



Influence of Parental Determinants on Academic Performance of Pre-School Learners in Nyamache Sub-County, Kenya

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Abstract: Parental determinants on academic achievement of learners at any level cannot be overemphasized. The major challenge in Kenya is that early childhood development education is left in the hands of the school and parents resulting in a big variations of preschool academic performance. The objectives of the study was to find out how socio-economic orientation of parents, parental level of education, parent- teacher relationship and parent school communication impact pre-school learners academic performance. The target population included 71 head teachers, 142 ECDE teachers and 763 parents and a sub county ECDE officer. The sample size was 9 head teachers, 43 ECDE teachers, 76 parents and a sub county ECDE officer. The instruments for data collection were questionnaires, interviews and document analysis. Quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive statistics and presented in form of tables, graphs and percentages. The findings revealed that socio-economic orientation is significant in determining pre-school learners academic performance, parental level of education was the highest predictor of pre-school learners' performance with a positive significant relationship of $r=0.582$ on parental – teacher relationship and academic performance in ECDE. It was concluded that higher parental level of education was required in order to improve the quality of children's education. The present study recommends that parents should sacrifice themselves in engaging their children in education. It is recommended for parents and teachers to have high parent-teacher relationship.

Keywords: Influence, Determinants, Pre-school, Learners, Academic Performance.

1. Introduction

The first six years of life are most important for the development of the human kind during which children experience exceptionally fast growth and development in all aspects with brain development being the most rapid Bernndt, (2011). The pre-school years further present crucial opportunities for the development of parental involvement in their children's learning which has shown to improve their academic outcomes (Powell, son, file and San Juan, 2010)

Parental participation includes activities that parents conduct at home and in early childhood settings directly or indirectly to support their children's learning (Nakoli and VortubaDrza, 2010). Therefore parental participation involves teachers and parents working together and supporting each other in the best interest of the child,

learners' achievement and adjustment are influenced by many people process and institutions (Larzelere, Morris and Harrist 2015). Parents, the broader family, peer groups, neighborhood etc., influence schools and other bodies for example, churches are implicated in shaping learners progress towards citizenship pre-school learners themselves with their unique abilities, temperature and propensities play a central role in forming and reforming behavior.

It can also be recognized that there are other parental determinants which impact greatly on how children get to interact with their friends in the outside world. One of the key characteristics as observed by (Kahsakhala et. al .2015) include the parent being a stakeholder in education sector influences learners performance in several ways such as provision of basic needs, financial provision, discipline, provision of learning time, monitoring assignments among others. The Kenyan education system

has undergone various changes in the length of training, development of numerous universities and tertiary colleges, administrative development and policy amendments to ensure better academic performance, length of training advantage economics in education and curriculum related advantages like timely syllabi coverage.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Socio-economic orientations of parents and academic performance

Parental socio-economic status forms a huge part of a child's education. Children from socioeconomically challenged background are always faced with overwhelming challenges that are confronted with suboptimal conditions that undermine good performance. Such children are likely to have emotional and socio challenges, acute and chronic stressors, cognitive lags as well as healthy and safety issues. This reality does not mean that success in school or life is impossible. On the contrary, a better understanding of these challenges points to actions educators can take to help their less advantaged learners succeed. (Koki, 2008).

The kind of job a parent does determines the levels of income in the family. Such income play a major role in providing children's educational requirements. Lutz (2008) pointed out that where children are unable to take a balanced meal or have no food at all, education becomes a stump. Learners who are fed well have energy to study. Hungry and malnourished preschool learners do not perform well in their studies. Scientist argue that brain requires nourishment and proper feeding. If the nutritional value of food cannot lead to brain development, poor performance becomes imminent in many occasions. Inability of a parent to give a balanced diet is one of the root causes of academic failure (Kobia, 2011).

In many poor households, parental education is substandard, time is short, warm emotions are rare (Siu.et.al.2008).Caregivers tend to be overworked, stressed, and authoritarian with children. They tend to apply harsh disciplinary strategies used by their parents. Parents often lack warmth and sensitivity fail to form solid, healthy relationship with their children. A childhood spent in poverty often sets the stage for a life time of setbacks. Secure attachments, stable environment, is so vitally important to the social emotional development of young children and are often denied to needy kids. These children experience more stress due to loneliness, aggression, isolation, deviance in their peer relationships, and are more likely to describe feeling deprived, embarrassed, picked on, or bullied. As a result, they more often face future struggles in marital relationships.

