

**THE INFLUENCE OF PLAY ACTIVITIES ON PRE-SCHOOL CHILDREN'S
PERFORMANCE OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE IN HARAMBEE ZONE OF MAKADARA
DISTRICT IN NAIROBI COUNTY**

PRESENTED BY

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DECLARATION

This research project is my original idea and it has not been submitted for any award of degree at this university or any other university.

Signed _____

Date _____

Faith Waithera Reuben

E57/84194/12

This research project has been submitted for examination with my approval as the candidate's supervisor at the University of Nairobi.

Signed _____

Date _____

Dr. John Kamau Mwangi (PhD)

DEDICATION

I dedicate this project to my husband Anthony Kimemia and my children Daniel Gathumbi, Margaret Wanjiru and Reuben Nduati.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Utmost thanks to the almighty God for the good health and ability to undertake and accomplish this research project

I am heartily thankful to my Supervisors, Dr. J. Mwangi whose guidance and support from the initial to the final stage enabled me to develop the project.

Lastly, I thank my colleagues and all those who supported me in any respect during the preparation of this project.

ABSTRACT

The main purpose of the study was to examine the influence of play activities on pre-school children's English language performance in Harambee Zone of Makadara District in Nairobi County. The study focused on the influence of role plays (drama), constructive play, outdoor play activities and the influence of games with rules and pre-school children's performance in English language. The study utilized a quasi-experimental design. This study used pre-schools in Harambee Zone, pre-school teachers and pre-school children as the core respondents to provide information on the influence of play activities on pre-school children's performance and development of English language in Harambee Zone of Makadara District in Nairobi County. There are 20 pre-schools in Harambee Zone of which 4 are public and 16 private with a total population of about 1000 ECD pupils. A list of all the schools was generated. The researcher stratified the schools into 2 homogenous subgroups namely public pre-schools and private pre-schools. Half (50%) of the schools were under study. A total of 10 (2 public and 8 private) schools was randomly selected from the lists. A selection of 30% of the population is 300 pupils who were observed during play activities. Out of those, 120 children were randomly selected for written English test. That is, in each school 12 children. The study used questionnaires, observation schedules and in-depth interview guides to collect the data. The qualitative data was analyzed manually paying specific attention to the study objectives and themes. The study findings established that Play offers the child the opportunity to make sense out of the world by using available tools. Understanding is created by doing, by doing with others, and by being completely involved in that doing. Through play, the child comes to understand the world and the adult comes to understand the child.

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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

CRC	-	Convention on the Rights of Children
CPSC	-	Consumer Products Safety Commission
DEO	-	District Education Officer
ECDC	-	Early Childhood Development Centre
ECDE	-	Early Childhood Development and Education
GoK	-	Government of Kenya
HPPS	-	Handbook on Public Playground Safety
NACECE	-	National Centre for Early Childhood Education
NGO	-	Non Governmental Organizations
KIE	-	Kenya Institute of Education
MoE	-	Ministry of Education
TTC	-	Teachers Training College
ZPD	-	Zone of Proximal Development

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the problem

Play activities are essential parts of children's development and learning (Kamen, 2005). It is a central way in which majority of children explore and develop their understanding of the world. In most cases play activities are considered to be unimportant and frivolous by many people notably teachers, parents and politicians (Kamen, 2005).

Play activities have always been a controversial issue. Among parents there is a prevalent belief that play is time wasting and should only be allowed after work. Pioneers like Froebel and Montessori saw the value of self-initiated activity for young children, under adult guidance. Children are self – motivated and perform best when given appropriate responsibility and allowed to make errors, decisions and choices. Children need to play in order to develop creativity (Bruce 2001). A key factor is that play is initiated by the child. Through play, children actively manipulate, re-arrange, act on and reflect upon their performance.

Montessori stressed self-directed; children initiated and intrinsically motivated play. She designed apparatus with a view to achieving a child directed environment. (Steiner 1926 in Bruce 2001) dealt with self-directed play activated by and conforming to the child's temperament. As advocates of self-directed forces (stages of will), all three stated from what the child can do as a starting point of the child's education. 'Begin where the learner is'. He saw play as a mediating factor between the knowledge that the child is acquiring and the holistic development of the child.

When a child is deprived of play, the child becomes a prisoner shut off from all that makes life real and meaningful. As such, the impulse to create and achieve learning through play allows the child to grow in body and mind. Play is one of the ways through which a child may develop a capacity to deal with stress and strains of life as they press upon him or her. It acts as a safety valve allowing him/her to re-line and often come to terms with fears and anxieties which would otherwise be overwhelming. Piaget (1954) views play as a contributor to recognition and solid learning; he states that, play helps in performance of skills that are needed as an adult. Freud (1895) suggests that play may help children overcome potential problems such as Oedipus complex. Albert Bandura (1969) confirms that children observe and imitate adults then build what they observe into play. Psychoanalytic theories derived from Freud (1895) view play as a means to cope with anxieties and fears.

More often children will encompass several types of play within one activity. A child will construct a road or a bridge with bricks and this become part of imaginative play. Children playing with basic materials such as sand and water often use imaginative and investigative play (O'Hagan 1999). Games played take many forms ranging from common games to invented ones and board games to sports based games. Piaget and Vygotsky in Bruce (1996) stated that games with rules are the pinnacle of children's play.

In symbolic or pretend play, children are able to develop an inner thought world through re-living and re-organizing experiences, coming to terms with the world around them, understanding every day's events, trying out new ideas and practicing new words and behavior in safe pretend situations. Exploring their feelings will aid experience e.g. experiencing roles of others through acting roles such as mothers or teachers.

O' Hagan (1999) states that constructive play enables children to develop their muscles and manipulative skills. It also helps the development of imaginative use of construction, thus providing emotional release through building and knocking down blocks and so giving a sense of achievement and spatial awareness. Gender stereotyping can be counteracted through cooperative play and design elements or technology.

Early years practice in the United Kingdom (UK) is very much influenced by the perspective that children learn and perform through play. Historical and cross-cultural data show that all children play unless they experience persistently restrictive, depriving or abusive circumstances. However, the term learning and development through play has come to have a particular meaning for the early years setting (Lindon, 2008).

According to Sandra Smidt (2002) play is important because it provides children with a channel for social interaction with other children and also with adults. It helps children to explore, familiarize and understand unfamiliar objects and people when they interact with them. As they play, children learn skills which enhance the cognitive growth and help in solving problems. Play also helps the children to solve emotional problems such as fear and anxiety of being left alone or deserted.

The government of Kenya (GoK) through the teacher training colleges (TTCs) is teaching the importance of play materials which are essential learning tools (N.A.C.E.C.E, 1995). Many teachers are now becoming aware of the importance of play and play materials to the pre-school children as seen in the teachers' guidebook of 2003 published by the Kenya Institute of Education (K.I.E).

This study will seek to convince those who are skeptical about the benefits of play activities on pre-school children's language performance. It will also seek to find out the different types of play activities and whether they contribute towards child performance of language.

Ogutu (2007) stated that there was a problem in regard to time allocated for play by school administration and at home. There is still an element of inadequate time given. In school, time for break tied to that of primary school level and teachers substituted outdoor activity time with other subjects.

Lindon (2008) Realized that in messy play, children play with earth and water and it can get delightfully messy similar to finger painting. They spend lengthy time feeling and exploring the texture. Messy play allows children to explore through their senses a variety of interesting textures, smells and colours without being thought naughty.

The KIE's Teachers Activities Guide Series (2003) suggests that children involved in play activities helped in their physical, social and emotional development and aids creative development.

Davenport (1994) states that pretend and imaginary plays are encouraged as a way of developing the child's imagination and conquering their surroundings. some of the play activities which would be available in a playgroup or kindergarten included a play house with rag dolls, doll clothes, baskets, wooden cups and real cups.

Studies done in Kenya on the influence of play activities are few. In particular, studies that investigate the use of play materials on language development are very scarce. It is in this view that this study will attempt to answer concerns that play materials influence English language activity. A study on the impact of play in early childhood learning among the children aged

between five and six years by Waithaka (2001) and that of Water play activities in nursery by Sika (2001), the researchers felt there was a gap that needed to be addressed and filled through investigation of play and its effect on the performance of English language.

1.2 Statement of the problem

In the guidelines for the pre-school education in Kenya (1984) states that young children are curious, active and learn by doing. Pre-school children learn spontaneously through play. It is the most natural method through which they learn and experience the world around them. It is through senses that children learn about their environment. They use these senses to explore experiment and in the process discover new ideas and skills. However, this is made possible when adults who are in close contact with the children provide a free informal and secure atmosphere. Play should form the core of the pre-school activities.

Not enough research is done on play in Africa, especially in Kenya. It is for this reason that a suggestion was made in a UNESCO regional seminar held in Nairobi in 1980 that more studies be done on the opportunities given for play and manipulative activities among pre-school children. This suggestion was echoed in a national seminar held in Malindi in June 1982 on Pre-school education in Kenya. There is need to examine the importance of play in relation to learning.

Mwaura (1987), in his MA Thesis on the influence of play opportunities in the development of cardinal numbers concept in Pre-school children in Kiambu Municipality observed that trained pre-school teachers used more effectively the play method in the number lessons. He recommended that further research into the use of play in cognitive development of pre-school children is required, particularly in the development of number concepts.

The central role played by English both as a language and as a subject at all levels of education in Kenya cannot be over-emphasized. Kariuki (2007) state that English is a major world language which Kenyans use to disseminate information to other parts of the world. It is a means of international communication. The knowledge and proper mastery of both written and spoken forms of English enables one to communicate with many people especially those from Anglophone countries.

In Kenya literacy performance has a bearing on performance in all subjects and as such it becomes a matter of concern in order to ensure that anything that is likely to affect literacy performance negatively does not spill over to the other areas of the curriculum in Nairobi. According to Uwezo (Annual Learning Assessment Report, 2011) Seven out of ten children in class 3 can read a class 2 story, while slightly more than half of them can read a paragraph. Four out of a hundred children in class 8 nationwide cannot read a class 2 story. The implication therefore is that the basics of literacy were missing in many schools hence the lack of reading skills at higher levels.

This study shall investigate the influence of play activities at preschool level on the performance of the English language. Wood (1996) articulates sound principles for making connections between playing, learning and teaching and sets out pedagogy of play. This is defined as the ways in which childhood educators make provisions for playful and play- based activities, how they design play-learning environments and all the pedagogical techniques they use to support or enhance teaching and learning through play.

1.3 Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study is to examine the influence of play activities on pre-school children's English language performance in Harambee Zone of Makadara District in Nairobi County.

1.4 Research Objectives

The proposed study aims at fulfilling the following objectives:

1. To investigate the influence of role plays (drama) on pre-school children's performance in English language.
2. To examine the influence of constructive play on pre-school children's performance in English language.
3. To examine the influence of outdoor play activities on pre-school children's performance in English language.
4. To determine the influence of games with rules and pre-school children's performance in English language.

1.5 Research questions

1. What is the influence of role play (drama) on the pre-school children's performance in English language?
2. What is the influence of constructive play on pre-school children's performance in English language?
3. What is the influence of outdoor play activities on pre-school children's performance in English language?

4. What is the influence of games with rules and pre-school children's performance in English language?

1.6 Significance of the Study

The research is aimed at determining the influence of play on the performance of English language of pre-school children. Children will benefit by being allocated sufficient time for play activities and a variety of play materials. The research will provide information that will be utilized by stakeholders in the early childhood education including teachers, parents and children. It will also lead to relevant policy development by the government to address the short comings in the education systems that are as a result of non-play activities for pre-school children.

Pre-school teachers and parents will be more informed to enable change of attitude towards play. The teachers will also become more aware of the importance of play and how different play activities enhance language performance in children. It will also lead to capacity building and training teachers to embrace play and language development. In addition, the government and other stakeholders will know the target areas to utilize the limited funding available for the best effect; misuse of public funds will be avoided as the funds will not be directed to areas not beneficial to children's language performance.

