The Role of Childcare Programs and Family Involvement in Enhancing Child Development in Pre-primary Schools in Iganga District, Uganda

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Abstract: *The study sought to establish the role of childcare programs and family involvement in enhancing child development in pre-primary schools in Nakalama and Bumalamagi sub-counties of Iganga District, Uganda. The study was guided by the following objectives: How do childcare programs and family involvement support child development, the challenges hindering the role of childcare programs and family involvement in promoting child development in pre-primary schools, the strategies that can be used to overcome the challenges facing childcare programs in promoting child development and how can family involvement be enhanced in promoting child development in pre-primary schools in Iganga District. The study used descriptive survey design that included both quantitative and qualitative methods. Purposive and random sampling techniques were used to sample the 77 key respondents drawn from the district, sub-counties, and institutions. Specifically reviewed literature, observation, focus group discussion, and interviews were used during data collection. The findings revealed that childcare programs and family involvement help children develop physically, socially, intellectually, and spiritually. Some of the challenges hindering the role of childcare programs and family involvement in promoting child development were; Shortage of trained and qualified teachers in pre-primary schools and Lack of public awareness in enhancing child development. It is recommended that the government refocus its strategy on addressing the country's education crisis and confronting issues at the grassroots level and intensifying the training of Caregivers for Early Child Development programs including embarking on implementing ECD programs in all government aided primary schools.*

Keywords: *Childcare programs, Child development, Family involvement, Early Childhood Education, Primary Schools and Pre-Primary Education.*

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1. Introduction

According to Nakabugo, Opolot, and Masembe (2019), the role of childcare programs and family involvement in enhancing child development is the starting point for a child's development and the cornerstone of the Uganda Educational System. This is supported by Uganda's National Integrated Early Childhood Development (NIECD) policy (2016), which states that the Early Childhood Development (ECD) process begins from conception to the age of eight years. This is consistent with the findings of Mwaipopo, Maundeni, Seetso, and Jacques (2021), who stated that despite the fact that early childhood care and education (ECCE) programs have numerous benefits, the provision of high-quality ECCE services has

not been achieved in all countries. In China, for example, 95% of children in urban areas attend preschool, while only 50% of children in rural areas do. In Kenya, participation in ECCE services is approximately 75% in urban areas and 25% in rural areas (Mwaipopo etal.,2021). While the enrolment to pre-primary education is relatively better in the rest of East African countries compared to Uganda. In Kenya it stands at 53.5%, Tanzania 35.5%, and Rwanda 29% (NPA, 2015, Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development, (2016). In Uganda only 9.5% of Ugandan children of pre-primary school age (3-5 years) were enrolled in pre-primary education in 2014 (ESSAPR, 2013/14). This means that only 9 children of pre-school age are enrolled for every 100. This equates to a 90.5% gap, implying that over 5 million children do not attend pre-primary school. The Education Act (2008) however pronounces the management of pre-primary education under the management of the private sector which limits access. Despite the effort attached to pre-primary education in Uganda, Majority of children aged 3-5years do not access pre-school educational opportunities because over 80% of the population cannot afford the fees charged for pre-primary education (NPA, 2015).,there is shortage of qualified pre-primary school teachers, Many families cannot address the needs of Children in ECD Centres, Therefore, without Government's intervention pre-primary education remains under private sector, this will compromise the quality of education system in Uganda. It's based on this background that the researchers intended to examine role of childcare programs and family involvement in enhancing child development in Pre-Primary Schools in the selected sub-counties in Iganga district.

1.1 Statement of Problem

The Republic of Uganda Education Act (2008) defines pre-primary education as the first level of education and clearly specifies the role of childcare programs and family involvement in enhancing child development as a starting point for a child's development and a key to the Uganda Educational System. To achieve the aforementioned goals, the Government of the Republic of Uganda has implemented the following interventions: the education sector is expanding community-based ECD centres and attaching ECD centres to primary schools for the provision of pre-primary education (UNDP11 2019/2020), the Department of Pre-primary and Primary Education was established in 2000 within the Ministry of Education and Sports, and the early learning and development standard was developed (ECCE, Policy, 2018).