2.2 Relationships between parental level of education and academic performance

According to Kenyan National Institute of Health (2015) education level of a parent is significant predator of a child's educational achievement and behavioral outcome, parents who are educated raise their children to have healthy self-perceptions when it comes to their academic abilities, engage them in intellectual activities that help them to develop a healthy attitude about learning and generally have fewer behavioral problems that may hinder their learning experiences. According to Mattson (2016), parents with higher education levels have stronger confidence in learning. Such children build up their own confidence in academic fields hence become successful in life.

The association between parents' and their children's educational attainments has been one of the measures featured in the study of intergenerational mobility (keijsers et al., 2014). It has either been the focus itself or has been part of the exploration of the reasons for earnings, income or social class persistence: the opposite of mobility (Smeeding et al., 2011). Parental education is of course just one aspect of family background that influence children's subsequent achievements. They have a large impact on their earnings: they may alter the 'productivity' of their time investments in children, such as reading them hence affecting their aspirations.

A parent's level of education influences his/her knowledge, beliefs, values, and goals about child rearing, so that a variety of parental behaviour have directly related to children's school performance. For example, higher levels of education may enhance parents' involvement in their children's education, and also enable them to acquire and model social skills and problem-solving strategies conducive to children's school success. Thus, learners whose parents have higher levels of education may have an enhanced regard for learning, more positive ability beliefs, a stronger work orientation, and they may perform more effectively in learning than children of parents with lower levels of education. A research conducted by Larzelere et al., (2013) suggests that parents with higher levels of education are more likely to believe strongly in their abilities to help their children learn. This study further established that a parent's level of education impact on children's academic performance. In turn, parental level of education significantly predicts children's academic achievements.

2.3 Parent- Teacher relationship and academic performance

According to Green (2016), one of the most important factor affecting a child's performance is how involved

their parents are in their education. Developing a healthy parent- teacher relationship has a great way to improve a child's performance. Green argues that a parent needs to be an advocate for his/her children in the case of their education being an advocate by supporting and standing up for them as they make their way through the education system.

The relationship between parents and teachers has changed in some ways over time, though it has always been an influential factor to good education. School districts in the USA have adopted cloud based education software which has given them an advantage when it comes to establishing high quality parent teacher relationships. Keijsers (2014) notes that the parent teacher relationship is dramatically different from what it was some years back. More parents than ever before have been involved in their learners' academics, not to mention general school operations. These changes have the ability to improve learner success over time, as evidenced by a report discussed by the USA National Association of School Psychologist (2011).

Failure of parents to take care of their children's academic performance contributes to academic failure. At the same time here should be a productive relationship between the school and the community (Coleman 2010). This kind of bonding would help in building a reading, evaluation, control and a follow-up culture in education. Preschools should therefore cultivate an environment that initiates this kind of relationship. A study by Hornby (2011), revealed that most of the states have experiencing school drop outs and failure due to the fact that parents have neglected their parental duty of monitoring the performance of their children.

Teachers and other facilitators should view teaching as a vocation and not a career. This will assist in building institutions which can work as one body with the sole objective of ensuring great performance for learners who spend larger percentage of their time with parents. There is need to ensure that learners have given the necessary attention which would ensure educational productivity. The schools and homes work as a unity to address parental determinants so that learners are not left to wander in a world of their own without focusing on academic objective.

2.4 Parents – school communication and academic performance

Available literature indicates that cultivating teacher – parent relationship through frequent communication system was a vital tool in the development of team work among teachers, parents and students (Schuster 2003). According to Monadjem (2003), the benefits associated with effective communication are pupils become aware of their own progress and ways of maintaining or improving their grades; understands school expectations, attendance

as well as other policies that enables them gain understanding of school programmes and policies as well as the capability of families and make use of parent network to understand family views of learners' programmes and progress.

Kraft, Matthew and Shaum (2011) conducted a study in the USA to evaluate the efficacy of teacher communication with parents and students as a means of increasing student engagement. The study estimated the casual effect of teacher communication by conducting a randomized field experiment in which children were assigned to receive a daily phone call from home and a text/written message during a mandatory summer school program. It was found that frequent teacher parent communication immediately increased student engagement as measured by homework completion rates, on task behaviour and class participation. On average, teacher parent communication increased the student number of completion of their homework by 42% and decreased instances in which teachers had to redirect students' attention to the task at hand by 25%. Class participation rates among 6th grade students increased by 49%, while communication appeared to have small low effect on 9th grade students' willingness to participate. Drawing upon surveys and interviews with participating teachers and students, there were three primary mechanisms through which communication likely affected engagement: stronger teacher student relationships, expanded parental involvement, and increased student motivation. This study, however, assessed parental participation initiated by teachers' extent of communication without analyzing the communication between parents and the school. The current study went further to establish the extent to which parent school communication predicts preschoolers' learning outcome.

