



**ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY**

**COLLEGE OF EDUCATION AND BEHEVIORAL STUDIES**

**CENTER FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD CARE AND EDUCATION**

**TEACHERS' PERCEPTION ON CHILDREN'S BEHAVIOR IN THE LEARNING  
ENVIRONMENT IN BURAYU TOWN, OROMIA REGIONAL STATE**

**BY:**

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**AUGUST, 2023**

**ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA**

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## DECLARATION

I the undersigned, declared that this thesis is my original work, has not been presented for a degree in any other university and that all sources of material used for the thesis have been properly acknowledged.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

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Date: \_\_\_\_\_

This thesis has been submitted for examination with my approval as a University Advisor.

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## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS**

ECCE= Early Childhood Care and Education

EFA= Education for All

FDRE= Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia

MoE= Ministry of Education

MoH= Ministry of Health

MoWA= Ministry of Women Affairs

PTTI= Preschool Teacher Training Institute

UNCRC= United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child

UNESCO= United Nations Education, Science and Culture Organization

WHO= World Health Organization

## ABSTRACT

*The purpose of this study is to look into how children behave in private preschools in Burayu Town in relation to their learning environment. 182 respondents who were chosen from 43 private preschools provided the data. The quantitative data gathered for the study was analyzed using descriptive statistics, such as percentage, mean, standard deviation, and frequency. The analysis of semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions yielded qualitative data that was categorized using codes and themes. The major study result is that the private preschools in Burayu municipal compounds were not meant to provide preschool education. However, the owners of private preschools try their best to make the classrooms colourful in order to teach youngsters. In school, there are different areas for the children to learn and play. The school climate is safe and welcoming to all students. Every child is participating in the learning-teaching process. Children are encouraged to interact with their classmates. The school provides opportunities for students to demonstrate their cultures. Children's behaviour modifications were detected within 2-3 months after attending the preschool. The family's reaction to their children's behavioural adjustments was favourable. Based on the major findings of the study and conclusions drawn, the following recommendations were made: evaluating the behavioural change of children from family's feedback is very important and the feedback from the families helps in shaping the children in a positive way; the preschool administration should make the preschool compounds welcoming to all children.*

**Key Terms:** Teachers Perception, Children's behaviour, Learning Environments.

# CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

## 1.1. Background of the Study

As humans, we begin learning at the earliest stages of our lives. Our early childhood is not only one of these important stages, but it is also a time for developing our future characteristics and beliefs as adults, which are based on the environment we experience during our early childhood (Olds, 2001, Patrick, Kaplan, & Ryan, 2017). So, early childhood is the stage where shaping of human being for the future of life begins.

Moreover, “the number of children spending anywhere from one-half to a whole day in the care of people other than their parents, and in places other than their homes has increased over the years” (Olds, 2001). Sonestain *et al.* (2002), Patrick, *et al.*, (2017), Guta, *et al.*, (2018) state that “in 1999, 28 out of the 73 percent of children under the age of five who were in the care of someone other than their parents, were in center-based care facilities”. Thus, the need for the establishment and expansion of preschools becomes paramount so that the children are there to get socialization.

Due to the increase in number of children in need of care, the necessity for preschools or earlychildcare and education environment has increased gradually. This drivein turn has converted preschools into a significant part of a child’s first learning experience.

Pre-school education is intended to explore and assist the mental, physical, emotional, linguistic, and social nurture of children. Psychologists, educators and policy makers have given different names to preschool education, namely, “nursery school education”, “kindergarten education”, “early child education” and “pre-primary education” etc. (Singh, 2007, Patrick, *et al.*, 2017), Guta, *et al.*, 2018). “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” (Justice & Vukelich, 2008). Since children learn and feel during this time, particularly about themselves, the first six years of life is highly significant, and it is foundational to the rest of their life. It is at this stage that a child develops good relationship with the people around (High (1999) cited in Tadesse (2015)) and Malak, S *et al.*, 2014, Guta, *et al.*, 2018). It is at this level that behavioural changes in children start to be

observed. In shaping the behavioural changes going to happen among children the learning environment has significant effects.

In addition, UNESCO (2010) stated that ‘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’. Hence, education before primary education has significant importance in every aspect of child’s development.

“A developmentally appropriate learning environment that meets children’s developmental needs and capacities has positive effects on children’s development” (Maxwell, 2007; Sanoff, 1995; Stankovic & Stojic, 2007). And also “a well-organized learning environment in preschool education causes more time for classroom interactions” (OECD, 2006; UNESCO, 2005) and ‘supports the development of children positively’ (Burchinal *et al.*, 2000; Howes *et al.*, 2008; Mashburn *et al.*, 2008; Peisner-Feinberg *et al.*, 2001; Sabo, Soliday Hong, Pianta & Burchinal, 2013, Malak, S *et al.*, 2014, Patrick, *et al.*, 2017, Guta, *et al.*, 2018).

Research works by different scholars indicate that pre-school age children learn best in environments where they can have secure relationships with caring and responsive adults, where they feel safe, and where they feel free to explore and learn. Pre-school age children are affected by their environments as of adults, even if they cannot express these feelings in sophisticated ways. Ensuring that classrooms and other learning spaces for children make them feel welcome, secure, and ready to learn is the duty of school community.

A learning environment is more than just a classroom- it’s a space in which students feel safe and supported in their pursuit of knowledge, as well as inspired by their surroundings. The learning environments can be categorized into physical, psychological, and emotional environments (Monroe, M. *et al.*, 2019, Patrick, *et al.*, 2017, Guta, *et al.*, 2018).

According to UNESCO (2014), “because of multiple advantages of preschool education, expansion and improvement of Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) is the first goal in the Education for All (EFA) Dakar Framework”. Moreover, the links between early childhood care and education are strong and mutually reinforcing. That is, early childhood care and education services help build skills at a time when children’s brain is developing, with long-term benefits for children from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Early childhood is a critical time in life and is a time when young children learn different skills and develop abilities that set the stage for future development; it is also where behavioural change among children start to manifest itself. ‘Childhood experiences are critical for rapid cognitive development’ (Korjenevitch & Dunifon, 2010; Patrick, *et al.*, 2017; Guta, *et al.*, 2018). Thus, Early Childhood Care and Education from a very early age can have extremely important consequences, including decreased grade repetition, dropout, aggression and violence. ‘It also improves socialization in general, fostering broad participation in national development in the broadest sense’ (REIP, 2010). “Childhood experience is the time to acquire general well-being and emotional health” (Gunnar & Cheatham, 2003; Citizens’ Committee for Children, 2004).

Moreover, there has been a conforming recognition of the role of early care in the development of children by international agencies and conventions. For example, the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) stipulates that “every child has the right to care and education” (CRC, 1992). The world conference on “Education for All” (EFA) that took place in Jomtien, Thailand also underscored the fundamental place of Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE).

Ethiopia has accepted these United Nations declarations on the right of children addressing their needs in the initial years. Moreover, in Ethiopia, the implementation of preschool education has three modalities. These are kindergarten, the pre-primary ‘O class’ attached to government primary schools, and child to child modality. Recently, the other modality (Accelerated School Readiness) is emerging as the fourth modality. Even though the early childhood care and education modalities vary their ultimate purpose is the same (Patrick, *et al.*, 2017; Guta, *et al.*, 2018).

In Ethiopian context, even though the Education and Training Policy (FDRE, 2023) has given important place to pre-school education to address the needs of preschool age children, in practical terms the program didn’t get much attention from the government side. The preschools are predominantly owned by private organizations and individuals.

## **1.2. Statement of the Problem**

According to the way it is used a learning environment has many meanings. Besides its definition as ‘an indicator of learning task’ (Tynjala, 1999), ‘psychosocial environments in class’ (Henderson, Fisher, & Fraser, 2000), and ‘virtual environments formed with computer and internet technologies’ (Fulkerth, 2002; Patrick, *et al.*, 2017; Guta, *et al.*, 2018), it is also used in a very wide range of ways. ‘Studies on learning environments focus on behaviour management, classroom rules and discipline, motivation of students, teaching

methods, the set-up of classroom tools (tables, desks, etc.), and even the color of the classroom' (Chesebro & McCroskey, 2002; Slavin, 2000; Snowman & Biehler, 2003; Saarni, *et al.*, 2017; Spradlin, L. *et al.*, 2018). 'Learning environment is the surroundings that make it possible for the learner to find solutions to their problems and to have access to the materials to help them achieve their goals' (Ozerem & Akkoyunlu, 2015; Monroe, M. *et al.*, 2019).

Environment in which learning takes place can be described as a combination of natural conditions, circumstances and influences, and sociocultural contexts in which an individual is situated. Therefore, learning environment is the sum total of the surroundings in which individuals interact to enrich experiences and thus leading to learning.

