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## Acceptability and Knowledge of Montessori Method of Education among Early Years' Practitioners in Lagos State

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### Abstract

This study investigated the acceptability and knowledge of the Montessori Method of education among early years' practitioners in Lagos State. Four research questions and one hypothesis were raised for the study. A descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. The population for the study consisted of all early years' practitioners in Lagos State while the sample comprised 126 early years practitioners which were stratified as 102 early years' practitioners (teachers) and 24 school operators (school heads/ owners). In the first stage, proportionate sampling technique was used in selecting four Nursery schools from each of the six educational districts of Lagos State out of which two were Montessori Schools and the other two were non-Montessori schools. The total number of Nursery schools used for the study were twenty-four; while a random sampling technique was used in selecting four teachers from each Montessori school and five teachers from non-Montessori schools. Forty-eight Montessori teachers and fifty-four non-Montessori teachers were used for the study. The two researcher's designed instruments that were used to gather data for the study were Early Years' Practitioners Knowledge of Montessori Method (EYPKOMM) and School Operators Perception of Montessori Method (SOPOMM). EYPKOMM measured teachers' knowledge about the Montessori Method and it consisted of 20 close-ended items while SOPOMM consisted of 25 items on 4 point Likert scale. The study revealed that the majority of the teachers had average qualifications to work in early years' classrooms and that their knowledge of the Montessori Method is a little above average. It is also revealed school operators were enthusiastic and preferred the Montessori Method to conventional method but noted that the method is expensive to implement and too rigid to be adopted in conventional schools. It is therefore recommended that: (i) teachers seeking employment in a Montessori school should have professional training and experience; (ii) more awareness programme should be organized for early years' practitioners; (iii) The Montessori method should be adapted so that all stakeholders of education can benefit from it.

**Keywords:** Acceptability, Knowledge, Early years' practitioners, Montessori Method

### Introduction

A child needs to be guided and exposed to relevant experiences at the appropriate time in life moving from simple to complex. Ample literature with empirical findings demonstrated that there exists a strong relationship between the foundation stage of education of young children and their social development and language competence both in secondary and tertiary levels. Biechler (2006) believed that early childhood education should be emphasized because of its importance in laying a solid foundation for the best time for learning. Hence the early childhood period is the best time for learning and it is the most important period of one's life and as such language and social development of the child



should be inculcated using the appropriate teaching methodology of play. Arnold (2004) supported Early Childhood Care and Development is an investment that offers outstanding returns both in human and financial terms. This philosophical base for nursery education dovetails into the philosophy of Nigerian education which among other things is based on educating and raising the individual into a sound and effective citizen with equal educational opportunities for all and it is suggested that this should start from the cradle (Anyanwu, 2000). According to Olaleye, Florence, and Omolayo (2009), some recent factors have relatively brought early childhood education to the forefront of public awareness. These factors include the fundamental changes in the economy of the country and its impact on family life, rising cost of living, emergence of a single-parent household, increased number of teenage parents, decrease in the impact of the extended family and the call by many professionals who advocated for the rights of children. These recent phenomena no doubt stressed the need for quality education of pre-school children.

Therefore, growing recognition of the importance of early childhood education has generated interest in identifying the most effective programs for educating young children. Parents want their children to attend high-quality programmes that cater to the holistic development of children and meet the needs of diverse learners. How to best meet these legitimate parental expectations is one of the ongoing challenges of early childhood professionals (National Association for the Education of Young Children, 2005). In response to meeting these needs, school owners or operators have imported or adapted a variety of early childhood approaches in order to meet the demands of the 21<sup>st</sup>-century education stakeholders. Early childhood education centres come under different nomenclatures such as Daycare, Playgroup, Preschool, Nursery school, British school, American school, Montessori school, etc. The names of these schools most often depict the kind of services they provided; for example, British schools use the British curriculum, Montessori schools use the Montessori curriculum.

