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## **The Effect of Pre-School Education to Students' Learning Experience in First Cycle Primary Schools**

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### **Abstract**

The purpose of this study was to investigate the effect of pre-school education in the first cycle primary school. This effect was assessed in terms of students' learning experience. In this study learning experience was measured in terms of students' classroom participation, school attendance, and social behavior. The study used an ex-post facto design, in which what is happening on the students' learning experience in primary school as their pre-school education was assessed. The participants of the study were selected randomly from Burayu town administration government elementary schools. Teacher rated questionnaire was used to determine pre-school contribution in terms of classroom participation and students' social behavior. The study result showed that, pre-school education contributes to better class room participation and positively affect social behavior of students. Besides, pre-school attendees were better in school attendance during their primary school years compared with non pre-school attendees.

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It was recommended that the government should design strategies that provide pre-school education to rural areas, and politicians, education officers and private providers have to create awareness to the society to increase access and better enrolment in pre-school education.

**Keywords:** pre-school education; Effect; First cycle; primary education; students learning experience.

## **1. Background of the Study**

Pre-school education is designed to develop the mental, physical, emotional, linguistic, and also social upbringing of children. Different psychologists, educationists and policy makers have given different names to this type of education namely nursery school education, kindergarten education, early child education and pre-primary education etc [23]. Pre-school education is also referred to any systematic program in which young children participate before they do enter in primary schools that is designed to promote children's social, academic, linguistic, and literacy skills, and health and above all wellbeing [10]. As the first six years of life is highly significant, children learn and feel during this time, particularly about themselves, it will be foundational to the rest of their life. At this stage a child develops good relationship with the people around him/her [24].

Early childhood education is a sensitive period marked by rapid changes in physical, cognitive, language, social and emotional development. It represents a window of opportunity for a lifetime development of a person [25]. From this we can understand that education before primary education has wide importance in every aspect of child development.

As a result of multiple advantages of pre-school education, expansion and improvement of Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) is the first goal in the Education for All (EFA) Dakar Framework. The link between early childhood care and education are strong and mutually reinforcing. Early childhood care and education services help build skills at a time when children's brains are developing, with long-term benefits for children from disadvantaged background [26]. It is widely recognized fact that early childhood education is an integral part of basic education and represents the first and essential step in achieving the goals of Education for All in particular and human skill formation in general [6, 7, 8]. According to [28] early childhood education attendance is positively associated with a substantial improvement in children's cognitive development.

Early childhood experts also have the opinion that attending high quality preschool program helps to promote children's social and emotional development and prepare them for primary education. Studies have shown that children who attended quality early education programs are more likely to have better test scores and grade [27]. According to [2], a well-designed preschool education has long-term and progressive effects in school success, including higher achievement test scores, lower rates of grade repetition and special education, and higher educational attainment. Also, pre-primary education is not only seen to prepare children to adjust to formal schooling but also kick-starts the process of instilling in them the basic essential values of life and prepares them physically, emotionally, socially and mentally for the road ahead [9].

Although pre-school education has its own variety of contributions as indicated by different researchers in different countries, its access is insufficient. For example, according to Young Lives research findings, there are

significant inequalities in access to early education in Ethiopia, India and Peru, as well as clear discrepancies in the quality of services. These findings underline the importance of ensuring that high-quality care and education in early childhood reach the poorest children if these policies are to fulfill their potential. This requires an increased focus on the most marginalized groups in society, targeted investments to improve the quality of services, and effective governance of both public and private sector provision, to support every child to have a good start in life [29]. To fulfill this gap it was clear that countries have to give attention in promoting general education starting with focusing on early childhood care and education to assure quality of education. Thus, Ethiopia in its Education Sector Development Program(ESDP IV), made the issue of ECCE among the priority action programs, within general education quality improvement program to increase equity and access with early childhood care and education, primary and secondary education [13].