Since it focuses on the attention of the child to what is expected at the next level, the overall aim of Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) is to optimize the children's development and ability to participate in family and community life. It also provides parents and the community with the knowledge skills and support to meet the needs of their children. By providing a wide range of educational experiences to young children, preschool education builds background experiences that will promote the later attainment of academic, social, and life skills. It can enhance both personality development, and positive attitudes towards learning. Hence, 'preschool education aims at all round development of children and intends at preparing for life' (Butler, 2001). 'More specifically, preschool education helps children to be confident, eager and enthusiastic learners, who are looking forward to start school and success in life' (Fitzgerald, 2004; Saarni, *et al.*, 2017; Spradlin, L. *et al.*, 2018; Monroe, M. *et al.*, 2019). Thus, preschool education is a critical stage where the ground is laid for shaping the behaviour of the children with the appropriate learning environments.

Research conducted in many countries of the world revealed that children who have not received appropriate early attention are less appropriate to enrol in schools and are likely to dropout or repeat grades. Moreover; they become less active in their social interaction and are exposed to various social problems.

Preschool school teacher encounters both good and bad behaviour from their children; and these social behaviours develop as a result of both physical and social factors that are associated with classroom environment. Different researchers have found that peer settings and classroom environment play critical roles in children's behaviour development. "Some European countries have guaranteed a place for all children by the time they reach a certain

age (e.g. age 1 in Sweden, Denmark, and Finland, and age 3 in Germany)” (Kamerman, 2000, 2001; OECD, 2001; Saarni, *et al.*, 2017; Spradlin, L. *et al.*, 2018; Monroe, M. *et al.*, 2019). In Ethiopia, the demand for preschool education has increased due to the growing recognition that the program can contribute to all aspects of children’s development who are the future citizens of the country. Consequently, the issue of preschool education was given important place in the Education and Training Policy (FDRE, 2023) of the country to address the needs of preschool age children. In addition, the National Policy Framework of Early Childhood Care and Education of Ethiopia emphasizes the importance of early intervention in a coordinated manner along with strategy of implementation and states that “Ethiopia needs a comprehensive approach to ECCE in order to ensure that all children reach their full potential strategies building on existing policies, structures and resources and using evidence based and low-cost interventions need to form the foundation for ECCE” (MoE, MoH & MoWA, 2010a: 16; Guta, *et al.*, 2018).

In Ethiopian context, preschool education is structured in the form of kindergartens and predominantly provided by the private sector, non-governmental organizations (NGO), communities and faith-based organizations. The government had very limited intervention on this regard. To be precise, in its 2007 report, the Ministry of Education (MoE) states that “the government does not run preschool education program essentially for two main reasons. The first explanation, as stated in the document, is to enhance the involvement of the private sector in the education sector, the second justification is to maximize the government’s effort in the other levels of the sector. As the result of this government’s limited intervention, enrolment rate for preschool education has remained very low, especially in rural areas of the country. In addition, primary education is currently taken as a substitute for preschool education in most parts of the country. That is, majority students are enrolled to primary education without having any exposure to preschool program” (Tassaw, 2011; Guta, *et al.*, 2018; Monroe, M. *et al.*, 2019). Moreover, there is lack of conducive and appropriate learning environment for preschool in most parts of the country in general and in Oromia national regional state in particular.

In Oromia, based on the Education and Training Policy to meet the intended regional goals and profiles the region has set standards that serve as a benchmark for the success of the program. The standards describe the sphere of curriculum, quality of the learning environments, materials and equipment of minimum essentials, professional requirements of teacher’s, parental involvement, and government support services required to lay a sound foundation for preschool children.

Even though the standards were set for the preschool by the national regional state, and due to the fact that learning environments' decisive role in shaping the future of the children there is no study indicating teachers' perception on children's behaviour in learning environment in preschools either in public or private preschools.

The Ethiopian Ministry of Education develops the curriculum, provides supervision, sets standards for facilities, and issues licenses for the institutions. 'The government plays a crucial role in policy development standard setting' (MoE, 2006). Different researches (such as Adam (2020), Tefera (2018), and others) showed that 'the provision of preschool education in Ethiopia, including the capital city, Addis Ababa, is poor'. These studies further explain that, because the learning environment of the preschools in general and the classrooms in particular are not conducive for proper implementation of the curriculum; basic facilities and equipment are considerably lacking and the training as well as competencies of the teachers is inadequate.

Despite the importance of preschool education, most of the researches or unpublished studies in Ethiopia (Tsegaye, 2014 and Guta, *et al.*, 2018) studies on the subject area mostly focused on practices and challenges, and situations of pre-school education. However, due to the fact that learning environments' decisive role in shaping the future of the children and this in turn has a paramount effect on the quality of education, and there are indicators that the national regional government is focusing on the expansion of public preschools raised the need for further research in teachers' perception on children's behaviour in learning environment in private preschool of Burayu Town.

Even though there are researches conducted on the area of preschool education, much attention was not given on the effect of learning environments on children's behaviour on the side of the researchers. To fill this gap the researcher conducted a research on teachers' perception on children's behaviour in learning environment in preschools focusing on private preschools in Burayu Town, Oromia National Regional State.

### **1.3. Objectives of the Study**

#### **1.3.1. General Objective**

The main objective of this study was to investigate Teachers' Perception on Children's Behavior in Learning Environment in Burayu Town, Oromia Regional State

### **1.3.2. Specific objectives**

- To examine the teacher's perception on children's behaviour in learning environment (physical, psychological and emotional) private preschools in Burayu Town.
- To assess children's behavioural change in school learning environment.
- To identify the influence of school environment on children's behaviour.

### **1.4. Research Questions**

This study focuses on the Teachers' Perception on Children's Behavior in Learning Environment in Burayu Town, Oromia Regional State. To attain the objective of this study, the following basic research questions were identified for investigation.

- ✓ What is teacher's perception on child's behaviour in learning environment private preschools in Burayu Town?
- ✓ When children's behavioural change is observed in school learning environment?
- ✓ How children's behaviour influenced by school environment?

### **1.5. Significance of the Study**

This study is significant for the following reasons:

The findings of this study added knowledge to the understanding of learning environment in general and its relevance to child's behaviour in preschools which was essential not only to private preschools, but to other preschools that are running preschool programs.

This study contributes to the existing literature. Similarly, preschool administrators, students' parent and teachers can benefits from the study result. In general the finding can be useful in improving teaching delivery and learning environment private preschools in Burayu Town.

The study will serve as a reference to other researchers who intend to conduct similar studies concerning the research topic in the future.

### **1.6. Scope of the Study**

Conceptually, the study is delimited to investigation of teachers' perception on children's behaviour in learning environment in private preschools in Burayu Town. This study used a sample of respondents selected from preschools teachers, principals, and vice principals from private preschools of Burayu Town based on sample selection procedures. Further, geographically, the study was conducted in Oromia national regional state since the researcher resides in Oromia National regional state and he is aware of Oromia education

system hence helped the researcher in accessing the relevant information from the respondents in the preschools. Methodologically, the research was delimited to descriptive survey mixed approach type

### **1.7. Limitation of the Study**

The study was not able to cover the entire private preschools in the town due to lack of resources such as financial support, time and personnel. The depth of the study may not be reached accordingly. Lack of interest on the side of the respondents to participate on the study was another constraint of the study.

### **1.8. Definition of Key Terms**

**Teachers Perception:** Refer to the physical, psychological, and emotional on children's behaviour.

**Learning Environment** is the surroundings that make it possible for the learner to find solutions to their problems and to have access to the materials to help them achieve their goals (Ozerem & Akkoyunlu, 2015: 64).

**Behaviour** is "any observable overt movement of the organism generally has taken to include verbal behaviour as well as physical movements" ([webref.org/psychology/b/behaviour.htm](http://webref.org/psychology/b/behaviour.htm)7, July 5, 2022).

### **1.9. Organization of the Study**

The study was organized into five chapters. Chapter one presents the "Introduction" that presents the background, the statement of the problem, objectives of the study, research questions, significance of the study, scope of the study, limitation of the study, and definition of key terms. Chapter two discusses the "Review of Related Literature". Chapter three presents the "Research Methodology" and discusses the methods and techniques employed in the study. Chapter four is the "Data Presentation, Analysis and Interpretation" and its focus is detailed and logical presentation and analysis of the data. The last chapter (chapter five) presents the summary of the major findings, conclusion, and recommendations.

## **CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE**

### **2.1. Introduction**

This chapter of the study deals with review of related literature. It deals with issues related to early childhood care and education, historical roots of early schooling in Ethiopia, early education in Ethiopia today, learning environment, child's behaviour, the Effect of Learning Environment on Children's Behaviour in Preschool, and the conceptual framework of the study. Additionally the contribution of environment to teaching learning process and the how can the behaviour of the child is influenced by the learning environment are discussed.

### **2.2. The Conceptualization of Early Childhood Care and Education**

Studies conducted by various scholars indicate that the early years in children's development are crucial in building their personality and also shaping their character. Moreover, preschool offers an educational framework for children between the ages of 3 to 6 years that significantly contributes to their development and addresses their needs at the start of their journey through the public education system. It is important for this first encounter to be a constructive experience for children and their family, establishing a sense of trust and confidence that will accompany them from preschool throughout the whole school system.

