

**INFLUENCE OF PARENTAL CHARACTERISTICS ON PERFORMANCE IN  
LANGUAGE ACTIVITIES OF PRE-SCHOOLERS IN NYANDO DIVISION,  
KISUMU COUNTY, KENYA**

**AKINYI DOROTHY ODAWO**

**A RESEARCH PROJECT SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE  
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD OF DEGREE OF MASTERS OF  
EDUCATION IN THE DEPARTMENT OF EARLY CHILDHOOD  
EDUCATION OF THE UNIVERISTY OF NAIROBI**

**OCTOBER, 2013**

## DECLARATION

I declare that this is my original work and has not been submitted to the University of Nairobi or any other University for examination.

.....

Dorothy Akinyi Odawo

This project has been submitted for examination with my approval as university supervisor.

.....

Dr. Inyega Hellen

Senior Lecturer,

Department of Educational Communication and Technology,

University of Nairobi.

## **DEDICATION**

I would like to dedicate this work to the late Mr. Andrew J. Odawo, the late Mrs. Mary Agnes Odawo for raising me well and setting the bar high. My husband Mathew, my children Aurelia, Hazel and Kevin Andrew for persevering with me during the entire time that school and work denied us time together. Your love, support and encouragement have seen me through this journey. My siblings Emily, Lilian, Linus, Teles, Euphemia and Julian. May God bless you.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

This project has been possible through the guidance, encouragement and assistance of a number of people and institutions. My greatest gratitude goes to my supervisor, Dr. Hellen Inyega, for guiding me through the start to the completion of the project. I appreciate her patience with me and her wisdom in bringing this work to completion.

I would also like to thank all the respondents in Nyando division who took time to respond to my questionnaires thus making this study successful. I would also like to thank the staff at the University of Nairobi's Kikuyu Campus for all their assistance. Finally I would like to thank God for making all things possible.

## ABSTRACT

The present study focuses on parental characteristics that influence performance in language activities of pre-schoolers in Nyando division. It sought to assess if household composition, parental income, level of education and parental occupation influence performance in language activities of pre-schoolers. The study adopted a descriptive survey research design since it focuses at one point in time. The findings were obtained using a questionnaire that was administered personally by the researcher. Demographic profiles established that the majority of parents were self-employed. In terms of parental income, majority of parent respondents (55%; n=55) earn less than Ksh. 5,000/= and their children's level of performance in language activities is rated as very low since majority of preschool children had not performed well in language activities. The study established that majority of the respondents (47%; n=47) were KCSE certificate holders. From the findings the preschool children whose parents attained degree level of education had higher rates of performance in language activities in preschool while the children from parents who attained KCSE certificate level and below had lower performance in language activities. Household composition findings showed that majority of respondents come from single-parent family and their children's preschool performance in language activities rate is very low. The study found out those children from polygamous families performed poorly in language activities. In the findings of the parental occupation, majority of the parent respondents (40%; n=40) were self employed while 38% (n=38) were unemployed. Only 22% (n=22) were employed. The parents who were self-employed were mostly peasant farmers and small scale business men. The study concluded therefore that parental income, parental occupation, household composition and parental level of education influence preschool education hence performance in language activities of preschoolers in Nyando division.

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>DECLARATION.....</b>	<b>ii</b>
<b>DEDICATION.....</b>	<b>iii</b>
<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENT.....</b>	<b>iv</b>
<b>ABSTRACT.....</b>	<b>v</b>
<b>LIST OF TABLES.....</b>	<b>ix</b>
<b>LIST OF FIGURES.....</b>	<b>x</b>
<b>ABBREVIATION AND ACRONYMS.....</b>	<b>xi</b>
<b>CHAPTER ONE.....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>INTRODUCTION.....</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1 Background to the Study.....	1
1.2 Statement of the Problem.....	3
1.3 The Purpose of the Study.....	4
1.4 Research Objectives.....	5
1.5 Research Questions.....	5
1.6 Significance of the Study.....	6
1.7 Limitations of the Study.....	6
1.8 Delimitations of the Study.....	7
1.9 Basic Assumptions.....	7
1.10 Definition of Key Terms.....	7
1.11 Organization of the Study.....	8

<b>CHAPTER TWO</b> .....	<b>9</b>
<b>REVIEW OF LITERATURE</b> .....	<b>9</b>
2.1 Introduction .....	9
2.2 Performance in Language activities.....	9
2.3 Parental Educational Level .....	10
2.4 Parental Income .....	13
2.5 Household Composition.....	14
2.6 Parental Occupation .....	15
2.8 Theoretical Framework .....	16
2.9 Conceptual Framework .....	19
<b>CHAPTER THREE</b> .....	<b>20</b>
<b>RESEARCH METHODOLOGY</b> .....	<b>20</b>
3.1 Introduction.....	20
3.2 Research Design.....	20
3.3 Target Population.....	20
3.4 Sample Size and Sampling Procedure .....	21
3.5 Research Instruments .....	21
3.6 Validity of Data Collection Instrument.....	22
3.7 Reliability of the Instrument .....	22
3.8 Procedure for Data Collection .....	23
3.9 Data Analysis .....	23

3.10 Ethical Considerations.....	24
<b>CHAPTER FOUR.....</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS.....</b>	<b>25</b>
4.1 Introduction.....	25
4.2 Parental Income and Children Performance in Languages in Preschool.....	25
4.3 Relationship between Educational Level of Parents and Performance of their Children in Language Activities.....	28
4.4 Household Composition and Children’s Performance in Language activities in Preschool.....	33
4.5 Parental Occupation and Children Performance in Preschool.....	36
4.6 Conclusion.....	37
<b>CHAPTER FIVE.....</b>	<b>38</b>
<b>SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....</b>	<b>38</b>
5.1 Introduction.....	38
5.2 Summary of Findings.....	38
5.3 Conclusions.....	41
5.4 Recommendations.....	43
5.5 Recommendations for Further Research.....	44
<b>APPENDIX I: LETTER OF TRANSMITTAL.....</b>	<b>50</b>
<b>APPENDIX II: QUESTIONNAIRE FOR PARENTS.....</b>	<b>51</b>
<b>APPENDIX III: AUTHORIZATION LETTER.....</b>	<b>54</b>

## LIST OF TABLES

<b>Table</b>	<b>Page</b>
Table 1.1: Nyando Division KCPE Language Results: 2010-2012.....	4
Table 4.1: Relationship between Parental Income and Performance in Language Activities.....	25
Table 4.2 Relationship between Parents ability to Pay School fees and Children’s Performance in Languages.....	27
Table 4.3 Relationship between Educational Level of Parents and Performance in Language Activities.....	28
Table 4.4 Relationship between Parents Involvement in School Activities and Performance in Language Activities.....	30
Table 4.5 Relationship between Parental Education and Children’s’ Motivation and Performance .....	31
Table 4.5.1 Relationship between Parents Motivating Children and Preschool Performance in Language Activities.....	32
Table 4.6 Relationship between Household Composition and Performance in Language Activities .....	33
Table 4.7 Relationship between Number of Children and Performance in Language Activities.....	35
Table 4.8 Relationship between Occupation of Parents and Performance in Language Activities .....	36

## LIST OF FIGURES

<b>Figure</b>	<b>Page</b>
Figure 1.1 : Conceptual Framework.....	19

## ABBREVIATION AND ACRONYMS

<b>DEO:</b>	District Education Office
<b>DICECE:</b>	District Centre for Early Childhood Education
<b>ECD:</b>	Early Childhood Development Education
<b>ECE:</b>	Early Childhood Education
<b>FPE:</b>	Free Primary Education
<b>MoEST:</b>	Ministry of Education Science and Technology
<b>NGO:</b>	Non Governmental Organizations
<b>OECD:</b>	Office of Early Childhood Development
<b>SPSS:</b>	Statistical Package for Social Sciences
<b>SES:</b>	Socio-economic status
<b>UNESCO:</b>	United Nations Education Scientific and Culture Organization

# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background to the Study

Excelling in academics has become the most dominant feature of education systems around the world; it features in all levels of education beginning from pre-primary to higher level of education. Academic performance is a notable indicator of an individual's success in life. Baratz's (1970) model indicates that the probability of a child attending and performing well in preschool education comes as a result of a family maximizing their income.