## **2. Statement of the Problem**

Early Childhood Care and Education in Ethiopia received much focus in ESDP IV (2010 to 2014/15), which provides a useful analysis of lessons learnt from ESDP III (2005/06 to 2010/11). It has placed mainly two key outcome targets: to increase GER from 6.9% in 2009/10 to 20% in 2014/15 and to establish a pre-primary class in all rural and urban primary school compounds [13]. However, despite the presence of these statements in different sectors of governmental policy and the comprehensive inclusion of ECCE in the ESDP IV, ECCE in Ethiopia was one of the most neglected areas [13].

The framework from the policy acknowledges the need to increase awareness of the importance of a good start in life and a strong foundation for later learning, which are often achieved through pre-school programs. However, there is extremely limited government and donor funding available for the plans in the framework, and their implementation of ECCE risks placing a significant burden on an already overstretched primary education system [30].

As MOE [14] the government is also involved in developing curriculum, training teachers, and providing supervisory support. The enrolment of pre-primary education is increasing every year though underreporting remains a persistent issue in the kindergarten centers. Pre-primary enrolment has increased dramatically starting from the year (2011/12) and this is because 'O' class and child to child enrolments have been counted as part of pre-primary. But, for [20].Early childhood development also has been growing rapidly, but started at a very low base, so the coverage is still modest, with the GER being 26.1% in 2012/13 compared 4.2% in 2008/09).

According to [15] in the academic year of 2013/14, among 7.35 million children of the expected age population nationally, those for which ECCE was being delivered were only 2.4 million. This in turn implies that gross enrolment ratio in the academic year has become 33.7% nationally and the share of girls has reached 48%. The gross enrolment of 2013/14 has shown an improvement from the previous year participation rate, which was 26.3%. This increase is due to the improved reporting of "O" class and child to child data in the consecutive years from primary schools. On the other hand, if one look at the variability of the recorded GER regionally in 2013/14, the variation within the regions resulted standard deviation of 28.7 due to the achievement difference such as on the top, regions like Addis Ababa, Tigray and Harari has recorded with the highest GER that

is 88.1%, 75.7% and 74.5% respectively and on the bottom, regions like Gambella, Afar and Somali has recorded with the lowest GER 17.8%, 4.5% and 3.6% respectively. Had it not been with the additional enrolment from "O" class and child to child, the gross enrolment in the academic year 2012/13 and 2013/14 for pre-primary education would have been 6.2% and 6.6% respectively.

Although the government made its priority areas and set ECCE policy framework and launched "O" class and child to child program, still the number of children who attended pre-school education are by far less than those who did not attend it. According to [30], mounting evidence indicates that ECCE programs generally do not reach the poorest and most disadvantaged children, the very ones who stand to gain the most in terms of health, nutrition and cognitive development. Though the provision of pre-primary education for children has recently shown some improvement in urban settings, it has remained scarce across rural areas and the service is still inaccessible for economically disadvantaged children.

For example, with the private sector, currently the dominant provider of pre-schooling, the high fees that these private pre-schools expect in effect exclude children from economically disadvantaged households and rural areas. Even though the policy framework is launched and ECCE is made one of the priority activities, its access and enrollment is not satisfactory in Ethiopia. Now, to ensure all children can access pre-primary education as preparation for schooling, in ESDP V the government planned to increase the GER of pre-school education from 34% in 2014 to 80% in 2020 by making the enrolment the same for both male and female [15]. So, one of the strategies to create awareness among the society about pre-school education and achieve this government's plan is to bring the empirical evidence regarding the contribution of pre-school education in students' learning experience.

There are few researchers who conduct on this issue for instance, [24] conducted a study on the contribution of pre-school education on primary students' achievement and learning experience in Addis Ababa Nifas silk Lafto Sub city of grade one and two students found that students with pre-school education outperform than students who had no pre-school education and these students from pre-school have better class activity and less drop out, but has no brief information about social behavior of students.