In their preschool class children join their peer group, forming various social interactions. They learn social mores and acceptable behaviour patterns; they also develop sensitivity, awareness and empathy as well as moral values and social integrity (Sobri, K. *et al.*, 2018 and Guta, *et al.*, 2018).

Works of scholars indicate that, the children become acquainted with the world and their natural curiosity which leads them to investigate further, solve problems and realize their potential in a variety of subjects through their diverse experiences. Moreover, "Early childhood is a period of great opportunity for shaping a child's way of interacting with his or her environment, and shaping his or her adulthood, and more generally his or her future" (WHO, 2012). Several studies also investigated the importance of early childhood investment for children's education and their life in general.

According to UNESCO summary report, 'Early Childhood Care and Education is defined as the support for children's survival, growth, development, and learning from birth to the time of entry in to primary school in formal, informal, and non-formal settings' (UNESCO, 2007). In the Ethiopian context, 'Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) refers to a holistic and comprehensive approach to policies and programs for children from prenatal to seven years of age, their parents and caregivers' (MoE, 2010).

‘Early education serves at least two primary interests: those of parents seeking opportunities for development enhancement for their children or child care to support their own employment and those of society at large in relation to the development of human capital’ (Heckman & Masterov, 2007; Sobri, K. *et al.*, 2018).

Since “early childhood is a period of crucial phase of growth and development, where early circumstances can influence outcomes across the entire course of an individual’s life, investments in early childhood education are believed to be critical in forming the foundation for life-long learning and providing children the opportunity to reach their full potential” (WHO, 2012).

‘A country’s economy depends on the competencies of its citizens and those competencies are set early in life with minimal effort to acquire desired cognitive and attitudinal development, and this is possible through the provision of better nutrition, health care and mental stimulation in the earliest years of life of children’ (MoE, MoH & MoWA, 2010; Tirussew, 2007; Guta, *et al.*, 2018).

Linke (2020) explained that “children’s behaviour is one of the most common things that parents worry about. Children aren’t born knowing what behaviour is wanted and what behaviour is not wanted and, in fact, this varies depending on where you live in the world and which family you live in. So we need to teach children about behaviour, just as we need to teach them about talking and getting dressed and all the other things in their lives”.

“Lack of access to early childhood care and education programs predicts not only decreased school performance at later stages, but also other efficiency measures of the educational system and future social behaviours during adolescence and adulthood” (Carnegie Report, cited in Ramey & Ramey, (2005, Sobri, K. *et al.*, 2018).

### **2.3. Historical Roots of Early Schooling in Ethiopia**

The works of different scholars regarding the historical roots of early schooling in Ethiopia such as Pankhurst (1955) and Wagaw (1979), Guta, *et al.*, (2018) indicate that “the development of education in Ethiopia is characterized by two major traditions ‘traditional’ and ‘Western’ systems. While Western educational ideas have flourished since the early twentieth century, the traditional approach has characterized Ethiopian education through-out the history of this ancient nation. This traditional system is deeply rooted in the Ethiopian Orthodox Church and is recognized as one of the oldest educational systems in the world. For centuries, Orthodox churches, monasteries, and convents were the only centers for formal

learning from preschool through the university level, and traditional subjects of study in these programs included theology, philosophy, computation, history, poetry, and music” (Pankhurst, 1955; Wagaw, 1979).

Accordingly, the importance of early education was recognized as early as Medieval Ethiopia at least for males. Pankhurst (1992), for example, writes:

*Early historical data on children in Ethiopia is so scant that it is almost as though they were neither seen nor heard. We can, however, catch occasional glimpses of the medieval educational system which must have existed for centuries. (p. 3)*

During the Medieval period, male children began attending church services at around age 4. At these services children began the first stages of formal education. The curriculum for children of this age consisted primarily of drill and practice of the alphabet. Mastery of the alphabet was followed by reading and recitation of religious texts that began with the Psalms of David.

During the nineteenth century, Swiss missionary Gobat provided one of the most thorough descriptions of early education in Ethiopia. In describing the more formal church education Gobat observed:

*Having learned to read... they were required to commit to the Gospel of St. John, and to study several of St. Paul's Epistles and a number of the Homilies of St. Chrysostom; after which they were assigned the task of learning by heart the Psalm of David, the Waddase Mariam, or Praises of Mary, and several prayers, and were supposed to memorize long lists of Ge'ez words. After this they would sit at the feet of renowned masters who would explain to them the scriptures and other texts, including... traditional Ethiopian code of law. The course thus embraced seven years on chanting (mu-sic), nine years on grammar, and four on poetry... after which the student had to face the sacred books of the Old and New Testament. There were in addition courses in civil and canonical law, astronomy and history. (cited in Pankhurst, 1992, p. 130)*

From these explanations it can be concluded that, Ethiopia has a long history of didactic education provided almost exclusively to male children. However, a few changes emerged in the formal education of young children by the end of the nineteenth century. The then emperor of the country, Menelik II (emperor from 1889–1913), recognized that modern education would be needed for a modern Ethiopia. In line with his aspirations, in 1908 Menelik established the first public school, called Menelik II Primary and Secondary School. Eight years prior to the establishment of this public school, however, the first modern

preschool (kindergarten) was established in Dire Dawa, a town in the eastern part of the country. This kindergarten was created for the children of French consultants who were helping build Ethiopia's first railroad. Development of such programs was very slow compared to kindergarten expansion in other nations during the same period of time. From 1908 to 1974, for example, only 77 kindergartens were established in Ethiopia. Moreover, these programs provided education for only 7,573 out of the 3.5 million children aged 4–6. In addition, these kindergartens were limited to urban areas of the country and operated by missionaries, private organizations, and the Ministry of Social Affairs and Development. “The federal government at that time paid little attention to early education since it was felt that scarce resources should be directed toward creating literate adults to run the emerging modern state” (Negash, 1996; Pankhurst, 1986; Guta, *et al.*, 2018).

Following the socialist revolution of 1974, pre-primary education was greatly expanded. As the result of the increased involvement of women in economic activities, the need for facilities to care for children became increasingly evident. This need resulted in the establishment of day care centers for early care and education. To meet the demand for teachers at this level, a Pre-school Teacher Training Center was opened in the capital city, Addis Ababa, in 1986. Additionally, at the Ministry of Education, specialized departments that were responsible for the early childhood education were introduced. These included departments of curriculum development, supervision, and teacher education.

The launching of the National Literacy Campaign supported by UNESCO in the late 1970s was one of the major contributing factors to the expansion of early childhood education during the socialist period. While supporting literacy in the cities, this campaign also expanded education to the rural parts of the country, where the majority of the population live. Likewise, the formation of Farmers' Co-operatives during this era also contributed to early education, since schools were needed to take care of children while parents were working in the fields.

#### **2.4. Learning Environment**

“A good environment for children must be safe physically, psychologically” (Feeney *et al.*, 1987) and emotionally. Concurrently, Curtis (1998); Sobri, K. *et al.*, 2018) also described that “children are active learners in well prepared, safe and secure learning environment”. Thus, learning environment is expected to be safe and inviting for children who are attending the pre-school.

According to Kumar (2020), “environment plays a crucial role in shaping behavior. Children are like wet clay which can be molded in any shape so environment influences the initial behavior shaping of a child in many ways like from the way the family is structured to the way culture is structured, nearly every facet of life shapes the behavior”. Kumar (2020) further explained that “children are influenced by the physical surrounding of a social environment which includes housing, facilities for education, health care, employment, and open space for recreation as they spend the majority of their time and start to interact”. That is, children learn from their environment by imitating the social behavior of the people around, and what they see in their day to day environment influences their social behavior. Environment molds the behavior of children to face the situations coming in their life and makes them prepared to sustain in the competitive world. The behavior developed in children when they are young will always define his/her character and will always reflect in his/her actions throughout his/her life.

Although some people see the environment as insignificant, but for teachers, parents, and educators it is something that needs to be considered a high priority. According to (Vickerius & Sandberg, 2006; Sungur, & Gungoren, 2019; Tanner, 2018, Sobri, K. et al., 2018), “environment is defined as the physical environment, its surroundings, and a specific setting”. But, learning environment is not limited to physical environment only; it includes psychological and emotional environments also. Moreover, learning environment is more than just a classroom, but it is a space in which students feel safe and supported in their pursuit of knowledge, as well as inspired by their surroundings.

‘A well-organized learning environment in preschool education causes more time for classroom interactions’ (OECD, 2006; UNESCO, 2005) and ‘supports the development of children positively’ (Burchinal *et al.*, 2000; Howes *et al.*, 2008; Mashburn *et al.*, 2008; Peisner-Feinberg *et al.*, 2001; Sabol, Soliday Hong, Pianta & Burchinal; 2013, Sobri, K. *et al.*, 2018). This means, good arrangement of the learning environment is important for the development of children because the children are developing by being influenced by the environment.

