

INFLUENCE OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT ON PERFORMANCE OF CHILDREN
AGED 5-6 YEARS IN KISWAHILI READING COMPREHENSION IN PUBLIC PRE-
SCHOOLS IN ATHI-RIVER ZONE, MACHAKOS COUNTY, KENYA

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DECLARATION

This thesis is my original work and has not been presented for the award of a degree in any other University.



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This proposal has been submitted for examination with our approval as university supervisors.



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DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to my dear mother Jessica Mudaki and my sister Beth Mudaki for their unconditional support; morally and financially. To my adorable children Nicole, Sonia, and Ryan Mutwasi for their love, support and encouragement in my academic journey.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

AKF	Aga Khan Foundation
ECDE	Early Childhood Development Education
ECEC	Early Childhood Education and Care
HLE	Home Learning Environment
KICD	Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development
KNBS	Kenya National Bureau of Statistics
MoEST	Ministry of Education Science and Technology
PISA	Programme for International Student Assessment
UNESCO	United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund

ABSTRACT

The purpose of the study was to investigate the influence of parental involvement on performance of children aged 5-6 years in Kiswahili reading comprehension in public preschools in Athi- River Zone, Machakos County. Four research objectives guided the study. They aimed at first determining the extent to which parental involvement in storybook reading and shared reading activities influenced children's performance in Kiswahili reading comprehension, secondly assess the extent to which frequency of both select Kiswahili story book reading and shared reading activities between parent and child at home and lastly to determine the extent to which this involvement influenced performance of preschool children in Kiswahili reading comprehension test. The study adopted the quasi-experimental research design to find out the influence of parental involvement in children's reading at home on preschool children's performance in Kiswahili reading comprehension. The sample size comprised of 100 preschool parents, 100 preschool pupils and four preschool teachers. Data were collected using interview guides, pre and post preschool reading comprehension test, school archival data and parent's focus group discussion guides. Reliability of research instruments stood at ($r=0.84$) signifying that the instruments were reliable. Findings on the influence of parental involvement in reading select Kiswahili story books with the children at home on children's performance in Kiswahili reading comprehension reveal that parental involvement at baseline was wanting. However, after the commencement of the experiment, they had good progress in reading with the children at home, they had established daily routines of reading with their children, they came up with many shared reading activities, had purchased more Kiswahili story books with most homes having between 15-20 story books and some above 20. Majority of parents read to the children and were the initiators of reading sessions in the home other than the children themselves. However time constraints, poor reading environment as indicated by 60% of parents from the experimental group and ignorance were some of the major challenges they faced. Involving other family members in reading activities and cooperating with the teachers were some of the strategies to overcome these challenges. The results on frequency of parental involvement in reading select story books with the children indicated that 64% and 60% of parents from the control and experimental group respectively rarely read to their children at baseline. The findings also indicated an increase in the frequency and number of shared reading activities between the parents and their children at end line as indicated by 42% of parents who did it very frequently and 40% frequently. Findings also revealed that parental involvement in children's reading at home had a positive influence on development of reading comprehension and other reading skills in that parents and teacher noted an improvement in children's comprehension, vocabulary, fluency, speed among others. Parental involvement on children's performance in Kiswahili reading comprehension was positive as measured by the pre and post test results which indicated statistically 2.5 in the mean scores of children from experimental who performed better than the control group. Based on the findings the study recommended that the government through the Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development should come up with workshops, seminars, training sessions and a reading manual to guide parents on meaningful indulgence in their children's reading at home. The study further recommended mobilization of stakeholders to establish community libraries to make books available to more families.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Reading plays an integral part in the education of individuals, especially young children. It is so important that it cannot be eliminated from the education process. Reading is a basic life skill which is a cornerstone for a child's success in school and, indeed, throughout life (Gayle, 2010). Without the ability to read properly, opportunities for personal fulfillment and job success will inevitably be lost. Reading provides an opportunity to develop children's minds and this helps them form enduring habits and character (Gayle, 2010). It is significant that children at their formative age should acquire love for books and reading culture, which should start right from birth of a child and the book, can be considered as the third parent to the child (Burgess & Anthony, 2000).

Education is a fundamental right and obligation. Both the OECD (2006) and UNICEF (2008a) argue that early childhood education and care (ECEC) services should recognize mothers' and fathers' right to be informed, comment on and participate in key decisions concerning their child. Aga Khan Foundation reading for children training manual (2014), too many children all over the world leave primary school unable to read and write fluently. What happens in school is important but children must be read to long before they go to school. Children whose family members read to at home outshine those who have not had this opportunity in literacy, critical thinking, communication, social emotional skills and confidence.

The involvement of parents in young children's Early Head Start, the Perry Preschool and the Chicago Parent Centers are examples of successful ECEC services that promote parental engagement from the United States and offer evidence that parental engagement matters and that it has a major impact on children's academic success and social development (UNICEF, 2008b). The Effective Provision of Pre-School Education study of England (United Kingdom) has also shown the importance of parent-child activities in contributing to the quality of children's Home Learning Environment (HLE). Research results indicate that programmes which directly promote activities for parents and children to engage in together are likely to be most beneficial for young children (Sylva, 2004). United States Department of Education (2011), the President of the United States of America, Barrack Obama, is committed to providing the support that the youngest children need to prepare to succeed later in school. He supports a seamless and comprehensive set of services and support for children, from birth through age 5 because the President is committed to helping all children succeed-regardless of where they spend their day. He urges States to impose high standards across all publicly-funded early learning settings, develop new programs to improve opportunities and outcomes, engage parents in their child's early learning and development, and improve the early education workforce.

Reading and communication with the child emerge as an important facet of parental involvement in numerous studies. An intervention study to increase vocabulary of 3-4 year-old children (Lonigan & Whitehurst, 1998) found it most effective when parents as well as teachers were trained to read to the children using dialogic reading in which they were encouraged to ask questions to the children. Parents were given information about opportunities for engagement in their children's developing literacy abilities. When there was increased frequency and quality of

language interactions between children and their parents through book-centered activities, reading growth was predicted on children who were non-readers or were behind by one or two grade levels. Findings from this study point to an increased amount of book-reading activities that were related to increases in language skills as measured by increased vocabulary, story comprehension and sequencing in story production.

Reading stories at home, a popular form of parental engagement helps with children's reading development (Keating & Taylorson, 1996). Storybook reading between a parent and their young child can be a source of entertainment and learning. First, parents can promote their young child's vocabulary when they read books to them and in time, children's vocabulary skills will facilitate their reading comprehension (Snow, 1991). Previous research has shown that exposure to storybooks has a positive relation on the development of a child's vocabulary and listening comprehension skills and a positive reading attitude and that children are more likely to enjoy reading later on (Sénéchal, 2006). This research expanded upon these findings to investigate if exposure to storybooks is also related to the development of a child's reading comprehension beyond vocabulary and listening comprehension Oxfam (1999) cited in UNESCO/OECD (2006) Africa acknowledges the significance of parents' involvement in children's literacy development. However, poor language policies and neglect of potential in early years is an impediment towards early literacy. Illiteracy among adults in Africa has also been cited as one of the impediments towards this involvement in numerous researches. Family literacy project in South Africa aimed at addressing the low literacy achievement of many pre-school and primary school children and lack of parent's confidence in their ability to support these children estimated that 7.4 and 8.5 million adults are functionally illiterate in reading and numeracy

respectively and one million children in the country live in a household where no adult can read. In another recent survey it was found that just over 50% of South African families own no books for recreational or leisure time reading. A national evaluation carried out by the South African Education Department in 2003 a project set up in 2000 after a revelation that the literacy scores of preschool children were not improving despite the government's intervention in ECDE sector found out that the average reading comprehension and writing score for grade three children was only 39% a figure which was very low. These findings clearly indicate parents are not effectively playing their role in their children's reading and most homes without books provide a poor environment for reading for children.

A survey conducted by an East African group UWEZO in 2011 to test the literacy skills of children in households across East Africa revealed that too many children all over the world left primary school unable to read and write fluently. Twenty eight per cent of children in Kenya, 4% in Uganda and 8% in Tanzania were unable to pass a Standard 2 level Kiswahili test. These findings reveal that the many of the children are not acquiring basic competences during the early years yet Kiswahili is the language of instruction during early years which teachers use to explain challenging concepts and with which children converse with one other (www.theguardian.com).

The Kenya National Adult Literacy Survey report, conducted by Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (KNBS, 2006) revealed that most adults in Kenya are illiterate. The country had a national adult literacy of 61.5% and a numeracy rate of 64.5% indicating that more people are more knowledgeable in computation than reading. The critical finding was that on average 38%

of adults in Kenya are illiterate with women performing worse than men. These findings imply that most parents in many households lack the capacity to help their children in reading at home. Many parents want their children to develop skills that will help them succeed in life, do well in school and contribute to their families and communities. They are aware of keeping children safe and healthy but sometimes they underestimate their important role in supporting their children's learning, language and sense of themselves. Many parents ask how they could find time for such things when they are so busy and they fail to know that basic concepts which help children to learn are best learnt through every day activities and they do not have to put aside time to 'teach' them (AKF, 2014) concurrent with UNESCO/OECD (2005) in its background of Kenya report points out that parents put pressure on teachers to teach ECDE children to read and write, but leave the whole burden to the teacher in the belief that teaching is a function for the school only. These findings imply that parental involvement in children's reading development at home is very minimal due to their uninformed perspective that this role is a function of the teachers and the school.

In a multiple indicator survey report conducted by Kenya National Bureau of Statistics in conjunction with UNICEF (2008) in eastern province Machakos district on monitoring the situation of children and women, several of activities that support early learning were collected in the survey. These included the involvement of adults with children in reading books or looking at picture books, telling stories, singing songs, taking children outside the home, compound or yard, playing with children, and spending time with children naming, counting, or drawing things.

The report KNBS and UNICEF (2008) revealed that 62% of children aged 0-5 years, household members engaged in about four activities that promote learning and school readiness. The survey also revealed that children whose mothers have no education tend to interact more with household members (77%) compared to those who belong to mothers with primary (61%) and secondary or higher (61%) education. In addition, the average number of activities that adults engaged with children was 3.9%. Fathers' involvement with one or more activities was reported for only 16 % of the children, with an average of 0.4 activities. Adult literacy rates were derived from the ability of women to read a short simple statement or on school attendance. Overall, 91 per cent of women aged 15-24 years in Machakos are literate. This percentage is higher among younger women in the age group 15-19 years (94 %) compared with those aged 20-24 years (88 %). Despite the high percentage of literate women, participation in literacy activities which were also quite minimal with their children in most households was deemed very low similar to that of fathers. Basing on above background of this study, there was need for researcher to investigate the influence of parental involvement on performance of children in Kiswahili reading comprehension in Athi-River zone, Machakos County.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Parents' willingness to delegate part of the care for their children to Early Childhood Education and Care services does not mean that the importance of the parent's role has diminished. It is still widely acknowledged that parental behavior in the child's first five years is critical for the development of important academic and social skills and abilities.

Kenya fully recognizes the importance of parental involvement in children's learning in ECDE however various impediments have been found to exist, some parents are illiterate implying that they are unable to fully participate in their children's reading development. Many parents are ignorant and do not seem to understand their role in children's reading development and most think that learning to read and write is a function of the teacher and the school. Most parents claim to be so busy and thus do not dedicate any time to engage their children in any reading activities in the home. Moreover most homes do not provide a rich reading environment full of reading materials to expose children to reading. It was of particular interest to this research to find out and shed light on influence of parental involvement on performance of pre-schoolchildren in Kiswahili reading comprehension in Athi-River Zone, Machakos County.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to investigate the influence of parental involvement on performance of children aged 5-6 years in Kiswahili reading comprehension in public pre-schools in Athi-River Zone, Machakos County.

1.4 Objectives of the Study

This research was guided by the following objectives:

- 1 To determine the extent to which parental involvement in select Kiswahili story books' shared-reading activities at home influences children's performance in Kiswahili reading comprehension.

- 2 To establish the extent to which frequency of parental participation in select Kiswahili story book activities with children at home influences pre-school children's performance in Kiswahili reading comprehension.
- 3 To examine the extent to which frequency of parental participation in select Kiswahili story book shared-reading activities with children at home influences pre-school children's performance in Kiswahili reading comprehension
- 4 To determine the extent to which parental involvement in select Kiswahili story book reading and shared activities influences children's performance in Kiswahili reading comprehension.