Moreover, [12] on their study that examined the effects of different child-care arrangements on children's cognitive and social proficiencies at the start of kindergarten reported that overall center-based care raises reading and math scores, but has a negative effect for socio-psychological measures. However, this study deals with the contribution of pre-school education on students' learning experience of grade four students, it is unique in having pre-school attendees with "O" class program and to check whether it has negative effect in social behavior in learning experience in addition with the students' class room participation and school attendance. Moreover, to the best knowledge of the researchers little research has been done so far in Ethiopia on this topic. Therefore, to clearly understand the issue more empirical based research has to be done to convince policy makers and practitioners to expand pre-school education to reach the unserved portion of the population.

As a result, this research is designed to investigate the effect of pre-school education to students' learning experience and academic achievement on the first cycle primary at Burayu town administration. To achieve this

objective the following research questions were forwarded.

1. What are the effects of pre-school education on students' classroom participation in Burayu Town administration primary schools?
2. What is the benefit of pre-school education in improving students' social behavior in primary schools of Burayu Town administration?
3. To what extent pre-school education contributes to students' school attendance in Burayu Town administration primary schools?

### **3. Objectives of the Study**

The general objective of this study was to investigate the contribution of pre-school education learning experience of students in primary schools. More specifically the specific objectives of this research were:

- To assess the effect of pre-school education to first cycle primary school students' classroom participation.
- To investigate the benefit of pre-school education on primary school students' social behavior
- To examine the effect of pre-school education on first cycle primary school students' school attendance.

The results of this research may help the policy makers, Non-Governmental organizations and education officers to mobilize the society and search for preferable directions in promoting access and enrollment. The existing primary schools may use the evidence from this research to communicate with parent and other stakeholders to make their school more suitable for their own "O" class as attached pre-primary school. It may encourage teachers in supporting the existing attached pre-school in their primary school as the result of the difference between pre-school attendees and non pre-school attendees in their classroom as well to make them plan for attention, support and make up the learning of those non pre-school attendees to take them along with the pre-school attendees in their own classroom. Moreover it may lead teachers to communicate with parents to make them identify the area of support for their children. Therefore, it is important to show what influence does pre-school education has on children's school performance for all concerned bodies.

## **4. Research Method**

### **4.1. Research Design**

In assessing the effect of pre-school education to the first cycle primary school students' learning experience, exactly there are participants with pre-school experience and non-pre-school experience. But these two groups are not randomly formed by the researcher and they are happened as a result of pre-school experience happened in the past without manipulating conditions for formation of the groups. As a result the research design used was ex-post facto design. According to [11], the ex-post facto design for descriptive research is the method in which the researcher has no control over the variables; the researcher can only reports what has happened or what is happening. Also [5] stated that, ex-post facto means from what is done afterwards and ex-post research is that in

which independent variable have already occurred where the researcher starts with the observation of the dependent variable/variables.

**a. Samples and sampling techniques**

This study was conducted in Burayu town administration in Oromiya regional state which is equivalent to zonal administration. In this town administration there are seven government primary schools which have attached pre-primary classes and have students who attended pre-school education in private and faith based pre-schools. Among these primary schools the researchers selected four schools namely Burayu Mariyam, Kata, Gafarsa Chorisa and Guje primary schools randomly and conducted the research on the effect of pre-school education on grade four students' learning experience.

The sources of data for this research are first cycle primary school teachers and school principals, since they are the front liners to deal with primary school students whether the students were pre-school attendees or not. Hence, out of 65, (15 males and 50 females) teachers in the first cycle primary schools in the selected schools 63 of them were taken as participants of the research. Principals and vice principals were totally eight in the sampled schools, thus 7 of them were purposively selected as sample. Hence, the total sample was summarized in table as follows.