It is important for the design of the learning environment to support and encourage children’s curiosity, their wish to experiment, explore and create interactions. A suitable environment stimulates the children to widen their horizons and knowledge, develops their capabilities, helps them to understand boundaries and develops their self-control. Moreover, the preschool learning environment includes various daily activity areas within the preschool itself and in

the preschool compound. Safe, well-lighted and well ventilated, clean areas make all these activity areas inviting; and the furniture and furnishings should be aesthetic and welcoming, well-suited to the children and what is expected of them.

#### **2.4.1. Components of Learning Environment**

##### **2.4.1.1. *Physical environment***

According to (Okello & Olung'a, 2020, WGU 2022), 'those vibrant, colourful classrooms of your youth or the rows of the desks that characterized the school both fall into the category of the physical learning environment'. This category is all about the design of a classroom, including how it's laid out to influence learning and which spaces are designated for learning activities; and this can include the furniture that is used to fill the space and even the equipment a teacher relies on to enhance the learning experience.

"A well-arranged environment should enhance children's development through learning and play. It facilitates classroom management and supports the implementation of curricular goals and objectives" (Catron & Allen, 2007; Sobri, K. *et al.*, 2018; Okello & Olung'a, 2020). "The way the physical environment is designed and configured influences how children feel, act, and behave. The physical environment allows growth and development through activities and materials in defined play areas. Room arrangement for play activity plays an important role in students' social and language interactions. Poorly designed classrooms can cause disruptions and negative social interactions among students and/or between students and the teacher. For example, having the reading and writing center next to the music area would cause disruptions among children who are trying to concentrate on the skill of writing. Students can become frustrated when they do not have an organized environment to call their own" (Clayton & Forton, 2001, and Sobri, K. *et al.*, 2018).

"The physical environment is a direct image of the teacher's planning and the student's learning. It is where both teachers and students will spend most of their time and a place they can call their own and relate to. It should be well organized, comfortable, and personable and offer a variety of manipulates for cognitive, social, emotional, and physical development" (Catron & Allen, 2007; Sungur, & Gungoren, 2019; Tanner, 2018).

The physical environment will vary depending on the age and number of children in the classroom, as well as the goals of programs and specific activities in the classroom. The infant classroom, for example, will designate the eating, sleeping, diapering, and play areas as

primary for activities. However, the most important space in which activities will be performed is the play area. “The play area of infants needs to be configured so that they can grasp and reach age-appropriate toys or pull themselves up when practicing standing or walking” (Vance & Boals, 1989). Vance & Boals, 1989, Sobri, K. *et al.*, 2018, Okello & Olung’a, 2020) further described that “infants will need to be down on the floor exploring their environments with toys to look at, listening to things around them, feeling, chewing, pushing, pulling, stacking, rolling, turning, squeezing, and shaking. To maximize infant supervision, it is best to have all the activities in one room. This includes the sleeping area”. Some researchers have recommended ‘a separate room for sleeping’ (Willis & Ricciuti, 1974); others, however, have found that ‘sleep patterns are not adversely affected by having a sleeping area in the same room as a play area’ (Twardosz, Cataldo, & Risley, 1974, Okello, & Olung’a, 2020). Having a comfortable, warm, and homelike environment in the classroom provides children with a healthy social/emotional environment.

According to, Vartuli (1987); Sungur & Gungoren (2019); Tanner (2018) and Sobri, K. *et al.*, (2018) described that “the physical environment for a toddler classroom has eating, napping, diapering, toileting, and playing areas. Play continues to be very important, and learning centers become more obvious for this age-group. Areas are subdivided into dramatic, block, art, library, manipulative, and science learning centers. Toddlers need spaces that allow them to experiment, explore, and discover things around their environment. They are constantly moving or on the go and need many opportunities to practice newly emerging skills”. The preschool classroom will have similar physical space needs to the toddler classroom. The only difference is the diapering area, no longer needed in the preschool classroom. Therefore, eating, napping, toileting, and play areas continue to be essential.

#### **2.4.1.2. Psychological environment**

If building, space and facilities provide physical environment to a school, its philosophy and practices provide a psychological environment to it. The psychological environment of a school would refer to the stimuli that influence upon the learner’s psyche in the school. For example, the attitude of the teacher towards a learner would act as a stimulus for the learner to do or not to do certain things in the school.

A positive psychological environment can encourage students to engage with the curriculum- and their fellow students-in ways that can enhance their personal and professional development. “By building trust with students and creating a safe space that feels welcoming

for all, teachers create a positive learning environment and make sure students have more opportunities to participate, ask questions, take risks, and receive feedback” (Okello & Olung’a, 2020 and WGU, 2022).

#### **2.4.1.3. Emotional environment**

Students need a positive emotional environment that supports their educational path because school can be hectic at any age. Creating the psychological environment’s safe space means addressing the emotional environment’s need for self-expression and the freedom to express emotions. By supporting student’s emotional needs and feelings, teachers help enhance their students’ emotional intelligence-which, in turn, gives them confidence. Teachers can also create a supportive emotional environment by creating routines students can rely on, encouraging diversity and choices, and celebrating their achievements.

### **2.5. Children’s Behaviour**

Behaviour can be defined by different scholars in various ways; and the meaning can vary based on the contexts. For this particular context it can be defined in the following ways. ‘Behaviours are our actions and responses to feelings, emotions and needs’ (Barnardos, 2014; Sobri, K. *et al.*, 2018; Okello & Olung’a, 2020). All behaviour has meaning and is closely connected to how we feel and what we think. In the context of children, behaviour refers to how they conduct themselves. It is their actions, reactions and functioning in response to everyday environments and situations.

With respect to children, behaviour can be manifested with their feelings and actions. When children are seen as having nice manners, are able to share with others and do as they are told, we think of them as being ‘well behaved’. When children have temper tantrums, shout and stamp their feet, hit out at others or throw things, we think of them as ‘bold’ or ‘badly behaved’. However, there is no such thing as a ‘bad’ child but there are behaviours that are not good. As with adults, a child’s behaviour is an outward expression of the emotion they are feeling at the time and their behaviour, therefore, has meaning (Sungur & Gungoren, 2019; Tanner, 2018).

Works of different scholars show that, every child is unique and will develop different skills and display different behaviour at different age. That is, the behaviour children display varies at different age levels.

Naturally children are always questioning and want to learn about people and explore their surroundings and different sensations. It is important to think that certain behaviour is a natural and important part of a child developing and learning about the world. Sometimes the child's behaviour may be very frustrating and require a lot of patience on the part of caregivers, but when the caregivers are aware of the reasons behind the behaviour, it can make it easier for them to respond to it.

The table below shows some examples of behaviours typically displayed at different ages and some of the reasons behind the behaviour. These behaviours are a very normal part of development and are also just given as a guide- children develop at different stages.

Table 2.1: Children’s Behaviours at different age levels

Age	What to expect
	Children...
6-9 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Will begin to show fear.</li> <li>▪ Become very attached to you and get upset if you go away.</li> </ul>
9-12 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Seek your attention and will cry to get it.</li> <li>▪ Can show feelings of happiness by laughing, anger by screaming and hurt by crying.</li> <li>▪ Are able to recognise these feelings in others, for example through facial expressions or hearing another child cry.</li> </ul>
12-15 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Look for your approval but don’t always do what you say.</li> <li>▪ React to changes in their daily routine.</li> <li>▪ Are able to soothe and comfort themselves when upset but will also seek comfort from you.</li> </ul>
18-24 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Like to have their own way and will test limits, having temper tantrums if they do not get their own way.</li> <li>▪ Do not like it if you are cross with them and may cry.</li> <li>▪ Have a sense of themselves and can recognise their own face in a mirror.</li> </ul>
2-3 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Show a wide range of emotions and will try to deal with their own emotions, showing an awareness of their feelings and those of others.</li> <li>▪ Are assertive and may say NO a lot and will defend their own possessions.</li> <li>▪ Watch other children play and join in briefly and can wait their turn in playing with other children.</li> </ul>
4 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Begin to find solutions to problems and conflict.</li> <li>▪ Seek information asking ‘why’ and ‘how’ questions a lot.</li> <li>▪ Become more independent and want to do more things for themselves.</li> <li>▪ Can share their toys with other children and can play with something for 5-15 minutes without getting distracted.</li> </ul>
5 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Are sometimes very demanding towards you and at other times very cooperative.</li> <li>▪ Choose their own friends.</li> <li>▪ Are more likely to understand and agree to rules.</li> <li>▪ Want to please their friends and comfort those who are upset.</li> <li>▪ Show more independence in what they do for themselves.</li> </ul>
6 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ is becoming more independent and in control of own behaviour;</li> <li>▪ understands rules in a game, including the rules of fair play;</li> <li>▪ likes competitive games;</li> <li>▪ has a strong sense of family and home;</li> <li>▪ enjoys play with peers rather than alone;</li> <li>▪ often prefers to play with children of same sex;</li> <li>▪ often asks permission before doing something;</li> <li>▪ asks serious questions and wants be taken seriously;</li> <li>▪ can be reasoned with;</li> <li>▪ laughs at multiple meanings of words.</li> </ul>

❖ Children Behaviours mentioned under age groups 4 to 6 years are appropriate to this research.