Despite the government's adoption of the aforementioned suggestions, just a few eligible children receive access to pre-primary education. Only 14% of Ugandan children attend pre-primary school (Bridge, 2017). However, some stakeholders attribute this to an inadequate Childcare Programme and family involvement in child development in pre-primary education, as well as the Government of Uganda leaving the provision of pre-primary education in the hands of local Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and Faith-Based Organisations (FBOs), including individuals and communities, as well as international and bilateral organisations such as UNICEF and the Aga Khan Foundation (Kisitu,2009).

This has resulted in consequences such as: optional rather than universal enrolment, few eligible children enroll for pre-primary education due to the service providers' fee-paying nature, most ECD Centres are located in urban and semi-urban areas rather than rural areas because service providers tend to go where the demand is and they aim to profit. Failure by government to intervene in the above mentioned vices in childcare programs, as well as family involvement in boosting child development in pre-primary schools in Iganga District, the quality of education will be compromised, hence the purpose of the study.

1.2 Purpose of the Study

To establish the role of childcare programs & family involvement in enhancing child development in pre-primary Schools in Iganga District, Uganda

1.3 Research Questions

The study was guided by the following research questions:

1. How do childcare programs and family involvement support child development in pre-primary schools in Iganga District?
2. What are the challenges to the role of childcare programs and family involvement in promoting child development pre-primary schools in Iganga District?
3. What strategies can be used to overcome the challenges facing childcare programs in promoting child development in Iganga District pre-primary schools?
4. How can family involvement be enhanced in promoting child development in Iganga District pre-primary schools?

1.4 Scope and Approach

The study was limited to the role of childcare programs and family involvement in enhancing child development in pre-primary schools. The study included selected ECD Centers

in Nakalama and Bulamagi Sub-Counties in the Iganga district. A qualitative approach was used to collect data from ECCE stakeholders such as local governments, ECD proprietors, caregivers, faith-based and community-based ECCE centers, primary schools, and key development partners. Lessons from case studies of countries at various stages of implementing ECCE in the public school system were highlighted. The data was gathered in relation to the role of childcare programs and family involvement in enhancing child development, the challenges to the role of childcare programs and family involvement in promoting child development, and strategies for overcoming the challenges to the role of childcare programs and family involvement in promoting child development in Iganga District pre-primary schools in selected sub-counties in Iganga district.

1.5 The Significance of the Study

The findings of the study will assist the policy makers in identifying the gaps and best practices on childcare programs and family involvement in child development in Uganda.
The study's findings and recommendations are intended to contribute to the implementation of IECD policy by strengthening the contribution of Childcare Programmes and family involvement to improve child development.

2. Literature Review

This section reviews related literature and studies that have already been done and reviewed from local and international books, journals, newspapers, internet sources, and research reports. The review of related literature and studies was done in order to research the subject and probe available literature on the role of other agencies in childcare programs and family involvement support child development in pre-primary schools so as to compare with other researcher conducted study in similar area. Further still, to collate the reading materials, which have, in one way or another, a close similarity to this study.

2.1 How childcare programs and family involvement support child development in pre-primary schools

The Childcare programs and family involvement in supporting child development entails physical, social, intellectual, and spiritual development. This is consistent with the findings of Nakagawa (2011), who defined the four dimensions of holistic education as physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual, and argued that ignoring emotional and spiritual aspects of education would result in the deterioration of human unity and insufficient development.

According to the Hong Kong Council of Social Service (2015), both parents and teachers were aware that the development of loving and trusting relationships, as well as holistic childhood development, was the two most important components in early childhood education. Luci and Chang (2021) emphasizes that childcare programs influence and shape the child's subsequent physical, social, intellectual, and spiritual development. This implies that the quality of childcare programs can determine the success or failure of any educational system. Proper preschool education can assist children in the creation and development of attitudes, intellectual, physical and motor skills, social, moral, and creative qualities necessary by a child before proceeding to the next stage of development. The social side of children begins to develop at of age 0 – 8 years (Wathu, 2018).

Physical development refers to changes in the size, shape, and physical maturity of the body, as well as physical abilities and coordination (Dean, 2019). This is consistent with (Firehiwot,2016) who stated that parents confirmed that physical skills and health were important, while appreciation of sports should take place in outdoor physical environments rather than confined in four-wall classroom.