Today there are many alternative pre-school education programs and approaches. Each of these programs has different educational understanding, teacher training systems, material development and classroom management approaches (Erişen&Güleş, 2008). Among them, the Montessori Method stands out in many aspects. Based on the holistic development of the child, the Montessori approach consists of a methodology and philosophy of education that caters to children's individual needs and their natural desire to learn. A specific educational environment is prepared to accommodate the child at each stage of development, and manipulative materials that enable children to explore and discover concepts and ideas through their own activity. According to the basic philosophy behind the Montessori Method, human beings are innately bound for benevolence and their main aim is self-realization. The education method that Montessori developed shows great parallelism with the personality theories developed by J.J. Rousseau, Adler, Prescott Lecky, Carl Rogers, and Jean Piaget. Maria Montessori emphasized that every child goes through a unique development process, and as a unique individual can learn in line with his/her capacity. The Montessori approach is based on the tenet that children learn most effectively when information is developmentally appropriate (Ryniker & Shobo 2001). Central to this



approach is the notion that children's natural tendencies "unfold" in specially designed multi-age environments that contain manipulative, self-correcting materials (North American Montessori Teachers' Association, 2003). Montessori Education emphasizes the importance of special training and circumscription of the heart for the teachers called Directors/ Directresses who are the link between the child and the environment. It is this training that distinguishes a Montessori teacher from any other early years' practitioners.

The conventional teacher training programme in Nigeria had many phases based on the era. During the colonial and towards independence era, the teacher training programme was focused on producing teachers whose primary aim was to win souls for Christ, to teach the 3R's (Reading, Writing and Arithmetic), and preparation of students for clerical considerations. The main goal of education was for people to become literate, numerate, productive and loyal citizens. Teacher Education Programme after independence ultimately recognized the National Certificate of Education (NCE) as the minimum basic qualification for entering into the teaching profession. This is due to the continuing attempts of the governments of the Federation to consolidate and standardize teacher education with a view to improving the quality of teachers. Presently, most teachers in ECE classrooms and primary schools are degree holders which is in conformity to the requirements of the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC, 2008). This Association found out that children benefit most when their teachers have higher levels of formal education and specialized early childhood professional preparation; as the teachers are more likely to engage in warm, positive interactions with children than those who do not have specialized training in early childhood education. NAEYC requirement for success in early childhood education career becomes a prerequisite for years' practitioners' professional development; one such specialized professional preparation is the Montessori training.

Montessori Method came into existence as a result of the interaction that Maria Montessori had with mentally retarded children whom she believed that their health would improve if there could be an educational intervention to alleviate their mental conditions. Maria Montessori built educational principles of children's development and learning on sense training, exploration, and independence, development from within, self-education, individualizing curriculum and reference for the child. She believed that the critical or sensitive periods are the most important aspects of children's life when they develop irresistible impulses to learn and that if we fail to maximize these periods for them, once the phase of life is past, it is gone forever and can never be regained. These periods include the sensitive periods for language, movement, need for order, interest in small objects, development of social skills and good manners. As a result of the importance of the formative year, the child must be put in a prepared environment filled with didactic materials where he can construct his world and form his unique personality with the guidance of the Montessori Director/ Directress. For this reason, Maria Montessori recommended specialized training for the adult (teacher) and self-corrected learning materials that complement teaching-learning activities in the prepared environment.



Under her methods, a number of retarded children were successfully taught to read. Maria Montessori wrote of her work as cited in Standing (1984) "I succeeded in teaching a number of idiots from the asylums both to read and write so well that I was able to present them at a public school for examination together with the normal children, and they passed the examination successfully". This successful feat recorded for mentally retarded actually led to the introduction of the Montessori Method into normal schools. Visitors traveled from many parts of the world to see for themselves the successful and stimulating teaching and learning taking place in the Children's Houses. The visitors were inspired and Montessori's movement began to spring up all over the world. Montessori schools opened in places such as America, Russia, Japan, Germany, India, and Nigeria with no exception.

Research has documented the impressive merits of the implementation of the method in many parts of the world. Omotuyole (2015) listed some of the advantages which include: preparation of children for a more balanced and spiritual approach to life; creation of sense of dignity and orderliness in children; equipping them with social skills to function effectively in their communities; development of the spirit of independence and scientific exploration; mastery of important life skill of being a self-directed learner; development of the minds' capacity to understand about the world around them.

Despite the successes recorded about Montessori Method, a strong attack that dealt a heavy blow on the Montessori method was launched by a Professor of Education, William Kilpatrick who concluded that the method was out of date psychological theory. Other criticisms that confronted Montessori method include that fact that it was for slow learners; that multi-age classroom can create an atmosphere of domination of the younger ones by the older ones; that it minimizes the importance of friendships; Montessori schools and resources are expensive, excessive freedom for the child and extremely structured classrooms, rigid curriculum to the exclusion of religion and creativity, etc. Worthy of note is the fact that all these criticisms are grey areas to Non- Montessori practitioners that Maria Montessori had carefully taken care of by integrating the answers into the structure of the prepared environment, specialized training of the teachers and the Montessori training materials. This study, therefore, set out to investigate the acceptability of the Montessori Method of education in selected Nursery schools in Lagos State.

