

**PARENTS' INFLUENCE ON THE PERFORMANCE OF PRE-SCHOOL CHILDREN IN  
MIRIGA MIERU WEST DIVISION OF IMENTI NORTH DISTRICT**

**BY**

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## DECLARATION

This research project is my original work and has not been submitted for an award of degree in any other university.

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This research project has been submitted with our approval as university supervisors.

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## **DEDICATION**

This research is dedicated to my husband, Mr. Paul Mwenda Maitima, and my children, Ian Mutuma, Brian Kagwima and Favour Valentine Wairimu.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

I am highly indebted to my supervisors Dr. Agnes Kibui and Mr. Timothy Maonga of the University of Nairobi for their tireless guidance at all stages.

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Finally, I thank God who gave me and all the above mentioned parties ability, knowledge and strength to provide the necessary support required to complete this work.

## **ABSTRACT**

The purpose of this study was to discover parents' influence on the performance of pre-school children in Miriga Mieru West Division of Imenti North District. The objective of the study included finding out the common child-rearing practices during early childhood by parents, economic status of parents of early childhood learners, home environment for early childhood learners in public pre-schools and, finally, early childhood development parents' level of education in the area.

The accessible population of the study was 40 schools, 40 head teachers, 1,070 pupils and 1,060 parents. The procedure of data collection was through sampling and questionnaires. The data was edited and analysed using descriptive statistical tools, such as frequencies and percentages.

The findings revealed that the family structure had a significant influence on children's education performance and affects education achievement at all educational levels. This is because the family structure affects the range of children's behaviour positively and negatively, which in turn influences performance.

It was recommended that teachers, educationist and leaders should enlighten parents on how performance can be influenced by the home environment, common rearing practices during early childhood, parents' economic status and their level of education.

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## **LIST OF ACRONYMS**

ECD	-	Early Childhood Education
K.I.E	-	Kenya Institute of Education
NAEP	-	National Assessment Education Progress
PEEP	-	Peer Early Educational Partnership
WHO	-	World Health Organisation
UFPE	-	Universal Free Primary Education

# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background to the Study

Early Childhood Development (ECD) encompasses the holistic growth and development of a child, from conception to eight years of age. Growth and development is influenced greatly by the environment in which the child grows up.

Child rearing practices must, therefore, provide a conducive environment in which development of the child can be enhanced. Before joining kindergarten, children are given opportunities where possible to socialise through different activities like play, songs, and dances. This enables them to develop socially and identify with others. The need to educate young children was promulgated by the great scholars such as Comenius (1592-1670), Rousseau (1712-1778) and Foebel (1782-1852), who championed the rights of children's early education.

Several reasons are advanced for the need to establish pre-school education, the most important being that childhood is very significant in the development sequence for building conceptual learning sets, interest and habit pattern. In the document entitled, 'The Universal Opportunity For Early Childhood Education' (Van Leer Foundation, 1974), it is stated that the development of intellectual ability and intellectual interest are seen to be fundamental to the achievement of all goals in a country's education.

These qualities are assumed to be affected by what happens to children before they reach school. Parents' influence is also an important aspect in the pre-scholar performance. Children whose parents have positive attitude develop positively in life's experiences. Those with negative attitude transfer the same to their children. The

environment in which the children are brought up is also another factor that can influence the performance of the child. Children who are brought up in a loving and caring environment tend to perform better than children who were not brought up in a loving environment (Froebel, 1782-1852). Deficient parent, controlling, alcoholic and abusive parents affect the children's performance negatively. Children tend to take on adult responsibilities from a young age in these families. Parental emotional needs tend to take precedence and children are often asked to be their parent's caretakers thus affecting their performance (Gravitz and Bowden, 1985).

Parents' economic status is also a contributing factor, because parents who are financially stable are able to provide enough learning and reading materials which exposes the learner to the reading culture early in life, there are also able to provide nutritious food which assist in healthy growth and mental development.

Parents' level of education is also very important, because highly educated parents have greater success in providing their children with cognitive and language skills that contribute to early success in school (Sticht, T. G and McDonald, 1990).