Social development is the way children interact with others and communicate in their environment (Choi and Luo, 2015). This includes the development of relationships with caregivers, siblings, and peers, interpersonal skills, friendships, intimate relationships, and moral reasoning and behavior. The childcare program and family involvement in social development promotes a child's growth by aiding a child in learning the knowledge and skills required to interact successfully with others. This is consistent with Nakabugo etal. (2019), who indicated that childcare and family participation enhances child development by addressing children's caring, love, and sharing with others.

Rosli and Lin (2018) noted that children who have a good grasp on their social skills will find it easier to adapt, enjoy their childhood, and later on, be adaptable in various situations as adults. Childcare programs and family involvement play an important role in child development by introducing young children to the real world (UNICEF,2018).

Billekeet al. (2015), noted that intellectual development encompasses the growth of many different cognitive processes and intellectual capacities, such as the capacity for verbal communication, imagination, creativity, and academic problem-solving. According to Kendra (2019)

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responsive parenting—a parenting style marked by affection, warmth, and being attentive to a young child's signals, wants, and interests—may be the most effective way to assist children's development of cognitive and intellectual skills, which are necessary for eventual success in school. Parental sensitivity, responsiveness, and consistency are linked to favorable child outcomes, according to Garner (2005).

Spiritual development is an inward and outward journey of discovery for children as they grow in awareness of a sense of meaning and purpose in life; connect, empathize with and are influenced by others, especially parents and peers; and begin to explore their understanding of God (Chan, 2011).. Additionally, results of Lau's study (2011) also indicated a significant correlation between the parents' involvement and their young children's readiness for primary school education. Lau argued that Spirituality Education should be seen having a closer connection with humanistic education rather than with religious education. She also confirmed that about half of the schools in Hong Kong and Macau upheld spiritual education in addition to the five commonly known domains, namely: moral, intellectual, physical, social and aesthetic. She claimed that spiritual education should be the sixth domain of school education, and hence, the missing gap of holistic education.

According to the Hong Kong Council of Social Service (2015), both parents and teachers were aware that the development of loving and trusting relationships, as well as holistic childhood development, was the two most important components in early childhood education. Lucy Chang (2021) emphasizes that childcare programs influence and shape the child's subsequent physical, social, intellectual, and spiritual development. This implies that the quality of childcare programs can determine the success or failure of any educational system. Proper preschool education can assist children in the creation and development of attitudes, intellectual, physical and motor skills, social, moral, and creative qualities necessary by a child before proceeding to the next stage of development. The social side of children begins to develop at of age 0 – 8 years (Wathu, 2018).

Social development is the way children interact with others and communicate in their environment (Choi and Luo, 2015). This includes the development of relationships with caregivers, siblings, and peers, interpersonal skills, friendships, intimate relationships, and moral reasoning and behavior. The childcare program and family involvement in social development promotes a child's growth by aiding a child in learning the knowledge and skills required to interact successfully with others. This is congruent with Nakabugo etal (2019), who indicated that childcare and family participation enhances child

development by addressing children's caring, love, and sharing with others.

2.2 The challenges hindering the role of childcare programmes and family involvement in promoting child development in pre-primary schools

The challenges hindering the role of childcare programmes and family involvement in promoting child development in pre-primary schools in Iganga district. Kyasanku (2017), who noted that pre-primary schools are crowded, with a teacher/child ratio of up to 1:50 and managed by shortage of trained and qualified teachers. This concurs with National Planning Authority, 2015 that noted that some pre-primary schools are operating with inadequate funds to pay caregivers and ECD Equipment as well as the New Vision; 10/05/2012 reported that there is no line budget for pre-primary education. Although the pre-primary and primary budgets have remained consolidated, nearly 100% of the entire budget goes to the primary sub-sector; with almost no funds directed at the pre-primary sub-sector (The New Vision, 10/05/2012).

Coste (2015) noted that Parental sensitivity, responsiveness, and consistency of family involvement in enhancing child development are linked to favorable child outcomes as one of the strategies that can be used to overcome the challenges facing childcare programs in promoting child development.