#### **Statement of Problem**

In recent times, the efficacy and effectiveness of the Montessori Method have become a subject of public discussion among early childhood education practitioners. Scholars have established the fact that it is an alternative method of teaching children with learning needs which had now found its ways into mainstream schools. It is of the truth that not all schools adopt this method because of its cost implication and the fact that many teachers have no idea of the method which makes its implementation difficult. Due to the fact that this method of teaching focuses on the individual child and coupled with the large population of pupils in a modern Nigerian classroom, it is widely believed that this method of teaching, which has been claimed to be successful in other countries cannot be practiced here in Nigeria. Many

questions have been raised on whether this method actually deserves the loud ovation it is attracting everywhere. In view of this, the study investigated the acceptability of this method among early childhood education practitioners in Lagos State. Specifically, the objectives of this study were to:

1. Examine the demographic profiles of early years' practitioners in selected Preschools in Lagos State;
2. Examine the level of knowledge of the Montessori Method among early years practitioners in Lagos State?
3. Investigate the level of acceptance of the Montessori method among early childhood education practitioners in the selected preschools in Lagos State;
4. Describe the perception of school operators about Montessori method in the selected preschools in the selected preschools in Lagos State; and
5. Examine the factors militating against the acceptability of the Montessori method of education among early years' practitioners in Lagos State.
6. Examine the relationship between acceptability and practitioners' perception of the Montessori method of education in selected Nursery schools in Lagos State.
7. Examine the relationship between practitioners' knowledge and acceptability of the Montessori Method of education in selected Nursery schools in Lagos State.

#### **Research Questions**

The following research questions were raised in this study.

1. What are the demographic profiles of the early years' practitioners in the selected preschools in Lagos State?
2. To what extent is the level of acceptance of the Montessori method among early childhood education practitioners in Lagos State?
3. What is the perception of the school operators about the Montessori method in the selected preschools in Lagos State?
4. What are the factors militating against the acceptability of the Montessori method of education among early years' practitioners in the selected preschools in Lagos State?
5. What is the level of knowledge of the Montessori Method among early years practitioners in Lagos State?

#### **Research Hypotheses**

- **H<sub>0</sub>**, Acceptability will have no significant relationship with practitioners' perception of the Montessori method of education in selected Nursery schools in Lagos State.
- **H<sub>0</sub>**, There will be no significant relationship among early years practitioners' knowledge and acceptability of the Montessori Method of education in selected Nursery schools in Lagos State.

#### **Methodology**

A descriptive survey designed was adopted for the study. The study was carried out in Lagos State, Nigeria. The target population for the study consisted of all private pre-schools operators and early years practitioners in Lagos State. A multi-stage sampling technique was



adopted for the study. In the first stage, the proportionate sampling technique was used in selecting four Nursery schools from each of the six educational districts of Lagos State out of which two were Montessori Schools and the other two were non- Montessori schools. The total numbers of Nursery schools used for the study were twenty-four; while random sampling technique was used in selecting four teachers from each Montessori school and five teachers from Non-Montessori schools. The opinion of 24 School Operators (school owners) were sampled and 102 respondents early years' practitioners constituted the sample for the study. In all, One hundred and twenty-six (126) participated in the study. Forty-eight Montessori teachers and fifty-four non- Montessori teachers were used for the study. The two researcher's designed instruments that were used to gather data for the study were Early Years Practitioners Knowledge of Montessori Method (EYPKOMM) and School Operators Perception of Montessori Method (SOPOMM). EYPKOMM measured teachers' knowledge about the Montessori Method and it consisted of 20 close-ended items while SOPOMM consisted of 25 items on 4 point Likert scale. The validity of the instruments was determined by experts in Early Childhood Education for face and content validation. The Cronbach alpha ( $\alpha$ ) was used to determine the reliability of EYPKOMM instrument with coefficient alpha ( $\alpha$ ) value that was found to be ( $\alpha=0.78$ ) while SOPOMM had reliability coefficient of  $r=0.71$ . Data collected in the study were analyzed using descriptive statistics. The research questions were analyzed using Mean and Standard Deviation.