1.5 Research Questions

This study was guided by the following research questions:

- 1 To what extent does parental involvement in shared reading activities with the children at home influence their performance in Kiswahili reading comprehension?
- 2 To what extent does frequency of select Kiswahili story book reading between parents and their children at home influence their performance in Kiswahili reading comprehension?
- 3 To what extent does parental participation in shared reading activities with their children at home influence their performance in Kiswahili reading comprehension?
- 4 To what extent does parental involvement in select Kiswahili storybook reading and shared reading activities with the children at home influence children's performance in Kiswahili reading comprehension?

1.6 Significance of the study

The findings of this study is useful in providing information that will encourage parents to engage meaningfully in more shared storybook reading with their children at home thus promote their reading comprehension and other language skills. They will also help parents in creating a rich home literacy environment and reading culture which helps in the development of children's reading skills. It will inform the Ministry of Education and curriculum developers to come up with a reading guide for parents for home use, come up with seminars and workshops in an effort to engage parents more and actively in their children's reading development by providing them with information on various ways of engagement in the same. They are also expected to contribute to the body of knowledge regarding children's reading and the crucial role played by parents in the same. They are expected to help other researchers to become conversant with research methodology of this kind if they wish to carry out similar research. Finally it may be useful in mobilizing stakeholders in ECDE to develop community libraries thus make books available to parents, families, schools and children in the community.

1.7 Limitations of the Study

There was lack of cooperation from some of the parents in the carrying out of the intervention programme due to parents' busy work schedules. The low literacy level of a few of the parents was also a hindrance. To overcome this limitation, the researcher encouraged parents to make use of any other literate members of the family such as older siblings and relatives in cases where a parent was too busy to engage in reading activities at home or was illiterate for that matter.

1.8 Delimitations of the Study

The study was delimited to a pre-school class, parents and teachers from two public pre- schools from Athi-River Zone, Machakos County whose medium of instruction in pre-school was Kiswahili. The study was further delimited to reading selected Kiswahili story books and to children's performance in Kiswahili reading comprehension.

1.9 Basic Assumptions of the Study

The study was based upon the assumption that the schools participating in the study were similar in all ways. It was assumed that parents were conversant with the benefits of participating in their children's reading activities. It was assumed that children had mastered enough language by pre-school age to enable them participate fully in reading activities with their parents and that parents' literacy levels and socio-economic status greatly influenced children's performance in reading skills. The study also assumed that all, if not most, parents were proficient in Kiswahili and that reading activities are part of early childhood curriculum in the respective schools. The study further assumed that a child's individual characteristics affected their level of performance in reading comprehension and acquisition of other language skills. It was assumed that teachers were carrying out their role effectively in schools regarding children's reading skills development and that parents were involved in their children's reading activities at home and fully embraced and stuck to the planned intervention schedule.

1.10 Operational Definition of Key Terms

- 1 **Comprehension** refers to a child's ability to understand the meaning of Kiswahili language text.

- 2 **Frequency of reading** refers to the number of occurrences reading activities happen within a given time frame or period between a parent and pre-school child.
- 3 **Home-based activities** refer to those activities that parents engage their children in at home geared towards development of their reading comprehension skills.
- 4 **Influence** refers to a consequence in performance of children in Kiswahili reading comprehension as a result of parental engagement in children's reading activities at home.
- 5 **Literacy environment** refers to a child's home reading surroundings in terms of availability of reading materials and activities
- 6 **Parent** refers to all caregivers holding prime responsibility for the upbringing and care of a child.
- 7 **Parental involvement** refers acquisition of reading materials, engagement in shared story book reading and shared reading activities by parents with the child at home.
- 8 **Performance** refers to the ability of a learner to read and comprehend a Kiswahili story or text as measured by scores Kiswahili reading comprehension test.
- 9 **Pre-school children** refer to any child attending pre-school education.
- 10 **Reading** refers to the ability of children to perceive and make meaning out of print.
- 11 **Select story books** a selection of developmentally appropriate Kiswahili reading story books for preschool children in relation to their age and mental abilities.
- 12 **Shared - reading activities** refers active story book reading that allows for interaction between a parent and a child through actions such as singing, dramatizing, description, discussion among others.

13 **Time** refers to thirty minutes of quality time interaction between the preschool child and parent in reading and shared activities at home

1.11 Organization of the study

The study is organized into five chapters. The first chapter deals with introduction which comprises of background to the study, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, research objectives, research questions, significance of the study, limitations and delimitations of the study, basic assumptions of the study, operational definition of significant terms and finally organization of the study. Chapter two covers literature review related to the study under the following sub headings: parental involvement in children's reading; reading experiences in the home; quality parental involvement in children's reading: quality parental involvement in children's reading; a summary of literature review and theoretical and conceptual frameworks. Chapter three focuses on research methodology which included research design, target population, sample size and sampling procedures, research instruments, data collection procedures, data analysis techniques and ethical considerations. Chapter four comprises of presentation and discussion of findings. Chapter five contains summary, conclusion and recommendations.

CHAPTER TWO

RELATED LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

The chapter covers parental involvement in children's reading and its benefits in children's reading, children's reading experience at home in terms of shared reading and developing children's reading and comprehension skills, time investment in children's reading, the importance of quality active parental participation in children's reading, theoretical and conceptual framework for the study.

2.2 Parental involvement in children's reading and its benefits

Parents are the first educators the children come in contact with, they are the first teachers and role models for their children, and therefore have a strong influence on their learning. Imparting knowledge to the children through reading at the early stage adds a lot of meaning to their lives (Angelica, 2008). Children are easily taught and mentored through parental action, so when their parents take time to read to them, the children become more interested in reading. Reading makes them eager to explore things written in books as they grow older, thereby cultivating reading culture and learning about things, places, events and experience (Desforges & Abouchar, 2003).

Parents' attitudes and support for their children's learning influence performance on literacy tests irrespective of socio-economic status. Parental involvement in their child's literacy practices positively affects children's academic performance and is a more powerful force for academic

success than other family background variables, such as social class, family size and level of parental education (Flouri & Buchanan, 2004). Specifically parental involvement with reading activities at home has significant positive influences not only on reading achievement, language comprehension and expressive language skills but also on pupils' interest in reading, attitudes towards reading and attentiveness in the classroom. Parents make the greatest difference to achievement through supporting their learning in the home rather than supporting activities in the school (Harris & Goodall, 2007).

This parental activity is associated with strong evidence of benefits for children such as language growth, reading achievement and writing. The enhancement of children's language comprehension and expressive language skills, listening and speaking skills, later enjoyment of books and reading, understanding narrative and story. Children who are read to at an early age tend to display greater interest in reading at a later age (Arnold & Whitehurst, 1994).

Numerous researches have revealed that reading stories at an early age at home, a popular form of parental engagement has clear benefit in children's reading development. it enhances children's language comprehension and expressive language skills (Crain-Thoreson & Dale, 1992). Oral language developed from parent/child reading predicts later writing development at a later age (Arnold & Whitehurst, 1994). When parents read to their children they have the opportunity to interact positively with their children and create a pleasurable reading experience, effective quality of interactions foster children's interest in reading. It is the quality of the shared reading experience that determines its effectiveness in nurturing literacy skills. More crucial than

whether the parents read to the child every day or less often, is the extent of the child's active participation in these situations (Crain-Threson & Dale, 1992).

Parents who introduce their children to books give them a head start in school and an advantage over their peers throughout primary school and Parental support continues to play a crucial role throughout children's and young people's lives: Although parental involvement has the greatest effect in the early years, its importance to children's educational and literacy outcomes continues into the teenage and even adult years (Desforges & Abouchar, 2003). For example, Feinstein and Symons (1999) found that parental interest in their child's education was the single most powerful predictor of achievement at age 16.

2.3 Children's reading experiences in the home

2.3.1 Shared reading

Studies suggest that it is the quality of the shared reading experience that determines its effectiveness in nurturing literacy skills. More crucial than whether the parents read to the child every day or less often, is the extent of the child's active participation in these situations (Crain-Threson & Dale, 1992). Lonigan & Whitehurst (1998) active engagement of the child predicted his or her later language and literacy skills more strongly than did any of the parental variables related to book reading. This research highlights the importance of parents actively engaging their child in the reading process. This occurs when a parent ensures that the child actually participates in the unfolding story. A parent can ask questions to focus their children's attention, to check comprehension, and to elicit labels for objects and descriptive attributes, such as colour, size and number. Story book reading between a parent and their young child can be a source of

entertainment and learning. Previous research has shown that exposure to storybooks has a positive relation on the development of a child's vocabulary and listening comprehension skills (Sénéchal & Lefevre, 2002). Shared storybook reading between parent and child therefore often makes for a natural and productive learning experience.

Sénéchal and Lefevre, (2002), shared reading can be conducted in a number of ways, from the child reading to the parent, the parent and child reading together, taking turns reading, rereading favorite books (as many times as the child requests) and the parent and child each silently reading a different book on the same topic (this may be suited more for older, more independent readers to develop discussions comparing the books each has read). They also found that important elements to the reading process are: sitting next to the child when reading to them so that they can see the print, talking about the story, and listening to and encouraging the child's responses.

(Desforges and Abouchar, 2003) one form of reading together is called paired reading, after choosing and discussing a book the parent and child read the book simultaneously together with the parent making sure to read at the pace of the child, so that the child isn't just shadowing the parent. As well, while simultaneously reading the parent is modeling for the child. During the reading the child must clearly pronounce all words and the parent must stop to allow self correction of any mispronounced word. In the second phase, the child gives a prearranged signal to the parent indicating their desire to read on their own. The parent praises the child for their attempt to read independently. While reading independently the parent continues to correct minor errors (mispronunciations etc.). If the child gets stuck on a word or makes an error and

does not self correct within four seconds (see below for strategies to use when a child gets stuck on a word), the parent will prompt, then give the word and simultaneous reading will begin again. Praise is administered by the parent if self corrections are achieved. Once simultaneous reading recommences, the child can once again signal to go back to independent reading when they feel confident. In effect, paired reading is a scaffolding method which is meant to be withdrawn over time (more independent reading from the child and less praise as the child becomes an independent reader).

Lonigan, and Whitehurst, (1998) regardless of exactly how you and your child chooses to conduct shared reading, be sure to choose specific routine locations within each book, that you and your child read, to pause and discuss what has happened in the book, make any connections to the book (what events in your lives relate to the book or are there other books, movies etc. that connect to particular parts of this book), and make predictions about what may happen in the book. The point is to increase the child's active thinking skills and become more engaged in the book on a personal level. Talk about what your child likes and dislikes about a story or book, these conversations are important because children will learn to use and explain their own thinking and will significantly improve vocabulary abilities over time.

2.3.2 Developing children's reading and comprehension skills

The AKF, (2014) comprehension skills are abilities to use context and prior knowledge to aid and make sense of what one has read and hears. Children who can read well and with understanding have automatic interpreting skills, build up vocabulary of sight words, read smoothly and with expression and self-corrects.

For beginning readers, talking about print may be a way to help improve Children's awareness of print (Darling, 2005). According to Partridge (2004), beginning with letter recognition, parents can read and discuss alphabet books with their children (practicing sounds, identifying letters, relating letters to the child's world – their name, favorite colour etc.). Within story books parents can discuss the concept of words by pointing to words that you read out loud, relating words relevant to the child's life, and pointing out specific words for discussion (that is. "This is the word cat. What letters do you see in cat? What sound does the first letter make? Can you see a word in the book that you know?") (Gayle, 2010) Later parents can point out and discuss some of the conventions of print (that is, title, author's name, the start and end of a sentence, breathing between sentences). Discussing print should be Included in small amounts when children are interested in talking about it, but not over done to the point of disengaging the child (Baker, 2003).

It is important to choose specific routine points in the reading to pause and engage in discussion about what has happened in the book and what may be about to take place. This action will allow the child to become an active participant and help to develop their active thinking skills. Extending reading time to include creative play centered on the story you are reading correlates with an increase in receptive and expressive vocabulary in preschoolers(Baker, 2003)

Gayle, (2010), reading storybooks to young children will familiarize them with story structure which, in turn, should help facilitate their comprehension of stories. Discussion about the text will familiarize the children with strategies that readers use to comprehend text For example, based on observations of middle income preschool children's reading interactions with adults,

adult readers guided children's understanding of the text by modeling the use of four sources of information to facilitate comprehension: general knowledge of the world, knowledge of literacy conventions, knowledge of narrative structure, knowledge of how to respond as members of a reading audience. It was noted that such modeling of strategies occurred even though "instruction was neither the goal nor the context of the story reading" (Snow, 1991) has addressed the importance of certain types of talk about text for story comprehension. In particular, Snow suggested that talk that requires the child to go beyond the immediate text, such as asking a child to predict outcomes or asking to evaluate parts of a story, will foster the type of cognitive skills necessary for higher-level comprehension.