Much of work relating to out of school influence on prospects for academic success stems from James Coleman's (1996) study of racial and ethnic segregation, students and family characteristics and students' achievement. In the equality of educational opportunity document prepared for the US Department of Education, Coleman found that family factors such as household composition, socioeconomic status and parents' level of education were stronger predictors of educational attainment than were direct school related factors.

There have been many studies conducted to identify the factors that contribute to the decline of student's performance in language. According to Kayongo, Janine and Launcelot (2006), past research has indicated that a significant relationship exists between children's home environment and reading achievement. However, most such studies have been conducted in western countries where the concept of home

environment is different from that in developing countries. In a study conducted in Zimbabwe, home environment factors considered were television, fridge, electricity, and piped water. Collectively, these possessions were taken to be a measure of SES (Kayongo, Janine and Launcelot, 2006).

Reviewed literature indicated that there is an awareness of the importance of family on pupils' academic performance. The home has a great influence on the students' psychological, emotional, social and economic state. In the view of Ajila and Olutola (2007) the state of the home affects the individual since parents are the first socializing agents in an individual's life. This is because the family background and context affects the child's reactions to life situations and his level of performance. The home background constitutes of parents' SES, parents' educational level, and living conditions. Kitavi (2005) in his thesis observed that parents and the community were the two most important components in the home background affecting both learning and performance in schools.

Rasinski and Fredericks (1998) stated that in the literary development of children parents play a crucial role. In *Becoming a Nation of Readers*, the commission on reading concluded that parents play an invaluable role in laying the foundation for their children learning to study, and that parents cannot shirk the responsibility of supporting their children's continued growth as readers. They further recognized the importance of parental involvement and guidance in the development of their children's reading behavior. The value of daily activities such as reading aloud, is significant; bedtime stories another good example (Rasinski & Fredericks, 1998).

The school is responsible for the experiences that make up the individuals life during school periods. However, parents and the individual's experiences at home play tremendous roles in building the personality of the child and making the child what he is. Ichando (1998) concluded that the environment in which the students come from can greatly influence his performance at school.

The family has been recognized as having a lot of influence on academic performance of students (Neuman, 1997; Ajila and Olutola, 2007). However, previous studies have concentrated on SES of parents. Other aspects of parental environment such as educational level of parents, occupation, income and household composition have been neglected. It is on this basis that the researcher sought to investigate whether these other parental characteristics influence performance in language activities among pre-school children.

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

Examinations have always been used as the main basis for judging a student's ability and as a means of selection for educational progression and employment. Although there is no national examination at pre primary level of education, many pupils sit for KCPE every year. Over the years, discrepancies in performance and low performance in language have been observed in Nyando Division compared to other subjects, yet the language of examination is English. Consider the KCPE results for the last three years shown in Table 1 below.

*Table 1.1: Nyando Division K.C.P.E Three-Year (2010-2012) Language Results*

	<b>2010</b>	<b>2011</b>	<b>2012</b>
English	50.06	48.44	51.78
Kiswahili	36.99	42.88	43.91

**Source: Nyando District 2012 K.C.P.E Result Analysis.**

Among the factors that are blamed for students' poor academic performance, parental characteristics are hardly mentioned. Poor performance has raised concerns and efforts have been made to find out the reason behind it. Many factors such as lack of facilities in school, lack of teachers, low intelligence, and anxiety have been found to cause poor performance (Cantu, 1975; Mwinzi and Kimengi, 2006).

While these factors have been identified as possible factors that contribute to the poor performance in language activities in Kenya, perhaps it is not worth the effort and investment to show the role played by the characteristics of the parents on children's performance in languages. This study therefore attempted to find out whether parental characteristics influence performance in language among preschool children.

### **1.3 The Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to determine the influence of parental characteristics on performance in language activities of children in preschool in Nyando Division, Kisumu County.

## **1.4 Research Objectives**

The study sought to achieve the following objectives:

- i. To establish the relationship between parental level of education and performance in language activities of preschoolers.
- ii. To establish the relationship between parental income and performance in language activities of preschoolers.
- iii. To establish the relationship between household composition and performance in language activities of preschoolers.
- iv. To establish the relationship between parental occupation and performance in language activities of preschoolers.

## **1.5 Research Questions**

The following research questions guided the study:

- i. What is the relationship between parental level of education and performance in language activities of preschoolers?
- ii. What is the relationship between parental income and performance in language activities of preschoolers?
- iii. What is the relationship between household composition and performance in language activities of preschoolers?
- iv. What is the relationship between parental occupation and performance in language activities of preschoolers?

## **1.6 Significance of the Study**

The study's findings provide the Ministry of Education planners, teachers, learners, and the public and other stakeholders with a better understanding of the importance of preschool enrolment in the district. This will help the Ministry of Education decide where to increase their investment in children's early years as they set the stage for subsequent education and development.

It will also enable them to identify education sector's institutional needs for improvement and ensure that quality teaching is offered in our preschool institutions. The findings will enable the District Education Officers to reevaluate their activities and apply the recommendations made by the study to improve Early Childhood Development Education through government efforts such as school subsidy. The findings will also help the Constituency Development Planners and other ministries partnering in education understand that education is in vain if the entry point to literacy is ignored. This helps the stakeholders and parents to understand the importance of early childhood education and recommends strategies to address the situation of preschool enrolment.

## **1.7 Limitations of the Study**

The study was conducted in Nyando division which is a rural setting hence the results may not be applicable to other parts of Kenya. This is because the culture and economic status might be different yet they the research problem under investigation in the present study might be the same nationwide.

### **1.8 Delimitations of the Study**

The study was delimited to only four (4) factors of parental characteristics: level of education, income, occupation and household composition, even with the realization that there are many other factors. The study was also delimited to a few selected preschools, preschoolers and parents of preschoolers in Nyando Division.

The study was conducted in selected preschools in Nyando division, Nyando district, in Kenya though the factors that the researcher sought to investigate are nationwide. Since the researcher was not in a position to conduct a nationwide study, the findings may not apply to areas outside Nyando Division hence may not be generalized to all preschools in the nation at large.

### **1.9 Basic Assumptions**

The study assumed that preschool centres have adequate facilities for proper language education. Secondly, it assumed that preschoolers have the same learning and concentration abilities at the initial point of enrollment.

### **1.10 Definition of Key Terms**

**Household Composition:** The contents and features of a family.

**Income:** Money received especially on a regular basis for work or through investment.

The study took it that parents who earn less than KSh. 5000 shilling a month are poor while those who earn from KSh. 5000 and above are rich.

**Language Activities:** The learning of language including oral, reading and writing skills and activities performed through language such as singing, drama, modeling, and reciting poems.

**Level of Education:** The level to which a parent has attained formal education.

**Parental Characteristics:** Features of parents that have been identified as explanatory variables in a wide range of settings. This study considers these features to be level of income, level of education, parental occupation and household composition.

**Performance:** Refers to children's language activities achievement scores as measured by the achievement test obtained after tests

**Preschoolers:** Children between ages 3 and 6 who attend pre-primary education.

**Preschools:** Learning institutions for children between ages 3 and 6.

### **1.11 Organization of the Study**

This study was organized into five chapters. The first chapter explored the background of the study, statement of the problem, objectives of the study, research questions, significance of the study, limitations of the study, delimitations of the study, study assumptions, definition of key terms and organization of the study. Chapter two covered the literature review related to area of study. Chapter three addressed the research methodology. Chapter four covered the presentation, interpretations and discussions of the research findings and chapter five addressed the summary of findings, conclusions and recommendations.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

In this chapter, the researcher reviews literature related to performance in language activities together with parental characteristics that may impact positively or negatively on preschoolers performance in language. The chapter also contains theoretical and conceptual frameworks.

#### **2.2 Performance in Language activities**

The first three years of children's lives are characterized by rapid advances in all areas of development, including the acquisition of communication and language competence (Hoff, 2009; Mowder, 1997; Shonkoff and Phillips, 2000). Communication competence develops from early infancy, and includes children's communicative gestures and vocalizations. More conventional oral language generally begins to appear with children's first expressive vocabulary at around one year of age and has been thought to be motivated by early communicative and intentional behaviors (Hoff, 2003). Children learn communication and language in their primary social contexts this play an important role in the development of use of language (Bruner, 1981; Snow, Burns, and Griffin, 1998). Adult-child relationships characteristics is linked to children's later language development (Hart and Risley, 1995; Hoff, 2003; Tomasello, 1992). According to Hart and Risley (1995), Hoff (2003) and Tomasello (1992), environmental stimulation in the form of adult-child joint attention activities and characteristics of adult child-directed language is related to children's later language development.

