing.

Classroom experience has been found to be the master of competency as it influences leadership performance. The studies of Meirink et al. (2019) and Yigit Kutluca (2021) report significant differences with reference to classroom teaching experience and administrative assignments. These findings are in conformity with the present study, which reported the significant role of experience in performing ECCE leadership responsibilities. It further showed that teachers, caregivers and principals with more teaching or administrative years proved to be result oriented with high output.

The current research project reports that head teacher's frequent classroom visits and the provision of wide playing space in schools shows a high mean score, which is evidence to the study conducted by Syed et al. (2023) as an interconnection in the chain of ECCE leadership. In an ECCE classroom, the happiness and willingness of the child is very important. Therefore, it was reported that students love their uniforms and feel happy about activities in the classroom. Assessment techniques were well planned and documented. It shows the high level of administrators, teachers and caregivers in the assessment and document handling towards ECCE promotion. This report complements the study of Kaur and Sharma (2021), which revealed the role of play and happiness in child learning and how leaders can plan future planning and implementation.

Regardless of the successes made, the current study shows the high need for government investment into ECCE programs and activities to improve on the 7.10 percent low perception and the 47.60 percent moderate perception to an appreciable high-level perception. This report speaks in line with the ASC by the Ministry of Basic and Senior Secondary Education (2022) where 24 percent are children with ECCE background while 76 percent represent those without ECCE opportunity. Another study shows the desperate need for government support in providing the necessary financial intervention for a successful ECCE implementation program (Cortázar et al. 2019). Additionally, there are still areas that require improvements for an overall promotion of ECCE whereas government and education stakeholders need to improve on the following areas, which shows a rejection from the study conducted. There should be nationwide sensitisation and awareness raising about the enrolment of children to early learning. Children should be provided separate spaces for them to keep their bags. The education stakeholders should design an activity that will help to minimise the homework task while District Education Officers visiting the preschool classrooms require an improvement and prepare the classrooms to a global standard according



to the needs of students and provide them separate washrooms for children to increase their hygiene observations and health protection.

Despite all efforts made in search of literature related to budget, the researchers were unable to access one. In the current study, it was reported that the budget lubricates all ECCE functionalities including leadership provision. In summary, the availability of funds will facilitate the implementation of ECCE activities like provision of conducive, spacious and child friendly environment for play and other activities.

It was also believed that the frequent visits by head teachers in monitoring classroom activities will contribute to the improvement of ECCE. The conduct of parent teacher meetings by management proved to be functional with a high mean score. With such important administrative activity, it creates the platform for proper planning, crosschecking the implementation of previously agreed policies and meeting action points. This report from the current study recorded the same or similar findings of Rodd (2019), which emphasised on collaboration among stakeholders for proper monitoring. Thus, answers were provided to all the research questions and objectives were achieved.

Educational Implications

The perception of teachers about leadership in ECCE has shed light on the challenges ECCE leaders encounter in carrying out their duties. The current study provides recommendations and implications to justify the need for the conduct of the study in Sierra Leone. In conclusion, there is a clear indication for a collaborative effort from the various ECCE stakeholders for a professional leadership. The provision of the needed financial resources from the government proved to be not encouraging. This led to the non-availability of free and special spaces of the student learner to safely guide their bags, furnishing the classrooms as well greatly affected the routine visit of the District Education office. If properly taken care of, ECCE leaders will find it light and non-complicating in administering ECCE services and principles.

Another prominent implication from the study is the proper implementation of ECCE policy, which at ground level will nurture monitoring mechanisms from the District Education office, preparation of admission strategies with vibrant sensitisation and awareness raising to not in urban areas but the rural areas where ECCE programs are limited.

To complement it, leaders and community stakeholders, parents should be provided with an in-service training to improve on their leadership skills in preparing the child for future academic prominence.



When ECCE leaders are academically and administratively oriented, implantation and provision of ECCE challenges will be the thing of the past

Conclusion

Teachers as front runners and guidance providers in the classroom with compounded experiences showed that leadership takes the centre stage in promoting ECCE.

In conclusion, results have reported that leadership has greater influence with direct effects on admissions, classroom management, provision of child friendly classroom environment, learning process, awareness and advertisements and stakeholders' engagement through parent teachers' meetings. Teachers emphasise for ECCE authorities to minimise homework and provide children a wide playground. This will increase child engagement and social skills development through play. The provision and improvement of school infrastructure have been a significant role of education leaders. Leadership credibility and integration of partnership geared up the success of ECE program. It is practically important that leaders succeed when they provide subordinates are provided the environment to exhibit their skills and knowing how to manage the resources available. What the teacher belief is half way competency. Therefore, government, ECCE service providers, parents and other stakeholders should design a web operation structure that value the role and contribution of every sector of the structure. The authors' current research aims to contribute new knowledge to the already existing leadership experience for promoting ECCE programs.

Recommendations

Summarising the study, it is recommended for education leaders to devise strategies on how to promote ECCE programs through awareness raising and advertisement to disseminate the idea of ECCE, construction of washrooms in the schools to make the school comfortable for learning. School leaders should integrate teacher-parents collaboration to increases students' enrolment and also minimised homework so that have enough time to reflect on what they learnt in school. The Government and school authorities jointly should work to provide students spaces for the custody of their bags. In all this, the district office is to improve on their school monitoring frequency and supervisory mechanism.

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Conflict of Interest

The investigator follows all due processes and values the risk of conflicting interest, which gives no room before, during and after the conduct of the research work.

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