There is evidence that demonstrates a strong and positive link between parents' involvement in the child's learning that helps improve achievement and raise standards in schools (Desforges, 2003). Parental aspiration and expectation for children's education achievement has strongest relationship, whereas parental home supervision has the weakest relationship with children's academic achievement (Xitao Fan and Michael Chan).

Early childhood experiences influence subsequent behavior, especially in the cognitive domains. Pre-school years constitute a period of human "apprenticeship", when the child

acquires the most elementary discriminations and skills needed for future learning. However, some parents tend to supersede or challenge the authority of head teachers and their staff by allowing children to spend more time watching television, than doing homework (Journal of Educational Psychology Vol.78(5) October 1986, 373-380).

This period in the child's education is so significant that it constitutes the unquestionable foundation on which the individual's success in all aspects of his future life is built.

Early childhood is a period when the child's potential can be discovered, activated and desirable norms are inculcated in him or her without overtaking them. This implies that trained hands within a rich environment guide a child's early life; the child's curiosity and potential can be developed into purpose of activities, which will enhance his overall development. Research and experience have shown that at the age of six years, most children have developed a considerable part of the intellectual ability they will possess as adults. (Bwajuma, 2000).

The role of pre-school education and its possible contribution to the intellectual growth and development of young children has become a point of concern in both developed and developing countries. This is a result of the Conference On The Rights Of The Child (Geneva, 1989) and the World Conference On Education For All (Jomtien, 1990). At these and similar era, it has been expressed that early childhood education (ECE) programmes should be broadened to:

- a) Cover children aged zero to three years.
- b) Include child survival and development, socialisation as well as community participation in the provision of health and nutrition.

The Government of Kenya (GoK) is committed to the Education For All (EFA) initiatives discussed at this conference according to the Children's Act, 2001.

(Act No. 8 of 2001), Section 7 (1) and 92);

- Every child shall be entitled to education the provision of which shall be the responsibility of the government and the parents
- Every child shall be entitled to free basic education, which shall be compulsory in accordance with Article 28 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the child.

In the Kanu Manifesto, 1963, the government committed itself to the provision of Universal Free Primary Education (UFPE) by 1980. The government encourages the establishment of pre-school as a way of laying a firm and healthy foundation for children during their formative years. The ministry has adapted the policy of partnership, which allows the participation of various partners in the establishment, financing and management of pre-school. Such partners include parent's associations, local authorities, religious organisations, welfare organisations, private firms and private individuals.

Research shows that the time to start learning is during the early years of a child's life. Bakes in Bouma et al (1991) argues that the social return on early childhood care and education programme could be nearly three times that for university education.

A large body of evidence demonstrates a strong and positive link between parent's involvement and interest in a child's learning, subsequent adjustment and achievement (Desforges, 2003). Being a good parent is tough work. You may experience fatigue, the likes of which you have never felt before. You may discover strength, you never knew you had. You will learn things that your prior years of education and careers never taught

you. You undoubtedly will experience great joy, challenge and change. If you are deeply immersed in your child's busy active school years, you may have little time or inclination to contemplate the years that lie ahead. Each age in childhood brings with a difference focus for you as a parent. (Pipher, 2002).

Why children succeed or fail in school is one of the most enduring questions for education researchers. A salient finding from traditional research on early childhood education intervention programmes is that the mother's level of education is one of the most important factors influencing children's reading levels and other school achievements (Sticht and McDonald, 1990). Generally traditional research has revealed that highly educated mothers have greater success in providing their children with cognitive and language skills that contribute to early success in school (Sticht and McDonald 1990).

Tizard (1982) established a study of parental involvement based on a model of children reading to parents which found that children who read to their parents on a regular basis, made greater gains than children receiving on equivalent amount of extra reading instruction by reading specialists at school.

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

Parental influence has emerged as a major factor in the pre-schoolers performance. Other than holistic growth and development, parents help to build unquestionable foundation for future life, intellectual growth and development and also help in the discovering of a child's potential.



Children whose parents have a positive attitude develop positively and also those brought up in good environment perform better. The same case applies to children whose parents are well educated and financially stable. Many parents are ignorant of their responsibility, which has led to negative impact on the children's performance. Therefore, this study investigated the parents' influence on pre-school performance in Miriga Mieru West Division of Imenti North District.