The study will benefit educational planners by highlighting the various play facilities and how they can be used for pre-school children's language performance. It will help them advocate for policies which will focus on the importance of play at the pre-school level. These policies will be included in the syllabus and textbooks used in the teaching of pre-school children.

1.7 Limitations of the study

This study focused on schools in Harambee Zone of Makadara District in Nairobi County. Three major limitations had been identified as follows:

1. Although play resources are important for learning, many pre-schools lack them in quantity and quality hence the results of this study could be biased.
2. The cost of play materials is prohibitive as such the public schools would have less material.
3. Classification of play materials and relationship to language development could also have an adverse effect on the study. For instance there are no language laboratories in Kenya that can be used for language development as other studies out of Kenya have done, making a comparison with other country studies may not be coherent.

1.8 Delimitation of the study

The study was going to focus on the influence of play activities on language performance of pre-school children in Harambee Zone of Makadara District in Nairobi County. It focused on types of play namely role play, constructive play, outdoor play and games with rules, and how they influence and effect performance of English language.

1.9 Basic assumptions

The researcher assumed the following while carrying out the investigation. The researcher assumed that, all pre-schools in Harambee Zone of Makadara District provide for play and play materials for the children, the teachers who were handling pre-school children were well trained

and they would incorporate play activities in the learning of English language, time allocated for play would be enough and children would not be restricted in their play activities, tools used for data collection were to give the researcher accurate and reliable information and that the sampled children would produce the expected response planned for observation.

1.10 Definition of key terms

Play: Activity for amusement.

Guided play: Games and activities guided by the teacher

Outdoor play/ games: Activities for pleasure done outside the classroom

Play materials/equipments: Things used for play such as toys, balls, ropes, swings, tyres etc

Pre-schooler: A child who is in pre-school and is of the ages between 2 ½ to 5 years.

Language: A media of communication.

Literacy development: Literacy skills are all the skills needed for reading and writing. They include awareness of sounds of language, awareness of print and the relationship between letters and sounds, vocabulary, spelling and compensation.

Early childhood development: These are all the developmental experiences of young children from birth to entry into primary school (0-6 years)

Early childhood education: These are the educational activities organized for children at age of 3-6 years.

Parents: These represent the primary adult or adults who have parental responsibility. These include biological parents, foster or stepparents, a grandparent, an aunt, uncle or older sibling or guardian who takes care of the child between 0-6 years.

Stakeholder: These are persons with strong personal or professional interest in curriculum development. They are the major participants in curriculum planning. They include teachers, parents, principals, children and the community.

Role Play: Involves imitation, make believe, imagination and creativity. It also involves symbolic activities.

Constructive Play: Constructive play involves the manipulation of objects and materials to build or create something, using natural and manufactured materials such as block and other constructional kits such as play dough, junk and collage materials, sand and water

Outdoor/Physical Play: Physical play involves use climbing equipment and swings, tricycle paths, and large areas of grass and hills on which pre-schools can run, crawl and roll

Games with Rules: These are games that children have rules in play, or make up games that have rules and through this they are learning cooperation, negotiating, problem solving etc.

1.11 Organization of the study

The study is organized into 5 chapters namely, Introduction, literature review, research methodology, findings and discussions, and summary, conclusions and recommendations. References and Appendices will be attached at the end of the paper

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

This literature review is an extended examination of views and opinions regarding aspects of types of play and their input in language, performance. Literature review surveys scholarly articles, books, and other sources including the internet that are relevant to a particular issue, area of research, or theory providing a description, summary and critical evaluation (Cooper 2010).

The purpose is to offer an overview of significant literature published on a topic. The review makes a critical examination of theories related to play's influence on language performance in pre-school children. The review will focus on types of play, theoretical framework and conceptual framework.

2.1 Children's Plays

Children play every day. Play is crucial for the development of the child. It is through play that children learn many things about the world around them. Play occurs throughout life but the form of play varies as a person grows older. Babies play by exploring with their hands and feet while a young child may dress up as part of pretend play (Harding, 2000). Play can be defined as occupying oneself or amusing oneself in an activity or game. It includes the competitive aspect linked to team games or sports. It is an activity undertaken for pleasure, especially by children.

Play is considered to be one not the primary needs of a child. Play is often said to be a child's work. It is a common global behavior of children in all countries and cultures. Children naturally want to play although they also learn to play. So both nature and nurture contribute to the development of the skills needed to play effectively. The adult is the key to successful play in the early years at home and in a professional situation (Bilton 1998).

Play has different features some of them are that play is initiated by children themselves for example role-play of mothers and fathers. Play is designed by children themselves; they choose how to play and what to play. Play is something children choose to do because they like to do it, not for an end product or a reward. Play is natural, it is something children seem to be able to do without coaching or lessons. Play is spontaneous; the children can involve themselves in it without guidance or instruction from an adult. Play is voluntary, children play because it provides a way in which they can explore their environment, develop communication skills and express their pleasurable feelings. It combines both action and thought, and in so doing gives the child a sense of satisfaction (Taylor, 1973).

Children have their own definitions of play. In order to establish mutual awareness of play and non-play situations, they create roles, use symbols, redefine objects, transform ideas, and determine the action through negotiation and shared meanings. Play is not just about fantasy. Children continuously weave in and out of play, transferring "real world" knowledge, skills and understanding from other areas of their lives. Play is also rich with meanings children create for themselves (Bilton, 1998).

The characteristics of play change as different stages of development are reached. All children go through these stages and although they are linked to ages, children develop at a different pace and may take longer to go through a particular stage. Some children may need greater adult

support in order to move from one stage to another. It also depends on the child's experience. A child from a large family may find it easy to play co-operatively with other children in a nursery situation, whereas an only child may find engagement with play more difficult (Oates, 2007).

The main stages of play include the solitary play stages from age 0-2 years old. Here the child plays alone and has little interaction with other children. The onlooker or spectator play stage is from 2 years to 2 ½ years old. Here the child watches other children playing around him/her but does not join in. The parallel play stage is from the ages of 2 ½ to 3 years old whereby the child will play alongside other children but does not play together with them. The fourth stage is the associative play stage which is from 3 years to 4 years. The child begins to interact with other children in their play and there is fleeting co-operation between the children. Here children begin to develop friendships and preference for playing with certain other children. Play is in mixed sex groups (Waller, 2009).

The co-operative play stage is from 4 years upwards. Children play together with shared goals for their play. Play can be quite complicated and children are supportive towards others in their play. As they reach primary school age, play is usually in single-sex groups. Weare (2004:2) Realizes that patterns of learning are socially and culturally determined from birth so that children are gradually socialized into forms of appropriate behavior in different contexts. Play activities provide many opportunities to develop social cognition (Waller, 2009).

2.2 Types of play

This study will look into four different types of play namely; Role play, constructive/manipulative play, outdoor/physical play and sports based/games with rules.

2.2.1 Role play

This type of play is also referred to as imaginative play, dramatic play, socio-dramatic play or. It involves imitation, make believe, imagination and creativity. It also involves symbolic activities. According to Rogers and Evans (2008) children derive satisfaction not only from the ability to imitate but also from a make believe play which provides unlimited access to the existing world of adults. Role play may serve as a means of escape from the real world; it extends the scope of the imitative activity and provides a comprehensive context that increases the realism of behavior.

Through role play children come to terms with different aspects of daily life. Young children play “school” acting out experiences they have encountered. Role reversal is also common in role play, for example a girl may pretend to be a dad in a game of mums and dads. Children like to use dressing up clothes as part of their role play. These are wonderful props that allow children to extend their play (Rogers and Evans, 2008).

According to Wood and Attfield (1996), there are six elements of socio-dramatic play, they are; role play by imitation, make believe with objects, make believe with actions and situations, persistence in the role play, interaction and verbal communication. Each element incorporates play skills and play knowledge. Verbalization in children’s social –dramatic play can be complex, highly developed and reflect the patterns and content of adult verbal interactions.

Between the ages of three and four, children develop an awareness of others’ mental states and feelings, and can adapt to their behavior accordingly. These ‘mind-reading’ skills are evident when they construct and share pretend worlds, thereby engaging in quite sophisticated activities, such as stepping into a role, acting in role, imagining different feeling states, and developing

empathy (seeing things from another's perspective). Children do not just play with objects and materials; they also play with meanings, ideas, roles, rules and relationships and can make significant cognitive leaps and transformations (Bilton, 1998).

For younger children, action tends to arise more from things. They are more absorbed in assigning roles and arranging props. In solitary dramatic play, children may use self speech or out-loud thinking to communicate the pretence in different voices (Rogers and Evans, 2008).

With age and experience, action arises more from ideas than from things. As experienced players, older children can more readily formulate goals which they realize through cooperation and reciprocity (Broadhead, 2004).

Creativity and imagination are both important cognitive processes that serve to direct, influence and generate complexity. The roles that children create involve actions, and speech, and generate feeling states that link both affective and cognitive processes. Children use stories as a powerful means of making sense of the world, and play with a wide range of human emotions like love, fear, anger and jealousy. These are often played out as opposing forces e.g good and evil, cruelty and kindness, strength and weakness, friendship and enmity. Such powerful moral and affective schemes are drawn from children's popular culture and their everyday experiences (Marsh and Millard, 2000).

Creative play creates dynamic, unifying activities that integrate many areas of learning across the curriculum. Kamen (2007), states that early learning involves learning through stimulating play activities with appropriate adult support to provide young children with essential foundations for later learning. A combination of real and imaginary experiences is needed to encourage young

children to learn. Children use play opportunities to encourage and extend the problem solving abilities that are essential to developing their intellectual process.

2.2.2 Constructive/manipulative play

Constructive play involves the manipulation of objects and materials to build or create something, using natural and manufactured materials such as block and other constructional kits such as play dough, junk and collage materials, sand and water. Constructive play involves exploration and discovery, tactile stimulation, problem solving, social interaction and attention to process and outcomes. It may be combined with social dramatic play because they enjoy making props to support their play, and playing with what they have created.

Constructive play enables children to represent their ideas, knowledge and interest through different forms such as layouts, buildings, plans, sculptures and collages. These processes and outcomes can give practitioners a window into patterns of children's thinking and learning as described by Gura's (1992) report on the Froebel block play research study. The study focused on what children did with the building blocks and what they learned. Much of the children's learning was identified as scientific, mathematical, technological, and linguistic and was situated in creative, flexible contexts that enabled them to explore the materials and their ideas and represents their thinking. The children invented signs and symbols to represent the blocks. They needed knowledge about names and properties of the blocks in order to have mastery of them, and use them for different functions e.g. knowledge about size, shape, tessellations and configurations was needed to solve practical and conceptual problems.

However, several conditions were put in place, in order to support children's learning and performance through play as follows:-

- i) adult involvement to enable children to share the initiative about what and how it is to be learned;
- ii) create context for learning which encourage exploration and investigation;
- iii) enable children to be creative, take risks and be playful in their ideas;
- iv) organize the physical setting to maximize the potential for learning, developing continuity; and
- v) Progress through observation and record keeping.

All forms of constructive play teach children about manipulation, building and fitting things together. Cognitive skills are important here too as a child learns to figure out how to make something work best, whether it is a block tower that won't stand up or a sand castle that keeps collapsing. Constructive play develops all types of skills and behaviours: the physical skills necessary to manipulate and control the chosen toy or material, problem solving skills, the ability to plan the use of materials to see a design idea become a reality, the ability to test ideas, perseverance in the face of construction challenges, when working with others, team work behaviors necessary to successfully and collaboratively complete a task together. White (2007) suggests that the teacher provides letter games and approaches for the children to play with independently. Many literacy- related resources and play areas will support reading and writing skills.

2.2.3 Outdoor/ physical play

Outdoor play is of vital importance in the early years of childhood. Active outdoor play increases health and physical performance, reducing obesity and stimulating brain cells. It also cultivates

responsibility in children, preparing them for the added duties of adolescence and adulthood. Repeated exposure to nature will encourage an environmental awareness that will help the child develop into a responsible, environmentally conscious adult (Bilton, 1998).