3. Methodology

This section describes the research design, population, sample size and sampling techniques, research instruments, validity and reliability of research instruments, data collection procedures, treatment of data, data analysis procedures, and ethical considerations.

3.1 Research Design

This study used descriptive design which was aimed at describing the Role of Childcare Programs and family involvement in Enhancing Child Development. A qualitative method was used during the study.

3.2 Study Population

In this study 10 pre-primary Schools were chosen from Iganga district. The data was qualitatively collected from seventy seven (77) respondents that included: one (1) District IECD focal person, one (1) District Inspector of Schools, one (1) District Community Development Officer, one (1) district planner, three (3) Education

Secretaries from FBOs, thirty (30) Caregivers, thirty (30) Centre Management Committee and ten (10) primary School head teachers.

3.3 Sampling Techniques

The sample size of the study was obtained using purposive and simple random sampling techniques.

3.3.1 Purposive Sampling Technique

In this study, the researcher's judgment was that the Centre management committees were purposefully selected because they reside within the communities and it is assumed that they have knowledge about background and the smooth running of the ten preprimary schools.

3.3.2 Simple Random Sampling Technique

In this study, simple random sampling was used to select the (1) District IECD focal person, one (1) District Inspector of Schools, one (1) District Community Development Officer, one (1) district planner, three (3) Education Secretaries from FBOs, thirty (30) Caregivers, thirty and ten (10) primary School head teachers.

3.4 Qualitative Data Collection

During the qualitative data collection phase, the researcher conducted a guided interview with the selected respondents, documentary analysis and observation check list.

3.4.1 Interview Guide

The interview guide was used to gather responses from 18 teachers, 9 parents, 9 local leaders and 9 school management committees.

3.4.2 Document Analysis Guide

The document analysis was used specifically to get information from the library, internet, newspapers and reports.

3.4.3 Observation Check List

In the observation check list the items were: Records such as visitors' book, admission register book, minute book, children assessment records and attendance register, Quality of Indoor learning environment such as Play cards, bottle tops, seeds, tins, boxes and reading corners, Toys and Ropes, the rooms, Quality of Outdoor learning environment such as fixed and moveable equipment and space.

3.5 Qualitative Data Analysis

Qualitative data analysis followed four main steps: translating and transcribing, identification of themes, coding data, and conceptualization of themes (Punch, 2015; Neuman, 2011).

3.5.1 Translating and transcribing

The recorded data was analyzed by playing the recorded version on a multimedia player. The digital sound versions of the interviews were displayed, and the researcher had the power to start and stop by pausing. The recordings of the interview were transcribed verbatim. After transcribing all the interviews, the transcripts were checked against the recordings for a second time.

3. 5.2 Identification of Themes

The coded data was sorted into arrays according to the major categories, giving special attention to the research questions. All the chunks of data that had the same labels or closely related labels were categorized.

3.5.3 Coding the data

The information gathered from the interviews and focus was used to derive these tags. Codes are labels or tags for the assignment of units of meaning and are particularly useful instruments for the purposes of data reduction (Neuman, 2011).

3.5.4 Conceptualization of Themes

The conceptualization of themes was tied together and paved the way for answering the research questions. The basic ideas for conceptualization were inferred from specific instances of the data collected to validate the findings, i.e., determine the credibility of the information and whether it matched reality. Three primary forms were used in the second, qualitative, phase of the study: (1) triangulation—converging different sources of information (interview and observation); (2) member checking—getting feedback from the participants on the accuracy of the identified categories and themes; and (3) providing a rich, detailed description to convey the findings (Neuman, 2011).

3.6 Ethical Consideration

Ethics refers to well-founded moral standards that prescribe what humans should do, usually in terms of

rights, obligations, societal benefits, fairness, or specific virtues (Saunders et al., 2012).

The researcher respected the participants' autonomy and freedom. The researcher did not put participants under pressure, force, frighten, embarrass, offend, harm, or coerce them. The researcher was honest in reporting the research results and informed participants of their rights to withdraw if they felt like doing so.

This section highlights findings from the study, specifically how do childcare programs and family involvement support child development, the challenges to the role of childcare programs and family involvement in promoting child development, the strategies that can be used to overcome the challenges facing childcare programs in promoting child development and how can family involvement be enhanced in promoting child development in Iganga District.