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

The purpose of the study was to evaluate the parents influence on the pre-school children performance in Imenti North District Miriga Mieru west Division. That is parental involvement, economic status of the parents, the home environment from which the pre-schoolers hail and the parents level of education and how this factors affects pre-school children performance. This has provided teachers and parents with information that will help to improve performance.

### **1.4 Objectives**

The study sought to achieve the following objectives:

1. To determine whether parents' attitude towards children, influence performance in public pre-schools in Miriga Mieru West Division Imenti North.
2. To investigate how the home environment influences performance of children in public pre-schools in Miriga Mieru West Division Imenti North District.
3. To investigate how parents' level of education influence performance of children in public pre-schools in Miriga Mieru West Division Imenti North District.

4. To establish whether economic status of parents influence performance of children in public pre-schools in Miriga Mieru West Division Imenti North District
5. To find out parents common rearing practices among children and how it influences performance in public pre-schools in Miriga Mieru West Division Imenti North District.

### **1.5 Research Questions**

1. How does parents' attitude influence children's performance in public pre-schools in Miriga Mieru West Division Imenti North District?
2. How does the home environment influence performance of children in public pre-schools in Miriga Mieru West Division Imenti North District?
3. How does the parent's level of education influence performance of children in public pre-schools in Miriga Mieru West Division Imenti North District?
4. How does the economic status of parents influence children's performance in public pre-schools in Miriga Mieru West Division Imenti North District?
5. How do parents' common rearing practices influence children's performance in public pre-schools in Miriga Mieru West Division Imenti North District?

### **1.6 Significance of the Study**

This study might shed some light on how to improve performance on pre-school children's education in Kenya. The findings are important to this vital sub-sector of education, which is of significance to an individual's later physical and mental development. The findings could be used in planning for early childhood education and

they will provide guidance for policies that could have significant effect on early childhood education in Kenya. (Author)

### **1.7 Limitation of the Study**

The study was conducted in Imenti North District, which is just one of the districts in Eastern Province and, therefore, the findings of this study may not apply to other geographical regions outside Imenti North District, unless prevalent circumstances exist.

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

The study focused on 40 public Early Childhood Schools, 40 heads of institutions, 1,060 and 1,070 pupils in the division. It evaluated the influence of parents on pre-school children performance.

### **1.9 Basic Assumptions of the Study**

The following assumptions were made in the study:

1. Respondents gave honest and reliable information when responding to the items in the questionnaire.
2. Most of the Early Childhood Development centers has trained teachers.
3. All Early Childhood Development centers have facilities such as classrooms, playgrounds, toilets and other equipment necessary for effective learning.

### **1.10 Definitions of the key terms**

1. **Pre-scholars:** They are children aged three to six years.

2. **Early Childhood Development:** The growth of a child as time passes and learns to do things.
3. **Early Childhood Education Centers:** These are institutions where early childhood education is undertaken. The centers are variously referred to as nursery schools, day-care centre, pre-schools and kindergartens.
4. **Early Childhood Education:** This is synonymous to pre-school and pre-primary education. It refers to education offered to children of two to fewer than six-years-old.
6. **Performance:** This refers to the product or the outcome of learning process measured with use of instruments such as observation testing or examining.
7. **Nutrition:** A diet eaten by the children both at home and at school. It can also be referred to as food.

### **1.11 Organisation of the Study**

The study is organised in five chapters. Chapter One deals with the general introduction of the research which includes the background of the study, the statement of the problem, purpose of the study, Research objectives, Research questions, significance of the study, Limitations of the study, Delimitation of the study terms and the organisation of the study.

Chapter Two deals with the related literature beginning with an introduction, literature related to nutritional factors, parental literacy, parental involvement in children, home factors that influence performance, summary of the literature review, theoretical and conceptual frame work.

Chapter Three consist of the research methodology, which is divided into introductive research design, target population, sampling strategy, research instruments, validity and reliability of the instrument , procedure for data collection and data analysis techniques.

Chapter Four consists of data analysis that is composed of introduction, demographic profile of the respondents, the part one of the findings and part two of the findings of the study.

