

Influence Of Family Size On Parental Involvement In Public Pre-School Education In Turbo Division, Kenya

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Abstract: Parents are the prime educators of their children at infancy stage till they attend pre-school. They remain a major influence on their children's learning through their early years, school and beyond. Therefore their involvement in pre-school learning is very vital since it determines the kind of foundation accorded to the child for future learning. Descriptive survey design was used in this study. The 760 parents and 63 teachers of the pre-school pupils, who reside in Turbo division formed the study population. Stratified sampling technique was used to select 19 pre-school centres out of 63. Simple random sampling was used to select 228 out of 760 parents and purposive sampling was used to select 19 Pre-school teachers out of 63. The data was collected using researcher administered questionnaires and interview schedules. Descriptive statistical techniques were used to analyze quantitative data and these include frequencies, percentages, means and standard deviations. The findings were presented in bar graphs, pie charts and tables. Qualitative data were analyzed using selective coding of common themes and concepts and presented by basing on the objectives of the study. The study found that family income has an influence on parental involvement in public pre-schools. The study concludes that parental involvement does not only mean paying of school fees or buying of school uniforms but it involves attending parents' meetings, encouraging of children to work hard in school, and most importantly assisting children in doing their homework and regularly checking books of their children.

Key Terms: Influence, family size, parental involvement, public pre-school

Introduction

Children may be viewed as growing plants that need nurturance, miniature adults and natural resources that need to be nurtured as future investments of the society. Early learning begets later learning and success and early failure breeds later failure (Heckman, 1999). Children who are vulnerable gain most from pre-school services (Bennet, 2008). Warm and caring relationship need to be developed between teachers and children to enable them to detect any warning signs that might risk children for failure that may interfere with their success in school and life and thus call for parental involvement in early education of the children (Leroy & Ymes, 2009). In USA and Europe educationists has it that due to parental involvement children has greater interest, motivation and participated more in co-curricular activities. They also have greater confidence in themselves and higher aspirations for their future (Bennet, 2008). Children have two main educators in their lives, who are their parents and teachers. Parents are their children's first and most enduring educators (Conger, 1992).

It has been argued poverty put children at risk because of the deficiencies in resources associated with poverty such as poor nutrition, including calcium, vitamins, and proteins deficiencies, which are all essential elements for healthy physical development and cognitive growth. Recent studies have also documented that children from economically disadvantaged families have poorer academic achievement, social skills and cognitive functioning than children who are not from economically disadvantaged families (Smith, et al, 1997). However the studies have little on how the economic status of a family affects parental involvement in children's learning. The ability of parents to provide parenting can be hindered by socio-economic or personal circumstances such as unemployment, stress, and/or depression. Family level factors, such as low maternal education, poor maternal mental health, lack of family networks, have been demonstrated to pose risks to early childhood development (Hertzman, 2000). In the case of poor parental mental health, in situations of extreme poverty, or high levels of family stress parent-child interactions resulting in fewer opportunities for learning experiences in the home (Bornstein, 1995 and Willms, 2002). The period of early childhood is precisely the time of development when children need most care and support. It is time when cognitive stimulation, nutrition and emotional attachment all work together to shape the child's identity, coping skills, intelligence and problem solving skills relevant at their age. The government policy on pre-school is that the curriculum should be child centered and developmentally appropriate which enhances holistic development of young children. It helps children in their cognitive as well as psychomotor and emotional development. In Turbo Division all primary schools have pre-schools centers attached to them. Parental involvement in these centers is revealed to be inadequate that is why investigated how family size influence parental participation in public pre-schools in Turbo, Kenya.