Joan (2018) also did a study on factors impacting on grandparent and grandchild communication. The study aimed at investigating communication between grandparents who have primary caregivers and their grandchildren as it relates to school learning. The study was conducted in urban and peri-urban central Kenya. A convenience sample of 193 grandparents and 166 twelve to fifteen year old grandchildren were identified by community health workers. A cross sectional survey assessed nine potential barriers of communication including frequency of communication, perceived grandparent knowledge, grandparent sense of responsibility to communication on education matters. Bivariate and multivariable analyses identified significant associations between communication variables and the outcomes of interest. In the multivariable model, higher grandchild age, gender, higher comfort during communication, and higher perceived grandparent knowledge remained significantly associated with higher levels of communication frequency. The positive association between youth satisfaction and desire for more

communication was found to be improving educational outcomes. The study majorly sampled grandparents and is based on quantitative methods. On the other hand, the current study sampled parents, and ECDE teachers.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design.

A survey research design was used to generate answers to research problems about the impact parental determinants on academic performance of learners in Nyamache Sub-county. Both qualitative and quantitative approaches were used to increase the overall strength of the study.

3.2 Population

The target population comprised of head teachers from public schools, ECDE teachers parents and a sub- county officer in Nyamache Sub- County.

3.3 Sampling techniques and sample size

The study employed cluster, saturated, purposeful and random sampling. The schools were selected using cluster sampling from four geographical divisions. The public schools were divided into four clusters and then random

sampling was used. The head teachers were selected through purposeful sampling. On the other hand, random sampling was used to sample parents so that every member was given equal opportunities to be selected.

Mugenda and Mugenda (2005) suggest that it's adequate to consider 10% to 30% of the target population in any given study. This informed the researchers' decision to select 10% of the 763 parents 30% of 71 of the head teachers and 30% of 142 ECDE teachers and it was 76, 21 and 43 respectively

4. Results and discussion

The following research question guided the study. How does parental level of education affect pre-school academic performance?

This question was responded to by 76 Preschool parents, 43 ECDE teachers, 9 Head teachers and a Sub-County Educational Officer.

4.1: Highest level of education of parents' academic performance

Table 1 below shows the educational level of parents and its influence on children academic in preschool as per the findings from parents.

Table 1: Parents on Level of education of parents

Level of education of parents	Frequency	Percent
Below primary	17	22.4
Primary	20	26.3
High School	27	35.5
Higher Level College	8	10.5
University	4	5.3
Total	76	100

Data solicited on the educational background of parents revealed that most parents were mainly educated up to High school level (35.5%). This means that they were aware of the advantages of training children through early childhood education. There was evidence that parents with higher education are more likely to provide quality education to their children according to previous research by Brown & Beckett (2007). That was followed by those who had primary school education and below primary level education at (26.3%) and (22.4%) respectively, implying that still there is a good number of parents who are undereducated or uneducated meaning that they can't encourage their children to develop interest in schooling unlike well-educated parents. This relates to United

Nations International Children Education Fund (2014) which stated that educated parents will be a role model to their children and will cultivate a positive parent-school communication towards school in their children from an early age. Those who had attained a first Degree were 5.3% whereas 10.5% had gone up to higher level College, and 4.5% educated up to High School level.

On parents' education level and its effect to children's academic performance, most of the head teachers (85%) reported that the majority of the parents of children in their school are primary and below primary leavers who are not very much concerned about the academic performance of their children in preschool. They reported that these do not

even attend PTA meetings nor make follow-ups to the school to check their children's academic progress. They do not adequately provide enough support for the teaching and learning of their children. This makes the academic development of the children in the community a very difficult task.

Further, ECDE teachers supported the findings on parents' level of education and its effect on pre-school learners' academic performance. It revealed that academic performance of a child in pre-school seems to be closely related to the level of education of the parent. The interviewed parents were asked about their highest level of education attainment. The findings are shown in table 2 below:

Table 2: ECDE teachers on parental highest level of education and academic performance

Parents' highest level of education	Frequency	Percent
Below primary	8	19
Primary	12	28
High School	13	30
Higher Level College	7	16
University	3	7
Total	43	100

According to findings from ECDE teachers engaged in this study as shown in table above different levels of parents' highest level of education were identified. These identified that, majority of parents had high school education as the highest level of education (30%). This implies that, majority of parents are aware of the importance of taking children through early childhood education. This also signifies that majority of parents meet minimum academic and formal qualifications needed to them to be able to address the cognitive, psychological and emotional needs of pre-school by showing them love and affection and motivate them to attend school and perform academically others who are ready to join and therefore improve academic performance. These parents on top of that, have skills of involving pupils in socialization activities such as games, songs and homework and this will improve performance in school.