Chapter Five contains the summary, conclusions and recommendations.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

This section reviews literature from different scholars on parents' influence on the pre-school children performance. The factors are divided into four broad categories; nutrition of pre-school children; the pre-scholars home environment; the extent to which parents get involved in pre-school activities and the parents' literacy level.

#### **A General Overview Of Factors On Parental Influence On Performance Of Pre-School Children**

Parental involvement in learning positively affects the child's academic performance in school (Fan & Chen, 2001).

This leads to higher academic achievement, better school attendance and fewer behavioural problems at school. (Melhuish, Sylva, Sammons et al, 2001).

Similar impacts have also been identified with regards to literacy practices, including early reading experiences with their parents. They prepare pre-school children for the benefits of formal literacy instruction. Indeed, parental involvement in their child's reading has been found to be the most important determinant of language and emergent literacy. (Bus, Van Lj. Zendorm & Pellergrini, 1995).

Furthermore, parents who introduce their babies to books give them a head start in school and an advantage over their peers throughout schools.

(Wade & Moore, 2000).

Evidence of parental involvement is less convincing and less comprehensive. Moreover, should such initiatives be effective, they raise questions about whether they will increase the pupil attainment gap. This is because children of involved parents will reap benefits in contrast to those who do not.

According to (Mitchell, 1983) eating is a crucial part of every person's life and children eat what they are offered by their parents. We need food for energy; it is the fuel our bodies burn to provide the energy for all the activities and all our body's complex biochemical processes. UNICEF (2001) suggests that better nutrition enhances school enrolment, attendance and performance, which lead to greater economic productivity and improved health and nutrition for future generations. Jansen (1987) in a historical review says that knowledge of proper nutrition practices is a core subject in the development and maintenance of good health among the population of a developing country such as Kenya.

## **2.2 Nutritional Factors**

Encyclopedia Britannica (1768) defines nutrition as the study of all of the processes by which micro-organisms, plants and animals absorb and utilise food substances.

It involves the identification of individual nutrients essential for growth and maintenance of individual organisms. It includes the determination of inter-relationships among nutrients within individual organisms for specific nutrients under various environmental conditions. Nutrition is also referred to as the process of assimilating food and their use in the diet and therapy. Encyclopedia (1786) nutrients are components of

foods utilised by the body either as a source of energy for building and maintaining body tissues.

### **2.2.1 Food Serves Three Functions In The Body Or In Most Living Organisms.**

It provides materials that are metabolised either by oxidative or by fermentative processes, to supply the energy required for the synthesis of cell materials, mobility and locomotion and other activities of the organism.

Food supplies the electrons required for the formation of the reduced enzymes which are necessary for synthetic processes that occur within the cell.

Food provides the materials from which all the structural components of a living cell can be assembled through a process called anabolism.

### **2.2.2 Effects of Malnutrition**

*Growth-* Macmillan and Dean (1965) suggest that catch-up growth is delayed for a long time and that children who have severe malnutrition are always stunted.

*Central Nervous System-* Cravito (1966) suggests that the malnourished children do worse in later years in psychometric and integrative tests as compared with wholly well-nourished counterparts.

*Other organs -* Stanfield (1967) says that malnutrition produces severe biochemical disturbances especially on the intestinal walls. Inadequate nutrition therefore leads to mental retardation, physical disability, and increased vulnerability to serious and chronic illnesses, diminished educational and economic prospects and early death.



In order to curb this long-term effect of malnutrition the solution will come from the parent who will ensure that proper feeding is done and is up to date with nutritional education.

Children are the future of any society. For this reason, they should be the starting point of any strategy that emphasises human development. The education of young children in Kenya has become of primary importance to educators, parents and the society as a whole, resulting in the evolvment of numerous related philosophers who have often ignored the important area of child health and nutrition (NACECE 1998).

The problems of child malnutrition continue to plague societies and ends up affecting the education of the child. Researchers have shown that malnutrition in Kenya among pre-school children is on the increase, as 30% of pre-scholars are severely or mildly malnourished (Central Bureau of Standards, 1979).

It is, therefore, the task of the parents to provide health-care, nutrition and education during the formative years of early childhood (Myer, 1992).