**Table 1: Summary of the samples taken**

No.	Participants	Population	Sample	Sampling technique
<b>1</b>	Teachers	65	63	Purposive sampling
<b>2</b>	Principals	8	7	Purposive sampling
<b>Total</b>		73	70	

**b. Instruments of Data collection**

**Questionnaires**

Quite often questionnaire is considered as the heart of a survey operation and to collect data through questionnaire is relatively cheap and economical [11]. Both closed ended and open ended questionnaire were employed. The researchers prepared the questionnaire from related literatures. The questionnaire focused on students' classroom participation and social behaviors. It was designed for sample first cycle primary school teachers.

**Interview**

Semi structured interview guide questions were prepared for school principals. The reason for using this interview is for triangulating of the information from other participants about the contribution of pre- school

education in primary schools.

### **Document Analysis**

The document analysis deals with the school attendance found in the studied primary schools. The researchers took and assessed teacher made daily attendance document to see the frequency of absentees. Here the researchers checked the maximum/minimum number of days a student was absent from school and identified whether the student is with pre-school experience or not from the school attendance.

#### ***c. Procedures of Data Collection***

Data were collected by using different instruments. With the help of questionnaire information was gathered from the sample teachers after the completion of pilot test and necessary correction was made. Then the instrument was administered to sample teachers and enough time was given so as to fill the questionnaires.

In document analysis students' daily school attendance record made by teachers was taken and analyzed. Then, the number of absentees were selected and recorded by the researcher and finally the number of students with maximum/minimum of absentees were recorded and identified in relation with students' pre-school experience as pre-school and non-pre-school attendees. Finally, interview was conducted after having prior appointments with each school principals.

#### ***d. Validity and Reliability of the Instruments***

The researchers prepared questionnaires based on the review of related literature. Then, experts from the field of measurement and evaluation and peers were requested to see and comment on the questionnaire to maintain validity. Pilot testing was done to check reliability of the instruments. As a result, four items were deleted and few items were modified based on the comments given. The reliability coefficient of Alpha was calculated and it was found to be 0.87 which was highly reliable as indicated by [5].

#### ***e. Methods of Data analysis***

The data collected with closed ended questionnaires were analyzed in terms of mean and aggregate mean quantitatively and those from open ended questionnaires were analyzed with narration. In addition, data from document analysis was analyzed in terms of narration in which the summary of maximum/minimum numbers of days a student was absent from school and whether the student is with pre-school experience or not was explained and presented with table. Finally, data from interview were analyzed with narration using the themes obtained through the interview.

#### ***f. Ethical Considerations***

The purpose of the study was explained to the participants and they have asked their consent to answer questions in the questionnaire or interview guide. The participants were also informed that the information they

have provided will not be given to a third party. Accordingly, the information that the participants provided was used only for the study purpose. In addition, the researchers ensured confidentiality by making the participants anonymous.

#### **4. Result**

##### ***5.1. The contribution of Pre-School Education on Students' Classroom Participation***

In general teacher rated questionnaire which involves five rating scales was administered after they have been given awareness to give attention and to recall what they were observing from pre-school and non-pre-school attendees in their classroom. The respondents were requested to rate with numbers in such a way that, 1- stands for "Never at all", 2- stands for "Rarely" , 3- stands for "Sometimes", 4- stands for "Often" and 5 - stands for "Always". For each category the aggregate mean score was calculated and interpreted in terms of the obtained mean. The criteria used to categorize the contribution of pre-school education as low (1.00 - 2.33), medium (2.34 - 3.66) and high (3.67 - 5.00), based on the mean scores as used by [16].

Hence, to see the effect of pre-school education among the questionnaire distributed to elementary school teachers, the first eight items deal with the students' participation and understanding of the learning materials. The result of this part was summarized as follows in the table below.