Mwinzi and Kimengi (2006) assert that children's capacity is diminished due to poor economic backgrounds because they lack appropriate care and stimulation at the right age to develop certain language skills.

### **2.3 Parental Educational Level**

According to Okantey (2008) foundation in the home is laying the moral, spiritual and intellectual foundations that build the child later in life. Unless this foundation is set at home, the school will have nothing to build upon the child later and this becomes a problem not only to the parents but also to the community as a whole. Children of educated parents are reliable than children of lower or home educated parents (Ajila and Olutola, 2007). Parent's educational value has direct impact on their children's educational aspirations (Okantey, 2008). Okantey further states that children schooling is positively related to their parent's level of education because children tend to imitate their parents and also aspire to be as highly educated as their parents. Children are more disadvantaged when their parents have low education level; forming a cycle of uneducated family members and making every generation of the family not to go higher than their parents. Children from highly educated families are more ambitious and attain higher levels of education.

Education levels of the parents have a positive and significant effect on the enrolment of preschool children since parental level of education influences parental involvement, support and expectation to their children. Okantey (2008) further argues that parental education level leads to good income which can empower parents to give children solid foundation for schooling and life success. Lower

educational level is associated with higher prevalence of indicators of unhealthy lifestyle. Therefore parents' efficacy has stronger predictors of schooling success. Parental education is part of a larger constellation of psychological and sociological variables influencing language development outcomes in children. It is believed that parents educational level perhaps be the main source of influence that determines child's' performance (De Temple, 2001). Studies have indicated that parents with higher education level could motivate the intellectual potential within children that may lead them to perform better in school (Hart and Risley, 1995). For example parental education level may foster higher parental involvement in their children's performance. Well-educated parents are involved more in their children's education than less-educated parents (Sclafani, 2004). The more actively involved parents are in their children's education, the higher their children's' perceptions of competence and the better they perform and enhance their achievement motivation. Parents who have a high level of education tend to have higher aspirations and higher education plans for their children than lower or non educated parents (Sarigiani, 1990). Children of the educated group are liable than the children of lower or non-educated groups to have higher aspirations and higher education plans (Wilson, Smeeding and Havenan, 2007). There is a significant relationship between parental level of education and the pupil's educational aspiration (Alexander, 2002).

Parental education enhances children's progress in school (Alexander, 2002). This obligation to educational value has a direct impact on their children's language development (Okantey, 2008). There is an indication that children of parents with high level of education are likely to follow the modern ideas while the children from parents

with low level of education are likely to follow old tradition i.e. not to appreciate the value of education (Beals, 2001). Ninio (1989) found out that students who have parents that have received formal education are generally expected to perform better than those with parents who did not go to school at all as quoted by Kitavi (2005) in his research to investigate factors influencing performance of Kenya certificate of Primary Education in Kathonzi Division of Makueni District.

Parents' education also influences parents' skills, values and knowledge of the education system which in turn influences their educational practices at home. Parents with higher education talk and use more varied languages which influence language skills of the children (Hoff, 2003). Research also shows that parent's education is related to warm social climate in the home. Klebanov (2002) found that both mothers' education and family income were important predictors of the physical environment and learning experiences in the home. But mother's education alone predicts warmth in the family. Research has revealed that highly educated mothers have greater success in providing their children with cognitive and language skills. Parents who are more educated generally display more positive value towards educational achievements and social mobility. Roopnarine (2004) argued that parental level of education influences support, involvement and expectation for their children, in turn these support, involvement and motivation influence academic performance of children, language inclusive. Educated parents have also been found to be able to make constructive decisions such as how much time to spend with their children, and then given their income, may decide how much income to devote to children's education (Wilson,

Smeeding and Havenan, 2007). For example they may decide how much to spend on buying story books to enhance reading skills.

## **2.4 Parental Income**

Economic hardships are caused by low socioeconomic status of the parents (Eshiwani, 1993) and can lead to disruption in parenting, increase amount of family conflicts and increase the likelihood of depression in single parent households. Socio-economic status indicates the quality of home life for children. (Beals, 2001) states that an increase in an individual's income relatively increases the quality of their children. Families with high socioeconomic status often succeed in preparing their children for schooling because they have access to a wider range of resources to promote, explore and support young children mental and physical development as well as providing educational toys which can groom their character. These opportunities help parents understand the emotional, mental, social, physical, psychological, and cognitive growth of their children. High socioeconomic status builds the confidence of an individual to face challenges in life compared to poverty stricken families who hopelessly struggle to make their ends meet in life than children's schooling (Booth and Crouter, 1998).

Parents not only lack financial, social and educational support but they also find themselves struggling to accrue financial resources and lack time for their children to impact values, good habits, manners and basic nutrition for their children. Their children enter primary school unprepared as their peers from families with medium or higher social economic status (Booth and Crouter, 1998).

Children from low income families become victim of diseases, physical, mental disabilities and homelessness due to environmental factors than children from rich families (Hinum and Park, 2004). Therefore socioeconomic background of the family sets the road map of academic achievements. Family background is the key to student's life and outside school. The environment at home influences the child's interest in school and aspiration for the future. Zellman and Waltermann (1998) suggested that economic and social science perspective have a role on family composition in education attainment. The higher female labour force participation increases the child's education quality but less parental time. When the child is young, time is considered more important than money (income) in raising a child quality determines a child's performance in schooling.

## **2.5 Household Composition**

Yeung, Sandberg and Davis (2001) states that children from single parents households do not perform as well as children from nuclear family households. Single parents have less income and lack support which can increase stress and conflicts. They usually struggle with time management issues in order to balance many different areas; in the process some become less involved with their children and give less encouragement and have low expectation for their children than nuclear family households. Divorced parents negatively affect academic achievement of their children and cause a decrease in family's socioeconomic status and parental connections are harmed (Yeung, Sandberg and Davis, 2001). Therefore a household decision to monitor their children's performance and even pay for extra coaching in preschool programme is found to be difficult as they claim the cost of care. High cost

of preschool education discourages them in hiring private tutors for their weak children to fast track language development. The influence of wages on demand for schooling is expected through a combination of income and substitution wage to increase preschool participation and performance.

Parental investment in their children contributes to the wealth of the entire family (Hinum and Park, 2004). Performance per child is usually lower in families with more children. Lower resources for all children can lead to lower life perspective. The number of siblings decreases the likelihood of language performance for preschool children.

## **2.6 Parental Occupation**

Parental time inputs to children during preschool age and schooling periods depend on children spacing, family size, parental education, mother's labour force participation and increase in family income (Weizman and Snow, 2001). With the dramatic increase in female labour participation, mothers are likely to enroll their children in preschool centres, since preschool programs accommodate families whose working schedules are tight and they need the entire full day programme as the other older children. They also believe all day care allows children to interact with their peers and expose them to several learning experiences that are beneficial to ECDE children.

Pan (2005) found that in cities, childcare costs have a negative effect to the probability that the mother works full time. Yeung, Sandberg and Davis (2001)

indicate that the probability of using ECDE centres based care increases with full time employment of mothers than mothers employed part time for they rely on childcare provided by relatives. Others do not enroll their children in preschool for they do not understand why early childhood programs are important and they believe their children are not ready to begin formal education. High available wages encourage mothers to work outside their homes, while high cost childcare suppresses maternal employment. Pan (2005) states that there are significant negative effects on the presence of young siblings on school enrolment due to the cost of care. High cost of care can discourage parents from using preschool centres. Maternal wages influence the cost of care for young children; this affects enrolment of school going children. The influence of wages available to mothers on demand for schooling is expected through a combination of income in substitution effects. Increase in mother's labour rises school participation for boys and depresses schooling for girls, since they substitute the mother in household chores.