(Snow, 1991) proposes the following as measures of helping children develop reading comprehension: Parents should let children to make predictions about events in the story and what might happen next, while reading; Ask questions about the story (who, what, where, when, and why); When reading with your child one should not forget to ask questions that require your child to read between the lines (Why do you think Bob said that? How would you feel if that happened to you? How do you think Ken felt when he wasn't allowed to play hockey?); the topic of the story should be related to the child by asking questions or discussing the topic before beginning the story. When reading nonfiction books, parents should discuss the topic and questions that parent and the child might have about the topic before reading the text (this will help the child develop a purpose for reading the text – added motivation).

2.4. Time investment by parents in children's reading

Santrock, (2005), time investment by parent in reading to their children is a crucial factor in cultivating reading culture in the formative age of their children. Parents must dedicate time and energy if they tend to achieve the best for their children. Competent parents of preschool children set aside regular time to be with their child listen to the child and respond to questions, become more involved in the child's preschool and kindergarten activities. The amount of parental involvement in educational activities at home can reinforce what children learn in the classroom. Santrock (2005) further notes that the time pressures which today's parents are subjected to, would suggest that parents are devoting less time to their children as compared to 30 or 40 years ago. But in fact, time use data from Canada, the United States and several other industrialized countries suggest exactly the opposite; authors rely on time use surveys collected between 1961 and 2000. From the survey it indicates that today's parents are spending substantially more time with their children. The increase in parental time has been especially strong for fathers. Parents have been able to preserve the time they spend with their children by sacrificing other activities including sleep this may be due to changes in societal norms may have called for increased reading time and for fathers to be more involved in their children's lives. Robinson and Godbey (1997), also speculated that the rise in parental involvement may be related to parents' increasing fear of the external environment (for example, traffic and perceptions of increased threat of harm from adults), which may restrict the time children spend playing unsupervised.

Huebner and Payne, (2010) parents should establish daily story times during which they read to children and listen as children read to them or to one another. Children experience enjoyment when parents show that a book is a wonderful thing by reading one to them. Even if the child

cannot understand the story, the child experiences the intimacy of sharing a book with a loving parent. Reading times can be brief, about 5-10 minutes for younger children and still be of great value. Researchers believe that parents are potentially in the very best position to make reading a personally rich and rewarding experience. There is real evidence that reading together as well as listening to children read can have positive effects. Besides getting the much needed reading practice, the children have a model of a fluent reader (the parent), and they experience reading in a warm, encouraging environment (Santrock, 2005).

National Household Education Surveys data (1993, 1999) indicates that 43% of children who are taught letters, words, or numbers three or times a week show three or more skills associated with emerging literacy, compared to 31% of the children who are taught the same skills less often (Mullis, Cornille, Ritchson, & Sullender, 2003) these results highlight the importance of high-quality conversations with children. Findings of the PIRLS study², undertaken across 40 countries show that the reading performance of children in highest frequency of parent-child activities (*i.e.* on a daily regular basis) is well ahead of that of their peers with lower frequencies of parent-child activities(PIRLS ,2006)

Research undertaken in the United States with three- and four-year-olds has shown that early learning activities at home make a difference: children who are frequently read to and told stories are more likely to recognize all letters of the alphabet, count to 20 or higher, write their own names and read. In addition, children who are taught letters, words or numbers and are taken to the library regularly are more likely to show signs of emerging literacy (Nord, Lennon, Liu & Chandler 1999).

Wood (2002), in a study on children's literacy asked parents to indicate the frequency with which they participated in various literacy activities with their four-year olds. The questionnaire aimed at assessing various literacy activities in the home, from this questionnaire, Wood (2002) identified four main types of activities. These included storybook reading, letter based activities (that is, drawing/coloring letters), singing activities, and games (that is, picture dominoes). Children were assessed progress in various areas of literacy. Results pointed out the importance of engaging not just in frequent literacy activities, but also in a wide variety of different activities during the preschool years, and its positive impact on literacy development. Those children whose families engaged in a wide variety of activities made the most progress in the literacy areas assessed. Frequency of storybook reading was also related to higher achievement in reading and oral language skills (that is, vocabulary).

2.4.1 The importance of quality and active parental involvement in children's reading development

Snow, (1991) the full value of reading with young children is most effectively realized when the child and adult engage in conversations that support interpreting and constructing meaning. The oral language abilities developed through this type of explanatory talk is crucial to literacy development. From a very young age children learn to use sounds and words for an ever-increasing number of purposes. In addition to discovering the power of language to make requests and demands in more subtle and powerful ways, children also begin telling stories about personal experiences and communicating information and ideas. The link between language skills and reading lies in the way children comprehend words by the individual sounds that

constitute them. This developing phonemic awareness allows children to expand their language capabilities and therefore assume greater control over their environment. Because oral language acts as a precursor to literacy, we can see why book reading is of such value. With books children encounter a broader range of words than they do in typical conversations. Also, they can construct imaginary worlds using the text and pictures as a springboard, and when discussing books they get a chance to reflect on language and to develop skills interpreting and constructing extended discourse. Shared book reading is beneficial, then, because it involves the child in conversations that interpret and construct meaning (Sénéchal and LeFevre, 2002).

Among the many sources of compelling evidence of the benefits of shared reading is the recent study of the outcomes of different learning environments (Beals, De Temple & Dickinson, 1994). Beals et al undertook a longitudinal study of children who, during their toddler years, had been exposed to shared reading in the home against a control group who had not. At the age of five, the children underwent a series of tests to measure their language and literacy skills. The tests included a narrative production task in which the child is asked to tell a story about a group of bears shown in three photographic slides that the evaluator cannot see. The purpose of the task is to evaluate the child's ability to produce a narrative for someone who does not share the same visual field. In addition, the study used a Comprehensive Assessment Programme (CAP) which assesses a child's print skills, such as recognition of print words, identification of alphabet letters, the comprehension of story and print concepts, as well as phonemic awareness and writing skills.

The study found that incidence of structured conversation in shared reading was correlated with

the child's performance on the CAP, the test of early print skills. In other words, the parent who makes book reading a rich and cognitively challenging event is also helping his or her child to develop a familiarity with how books work and what you need to do to read one. Engaged shared reading was also shown to support the more sophisticated skills of story comprehension and story production. This relationship was evidenced by children's improved performance on telling the bear story and better story comprehension (Beals, De Temple & Dickinson, 1994).

Overall, recent research provides powerful evidence to suggest that the language interactions of young children with adults are important determinants of their literacy development. Because literacy development is closely related to the development of language skills, challenging verbal interaction with adults can be a powerful promoter of early literacy for young children. The shared reading experience advocated by Book start speaks to precisely this kind of practice. It is hoped that through the book packs Book start can make a significant contribution to establishing book sharing as a routine feature of family life across the country (Beals, De Temple & Dickinson, 1994).

2.5 Summary of literature review

This section outlines parental involvement in children's literacy development and its significance during the early years. Parental involvement in children's education has shown to be an important variable that positively influences children's education. (Epstein, 1997). More and more schools are observing the importance and are encouraging families to become more involved. Due to this trend, it is now essential to comprehend what parental involvement means and its influence on children's education and life in general. The literature also identifies the importance

of quality and active parental involvement in children's reading development, nevertheless several impediments have been found that hinder this quality and active involvement for example illiteracy and ignorance of parents. Most adults in Kenya can not read thus not in a good position to participate in children's reading activities. Some parents would like to engage in their children's reading but do not know how or why such involvement is important, most believe that learning to read can only happen in school and not at home. This section further outlines the importance of providing a rich literacy environment for the children full of books and other reading materials to cultivate a reading culture in them however research points out most homes lack such reading materials.

2.6 Theoretical framework

This research is underpinned by the Family literacy theory which is an evolving theory that has come together as a series of ideas developed by several researchers (Durkins, 1966, Bereiter &Engelmann, 1966 & Duetsch, 1965) as they have studied the homes of children who learn to read without direct instruction. The current conceptions of family literacy are drawn from one primary source, the variety of studies in reading and literacy undertaken as early as 1960s and 1970s. According to this theory, "literacy is not a single unitary skill; rather, it is a social practice, which takes many forms, each with specific purposes and specific contexts in which they are used." Emergent literacy theory was a precursor to family literacy theory and both propose that the home environment is central. Family literacy theory asserts that literacy is a continuous and ongoing process that begins at birth. Family literacy theory emphasizes the critical role of parents to their child's literacy success. "The family's literacy values and

practices will shape the course of the child's literacy development in terms of the opportunities, recognition, interaction and models available to them"

Family literacy researchers have concluded that an environment rich in literacy materials and experiences is more important to a child's early successful literacy development than even the best preschool and kindergarten classrooms. In these homes, children have access to books and other literacy materials, have reading models, are read to frequently, have parents that are interested and involved in their development and education, and live in homes that are full of supportive and interactive experiences that encourage emergent literacy skills. This theory emphasizes the importance of at-home experiences and the critical role of parents on their children's reading success. While the importance of parental involvement during the school years has long been emphasized, the family literacy theoretical framework has become widely known only recently. As literacy theories are evolving, the implications of parental involvement are becoming increasingly central to models of literacy acquisition (Whitehurst & Lonigan, 1998).

2.7 Conceptual framework

A Conceptual framework is a research tool intended to assist a researcher to develop awareness and understanding of the situation under scrutiny and to communicate this (Fraenkel, and Wallen 2000) Figure 2.1 shows interrelatedness of home parental involvement in preschool children's reading activities and their Performance in Kiswahili reading comprehension

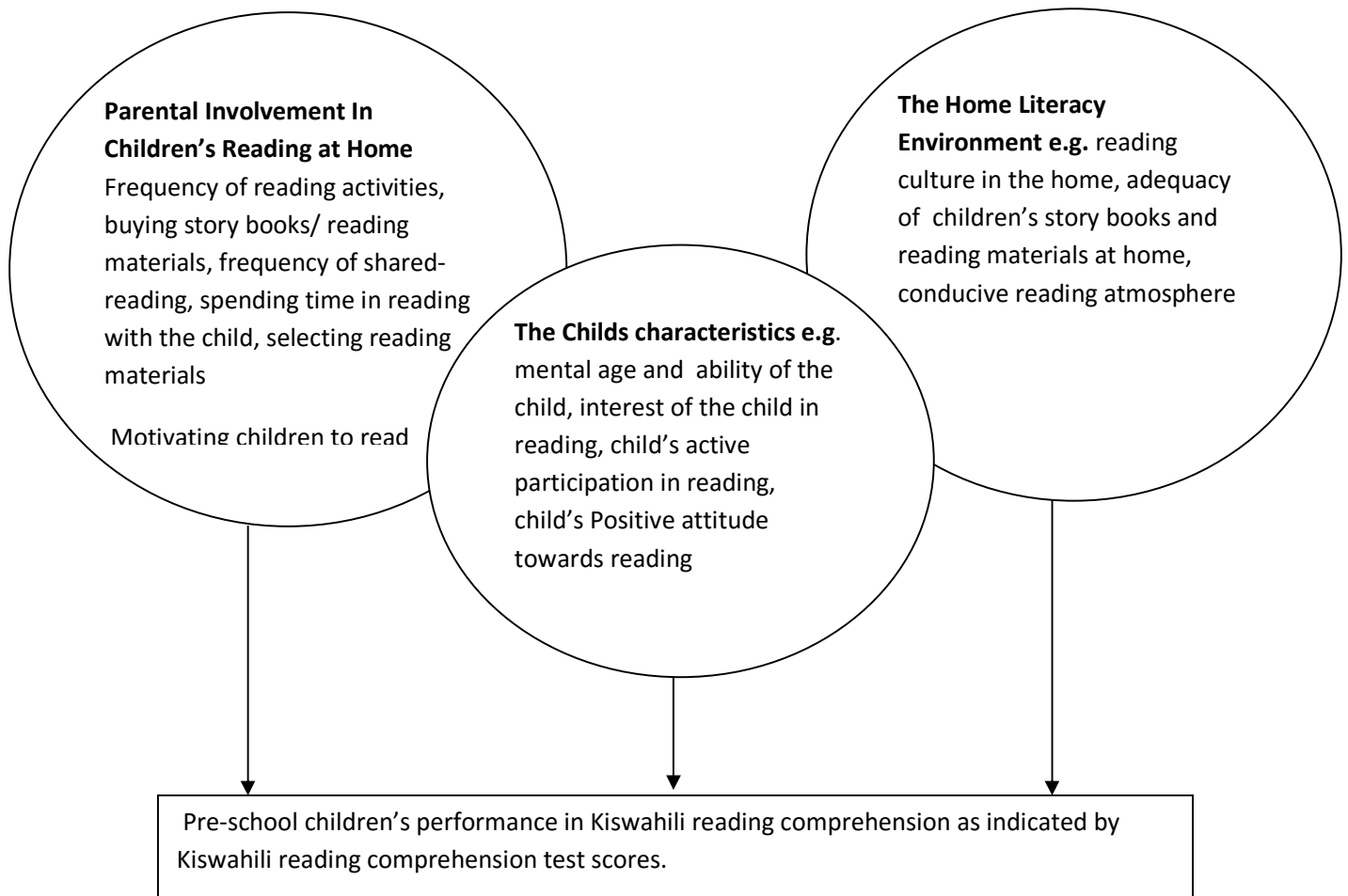


Figure 2.1 conceptual framework showing an interaction between parents reading activities with children , child characteristic, the home environment and their influence on preschool children's performance in Kiswahili reading comprehension