## Results

1. What are the demographic profiles of the early years' practitioners in the selected preschools in Lagos State?

Figures 1-6 present the demographic profile of the respondents with the area of specialization, age, qualification, and cataloguing experience.

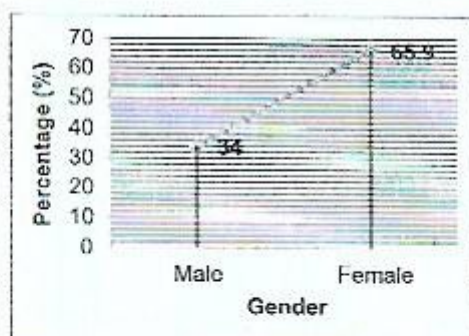


Fig 1: Gender

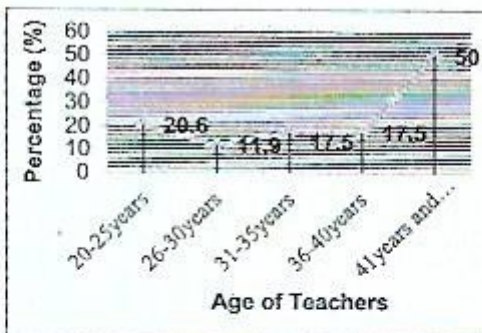


Fig 2: Age

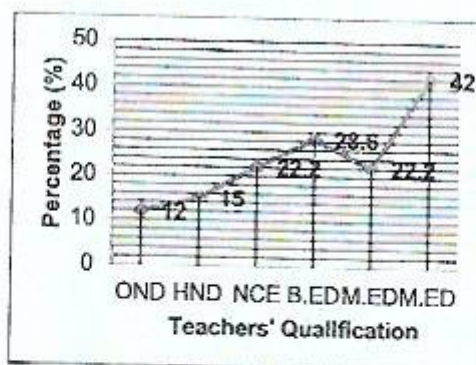


Fig 3: Qualification

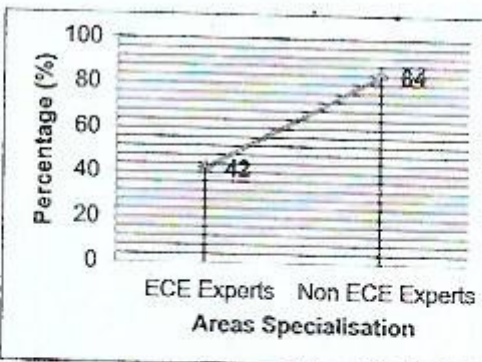


Fig 4: Areas Specialisation

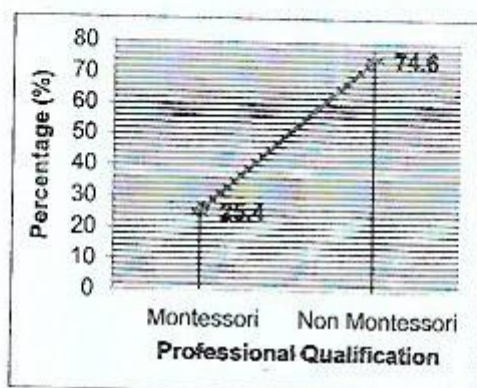


Fig 5: Professional Qualification



Fig 6: Years of Experience

Figures 1-6 show the profile of the teachers involved in this study. In relation to gender distribution, 34% were male while 65.9% were female. This indicates that most of the respondents were female. In relation to age, 20.6% were between the age range of 20 and 25 years, 11.9% were between 26 and 30 years, 17.5% were between 31 and 35, again, 17.5% were between 36 and 40 years and the remaining 50% were 40 years and above. In relation to qualification, 12% had an OND certificate, 15% had HND certificate, 22.2% had NCE certificate and 28.6% had a B.ED certificate. In relation to Area of specialization, 42% were ECE experts while the remaining 84% were Non-ECE experts. In relation to professional training, 25.4% had training on Montessori while 74.6% had training in other areas. In relation to teaching experience, 10.3% of the teachers had experience of 1-5 years, 34.9% had 6-10 years, 35.7 had 11-15 years and the remaining who constituted 19% had experience of 16-20 years.

2. To what extent is the level of acceptance of the Montessori Method among early childhood education practitioners in Lagos State?