This sentiment is in accordance with the UN Declaration of the rights of WHO, UNICEF and UNESCO. Nutrition must be recognised as a vital component of a quality early childhood education programme aimed at good performance.

The pre-scholars' nutrition and health are some factors that determine in part the child's schooling and performance.

Pollit (1984) says that malnutrition has become the highest risk factor for education future of children.

It has serious developmental implications on young children because their ages are critical in growth and development. Therefore, parental education on nutrition should form an integral part of early childhood education programme.

### **2.2.3 Meeting the Various Nutritional Needs of the Pre-School Children**

A report on the national seminar on pre-school education and its development in Kenya gave various recommendations on the nutritional needs for pre-scholars.

Pre-school should be made to play a crucial role in the total development of the child, by acting as centers for educating parents in health nutritional and developmental matters (K.I.E 1982). Pre-school teachers should encourage parents to organise mid-morning refreshments and lunch for children who stay at school the whole day.

Parents should be taught about nutrition, food groups, nutritional deficiencies, food production, planning and preparing family meals, food hygiene, diet for expectant mothers, babies and pre-school children and importance of breast-feeding and proper weaning (KIE, 1982).

### **2.3 Literacy of the Parents**

Generally, traditional research has revealed that highly educated parents have greater success in providing their children with cognitive and language skills that contribute to early success in school (Sticht, T. G & McDonald, 1990).

Also, children of mothers with high levels of education stay in school longer than children of those with low levels.

There is evidence suggesting that correlation studies intended to provide information for literacy intervention have identified symptoms of the causal variables. The social and cultural precepts within the family are causal factors which must be addressed in programs designed to produce long-term changes in the lives of disadvantaged family members (Hayes, 1991).

This report examines the recent research and programme development designed to improve the education of children by improving the literacy skills of their parents (particularly their mothers).

The National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP, 1990) data provide some evidence supporting the traditional interpretations of children's academic success that focus on gross measures of parent's educational attainment. A review of the performance of children and young adults across age groups and across ethnic groups on various literacy tasks of the NAEP confirmed the importance of parent's educational levels (Sticht, 1988).

Data from the (NAEP 1990) reading assessment revealed that the average proficiency among fourth-graders, was lower for those who reported that their mothers had not completed high school.

Improving the school readiness and literacy skills of children is an essential goal.

Literacy programme preliminary findings of the four-year national evaluation of the programme revealed that participating children who had no prior pre-school experience double the expected developmental growth rate.

These findings suggest that as children enter the public schools they are more likely to know basic concepts and precursors of kindergarten skills than they would have in the absence of the programme (St. Pierre, Swertz, Munay, & Deck, 1993).

In the Kenyan Trust Family Literacy Model, parents' work on basic academic skills and parenting skills, while their children attend a pre-school class. Follow-up studies of pre-school participants, who were at risk of failure when they enrolled in the family literacy program, showed that primary grade students performed above average on variables such as academic performance, motivation to learn, attendance, self confidence and probable success in school. Ninety percent of the children were rated as "not considered at risk of school failure" by their current teachers.

The Integration Literacy Action research project (ILAR) conducted by wider opportunities for women involved mothers participating in community-based programmes that provide women with basic skills instruction and job training. The study revealed that 65% of the children benefited from their mother's participation in the adult education and training programmes. Following their participation in the project, more than 90% of the mothers reported that they helped in their children's educational achievements. The mothers also stated that they would read to their children more often and make greater efforts to help them with their homework, take them to library, and talk with them about school. (Fossen and Stitch, 1990).

Literacy impact of parental education on the schooling of their children is well documented. In many countries, the educational level of parents is the single most predictor of how long their children will stay in school and how they will perform scholastically.

Learned parents in retrospect are expected to know the benefits of education and therefore likely to aspire, motivate and influence their children in school, Thus minimising poor performance. Uneducated parents on the other hand, sometime do not see the benefits of education since they did not attend school. Hence not likely to give adequate advice and counseling to their children on the importance of education and performance.

#### **2.4 Parental Involvement in Pre-school Children Education**

A large body of evidence demonstrates a strong and positive link between parents' involvement and interest in a child's learning, subsequent adjustment and achievements (Desforges, 2003). With such evidence there is potential of parental involvement to improve achievement and raise standards in schools.