**Table 2:** Mean Score of respondents as they perceived Students' Participation

No	Items	N	M	SD
1	Pre-school students pay sufficient attention in my lesson more than others.	63	4.22	0.81
2	Pre-school students put adequate effort in to understanding my explanation	63	4.20	0.79
3	They complete their homework regularly	63	4.27	0.85
4	Pre-school students take active parts better than non-pre-schools	63	4.36	0.79
5	Students with pre-school ask more questions during the teaching learning experience than students without pre-school education.	63	3.95	0.88
6	The students who attend pre-school understand the learning materials quickly and easily than non-pre-school attendees.	63	4.14	0.91
7	Children who have gone through pre-school experience take more interest in their learning	63	4.34	0.78
8	Children with Pre-school participate better in basic skills such as reading, writing, numeracy and literacy	63	4.36	0.78
<b>Aggregate Mean</b>			<b>4.23</b>	

*Note. N = Number of respondents, M = Mean and SD = Standard deviation*



As it is possible to understand from Table 2, the mean score for almost all the eight items under students' classroom participation was above four out of five. This indicates that attending pre-school before coming to primary school has contribution for students' class room participation; because the aggregate mean score is 4.23 and it is high. These showed pre-school attendees often took active parts in their classroom in every aspect of participation. In addition, the response from open ended questions reveals that pre-school education contributes for students to actively participate in their classroom, read and write better than non-attendees and play active role in coordinating group work. The interview result also showed that pre-school attendees were better in their learning experience that they attend their school better than non-attendees and participate more in their classroom and practical activities.

**5.2. The Contribution of Pre-School Education in Improving Students' Social Behavior in Primary Schools**

In this part the questionnaire items were categorized as two main groups. These are items dealing with positive social behavior and negative social behavior. Then the two main groups have two sub divisions that is, those that deals with positive social behavior were categorized as self-regulation and pro-social behavior, where as those that deals with negative social behavior were categorized as hyperactivity and anti-social behavior. First teachers were requested to rate the extent of their agreement on items related to preschool attitude students self-regulation behavior and the result is presented below.

**Table 3:** Summary of Mean Score as respondents perceived Self-Regulation

<b>No.</b>	<b>Items of self-regulation</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>SD</b>
1	Children with pre-school experience likes to work things for self, seeks help rarely than those without pre-school experience.	63	4.19	0.77
2	Students who attend pre-school does not need much help with tasks as those non pre-school attendees.	63	3.95	0.85
3	Pre-school attendees chooses activities on their own than non-pre-school attendees.	63	4.01	0.85
4	Students with pre-school experience persist on the face of difficult tasks than those without pre-school experience.	63	3.98	0.91
5	Pre-school attendees can move on to a new activity after finishing a task than non-pre-school attendees.	63	3.92	1.00
6	A student with pre-school experience is confident with others than that of none pre-school experience.	63	4.41	0.73
7	A student with pre-school experience shows leader ship in group work than that of non-pre-school experience.	63	4.33	0.76
8	A student of pre-school attendee can take responsibility for a task than non-pre-school attendee.	63	4.19	0.83
<b>Aggregate mean</b>			4.12	

Note. N = number of respondents, M = Mean and SD= standard deviation

As it is presented in Table 3, one can see that the aggregate mean score of the eight items was 4.12. This indicates that, attending pre-school contributed highly for students' self-regulation in their primary school. In the following pro-social behavior, the students' experience or behavior in terms of their relation with others and their need in helping others as perceived by their teachers was reported in terms of mean score.

**Table 4:** Summary of Mean Score in perceived Pro-Social Behavior

No.	Items with pro-social behavior	N	M	SD
1	Students with pre-school experience are considerate of others' feeling than those without pre-school experience.	63	3.96	0.82
2	Pre-school attendees share readily with other children's (treats, toys, pencils, etc. ) than non-pre-school attendees	63	4.11	0.88
3	Pre-school attendees are helpful if someone is hurt up set or feeling ill than non-pre-school attendees.	63	3.95	0.88
4	Pre-school attendees are kind to younger children than non-pre-schools	63	3.96	0.86
5	Pre-school attendees offer to help others having difficulties with a task than non-pre-schools.	63	4.00	0.96
6	Pre-school attendees are sympathetic to others if they are upset than non-preschools.	63	3.74	0.82
<b>Aggregate mean</b>			3.95	

As shown in Table 4 above, the respondents' average mean score for the six items under pro-social behavior was 3.95. Therefore, it showed that pre-school education has high contribution for students' pro-social behavior in first cycle primary school.