**Table 1: Extent of Acceptance of the Montessori Method of Education among Early Childhood Education Practitioners**

ITEMS	SD	D	A	SA	Mean	St. D	Remarks
Schools owners are enthusiastic about implementing Montessori method	8 (7.8%)	18 (17.6%)	53 (52%)	23 (22.5%)	3.08	0.34	Agreed
Montessori method is embraced by many school owners	9 (8.8%)	11 (10.8%)	56 (54.9%)	26 (25.5%)	3.10	0.56	Agreed
I would recommend Montessori method of education for any school	26 (25.5%)	25 (24.5%)	32 (31.4%)	19 (18.6%)	2.51	0.86	Agreed
I prefer Montessori method to contemporary traditional method of education	12 (11.8%)	11 (10.8%)	44 (43.1%)	35 (34.3%)	3.14	0.78	Agreed
Facilities for Montessori method are not readily available	10 (9.8%)	15 (14.7%)	42 (41.2%)	35 (34.3%)	3.17	0.94	Agreed
I support the implementation of Montessori method because it enhances children coordination and comportment	10 (9.8%)	6 (5.9%)	49 (48.0%)	37 (36.3%)	3.04	0.93	Agreed

Evidence from Table 1 indicated that 74.5% of the respondents agreed that schools' owners are enthusiastic about implementing Montessori Method (Mean=3.08>2.50); 80.4% also agreed that Montessori Method is embraced by many school owners (Mean=3.10>2.50). However, there is a mixed feeling that the practitioners would they recommend Montessori method of education for any school (Mean=2.51>2.50). However, most of the respondents agreed that they preferred Montessori method to contemporary traditional method of education (Mean=3.14>2.50), though facilities for Montessori method are not readily available (Mean=3.17>2.50). Finally, 87.7% agreed that the Montessori method enhances children's coordination and comportment. In summary, there is a high level of acceptance of the Montessori Method among early years practitioners in Lagos State.

3. What is the perception of the school operators about the Montessori Method in the selected preschools in Lagos State?

**Table 2: School operator's perception of Montessori Method**

ITEMS	SD	D	A	SA	Mean	St. D	Remark
I believe Montessori Method is appropriate for Nigerian children	3 (12.5%)	4 (16.7%)	9 (37.5%)	8 (33.3%)	3.09	1.01	Agreed
The Montessori Method should be adopted and practice absolutely	11 (45.8%)	8 (33.3%)	2 (8.3%)	3 (12.5%)	1.22	0.98	Disagreed
The method can serve the need of all children in the class	5 (20.8%)	6 (25.0%)	7 (29.2%)	6 (25.0%)	2.56	0.45	Agreed
Pupils attending Montessori schools have a better solid foundation for later life success in schools than those attending conventional schools	2 (8.3%)	3 (12.5%)	9 (37.5%)	10 (41.7%)	3.11	0.57	Agreed
Montessori Method should not be encouraged in regular school because it is not for normal children	9 (37.5%)	7 (29.2%)	3 (12.5%)	5 (20.8%)	1.16	0.67	Disagreed
Montessori Method is being over-emphasized in Nigeria	10 (41.7%)	8 (33.3%)	4 (16.7%)	2 (8.3%)	1.28	0.25	Disagreed
Montessori Method can be difficult to adapt to other types of schools	3 (12.5%)	6 (25.0%)	8 (33.3%)	7 (29.2%)	3.03	0.79	Agreed
Montessori Method and materials should be adapted without necessarily labeling schools as Montessori schools	2 (8.3%)	3 (12.5%)	11 (45.8%)	8 (33.3%)	3.22	0.59	Agreed

As can be observed from Table 2, 70.8% of the respondents believed that Montessori Method is appropriate for Nigerian children (Mean=3.09>2.50); 79% of the respondents confirmed that pupils attending Montessori schools have better solid foundation for later life success in schools than those attending conventional schools (Mean=3.11>2.50), Montessori Method can be difficult to adapt to other types of school (Mean=3.03>2.50), and that Montessori Method should be adapted without necessarily labeling schools as Montessori schools (Mean=3.22>2.50). However, 79.1% of the respondents disagreed with the opinion that the Montessori Method should be adopted and practiced absolutely (Mean=1.22<2.50); while 66.7% were in favour of the implementation of the Montessori Method in regular school (Mean=1.16<2.50). On the other hand, most of the respondents had mixed feeling Montessori Method can serve the need for all children in class (Mean=2.56>2.50), while 79.1% agreed that Montessori Method and materials should be adapted without necessarily labeling schools as Montessori schools. Summarily, most of the



school operators of the sampled schools agreed that the method is beneficial to children and supported its adaptation without necessarily labeling schools as Montessori schools.