The independent variable of this study is Parental involvement in children's reading which takes the form of active participation of parents in select Kiswahili story books reading and shared reading activities. Parental involvement is seen to be effective depending on the extent to which parents are able to create a literate home environment that encourages reading, actively participate in quality shared literacy activities in the home with pre-school children. The

characteristics of the individual child also influences children's ability to comprehend what is read. Interest of the child in reading, age and mental ability of the child and positive attitude of the child is motivating factor towards reading. The home reading environment of the child is also crucial in the development of children's reading skills such as reading comprehension, availability of positive reading culture and reading models in the home and availability of adequate and relevant reading materials in the home encourages the child's efforts towards reading hence improving the child's reading comprehension skills among other reading skills such as fluency, speed of reading among others. It is hypothesized that these variables interact meaningfully to bring about a positive effect on pre-school child's performance in Kiswahili reading comprehension.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter comprises of the research design, target population, sample and sampling procedures, research instruments, validity and reliability of research instruments, data collection and analysis procedures and ethical considerations in research.

3.2. Research Design

This research adopted a quasi-experimental research design to investigate the influence of parental involvement on pre-school children's performance in Kiswahili reading comprehension. Quasi-experimental research is a design used to estimate the causal impact of an intervention on a target population and that allows participants an equal chance of being assigned to either the experimental or control group (Borg & Gall, 1989). This research design was suitable for this study because it utilized pre- post testing, that is, tests were done before any data were collected to see if there were any participants with certain tendencies. Then the actual experiment was done and post-test results recorded. The control of certain variables that could affect the results of the study such as story books, time input in reading activities, target schools, among others, enabled the researcher to make comparisons and generalize results to other pre-schools within the region.

3.3 Target Population

The target population for this study was 17 public pre-schools, 1059 parents, 58 teachers, and 970 children from all public pre-schools in Athi-River Zone, Machakos County.

Table 3.1: Target Population of the Study

RESPONDENTS	TARGET NUMBER POPULATION
Parents	1059
Pre-school children	970
teachers	58
Pre-school units	17

3.4 Sample and Sampling Procedures

Sampling means selecting a given number of subjects from a defined population as representative of that population. Any statements made about the sample should also be true of the population (Mugenda & Mugenda,2003). In this study Athi-River Zone, Machakos County, was purposively selected since it is one of the areas in which research has pointed out to have little participation of parents in children’s reading activities. From this zone, two public pre-schools were purposefully selected on the basis of Kiswahili being their language of instruction and also were legally registered and recognized as early childhood education centers and were similar in terms of physical structures, staff establishment, enrollment and curricula. The experimental and control group were randomly selected to ensure that each school had an equal chance to be in the experimental group. The researcher used the lottery method to obtain both the control and experimental group for research. She wrote the names of the two preschools on a piece of paper, folded the papers, put them in a tin and shuffled them, the first pre-schools to be

picked was assigned as the experimental group while the other became the control group. From the two schools, the pre-unit class, parents and pre-school teachers were purposively selected to participate in the study because they possessed the information needed for this study and moreover pre-school teachers directly or indirectly influenced the children's reading development. Kiswahili story books were purposely selected following criteria for selection of children's story books for children five years and above as stipulated by the AKF(2014).This ensured that the books read by children were developmentally appropriate.

3.5 Research Instruments

This study utilized the following methods of data collection:

3.5.1 Parent's Mid- and End-line Focus Group Discussion Schedules

The researcher designed two focus group discussion schedules for parents that lasted for a period of two hours each. The mid-term focus group discussion schedule administered at the middle of the intervention contained open-ended questions parents were guided to respond to in the group discussion mainly focused to monitor the progress of the intervention, strengthen it, identify challenges and come up with solutions to these challenges to make the intervention a success

3.5.2 Parents, Teachers and Preschool Children's Interview Guides

Section A of the interview guide was on demographic information of the respondents while Section B provided information on parental involvement in children's reading activities. The interview guides contained both open- and closed-ended items for the interviewee to respond to. The interview between the respondents and the interviewer lasted between twenty to thirty minutes. The interviewer clarified the items that the responded did not understand.

3.5.3 Pre- and Post- Intervention Assessment Test

Preschool pre- and posttests of similar difficulty levels in Kiswahili were used to collect data on pre-school children's performance in reading comprehension. The pre-test was administered to pre-school children to establish their performance at the beginning of the intervention. A post-test was administered to establish the impact of intervention on reading achievement in Kiswahili reading comprehension.

3.5.4 Pre-school Archival Records

Archival data is information that already exists in the files in schools as an internal record as a result of completed activities and it is not subject to change. These data were used to obtain relevant information in relation to this research such as the age and number of children in preschool children. The researcher utilized the school archival records such as enrollment records of learners, parent's registers, pupils' progress records, pupils' class registers and school inventories. The researcher used this data to obtain certain information such as demographics of the population, behavior of learners regarding their current state in performance from an earlier time to be used at baseline

3.7 Reliability of Research Instruments

Mugenda and Mugenda (2003) define reliability as a measure to which a research instrument yields consistent results or data after repeated trials. Test-retest reliability was used to determine the consistency of the test instruments across time. The researcher administered the parent's baseline interview guides twice at two different points in time to the pilot group. The results from the two tests were then compared. The closeness of the results indicated greater test-rest reliability of the instruments. Pearson product moment correlation co-efficient formula was used to compute the correlation co-efficient.

$$r = \frac{n \sum xy - (\sum x) (\sum y)}{\sqrt{n \sum x^2 - (\sum x)^2} \sqrt{n \sum y^2 - (\sum y)^2}}$$

Where

n = the number of respondents

x = score of a respondent on one variable

y = the score of the respondent on the other variable

Mugenda and Mugenda (2003) asserts that when the correlation is found to be closer to 1, then the instrument is considered reliable and that a coefficient of 0.8 or more implies that there's a high degree of reliability of data. Findings indicated that there was consistency ($r = 0.84$) signifying that the instruments were reliable.

3.8 Procedure for Data Collection

The researcher applied for a research permit to conduct the research. After receiving the permit, she contacted the heads of the sampled schools and informed them about her research. She then sought consent to undertake the research with pre- school children and the pre-unit class of each of the schools. She secured the help of the schools administration both from the experimental and control groups and got in touch with the parents of pre-school children and explained to them about the research intervention. She also sought parental consent from parents of both groups for child involvement in the study. The researcher then conducted a two-day workshop with parents from the experimental group where parents were given information about opportunities and ways of engagement in their children's reading activities at home. An intervention guide/manual was provided to guide the parents through the intervention. Parents were expected to carry out the shared reading activities for at least thirty minutes per schedule for six months preferably in the evening. The researcher in conjunction with pre-school administrator arranged for two focus

group meetings (mid-term and end-term). A discussion guide was administered to gather information on continuous and summative intervention.

3.9 Data Analysis Techniques

Before actual data analysis, all data collected were validated, edited and then coded instruments were checked for completeness. Editing of the instruments was done to scrutinize and check for errors and omissions. Data were analyzed using both quantitative and qualitative techniques. Quantitative analysis was done where the raw scores were keyed into the computer and percentages computed. Descriptive statistics were used to analyze qualitative data. Data were processed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) and interpreted according to the objectives of the study. The results from data analysis were presented using descriptive statistics.

3.10 Ethical considerations

The researcher was guided by the following ethical considerations:

Upheld the privacy of the homes of the respondents, that is, sought permission before visiting children's home during field visits. Used pseudonyms to disguise the identity of the respondents, maintained confidentiality of information gathered from respondents using the research instruments and used it only for the purpose of this research. The researcher sought parental consent to use children as subjects for this research through the school administration, would share findings of the study with the community, parents and other stake holders and share also control group on how to read with the children based on the research results.

CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

The chapter comprises of instruments' return rate, demographic information of respondents, that is, parents teachers and preschool children, findings on the extent to which parental involvement in reading select story books with the children influences their Kiswahili reading comprehension, intervention on parental involvement in children's reading, and discussed them under sub-sections guided the extent to which parental involvement in select Kiswahili story books shared reading activities influences children's performance in Kiswahili reading comprehension, findings on the extent to which frequency of parental participation in select story books shared reading activities influences children in Kiswahili reading comprehension and lastly findings on the extent to which parental involvement in select Kiswahili story books reading and shared reading activities influences children's performance in Kiswahili reading comprehension.

4.2 Instruments Return Rate

Completion rate is the proportion of the sample that participated as intended in all the research procedures. In this study out of the 104 parents sampled, 100 (96.2%) responded to items in the interview guide at baseline. All the sampled parents 50 (100%) responded to mid- and end-term focus group discussion schedule, all sampled children 100 (100%) responded to pre-test at baseline and post-test at the end of the intervention. All the 4 (100%) sampled pre-school teachers responded to and returned the questionnaires. These percentages were deemed adequate for data analysis since they exceeded 85% return rate as suggested by Mugenda (2003). The researcher with the help of the pre-school administration and teachers in the sampled schools

administered the instruments, clarified any item on the spot, and verified that all sections had been filled before collecting them. The researcher's involvement contributed to a high and acceptable response rate. Besides that the research topic that created enthusiasm among the respondents positively influenced the response rate.

4.3 Demographic Information of Respondents

This section presents the demographic information of respondents mainly the parents, pre-school children and pre-school teachers.

4.3.1 Demographic Characteristics of Parents

The section provided the demographic characteristics of the main participants of the study who were the parents. The demographic information of parents is focused on their gender, age, educational level, occupation and language proficiency. Their responses showed that most of the parents who participated in the study were female accounting for 63% while the male accounted for 37%. Concerning their age data showed that a few parents 19 (19%) were below the age of 25 years majority of the parents 62(62%) fell between the age of 25– 40years, 20 (20%) between 41- 50 years with minority 9 (9%) above the age of 50years. Responses on language proficiency showed that majority of the parents 80 (80%) were proficient in Kiswahili, few 20 (20%) indicated they were proficient in English, mother tongue and other languages. Asked to indicate their educational level and occupation, they responded as indicated in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1 Parent Demographics

Education level of parents	F	%.
Masters	4	4
Bachelor Degree	17	17
A level	20	20
O level	39	39
KCPE	14	14
Others	6	6
Total	100	100
Living/Occupation		
Civil Servants	18	18
Farmers	20	20
Casual Worker	35	35
Businessmen	23	23
others	4	4
TOTAL	100	100

Data in Table 4.1 indicates that at the time of the survey many of parents (80%) were learned holding ‘O’ level certificates to master’s degrees, a few (14%) had attained primary education and a minimal number (5%) classified as “others” were not educated Thirty five percent of parents were casual workers followed by business men accounting for (23%), civil servants accounting for (18%) and lastly farmers accounting for (15%). From the findings one can deduce

that parents who participated in the study had of adequate education background, they were of young age and productive in their occupation which implies that the sample fitted very well with the purpose of the study.

4.3.2 Demography of Pre-school Children

The demographic data of pre-school children focused on their gender and age. The school archival record was used to establish the gender and age of the children. Data are presented in Table 4.2

Table 4.2 Distribution of Pre-school Children by Gender and Age

		F	%
Gender	Boys	53	53%
	Girls	47	47%
TOTAL		100	100
Age	Below 5yrs	0	0
	5-6 Years	85	85
	Above 6 Year	15	15
TOTAL		100	100

Data in Table 4.2 indicates that there was gender parity among children who participated (boys being 53% while girls being 47%) the respondents and the interviewee. Their average age was 6 years. This is the appropriate age children are required to develop basic language skills.