## **2.8 Theoretical Framework**

The present study was informed by Bowlby's Attachment Theory and the Interactionist theory. Bowlby's Attachment Theory resorted to unorthodox psychoanalytic thinking by taking into account that childhood and its proceeding developmental years are totally dependent on parental characteristics (Bowlby, 1969). Bowlby firmly believed that the attachments, bonds and loyalty were formed during childhood. Because childhood attachment is crucial to later performance of children, Bowlby argued that investigators should study childhood directly and not rely on distorted retrospective accounts from adults (Bowlby, 1969). Being in agreement to Bowlby's theory, the researcher worked

under the assumption that early separation of a parent from a child makes a wholly complicated scenario when it comes to psychological growth and social behaviour which, in turn, affects the preschool child's performance in language activities. As a child grows, the most influential factors around the child come from its parental environment which ranges from the household features to financial characteristics.

Interactionist Theory, advanced by the work of Jean Piaget (1969), Lev Vygotsky (1978) and Krashen (1996), attribute more influence to the environment where children's language develop more from complex interchange between a child's innate aptitude and their linguistic environment. According to interactionism, both children's biological readiness to learn language and their experiences with language in their environment come together to bring about language development. Interactionists see language acquisition as incompatible from the child's experiences and cognitive development and assert that these are influenced and affected by other skills and knowledge. According to Jean Piaget (1969), children use language to express their understanding of their physical interaction with their environment. He asserts that as children interact with the environment they develop a symbol system which represents the thoughts of the child and how the child comprehends the environment he/she interacts with. Piaget (1969) concluded that language represents a verbal pattern that follows a chain of actions and that thought through language represents elements of structure. In other words, language is a notation for a system of cognitive instruments including classifications and relationships (Piaget, 1969). Further assumptions by Piaget show that language can distinguish different levels and contents of an object as well as

describe the relationship between objects. He believed language possesses its own logic and that children can be trained to use expressions through logic.

Lev Vygotsky (1962) asserts that children are born social beings, so their speech is never “presocial.” Instead, children always intend to communicate, but at some point their speech divides into two types: speech directed at other people and speech directed at oneself. According to Vygotsky (1978), the child’s intellectual development can be viewed as a transition from other-regulation to self-regulation. Parents and teachers participate in activities with the child and monitor the child’s progress. Krashen (1996) states that language acquisition does not require neither extensive use of conscious grammatical rules nor tedious drill but requires meaningful interaction in the target language - natural communication - in which speakers are concerned not with the form of their utterances but with the messages they are conveying and understanding.

Parental characteristics are part and parcel of the environment in which a child grows. All the above three theories clearly link the child’s environment to his or her development. Performance in language activities is an element of education which is a developmental stage in a child’s life. So, the study seeks to establish the influence the parental characteristics have on the child’s performance in language activities; which is the basis of all the three theories.

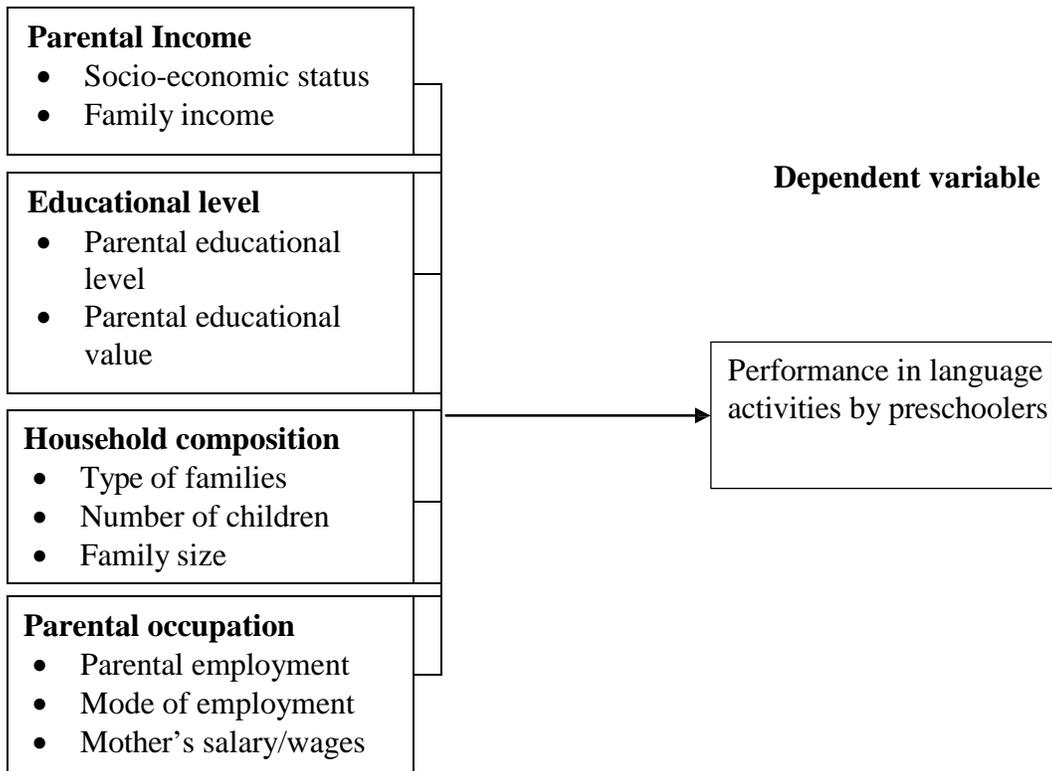
## 2.9 Conceptual Framework

According to the framework shown below, the independent variables are parental income, educational level, household composition and parental occupation. These variables are thought to have a significant influence on the performance of preschoolers in language activities.

*Figure 1: Relationship between Parental Characteristics and Performance in Language*

*Activities of Preschoolers*

### Independent Variables



Source: Reseachar (2013)

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

This section deals with research design, target population, sample and sampling procedures, research instruments, validity and reliability of instruments and data collection and data analysis procedures.

#### **3.2 Research Design**

According to Kothari (2004) research design is defined as framework that shows how problems under investigation will be solved. The design of this study was cross-sectional descriptive survey. This design is where the researcher interviews a sample group either one by one or as a group at one point in time. A researcher asks a group of respondents a set of questions at one point and analyzes the factors pointed out. This can be administered for a limited period of time as external changes may have effect on attitudes of respondents as time progresses. This research design was relevant in helping the researcher to investigate the influence of parental characteristics such as parental income, education level, parental occupation, and household composition on pre-school children's performance in language activities.

#### **3.3 Target Population**

According to Mugenda (1999), population is an entire group of individuals, events or objects having a common observable characteristic. The researcher drew her population from public and private pre-schools in Nyando Division, Nyando District. The target population was the parents of pre-schoolers in Nyando division.

### **3.4 Sample Size and Sampling Procedure**

A sample is a small proportion of a population selected for observation and analysis while sampling is a deliberate rather than a haphazard method of selecting subjects for observation to enable scientists infer conclusions about a population (Kothari, 2004). Nyando division has a total of 88 preschools. Simple random sampling was used to select the desired representation of 13 preschools (15%) from the 88 preschools in the division. Simple random sampling gives every subject an equal chance of being selected (Mugenda and Mugenda, 1999). From the sampled schools, purposive sampling was used to select 10 preschool pupils from each school giving a total of 130 pupils whose parents participated in the study. This number was relatively large to ensure that the sample is a representative of the population and to reduce the magnitude of sampling error.

### **3.5 Research Instruments**

The main instrument that this study relied on was a semi-structured questionnaire for parents of sampled preschoolers. The questionnaires had two sections: A and B. Section A was used to gather demographic and background information of respondents and Section B sought information on parental characteristics that are known to most likely influence pre-school children's performance in language activities. Questionnaires are appropriate for educational research as they are affordable in terms of cost and save time as an instrument of collecting data (Ogula, 1998).

Documentary analysis was used to gather information in performance in language activities of preschoolers in Nyando Division. Documentary analysis was provided by

the teachers showing preschool children's performance in the following language activity areas: oral, reading and writing skills. The researcher prepared a documentary analysis form that contained four sections. Section 1 had the name of the document, Section 2 stated the purpose of the document, Section 3 had the description of the document and Section 4 the significance of the document.