4. What are the factors militating against the acceptability of Montessori methods of education among early years' practitioners in the selected preschools in Lagos State?

**Table 3: Factors militating against the acceptability of the Montessori method of education**

ITEMS	SD	D	A	SA	Mean	St. D	Remark
Montessori method of education relies on expensive materials and hence makes schooling very expensive for the average Nigerian	14 (13.7%)	25 (24.5%)	52 (31.4%)	31 (30.4%)	2.89	0.89	Agreed
Montessori method of education is too rigid and is not adaptable nor suitable to Nigeria education system	11 (10.8%)	22 (21.6%)	32 (31.4%)	37 (36.3%)	2.91	0.28	Agreed
Montessori method of education does not encourage creativity due to the systematic use of materials	32 (31.4%)	29 (28.4%)	14 (13.7%)	27 (26.5%)	1.32	0.31	Disagreed
The Montessori method does not award grades hence parents cannot monitor children progress	23 (22.5%)	15 (14.7%)	39 (38.2%)	25 (24.5%)	2.91	0.47	Agreed
Many Elites do not have in-depth knowledge of the method hence, there is resistance	20 (19.6%)	18 (17.6%)	39 (38.2%)	25 (24.5%)	2.98	0.46	Agreed
The critical opposition against the Montessori Method is the fact that no one method can serve the needs of diverse learners.	10 (9.8%)	15 (14.7%)	45 (44.1%)	32 (31.4%)	3.01	0.67	Agreed

Table 3 revealed that 61.8% of the respondents agreed that Montessori method of education relies on expensive materials and hence makes schooling very expensive for the average Nigerian (Mean = 2.89 > 2.50), 67.7% agreed that Montessori method of education is too rigid and is not adaptable nor suitable to Nigeria education system (Mean = 2.91 > 2.50), Montessori method does not award grades hence parents cannot monitor children progress (Mean = 2.94 > 2.50), many Elites do not have in-depth knowledge of the method hence, there is resistance (Mean = 2.98 > 2.50); 75.5% of the respondents agreed that the critical opposition against Montessori Method is the fact that no one method can serve the needs of diverse learners (Mean = 3.01 > 2.50). However, most of the respondents disagreed that the Montessori Method of education does not encourage creativity due to the systematic use of materials (Mean = 1.32 < 2.50).

5. What is the level of knowledge of the Montessori Method among early years practitioners in Lagos State?

**Table 4: Level of Knowledge of Montessori Method among Early Years Practitioners**

Score	Frequency	Percentage	Mean	Std. D.
0-10	34	33.3	18.28	9.08
11-20	39	38.3		
21-30	24	23.4		
31-40	4	4.0		
41-50	1	1.0		
51-60	0	0.0		
Total	102	100.0		

**Highest Mark Obtainable = 60**

**Decision Value:** Low (0.00-20.00), Average(21.00-40.00), High (.00-60.00)

Table 4 shows the level of knowledge of the Montessori Method of Education among the early years' practitioners in Lagos State. The result shows that 33.3% of the practitioners scored 0 to 10 in the test, 38.3% of them scored 11 to 20, 23.4% scored 21 to 30, 4% scored 31 to 40 and the remaining 1% scored between 41 and 50. None of the practitioners scored 51 to 60. The overall mean score of the practitioners' knowledge on the Montessori Method of Education is 18.28 (a value within the range of decision value for low) with a standard deviation value of 9.08. Based on this result, it can be inferred that the level of knowledge of the Montessori Method of Education among early years' practitioners in Lagos State is low.

#### **Hypotheses Testing**

**H<sub>0</sub> 1:** Acceptability will have no significant relationship with practitioners' perception of the Montessori method of education in selected Nursery schools in Lagos State.