In an era where obesity is increasingly common, encouraging outdoor physical activities can help improve children's health. Outdoor fresh air is also beneficial to the body. Physical exercise is important because it reduces the risks of heart diseases. Being outdoor stimulates the brain cells and encourages performance (Lindon, 2001).

When playing outdoors, children have the opportunity to use all their senses. Active children regularly exercise all their physical senses for example grass offers full stimulation to sight, smell, taste and touch. Children are naturally curious and by allowing them to explore the world around them, they can develop their senses in an existing and stimulating way (Ouvry, 2003).

According to Wardle (1996), playgrounds are places where children's play can take off and flourish. Good outdoor playgrounds are large enough and designed in such a way that children can make a mess, run, jump and hide, where they can shout, whistle and explore the natural world. Factors that determine the quality of a playground for young children from infants to eight year old, include the design of the play area, safety issues, play equipment, accessibility and adult supervision. Playgrounds must encourage all forms of play. Outdoor play should not become too academic and too teacher controlled.

Outdoor play is critical for young children because many performance tasks that children must achieve like exploring, risk taking, fine and gross motor performance and the absorption of vast amounts of basic knowledge can be most effectively learned through outdoor play (Lindon,2001).

According to Warden (2005) children need to develop large motor skills and cardiovascular endurance. She provides a comprehensive discussion of the motor performance and movement skill acquisition of young children which must be encouraged in outdoor playgrounds.

Physical play should be encouraged by climbing equipment and swings, tricycle paths, and large areas of grass and hills on which pre-schools can run, crawl and roll. Toy tricycle paths are used for big toys, tricycle, scooters, wagons, balls and jogging. Climbing equipment for toddlers should be very basic including a crawling tunnel, small steps, and a slide because toddlers are very insecure on their feet, special attention should be paid to barriers, railings on the sides of raised equipment. Outdoor plays help to support the performance of the brain and nerve functions and growth (Whalley, 2007).

According to Whalley (2007), too many educators, politicians and parents believe outdoor play takes time away from academic activities. As a result recess and physical education in many schools is limited or totally eliminated. Programs that advocate for outdoor play often focus on learning cognitive and academic skills, rather than encouraging needed physical pursuits and social interactions.

2.2.4 Games with rules

Games with rules mean that children have rules in play, or make up games that have rules and through this they are learning cooperation, negotiating, problem solving etc. children 3-4 years old start to play this way but this type of play really peaks around the age of 6-7 years when children are really starting to understand abstract thought. Rules are abstract and as children move from concrete to abstract thought, they can participate more in this type of play (Edington, 2002).

Games with rules are a level of play that imposes rules that must be followed by the players. It requires self-regulation by the children who play it. They can successfully follow rules and curb their own personal ego needs. Games with rules are characterized by logic and order, and as children grow older they can begin to develop strategy and planning in their game playing (Edington, 2002).

Jean Piaget developed a theory of three levels of cognitive play. He felt the highest category of play was games with rules emerging in children between the ages of 7 and 12. Vygotsky (1978) however, thought that much younger children actually were able to follow rules in play as they engaged in role-play and pretend play. Pre-school children are also able to participate in simple games with rules such as matching games and board games. School age children develop understanding of social concepts, such as cooperation and competition and are able to think more objectively and are able to grasp the concept of the game having a clear beginning and end where they are required to take turns and follow certain procedures to complete the game. Breaking the rules carries specific penalties. The rules are the essence of the game and must be honored to successfully engage in the play (Vygotsky, 1978).

When children initiate their own games with rules, they realize the need to determine rules for playing the games as well as the rules for social interaction as they play their game. They may modify an existing game to their own rules or the game might be a game of competition in motor skill, such as jumping with rules to determine a winner. As children develop the concepts of the game, they need to negotiate with each other to make the game enjoyable for all players with various skill levels. Adaption of the rules makes play fair for everyone and make the game more fun. School age children are often found on the playground playing games with rules at recess. They could be enjoying a game of marbles, hopscotch or chasing each other playing tag. Team

sports promote cooperative play and teamwork. Whether children play a game of football or 'kati' they must follow the rules to play effectively (Meggit and Sutherland, (2000).

Board games help children develop reasoning strategies and skills when playing games, such as chess and checkers. Other board games include snakes and ladders, monopoly, and scrabble. In strategy games they must consider both offensive and defensive moves at the same time to succeed. Many board games have been adapted to be played on electronic media. New electronic games are being developed all the time for children of all ages including toddlers. The games require practice to master the challenges and often allow children to imagine they are in a fantasy world as they play through the game. While electronic gaming was previously a solitary activity in its earliest days, there are a lot more opportunities for group play in today's gaming world (White, 2007).

2.3 Theoretical framework

Lev Vygotsky's (1978) model of play and learning is a result of continued working of his ideas especially in the 1980s and 90s. He placed emphasis on social context in which children explored and learned and viewed language as a vital tool. Vygotsky (1978) described learning as a process within social interaction to enable creation of unity between playing, learning and teaching.

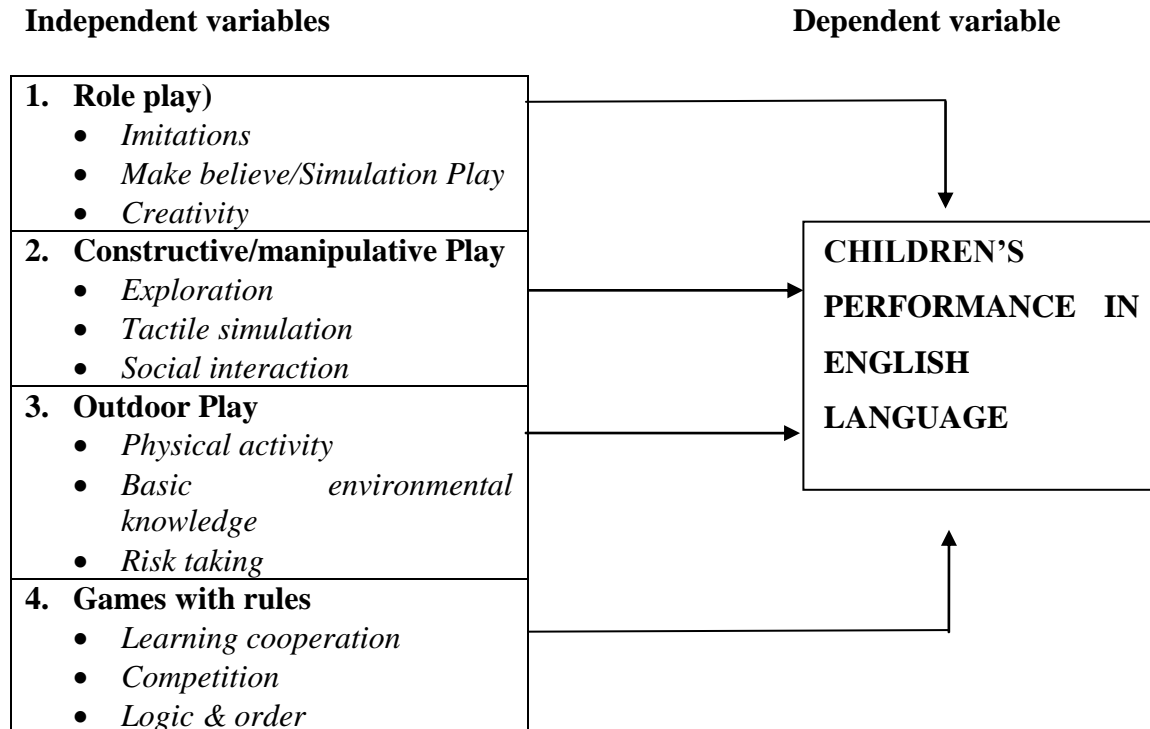
Vygotsky (1978) claimed that learning is enhanced when interacting with a more knowledgeable other. He proposes the Zone of Proximal Performance (ZPD) which is a concept that refers to a child not being able to do a particular task on his/her own but does it with the assistance of an adult. Finally he/she is able to do the task above. The teacher is actively involved in teaching language and providing a variety of play and learning material and experiences. She/he also provides cognitive tools which include language.

Jerome Bruner (1990) saw language as an important medium for adults to stimulate children to think and understand beyond their current grasp. Bruner (1990) further developed Vygotsky's (1978) theoretical perspective that the concept of spiral curriculum whereby children learn through discovery, with the help of adults, and by returning again and again to the same materials and ideas. Bruner felt that young children learn most easily through the medium of their play. Familiar play materials could remain of interest to children, but older children use the same or similar materials in qualitatively different ways.

2.4 Conceptual framework

Conceptual framework shows the relationship between the independent variables and the dependent variables.

Figure 2.1: Conceptual framework



The independent variables are the types of play; the role play, constructive play, outdoor play and games with rules. Conceptual framework shows the effects that these types of plays will have on the performance of English language.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the research design, target population, sample size and sampling techniques, research instruments, validity and reliability of the study, data collection procedures and data analysis techniques and presentation.

3.2 Research Design

This study utilized a quasi-experimental design. This is an action oriented studies as well as evaluative. The quasi experimental design studied two groups, one of which served as a control group in which no intervention took place. Both groups were served prospectively before as well as after the intervention for comparison purposes and to establish if it made any difference. The researcher intended to study the influence of play activities on English language among pre-school children. Both groups were exposed to the usual play materials while the in the other group more play materials were introduced. The figure 2 below shows the quasi –experiment model. Although the study utilized a quasi-experiment design, it did not use a random assignment, but there was a control group for evaluation and comparison purposes to find out if there was more influence in the intervention group where more play materials were introduced. The researcher concentrated more on the intervention group activities.

3.3 Population

Population is defined as any group of people, observation or test in which the researcher happened to be interested. According to Borg and Gall (1989), target population of a study is defined as all members of real or hypothetical set of people, events or objects to which the investigator wishes to generalize the results of the study. This study used pre-schools in Harambee Zone, pre-school teachers and pre-school children as the core respondents to provide information on the influence of play activities on pre-school children's performance and development of English language in Harambee Zone of Makadara District in Nairobi County.

There are 20 pre-schools in Harambee Zone of which 4 are public and 16 private with a total population of about 1000 ECD pupils. A list of all the schools was generated. The researcher stratified the schools into 2 homogenous subgroups namely public pre-schools and private pre-schools. Half (50%) of the schools were under study. A total of 10 (2 public and 8 private) schools was randomly selected from the lists. A selection of 30% of the population is 300 pupils who were observed during play activities. Out of those, 120 children were randomly selected for written English test. That is, in each school 12 children (6males and 6 females from each of the three levels).

3.4 Summary of target population

The study site was Nairobi County in Makadara district and Harambee zone. The researcher visited 10 (8 Private and 2 Public) ECD schools. In each of the schools visited, a head teacher/principal, 3 ECD teachers and 120 (60 Males and 60 Females) pupils were interviewed.

3.5 Sampling Techniques and Sample Size

A purposive selection was used to select the site and was also utilized to select the key informants such as the pre-school heads, teachers and other institutional heads in Harambee Zone of Makadara District.

3.6 Research Instruments

This study adopted four data collection instruments as follows: Observation schedule, questionnaires and interview guides and classroom test.

3.6.1 Questionnaires

According to Chandran (2003), a questionnaire is a series of written questions on a topic about which respondents' opinions are sought. They are useful in a descriptive study where there need to quickly and easily get information from people in a non-threatening way (Davies, 1997). Best and Khan(1992) noted that questionnaires enable the person administering them to explain the purpose of the study and give meaning to items that may not be clear. A questionnaire is a carefully designed instrument for collecting data in accordance to specific research questions.

This study used head teacher's questionnaires to find out their professional qualifications, time, and materials allocated for play in the pre-schools. Questionnaire for teachers seeked to find out the teacher's age and gender, his or her professional qualifications and materials used for play, types of play activities children are engaged in and the language activities children are involved in.