### **3.6 Validity of Data Collection Instrument**

Validity is the degree to which a test measures what it is supposed to measure (Ogula, 1998). For validity of any measuring instrument to be qualified it must be subjected to a pre-test (Mugenda and Mugenda, 1999). The researcher tested the validity of the instruments through a pilot study. The aim of the pilot survey was to test whether the design of questions was logical, if questions were clear and easily understood, whether the stated responses were exhaustive and how long it would take to complete the questionnaire. The pre-test also allowed the researcher to check on whether the variables collected could be easily be processed and analyzed. The pre-testing was carried out on a sample consisting of 10% of the respondents. Any questions that were found to be interpreted differently during the pre-testing were rephrased so that they could have the same meaning to all respondents. Views given by the respondents during pre-testing were analyzed and used to improve the questionnaires before actual collection of data. The researcher also made consultations with her supervisor to confirm validity of the research instruments.

### **3.7 Reliability of the Instrument**

Reliability is the ratio of the true score variance to the observed score variance. It also refers to the degree to which a test consistently measures whatever it is designed to

measure (Ogula, 1998; Philips, 1999). Thus the reliability of a standardized test is usually expressed as co-efficient where the reliability co-efficient reflects the extent to which a test is free of error variance. The researcher ensured that the reliability of the instrument used to collect data by conducting a test-retest technique. The researcher administered the questionnaires to a group of individuals with similar characteristics as the actual sample size at different points in time.

### **3.8 Procedure for Data Collection**

Before going to the field, the researcher obtained a research permit from the DEO's office authorizing her to carry out the research. The researcher then visited selected schools to seek permission from head teachers to enable the researcher to establish a rapport and to make appointments with the respondents on the appropriate sessions to administer the questionnaires.

The researcher collected data using questionnaires and documentary analysis for purpose of making conclusion and recommendations. The questionnaires were administered to the respondents directly by the researcher. The documentary analysis form was used to pull out the relevant information on performance in language activities namely oral reading and writing skills.

### **3.9 Data Analysis**

At the end of the data collection exercise the researcher thoroughly inspected and edited the data by checking for completeness of responses, their uniformity and for their accuracy. The researcher then organized the data along research objectives so as to identify emerging themes. The researcher then analyzed the data using SPSS. The data

analyzed was interpreted using frequencies and percentages. The researcher then interpreted the data by giving meaning to what had emerged quantitatively.

### **3.10 Ethical Considerations**

This study observed confidentiality and privacy of respondents. Consent was sought from all respondents before data collection. Respondents were treated confidentially and not subjected to any form of harassment. Data and results were treated confidentially and only shared with the researcher's supervisor. Humane treatment was observed throughout the study. Should the findings of this study be published, the researcher will ensure nothing can be traced back to any of the respondents. Where possible, pseudonyms will be used unless a respondent prefers use of their real names.

**CHAPTER FOUR**  
**FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS**

**4.1 Introduction**

This chapter focuses on the findings and discussion of findings on parental income, parents' educational level, household composition and parental occupation and their influence on children performance in language activities in preschool.

**4.2 Parental Income and Children Performance in Languages in Preschool**

This study sought to find out the relationship between parental income and children's performance in language activities. Table 4.1 presents the findings on parental income and its effect children's performance in language activities in preschool.

*Table 4.1: Relationship between Parental Income and Children's Performance in Language Activities in Pre-school*

<b>Parental Income</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Number of Children passing</b>
Less than 5,000	55	27	1
7,000 to 10,000	23	46	2
11,000 to 20,000	14	27	2
More than 20,000	8	18	3
Total	100	100%	100%

**Source:** Researcher (2013)

Table 4.1 shows that the majority of parent respondents (55%, n=55) earn less than KSh.5,000/= and the passing of their children is rated as very low. They are

followed by those earning between KSh.7,000/= to 10,000/= whose children's performance in languages in preschool is rated as low since average number passing per term is 2 children. Parents earning more than KSh.20,000/= have very high rate of children passing since they had an average of 3 children passing for preschool per term.

Eshiwani (1993) states that an increase in an individual's income relatively increases the quality of their children. Families with high socioeconomic status often succeed in preparing their children for schooling because they have access to a wider range of resources to promote, explore and support young children's mental and physical development as well as providing educational toys which can groom their character. These opportunities help parents understand the emotional, mental, social, physical, psychological and cognitive growth of their children. High socioeconomic status builds the confidence of an individual to face challenges in life compared to poverty-stricken families who hopelessly struggle to make ends meet in life than children's schooling. The fact that parents are psychologically settled then impacts positively on the attention they give to their children especially in oral and written language activities.

Table 4.2 presents the number of parents who are able to pay school fees for their preschool children and its effect on the passing of the preschool children in language activities.

**Table 4.2: Relationship between Parents ability to Pay School Fees and Children's Performance in Languages**

<b>Parental Income</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Number of Children Passing</b>
<b>Not able</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>1</b>
Able	23	23	2
Very able	17	17	3
Total	100	100%	100%

**Source:** Researcher (2013)

Table 4.2 shows that majority of parents (60%, n=60) were not able to pay school fees for their preschool children. Those that are comfortable in paying school fees for their preschool children are only 17% (n = 17). From these findings most of the parents are poor and hence unable to finance their children's preschool education. The preschoolers' performance in language activities is low since majority of the parents are poor.

According to Epstein (2001) children from low income families suffer from diseases, physical, mental disabilities and homelessness due to environmental factors than children from rich families. Therefore, socioeconomic background of the family sets the road map of academic achievements. Family background is the key to student's life outside school (Epstein, 2001). Hinum and Park (2004) suggested that economic perspective has a role on education attainment of members of a family and that includes the children as well.

### 4.3 Relationship between Educational Level of Parents and Performance of their Children in Language Activities

This study sought to find out the relationship between educational level of parents and children’s performance in language activities. Table 4.3 shows the findings on the educational level of parents and performance of their children in preschool in language activities.

*Table 4.3: Relationship between Educational Level of Parents and Performance in Language Activities*

Parental Income	Frequency	Percent	Number of Children Passing
Degree	7	7	3
Diploma	17	17	2
Certificate	29	29	1
KCSE	47	47	1
Total	100	100%	100%

**Source:** Researcher (2013)

Table 4.3 shows that majority of the respondents (47%, n=47) of the parents were KCSE certificate holders. This means fourth form is their highest level of education. They are followed by 29% (n=29) who attained education up to certificate level while 7% (n=7) had degrees as their highest level of education. From the findings preschool children whose parents attained degree level of education had a higher rate of performance in language activities in preschool with 3 children passing per term

while the children from parents who attained KCSE certificate level and below had lower rates of performance in language activities with 1 child per term enrolled. This group formed the majority. This can be explained from the fact that parents' level of education may be leading to access to resources such as income and that they involve themselves more in school activities (Okantey, 2008). In addition, parental level of education influences parental knowledge, beliefs and benefits about educating children.

Education level of the parents has positive and significant effect on the performance in language activities of preschool children. As a result parental level of education influences parental involvement, support and expectation to their children. Okantey (2008) further argues that parental education level leads to good income which can empower parents to give children solid foundation for schooling and life success. A lower educational level is associated with higher prevalence of indicators of unhealthy lifestyle (Okantey, 2008). However, the researcher found out that in some cases preschool children's performance in language activities was high in spite of their parent's low level of education. This was shown from the interaction with the head teacher. After investigation the researcher realized that the bright children from poor families get sponsorship from Donor Funds offered to some school children in this area.

The researcher then sought to investigate parents' involvement in school activities and its influence on children's performance in language activities in preschool. The results are shown in Table 4.4.

**Table 4.4: Relationship between Parents Involvement in School Activities and Performance in Language Activities**

<b>Parental Income</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Number of Children Passing</b>
Very much	22	22	3
Fairly	18	18	2
Sometimes	44	44	2
Not at all	16	16	1
Total	100	100%	100%

**Source:** Researcher (2013)

Table 4.4 shows that majority of the parents (44%; n=44) sometimes involve themselves in school activities, 22% (n=22) involve themselves very much while a mere 18% (n=18) involve themselves fairly well. This is as a result of the parents having low interest in preschool education and, therefore, not visiting schools to appreciate the kind of learning that goes on preschool. This, in turn, minimizes their ability to monitor their children resulting in their children’s low performance in language activities.