Unfortunately (28%) of parents indicated that they have attained primary level of education and equally (19%) represented the parents who had below primary level of

education, meaning that these kind of parents cannot understand the importance of education and therefore, they cannot encourage their children to attend to school regularly or even visit the school to know the academic progress of their children. College level was represented by (16%) and (7%) represented University level as the highest pre-school parents education level they had attained. The finding from the current study confirmed that the level of education of the parent affects academic performance. This is in line with Msila (2012) who argued that illiterate parents denied their children academic performance while the educated ones do not.

Approval on the extent to which parents level of education affect their academic performance. This was done on a maximum scale of 5 where in 1-Almost Never, 2 – Rarely, 3-sometimes, 4-Rather often, and 5-very often.

Table 3 indicates the findings from parents on their engagement with their pre-school education.

Table 3: Parents on parental level of education and learners' academic performance

Parent level of education	N	Mean	Std. deviation
I always check my child's homework	76	2.83	1.310
I always want to know my child's academic progress	76	2.87	1.237
I support my child at any academic activity he/she embark on.	76	3.00	1.244
I guide my child when and where to do his/her studies at home	76	3.26	1.215
I go to my child's school regularly to find out his/her academic progress	76	3.33	1.482
I pay my child's school fees and other fees promptly	76	3.28	1.271
I participate actively in activities involving parents and teachers in my school	76	3.12	1.083
I encourage my child to read always	76	3.11	1.150
I help my child when he/she has problems with his/her peers or friends	76	4.64	.844
I attend school's Parent Teacher Association meetings of my child	76	3.49	1.361
I attend organized functions of the school such as speech and prize giving days.	76	2.29	.921
I arrange for private classes for my child	76	2.20	1.376
It is my job to explain tough assignments to my child	76	3.11	1.066
It is my duty to make sure my child understands his or her assignments	76	3.25	1.328
I make sure that my child's homework is done	76	3.37	1.263
I talk to my child about what he or she is learning	76	2.83	1.310
I get most of my information about my child's progress from progress report	76	3.62	1.032
Valid N (list wise)	76	3.15	1.205

The findings in table 3 above revealed that the frequency engagement of parents on child or children's schooling welfare ranged between 2.20 (1.376) (close to rarely) and 4.64 (0.844) (approximately 4 – rather often.). The findings indicated that the parents rather often get most of information about their children's performance progress report that is represented with second highest mean of (3.62), suggesting that they are also less involved with visiting the school to find out the child's academic progress resulting also to an indication of 2.87 (1.237) that they rarely engage themselves in .It is indicated that parents sometimes engage in supporting their children in any academic activity he/she embark on which is shown by a mean of 3.00 and Std. Deviation of 1.244. That means not very often the children enjoy parental support towards their education. It is also indicated that engagement of parents in attending organized functions of the school such as speech and prize giving days is rarely (2.29) (0.921). Sometimes parents engage themselves in encouraging their children to read, which is shown by a mean of 3.11, which is now better even in comparison to a mean of 2.83, which shows that parents put more effort to ensure the child is accessing ECDE effectively. Also most parents sometimes participate actively in activities involving parents and teachers in my school, which is indicated by a

mean of (3.12). Sometimes, most parents visit the school to find out the academic progress of their children, indicating a mean of (3.33). According to the findings sometimes parents engage in guiding their preschoolers do his/her work at home as indicated by a mean of 3.26. Equally, most parents choose to someone engage I participating actively in activities involving parents and teachers in their children's school as indicated by (3.12). It is indicated that most parents rarely engaged to know their children's academic progress (2.87). Most parents strongly agreed that they help their child when he/she has problems with his/her peers or friends with the highest std. deviation of 0.844 and a mean of 4.64, but much lower approval was given to the view that parents arrange for private classes for their children which indicated the minimal mean of 2.20 with a std. deviation of 1.376, which was an indication that most parents were rarely engaged with their child's education. The overall frequency of engagement was 3.15 (1.205) indicating that most parents were sometimes engaged with their preschoolers' school welfare.

According to the ECDE teachers as respondents, the study also sought to explore the extent to which parental level of education affect preschoolers' academic performance as presented in table below.