3.6.2 Observation Schedules

This study used the observation schedule to identify the play activities the children engage in, the teacher's role in the children's play activities, the materials used during play and the children's ability to communicate, read and write using the English language. An observation schedule is designed to identify specific areas of interest to the study. Two specific tools were developed for this study. They were used to determine the availability and suitability of play materials and facilities in the schools. A general observation tool was administered personally by the researcher to observe pupils during play activities and other interactions during field data collection. The words that children use commonly while playing were researched later in a classroom situation to check whether they understood them. The other was administered to heads of schools or their deputies to determine school's ECD staff capacity, materials and items available including the population of the ECDE children in the selected schools.

3.6.3 In-depth Interview guides

An interview is a conversation between two or more people who are the interviewer and the interviewee, where questions are asked by interviewer to obtain information from the interviewee. A research interview is a structured social interaction between a researcher and a subject who is identified as a potential source of information, in which the interviewer initiates and controls the exchange to obtain quantifiable and comparable information relevant to an emerging stated hypothesis. The guides were developed after the researcher accessed information that need to be answered although it might not have been captured in any quantitative tool that was already administered. The interview was a one-on-one session; that enabled the researcher to

access extra linguistic aspects of the interaction. Interviews are an essential tool in following up on areas of curiosity during research (Jackson 1990). This study conducted structured interviews with teachers and pre-school children in the sample and was also used to generate questions for the DEO and the main stakeholder in Makadara. The process involved the researcher asking the same question to each respondent in the same way (Wengrat 2001).

3.6.4 Classroom tests

This study used classroom tests for English language. In these tests the researcher sought to establish the children's ability to comprehend English language. The children answered both oral and written questions. They also read sounds and simple words. At this level they were tested on cognitive skills such as matching the word to the item and coloring.

3.7 Pilot Study

In order to test validity and reliability of the research instruments the researcher conducted a pre-test (pilot study). This was done by submitting the research instruments to a research expert. The feedback from the expert determined the validity and reliability of the research instruments. Thereafter, the researcher visited the sampled schools pre-schools and administered the instruments to the relevant groups and individuals (Target Population). The data was processed and analyzed. This exercise was done twice. If the results showed no variations, then the instruments would be termed as valid and reliable.

3.8 Validity

Validity of the instruments represents the degree to which a test measures accuracy and relevance of inference made based on research results (Mugenda and Mugenda, 2003). An instrument is actually valid when it measures what it claims to measure. In this study, validity of research instruments was attained through being subjected to expert's judgments and qualified researchers. Content validity was further attained through research instruments based on research questions of the study and professional advice from peers who have completed their master's degree.

3.9 Reliability

The degree to which a research instrument yields consistent results or data after repeated trials is known as reliability (Borg and Gall, 1989). To establish reliability in this study a pre-test was carried out to clarify if the instruments seek the intended information before being actually administered to the sampled population. After the pretest, some of the items were retained, rephrased, deleted and added according to the findings. This was done to increase clarity and sustainability of the instruments to collect the right data.

3.10 Data Collection Procedure

The researcher sort permission from relevant authorities starting from the school of graduate studies and the County education office before proceeding to the pre-schools. She visited the sampled pre-schools asking for permission to administer a questionnaire to the teachers and interview both teachers and children. The researcher administered the questionnaire personally to the teachers. The researcher interviewed the children and the teachers as well as observed the children during play activities.

3.11 Data processing and analysis

Classroom observations, attitude scales and data from questionnaires was entered into a computer. Central tendency (mean, mode, median) and measures of variability (Sd, Variance and range) permitted the researcher to describe many pieces of the data with few indices. The indices were calculated by the researcher for sample drawn from the population. Frequency counts and pie charts enabled the researcher to describe a participant's performance compared to the performance of all other participants as the data was computed separately. The qualitative data was analyzed manually paying specific attention to the study objectives and themes. The themes adopted for analysis included perceptions towards ECD, achievements, sustainability and the role of MoE. Quotes were cited verbatim to give a voice to the participants.

3.12 Ethical Considerations

The researcher told the respondents the truth and gave them facts about the research in order to make an informed decision about participating or not. She protected respondents from any harm whether physical or psychological. The researcher observed confidentiality of the information given by children and hid the identity of the respondents. She did not deceive or manipulate the respondents to provide data. She did not refer to other people's work without acknowledging the author or get involved in plagiarism.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA ANALYSIS, PRESENTATION AND INTERPRETATION OF FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

The main objective of the study was to examine the influence of play activities on pre-school children's English language performance in Harambee Zone of Makadara District in Nairobi County. The qualitative data was analyzed paying specific attention to the study objectives and themes of the study. Graphs, pie charts and tables were used to present the data.

4.2 Demographic Information

4.2.1 Name of Schools

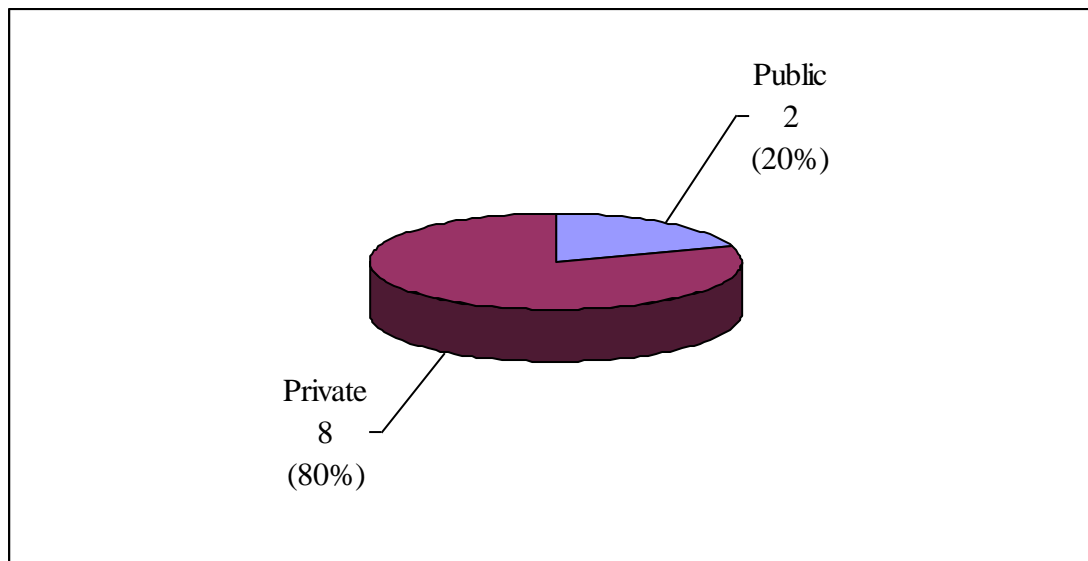
The respondents were required to indicate the name of the school in which they were currently attending for schooling or teaching. There are 20 pre-schools in Harambee Zone of which 4 are public and 16 private with a total population of about 1000 ECD pupils. The list of schools was attached in the appendix, See Appendix VIII. The schools are located in Harambee Zone of Makadara District in Nairobi County.

4.2.2 Type of school

The researcher established the type of school the respondents were currently attending. This was categorized into Private and Public schools. Figure 4.1 shows the distribution of responses on the type of school.

Figure 4.1: Distribution of responses on the Type of School

The figure 4.1 below shows distribution of responses on the type of school



The Public schools rate was the highest at 80%. Only 20% of them were private schools. This shows that a total of 10 (2 public and 8 private) schools were randomly selected from the list of schools in Harambee Zone of Makadara District in Nairobi County.

4.2 Gender of the Respondents

The study sought to establish the gender distribution of the respondents who included: pupils, ECD teachers and the head teacher/principal in the schools.

4.2.1 Pupils

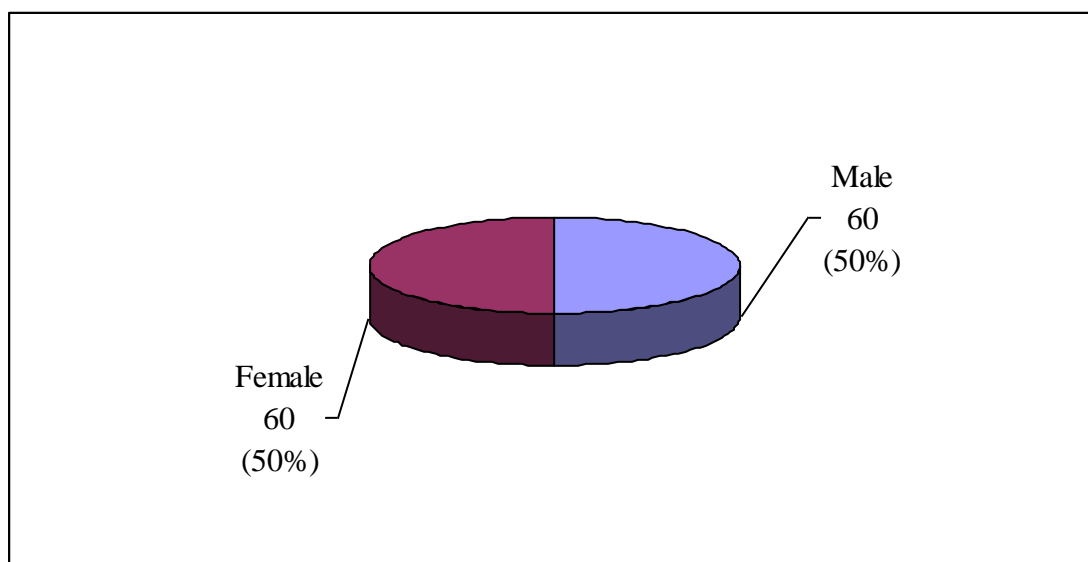
The background characteristics of pupils that were considered included: Gender, age bracket and class.

Gender

The study sought to know the gender in which pupils belonged to: This was categorised into; male and female.

Figure 4.2: Distribution of pupils by their gender

Figure 4.2 shows the distribution of pupils by their gender.



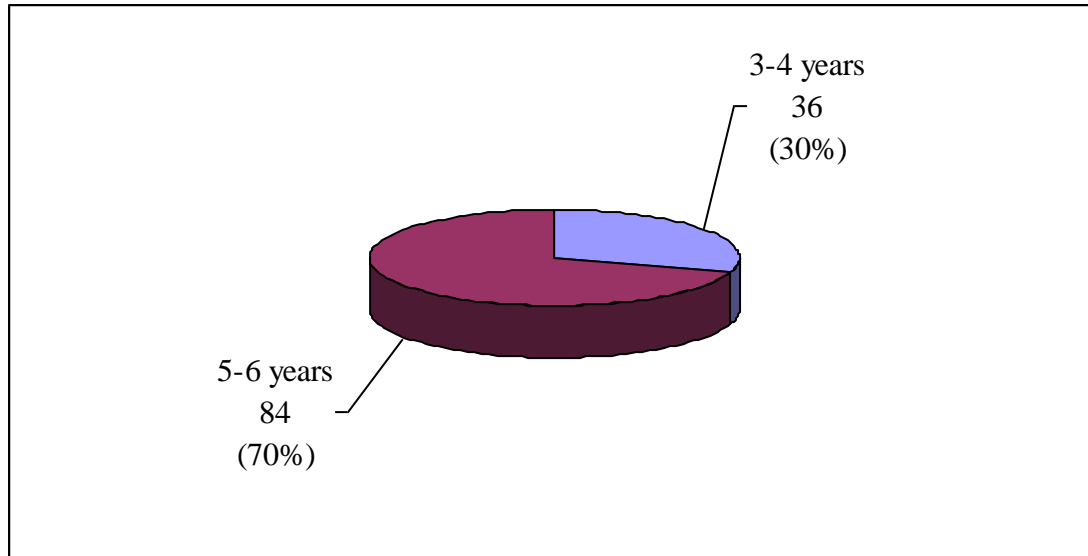
From the figure, it can clearly be seen that half, (50%) of the pupils who took part in the study were female. Also, that half, (50%) was male pupils. This shows equal distribution of pupils in terms of their gender.

Age Bracket

Pupils were further asked to indicate their age brackets. This was categorized into; 3-4 years, 5-6 years, 7-8 years and 9 years and above.

Figure 4.3: Distribution of pupils by their Age Brackets

Figure 4.3 shows the distribution of pupils by their Age brackets.