The problem is that parents claim not to have time because they have dis-engaged from their children's education (Sheffield, 1998).

A cursory examination of school-family community links in England and Wales reveals a Welter of activity in the area. The range of programmes currently receiving funds by state to locally drive activities across the country, to help the parents provide parenting styles and environment that will facilitate their child's pre-school learning, for example, PEEP (Peers Early educational Partnership) (Evangelou and Sylva, 2003). The sessions cover different aspects of home learning and play relevant to children literacy and numeracy development. Parent also have access to learning resources and receive support through ideas for home-based activities, one-to-one conversations and home visits.

### **2.4.1 The Benefits of Naturally Occurring Parental Involvement**

A significant number of studies have examined the impact of parent's involvement on different aspects of their children's education. This section draws heavily on a comprehensive review of this literature conducted by (Desforges 2003) for the department for education and skills.

The pre-scholar home environment, including the nature and quality of play activities is critical to pre-school children's cognitive development and readiness for school.

Parental involvement as children get older also has significant benefits for children's achievement (Brassett- Grundy, 2002). At pre-school age, the home learning environment and the nature of parental involvement has a greater influence on achievement than variations in the quality of schools (Desforges 2003).

Using data from the National Child Development Study, (Feinstein and Symmon 1999) demonstrated that parental interest has a more significant impact on achievement at early age, than social class, family size and parent's educational achievement.

One of the ways that parental involvement influences children's achievement is through helping the child develop a pro-social and pre-learning self-concept (Desforges, 2003). It is not surprising, therefore, that parental involvement is associated with healthy adjustment as well as academic achievement. This is evident where they have higher levels of co-operation and confidence, lower levels of anti-social behaviour, are less worried or upset (McIlhuish et al 2001).

Indeed, (Schoon and Parsons, 2002) found that parental involvement helped to explain why children experiencing multiple disadvantages were able to succeed despite unpromising circumstances. At the other end of the spectrum, truancy is associated with

low parental interest as well as poor relationships between parent, child and school (Graham and Bowling, 1995).

Parents will always be involved in their children's learning and influence their attainment regardless of current and future policy. Most parents want to be involved and supportive of their children's education and do not require legislation to do so. But some parents struggle with getting involved and find the barriers to doing so insurmountable.

## **2.5 Home Factor**

Environmental home conditions can positively and negatively influence a child's performance in school. It is related to social class of the family. Certain conditions within the home or the family can expose the pre-scholars' to experiences which may render them more vulnerable to the onset of learning. (Wedge and Essen, 1982) talked of the socially disadvantaged children who grow in large or single parent families, are poorly housed and have low family income.

These children at the time of birth already face substantially diminished prospects of normal development and progress through childhood experiences like health problems, weighing less, behaving less acceptably, as well as performing academically poor.

(Charlton and George, 1993) support that children with serious behavioural problems often come from homes characterised by parental conflicts or family disturbances. Traumatic events such as bereavement, divorce or violence are also potentially harmful to the pre-scholars' performance. For example, children from violent families often manifest withdrawn or disruptive behavior, which retards their development and impedes their progress in school.

Parents in unstable families can also act in ways that can generate emotional problems for their children. For example, by having unrealistic expectations about their offspring's performance in school and habitually insisting on better performance may precipitate fear and anxiety within them, which causes untold misery and unhappiness. (Hart, 1976).

Similarly, over-permissive parents can also generate anxiety in children who require boundaries and guidelines within which they can act and feel secure. Homes which fail to provide reasonable structure and where environment predictability is lessened and uncertainty heightened may leave children feeling insecure and anxious (Clarizio and McCoy, 1983).

The level of family income is one of the most powerful influences on demand of education, poor families will certainly find it difficult to support education or their children, for example, provision of snacks, learning materials, etc. A study in Malaysia concluded that effective demand at each educational level is a positive function of income. (Psacharopoulos, and Woodhall, 1985).

(Reche 1982) revealed that children from broken families performed poorly in school, and also showed a number of social and health problems. In cases where the mother has left, the eldest child takes her place of homemaking and hence attends school irregularly. This leads to poor performance at school.