According to Hoff (2003) education at home lays the foundation of moral, spiritual and intellectual development that builds the child’s later in life. Unless this foundation is set in the home the school will have nothing to build upon and the child later becomes a problem not only to their parents but also to the community as a whole. Children of educated parents are more reliable compared to children of lower or less educated parents (Ichando, 1998).

In this study those parents with higher levels of education were able to motivate their children in school. Indeed there is positive relationship between parental education and children's academic performance and success (Jeynes, 2002). This necessitated investigation on the level of motivation and performance in language activities of children in preschool. The results are shown in Tables 4.5 and 4.6.

***Table 4.5: Relationship between Parental Education and Children's' Motivation and Performance***

<b>Parental Income</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Number of Children Passing</b>
Strongly agree	55	55	3
Agree	23	23	2
Disagree	14	14	2
Strongly disagree	8	8	1
Total	100	100%	100%

**Source:** Researcher (2013)

Table 4.5 shows that majority of the respondents (65%, n=65) strongly agree that children from well educated parents are motivated and like school than those children from low educated parents. Most of the preschool children in Nyando division are from parents who are averagely educated. From this background it can be explained why the rate of performance in language activities in the district is low.

In short, parent’s educational level has direct impact on their children's educational aspirations (Okantey, 2008). Children’s schooling is positively related to the education of their parents because children tend to imitate their parents and also aspire to be as highly educated as their parents. Children are more disadvantaged when their parents have low education levels. They form a group of uneducated family members making every generation of that family not to go higher than their parents. Children from more highly educated families are more ambitious and attain higher levels of education.

**Table 4.6: Relationship between Parents Motivating Children and Preschool Children’s Performance in Language Activities**

<b>Parental Motivation</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Number of Children Passing</b>
Always	27	27	4
Sometimes	46	46	3
Not at all	27	27	1
Total	100	100%	100%

**Source:** Researcher (2013)

Table 4.6 shows that majority of parents (46%; n=46) sometimes motivate their children’s on preschool performance in language activities. Other parents (27%; n=27) always motivate their children while the remaining 27% (n=27) do not motivate their children hence the low performance.

Kitavi (2005) found that parents can be regarded as the child’s first teacher, but when the child enters school, parents begin to ask themselves how they can be positively involved in their children’s education by motivating their children. Therefore in this study, parental motivation in pre-school children’s performance in language activities can significantly influence the children’s performance in language activities in preschool within the division.

#### **4. 4 Household Composition and Children’s Performance in Language activities in Preschool**

This study sought to find out the relationship between household composition and children’s performance in language activities. Table 4.7 shows the findings of family composition and children’s performance in language activities in preschool.

***Table 4.7: Relationship between Household Composition and Pre-School Children’s Performance in Language Activities***

<b>Household Composition</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Number of Children Passing</b>
Nuclear	15	15	3
Polygamous	20	20	2
Extended	23	23	2
Single	42	42	2
Total	100	100%	100%

**Source:** Researcher (2013)

Table 4.7 shows that 42% (n=42) of parent respondents come from single-parent family and their children's rate of performance in language activities is low - that is, having an average of 2 children passing per term as shown from the document analysis of the performance in language activities records obtained through head teachers.

They are followed by those from extended families whose children's rate of performance in language activities is low as shown by an average of 2 children passing per term. Performance in language activities by children from polygamous families was equally low. The few respondent (15%, n=15) from nuclear household composition have a higher rate of performance in language activities- that is, an average of 3 children passing per term.

According to Kitavi (2005) the economic hardship are caused by low socioeconomic status of the parents and can lead to disruption in parenting, increase amount of family conflicts and increase the likelihood of depression in single parent households. Socio-economic status indicates the quality of home life for children. Mwinzi and Kimengi (2006) states that children from single parent households do not perform as well as children from nuclear family households. Single parents have less income and lack support which can increase stress and conflicts. They usually struggle with time management issues in order to balance many different areas. In the process some become less involved with their children. They give less encouragement and have low expectation for their children than two-parent households. Divorced parents negatively affect academic achievement of their children and cause a decrease in family's

socioeconomic status (Mwinzi and Kimengi, 2006). The influence of wages on demand for schooling is expected through a combination of income and substitution wage to increase preschool participation that increases the performance in language activities.

Table 4.8 presents the number of children in the family and its effect on the preschool children’s performance in language activities.

***Table 4.8: Relationship between Number of Children and Performance in Language Activities***

<b>Number of Children</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Number of Children Passing</b>
1 – 3 children	11	11	3
4 – 6 children	20	20	2
7 – 10 children	51	51	2
Above 10 children	18	18	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Source:** Researcher (2013)

Table 4.8 shows that majority of parent respondents (51%; n = 51) had between 7 and 10 children. It appears that some of these parents had more children than they could afford to educate. Consequently, there was likelihood that their children would have low performance in language activities.

Sarigiani (1990) indicates that a large number of siblings and close spacing among siblings dilutes the amount of parent time, attention and money available per child. This in turn negatively influences several child outcomes including their preschool performance in language activities.

According to Phillips (1999), parental investment in their children contributes to the wealth of the entire family. Education per child is usually lower in families with more children. The number of siblings decreases the likelihood of choosing ECDE centres for preschool children.

#### **4.5 Parental Occupation and Children Performance in Preschool**

This study sought to find out the relationship between parental occupation and children’s performance in language activities.

Table 4.9 shows the parental occupation and its effect on the performance of children in preschool.

***Table 4.9 Relationship between Occupation of Parents and Performance in Language Activities***

<b>Occupation</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Number of Children Passing</b>
Employed	22	22	3
Unemployed	38	38	1
Self employed	40	40	2
Total	100	100%	100%

**Source:** Researcher (2013)

Table 4.9 shows that majority of the parent respondents (40%; n=40) are self employed. A few (38%; n = 38) were unemployed while 22% (n=22) are employed. The parents who are self-employed are just peasant farmers, small scale traders and under age mothers who are still depending on their parents and cannot afford to take care, train and monitor their preschool children.

Sclafani (2004) stated that the low background status perpetuates education deprivation hence unemployed parents are likely find it difficult to pay school fees and meet other educational expenses for their children while employed parents have higher income and therefore deploy their resources in a manner creating preschool conditions conducive to a successful school performance. Sarigiani (1990) notes that family income level influences education chances for the child since this determines the motivation with which the child pursues basic education.

#### **4.6 Conclusion**

The present study aimed to find out the influence of parental characteristics on pre-school children's performance in language activities. This chapter presented and discussed findings of the study on four parental characteristics deemed to be most likely to influence performance in language activities of preschool children in Nyando division.

The study found out that there is, indeed, a relationship between parental education, parental income, parental occupation and household composition and pre-school children's performance in language activities.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **5.1 Introduction**

This chapter summarizes key findings of the study and makes conclusions and recommendations based on the objectives of the study. It gives the implications from the findings of the study and areas for further research are also presented.

#### **5.2 Summary of Findings**

The study aimed to find out the influence of parental characteristics on performance in language activities of preschool children. The researcher was guided by four parental characteristics that she deemed are the ones most likely to influence performance in language activities of preschool children in Nyando division. From the data analyzed the following findings were unearthed:

In terms of parental income, majority of parent respondents (55%;n=55) earn less than Ksh. 5,000/= and their children's level of performance in language activities is rated as very low since majority of preschool children had not performed well in language activities. Majority of the parents (60%; n=60) were not able to pay school fees for their preschool children indicating that most of the parents are struggling to provide daily bread than raising school fees for their children resulting in low performance in language activities of the preschool children in the division. Those that are comfortable in paying school fees for their preschool children are only 17% (n=17). From these findings most of the parents are poor and hence unable to finance their children's

preschool education. The school performance in language activities of these children is low since majority of the parents cannot afford to pay fees for their children.