Source: Barnardos (2014: 3); Community Child Care Victoria (2011)

## 2.6. Effects of Learning Environment on Children's Behaviour

Children are different and will respond to situations differently. For instance, for a lot of children too much noise, too many people or strong smells can cause them to become upset, stressed, overwhelmed or agitated. Equally too much sugar or not enough sleep or exercise can also cause them to become easily upset.

Their caregivers will know the child best and are probably already very aware that there are certain things or situations that the child does not like and how they usually behave in these situations. As the caregivers become aware of situations they can be avoided, minimised or prepared for.

“The environment affects the people, or users, that interact with it; and this is especially true in children who are susceptible to the influences of their surroundings” (Watkins & Durant, 1992; Okello & Olung'a, 2020). Moreover, “the physical environment in the preschool setting influences a child's behaviour” (Read *et al.*, 1999; Sungur & Gungoren, 2019; Tanner, 2018). According to Isbell & Exelby (2001), “the environment is a good indicator of how children should respond or act”. Learning environment arrangement and materials determine where children focus their attention.

“As children learn through exploration and investigation of their surroundings, a learning environment should be attractive, exciting, and a place where a child can learn and play using suitable resources” (Isbell & Exelby, 2001; Turanli, 2019; Okello & Olung'a, 2020). Most of the characteristics in the physical setting of the learning environment can have an effect on the way the children behave and on their mental health. “This includes the interaction with the environment, which aids children in their development” (Bailey, 2002). And also, “how children interact with their environment and its occupants should influence the arrangement of objects and activities in the space” (Isbell & Exelby, 2001).

In a study by (Read *et al.* 1999 and Okello & Olung'a, 2020), “children were exposed to different variations in ceiling height and colour”. They found that the behaviour of the children was significantly changed by the alterations in ceiling heights. This study demonstrates that changes made to the physical setting may have an impact on children's behaviour. In addition, a study by Teets (1985) found that “modifications to the overall organization of the room had positive changes in the ambiance of the room; consequently improving the children's behaviour”.



## **CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **3.1 Description of the Study Area**

Burayu town is found in Oromia special zone surrounding Finfine and situated very closer (15 km from Piassa) to Addis Ababa city administration office. Astronomically the town is located in between a 9° 00' 00"N- 9° 06' 00" N latitude and 38° 34' 30"E -38° 43' 30" E longitude.

Burayu town is located almost at the center of the Oromia regional state which is closer to Addis Ababa city administration because of this there are many people migrating to this area that enables to have large population. According to 2007 national population and housing census of Ethiopia the population of the area reached 63,873 of which 31,504 male and 32,369 are female (CSA, 2007).

### **3.2 Research Design and Approach**

#### **3.2.1 Research Design**

Research design is ‘the overall plan or strategy for conducting or carrying out the research’ (Oso & Onen, 2008). ‘It is a blueprint or plan for the collection, measurement, and analysis of data, created to answer research questions’ (Sekaran and Bougie, 2016). ‘The choice of which design to apply depends on the nature of the problems posed by the research aims’ (Walliman, 2011: 9). The research design is the conceptual structure within which research is conducted; it constitutes the blueprint for the collection, measurement and analysis of data (Kothari, 2004: 31). Descriptive survey designs were employed in this study. Descriptive survey design was employed in this study because, “descriptive survey research attempts to describe systematically a situation, problem, phenomenon, service or programme, or provides information about an issue” (Goundar, 2012: 47).

#### **3.2.2. Research Approach**

According to Creswell (2009) “mixed methods research is an approach to inquiry that combines or associates both qualitative and quantitative forms”. It involves philosophical assumptions, the use of qualitative and quantitative approaches, and the mixing of both approaches in a study. Based on the objective of the study this study used mixed research approach which helps to arrive at possible research destination efficiently. The mixed approach was applied to examine the relationship between the dependent variables (i.e.

child's behaviour) and the independent variables (i.e. physical environment, psychological environment, and emotional environment). To achieve this objective the quantitative data was collected by distributing questionnaire, and the qualitative data was also collected by conducting semi-structured interviews and FGDs, and the data collection were conducted concurrently.

### 3.3 Target Population, Sample Size, and Sampling Techniques

#### 3.3.1 Target Population

Population refers to 'the entire group of people, events, or things that the researcher wishes to investigate' (Sekaran, 2003). The organization that is targeted is private preschools. According to the recent data obtained from Burayu Education Office, there are 171 private preschools in the town. Among 171 preschools in the town 43 preschools whose number of students is 200 and above were selected for this study. The total number of teachers in these selected preschools was 345. Therefore, the target population for this research was the teachers in the selected private preschools in Burayu Town.

#### 3.3.2 Sample Size

The study drawn sample from all private preschools of Burayu Town which has legal permission from the concerned body, and the formula below was used to calculate sample size, according to (Kothari, 2004).

$$n = \frac{z^2 \cdot p \cdot q \cdot N}{e^2(N - 1) + z^2 \cdot p \cdot q}$$

Where,

n: the sample size

N: the total Population size

Z  $\alpha$  /2: normal reduced variable at 0.05 level of significance z is 1.96

p: population reliability (or frequency estimated for a sample of size n), where p is 0.5

q = 1-p

e: margin of error considered is 5 % for this study.

Hence,  $N= 345$ ,  $z= 1.96$ ,  $p=0.5$ ,  $q=0.5$ , inserting these values into the formula, sample size  $n=182$ .

Accordingly, the sample size for this study was 182 private preschool teachers, were selected randomly. Principals, vice principals, and teachers were the participants of the study.

### **3.3.3 Sampling Technique**

Simple random sampling technique was employed in this study. This technique was chosen because, “it is that method of sample selection which gives each possible sample combination an equal probability of being picked up and each item in the entire population to have an equal chance of being included in the sample” (Kothari, 2004).

### **3.4 Type and Sources of Data**

Both primary and secondary sources of data were used in this study. Closed-ended questionnaire, interview guide, and focus group discussion schedules were used as a source for primary data, and documents from the Oromia Education Bureau, Burayu Town Education Office, and the private preschools were also used as a source of secondary data.

### **3.5 Method of Data Collection**

The instruments employed in this study, that is, questionnaire, interview and focus group guides were developed by the researcher, and the validity of the tools was ensured. The data was collected primarily by using closed-ended questionnaire which was distributed to 182 respondents (174 questionnaires were filled and returned), five semi-structured interviews were conducted with principals and vice principals, and two focus group discussions were conducted with group of teachers. Both quantitative and qualitative data were collected concurrently. Documents from the regional education bureau, Burayu Town Education Office, and also documents from the sample private preschools were also used in the data collection.

### **3.6 Method of Data Analysis**

Data analysis is “an application of reasoning to understand, clear and interpret the data or information that have been collected through the questionnaires” (Zikmund, 2003), interviews and focus group discussions. “Data analysis is the computation of certain indices or measures along with searching for patterns of relationship that exist among the data groups” (Kothari, 2004: 130). For this study descriptive statistics were used for the analysis.

Both quantitative and qualitative data collected by questionnaire, semi-structured interview, and focus group discussion.

Descriptive statistics are used to describe the basic features or provide a concise summary of the data in a study. They provide simple summaries about the data numerically or graphically. Together with simple graphics analysis, they form the basis of virtually every quantitative analysis of data. Descriptive statistics are used to present quantitative description in an organized form, helps us to simplify large amounts of data in a sensible way, reduces lots of data into a simpler summary, and provide a powerful summary that may enable comparisons across. The primary data collected by questionnaire was analysed using descriptive statistics including frequency tables, mean scores, and standard deviation.

The objective of the study was to determine the effect of physical environment, psychological environment; and emotional environment on children's behaviour of private preschools in Burayu town. The dependent variable, that is, child's behaviour is expected to be influenced by three explanatory variables presented on the theoretical framework.

### **3.7. Validity and Reliability Analysis**

#### **3.7.1. Validity**

The questionnaire developed by the researcher was used in this study. In order to ensure the validity of the research instrument, the researcher gave the draft questionnaire to the advisor and senior colleagues in the field to evaluate appropriateness of the items and to ensure that all the questions asked in the questionnaire fully exhaust all that are implied by the research objectives and the formulated research questions. In addition, pilot test was conducted in two preschools (Abogida and Aleef) and the preschools selected for pilot test were excluded from the sampled preschools; and feedback from the pilot survey was also used to check the appropriateness of the question.

#### **3.7.2. Reliability**

After designing the questionnaire, reliability analysis was done to ensure measurements are reliable for the research. Pilot test is a survey which was done on a small group of respondents to make sure the questions being asked in the questionnaire are reliable. Sets of questionnaires were distributed to some respondents, and the respondents were asked to comment and suggest changes to the questionnaire. Based on the feedback from the respondents modifications were made by the researcher. However, during adaptation it was

reduced to 5 points Likert-type scales from "strongly disagree (1) to disagree (2) to neutral (3) Agree (4) to Strongly agree (5)" to minimize the confusion which may arise as a result of the responses length. The questionnaire items were 12 and of them were adapted for the current research and checked for the reliability during pilot test.