4. Results and Discussion

Table 1: Some records and materials observed at pre-primary schools

No	Item observed	Remarks
1	Records	They were adequately available records such as visitors' book, admission register book, minute book, children assessment records and attendance register.
2	Quality of Indoor learning environment	They were adequately available variety play/ learning materials such as Play cards, bottle tops, seeds, tins, boxes and reading corners, Toys and Ropes
		The rooms are secure with lockable doors and windows.
3	Quality of Outdoor learning environment	They were fixed and moveable equipment in the outdoor space such as swings, climbing frames, tunnels, **monkey bars**, and riding toys
		The space was well leveled and free from obvious safety hazards.
		The space was adequate enough to allow active play

Source: Primary Data from pre- primary schools in Iganga District

According to Table 1, necessary records needed in pre-primary schools such as visitors' books, admission register books, minute books, children assessment records, and attendance register were adequately available and frequently used to capture the required information such as number of visitors and their purpose of visiting the Pre-Primary School, number of children admitted, Centre Management Committee meetings held every term, and Children attendance is registered on daily basis. The study discovered that indoor play materials such as Play cards, bottle tops, seeds, tins, boxes, and reading corners were available in the majority of the pre-primary schools investigated, but not adequate enough to serve the existing population of children in those schools. Ropes and toys were cited in only a few pre-primary schools and were not common in the majority of the schools studied. This presents a challenge because, when using play-based learning, teachers must ensure that the materials available can serve the number of children in the classroom.

The study also established that outdoor play materials such as swings, climbing frames, tunnels, monkey bars, and riding toys were adequately available in urban pre-primary schools but not adequately available in rural pre-primary schools. According to interviews with pre-primary caregivers, a lack of play-based learning makes teaching difficult because children lack critical social skills, flexibility, and strength to cope with difficult situations such as interpreting questions and relating situations learned to real-life situations. Furthermore, when play-based learning is not used, it has been reported that there is difficulty analyzing, evaluating, applying knowledge and creativity, as well as a lack of enthusiasm. Children also lack support in developing social skills such as cooperation and responding to ideas, negotiation, and conflict resolution. In this manner, children miss out on practice and end up cramming concepts. This is consistent with the UNICEF Report (2018), which stated that the caregiver or guardian is the child's "first teacher" and the primary advocate for the child's learning experience. As a result,

caregivers play an important role in creating a learning environment through play. It is also critical to support and empower caregivers so that they can play an active role in shaping their children's education and development, as well as to facilitate fun learning for children at home and in the community in their everyday experiences. Previous research has also shown that role-playing has an impact on young children's development of early socio-emotional skills (Irvin, 2017). The essence of early childhood learning is experiences that provide space and opportunities for exploration. Children can generate strong imagination and fantasy in these situations, making an impact. This demonstrates that role-playing is more than a meaningless simulation; it can encourage children to investigate both the actual and the factual (Irvin, 2017).

How do childcare programs and family involvement support child development in pre-primary schools?

The Childcare programs and family involvement in supporting child development entails physical, social, intellectual, and spiritual development. This is consistent with the findings of Nakagawa (2011), who defined the four dimensions of holistic education as physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual, and argued that ignoring emotional and spiritual aspects of education would result in the deterioration of human unity and insufficient development.

According to the Hong Kong Council of Social Service (2015), both parents and teachers were aware that the development of loving and trusting relationships, as well as holistic childhood development, was the two most important components in early childhood education. Lucy Chang (2021) emphasizes that childcare programs influence and shape the child's subsequent physical, social, intellectual, and spiritual development. This implies that the quality of childcare programs can determine the success or failure of any educational system. Proper preschool education can assist children in the creation and development of attitudes, intellectual, physical and motor skills, social, moral, and creative qualities necessary by a child before proceeding to the next stage of development. The social side of children begins to develop at of age 0 – 8 years (Wathu, 2018).