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2. Literature Review

Many families living in high-risk, low-income neighborhoods tend to be preoccupied with survival strategies that either focus inward on the family or do not permit them to pursue the types of parenting strategies that might involve greater school involvement (Eccles and Harold, 1996). A school climate that does not make families feel welcomed, respected, needed, and valued risks alienating parents. Larger, more bureaucratic school environments, typical of those normally encountered at the middle and high school levels, tend to discourage parental involvement. Educators' perceptions of, and attitudes toward, parents may facilitate or impede their involvement. Some educators are skeptical of parental involvement, which they fear signals an incursion into their domain. They are especially reluctant to have parents assume decision-making roles. Educators have actively discouraged parental involvement in middle and high schools (Eccles and Harold, 1996; Epstein and Dauber, 1991). Some school staff want parent involvement limited to certain functions and specific occasions. Teachers who view parents as deficient or reluctant participants in their children's education rather than potential supporters of the educational process damage parent involvement. More often than not, however, teachers who are uncomfortable with parent involvement have not received sufficient training and support in working with parents (Kathleen et al, 1997). Sacker et al (2002) noted that material deprivation had a strong, negative effect on parental involvement. As material deprivation worsened, parental involvement decreased markedly. Material deprivation was notably worse for families in the lower social classes. The deprivation factor accounted for a great deal of the differences in parental involvement between the social classes. Distribution of pre-schools is highly driven by income level. Areas where population has high income tend to attract pre-school proprietors assuming that the parents and guardians will afford fees. The quality of pre-school is compounded by poor learning environment, poor hygiene and poor quality play kits. Teachers pay is low and is verging on miserable and go for months without pay. Pre-schools are also constrained by lack of availability of learning materials (Mary O, 2012). United Nations Education Scientific and Cultural Organization (2005) state that children who lack access to pre-school services tends to come from disadvantaged communities such as those in semi-arid and slum areas. Failure of parents to accomplish their responsibility lays a weak academic foundation for their children and many of them develop trauma and feel withdrawn and may drop-out of school. The economic status of parents has made them uninvolved, uninterested and not valuing and encouraging their children's success (Compton G, 1996). Mary (2012) states that although all families want their children to succeed in school, not all families have the same resources or opportunities to be involved in their children's education. Sessional paper no 5 policy framework on Education training and Research state that the access, equity and quality education in pre-school have remained constrained by limited teaching-learning materials inadequate pre-school centres, inadequate community involvement, lack of clear policy on transition from pre-school to primary, inadequate nutrition and health care and low and irregular salaries for pre-school teachers (Government of Kenya, 2005). This study sought to

determine whether parental levels of income influence their involvement in pre-school education in Turbo Division.

4. Methodology

This study employed Descriptive Survey Design. This design was chosen because the researcher was interested in collecting original data for the purposes of describing a large population which was too large to observe. Data generated through this design was coded descriptively by use of tables and graphical presentations and interpretations are made (Orodho, 2005). This study was conducted in Turbo Division in Uasin Gishu County, Rift Valley Province, Kenya. It borders Maili nne division on the eastern side, Lugari district on the west, Nandi North district on the south and Soy division on the northern side. The Division is subdivided into three zones, namely, Kiplombe, Sugoi and Turbo. The division has 63 public pre-school centres that were used as research sites. The main economic activities in this area are farming and businesses. The subjects for this study were parents and teachers of the pre-school centres. The 760 parents of the pre-school pupils, who reside in Turbo Division, formed the study population. The parents were picked upon because they are the ones who understand the socio-economic factors affecting their involvement in pre-school education better than any other stakeholder in the schooling process. A total of 63 pre-school teachers were also included. Teachers were picked because they have a general knowledge of every pupil's background. Stratified sampling was used to categorize pre-school centres based on the zones they are located. Simple random sampling technique was used to get a sample of 30% of the 63 pre-school centres from each zone. A total of 19 pre-school centres were selected. A list of parents from each of the selected pre-school centres was used as a sampling frame for the parents that were involved in the study. Simple random sampling was then used to select 30% of the 760 parents on the list of each pre-school centre. A total of 228 parents were involved in the study. One pre-school teacher from each of the selected pre-school centre was purposively selected. A total of 19 pre-school teachers were involved in the study. The sampling percentage is in accordance with (Kerlinger, 1964), (Mugenda and Mugenda, 1999) and (Kothari, 2003) who assert that 10-30% of the total population form a representative sample. The sampling procedure and sample size are shown in table 1 below.