4.3.2 Demographic Characteristic of Teachers

Teachers' demographic information was focused on their gender, age, highest academic qualifications and the duration of teaching as summarized in Table 4.3. Their responses on gender showed that majority of teachers 3 (75%) were female; a characteristic of many preschools in Kenya. Responses on age indicated that 2 (50%) teachers were aged between 20 and 30 years while the other half fell between 31 and 40-year age bracket. Asked to indicate their professional qualifications and teaching experience, they responded as indicated in Table 4.3.

Table 4.3 Teacher Demographics

	F	%
Education		
Degree	1	25
Diploma	2	50
Certificate	1	25
Teaching experience		
0- 6yr	0	0
6-10yrs	1	25
11-20yr	2	50
21-30	1	25
Over 30yrs	0	0
N=4		

Findings in Table 4.3 indicate that 2(50%) of the teachers had a Diploma in ECDE; one had a Degree in ECE while the other one had a certificate in ECE. This implies that all the teachers had the minimum qualification required to teach in pre-school. Two teachers (50%) had a teaching

experience of 11-20years; one teacher had a teaching experience of 21-30 years while another between 6-10 years. This implied that all the teachers had adequate teaching experience which was critical in credibility of teacher research findings provided in this study.

4.3 The extent to which parental involvement in reading with children select story books at home influences children's performance in Kiswahili reading comprehension

The researcher sought to establish the extent to which parental involvement in reading select story books with the children at home influenced performance of pre-school children in Kiswahili reading comprehension. Respondents rated the intensity of their involvement in children's reading in terms of time and frequency of the reading activities at both baseline and end-line. Parents were, for example, asked to indicate whether they involved themselves in any reading activities with their children at home. Responses from them revealed that a large percentage of parents from the experimental 32 (64%) and 35 (70%) control group did not carry out any reading with the children at home at all. Few parents did read to their preschoolers. In other words, parental involvement in children's reading development was wanting, thus confirming the need for this study and the intervention that was implemented. Parents were asked to indicate the time they read with their children. Their responses are presented in Table 4.4.

Table 4.4 Times the Parents Read with their Children

Time the Parents Read	Control		Experimental	
	F	%	F	%
At bed time	3	6	3	6
After work	3	6	3	6
On weekend	3	6	4	8
During Holidays	6	12	8	16
Never	35	70	32	64
Total	50	100	50	100

Findings in Table 4.4 indicate that 70% from the control and 60% from the experimental group at baseline were never involved in reading activities with their children. Few (6%) from both groups did help the children to read after work and at bed time. The percentage of parents who read with their children on weekends was (6%) and (8%) from the control and experimental groups respectively while that of parents who read with their children during holidays was slightly high. In view of these findings on when parents read to the children at baseline, both groups seemed to do poorly in relation to their participation in children's reading activities. These findings were disheartening in light of the fact that a rich home literacy environment is crucial to the child's reading orientation and establishment of a reading culture in them. Parents were asked to indicate the kinds of reading materials found in their homes. Findings are presented in Table 4.5.

Table 4.5 Reading Materials in Homes

Kind of Reading Materials	Control		Experimental	
	F	%	F	%
Children's Story books	5	10	7	14
Reading charts	4	8	5	10
Bible /Quran	12	24	10	20
Newspapers	18	36	9	18
Magazines	5	10	9	18
Picture books	4	8	3	6
Novels	2	4	7	14
TOTAL	50	100	50	100

The findings in Table 4.5 indicate that at baseline there were few reading materials in many homes. Only 10% of the parents in the control group self-reported that they had children's story books compared to 14% in the experimental group. The situation was no better for reading charts with 8% of parents in the control group and 10% in the experimental group self-reporting that they had them. It was even worse for picture books with 8% of parents in the control group and 6% in the experimental group reporting that they had them. Interestingly, the most common reading materials found in many homes were the Quran or bible, newspapers and magazines. Would these be materials parents can use to share a love of reading in homes? Future research could inquire into this. These results indicate that there were poor home environments that did not fully support children's reading development which could, in turn, affect children's performance in reading comprehension. Indeed Snow (2000) and Sénéchal, (2006) affirm that

storybook reading between a parent and their young child can promote their young child's vocabulary skills and in time facilitate their reading comprehension; story book reading has a positive relation to listening comprehension skills and positive reading attitude.

The study also sought to establish the number of children's story books in homes. Findings are presented in Table 4.6.

Table 4.6 Number of Children's story Books in Homes

No. of Story Books per Home	Control		Experimental	
	F	%	F	%
1-5 Story books	31	62	27	54
5-10 story books	7	14	8	16
10-20 Story books	10	24	12	40
Above 20 story books	2	4	3	6
Total	50	100	50	100

The data in Table 4.6 shows that many homes had between 1 and 5 children's story books, that is, 62 % and 54 % for the control and experimental groups respectively. Two homes from the control and 3 from the experimental group had over 20 children's story books respectively. This implies that many homes were not print-rich a fact that negatively impacts children's reading development.

The researcher sought information on the number of Kiswahili storybooks present in children's home. Pre-school children were asked to indicate the same. Findings are presented in Table 4.7.

Table 4.7 Number of Kiswahili Story Books in Homes

No. of Kiswahili story books	Control		Experimental	
	F	%	F	%
1-5 Story books	30	60	38	76
5-10 Story books	16	32	10	20
10-20 story books	3	1	2	4
Over 20 story books	1	2	0	0
Total	50	100	50	100

The results in Table 4.7 indicate that 60% of home the respondents and the interviewee from the control and 70% from the experimental group had between 1- 5 children's Kiswahili story books. Only 2 of homes from the control group had over twenty of such books. These findings, dismal though they are, indicate there were some materials in a language learners were likely to understand; a necessary factor in augmenting learners' reading development.

To ascertain if any meaningful reading took place in the homes or whether there was any positive reading culture or habits in the homes, parents were asked to comment on the reading habits and culture of family members in general. Findings are presented in Table 4.8.

Table 4.8 Family Members' Reading Habits

	Control		Experimental	
	F	%	F	%
Very Good	9	18	7	14
Good	8	16	10	20
poor	16	32	18	36
Very Poor	17	34	15	30
Total	53	106	50	100

The findings in Table 4.8 indicate that 34% families from the respondents and the interviewee control and 30% from the experimental group rated themselves very lowly in terms of their reading habits stating they were very poor with the majority (32%) in the control and 36% in the experimental group indicating reading habits to be poor. Very few parents reported that their reading habits were good or very good as shown in Table 4.8. Seneschal (2006) asserts that children who grow in a literate environment are likely to develop comprehension skills and vocabulary and are likely to enjoy reading later. AKF (2014) further explains that reading for children is beneficial to the entire family as it improves interaction of members, develops thirst for books and nurtures a culture of reading.

The researcher also sought information on whether parents ever engaged in any literacy activities themselves in their homes to help cultivate a reading culture in their homes. Parents were asked to indicate any literacy activities they engaged in at home. Findings are presented in Table4.9.

Table 4.9 Literacy Activities Parents Get Involved in

Literacy Activities	Control		Experimental	
	F	%	F	%
Reading novels	8	16	5	10
Writing	11	22	12	24
Reading newspapers	18	36	14	28
Reading magazine	3	6	0	0
Story telling	4	8	6	12
buying reading materials	6	12	13	26
Total	50	100	50	100

The results in Table 4.9 established that parents got involved in reading activities at home. Newspaper and writing emerged as the most popular literacy activity among parents standing at 36% and 28% for newspaper reading and 22% and 24% for writing for control and experimental groups respectively. Story telling was the least popular activity among the parents as indicated by 8% and 12% of parents from control and experimental groups respectively followed by reading magazines done by none of the parents in the experimental group and only 3(6%) from the control group.

4.4 Intervention on Parental Involvement in Children’s Reading Skills

Parents in the experimental group received an intervention on reading with their children. In a one-day workshop parents were taught on ways of reading for and with their children at home. Their chances and levels of involvement in their children’s reading development were increased through intensified shared reading activities between them and the children of select Kiswahili story books. Monitoring of parental involvement in children’s reading development in the homes was done through a mid-term focus group discussion meeting in which parents gave their

opinion on the progress of their involvement in their children’s reading. Findings indicated that about 68% of parents reported that they had made good progress in reading with their children. However, 12% of parents still rated their involvement as poor. Overall, progress made in most homes was commendable.

To find out if there was any improvement in parental involvement in their children’s reading activities, children were asked to indicate who initiated the reading in the home. Findings suggest that following the reading intervention, parents were proactive in and had become more interested in their children’s reading development. This is because 40% of the children reported that their parents initiated the reading activities. Noteworthy, 30% of the children reported that they too initiated the reading activity. This implies that children’s interest in reading had improved. In few cases, other siblings initiated the reading activities. Children were also asked to indicate the time parents read with them. Their responses are presented in Table 4.10

Table 4.10 Times the Parents Read with their Children

Times for reading	F	%
At bed time	10	20
After work	24	48
Before school	2	4
On weekend	9	18
During Holidays	4	8
Never	1	2
Total	50	100

As indicated in Table 4.10 reading habits among parents in the treatment group had improved. Forty eight percent of Children from the experimental group reported that parents read to them

mostly after work, 18% during weekends and 8% during school holidays. These findings concur with those of Angelica (2008), that children are easily taught and mentored through parental action, when parents read with children they become interested in reading and are eager to explore things written in books thereby cultivating a reading culture. Nord, Liu and Chandler (1999), indicate that parents should establish daily story times during which they can read to children and listen as children read to them for children experience enjoyment, see a book as a wonderful thing and experience the intimacy of sharing a book with a loving parent.

It would be erroneous and foolhardy to imagine the reading activities were conducted smoothly. Parents identified several challenges they encountered when reading with their children in their homes. The findings are presented in Table 4. 11.

Table 4.11 Challenges Encountered in Reading with Children

Challenges	F	%
Lack of time	20	40
Lack of expertise to handle the reading	22	44
Children not taking exercise seriously	6	12
Too tired to read with them	10	20
Un conducive reading environment	30	60
Lack of concentration on reading	12	24
Children overloaded with homework	15	30
N=50		

The data in Table 4.11 indicate 40% of parents lacked time, 44% lacked the expertise in handling children and 20% were too tired to read with the children. Factors related to children were also highlighted for example 24% parents indicated lack of concentration in children 12% of parents

indicated failure of children to seriously engage in reading. The biggest challenge was linked to the not-so-conducive home environment as cited by 60% of the parents. One parent said, “My house is single-roomed. We cook, eat, watch news and sleep in the same room. It is difficult for me and the child to concentrate on reading without being disturbed by other members of the family.” What’s more, 30% of parents indicated that children were overloaded with home work which made reading together challenging.

Parents were also asked to suggest ways to overcome the challenges they had identified. Their responses are shown in Table 4.12.

Table 4.12 Solutions to Challenges Surrounding Reading with Children

Challenge	F	%
Use the help of siblings	18	36
Work with the teacher	36	72
Make reading a fun activity	24	48
Cooperation among family members	12	24
Read in a secluded place	25	50
Rest and relax before the activity	12	24
N=50		

Findings in Table 4.12 indicates that 72% of the parents recommended working closely with teachers would help their children’s reading. Thirty six percent noted that help from siblings and cooperation of other family members was vital in increasing opportunities for family literacy development. Forty eight percent suggested that making reading a fun activity would boost children’s concentration and interest in the reading activities. Fifty suggested that reading should

be done in a quiet place when family is relaxed and have had a good rest as indicated by 24% of the parents.

4.5 Parental Involvement in Shared Reading Activities from Select Story Books and Pre-School Children's Performance in Kiswahili Reading Comprehension

The study at baseline sought to establish the current shared reading activities conducted between parents and children at home. Parents were asked to indicate the same. Responses from parents highlighted only three activities, that is, discussing the story (accounting for 22% of parents from the control and 26% from experimental group), asking questions from the story (indicated by 20% of parents from both groups) with the highest number of parents from the control and experimental groups' 58% and 54%, respectively indicating non-engagement in any shared reading activities. This implies that at baseline parents were ignorant of the myriad ways of involvement with their children around reading.

At the end of the intervention the researcher sought information from parents regarding the same. Their responses are presented in Table 4.13.

Table 4.13 Shared Reading Activities between Parent and Child

Reading Activities	F	%
Asking Questions from the story	20	40
Discussing the story	11	22
Acting out the story	5	10
Naming the characters in the story	18	36
Drawing pictures from the story	5	10
Retelling the story	8	16
others	5	10
N = 50		

The results in Table 4.13 indicated an increase in parents' repertoire of shared reading activities to choose from. Over and above asking questions from the story represented by 20 (40%) and discussing the story 11(22%), parents engaged in acting and role playing the story, naming the characters in the story 18(36%), drawing pictures about the story and re-telling the story. This was proof that parents had become more knowledgeable in ways of engagement in their children's reading than before.