**Table 5:** Summary of Mean Score in perceived Hyper-activity

No.	Items of Hyper-activity	N	M	SD
1	Pre-school attendees are restless, overactive, cannot stay still for long than non-pre-schools.	63	1.95	0.81
2	Pre-school attendees are easily distracted, concentration wonders than non-pre-schools.	63	1.75	0.76
3	Pre-school attendees do not think things out before acting than non-pre-schools.	63	1.87	0.77
4	Pre-school attendees quickly loose interest in what she/he is doing than non-pre-school.	64	1.84	0.70
5	Pre-school attendees get over excited than non pre schools	65	1.75	0.74
6	Pre-school attendees fail to pay attention than non-attendees	63	1.56	0.69
7	Pre-school attendees are easily frustrated than non-pre-school	63	1.56	0.64
<b>Aggregate</b>			1.75	

The respondents result in Table 5 above, showed that the aggregate mean score of the seven items under hyper activity was 1.75 which reveals pre-school education has low contribution for hyper activity. As a result it is possible to understand that the hyper activity of pre-school attendees was almost rare/no in first cycle primary schools, which ensures pre-school education contributed to make learners to be free from hyper activity in their social behavior.

Then mean score of students' perceived characteristics in terms of anti-social behavior was summarized in the following table.

**Table 6:** Summary of Mean score in perceived Anti-Social Behavior

<b>No.</b>	<b>Items of anti-social behavior</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>SD</b>
<b>1</b>	Pre-school attendees often fight with other children or bully them than non-pre-schools.	63	1.49	0.59
<b>2</b>	Pre-school attendees often lie or cheat than non-attendees.	63	1.56	0.64
<b>3</b>	Pre-school steal from home, school or else where	63	1.35	0.51
<b>Aggregate</b>			1.47	

From Table 6, the respondents' result for three items under anti-social behavior has the aggregate mean score of 1.47 confirming that pre-school education has minimal contribution in anti-social behavior. Thus it illustrate that pre-school attendees can never practice anti-social behavior in their primary schools. Therefore, it showed that pre-school education contributes for students to reduce or not to practice anti-social behavior.

Now from Table 3 to 6 all the results depict that, pre-school education positively affect the social behavior of students, which encourages positive social behaviors as rated to the mean score 4.12 and 3.95, and discourages negative social behavior as it was rated to mean scores of 1.75 and 1.47. As the result from open ended questionnaire pre-school education has advantages in such a way that pre-school attendees were free from fear, more friendly with peers and their teachers, take care for their learning materials. In addition, most of them reported that there was no negative impact from attending pre-school education, but some of the respondents comment that pre-school attendees want to dominate classroom participation by imposing on non-attendees; also pre-school attendees were too fast in their daily activities.

The response from interview result also confirm that the students' social interaction was better in the school when they came after pre-school interaction, which ensures that pre-school experience contributes for social development of students.

In addition, they rise that students from pre-school behave wisely better than non-pre-school attendees they differentiate those activities that leads them to disciplinary problems. Thus pre-school attendees control themselves from being indisciplined. Also the interview respondents confirm that there were no negative characteristics observed from pre-school attendees except their domination in class room participation especially during the beginning of their school. One principal of the school in Guje primary school, who was with five

years of experience as a school director informed that, "I couldn't observe any negative behavior from pre-school attendees, even some pre-school attendees who came to grade one after completion of the three years kindergarten (KG) program suffer in class when they wait for non-pre-school attendees understand what they are thought in the class."