Physical development refers to changes in the size, shape, and physical maturity of the body, as well as physical abilities and coordination (Dean, 2019). The findings indicated that parents could help their children grow physically by leading by example. As a result, childcare programs and family involvement should aid in child development by keeping children healthy, encouraging regular exercise, encouraging teamwork, and providing children with a nutritious diet. Toddlers' brains thrive when children are given opportunities to climb, play, splash, jump, and run. Physical activity causes the parts of the brain that control movement to form more neuron connections. This is consistent with (Firehiwot,2016) who stated that parents confirmed that physical skills and health were important, while appreciation of sports should take place in outdoor physical environments rather than confined in four-wall classroom.

Social development is the way children interact with others and communicate in their environment (Choi and Luo, 2015). This includes the development of relationships with caregivers, siblings, and peers, interpersonal skills, friendships, intimate relationships, and moral reasoning and behavior. The childcare program and family involvement in social development promotes a child's growth by aiding a child in learning the knowledge and skills required to interact successfully with others. This is congruent with Nakabugo et al. (2019), who indicated that childcare and family participation enhances child development by addressing children's caring, love, and sharing with others.

Parents interviewed also stated that children learn to socialize with one another and build social skills by connecting a child with other children and adults through the sharing of experiences and belongings. This is consistent with other findings such as Fatima Malik's and Raman Marwaha's (2022) observation that practice actions such as sharing, taking turns, sharing a meal together, or going on an outing. According to Rosli and Lin (2018) children who have a good grasp on their social skills will find it easier to adapt, enjoy their childhood, and later on, be adaptable in various situations as adults. Childcare programs and family involvement play an important role in child development by introducing young children to the real world (UNICEF,2018).

Wathu (2018) states that play has a significant impact on children's social, behavioral, cognitive, and language development. It is something universal and necessary for healthy social development. As fewer opportunities for children to play are provided, a number of social issues arise (Daubert et al., 2018). According to Whitman (2018), play is important in a social context. The reason for this is that at this age, children will begin to form relationships, trust, and long-term bonds. Play helps children's imaginations by allowing them to be creative and engage in pretend play. It also helps children develop language skills and communication skills while they play. Children will not only enjoy play-based learning activities, but they will also develop physically, mentally, and emotionally (Nachiappan et al, 2017). Puteh and Ali (2012), incorporating play-based learning into lessons is difficult if one does not have the necessary knowledge and skills. The study's findings revealed that some teachers, particularly

private preschool teachers, reported a lack of skills in the play approach, which was the most difficult factor when using a play-based approach.

The findings revealed that childcare programs and family involvement play a key role in child development intellectually through verbal communication and academic problem solving. This is in line with Billekeet al. (2015), who noted that intellectual development encompasses the growth of many different cognitive processes and intellectual capacities, such as the capacity for verbal communication, imagination, creativity, and academic problem-solving. According to Cherry (2015) responsive parenting—a parenting style marked by affection, warmth, and being attentive to a young child's signals, wants, and interests—may be the most effective way to assist children's development of cognitive and intellectual skills, which are necessary for eventual success in school. Parental sensitivity, responsiveness, and consistency are linked to favorable child outcomes, according to Garner (2005).

The respondents interviewed reported that parents should connect with their children and tell those tales to test their listening abilities, as well as offer them questions that require them to think or utilize their brain. Parents should also offer questions that assist youngsters grow cognitively or intellectually, such as, "Why do we bathe?" What makes us eat? Parents must teach their children how to count, add, and subtract at home. How many of us live at home? Give them sticks to count, add, and subtract. Sweeping, mopping, making the bed, and time management.

Spiritual development is an inward and outward journey of discovery for children as they grow in awareness of a sense of meaning and purpose in life; connect, empathize with and are influenced by others, especially parents and peers; and begin to explore their understanding of God (Chan, 2011). The study discovered that Childcare programmes and family involvement enhances child's spiritual and emotional growth and development. Additionally, results of Lau's study (2011) also indicated a significant correlation between the parents' involvement and their young children's readiness for primary school education. Lau argued that Spirituality Education should be seen having a closer connection with humanistic education rather than with religious education. She also confirmed that about half of the schools in Hong Kong and Macau upheld spiritual education in addition to the five commonly known domains, namely: moral, intellectual, physical, social and aesthetic. She claimed that spiritual education should be the sixth domain of school education, and hence, the missing gap of holistic education.