Parents from the treatment group were asked to indicate the reading materials they had been using at home in shared reading activities with their children. Findings are presented in Table 4.14.

Table 4.14 Materials used in Shared Reading Activities

Kind of Reading Materials	F	%
Kiswahili Story books	25	50
Children's story books	5	10
Bible/Quran stories	5	10
Instructional textbooks	6	14
flip charts with words, letters and numbers	4	8
others	4	8
Total	50	100

Findings in Table 4.14 attest to the increase in the types of additional reading materials other than Kiswahili story books represented by 25 (50%) that parents acquired for shared reading purposes with their children. These included bible story books as indicated by 50% of parents, and flip charts with words, letters and numbers as indicated by 8% of parents. Bible and Quran stood at 10% and instructional text books at 14%. These findings are in line with studies that suggest it is the quality of the shared reading experience, that is, the extent of the child's active participation in activities where a parent ensures that a child actually participates in the unfolding story by asking questions to focus their children's attention, to check comprehension, and to describe attributes of things and objects in the environment. These determine the effectiveness in nurturing literacy skills more crucial than whether the parents read to the child every day or less often. This predicts later language and literacy skills more strongly than do any of the parental variables related to book reading (Crain-Threson & Dale, 1992; Lonigan and Whitehurst, 1998).

4.6 Influence of Frequency of Parental Involvement in Reading Select Story Books at Home and Pre-School Learners' Performance in Kiswahili Reading Comprehension

Parents who indicated they read with their children at home at baseline were also asked to indicate how frequently they did so. Their responses are presented in Table 4.15.

Table 4.15 Frequency of Reading with the Child at baseline

Frequency	control		experimental	
	F	%	F	%
Very Frequently	5	10	5	10
Frequently	3	9	8	16
Rarely	10	20	7	14
Not At all	32	64	30	60
Total	50	100	50	100

The data in Table 4.15 indicate that 64% and 60% of parents from the control and experimental groups, respectively, rarely read to or spent time in reading activities with their children. Only 10% of parents from control and experimental groups very frequently spent time with the children around reading activities. This implies that parental involvement in children's reading development at home was quite low at baseline.

The researcher sought to establish parents' opinion on effect of time spent on reading with a child on their performance in Kiswahili reading comprehension. At baseline many parents either thought it did not help (26%) or it was not necessary (24%). Later, many of them (41%) realized that reading comprehension was positively influenced by the interactions and that those

interactions did “help a lot.” The research later sought information from children on the frequency of parents using select Kiswahili story books with them at home. They responded as shown in Table 4.16.

Table 4.16 Frequency of Reading Select Story Books between Parents and their Children at Home

	Experimental	
	F	%
Very Frequently	21	42
Frequently	20	40
Rarely	7	14
Not at all	2	4
Total	50	100

Results in Table 4.16 indicate that frequency of involvement in reading activities did increase between baseline and end-line among the intervention group. Forty two percent of parents frequently read to their children, 40% frequently read to them. The number of those who rarely read to children decreased to 14% with only 2 parents reporting they did not participate at all. Indeed, frequency with which parents participate in various literacy activities with their children impacts positively on their children’s literacy development. They are more likely to show higher achievement in reading, comprehension and vocabulary (Wood, 2002).

4.7 Frequency of Shared Reading of Shared Reading Activities on Preschool Children's Reading Comprehension

Parents were asked to indicate the frequency with which they engaged in shared reading activities with their children at home. Their responses are presented in Table 4.17.

Table 4.17: Frequency of Shared Reading Activities between Parent and Child at Baseline

Frequency	Control		experimental	
	F	%	F	%
Very Frequently	5	10	5	10
Frequently	3	9	8	16
Rarely	10	20	7	14
Not At all	32	64	30	60
Total	50	100	50	100

Results in Table 4.17 confirms that at baseline the frequency of shared reading activities was significantly lower for parents in the intervention and control groups. Many parents never carried out shared reading activities at all, with the largest percentage (64% in control and 60% in the experimental groups respectively) rarely doing it. Later many of the parents participated in shared reading activities with their children.

The researcher also sought information from the children on shared reading activities parents engaged them in during the intervention period. Findings are presented in Table 4.18.

Table 4.18: Frequency of Shared Story book Reading Activities at Home

	Experimental	
	F	%
Very Frequently	18	36
Frequently	17	34
Rarely	13	26
Not at all	2	4
Total	50	100

Findings in Table 4.18 show an increase in frequency of shared reading activities of the treatment group notably improved after the intervention. These assertions were substantiated by comments from children showing that reading activities took place very frequently as indicated by 18 (36%) and frequently as represented by 17 (34%) of parents. These findings suggest that parents were more conversant with how children learn and had started to realize the importance of their involvement in development of children's comprehension and other reading skills. Harris and Goodall,(2007) assert that parental involvement with reading activities at home has significant positive influences not only on reading achievement, language comprehension and expressive language skills but also on pupils' interest in reading, attitudes towards reading and attentiveness in the classroom. Parents make the greatest difference to achievement through supporting their learning in the home rather than supporting activities in the school.

The researcher also sought information on what parents can advise other parents basing on their experience on involvement in children’s reading at home. Their responses are presented in Table 4.19.

Table 4.19: Parental Advice on Involvement in Children’s Reading Development

Advice from experience		
	F	%
Parents need to buy more books	10	20
Parents work with teachers	14	28
Children need more support from parents	30	60
Home literacy environment is crucial	25	50
Reading culture is vital in the home	26	58
Spare more time to read with your child	32	64
Reading with the child boosts academic performance	10	20
It improves child- parent relationship	5	10
It improves children’s comprehension and other reading skills	27	54
N= 50		

The findings in table 4.19 indicate that Parents made suggestions regarding parental involvement in children’s reading involvement. 10(20%) of the parents recommended buying children’s books and 28% supported working hand in hand with teachers. A further 30(60%) indicated that children need support at home to motivate them to read and write. 10(20%) of parents stated

further that such intervention helps to improve children’s performance in other subjects. 25(50%) of the parents stated that learners’ home environment is very important. Collectively these suggestions from parents imply that parents learnt a lot in regard to their involvement in their children’s reading development at home.

The study also sought the views of the teachers regarding parental involvement in children’s reading development after the experiment. The teachers were asked to indicate any positive changes noted in parental involvement in regard to children’s reading and learning in general. Findings are presented in Table 4.20

Table 4.20: Positive Changes noted in Parents by Teachers

Positive Changes	F	%
Brought more story books to school	3	75
Interested academic performance of child	2	50
Increased school visits	4	100
More Support for children’s homework	2	50
N= 4		

The findings in table 4.20 indicate the positive changes noted by teachers in regard to parental involvement in children’s reading and learning in general, teachers indicated that there had been tremendous improvements in that regard. Teachers concurred that they had noted positive changes towards parental involvement in children’s reading development and learning in general. All the teachers 4 (100%) indicated that parental visits to school had increased; an implication that parental involvement was extending from home to school. A healthy skepticism would be that the parent’s interest in the welfare of their children was beginning to soar. 2 (50%) teachers

observed parents were becoming more concerned with children's academic performance and showed more support towards children's homework.(75%) of teachers noted that teachers had bought more books towards children's reading.

The researcher also wanted to find out from the teachers whether there were any benefits for them. Findings are presented in Table 4.21

Table 4.21: Benefits of Reading Intervention for the Teachers

Benefits of intervention	F	%
Pupils who were unable to read can be able to read	2	25
More motivated to teach reading skills	4	100
Increased support from parents towards children's learning	3	75
Children able to work with little guidance	3	75
Pupils can do work from books without guidance	3	75
Improved parent, teachers relationship	4	100
N=50		

Findings in table 4.21 indicate that all teachers 4(100%) had become more motivated to teach reading skills to children and had also witnessed improved relationship between themselves and parents. This implies that there was not only improvement in pupil outcomes in reading development but also motivation for teachers. This stemmed from parental support that the teachers perceived to be getting. 75% of teachers noted that children were now able to work on their own only with little guidance from the teachers. 25% of teachers noted that some of the children who previously could not read were now able to read.

4.8 Impact Of Parental Involvement In Select Kiswahili Story Book Reading and Shared Reading Activities On Children’s Performance In Kiswahili Reading Comprehension

To establish whether parental involvement in children’s reading at home through intensified reading, active and meaningful interactions and time input in select Kiswahili story book reading and shared reading activities with the children at home influenced children’s performance in Kiswahili reading comprehension, Parents were asked to indicate the benefits shared story book reading activities they had noted in regard to development of children’s reading skills. Their responses are shown in Table 4.22.

Table 4.22: Parents’ Opinions on Benefits of Shared Reading at end line

	F	%
Increased vocabularies	27	54
Improved reading fluency	15	30
Improved Story comprehension	30	60
Promote social interactions	35	70
Improved expressive skills	26	52
Improve reading speed	14	28
Boosts child interest in reading	28	56
Others	10	56
N=50		

Findings in table 4.22 indicate that Parents noted improvement in their children’s reading sub-skills including: increased vocabulary (54%), improved reading fluency (30 %), improved story comprehension (60%) and expressive skills (28%). About 56% of the parents indicated that it boosts children’s interest in reading among others. These findings imply that parental

involvement in children’s reading at home has positive outcomes towards story comprehension and other reading skills in children.

Parents were also asked to indicate any general improvements they could have noted in the reading development of their children other than reading comprehension. The responses are presented in Table.4.23.

Table 4.23 Improvements in Children’s Reading Development

Comments	F	%
can read more complex words and stories	25	50
Improved speed of reading	27	54
Understand what they read	36	72
motivated to read and write	17	34
Little guidance in the homework needed	20	40
Increased vocabulary	16	32
N=50		

Findings in table 4.23 show that 25(50%) of the parents observed that their children could now read more complex words and stories. 27(54%) indicated that the children’s reading speed had improved.72% of parents noted that children could understand better what they read and this according to 34% of the parents had in turn had motivated the children to not only read but write as well. Noteworthy was the fact that according to 34% of parents, children could now work with little or no supervision.32% reported to have noted an increase in children’s vocabulary. These

positive self-reports imply that parental involvement in children’s reading at home had positively influenced children’s reading development in many areas and specifically in their reading comprehension.

The researcher also sought information from teachers on changes, if any, in children’s reading skills as a result of the reading intervention. Findings are presented in Table 4.29.

Table 4.24: Changes in Children’s Reading: Teacher Perspectives at end line

Positive Changes	Frequency	Percent
It has motivated pupils to read always	4	100
Improved reading comprehension	3	75
Improved listening comprehension	3	75
Increased speed of reading	2	50
Proper pronunciations of words	1	25
Increased interest and enjoyment in reading	2	50
N=50		

The results in table 4.24 indicate that 100% of the teachers observed improvements in motivation of pupils towards reading and also improvement in children’s listening and reading comprehension. 2(50%) of the teachers stated also that there was increased reading speed and increased interest and enjoyment in reading. One (25%) teacher reported improvement in pronunciation of words. These findings concur with those of the parents in relationship to the improvement they had noted in their children’s reading development.

To establish whether parental involvement in children’s reading at home influenced their performance in Kiswahili reading comprehension measured by their scores in a Kiswahili reading comprehension test, all children participating in the study were given a test at baseline. This was meant to establish their entry behavior as far as their performance in Kiswahili reading comprehension was concerned. A pre-test on Kiswahili reading comprehension was administered to both the experimental and control groups at the beginning of the experiment. Findings are represented in Table 4.25

Table 4.25: Preschoolers’ Kiswahili Reading Comprehension Pre-Test scores at Baseline

Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error
				Mean mark
Treatment Group	51	5.588	1.791	.251
Control Group	49	5.388	1.766	.252

Results from table 4.25 indicate that the pre- test for both groups were not statistically significant on observed and unobserved characteristics at baseline. Mean performance in Kiswahili at the beginning of the experiment was: Treatment (Mean=5.5882); Control (5.3878) a difference of 0.20 in the mean score of the scores the two groups.

The researcher also wanted to establish if there was any significant change noted on children’s performance in Kiswahili reading comprehension after the treatment. All children from experimental and control groups were again subjected to a post-test of a similar difficulty level

as the pre-test administered to them at baseline. Results from the two groups are presented in Table 4. 26.