**5.3. The Extent to which Pre-School Education Contributes to Students' School Attendance**

To identify whether pre-school experience contributes to students' school attendance in first cycle primary schools, seven grade four sections were randomly selected and teacher made daily school attendance record was analyzed. Then the number of days a student was absent from school in a semester was identified and the students were grouped as those with no absent, those with 1- 5 days absent, 6 - 10 days absent, 11- 15 days absent and finally those with 16 and above days absent. Hence, it is summarized in the following table.

**Table 7:** Summary Absenteeism in School Attendance.

No.	No of days a Student absent from School	Number of Students					
		P			NP		
		M	F	T	M	F	T
1	No absent	5	7	12	5	3	8
2	1-5 days absent	37	66	103	28	71	99
3	6 -10 days absent	21	24	45	41	46	87
4	11- 15 days absent	6	7	14	10	26	36
5	16 and above days absent	-	-	-	2	6	8

Note. P = Pre-school attendees, NP = No pre-school attendees, M = Male, F= Female & T = Total

As one can see from the Table 7 absenteeism occurred both with students of pre-school attendees and no pre-school attendees, but still there is a difference between the groups. That is when the number of students with no absenteeism is 12 for students with pre-school experience; it is 8 for those with no pre-school experience. Again the number of students who were absent for 1 - 5 days is 103 for students of pre-school attendees and 99 for those with no pre-school attendees. This shows that the number of students who have 1-5 days of absenteeism was high for students of pre-school attendees. Also the total number of students in pre-school experience who have 6 - 10 days of absenteeism is 45 and this number was 87 for those with no pre-school experience indicating that it was high for non-pre-school attendees. In addition, the number of students who have 11 - 15 days absent was 13 in those with pre-school experience and 36 for those with no pre-school experience. This data show that the number was high for students with no pre-school experience. Finally, the table shows that there was no students of pre-school attendees who has 16 and above days of absenteeism, but there were 8 students who have 16 or above days of absenteeism with non-pre-school attendees. Also the table assures that as the numbers of absentee days of non-pre-school attendees were greater than the number of pre-school attendees. Thus, the information above reveals that pre-school education contributes for better school attendance of students in first cycle primary school.

## **6. Discussion**

Based on the findings of this study, the researchers would like to discuss on the following major issues such as the contribution of preschool education on students classroom participation, social behavior, and school attendance in first cycle primary school.

Regarding the contribution of attending preschool education on primary school students' classroom participation the results of this study clearly indicate that attending pre-school before coming to primary school has contribution for students' class room participation because pre-school attendees often took active parts in their classroom in every aspect of participation. Moreover, the interview result with the principals also assert that students who attended preschool education participate actively in their classroom, read and write better than non-attendees, play active role in coordinating group work, and do practical activities.

Therefore, from the responses obtained from participants it is clear that students who have gone through preschool experiences take more interests in their studies. They are more responsible and complete the given assignments in time. Most of the students understand the learning material quickly and easily. The students attended preschool is confident and ask more question during teaching and learning process. Students who have the preschool experience do not feel shy, they are confident and have a number of playmates and so they do not hesitate participating in games or other co-curricular activities. They are also better in their adjustment with the teacher.

This finding is consistent with the results of [3] who describes that pre-school education positively affects classroom participation of students in such a way that students who attend preschool pay sufficient attention to the subjects they learn; put adequate effort into understanding their teachers explanation; are well disciplined in class room; regularly participate in class; complete the homework regularly; take active parts in curricular and co-curricular activities and students ask more questions during the teaching learning process.

Another role of preschool education is its contribution on the development of social behavior. There is a widespread belief among educators that the benefits of preschool education are carried over to primary school. According to [7] teacher's perceptions of the benefits of preschool education are related to the fact that preschool education facilitates the process of socialization and self-control necessary to make the most of classroom learning.