**Table 5: Summary of Pearson Product Moment Correlation showing Relationship between Acceptability and Practitioners' Perception of the Montessori Method of Education in Lagos State**

Variables	N	Mean	Std. D.	r	Sig	Remark
Acceptability	102	31.08	13.12	.004	.967	Not Significant
Perception	102	31.03	3.05			

Table 5 shows that there is a positive but not significant relationship between acceptability and practitioners' perception of the Montessori Method of education in Lagos State ( $r = .004$ ;  $N = 102$ ;  $p > 0.05$ ). Hence, hypothesis 1 is not rejected.

**H<sub>0</sub> 2:** There will be no significant relationship among early years practitioners' knowledge and acceptability of the Montessori Method of education in selected Nursery schools in Lagos State.



**Table 6: Summary of Pearson Product Moment Correlation showing Relationship between Practitioners' Knowledge and Acceptability of the Montessori Method of Education in Lagos State**

Variables	N	Mean	Std. D.	r	Sig	Remark
Acceptability	102	31.03	13.12	.056	.579	Not Significant
Perception	102	24.22	3.05			

Table 6 shows that there is a positive but not significant relationship between practitioners' knowledge and acceptability of the Montessori Method of education in selected Nursery schools in Lagos State ( $r = .056$ ;  $N = 102$ ;  $p > 0.05$ ). Hence, hypothesis 2 is also not rejected.

### Discussion of Findings

The study revealed that a quarter, 29% had B.A/ B.Ed./B.A. Ed, and 22% had either OND/HND or M.A/M. Ed while the remaining 27% had NCE academic qualification. However, 42 (33.3) of the respondents are ECE experts while 84 (66.7) were non- ECE experts. 25.4% of the respondents have attended professional Montessori training courses while 74.6% don't have regular professional training experience. This finding corroborated the opinion of the National Child Care Association (NCCA) (2007) that advocated a high-quality Early Childhood Education that requires a highly skilled and specialized workforce that is supported by ongoing professional development. National Association for the Education of Young Children (2008) supports the opinion that children benefit most when their teachers have higher levels of formal education and specialized early childhood professional preparations. Furthermore, the research finding of Ingersoll (2001) brings to limelight the consequence of having Non-ECE experts manning early childhood classrooms. He attested to the fact that when teachers function in the areas where they have not been trained, they do more harm to themselves and to the students.

The study revealed that Early years practitioners' knowledge of the Montessori method is a little above average. The benefits of teachers' knowledge on any subject matter cannot be over-emphasized as this is why the claim goes, that if you want to teach history, you should first learn a lot about history, and if you want to teach mathematics, then you should get a degree in mathematics. The 21<sup>st</sup> Century enterprise is a **knowledge-based economy in which the use of knowledge** is the main driver of growth, wealth creation and employment across all industries. This was amplified in Omotuyole (2011) as she reported that teacher's knowledge of subject matter and competencies are essential requirements for teachers' well-being, and those teachers who are less competent will be less satisfied with their jobs. Lack of competence will lead to lower well-being as this will subsequently impact the teaching process with its negative outcomes on pupils. Tracy (2010) confirmed that the more knowledge and great skill you acquire, the more competent and valuable you become.

Another finding reported that one of the factors militating against the acceptability of the

Montessori Method is the fact that early years' practitioners failed to adopt the method absolutely because it is believed that no one method can serve the needs of diverse learners in a classroom. This result is in agreement with Maduckwe's (2015) assertion that "no one teaching method is sacrosanct and that the effectiveness of any method depends on who uses it, who learns by it, what objective to be achieved and under what condition is the learning taking place. The finding also showed that Montessori schools are expensive which are not accessible to the average Nigerian. Allison (2015) confirms that low-cost services and products attract more customers, showcase products, attract, easier referrers and more opportunities for all concerned stakeholders.

### **Conclusion**

Based on the findings of the study, it was concluded that knowledge influences early years practitioners' acceptability of the Montessori method of education in selected Nursery schools in Lagos State. In addition, Montessori Method is widely recognized among early childhood education practitioners in Lagos State but they would prefer that the practice of the method should be more flexible and adaptable so that more schools can embrace the method. Finally, education as one of the social services provided by the government, or private individuals which is aimed at promoting equality and opportunity for the benefit of the community should be accessible to all and sundry at an affordable cost.

### **Recommendations**

It is therefore recommended that:

1. The scope of the Early Childhood Teacher Education programme should be expanded to accommodate Montessori curriculum contents.
2. A teacher who is seeking employment in a Montessori school should have professional training and experience.
3. More awareness programme should be organized for early years practitioners in Lagos State.

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