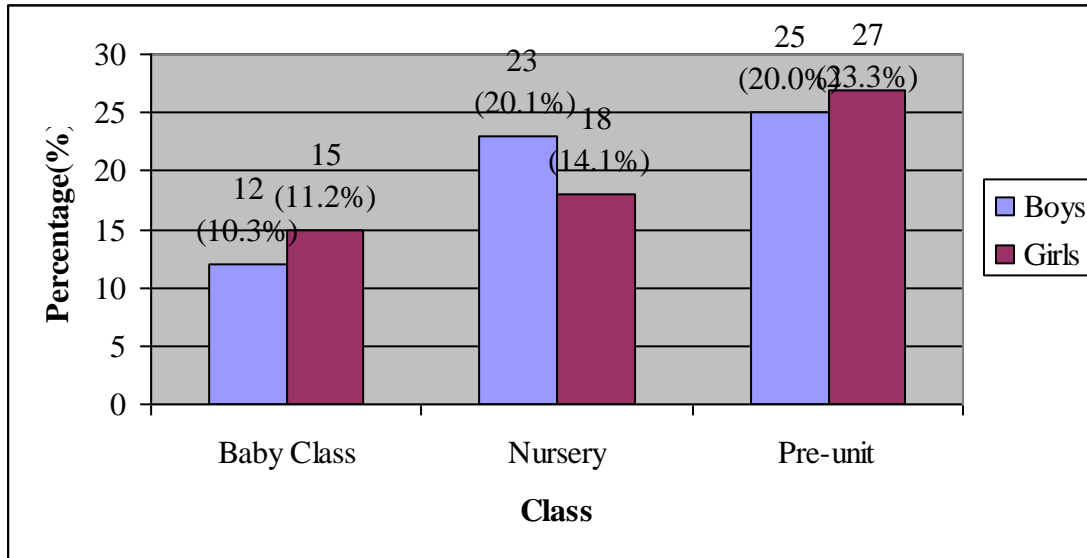
When asked to indicate their age brackets, majority of the pupils, (70%) who took part in the study aged between 5-6 years. The remaining percentage of them, (30%) was between the age of 3-4 years.

4.2.8 Population of ECDE pupils Class

The study sought to determine the population of ECDE pupils by their classes. This was categorized into; Baby Class, Nursery and Pre-unit.

Figure 4.4: Distribution Population of Pupils by class

Figure 4.4 shows the distribution of Population of pupils by class.



The population of the ECDE pupils shows the population of baby class comprised of 12 boys and 15 girls a total of 27 (21.5%) pupils in baby class. The population of the Nursery level comprised of 23 boys and 18 girls a total of 41 (34.2%) pupils. The population of the Pre-unit level comprised of 25 boys and 27 girls a total of 52 (43.3%) pupils. The study further sought to establish how many levels of ECDE the schools have. The category of the ECD include: Baby class, Nursery and Pre-unit. The preferred age for entrance at the ECD levels is between the age of 3 and 6 years.

4.2.2 Teachers

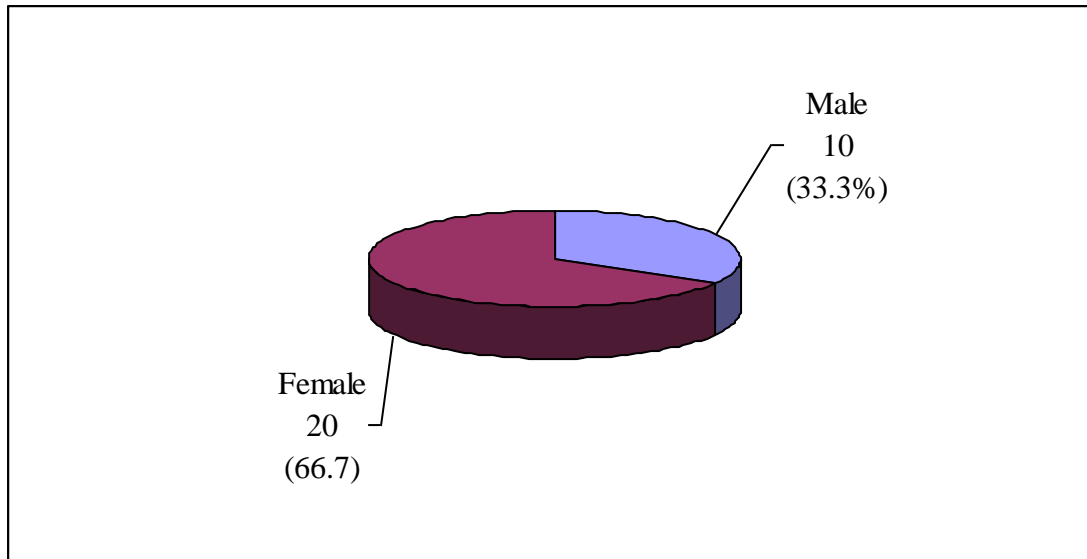
The background characteristics of teachers that were considered included: Gender, Age bracket, experience, designation and qualification.

Gender

The study sought to understand the gender of teachers. This was categorized into; male and female.

Figure 4.5: Distribution of teachers by their Gender

Figure 4.5 shows the distribution of teachers by their gender.



When asked to indicate their gender, majority of the teachers, (66.7%) who took part in the study were female. Slightly more than a third of them, (33.3%) were male teachers.

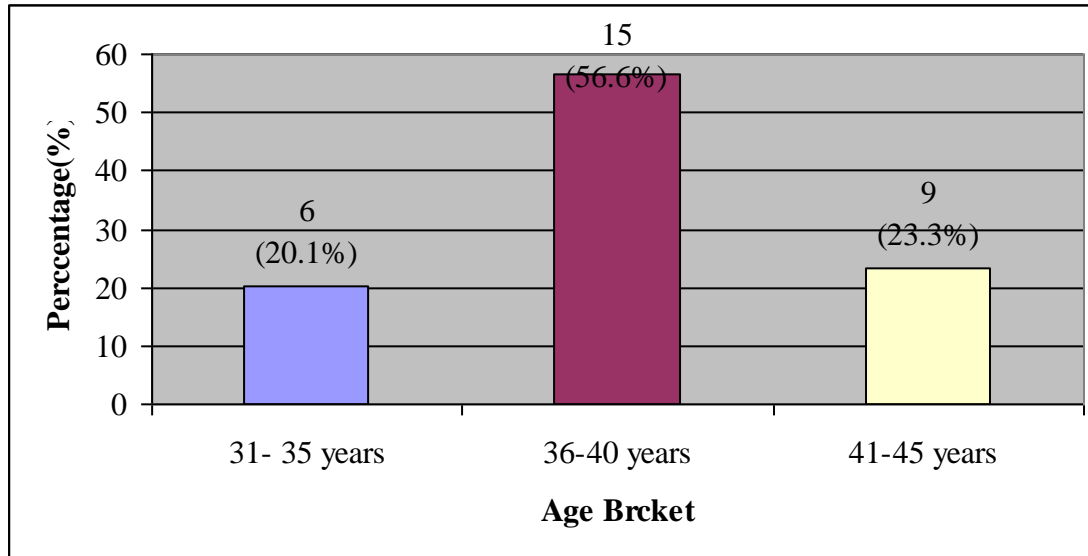
Age Bracket

Teachers were also asked to indicate their age brackets. This was categorised into; 23 years and below, 24- 30 years, 31- 35 years, 36-40 years, 41-45 years, 46-50 years and 51 years and above.

Figure 4.6 shows the distribution of teachers by their age brackets.

Figure 4.6: Distribution of teachers by their age Brackets

Figure 4.6 shows the distribution of teachers by their age brackets.

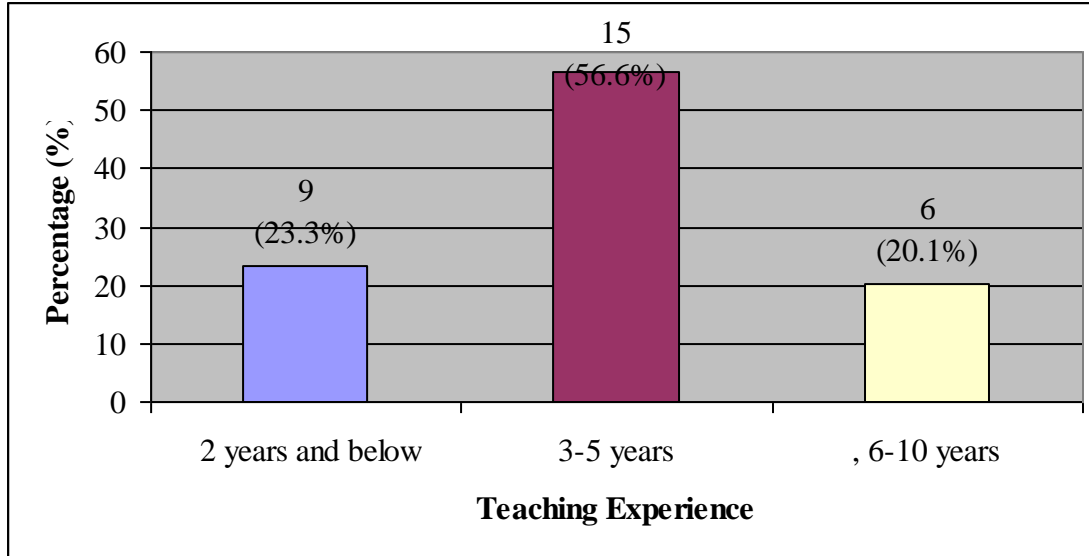


Teaching Experience

Teachers were further asked to indicate their working experiences. This was categorized into; 2 years and below, 3-5 years, 6-10 years, 11-15 years, 16-20 years and 21 years and above.

Figure 4.7: Distribution of teachers by their Teaching Experience

Figure 4.7 shows the distribution of teachers by their teaching experience.



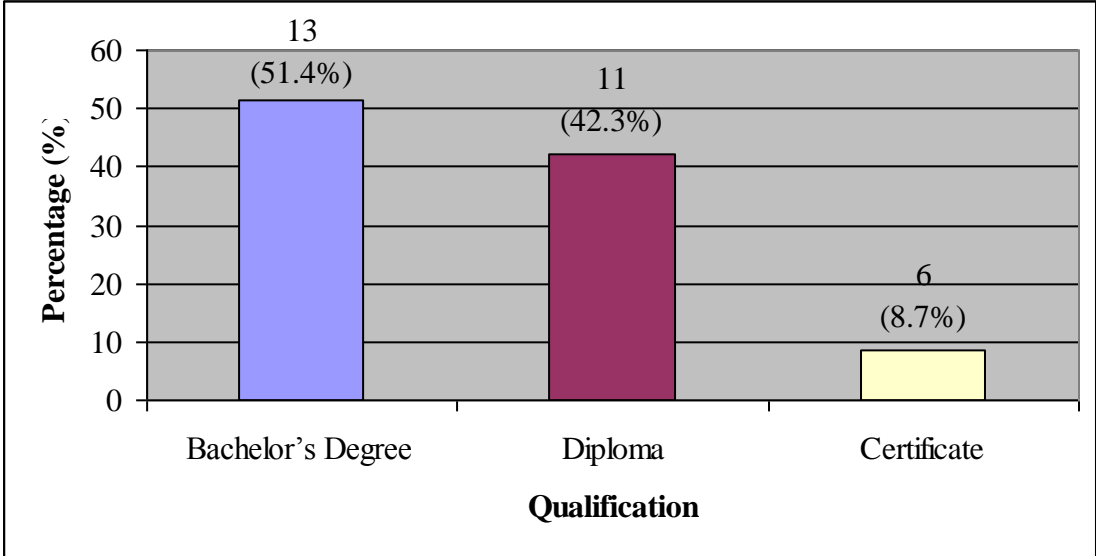
Majority of the teachers, (56.6%) who took part in the study had a teaching experience of 3-5 years. Slightly less than a quarter of them, (23.3%) had a teaching experience of between 2 years and below. The remaining percentage of them, (20.1%) had a teaching experience of 6-10 years.