Large families (extended families) find it difficult to educate their children. In cases where a couple would usually have found it difficult to maintain their own children, such an imposition can cause a great deal of hardship leading to poor performance (Mabal, 1996).



(Esewo 1983), writing about the role of the family in education, argued that the family's role may be supportive, neutral or antagonistic to school education and performance. A supportive family is that which is directly involved in encouraging good performance, for example, in buying learning materials, giving financial support and encouragement.

The values which a family attaches to education determine the motivation in which its children pursue education. On family social class, (Romo 1984) discovered a relationship between the family social classes with the degree of motivation the children receive. He found out that lower class families have lower aspirations for their children performance than upper class families; hence such families do not motivate their children to take interest in their school work.

## **2.6 Theoretical Framework**

Much of current thinking about children's learning has been influenced by the work and ideas of some outstanding developmental psychologists, for example, Jean Piaget, Lev Vygotsky and Sigmond Freud.

Tizard and Hughes (1984) and Gallistel (1978) in relation to young children's understanding about numbers are a good example. Both suggested that children's abilities were being systematically under-appreciated by teachers. In school, children were being faced by ideas or tasks taken out of any meaningful context and for no clear purposes they found them difficult. In home environment, when the same ideas or tasks occurred naturally, embedded in real meaning and purposes, the same children understood and managed them with ease.

Parental attitude influences the way parents treat their children and in turn, influences their children's attitude toward them and the way they behave. Therefore, the parent-child relationship is dependent on the parent's attitudes.

If parental attitudes are favourable, the relationship of parents and children will be better than when they are unfavourable.

Many cases of mal-adjustment in children as well as in adults can be traced to unfavorable parent-child relationships. When children are old enough to recognise the social status of their parents it affects their attitude towards them. If their family's social status is equal to their peers, children are proud of their parents. When they recognise its inferior, they are ashamed (Hurlock, 1978).

Early years are critical in the child's development. The first important scientific clue of the significance came from Freud's studies of personality mal-adjustment. Such mal-adjustments are traced on unfavorable childhood experience (Freud, 1962).

Generally, traditional research has revealed that highly educated parents have greater success in providing their children with cognitive and language skills that contribute to early success in school (Sticht and MacDonald, 1990).

A large body of evidence demonstrates a strong and positive link between parent's involvement and interest in their child's learning, subsequent adjustment and achievement (Desforges, 2003).

(Chalton and George, 1993) pointed out that children with more serious behavior problem often come from home characterised by parental conflicts or family disturbances.

(Macmillan and Dean, 1965), suggest that catch-up growth is delayed for a long time and that children who have severe malnutrition are always stunted.