### **Ethical Consideration**

The ethical issue was approved by Addis Ababa University, College of Education and Behavioural Studies Ethical Review Committee. The University Early child care and Education department provided a letter of support. After explaining the goal of the study, all participants provided verbal consent. All information provided by respondents was utilized only for research purposes, and confidentiality was protected by removing the respondents' names. There is no clearance number, and the University works using a letter of authorization produced by the University Research Directorate and sent to all college and departments, as well as the subjects' oral agreement.

## **CHAPTER FOUR: PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA**

This chapter presents the presentation, analysis and interpretation of the data collected from both primary and secondary sources. The main objective of this study was to investigate the effects of learning environment on children's behaviour in private preschools in Burayu town, Oromiya national regional state. To this end to fulfil the objectives of the study, the researcher collected data through questionnaire, semi-structured interviews, and focus group discussions from the teachers, principals, and vice principals of the selected private preschools sampled for the study.

The data collected for the purpose of this study are presented, analysed, and interpreted based on the research questions of the study.

### **4.1. Presentation of Research Findings Obtained from the Analysis of Quantitative Data (Questionnaire)**

#### **4.1.1. Response rates**

The researcher organized 182 questionnaires and distributed all, the return and non-return responses are presented in Table 4.1 of this chapter.

Table 4.1: Response rates

Number of Questionnaires Distributed	Questionnaires Returned		Questionnaires Not Returned	
	Number	%	Number	%
182	174	95.60	8	4.40

The information presented in table 4.1 shows that 182 questionnaires were distributed to respondents. Of these, 95.60% were returned while 4.40% were not returned. The researcher however convinced that the 95.60% that were returned was adequate to give reliable information to the study.

#### **4.1.2. Demographic Characteristics of Respondents**

The demographic characteristic of respondents is presented by age, gender, occupation, and qualification (area of specialization).

Table 4.2: Age of the respondent

<b>Age of the respondent</b>					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	18-30	102	58.6	58.6	58.6
	31-40	58	33.3	33.3	92.0
	41-50	8	4.6	4.6	96.6
	51-60	2	1.1	1.1	97.7
	61 and above	4	2.3	2.3	100.0
	Total	174	100.0	100.0	

The information presented in Table 4.2 reveals that 58.6% of the respondents were in the age group of 18-30 years, 33.3% were in the age group of 31-40 years, 4.6% was in the age group of 41-50 years, 2.3% was in the age group of 61 and above years, and 1.1% was in the age group of 51-60 years. The data set of this nature indicates that 92% of the sampled preschool teachers, principals and vice principals were in the age group of 18-40 years; and this age is the most productive age.

Table 4.3: Gender of the respondent

<b>Gender of the respondent</b>				
Gender	Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
Male	33	19.0	19.0	19.0
Female	141	81.0	81.0	100.0
Total	174	100.0	100.0	

As presented in the Table 4.3, 81% of the respondents were females, and 19% were males. This data indicates that most of the private preschool teachers were females.

Table 4.4: Occupation of the respondents

<b>Occupation of the respondent</b>				
Occupation	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Teacher	148	85.1	85.1	85.1
Principal	20	11.5	11.5	96.6
Vice principal	6	3.4	3.4	100.00
Total	174	100.0	100.0	

The information presented in the Table 4.4 reveals that, 85.1% of the respondents were teachers, 11.5% were principals, and 3.4% were vice principals.

Table 4.5: Qualification of the respondent

Qualification of the respondent				
Qualification	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Teaching	165	94.8	94.8	94.8
Other	9	5.2	5.2	100.0
Total	174	100.0	100.0	

The primary information presented in the Table 4.5 shows that, 94.8% of the respondents were qualified in teaching, and 5.2% were with qualifications out of teaching.

#### 4.1.3. Descriptive Analysis

The basic findings of the study based on the data from the questionnaire are presented for the independent variables, that is, the three basic components of learning environment; and the dependent variable, that is, child's behaviour.

##### 4.1.3.1. Physical Environments

Table 4.6: Physical Environments

Items	Responses									
	SD		DA		N		A		SA	
	F	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
The school is designed for teaching	-	-	9	5.2	35	20.1	81	46.6	49	28.2
The classrooms are colourful for teaching children	3	1.7	6	3.4	9	5.2	96	55.2	60	34.5
There are separate places for learning and playing for the children in the school compound	4	2.3	16	9.2	57	32.8	48	27.6	49	28.2
The necessary furniture for teachers are available in the classroom	1	0.6	12	6.9	26	14.9	105	60.3	30	17.2

Table 6.4 shows that 34.5% of respondents' strongly agree on classrooms are colourful, and 46.6% of participants' agree on school is designed for teaching. Regarding school physical

environment 28.2% of respondents strongly agree on the availability of separate places for learning and playing for children in the school compound. Similarly school infrastructure 60.3% of the respondents' perceived as agreed that there is necessary and available furniture's for teachers in the class room. In addition 32.8% of respondents are neutral on the availability of separate places for learning and playground for children in the school physical environment. Even though, teachers are involved in teaching-learning, the result implies that most of them do not aware the physical environment of the school.

#### 4.1.3.2. Psychological Environments

Table 4.7: Psychological Environments

Items	Responses									
	SD		DA		N		A		SA	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
The school compound is safe and welcoming for all children	1	0.6	5	2.9	52	29.9	60	34.5	56	32.2
The school compound is welcoming for children with disabilities	9	5.2	27	15.5	68	39.1	47	27	23	13.2
All the children are participating in their learning	-	-	6	3.4	31	17.8	83	47.7	54	31
Children ask questions in their classroom	1	0.6	3	1.7	26	14.9	84	48.3	60	34.5
Teachers give feedback to the children on their class works and home works	1	0.6	-	-	4	2.3	72	41.4	97	55.7

Table 4.7 indicates that 55.7% of respondents strongly agreed that teachers give feedback to the children on their class works and home works and 34.5% of respondents also strongly agreed that children ask questions in their classroom. Additionally, 32.2% of the respondents strongly agreed on psychological school environment are safe and welcoming for all children. Furthermore, 48.3 % of the respondents agreed that children ask questions in their classroom and 47.7% of the respondents agreed that all the children are participating in their learning.

The study result shows that some of the respondents are agreed of the psychological environment is conducive and attractive. But in general most of the teachers are not psychologically aware of the school environment.

#### 4.1.3.3. Emotional Environments

Table 4.8: Emotional Environments

Items	Responses									
	SD		DA		N		A		SA	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Children are encouraged to speak in front of their peers (classmates)	2	1.1	4	2.3	8	4.6	104	59.8	56	32.2
The school has programs where the children can show their cultures (their diversity)	7	4	3	1.7	41	23.6	73	42	50	28.7
The school has motivation programs for the students with high achievements (the school celebrates the students' achievements)	5	2.9	4	2.3	12	6.9	90	51.7	63	36.2

Table 4.8 illustrates that, 59.8% of respondents agreed that children are encouraged to speak in front of their classmates and 51.7% of respondents agreed that school have motivation programs for the students with high achievements. And also, 42% of respondents agreed that school have programs where the children can show their cultures diversity and, 23.6% of the respondents neutral on the school have programs where the children can show their cultural diversity.

The study result indicates that, even though school environment has great opportunity for students to learn and expose in different cultural diversity at their early school level. Some of the respondents did not practice cultural diversity at school environment as perceived by their teacher

#### 4.1.3.4. Children's Behaviour

Table 4.9: Children's Behaviour

<b>Have you observed behavioural changes among children after they joined the school?</b>					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	170	97.7	97.7	97.7
	No	4	2.3	2.3	100.0
	Total	174	100.0	100.0	

The information obtained from table 4.9 indicates that, 97.7% of the respondents showed that behavioural change was observed among children after they joined the preschool; only 2.3% indicated that there was no behavioural change observed among children after they join preschool. Based on this information the researcher can conclude that in some selected private preschools in Burayu town the behavioural change was observed after the children joined the preschool.

Table 4.10: Duration of change of behaviour observed among children

<b>In what duration of time is behavioural changes observed among children?</b>					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	In one month	22	12.6	12.7	12.7
	Within two to three months	99	56.9	57.2	69.9
	In six months	41	23.6	23.7	93.6
	At the end of academic year	11	6.3	6.4	100.0
	Total	173	99.4	100.0	
Missing	System	1	.6		
Total		174	100.0		

The information obtained from the table 4.10, 57.2% of the respondents indicate that change of behaviour among children was observed within two to three months, 23.7% of the respondents indicate in six months, 12.7% of the respondents indicate behavioural change among children was observed in one month, and 6.4% indicate at the end of academic year. Based on this information the researcher can conclude that in some selected private preschools in Burayu town significant behavioural change was observed starting from the second month of the children's preschool stay.