The challenges hindering the role of childcare programmes and family involvement in promoting child development in pre-primary schools

The challenges hindering the role of childcare programmes and family involvement in promoting child development in pre-primary schools in Iganga district. They were: Shortage of trained and qualified teachers in pre-primary schools, Poorly trained teachers lack knowledge of appropriate practices and teaching strategies to offer quality services, Lack of proper infrastructure that includes physical premises, outdoor spaces and inadequate indoor play materials, Inadequate funds to pay caregivers and ECD Equipment, Lack of public awareness and home support about Childcare programmes and family involvement in enhancing child development, Inadequate learning environment in pre-primary schools, There is an acute shortage of professionally experienced professional caregivers, There are relatively few Pre-Primary schools and that exist are under-staffed, and over three-quarters of them are neither licensed nor registered, Most of the Pre-primary schools are mainly located in urban centres, which make them inaccessible for people in rural areas, there is no line budget for pre-primary education in the district plan and lack of awareness among parents, staff, and Centre management Committee about the importance of Childcare programmes and family involvement in enhancing child development. This is in line with Kyasanku, (2017) who noted that pre-primary schools are crowded, with a teacher/child ratio of up to 1:50 and managed by shortage of trained and qualified teachers. This concurs with National Planning Authority, 2015 that noted that some pre-primary schools are operating with inadequate funds to pay caregivers and ECD Equipment as well as the New Vision; 10/05/2012 reported that there is no line budget for pre-primary education. Although the pre-primary and primary budgets have remained consolidated, nearly 100% of the entire budget goes to the primary sub-sector; with almost no funds directed at the pre-primary sub-sector (The New Vision, 10/05/2012).

Table 2: The challenges hindering the role of childcare programmes and family involvement in promoting child development in pre-primary schools

No	Challenges	Rank
1	Shortage of trained and qualified teachers in pre-primary schools.	#1
2	Poorly trained teachers lack knowledge of appropriate practices and teaching strategies to offer quality services.	#2
3	Lack of proper infrastructure that includes physical premises, outdoor spaces and inadequate indoor play materials.	#3
4	Inadequate funds to pay caregivers and ECD Equipment.	#4
5	Lack of public awareness and home support about Childcare programmes and family involvement in enhancing child development.	#5
6	Inadequate learning environment in pre-primary schools	#6
7	There is an acute shortage of professionally experienced professional caregivers	#7
8	There are relatively few Pre-Primary schools and that exist are under-staffed, and over three-quarters of them are neither licensed nor registered.	#8
9	Most of the Pre-primary schools are mainly located in urban centres, which make them inaccessible for people in rural areas.	#9
10	There is no line budget for pre-primary education in the district annual budget	#10
11	Lack of awareness among parents, staff, and Centre management Committee about the importance of Childcare programmes and family involvement in enhancing child development.	#11

Table 2 shows the responses on the challenges hindering the role of childcare programmes and family involvement in promoting child development in pre-primary schools in Iganga district. They were: Shortage of trained and qualified teachers in pre-primary schools, Poorly trained teachers lack knowledge of appropriate practices and teaching strategies to offer quality services, Lack of proper infrastructure that includes physical premises, outdoor spaces and inadequate indoor play materials, Inadequate funds to pay caregivers and ECD Equipment, Lack of public awareness and home support about Childcare programmes and family involvement in enhancing child development, Inadequate learning environment in pre-primary schools, There is an acute shortage of professionally experienced professional caregivers, There are relatively few Pre-Primary schools and that exist are under-staffed, and over three-quarters of them are neither licensed nor registered, Most of the Pre-primary schools are mainly located in urban centres, which make them inaccessible for people in rural areas, there is no line budget for pre-primary education in the district plan and lack of awareness among parents, staff, and Centre management Committee about the importance of Childcare programmes

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The strategies that can be used to overcome the challenges facing childcare programs in promoting child development in Iganga District pre-primary schools

There is a need to strengthen creation of awareness among parents, staff, and Centre management Committee about

the importance of family involvement in enhancing child development, capacity building to parents and local leaders to understand the role of family involvement in promoting child development in I ganga district, parenting sessions by caregivers at the ECD Centres and on radio programmes to reach out to many ECD stakeholders and the caregivers should strengthen home visits programmes within the areas where the ECD Centres are located while educating the parents about their involvement in enhancing child development. This is in line with Garner (2005) who noted that Parental sensitivity, responsiveness, and consistency of family involvement in enhancing child development are linked to favorable child outcomes.