Table 1: Sampling Procedure and Sample Size

Zone	Pre-school centres	Sampled Pre-school Centres 30%	Average number of parents	Sampled parents 30%
Kiplombe	18	5	200	60
Sugoi	25	8	320	96
Turbo	20	6	240	72
Total	63	19	760	228

Source: District Education Office, (2012)

The researcher administered questionnaire was used to collect data from the selected parents. The questionnaire was picked upon because of its suitability in collecting data from large samples and to solicit specific responses that answered research questions (Mugenda and Mugenda, 1999). Items in the questionnaire were developed by the researcher in relation to the study objectives. The items were both closed ended and open ended. A five point likert scale focused on getting specific data to answer the research questions. The questionnaire were administered by the research assistants because not all parents were literate thus they translated the questions in vernacular language which the parents understood. The pre-school teachers were interviewed by the researcher at a time that was convenient to them. Quantitative data was analyzed with the aid of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) program version 17. Descriptive statistics techniques were used to analyze quantitative data and these included frequencies and percentages, means and standard deviation. The data is presented in tables and graphical presentations such as pie charts and bar graphs. Qualitative data from open ended items in questionnaire and from interview schedule were analyzed using selective coding of common themes and concepts and presented by basing on the objectives of the study.

5. Findings

The second objective of the study was to investigate whether family size influence parental involvement in public pre-school education in Turbo Division. This was measured looking at four objectives outlined in Table 6. Furthermore, following the importance of how family size influence parental involvement, Likert scale was used for answering (1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=undecided, 4=agree and 5=strongly agree).

Table 2: Family Size and its Influence on Parental Involvement

Family Size and its Influence on Parental Involvement	Mean	Std. Dev.
I ensure my pre-school child is in appropriate school uniform	4.10	1.02
I assign the older children to assist the pre-school child to do his/her assignment	3.00	1.21
I always have time to attend to each child's homework	1.90	0.31
I give preference to the pre-school child when it comes to provision of basic needs	1.85	0.67

Regarding family size and its influence on parental involvement the study found that; parents ensuring their pre-school children are in a appropriate school uniforms was ranked first (4.10) parents assigning the older children to assist the pre-school child to do their assignment was second (3.00) parents having time to attend to each child's homework was third (1.90) and parents giving preference to pre-school children when it comes to provision of basic needs was ranked the least with a mean of 1.85 from the

Likert scale. The findings indicate that the respondents agreed to the first statement with a mean of 4.10 that they buy school uniform to their pre-school children which in most cases is compulsory before a child is admitted to pre-school. School uniform is meant for identification and a sense of belonging to a specific school and those who do not have may feel neglected and this may lead to a low self esteem. The study established in the third statement which had a mean of 3.00 that respondents do not assign the older siblings to assist pre-school children with their assignments. This may be due to the nature of work that surrounds a particular family where for instance children are required to perform other household chores. This will take time and may leave no room for them to coach their pre-school siblings. Older siblings may also have their assignments to do and therefore have no time for teaching or coaching others. Parents however, denied that they always have time to attend to each child's homework which had a mean of 1.90. This may be true taking into consideration their occupation whereby it was found out that majority of the respondents were farmers and drivers who may reach home exhausted due to the nature of their work thus may not be able to help their children do their homework also it could be as result of the parents illiteracy to assist their children. This finding agrees with 2006 survey of Canadian Attitude Towards Learning which reveal that parents feel they do not have enough knowledge to help their children do their homework. This may adversely affect the child's acquisition of concepts and may lead to a disconnect of learning because it seems as though a child only learn in school and stops when he/she reaches home. This affects parental involvement. When the respondents were asked whether they give preference to their pre-school children when it comes to provision of basic needs, the response attained a mean of 1.85. This may be particularly actualized when a parent has a number of children not only in pre-school but also in primary and secondary schools. Due to limited income, a parent might prefer to take care of those in secondary and primary schools while ignoring those in pre-schools. Sacker et al (2002) observe that levels of resources such as time, energy and money are diluted among children as family size increase. This may affect their achievement level for lack of some basic school requirements. UNESCO(2005) add failure to give preference to pre-school child may lay a weak foundation for him or her and continues to say such children develop trauma and feel withdrawn and may lead to drop out of school while Olmsted(1994) has it that children from one or two child family exhibit improved children's skills at sharing and cooperating. Respondents agreed that parents ensure their pre-school children are in appropriate school uniforms. However, they were not sure whether they assign their older children to assist the pre-school children to do their assignment. On the other hand, they denied the statements that they always have time to attend to their children's homework and that they give preference to the pre-school child when it comes to provision of basic needs.

6. Conclusion

Pre-school children are in appropriate school uniforms. However, they were not sure whether they assign their older children to assist the pre-school children to do their assignment. On the other hand, parents disagreed that they always have time to attend to their children's homework and that they give preference to the pre-school child when it comes to provision of basic needs.

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