Table 4.11: Types of behavioural change observed among children

<b>What type of behavioural changes is observed among children?</b>					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Happiness	17	9.8	9.8	9.8
	Interaction with other children	46	26.4	26.4	36.2
	Friendship formation	50	28.7	28.7	64.9
	Playing with others	42	24.1	24.1	89.1
	Agressiveness	11	6.3	6.3	95.4
	Beating other children	6	3.4	3.4	98.9
	Taking other children's properties by force	2	1.1	1.1	100.0
	Total	174	100.0	100.0	

From the information indicated on table 4.11, 28.7% of respondents indicate that friendship formation was the type of behavioural change observed among children, 26.4% of the respondents indicate interaction with other children, 24.1% indicate playing with others, 9.8% indicate happiness, 6.3% indicates aggressiveness, 3.4% indicates beating other children, and 1.1% indicates taking other children's properties by force.

Table 4.12: Family's response on their children's behavioural change

<b>What is family's response on their children's behavioural change?</b>					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Positive	111	63.8	63.8	63.8
	Negative	2	1.1	1.1	64.9
	Both positive and negative	53	30.5	30.5	95.4
	There is no such system of taking family's feedback	8	4.6	4.6	100.0
	Total	174	100.0	100.0	

From the information indicated on the table 4.12, 63.8% of the respondents indicated that family's response on their children's behavioural change was positive, 30.5% of the respondents indicated that family's responses on their children's behavioural changes was both positive and negative, 4.6% indicated there is no such system of taking family's feedback, and 1.1% indicates negative.

## 4.2. Presentation of Research Findings obtained from the Analysis of Qualitative Data

The qualitative data was collected through semi-structured interview and focus group discussion. The data collected through these instruments are presented below.

### 4.2.1. Semi-structured Interview

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with five participants selected randomly from each selected private preschools.

Table 4.18: Demographic Information of the Semi-structured Interview Participants

Participant (Interviewee)	Gender	Age	Occupation	Service Year in Teaching	Qualification (Area of Specialization)
P <sub>1</sub>	Male	28	Teacher	4	Teaching
P <sub>2</sub>	Female	35	Principal	8	Teaching
P <sub>3</sub>	Male	26	Teacher	3	Teaching
P <sub>4</sub>	Female	27	Teacher	3	Teaching
P <sub>5</sub>	Male	36	Vice principal	9	Teaching

In this table the “P”s represent the participants of the semi-structured interview. The researcher took one participant from the sampled private preschool randomly.

#### 4.2.1.1. Physical Environments

The information obtained from the interview of the participants indicates that the physical environment of the preschool is designed in a welcoming manner to the children, it allows children to explore, develop sensory experiences. The following are verbatim quotations from the responses of the participants to support the findings above.

*P1: Allowing children to explore, develop sensory experience, creation of private spaces for relaxation, quiet games and private lessons; communication with the external environment, natural surroundings.*

*P3: The preschool is designed very welcome, beautiful and attractive to the children; the paintings of the classrooms are very entertaining and engaging; it is designed for the purpose of teaching; it has playground and quite enough space for the children; the classroom has enough space for movement, for the organization purpose the children’s staff put in the shelves.*

#### **4.2.1.2. Psychological Environments**

The information obtained from the interview of the participants indicates that the school compound is arranged to accommodate all children, children are actively involving in their learning, and teachers actively conduct followup the learning of children. The following are verbatim quotations from the responses of the participants to support the findings above.

*P2: It has no stairs so that children with disability can move and play with their peers without any difficulties; the children are guided to do various school activities; the teachers conduct an assessment by using class works and home works which helps them to evaluate the children's learning.*

*P4: Evaluation of children's learning starts with information from the family and teachers on how the child is doing; the teachers evaluate them by observing when they discuss or argue their ideas and opinions.*

#### **4.2.1.3. Emotional Environments**

The information obtained from the interview of the participants indicates that the children are given an opportunity to discuss with their peers; children are motivated to entertain their diversities; rewards for high achieving students are given from the schools. The following are verbatim quotations from the responses of the participants to support the findings above.

*P2: There is free time for discussion with their peers; there is also group discussion on some issues; all students are treated equally; there are rewards for students with high achievements at the end of the academic year.*

*P5: Children adopt different roles in the process of collaboratively resolve a game; begin to show concern for others; explore the diversity of culture, heritage, background and tradition and that diversity presents opportunities for choices and new understandings.*

#### **4.2.2. Focus Group Discussion**

In this research process two focus group discussions were conducted with fourteen (14) teachers selected randomly from private preschools sampled for the study. The findings of the FGD are presented below.

It was indicated from the discussion of the participants that even though the compounds of the preschools were not designed for preschool, the owners of the preschools try to make the physical environments such as paintings of the classrooms, the arrangement of the classrooms, and the arrangement of the compounds welcoming for the learning of the children.

Regarding the psychological environments, the FGD participants indicate that there is an attempt of arranging the compound of the preschools for all children, the teachers are working to involve children in their learning, and continuous assessments relevant to children are applied to follow the learning of children.

The FGD also revealed that the preschools are working to make children active participants by arranging group discussions with their peers; organizing cultural days to motivate children to entertain their diversities; and giving rewards for high achieving students to help children motivated in their learning.

From the FGD result it was indicated that the learning environments such as physical environments, psychological environments, and emotional environments have significant effects on the behaviour of the children in the preschools.

### **4.3. Discussion**

The study reveals that while 34.5% of respondents believe classrooms are colourful and schools are designed for teaching, only 28.2% of respondents believe separate learning and playing areas are available. Despite teachers being involved, the majority are unaware of the school's physical environment the study result persistent with the study conducted (Tanner, 2018).

According to the study, 55.7% of respondents agreed that teachers provide feedback to students on their class and homework assignments, and 34.5% of them ask questions, 32.2% thought the psychological school environment was safe and welcoming, and 48.3% thought children participated in learning. The study found that children are encouraged to speak in front of their classmates, with 51.7% agreeing schools have motivation programs for excelling students. 42% agreed schools have programs showcasing cultural diversity, while 23.6% were neutral. However, some respondents did not practice cultural diversity. Children enrolled in selected private preschools in Burayu town demonstrated changes in their behaviour upon joining, with 97.7% by respondents reporting these modifications, while only 2.3% reported no change. The findings is consistent with the study conducted by (Getahun, 2019 and Sungur & Gungoren, 2019) revealed that teachers had inadequate awareness about students' diversity, had positive perception about students' diversity and low practices to address diversity in the classroom.

Respondents report seeing behavioural changes in children within two to three months, 23.7% within six months, 12.7% within one month, and 6.4% at the end of the academic year. Based on this information, the researcher can realize that significant behavioural changes in some selected private preschools in Burayu town began in the second month of the children's

preschool stay. Children exhibit various behavioural changes, including friendship formation, interaction, and happiness, with aggression and property theft being the most common behaviours. The study revealed that 63.8% of respondents found their family's response to their children's behavioural changes to be positive, 30.5% to be both positive and negative, and 1.1% to be negative. It is consistent with study result facilitate children's self-esteem, providing encouragement, not praise, is a specific skill that allows children to struggle with problems and helps them feel competent and capable. Setting consistent limits is skill that can help children feel secure and safe in the classroom. A succinct limit-setting model proposed by (Landreth, 2012 and Patrick, Kaplan, & Ryan, 2017, Turanli, 2019 ) can teach children self-control and self-responsibility for their own behaviour by allowing them to express their feelings or desire with an acceptable outlet, while providing them an opportunity to experience the consequences of their decision.

The preschool's welcoming physical environment fosters children's exploration and sensory experiences, as revealed in participant interviews. Children are encouraged to discuss with peers, entertain diverse groups, and receive rewards for high-achieving students through schools. The research involved two focus group discussions with 14 teachers from private preschools. The findings showed that despite not being designed for preschools, the owners are attempting to create welcoming physical environments, including classroom paintings and compound arrangements. Teachers are also involving children in their learning through continuous assessments and group discussions. The study found that learning environments, including physical, psychological, and emotional, significantly impact children's behaviour in preschools. The above idea is consistent with the result that explain children's misbehaviour may stem from emotional distress, such as school environment adjustments, parental divorce, domestic violence, abuse, and loss and grief, and these stressors may lead to behavioural problems that result in a lack of academic engagement (Edwards *et al.*, 2009 and Moreda, 2022). Thus, to support children's emotional, behavioural, and academic development, mental health professionals have supported teachers to learn specific skills targeted at building better teacher-child relationships, increasing teachers' awareness of students' experience and needs, and responding to students' challenging classroom behaviours (Lindo *et al.*, 2014 and Moreda, 2022). In addition the findings consistent with, teacher participants commented on various aspects of individual student behaviour, classroom conduct, and methods they employed to facilitate student learning. Similarly, teachers outlined challenges they experienced regarding disruptive student behaviour and its impact on their approach to managing students' behavior and classroom learning environment (Chen, S. Y., *et al.*, 2021).

## CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter presents summary of major findings, conclusion and recommendations. The summary is based on the findings on the study objectives and the recommendations are based on the discussion of the findings and analysis as well as interpretation of the findings addressing the research questions that the study aimed to answer.

### 5.1. Summary of Major Research Findings

The aim of this study is to investigate the Teachers' Perception on Children's Behavior in Learning Environment in Burayu Town, Oromia Regional State. To achieve this research objective the following basic research questions were formulated to be answered.

- ✓ What is teacher's perception on child's behaviour in learning environment private preschools in Burayu Town?
- ✓ When children's behavioural change is observed in school learning environment?
- ✓ How children's behaviour influenced by school environment?

The analysis of the data collected for the study came up with the following major research findings.

- ✚ The respondents of the questionnaire agreed that in selected private preschools in Burayu town the schools are designed for teaching, but; the respondents of the FGD indicate that the compounds of the preschools were not designed for preschool, but the owners of the preschools try to make the classrooms colourful for teaching children, there are separate places for learning and playing for the children in the school compound, and the necessary furniture for teachers is available in the classroom.
- ✚ The respondents agreed that in selected private preschools in Burayu town the school compound is safe and welcoming for all children, the school compound is welcoming for children with disabilities, all the children are participating in their learning, children ask questions in their classroom, and teachers give feedback to the children on their class works and home works.
- ✚ The respondents agreed that in selected private preschools in Burayu town children are encouraged to speak in front of their peers (classmates), the school has programs where the children can show their cultures (their diversity), and the school has

motivation programs for the students with high achievements (the school celebrates the students' achievements).

- ✚ The result of the data analysed indicates that, behavioural change was observed among children after they joined the preschool (which was indicated by 97.7% of the respondents); change of behaviour among children was observed within two to three months (indicated by 57.2% respondents); friendship formation, interaction with other children, playing with others, happiness were among the major behavioural changes observed among children; and the family's response on behavioural change of their children was positive (indicated by 63.8% of the respondents).

## **5.2. Conclusions**

Based on the findings of this study, the following conclusions were drawn.

Based on the result of mean and standard deviation result of the learning environments and child's behaviour, the researcher can conclude that private preschools in Burayu town effectively worked on organization of physical environments, psychological environments, and emotional environments.

Based on the result of the descriptive analysis the researcher can conclude that teachers had inadequate awareness about students' diversity, had positive perception about students' diversity and low practices to address diversity in the classroom.

Based on the result of both quantitative and qualitative analysis the researcher can conclude that significant behavioural changes began in the second month of the children's preschool day in selected private preschool in Burayu town.

Based on the result of the qualitative and quantitative analysis the researcher can conclude that learning environments including physical, psychological, and emotional significantly impact children's behaviour in preschools in selected preschools in Burayu town.

## **5.3. Recommendations**

Learning environment affect the child's behaviour negatively from various perspectives; as a result the researcher forwards the following recommendations to help the private preschools work on improving child's behaviour.

- ❖ Evaluating the behavioural change of children from family's feedback is very important and the feedback from the families helps in shaping the children in a positive way.
- ❖ Even though the respondents indicated that the school compound is welcoming for all children, and there are separate places for learning and playing for the children in the school compound; the researcher observed from the physical visit of the preschools that some of the preschools did not have separate place for play grounds, and the preschools construction have stairs which are not welcoming for children with disabilities. Therefore, the preschool administration should make the preschool compounds welcoming to all children.

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## APPENDICES

### Appendix I: Questionnaire for Effect of Learning Environments on Child's Behaviour

The purpose of the questionnaire is to generate relevant information on **The Effect of Learning Environment on Child's Behaviour in Preschool: The Case of Private Preschools in Burayu Town Administration**. The research is going to be conducted for the partial fulfilment of MA degree in Early Childhood Care and Education at the College of Education and Behavioural Sciences, Addis Ababa University. It is only for the academic purpose and be sure that the information you provide will be used for this research only. Your full support and willingness' to respond to the questions is very essential for the success of the study. Therefore, you are kindly requested to answer all questions and give reliable information on the issues. Give your response by putting "✓" or "X" mark on the blank spaces.

Thanks in advance for your cooperation.

#### I. Demographic Data of the Respondents

1. Age \_\_\_\_\_
2. Gender: Male \_\_\_\_\_ Female \_\_\_\_\_
3. Occupation:
  - Teacher \_\_\_\_\_
  - Principal \_\_\_\_\_
  - Vice principal \_\_\_\_\_
4. Service Years in:
  - Teaching \_\_\_\_\_
  - Principal \_\_\_\_\_
  - Vice principal \_\_\_\_\_
  - In other field \_\_\_\_\_
5. Qualification (Area of specialization):
  - Teaching \_\_\_\_\_
  - Other \_\_\_\_\_

## II. Learning Environments

Please indicate your level of agreement to each question and put “✓” or “X” mark using the following five point measurement scale:

5 = Strongly Agree (SA)

4 = Agree (AG)

3 = Not Sure (NS)

2 = Disagree (DA)

1 = Strongly Disagree (SD)

S/N	Statement	Level of Agreement				
		SD	DA	NS	AG	SA
		1	2	3	4	5
	<b><i>2.1. Physical Environments</i></b>					
6	The school is designed for teaching					
7	The classrooms are colourful for teaching children					
8	There are separate places for learning and playing for the children in the school compound					
9	The necessary furniture for teachers are available in the classroom					
	<b><i>2.2. Psychological Environments</i></b>					
10	The school compound is safe and welcoming for all children					
11	The school compounding is welcoming for children with disabilities					
12	All the children are participating in their learning					
13	Children ask questions in their classroom					
14	Teachers give feedback to the children on their class					

	works and home works					
	<b>2.3.Emotional Environments</b>					
15	Children are encouraged to speak in front of their peers (classmates)					
16	The school have programs where the children can show their cultures (their diversity)					
17	The school have motivation programs for the students with high achievements (the school celebrates the students' achievements)					

### III. Child's Behaviour

18. Have you observed behavioural changes among children after they joined the school?
- Yes
  - No
19. If your response to question no. 18 is "Yes", in what duration of time is behavioural change observed among children?
- In one month
  - Within two to three months
  - In six months
  - At the end of the academic year
20. What type of behavioural changes is observed among children? (more than one response is possible)
- Happiness
  - Interaction with other children
  - Friendship formation
  - Playing with others
  - Aggressiveness
  - Beating other children
  - Taking other children's properties by force

21. What is family's response on their children's behavioural change?
- a. Positive
  - b. Negative
  - c. Both positive and negative
  - d. There is no such system of taking family's feedback

**THANK YOU**

## **Appendix II: Interview Guide for Effect of Learning Environments on Child's Behaviour**

The purpose of the **Interview Guide** is to generate relevant information on **The Effect of Learning Environment on Child's Behaviour in Preschool: The Case of Private Preschools in Burayu Town**. The research is going to be conducted for the partial fulfilment of MA degree in Early Childhood Care and Education at the College of Education and Behavioural Sciences, Addis Ababa University. It is only for the academic purpose and be sure that the information you provide will be used for this research only. Your full support and willingness' to respond to the interview questions is very essential for the success of the study. Therefore, you are kindly requested to answer all questions and give reliable information on the issues.

### ***I. Physical Environments***

1. How is the preschool designed?
2. How do you see the paintings of the classrooms?
3. How is the compound of the preschool arranged?
4. How are the classrooms organized for the teachers?

### ***II. Psychological Environments***

5. How is the school compound arranged for all children?
6. How is the involvement of the children in their learning evaluated?
7. How is the follow up of teachers of the learning of children evaluated?

### ***III. Emotional Environments***

8. How are the children made to be active participants with their peers?
9. How the diversities children come with from their home is be entertained?
10. How are the students with high achievements being motivated?

**THANK YOU**

### **Appendix III: Focus Group Discussion Guide for Effect of Learning Environments on Child's Behaviour**

The purpose of the **Focus Group Discussion Guide** is to generate relevant information on **The Effect of Learning Environment on Child's Behaviour in Preschool: The Case of Private Preschools in Burayu Town**. The research is going to be conducted for the partial fulfilment of MA degree in Early Childhood Care and Education at the College of Education and Behavioural Sciences, Addis Ababa University. It is only for the academic purpose and be sure that the information you provide will be used for this research only. Your full support and willingness' to participate on the discussion is very essential for the success of the study. Therefore, you are kindly requested to participate on the discussion and contribute in providing reliable information on the issues.

#### ***I. Physical Environments***

1. How is the preschool designed?
2. How do you see the paintings of the classrooms?
3. How is the compound of the preschool arranged?
4. How are the classrooms organized for the teachers?

#### ***II. Psychological Environments***

5. How is the school compound arranged for all children?
6. How is the involvement of the children in their learning evaluated?
7. How is the follow up of teachers of the learning of children evaluated?

#### ***III. Emotional Environments***

8. How are the children made to be active participants with their peers?
9. How the diversities children come with from their home is be entertained?
10. How are the students with high achievements being motivated?

**THANK YOU**