Qualification

Teachers were further asked to indicate their highest level of education. The researcher assessed the highest and lowest qualification of ECD teachers in the school. This was categorized into Bachelor's degree, Diploma, Certificate and Master's degree.

Figure 4.8: Distribution of Teachers' Qualifications

Figure 4.8 shows the distribution of teachers' qualification.

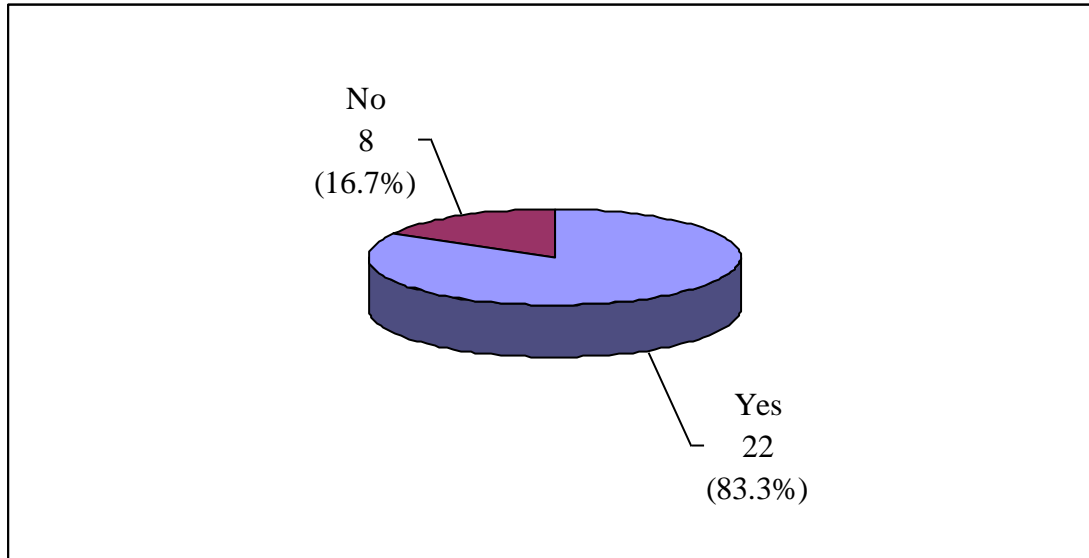


The findings established that the highest qualification of ECD teachers in the school was having a bachelor's degree in Early Childhood training at the university level; this follows a higher diploma in Early Childhood training; diploma in Early Childhood training and a certificate in Early Childhood training as the lowest qualification of ECD teachers in the school.

The study further sought to establish whether teachers had been trained as ECDE teachers.

Figure 4.9: Distribution of Responses on whether Teachers had been Trained as ECDE teachers

Figure 4.9 shows the distribution of responses on whether teachers had been trained as ECDE teachers.



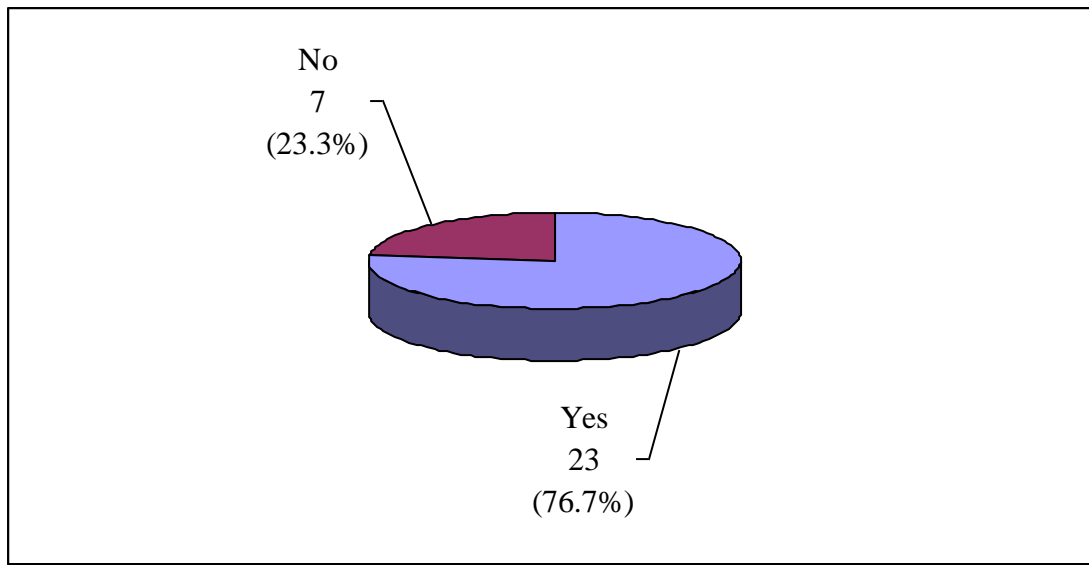
Majority of the teachers, (83.3%) who took part in the study had acquired training on ECDE. Only 16.7% of them indicated otherwise. This interprets to 83.3% of the ECDE class teachers who indicated yes that they had ECDE training while 16.7% of the ECDE class teachers had no ECDE training but they indicated the that they had acquired training in special education Early Childhood Special Education. The class teachers further indicated where they received training in ECD. Training for ECDE is in universities, colleges and other institutions of higher learning.

4.3 Effect of Play Activities on Children’s Performance

The study sought to investigate the influence of role plays/drama on pre-school children’s performance in English language. Figure 4.10 shows the distribution of responses on whether play activities influence pre-school children’s performance in English language.

Figure 4.10: Distribution of Responses on whether Play Activities Influence Pre-school Children's performance in English language

Figure 4.10 shows the distribution of responses on whether play activities influence pre-school children's performance in English language.



Majority of the respondents, (76.7%) were in agreement that play activities influence pre-school children's performance in English language. However, slightly less than a third of them, (23.3%) indicated otherwise. This shows that a classroom with drama activities motivates learners to learn and provides them with a relaxing yet challenging environment in which to study. In doing this, they are required to engage in the preparation of a role play and act it out. Drama-based role play has positive effects on learners' communicative and affective skills as it stimulates the learners' authentic conversation and allows them to act in a framework, so they can overcome their fear of certain emotional, linguistic or social constraints. Teaching language through drama has such potential because it gives a context for listening and meaningful language production, in which learners need to use their language resources. When learners learn English through drama, they learn not only language use, but also communicative processes.

When asked to indicate whether play activities influence pre-school children's performance in English language, head teachers explained that drama-based activities focusing on meaningful language, interactive communication, and cooperative group work can stimulate participation. With regard to cooperative learning, cooperative learning activities are also often used in language teaching. Cooperative learning is an instructional approach which encourages students' learning through group interaction. It provides maximum opportunities for meaningful input and output in interactive and supportive environments.

4.3.1 Constructive Play on Pre-school Children's Performance

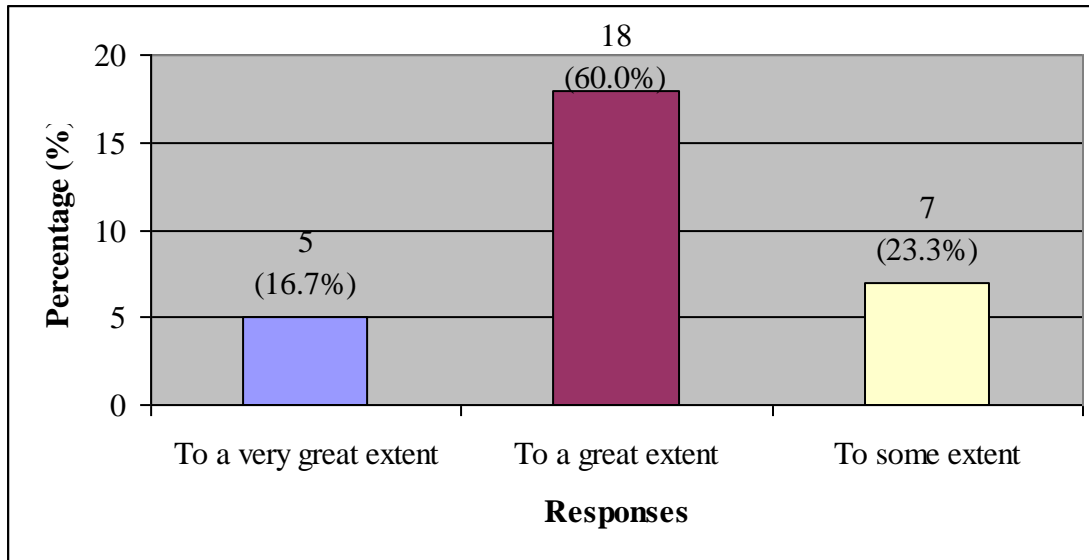
The study sought to examine the influence of constructive play on pre-school children's performance in English language.

The study sought to determine how much time is allocated for play in schools. The response showed that the children are given ample time to play as part of their curriculum requires the children to play as part of the learning process. Enough time to play is allocated to the children especially those in the preschool level and this continues to the kindergarten level. Through play, children develop who they are. Their cognitive, language and physical skills develop through their play experiences, as well as their imagination, concentration, self-confidence and sociability skills. Even though children's schedules are busy with such activities, teachers seem to feel that there is reasonable balance between structured activities and free time. While structured activities are part of growing up, it's important that young children have: enough time to play; a safe place to play and friendly people to play with. By making sure there's enough time for play in the children's schedule, it is ensuring that the children have time to be just that ... a child.

Teachers were further asked to indicate the extent to which constructive play influence pre-school children's performance in English language.

Figure 4.11: Distribution of responses on the extent to which constructive play influence pre-school children’s performance in English language

Figure 4.11 shows the distribution of responses on the extent to which constructive play influence pre-school children’s performance in English language.



Majority of the respondents, (60.0%) who took part in the study indicated that constructive play influence pre-school children’s performance in English language to a very great extent. Slightly less than a quarter of them, (23.3%) were in support that the constructive play influence pre-school children’s performance in English language to some extent. Only 16.7% of them indicated that it pre-school children’s performance in English language to a very great extent.

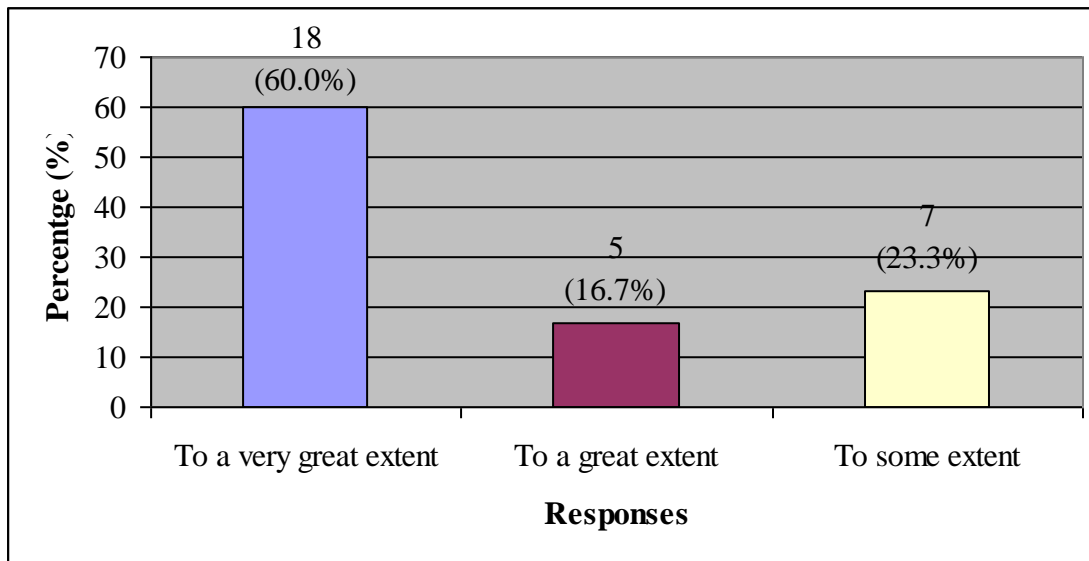
4.3.2 Materials and Equipment used by pre-school Children During Play

The study sought to determine the materials and equipment used by pre-school children during their play activities. High quality early learning and child care programs provide safe, stimulating environments that are warm, comfortable and aesthetically pleasing. Children are active learners who use the physical environment in a direct, hands-on manner. The physical

environment, as well as all the materials and equipment are part of a child's learning experience. The schedule, space, interaction with others and daily routines all provide learning opportunities. The study sought to establish the extent to which the materials and equipment used by children during play influence pre-school children's performance in English language

Figure 4.12: Distribution of responses on the extent to which the materials and equipment used by children during play influence pre-school children's performance in English language

Figure 4.12 shows the distribution of responses on the extent to which the materials and equipment used by children during play influence pre-school children's performance in English language



Majority of the respondents, (60.0%) indicated that the materials and equipment used by children during play influence pre-school children's performance in English language a very great extent. This was supported by slightly less than a half of them, (40.0%) who were in agreement that the

materials and equipment used by children during play influence pre-school children's performance in English language either to a great or to some extent.