Table 4.26: preschoolers’ in Kiswahili reading comprehension post-test scores

Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error
				Mean mark
Treatment	51	6.2549	2.15261	.30143
Group				
Control Group	49	3.7143	1.87083	.26726

The findings in table 4.25 indicate that at End-line, mean performance in Kiswahili was as follows: Treatment group Mean =6.2549; Control group Mean =3.7143 with a difference of 2.55 in the two mean scores. This findings show a statistically significant difference between the two groups suggesting that there’s a strong relationship between parental involvement in children’s reading at home and their performance in Kiswahili reading comprehension. This implies that parental involvement was beneficial to children’s reading development in Kiswahili. Contextual factors that made this possible included creation of a literate home environment that encouraged reading, actively participating in quality shared reading activities in the home with pre-school children and children’s ability to comprehend what was read. It is hypothesized that these variables interacted meaningfully to bring about a positive effect on pre-school child’s performance in Kiswahili reading comprehension. This positive impact has

important implications for learners' future educational outcomes. Overall, it appears there was a win-win situation for children, their parents and teachers.

Indeed, imparting knowledge to children through reading at an early stage adds value to their lives consistent with what Angelica (2008) says that children are easily taught and mentored through parental action. When parents take time to read to them, the children become more interested in reading. Reading makes them eager to explore things written in books as they grow older, thereby cultivating reading culture and learning about things, places, events and experience. Parents' attitudes and support for their children's learning positively influences performance on literacy tests irrespective of socio-economic status. When parents read to their children they have the opportunity to interact positively with them and create a pleasurable reading experience. Affective quality of interactions in fostering children's interest in reading is critical. It is the quality of the shared reading experience that determines its effectiveness in nurturing literacy skills. More crucial than whether the parents read to the child every day or less often, is the extent of the child's active participation in these situations.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents a summary of study findings, conclusions, recommendations and suggestions for further research.

5.2 Summary of the Study

The purpose of the study was to investigate the influence of parental involvement on preschool children aged 5-6 years performance in Kiswahili reading comprehension in public pre-schools in Athi- River Zone, Machakos County. Four research objectives guided the study. Research Objective one sought to establish the extent to which parental involvement in select Kiswahili story book shared reading activities on children's performance in Kiswahili reading comprehension. The second objective sought to assess the extent to which frequency of parental involvement in reading select Kiswahili texts with children at home influences pre-school children's performance in Kiswahili reading comprehension. The third objective sought to examine the extent to which frequency of parental involvement in shared reading activities from select Kiswahili texts with the children at home influenced pre-school children's performance in Kiswahili reading comprehension and the last objective was to determine the extent to which parental involvement in select Kiswahili story book reading and shared reading activities influences the performance of preschool children in Kiswahili reading comprehension. The study adopted quasi-experimental research design to find out the influence of parental involvement in

children's reading development at home on preschool children's performance in Kiswahili reading comprehension.

Findings of the study were based on the data collected from respondents namely: pre-school parents, pre-school teachers and pre-school children. It also focused on data collection instruments' return rate, which include parents, teachers and pupils' questionnaire, pre-school pre- and post-Kiswahili comprehension test and parents' mid- and end-term focus group discussion schedule. The study also analyzed demographic information of respondents. Items addressing the same research question were grouped together, discussed and conclusions drawn on a particular research question. The sample comprised of 100 pre-school children, 100 parents and four pre-school teachers. The study, through a parental involvement in children's reading development intervention, enabled parents to actively participate in their preschool children's reading activities at home. Reading activities that majorly included storybook reading and story book shared reading activities.

Findings on the influence of parental involvement in reading with children select story books at home on children's performance in Kiswahili reading revealed that parents from the experimental 32 (64%) and 35 (70%) control group did not carry out any reading with the children at home at all. These findings imply in other words, parental involvement in children's reading development was wanting, thus confirming the need for this study and the intervention that was implemented. Six percent of parents from both the control and experimental group did help the children to read after work and at bed time. This percentage is quite low and

disheartening in light of the fact that a rich home literacy environment and reading culture is crucial to the child's reading orientation and development

Findings in Table 4.5 indicated that at baseline there were few reading materials in many homes. Only 10% parents in the control group self-reported that they had children's story books compared to 14% in the experimental group. The situation was no better for reading charts with 8% of parents in the control group and 10% in the experimental group self-reporting that they had them, It was even worse for picture books with many parents in the control group and experimental group reporting that they had them. The most common reading materials found in many homes was either the Quran or bible and newspapers and magazines. These results indicate that there were poor home environments that did not fully support children's reading development which could in turn affect children's performance in reading comprehension as established by Snow (2000) and Sénéchal, (2006) that Storybook reading between a parent and their young child can promote their young child's vocabulary skills and in time will facilitate their reading comprehension, has a positive relation to listening comprehension skills and positive reading attitude .Many homes had between 1 and 5 children's story books, that is, 62 % and 54 % for the control and experimental groups respectively. Few homes had over 20 children's story books. This implied that many homes were not print-rich a fact that negatively impacts children's reading development. About 42% of homes had between 5 and 20 children's story books in Kiswahili while only 20% had over fifteen of such books. These findings, dismal though they are, indicate there were some materials in a language learners are likely to understand; a necessary factor in augmenting learners' reading development.

Sixty four of parents in the control and 66% in the experimental groups respectively rated them very low as far as reading culture was concerned. The study established that parents got involved in reading activities at home. Newspapers and magazine reading was the most popular literacy activity among parents standing at 36% and 28% for control and experimental groups, respectively. Story telling was the least popular activity among the parents as indicated by 8% and 12% of parents from control and experimental groups, respectively. Sixty eight percent of parents reported that they had made good progress in reading with their children. However, 12% of parents still rated their involvement as poor. Overall, progress made in most homes was commendable. Parents were proactive in and had become more interested in their children's reading development. This is because 40% of the children reported that their parents initiated the reading activities. Noteworthy, 30% of the children reported that they too initiated the reading activity. Children reported that parents read to them mostly at bed time, after work as indicated by 24 (48%) of the children during weekends and during holidays.

Parents identified several challenges they encountered when reading with their children in their homes. The biggest challenge was linked to the not-so-conducive home environment as cited by 60% of the parents. Forty four felt they lacked expertise in reading with the children. Forty percent did not find ample time to participate in the activity. Thirty percent of parents indicated that children were overloaded with home-work which made reading together challenging. Parents further suggested ways of dealing with the challenges. Seventy two percent of the parents recommended working closely with teachers was vital, 64% noted that help from sibling and cooperation of other family members was vital in increasing opportunities for family literacy

development. Twenty eight percent of parents suggested that making reading a fun activity would boost children's concentration and interest in the reading activities.

Findings on parental involvement in shared reading activities from select story books and pre-school children's performance in Kiswahili reading comprehension at baseline indicated that fifty eight percent of parents from the control group and fifty four percent from the experimental group did not engage in any shared reading activities with their children. This implied that at baseline parents were ignorant of the myriad ways of involvement with their children's around reading knowledge. At end line however, there was an increase in parents' repertoire of shared reading activities to choose from. Over and above asking questions from the story as indicated by 40% of the parents 11(22%) discussed the stories, 10% of parents engaged in acting and role playing the story, 36 % named the characters in the stories and drawing pictures from the stories. This was proof that parents had become more knowledgeable in ways of engagement in their children's reading than before. Findings attest to the increase in the types of additional reading materials that parents acquired for shared reading purposes with their children with Kiswahili story books carrying the highest number in most homes as indicated by half (50%) of the parents.

Findings on the influence of frequency of parental involvement in reading select story book at home and pre-school learners' performance in Kiswahili reading comprehension indicated that most of the parents from control and experimental groups at baseline rarely read to or spent time in reading activities with their children, that is, 10% of parents from both control and environmental groups. This implied that parental involvement in children's reading development

was wanting at baseline. On parents opinion, parents thought spending time with children in reading activities it did not help (26%) or it was not necessary (24%). Later, many of them (41%) realized that reading comprehension was positively influenced by the interactions and that those interactions did “help a lot.” Frequency of involvement in reading activities did increase between baseline and end-line among the intervention group.

Findings on frequency of shared reading activities on preschool children’s reading comprehension confirmed that at baseline the frequency of shared reading activities was significantly lower for parents in the intervention and control groups. Parents never carried out shared reading activities at all, with the largest percentage (64%) in control and (60%) in the experimental groups, respectively rarely doing it. Later many of the parents participated in shared reading activities with their children. Increase in frequency of shared reading activities of the treatment group notably improved after the intervention as reported by 36% of the parents from the experimental group. There was also a decrease in the number of parents who did not take part in these activities as indicated by 4% of the parents from the experimental group.

Parents made suggestions regarding parental involvement in children’s reading involvement. For instance 20% of the parents recommended buying of children’s books and working hand in hand with teachers. A further 60% indicated that children need support at home to motivate them to read and write. Half (50%) of the parents stated that learners’ home environment was very important towards development of child. Collectively these suggestions from parents imply that

parents learnt a lot in regard to their involvement in their children's reading development at home.

The findings in Table 4.20 indicate the positive changes had noted by teachers in regard to parental involvement in children's reading and learning. Teachers had noted positive changes towards parental involvement in children's reading development and learning in general. Four teachers indicated that parental visits to school had increased. A healthy skepticism would be that the parents' interest in the welfare of their children was beginning to soar. Two teachers observed parents were becoming more concerned with their children's academic performance and showed more support towards children's homework. Seventy five percent of teachers noted that teachers had bought more books towards children's reading. Findings in Table 4.21 indicate that all four teachers sampled for the study had become more motivated to teach reading skills to children and had also witnessed improved relationship between themselves and parents. This implies that there was not only improvement in pupil outcomes in reading development but also motivation for teachers. This stemmed from parental support that the teachers perceived to be getting. Seventy five percent of teachers noted that children were now able to work on their own only with little guidance from the teachers. Twenty five percent of teachers noted that some of the children who previously could not read were now able to read.

Findings on the impact of parental involvement in select Kiswahili story book reading and shared reading activities on children's performance in Kiswahili reading comprehension indicated that parents concurred with teachers that children could now read more complex words and stories. They reported also that the children's reading speed had improved and that because of that they understood better what they read. This, in turn, had motivated the children to not only read but

write as well. Noteworthy was the fact that children could now work with little or no supervision. Their vocabulary had also increased. These positive self-reports imply that parental involvement in children's reading at home had positively influenced children's reading development in many areas and specifically in their reading comprehension.

Results from Table 4.25 indicate that the pre- test for both groups were not statistically significant on observed and unobserved characteristics at baseline. Performance in Kiswahili at the beginning of the experiment was: Treatment (Mean=5.588; SD 1.791); and Control (Mean=5.3878; SD 1.765). The mean difference between the two groups stood at 0.20 and was not statistically significant on both observed and unobserved characteristics. The findings in Table 4.25 indicate that at end-line, performance in Kiswahili reading comprehension was as follows: Treatment Group (Mean =6.2549; SD 2.153) and Control Group (Mean =3.7143; SD 1.871). Results from the study indicate a difference of 2.55 in the mean scores between the experimental and control group, a statistically significant difference between the two groups suggesting that there is a strong relationship between parental involvement in children's reading at home and their performance in Kiswahili reading comprehension. This implies further that parental involvement was beneficial to children's reading development in Kiswahili. Contextual factors that made this possible included creation of a literate home environment that encouraged reading, actively participating in quality shared reading activities in the home with pre-school children and children's ability to comprehend what was read. It is hypothesized that these variables interacted meaningfully to bring about a positive effect on pre-school children's performance in Kiswahili reading comprehension. This positive impact has important

implications for learners' future educational outcomes. Overall, it appears there was a win-win situation for children, their parents and teachers.

Indeed, imparting knowledge to children through reading at an early stage adds value to their lives consistent with what Angelica (2008) says that children are easily taught and mentored through parental action. When parents take time to read to them, the children become more interested in reading. Reading makes them eager to explore things written in books as they grow older, thereby cultivating a reading culture and learning about things, places, events and experience. Parents' attitudes and support for their children's learning positively influences performance on literacy tests irrespective of socio-economic status.

5.3 Conclusion

Based on the findings, the study concluded that many of the parents in most homes do not get involved in their children's reading development. A large percentage of parents from the experimental 32 (64%) and 35 (70%) control groups, respectively, did not carry out any reading with the children at all. More so most homes do not provide a rich reading environment that support children's reading. In the study for instance, majority of homes lacked reading materials for children. Few homes had over 20 story books as indicated by 10% of parents in the study. Reading materials were mostly of adult nature such as newspapers, magazines and novels. Families exhibited poor reading habits and culture. Findings indicated that majority of the families had either a poor or very poor reading habits/culture as demonstrated by 32% of parents from the control group and 36% from the experimental group who indicated it was poor. Thirty

four percent of parents from the control group and 30% from the experimental group indicated that it was very poor.