Similarly, the findings of this study revealed that pre-school education positively affect the social behavior of students (contribute highly for students' self-regulation, for students' pro-social behavior, low contribution for hyper activity, and minimal contribution in anti-social behavior). Besides, the results from the open ended questionnaire and interview indicate that preschool attendees were free from fear, more friendly with peers and their teachers, take care for their learning materials. Moreover, there was no negative impact from attending pre-school education, but one of the respondents comment that pre-school attendees want to dominate classroom participation by imposing on non-attendees; also pre-school attendees were too fast in their daily activities.

This finding is consistent with the findings of various studies [19, 18] that indicated children at the first grade

level, especially at the beginning of the year are susceptible to some emotional disturbances due to a new and strange social environment they face. This could have a negative impact on their adjustment and academic performance. Attending preschool education has a potential to minimize the problem and enhance school achievement. According to [18] stated that early childhood education programs are supposed to bridge gaps between home and school leading to better adjustment and performance in primary school.

Likewise, [4] explained that a child who has had preschools experiences before joining the primary school adjust himself easily and successfully in primary classes because of his early preparation. It is through better emotional control, developing proper habits, behavior and attitudes. Such pre-preparation in the pre-school helps him considerably in his subsequent education. So, pre-school education prepares a sound base for primary education.

Generally, from the results of the questionnaire and interview pre-school education has contribution on students' social behavior development. This finding was similar to the findings of [1, 21] who found that pre-school attendees perform better in cognitive, motor and social skills. According to [22] also stated that, as with cognitive outcomes in reading and Mathematics, social behavior is found to be affected by children's background characteristics and their pre-school educational experiences

Finally, the other role of preschool education on primary school students is its contribution on students' attendance. The results of this study show that the number days of absenteeism is higher in non-pre-school attendees than the number of pre-school attendees. Hence, the result reveals that pre-school education contributes for better school attendance of students in first cycle primary school. Supporting the above idea Cohen and Gross as cited by [19] described that attending preschool education contributes in reducing the absenteeism, drop out and repeaters in early primary school.

## **7. Conclusions**

Based on the study, the following conclusions can be findings stated above; depending on the research questions raised the following conclusion was drawn.

Pre-school education has contribution for students in first cycle primary school in having better skill of reading and writing, understanding the learning materials easily, to put adequate effort and pay attention in learning, to actively engage in their learning and to ask and answer questions in the class room. Hence, pre-school education has a positive effect and highly contributes to students' classroom participation in general.

Pre-school attendees were self-regulatory by the activities like doing things for self and seek less help, choosing activities for own, persisting in face of difficulties, act leadership role in group work and taking responsibility. Again pre-school attendees are also considerate of other people's feeling, sharing with others and sympathetic. Hence, pre-school education has contribution to students' positive social behavior where it highly encourages self-regulation and pro-social behavior in first cycle primary school. In addition, pre-school attendees rarely experience negative social behavior such as being restless, overactive, quickly loss of interest and paying less attention in their learning, fight with others, lie cheat and steal. Therefore, pre-school education has no

contribution for negative social behavior and it contributes for better social behavior development in general.

In school attendance, despite both pre-school attendees and non-pre-school attendees have records absenteeism, the number of students absent from school 10 and more than ten days is maximum for non-pre-school attendees. Therefore, pre-school education contributes for better school attendance in primary schools.

## **8. Recommendations**

Based on the major findings and conclusions made the following recommendations were forwarded:

Even though there was low cost pre-school education program currently started, most of the kindergarten programs were situated in urban settings and for the advantaged groups only. Therefore, the government should design strategies that provide pre-school education for rural areas and the disadvantaged to allow children from low and middle classes to have the access of pre-school.

Politicians, educational offices, and all other stakeholders from top to bottom should arrange public conferences that enable to inform the contribution of pre-school education, so as to make the society and other stakeholders aware and invest on pre-school education, and support the existing pre-school education programs.

When students with pre-school experience and without pre-school experience are enrolled in grade one together, it is better if elementary schools arrange program/session in the form of tutorial program that can help those non pre-school attendees in their learning to go with pre-school attendees in classroom.

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