4.3.3 Outdoor Play Activities on Pre-school Children's Performance

The study sought to examine the influence of outdoor play activities on pre-school children's performance in English language.

Playgrounds and outdoor play experiences have been viewed primarily as an opportunity to develop physical skills through vigorous exercise and play. Despite this long-held attitude, educators are becoming more aware that outdoor play can be much more valuable than previously assumed. Clearly, outdoor play can stimulate physical-motor development. In addition, however, playgrounds are a positive setting for enhancing social interaction. Further evidence indicates that well-equipped playgrounds can stimulate a variety of play types, including dramatic play (Shin & Frost, 2011).

Outdoor play can be as effective as indoor play in promoting young children's development. Frost & Wortham (2008) suggest that "the outdoor play environment should enhance every aspect of child development-motor, cognitive, social, emotional-and their correlates-creativity, problem-solving, and just plain fun" (pp. 24–25).

Outdoor play and playground environments allow children to become familiar with nature and the world around them. Outdoor play provides children daily opportunities to use and develop their large-muscle skills as well as the opportunity to express themselves freely and "loudly". The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) asserts that outdoor play is an integral part of the curriculum for young children's physical, cognitive, and emotional development (Bredekamp, 2007).

4.5.1 Types of outdoor play activities

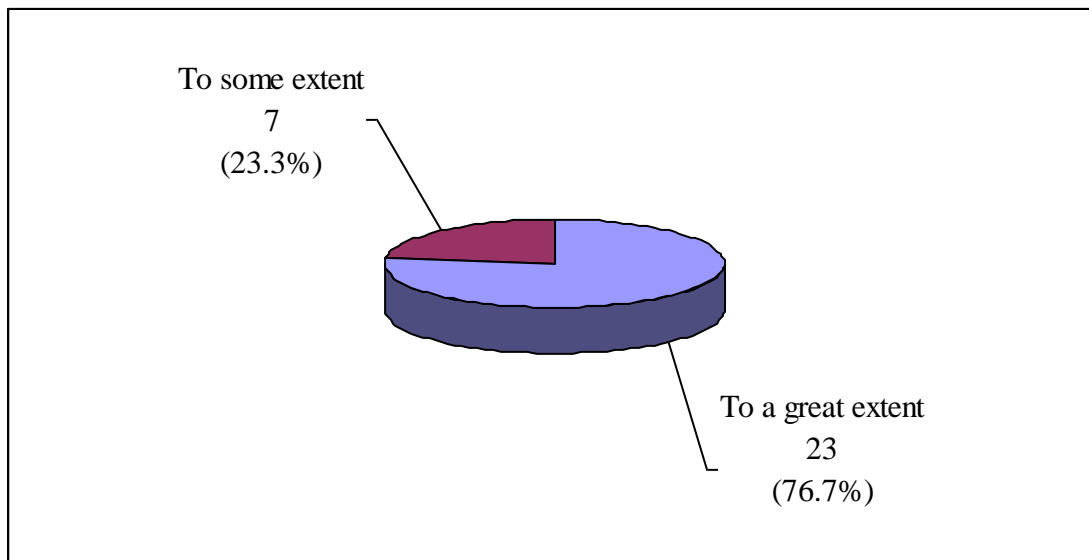
The respondents were required to write down the types of outdoor play activities which pre-school children are involved in. The respondents wrote different types of outdoor play activities which pre-school children are involved in as presented below:

Table 4.1: Types of Outdoor Play Activities	
Outdoor Play Activities	Description
Outdoor Transparent Painting	Preschool children use both large and fine motor skills and teachers can introduce a new vocabulary word, transparent, during this creative early childhood activity
Outdoor Wash	Encourage social skills as preschool children participate in this warm weather water play activity
Outdoor Game: "Hot Potato"	Preschool and kindergarten youngsters use their feet instead of their hands.
Sheet Painting	Young preschool children use fine motor and color recognition skills as they explore creativity during this early childhood outdoor activity
Game: Hula Hooping	During this preschool physical education activity encourages youngsters to use both fine and gross motor skills. Children also develop problem solving and social skills as they create their own methods of "hula hooping".
Game: Hop In The Hoops	During this outdoor early childhood activity children use gross motor skills
Outdoor Water Art	Promote fun with color mixing during this outdoor play activity
Balloon Bats	Promote group cooperation with an outdoor activity after the completion of these teacher made balloon bats
Nature Walk & Collage	Contributes science and art activity that encourages preschool children's "Language development through group participation, questions, speculation and conversation."
Rock Collecting	This outdoor preschool activity encourages observation, language development and seriation skills then extends into an art activity.

The study sought to establish the extent to which of outdoor play activities influence pre-school children's performance in English language.

Figure 4.13: Distribution of responses on the extent to which outdoor play activities influence pre-school children's performance in English language

Figure 4.13 shows the distribution of responses on the extent to which outdoor play activities influence pre-school children's performance in English language.



Majority of the respondents, (76.7%) indicated that outdoor play activities influence pre-school children's performance in English language to a great extent. This was supported by slightly less than a quarter of them, (23.3%) who were in agreement that outdoor play activities influence pre-school children's performance in English language to some extent.

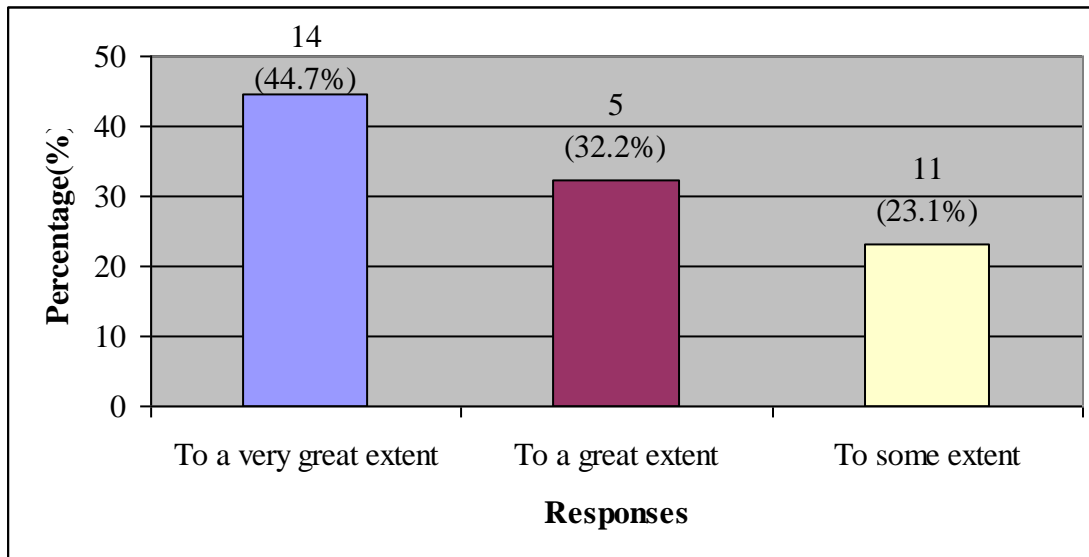
4.3.4 Influence of Games with Rules and Pre-school Children's Performance

The study set to determine how play activities encourage socializing among the children. The respondents indicated that playing activities encourages socializing by incorporating different ideas to the activity, learning how to share with their mates and make new friends that have a common interest. Children speak a common language that is shared across their mates as they develop an understanding of same interests in the play activities.

Teachers were further asked to indicate the extent to which games with rules influence pre-school children's performance in English language.

Figure 4.14: Distribution of responses on the extent to which games with rules influence pre-school children's performance in English language

Figure 4.14 shows the distribution of responses on the extent to which games with rules influence pre-school children's performance in English language



Majority of the respondents, (44.7%) indicated that the use of songs affects children's fluency in reading to a very great extent. This was supported by slightly less than a third, (32.2%) and slightly less than a quarter of them, (23.1%) who were in agreement that the use of songs affects children's fluency in reading either a great of to some extent respectively.

The respondents were further asked to state the key safety measures put in place by teachers in the school during pre-school play activities. The study established that when choosing a preschool for children, parents might consider a number of different factors, including cost, location, curriculum, hours of operation and environment. A preschool environment should be safe, above all things, and ensuring safety in a preschool setting encompasses a number of considerations.

The response revealed a number of considerations to examine in a preschool learning environment to ensure safety for all children: Hire ample, qualified staff members: the school should have enough employees to supervise all of the children in the preschool, and to ensure that all of the areas in the preschool where children congregate are monitored at all times by staff members. Additionally, the school should require that the staff is trained in cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR), and is certified in first aid.

Check the play area regularly: Toys should be clean, and sanitized at the end of every day. Make sure there are no broken toy pieces, which can be sharp and dangerous. Keep high traffic areas clear of anything that may cause preschoolers to trip and fall. For example, clean up spills as soon as they happen, and keep toys that aren't being played with in designated toy bins.

Arrange the classroom in a way that allows all of the children are seen, at all times. Make sure there are no blind spots where children can get lost from your sight. If you use cubicles or partition walls, configure them in a way that allows you to see around them from as many angles as possible. For example, it is better to put a partition wall at a right angle to a perimeter wall than it is to put 2 partitions walls at right angles to each other in the center of the room. Set up play areas in the center of the room. Arrange chairs, desks and work tables in circles.

Safeguard the outdoor play area: Ground covering must be soft to cushion falls. The height of swings, slides and other playground equipment must be a safe distance from the ground. There should be no bolts, nuts, screws or other fasteners protruding from the playground equipment in a way that could potentially harm children. Openings must be large enough to ensure that body parts cannot get trapped. A standard rule is to make sure there are no openings between 3.5 inches (8.4 cm) and 9 inches (21.6 cm) wide. Space plays equipment at least 12 feet (3.7 m) apart. Indicate clear traffic areas of tripping hazards. Examples of tripping hazards include tree branches, boulders, and sudden shifts in elevation and tree stumps. Check playground equipment regularly for ease of operation and structural integrity. Elevated platforms should have guard rails. Encircle the playground with a tall safety fence, and make sure any gates leading to the outside are locked.

Keep chemicals locked away from children: In a preschool environment, cleaners, insecticides, first aid solutions, medications and all other toxic substances should be kept in a high, flame-resistant and safety-locked cabinet.

Inspect for environmental hazards regularly: Common environmental safety issues include water impurities, lead-based paint, mercury, asbestos, waste management and indoor air pollutants like mold/mildew, carbon monoxide, tobacco smoke, allergens and dust. Call the appropriate

authorities to the premises to test for environmental hazards before allowing children to enter the preschool environment, and place applicable electronic detectors throughout the facility.

Have emergency plans in place: Conduct fire and natural disaster drills on a regular basis to ensure that everyone at the preschool is familiar with the proper procedures for handling emergency situations.

Create rules: Rule lists can be used in a variety of ways to promote a safe environment at preschool. Post school rules clearly where preschoolers can see them, and be sure to address them on a regular basis so that the children are familiar with them. For example, rules like "keep your hands to yourself" and "tell the teacher if you have a problem with another student" can help prevent physically harmful arguments in the preschool environment, and rules about washing hands and covering sneezes can help prevent the spread of illness.