The study concluded that time investment by parents in children's reading influences their comprehension skills as well as other skills in reading. Parents establish daily story times during which they can read to children and listen as children read to them. Parents emerged as the biggest initiators of reading activities in the home followed by the children themselves. Forty-eight percent of the children (N=24) indicated that parents read with them daily after work while 20% (N=10) indicated they did so before bed time.

The study also concluded frequency of shared reading activities has significant positive influence not only on reading achievement, productive and expressive language skill, pupils' interest in reading and attitudes towards reading but also on parents' attitude, involvement and parent-child relationship. In the study, when parents increased the amount of books for shared reading activities, exploited a variety and more shared reading activities and increased the occurrences of such interactions they, as well as teachers the respondents and the interviewee, noted improvement in the highlighted skills. For example, 54% of parents (n=27) noted increased vocabulary while 30 % (N=15) reported improved reading fluency. Seventy percent (N=35) expressed that it promoted social interactions while 60% (N=30) expressed that it improved story comprehension among other skills

Finally the study concluded that parental involvement in children's reading at home strongly influences children's performance in reading comprehension. It has significant positive

influences not only on reading achievement, language comprehension and expressive language skills but also on pupils' interest in reading, attitudes towards reading and attentiveness in the classroom. Parents make the greatest difference to achievement through supporting their learning in the home rather than supporting activities in the school.

Indeed, imparting knowledge to children through reading at an early stage adds value to their lives consistent with what Angelica (2008) says that children are easily taught and mentored through parental action. When parents take time to read to them, the children become more interested in reading. Reading makes them eager to explore things written in books as they grow older, thereby cultivating reading culture and learning about things, places, events and experience. Parents' attitudes and support for their children's learning positively influences performance on literacy tests irrespective of socio-economic status. When parents read to their children they have the opportunity to interact positively with them and create a pleasurable reading experience. Affective quality of interactions in fostering children's interest in reading is critical. It is the quality of the shared reading experience that determines its effectiveness in nurturing literacy skills. More crucial than whether the parents read to the child every day or less often, is the extent of the child's active participation in these situations.

5.4 Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made:

The present study was confined to parental involvement in children's Kiswahili reading comprehension in Athi-River Zone, Machakos County; it may not be out of place to extend the research recommendations to embrace a broader population of the country. In line with the findings and conclusions of the study, the researcher would make the following recommendations to help increasing parental involvement in children's reading at home;

- The study observed that many parents did not engage themselves in any reading activities with their children at home and that some parents were ignorant of their role in as far as their involvement in their children's reading development was concerned. For example, most expressed that spending time with children in reading activities at home either helped a little, or did not help at all. The study recommends that adequate effort should be made by stakeholders such as education officers and teachers towards encouraging parents to regain their position as children's first teachers and role models based on the strong influence on children's reading development, learning and lives in general. Parents who still have wrong or negative attitude towards being involved in sensitizing and helping their children at home to change this attitude at the earliest opportunity. This can be done through teaching parents in forums such as seminars and workshops on such matters.
- Early childhood reading culture can be improved when parents set aside time regularly for reading to their children. They should create quality time for the children and develop such closeness, love and passion in being in children's world to make reading time

interesting with their children. Every parent should endeavor as much as possible within the constraint of their time to nurture a good desire and interest for qualitative reading with their children. Reading should be an everyday exercise to achieve noteworthy results. However, parents should not put undue pressure on their children, while developing a reading culture in them. Parents should invest in purchasing of books for their children and appreciate children's reading materials. Indeed, should see purchasing of storybooks as an investment and not a waste of the often meager resources.

- The study established children whose parents got involved in their reading development at home performed better in a reading comprehension test compared to their counterparts. There were poor home reading environments at baseline characterized by little or no story books for children and other reading materials coupled by poor reading habits of family members. This study thus recommends that parents involve themselves actively in their children's learning through practices such as reading and telling stories to their children, conducting shared reading activities, buying and reading books for children, creating a literacy-rich environment and creating a reading culture in the home. It also recommends that home libraries can be created by parents for their children with children's books placed in an accessible area in the house to attract attention of the children and sense of treasure of the books should be developed in their children.
- Government and individuals should be involved in the distribution of books written for children. State and local governments should establish libraries in every local government space to promote reading culture in families and the country. Government should endeavor to equip all schools with libraries well-stocked with current children's

literature. Books for early childhood reading should be subsidized by the Kenyan Government to make them accessible and affordable for children's reading development. Government should support Kenyan writers of children's books.

- Establishment of community children libraries will greatly improve reading culture of the children. As a matter of policy, nursery schools should have fully functional libraries with well-stocked children's literature which can be available for home loan, while the libraries should be manned by a librarian. Storytelling sessions in nursery school libraries should be introduced and carried out on a regular basis as it is an important way to secure love for reading in our children.
- Parents should be educated on the importance of cultivating reading culture of their children during the formative years (from birth to age of 7). Educative programs should be designed for parents through television, radio, cinema, journals and newspapers on the need to embrace early childhood reading. Awareness should be created among parents on the necessity to be adequately involved in their children's' education. There should be deliberate increased awareness of the general public in Kenya on the requirements for increased reading culture among children with the involvement of parents.
- Children's literature should be educative, entertaining and with colorful pictures to catch and sustain children's attention. Books should be written with familiar language and should be easy to read. Most indigenous children's books are poorly worded and poorly illustrated. Picture books with Kenyan setting are uncommon. Indigenous authors should be encouraged to reflect our culture and moral values. Quality of indigenous books needs

to be improved here in Kenya, so that they will be books worth reading. Book publishers should ensure that they produce standard books for children, at affordable prices and in sufficient quantity.

- The study observed that parents had several challenges. Lack of time and unfriendly home environment were the most highlighted by parents. Parents should be made to understand that they need not necessarily to create special time for reading activities since activities that benefit children most are the day to day experiences which parents can exploit. Research demonstrates that it is not the length of time that is beneficial to children's reading development. Activities for young children can take 10-15minutes but still be beneficial to them. Regarding unfriendly reading environment, the study recommends the collaboration of stakeholders and community members to develop a community library where parents and children can find room for reading activities and also make books available to them.
- The study observed that parents were eager to help their children in reading at home but they were faced with numerous challenges including lack of knowhow on how to conduct the reading between them and their children. The study further recommends that the State Department of Education, in conjunction with the Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development (KICD), to come up with a manual which can help parents learn ways of engagement in their children's learning at home in all curricula areas including reading. That way parents will be informed thus reducing ignorance amongst them. They also receive guidance from the teachers in was by which they can read together with the children at home.

5.5 Suggestions for Further Research

The following are suggestions for further research:

- 1) An investigation to be carried out on the same research topic in a different region other than the one sampled for this study.
- 2) Influence of home environment on development of pre-school children's reading skills in other languages.
- 3) Impact of reading comprehension on pre-school children's academic performance in specific subject areas.
- 4) Effectiveness of parental involvement on preschool children's reading development in multi-lingual settings.
- 5) Influence of gender on parental involvement in children's reading development in multiple languages.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX: A

PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT BASELINE INTERVIEW GUIDE

SECTION A: PARENT'S DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

- 1) Sex: Male----- Female -----
- 2) Age: Below 25 ---- 25-30 ----- 31 -40----- 41-50 ----- Above 50 -----
- 3) Highest level of education -----
- 4) What do you do for a living? -----
- 5) Which languages are you proficient in? -----

SECTION B: READING ACTIVITIES AT HOME

- 6) Do you involve your child in any reading activities at home? Yes ----- No-----
- 7) List the kind of reading materials you read to/with your child? -----

- 8) During what time do you read to your child? -----
- 9) How frequently do you read to your child? -----
- 10) Which reading activities do you carry out with your child after reading with them? -----

- 11) Which literacy activities do you personally engage in at home?
- 12) How many children's story books are there in your home?
- 13) Other than story books, are there other reading materials present in the home?
- 14) Comment on the reading habits of members in your home-----
- 15) What challenges do you experience in spending more time with your child in reading activities? -----
- 16) In your own opinion, do you think spending time with your child in reading activities can improve his/her performance in reading comprehension?

Thank you for your co-operation

APPENDIX B

A PRE-SCHOOL PRE-INTERVENTION KISWAHILI READING COMPREHENSION TEST

Soma hadithi hii kisha ujibu maswali yafuatayo

Chungu cha Maharagwe

Mama alitaka kuenda sokoni. Aliwaambia wanawe wachunge chungu cha maharagwe yaliyokuwa yakiiva. Mama alipoondoka, Maria alienda chunguni na kuyala maharagwe yote haraka haraka. Mama aliporudi, alishangaa kuona chungu kitupu. Hakuna aliyekubali kuyala maharagwe. Usiku huo, Maria hakulala kwa maaumivu makali tumboni.

- 1) Mama alienda wapi? -----
- 2) Nani aliyala maharagwe yote? -----
- 3) Mama yako hufanya nini anapokupata na makosa? -----
- 4) Hadithi hii inakufunza nini? -----

Jibu maswali yafuatayo kutokana na kitabu kilicho wasilishwa

- 1) Kichwa cha kitabu ni? -----
- 2) Ni nini unachoweza kuona upande wa mbele wa kitabu hicho? -----
- 3) Nani mwandishi wa kitabu? -----
- 4) Je, unakisoma kitabu hicho ukielekea upande upi? -----
- 5) Upande wa nyuma wa kitabu hiki kuna nini? -----

APPENDIX C

PRE-SCHOOL POST-INTERVENTION KISWAHILI READING COMPREHENSION

TEST

Soma ufahamu huu kisha ujibu maswali yafuatayo

Uvuvi

Siku moja, wavuvi kumi na mmoja walivua samaki wengi. Waliamua kuandaa sherehe Wakataka kujua idadi yao ili wajiandae kabisa. Kila mmoja wao alipohesabu, alipata kasoro ya mvuvi mmoja. Wavuvi wakahuzunika. Walidhani mmoja wao amekufa majini. Mpita njia mmoja aliposikia shida yao, aliamua kudhibitisha idadi yao. Alihesabu wavuvi kumi na mmoja.

- 1) Siku moja wavuvi walifanya nini? -----
- 2) Wavuvi walikuwa wangapi? -----
- 3) Je, unafikiria mvuvi mmoja alikuwa amezama majini? Eleza jibu lako.-----
- 4) Unafikia uvuvi ulikuwa ukifanyika wapi? -----
- 5) Unapofanikiwa katika jambo fulani,wewe hufanya nini?-----

Jibu maswali yafuatayo kutokana na kitabu kilichowasilishwa

- 1) Kichwa cha kitabu ni? -----
- 2) Ni nini unachoweza kuona upande wa mbele wa kitabu hicho? -----
- 3) Kitabu hicho kimeandikwa na nani? -----
- 4) Je, unakisoma kitabu hicho ukielekea upande upi? -----
- 5) Upande wa nyuma wa kitabu hiki una nini? -----

APPENDIX

FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW GUIDES

A) MID-TERM INTERVIEW GUIDE

- 1) How are you carrying on with the story book reading activities with your child in the home?
- 2) Which challenges are you experiencing so far?
- 3) How can you overcome the above-mentioned challenges?

B) END- TERM INTERVIEW GUIDE

- 1) Have you noted any improvement in your child's reading skills?
- 2) Explain the kind of improvement noted.
- 3) Which area of reading skills have you noted as the most improvement
- 4) What advise can you give to other parents regarding their children's reading development?
- 5) In your own opinion, do you think this intervention was a worthwhile activity

APPENDIX E

POST INTERVENTION TEACHER'S INTERVIEW GUIDE

SECTION A: TEACHERS DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

1. Age 20-30 ----- 30-40 ----- 40-50 ----- 51and above -----

2. Sex male ----- female -----

3. Highest level if education -----

SECTION B: Items of children's Reading Comprehension

- 1) Are there any changes noted in children's reading skills?
- 2) If yes, which changes have you noted?
- 3) Please indicate if there's any positive change in the parents' support for children's reading.
- 4) Other than benefits noted in parental involvement in children's reading, are there other associated benefits?
- 5) Other than changes noted in the child's reading skills, which other observation have you noted in the child that might be related to the intervention?
- 6) Has the intervention helped you personally as a teacher? If yes explain

APPENDIX F

POST- INTERVENTION PUPILS INTERVIEW GUIDE

- 1) Do you and your parent read story books together?
- 2) How did you obtain the story books at home?
- 3) When do you read the story books? (time)
- 4) How frequently do you read the books together with your parents?
- 5) What activities do you carry out before, during and after reading a book?
- 6) How frequently do you engage in the above (4) named activities
- 7) Who initiates the reading?
- 8) How many Kiswahili story books are there at home?