The findings on parents' level of education showed that majority of the respondents (47%; n=47) were KCSE certificate holders. They were followed by 29% (n=29) who attained education up to certificate level while 7% (n = 7) had degrees as their highest level of education. From the findings the preschool children whose parents attained degree level of education had higher rates of performance in language activities in preschool while the children from parents who attained KCSE certificate level and below had lower performance in language activities. The latter were the majority. This can be explained from the fact that parents' level of education may result in access to resources such as income and more involvement in school activities. Majority of the parents (44%; n=44) sometimes involve themselves in school activities. Only a few (18%; n=18) involve themselves much. This explains the low preschool performance in language activities in Nyando division. This is as a result of the parents lacking motivation on the importance of languages in preschool education. Therefore they cannot visit the preschools and get to appreciate the importance of their children concentrating and passing in the language activities. This causes them to ignore motivating their children to take language studies seriously in school resulting to low performance in language activities in the district.

Household composition findings showed that majority of respondents come from single-parent family and their children's preschool performance in language activities rate is very low. They are followed by those from extended families whose

children's performance in language activities was low as well. Children from polygamous families performed poorly in language activities. Only a few of the children (15%; n=15) had high performance in language activities in preschools. Majority of the parents (51%; n=51) had more children than they could afford (between 7 and 10 children) indicating economic constraints leading to low preschool performance in language activities. Moreover, most of the parents who had more than 7 children came from polygamous family. However, the performance in language activities in single families was also poor. Generally, the district recorded low performance in language activities in preschool.

In the findings of the parental occupation, majority of the parent respondents (40%; n=40) were self employed while 38% (n=38) were unemployed. Only 22% (n=22) were employed. The parents who were self-employed were mostly peasant farmers, and small scale business men. This explains the economic constraints that influence the low performance in language activities of children in pre-school in the area. Surprisingly, majority of the parents (46%; n=46) sometimes involve themselves with their children preschool education. The others are either always involved in their children preschool education or not involved at all. Most parents with high level of education are motivated to get involved with the children education since they have a positive attitude towards education and would want to assist their children to perform better academically.

### **5.3 Conclusions**

This study had sought to establish influence of parental characteristics on performance in language activities of preschoolers in Nyando division. It can be concluded that parental income of majority of the parent respondents was less. Therefore, they were not able to pay school fees for their preschool children. This further indicates that most of the parents were struggling to provide daily bread than raise school fees for pre-school education resulting to lack of parental motivation hence low performance in language activities of the preschoolers in the division. It can be concluded therefore that parental income influences preschool education hence language performance of preschoolers in Nyando division.

The parents were not well educated since majority of them were either KCSE certificate holders or had lower certifications at the time of study. From the findings, the preschool children whose parents attained degree level of education had higher rates of performance in language activities while those from parents who attained KCSE certificate level and below had lower performance in language activities. The latter were the majority. It can be concluded therefore that parent's level of education may result to access to resources in terms of income and involve themselves more in school activities. The educated parents have interest with their preschool and therefore visit the schools and get to appreciate the importance of preschool education. It can be concluded therefore that parent's level of education influences performance in language activities of preschoolers in Nyando division.

Majority of children came from single-parent family. Their preschool performance in language activities rate was very low. They were followed by those from extended families whose performance in language activities was also low. From these findings it can be concluded that most of the parents who had more than seven children came from polygamous family. However, the performance in language activities rate in single families was also poor. This resulted in the district recording low preschool children performance in language activities. It can be concluded therefore that household composition influences performance in language activities of preschoolers in Nyando division.

It can be concluded from the study of parental occupation that majority of the parent respondents were self-employed; mostly peasant farmers and small scale traders. This means that such parents are not very much involved with their children's preschool education but with their daily jobs. This explains the low performance in language activities of children in preschool in the area. Only a few of the parents were involved in their children's preschool education. Most of the parents who were keen on their children's education were those whose level of education were higher since they had a positive attitude towards education and were willing to assist their children to perform better academically.

## **5.4 Recommendations**

The following recommendations were made according to the findings of the study:

- 1) The government should take part in initiating free preschool education to motivate preschool children to realize their academic dreams since most of the parents in the district are poor and cannot afford to educate their children.
- 2) Family planning importance should be taught for the parents to understand the importance of having a manageable number of children in a family. This is because the findings showed that large family compositions in the district are a major cause of preschool children underperformance in language activities.
- 3) The government should be advised to enforce protective laws to preschool children to protect them from the financial problems faced due to economic status of their families. For example, the government should introduce preschool parent empowerment programs to help educate all children and provide the necessary requirements for their preschool education. Once this is done, the preschool performance in language activities will be improved.
- 4) Adult education should be initiated by the government to help those parents that are not well educated to appreciate the importance of preschool education and hence encourage them to get fully involved in their children's academic matters.
- 5) Education officers need to encourage parents to see the importance of preschool education for their children in order to improve preschool performance in language activities.
- 6) Preschools should adopt an open day to enable parents comprehend and participate in their children's preschool activities.

## **5.5 Recommendations for Further Research**

The researcher recommends the following areas to be further researched;

- 1) A study on the impact of school feeding programmes on preschool children's performance in language activities in public pre-school centres.
- 2) A research on how Free Primary Education affects preschool performance in language activities in public pre-school centres.

## REFERENCES

- Ajila C. & Olutola. A. (2007). Impact of Parents Socioeconomic Status on University Students Academic Performance. *Life Journal of educational Studies*, 7 (1), 31-39.
- Alexander, G. B. (2002). Association for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing. Retrieved Ja Arriaga, R. I. and grammatical development of African American preschoolers: Child and environmental associations. *Child Development*, 70, 92-106.
- Baratz, J. C. (1970). Teaching reading in an urban negro school system. *Child Development*, 60, 72-105
- Beals, D. E. (2001). Eating and reading: Links between family conversations with preschoolers and later language and literacy. Baltimore: Paul H. Brookes.
- Booth A, Crouter AC, (1998). Men in families: When do they get involved? What differences does it make? Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Bornstein, M. H., Haynes O.M., (2004). Vocabulary Competence in first and second born siblings of the same chronological age. *Journal of child language*, 855 – 873.
- Bowlby, R. (1969). A Framework For Understanding Attachment Theory. FT Publishing. Retrived from Basic Education Journal.
- Bruner J. (1981). The social context of language acquisition. *Language and Communication*, 1,155–178.
- Bugental, D. B., & Grusec, J. E. (2006). Socialization processes. In N. Eisenberg, W. Damon, & R. M. Lerner (Eds.). *Handbook of child psychology: Social, emotional, and personality development* (6th ed.); Harvard Printing Press.

- Cantu I.S. (1975). The Effects of family characteristics, parental influence, language spoken, school experience and self-motivation on the level of educational attainment of Mexican Americans. New York, New York Printing Press.
- Coleman, J.S. (1996). Social capital in the creation of human capital. *American Journal of Sociology*, 94, 95–120
- De Temple, J. M. (2001). Parents and children reading books together. In O. K. Dickinson & P. O. Tabors (Eds.), *Beginning literacy with language: Young children learning at home and school* (pp. 31-51). Baltimore: Paul H. Brookes.
- Eshiwani, G. S. (1993). Education in Kenya since independence. Nairobi: East African Educational Publishers Ltd.
- Hart, B., & Risley, T. R. (1992). American parenting of language-learning children. Baltimore: Paul H. Brookes.
- Hart, B., & Risley, T. R. (1995). Meaningful differences in the everyday experiences of young American children. Baltimore: Paul H. Brookes.
- Hinum, E., and Park, A. (2004). *Children's Educational Engagement in Rural China*: Spencer Foundation.
- Hoff, E. (2003). The specificity of environmental influence: Socioeconomic status Early vocabulary development via maternal speech [Electronic version]. *Child Development*, 73, 1368-1378.
- Hoff, E. (2009). Language development. Belmont, California: Wadsworth Publishing.
- Ichando, S. M. (1998). Impact of broken home in academic performance of secondary schools students in English Language. *Journal of Research in Counseling Psychology*, 4(1), 84 – 87.