Establish a set of rules for picking up and dropping off preschoolers. For example, you may require parents to provide photo IDs, fill out forms for other parties they wish to pick up their children, sign in and out, and stay inside a pickup zone during pickup time and/or call ahead of time if the pickup method is to temporarily change.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents summary of findings as discussed in the previous chapter. From the findings, conclusions and recommendations are discussed based on the objectives.

5.2 Summary

The main purpose of the study was to examine the influence of play activities on pre-school children's English language performance in Harambee Zone of Makadara District in Nairobi County. The study focused on the influence of role plays (drama), constructive play, outdoor play activities and the influence of games with rules and pre-school children's performance in English language. The study utilized a quasi-experimental design. This study used pre-schools in Harambee Zone, pre-school teachers and pre-school children as the core respondents to provide information on the influence of play activities on pre-school children's performance and development of English language in Harambee Zone of Makadara District in Nairobi County. There are 20 pre-schools in Harambee Zone of which 4 are public and 16 private with a total population of about 1000 ECD pupils. A list of all the schools was generated. The researcher stratified the schools into 2 homogenous subgroups namely public pre-schools and private pre-schools. Half (50%) of the schools were under study. A total of 10 (2 public and 8 private) schools was randomly selected from the lists. A selection of 30% of the population is 300 pupils who were observed during play activities. Out of those, 120 children were randomly selected for written English test. That is, in each school 12 children. The study used questionnaires, observation schedules and in-depth interview guides to collect the data. The qualitative data was analyzed manually paying specific attention to the study objectives and themes. The study

findings established that Play offers the child the opportunity to make sense out of the world by using available tools. Understanding is created by doing, by doing with others, and by being completely involved in that doing. Through play, the child comes to understand the world and the adult comes to understand the child.

5.4 Recommendations

On the basis of the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made:

1. This study provides a rationale for the inclusion of play activities in the learning schedules for the preschoolers. Play should form the core of the pre-school activities.
2. There is need for teachers to consider the games level to make preschoolers suitable with the learners' language levels.
3. Outdoor play should not become too academic and too teacher controlled.
4. Physical play should be encouraged by climbing equipment and swings, tricycle paths, and large areas of grass and hills on which pre-schools can run, crawl and roll. The outdoor play environment should enhance every aspect of child development-motor, cognitive, social, and emotional-and their correlates-creativity, problem-solving, and just plain fun.
5. Climbing equipment for toddlers should be very basic including a crawling tunnel, small steps, and a slide because toddlers are very insecure on their feet, special attention should be paid to barriers, railings on the sides of raised equipment. Outdoor plays help to support the performance of the brain and nerve functions and growth.

6. The learning environment should provide a rich assortment of materials and equipment for children to develop socially, cognitively and physically.
7. There is need for the school administrators to ensure a safe environment, above all things, and ensuring safety in a preschool setting encompasses a number of considerations.

5.4.1 Recommendations for further Studies

From the findings this study, it is recommended that there is need for other studies to be carried out on the influence of play on pre-school children's English language performance in other parts of the country.

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APPENDICES

Appendix I: Head teachers observational checklist

Salutation and consent seeking: Good afternoon/morning, my name is Faith Reuben. I am a student at the University of Nairobi. I am currently undertaking an independent research to enable me to complete my studies. Today I am conducting a survey on the influence of play activities in language performance in several pre- schools in Makadara district of Nairobi County. If you accept to participate in this research, I am going to ask you about your experiences and opinions related to your work with ECD. Your participation is voluntary. I guarantee to protect the confidentiality of your answers and your full anonymity. Please express your opinions in a totally free and honest manner to ensure that the study realizes its objectives & gain an understanding of the issue in question.

I would first need to ask a few questions about you, which are strictly needed for classification purposes.

Many thanks for your cooperation.

Do you accept to participate in this exercise? Yes No

Start time: _____

1. Name of school: _____
2. Location of School: _____
3. Type of school: Public school Private school
4. How many levels of ECDE does this school have?
5. What is the preferred age for entrance at these levels?
6. Population of ECDE pupils

Level of ECD	Number of boys	Number of girls	Total number of pupils
Baby Class			
Nursery			
Pre-unit			
Total number of pupils in school			

7. How many pre-school teachers does this school have? _____
8. How many are: Females: _____ Males _____
9. How many of them are trained on ECDE? _____
10. What is the highest qualification? _____
11. What is the lowest qualification? _____
12. Designation of respondent _____
13. Age: _____ Years Sex: Male Female
14. How long have you been teaching children in pre-school? _____ Months/Years
15. Write down types of outdoor play activities which pre-school children are involved in _____

16. How much time is allocated for play in school? _____ (Mins/Hrs)

17. List down materials and equipments used by pre-school children during their play activities _____
18. In your own opinion, what is the attitude of teachers towards pre-school children play activities at school? _____
19. What is the attitude of children towards play activities at school? _____
20. How does play activities encourage socializing among the children? _____
21. What is your perception on the importance of play activities to pre-school children? _____
22. What are the key safety measures put in place by teachers in this school during pre-school play activities _____
23. What would you generally seek in the advancement of play activities in your school? _____
-

Appendix II: Semi-structured questionnaires for class teachers

Salutation and consent seeking: Good afternoon/morning, my name is Faith Reuben. I am a student at the University of Nairobi. I am currently undertaking an independent research to enable me to complete my studies. Today I am conducting a survey on the influence of play activities in language performance in several pre- schools in Makadara district of Nairobi County. If you accept to participate in this research, I am going to ask you about your experiences and opinions related to your work with ECD. Your participation is voluntary. I guarantee to protect the confidentiality of your answers and your full anonymity. Please express your opinions in a totally free and honest manner to ensure that the study realizes its objectives & gain an understanding of the issue in question.

I would first need to ask a few questions about you, which are strictly needed for classification purposes.

Many thanks for your cooperation.

Do you accept to participate in this exercise? Yes No

Start time: _____

1. Name of school: _____
2. Location of the school: _____
3. Type of school: Public school Private school
4. Designation: _____
5. Are you a trained ECDE teacher? Yes No
6. Where were you trained? _____
7. Age: _____ Years 5b. Sex: Male Female
8. How long have you been teaching children in pre-school? _____ Months/Years
9. What do you think is the effect of play activities on children as far as language performance is concerned? _____

10. What attitude do you have as a teacher towards child play? _____

11. How do you think the attitude affects play in children? _____

12. In your opinion what other play activities should be introduced to supplement the ones already in existence? _____

13. Do you think children in this school get enough time for play? _____

14. What is the appropriate time allocation for play according to you? _____ Mins/Hrs
15. Are the play equipment and play materials adequate for the children? _____

16. Please describe the school's play ground? _____

17. Do you think it is spacious enough for the children to play? Please explain

18. List some equipment you know are necessary but are missing _____

Teacher's perceptions of pre-school children's play activities

Please tick only **ONE** code for each statement

Codes (SA= Strongly Agree; A=Agree; U=Undecided; D=Disagree; SD= Strongly Disagree)

No.	Statement	SA	A	U	D	SD
1	More time should be allocated for play					
2	Children should sometimes be left to play alone without guidance of the teacher					
3	Games and songs should be integrated in the classroom learning activities					
4	Children should be left to formulate their own rules during play					
5	Children should be encouraged to share the play materials					
6	Children should be restricted from making noise during play					
7	Children should bring costumes for pretend play to school					
8	All children should be allowed to play with toys of their choice despite their gender					
9	Play has a positive role in a child's language performance					

Appendix III: Observation Schedule for playing Children during recess

1. Name of school: _____
2. Location of the school: _____
3. Type of school: Public school Private school
4. Where are the children playing at? _____
5. Are the children playing in groups or solitary _____
6. What are the children play with?

7. Are there equipment/ facilities that are available but are not being used?
_____ (list all)
8. Who do the children speak to as they play?

9. What are they saying? _____
10. Are the children sharing the play materials? _____
11. Are the children taking turns as they play? _____
12. Is the child enjoying play? _____
13. Is there adequate space for play? _____
14. What games are the children playing? _____
15. What are the playing materials in use? _____
16. Which songs are the children singing? _____
17. What safety measures are in place? _____
18. What role is the teacher playing in the children's play? _____

No.	Class under observation	Who is Present?	What is Happening?	Which play materials are being used?	What is being said?
1					
2					
3					

4					
5					
6					

Appendix IV: Pupils Questionnaire

Salutation and consent seeking: Good afternoon/morning, my name is Faith Reuben. I am a student at the University of Nairobi. I am currently undertaking an independent research to enable me to complete my studies. Today I am conducting a survey on the influence of play activities in language performance in several pre- schools in Makadara district of Nairobi County. If you accept to participate in this research, I am going to ask you about your experiences and opinions related to your work with ECD. Your participation is voluntary. I guarantee to protect the confidentiality of your answers and your full anonymity. Please express your opinions in a totally free and honest manner to ensure that the study realizes its objectives & gain an understanding of the issue in question.

I would first need to ask a few questions about you, which are strictly needed for classification purposes.

Many thanks for your cooperation.

Does the teacher/parent consent for the child to participate in this exercise?

Start time: _____

1. Name of school: _____
2. Location of the school: _____
3. Type of school: Public school Private school
4. Designation: _____
5. Age: _____ Years 5b. Sex: Male Female
6. Name some of the materials you use to play with at:
 - i. Home _____
 - ii. School _____
7. What is your favourite game? _____
8. Which one is better playing with friends or playing alone?
 - i. Friends: _____
 - ii. Solitary: _____
9. Do you see other children playing? _____
10. What games do they play? _____
11. Which races do you like most? _____
12. Do your teachers restrict you from playing? _____
13. Do you make and follow rules as you play? _____
14. Do you like doing homework? _____
15. Does doing homework prevent you from playing? _____

16. Do your parents play with you? _____

17. Which games do your parents play with you? _____

18. Who among the following allow you to play?

a. Father

b. Mother

c. Sibling

d. Teacher

19. Is there time you wanted to play and you were not able? Tell me about it? _____

20. What do you play with at home? _____

21. What do you play with in school? _____

22. Who would you not want to play with? _____

23. Why would you not play with this person? _____

Appendix V: Baby Class

CLASS TEST

Read and Match

egg



bed



hat



table



van



leg



hen



chair



yam



Colour this pictures

carrot



banana



apple



tomatoes



mango



Draw

apple _____

bell _____

cat _____

tap _____

mat _____

box _____

girl _____ boy _____

hat _____ pot _____

ball _____

book _____

Appendix VI: Nursery Class

CLASS TEST

Fill in

a _ c d _ _ _ g h _ _ _ _ m n o _ _ _ _ _

t u _ _ _ _ y z

b _ g

g _ n

p _ n

f _ n

p _ t

t _ p

t _ n

c _ n

s _ n

c _ t

b _ x

n _ t

make words using vowels 'a' 'o' and 'e'

examples

'a'

'o'

'e'

van

boy

red

Appendix VII: Pre-Unit Class

CLASS TEST

Fill in

__ b __ d __ __ g __ i __ k __ __

n __ p __ r __ t __ __ w __ __ z

g __ rl t __ ble dr __ ss

m __ at l __ on __ xe

fl __ wer b __ y s __ ven

c __ p c __ r d __ g

c __ t b __ d b __ rd

write well

amn _____

kboo _____

rca _____

igrl _____

geg _____

gtoa _____

rdoo _____

ebe _____

llba _____

elppa _____

Make words

oo _____

ir _____

a _____

ya _____

zi _____

do _____

sh _____

ck _____

th _____

m _____

Appendix VIII: List of Pre-schools Interviewed in Harambee Zone of Makadara District in Nairobi County

Public Schools

1. Buruburu Primary School
2. Rabai Road Primary School

Private Schools

1. PEMA Educational Centre
2. Happy Land Academy
3. Jacken Academy
4. St. Joseph Academy
5. Chalk Farm Academy
6. Jubilant Academy
7. Vineyard Academy
8. Rockfield Academy