Table 3: **The strategies that can be used to overcome the challenges facing childcare programs in promoting child development in Iganga District pre-primary schools**

No	Strategies to overcome the challenges facing childcare programs in promoting child development in Iganga District pre-primary schools	Rank
1	There is need to be training and making pre- primary teachers, administrators, parents and other stakeholders aware of the role of Childcare programmes in enhancing child development.	#1
2	There is a need to increase in the number of pre-primary schools at least every primary school to have an ECD attached to it.	#2
3	The Government should invest in constructing proper infrastructure that includes physical premises, outdoor spaces and inadequate indoor play materials at every primary school.	#3
4	The government should allocate adequate funds for more establishment and running of Early Child hood programs in primary in a district budget.	#4

Source: Primary Data from pre- primary schools in Iganga district

Table 3 shows the responses on measures to curb challenges hindering the role childcare programmes and family involvement in promoting child development in pre-primary schools. The following measures were suggested: There need to be training and making pre-primary teachers, administrators, parents and other stakeholders aware of the role of Childcare programmes in enhancing child development, there a need also to increase in the number of pre-primary schools at least every primary school to have an ECD attached to it. This concurs with the National Planning Authority, (2015) that pointed out that there is, therefore, the need to develop a single policy that will specifically address the provision of pre-primary education in the country.

The Government should invest in constructing proper infrastructure that includes physical premises, outdoor spaces and inadequate indoor play materials at every primary school and should allocate adequate funds for more establishment and running of Early Child hood programs in primary in a district budget. This is consistent with the suggestion made by Brunette et al. (2017) that there is an urgent need to operationalize the quality standards regulations and enforcement framework as provided in the Education Act (2008) and the ECCE Policy (2018).

Table 4: Ways how family involvement can be enhanced in promoting child development in Iganga District pre-primary schools

No	Ways how family involvement can be enhanced in promoting child development in Iganga District pre-primary schools	Status
1	There is a need to strengthen creation of awareness among parents, staff, and Centre management Committee about the importance of family involvement in enhancing child development.	#1
2	There is a need of strengthened capacity building to parents and local leaders to understand the role of family involvement in promoting child development in I ganga district.	#2
3	There is a need to strengthen parenting sessions by caregivers at the ECD Centres and on radio programmes to reach out to many ECD stakeholders.	#3
4	The caregivers should strengthen home visits programmes within the areas where the ECD Centres are located while educating the parents about their involvement in enhancing child development	#4

Source: Primary Data from pre- primary schools in Iganga district

Table 4 shows the responses on ways how family involvement can be enhanced in promoting child development in Iganga District pre-primary schools. The following ways were suggested:

There is a need to strengthen creation of awareness among parents, staff, and Centre management Committee about the importance of family involvement in enhancing child development, capacity building to parents and local leaders to understand the role of family involvement in promoting child development in I ganga district, parenting sessions by caregivers at the ECD Centres and on radio programmes to reach out to many ECD stakeholders and the caregivers should strengthen home visits programmes within the areas where the ECD Centres are located while educating the parents about their involvement in enhancing child development. This is in line with Garner (2005) who noted that Parental sensitivity, responsiveness, and consistency of family involvement in enhancing child development are linked to favorable child outcomes.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusion

In conclusion, Uganda is dedicated to utilize Early Childhood Development (ECD) as a platform for ensuring the fulfillment of children's rights in the country. As a result, this study investigated the role of childcare programs and family involvement in enhancing child development in pre-primary education in the Iganga District. The study's findings revealed that childcare programs and family involvement provides a holistic child development and if the recommendation of implementing ECD programs in all government aided primary schools is heeded to will result into contribution to the achieving education sustainable development goal.

5.2 Recommendations

1. The government should intensify the training of Caregivers for Early Child Development programs.

2. The government should embark on implementing ECD programs in all government aided primary schools to enable wider communities to benefit from the services.

3. The government should allocate adequate funds for more establishment and running of Early Childhood programs in primary schools.

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