- Jeynes, A. (2002). *Beyond Fathering Behaviour: Types of Dads. Journal of Family Psychology*, 10 (4), 431 – 442.
- Kayongo, G. Y., Janine, C, and Launcelot, B. I. (2006). Using regression analysis to establish the relationship between home environment and reading achievement: A case of Zimbabwe. Shannon Research Press.
- Kitavi, M. (2005). Influence of parents and the community on child performance. Unpublished MBA thesis, UoN.
- Klebanov, K.P. (2002). Neighbourhood effects and cultural exclusion. *Bauder Urban Studies*.
- Kothari, C.R. (2004). *Research Methodology*. Second Edition, New Delhi: New Age International publisher, PP. 1-2
- Krashen, D. (1996). *The Case Against Bilingual Education*. New York Printing Press, 1'st Edition.
- Mowder, B. A. (1997). Typical infant development. In A. Widerstrom, B. S. Mowder, S. Sandall (eds.). *Infant development and risk* (pp. 25–60). Baltimore, MD: Paul Brookes.
- Mugenda, O.M. and Mugenda A.G. (1999). *Research Methods: Quantitative and Qualitative Approaches*. Nairobi. ACTS Press.
- Mwinzi, D. and Kimengi, I. (2006). Learning Science & Mathematics Among Female Students in Secondary Schools in Economically disadvantaged Areas in Kenya: Challenges and Prospects. Nairobi, IIPE.
- Neuman, S. B., (1997). *Guiding young children's participation in early literacy development. A family literacy program for adolescent mothers. Early child Development and care* 127-128: 119 – 129.

- Ninio, A. (1989). Joint Book reading as a multiple vocabulary acquisition device. *Developmental Psychology, 19*, 445-451.
- Ogula P.A. (1998). *A Handbook on Educational Research*. Nairobi: New Kemil Publisher.
- Okantey, G. (2008). Facilitating educational attainment and student achievement - Science bound parents program. Indianapolis, IN: Purdue Extension.
- Pan, B.A. (2005) *Maternal Correlates of Growth in Toddler Vocabulary production in Low-income families, child development 76:763-782.*
- Phillips, D.A. (1999). Child Care for Children in Poverty: Opportunity of Inequity? *Child Development, 65*, 472-492.
- Piaget W. J. (1969). *Piaget's Theory*. In P. Mussen (Ed.). Handbook of child psychology. The psychology of the child. Inhelder, B, 1'st edition..
- Rasinski, T. V. & Fredericks, A. (1998). Sharing Literacy: Guiding principles and practices for parental involvement. *Reading Teacher, 41*, 508 – 513.
- Roopnarine, J. L. (2004). *African American and African Caribbean fathers: Level, quality and meaning of involvement*. In M.E. Lamb, (ed.). *The role of the father in child development* pp. 58–97. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.
- Sarigiani, P.A. (1990). Review of child development research. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Sclafani, J. D. (2004). The educated parent: Recent trends in raising children.
- Shonkoff, J, & Phillips, D. (2000). From neurons to neighborhoods: The science of early childhood development. Washington, DC: National Academy Press.
- Snow, C. E, Burns & Griffin, N. A. (1998). The contracts of Literacy: Writing and reading (116-138). Norwood N.J.

- Tomasello, M. (1992). The social bases of language acquisition. *Social Development, 1*, 67–87.
- Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Interaction between Learning and Development*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press
- Weizman Z.O., Snow C. E., (2001), *Lexical in Input as related to children's vocabulary acquisition: Effects of sophisticated exposure and support for meaning: Developmental Psychology: 37:265-275.*
- Wilson, K., Smeeding, T., and Haveman, R. (2007). A glimpse inside the black box-of social mobility, October, 2007.
- Yeung, J., Sandberg, J., & Davis – Kean, P., (2001). Children's time with fathers in intact families. *Journal of Marriage and the Family, 63,(1)*, 136 – 154.
- Zellman, G. L. & Waterman, J. M. (1998). Understanding the impact of parent-school involvement on children educational outcomes. *Journal of Education Research, 91 (6)*, 370 – 380.

**APPENDIX I**

**LETTER OF TRANSMITTAL**

Dorothy Akinyi Odawo,  
University of Nairobi,  
Department of Educational Communication and technology,  
P.O.BOX 92,  
Kikuyu.

.  
The Head teacher,  
.....

Dear Sir/Madam

**RE: PERMISSION TO CARRY OUT RESEARCH IN YOUR SCHOOL.**

I am a mater of education (ECE) student in the University of Nairobi. I am required to submit as part of my course work assessment a research project report on “THE INFLUENCE OF PARENTAL CHARACTERISTICS ON PERFORMANCE IN LANGUAGE ACTIVITIES OF PRESCHOOLERS IN NYANDO DIVISION” To achieve these objectives of the study, your institution has been selected to participate in this study. The information will be used purely for academic purpose and your school will not be mentioned in the report. Findings of the study shall upon request, be available to you.

Thank you in advance,

Yours faithfully,  
.....

Dorothy Akinyi Odawo

## APPENDIX II

### QUESTIONNAIRE FOR PARENTS

This questionnaire is divided into sections A and B. Please complete each section according to instructions. Do not write your name to ensure complete confidentiality.

Kindly respond to all questions.

#### Section A

Tick where appropriate.

Gender:

Male [  ]                  Female [  ]

Age:

Below 20 [  ]          21 -35 [  ]          36-50 [  ]          51 and above [  ]

Highest academic qualification:

Certificate [  ]    Diploma [  ]    Bachelors degree [  ]    Others-specify [  ]

Household composition:                  Nuclear [  ]                  Extended [  ]

Polygamous [  ]    Single [  ]

Occupation:

Not employed [  ]          Employed [  ]    Self employed [  ]

Number of children in your family:

1-3 [  ]          4-6 [  ]          7-10 [  ]          Above 10 [  ]

Salary per month:

Less than 5000shs a month [  ]          10,000shs -20000shs a month [  ]

5000shs – 10000shs a month [  ]    20000shs -50,000shs a month [  ]

Over 50,000 a month [  ]

Residence:

Rural [ ]                      Urban [ ]                      both rural and urban [ ]

**Section B.**

Which category of preschool does your child go to?

Private [ ]    public [ ]

How much fees is paid in the school?

Less than Kshs 5000 [ ]                      Kshs 7000-10000 [ ]

Kshs 11000-20000 [ ]                      More than Kshs 20, 000 [ ]

Are you able to pay your child's school fees?

Not able [ ]                      Able [ ]                      Very able [ ]

If no, who pays school fees for the child?

Brother [ ]                      Sister [ ]                      Sponsor [ ]

Has the child ever been sent home for school fees?

Yes [ ]                      No [ ]

If yes, how frequent?

Very frequently [ ]                      frequently [ ]                      Rarely [ ]

What is the reason behind the delay in fee payment?

Lack of money [ ]                      Delay by the sponsor [ ]

Do you provide the child with books, pictures, charts and games to help him/her perform in language?

Yes [ ]    No [ ]

If no does this affect the child's performance in language?

Yes [ ]    No [ ]

Have you ever lacked basic needs at home?

Yes [ ] No [ ]

If yes how does this affect the child?

.....

Do you visit the school the school to make a follow up your child's performance?

Yes [ ] No [ ]

If yes do you get ideas of helping the child?

Yes [ ] No [ ]

How often do you visit your child's school to make a follow up on performance??

Not at all [ ] regularly [ ]

Do you get progress records from the teachers?

Yes [ ] No [ ]

If no, does this affect your child's performance in language?

Yes [ ] No [ ]

Which language do you speak with the child at home?

English [ ] Kiswahili [ ]

Both English and Kiswahili [ ] Others- specify [ ]

How often do you read books with your child?

Regularly [ ] Not at all [ ]

Do you play language games with your child-what type?

Yes [ ] No [ ]

Does your child have any difficulty in

Speaking [ ] Writing [ ] Reading [ ]

If yes, what have you done?.....

Do you help your child with his or her homework?

Nedix 1ixxiii

# MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

Telephone: 0203507674  
Fax: 05751573



DISTRICT EDUCATION OFFICE

NYANDO DISTRICT  
P.O. BOX 3

When replying please quote

AWASI.  
7<sup>TH</sup> Sept 2013

NYD/ED/TCH/17/Vol. III/148

THE HEAD TEACHER  
..... PRIMARY SCHOOL

**RE: RESEARCH AUTHORIZATION- DOROTHY AKINYI ODAWO**  
**TSC NO 332552.**

The above referred is a student teacher currently taking her Masters of Education at Nairobi University. She is therefore given the authority to carry out her research in your school

Kindly accord her the necessary support.

pp -

For DISTRICT EDUCATION OFFICER  
NYANDO DISTRICT

William O. Minyiri  
District Education Officer  
Nyando District