Table 4: ECDE teachers on parental level of education determine academic performance in preschool

Parent level of education determine their engagement and academic performance	N	Mean	Std. deviation
Parents always check their children's homework	43	3.53	1.202
Parents always want to know their children's academic progress	43	3.35	1.232
Parents support their children at any academic activity they embark on.	43	2.49	1.162
Parent guide their children to do their studies at home	43	2.93	1.502
Parents go to their children's school regularly to find out their academic progress	43	2.53	1.334
Parents pay their children's school fees and other fees promptly	43	2.60	1.400
Parents participate actively in activities involving parents and teachers in school	43	2.86	1.226
Parents encourage their children to read always	43	2.77	1.342
Parents help their children when they has problems with their peers or friends	43	3.00	1.091
Parents attend school's Parent Teacher Association meetings of their children	43	2.79	1.081
Parents attend organized functions of the school such as speech and prize giving days.	43	2.35	1.361
Parents arrange for private classes for their children	43	2.79	1.355
It's parents' job to explain tough assignments to their children	43	3.16	1.379
It's parents' duty to make sure their children understands their assignments	43	3.02	0.597
Parents make sure that their children's homework gets done	43	2.88	1.434
Parents talk to their children about what they are learning	43	2.53	1.008
Parents get most of the information about their child's progress from report cards	43	3.72	0.984
Valid N (list wise)	43	2.90	1.217

According to the findings from ECDE teachers, it was clear that parental level of education helps them to check their children's homework, parents always want to know their children's academic progress, parents help their children when they have problems with their peers or friends, parents help their children when they have problems with their peers or friends, it's parents' job to

explain tough assignments to their children, it's parents duty to make sure their children understands their assignments and parents get most of the information about their children's progress from progress reports affected pre-school academic performance to a great extent as expressed by a mean score of 3.53 , 3.35 3.00, 3.16, 3.02 and 3.72 respectively. The respondents also indicated that

parental level of education based on; Parents support their children in any academic activity they embark on, parents' guide their children when to do their studies at home, parents pay their children's school fees promptly, parents participate actively in activities involving parents and teachers in school, parents encourage their children, parents arrange for private classes for their children, parents make sure that their children's homework gets done and parents talk to their children about what they are learning how it affected preschoolers' academic performance centers to a great extent as expressed by a mean score of 2.93,2.53,2.60,2.86,2.77,2.79 ,2.88 and 2.53 respectively. It was also evident that parents rarely supported their children in any academic activity they embark on and attended organized functions of the school such as speeches and prize giving days affected preschoolers' academic performance to a great extent as expressed by a mean score of 2.49 and 2.35 respectively,

which reveals that most parents took their pre-school children for educational tours which helped in improving their academic performance and transition. These educational tours help them know world science and acquire vocabularies (Brannon, D.2008).From the above findings, parental level of education affects preschoolers' academic performance sometimes to a great extent as expressed by an aggregate score of 2.90 based on the five point Likert scale in the questionnaire.

To find further whether parents' level of education for preschoolers' academic performance has a relationship with the preschoolers' academic performance, the two numerical indexes (parental level of education and preschoolers' academic performance) were correlated using Person's moment correlation co-efficient as illustrated in table below.

Table 5 Pearson moment correlation for parents' level of education and preschoolers' academic performance

		Academic performance	Parents' Engagement
Pre-school academic performance	Person sig. (2-tailed)	1	6.31*
Parental level of education	Person correlation	631**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	000	
	N	43	43

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

From the above table, the Person correlation index obtained is 631 ($r=0.631$).Being positive suggests positive correlation. This means pupils' performance rose with parents' level of education. Its significance or p-value was 0.00 which is less than alpha 0.01 ($p<0.01$).This implied that preschoolers' academic performance was significantly related to parents' level of education. According to Mitchell K. E (2012), also indicate that

parental low education does not generally enable them to discuss or participate in pupils' homework. One of the reasons for this is that pupils come from families where one or even more of the parents or caregivers is functionally illiterate and will thus feel unable to offer any meaningful support to the children which equally lower their academic performance.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusion

Based on the findings the study concluded that the higher the level of education of parents, the higher the chances of their children to perform.

It also concludes that high parents- teacher relationship from the children about ECDE can create difference in children's academic performance. This was evident in the findings that there is a strong positive significant relationship of $r=0.582$. This means that children's academic improves with the improvement of parents' normal positive parent-teacher relationship.

Parents –school communication proved to have a weak positive relationship with academic performance by the children to some extent $r=0.493$. However relationship was not too strong.

5.2 Recommendations

The study made the following recommendations:

It is important for policymakers and stakeholders to come up with the course for adult literacy as a pre-requisite tool for good academic performance.

It is necessary for parents and teachers to maintain warm and cordial relationship which will enhance easy approach between parents and teachers in aid of addressing academic progress.

Government should provide school feeding programmes books, school uniform and other educational facilities to serve as a solid support for children whose parents are economically low.

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