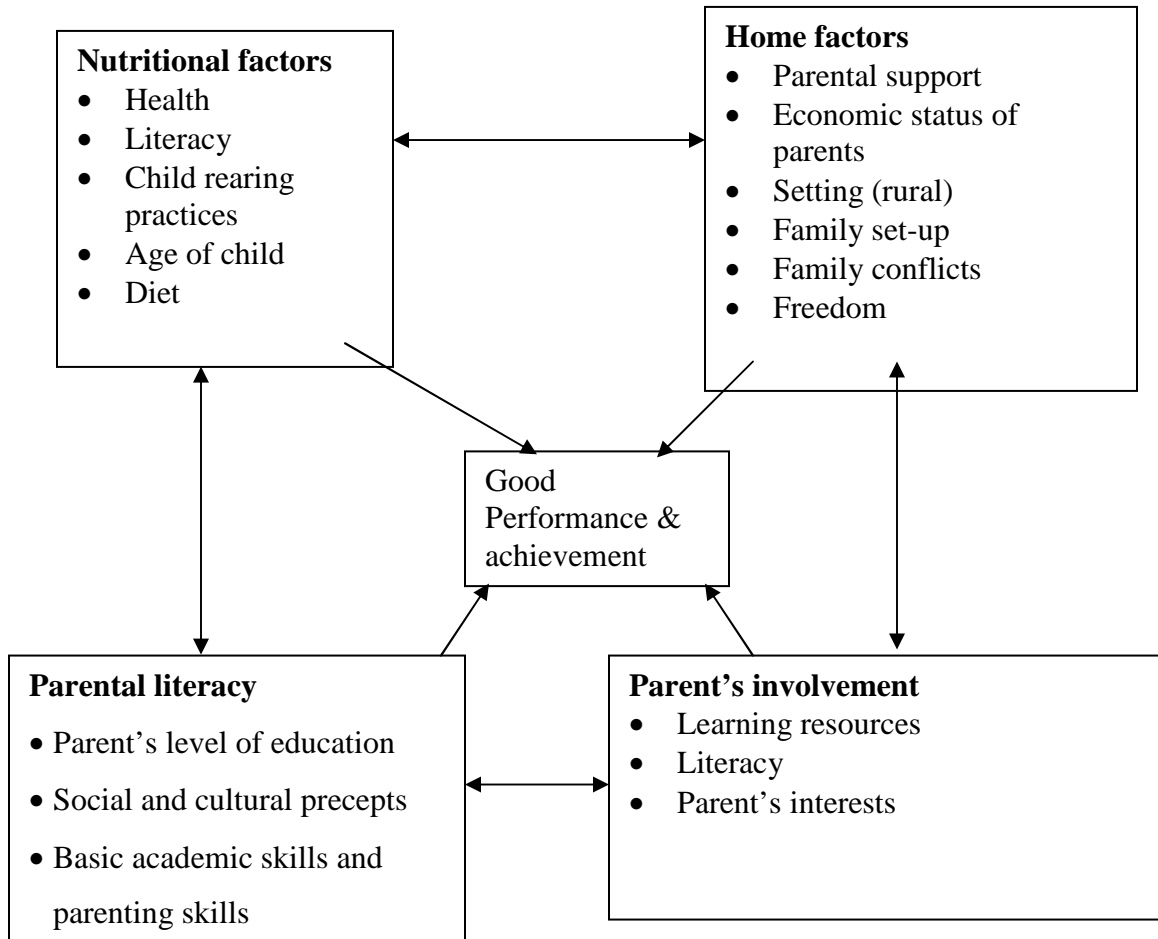
Therefore, my research is based on Vygotsky's Theory of Human Learning. The most significant idea within Vygotsky's model of human learning is that of the zone of proximal development. Faced with any particular task or problem, a child can operate at one level on their own, described as their level of actual development. But they can perform at a higher level when supported by an adult or a more experienced peer described as their level of potential development. He also argued that there is much more central role for the adult and indeed for other children, in the process of learning.

This role is not as an instructor delivering knowledge, but rather as a 'scaffolder', by supporting, encouraging and extending the child's own active search for understanding. Therefore, parental influence is significant in the learning of the children.

## **2.7 Conceptual Framework**

From the literature review and the theoretical framework the conceptual framework was developed.

**Fig I: The Conceptual Framework of the Inter-Related Factors on Parents Influence Of The Performance Of Pre-School Children (Researcher, 2009)**



## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

The chapter presents the procedures used in conducting the study. It is organised into the following sub-headings – research design, target population, sampling procedure, research instruments used, validity, reliability procedure for data collection and data analysis.

#### **3.2 Research Design**

The research design used in this study was survey and was descriptive in nature. Surveys are used to gather factual information for decision making. They may be used for descriptive, explanatory and exploratory purposes. They are chiefly used in studies that have individual people as the unit of analysis. Survey research is the best method available for the social researcher who is interested in collecting original data for describing a population too large to observe directly. They are also excellent vehicles for measuring attitudes and orientations in a large population. This is an effective method of collecting descriptive data regarding current practice, condition and preliminary information for generating research questions (Oyula, 1998).

#### **3.3 Target Population**

The study was carried out in Imenti North District Miriga Mieru West Division and it targeted 40 public early childhood schools, 1,060 parents, 40 head teachers and 1,070 learners.

### **3.4 Sample and Sampling**

(Wiersma, 1985), defines sample as a small proportion of a target population selected using some systematic procedure for the study. He points out that an ideal sample should be large enough so that the researcher can be confident within specific limits and be certain that a different sample procedure can give approximately similar results.

According to (Mugende and Mugenda 1999), descriptive research requires 10% of accessible population which is adequate. For example, the target population of Miriga Mieru West public pre-schools was 40. To get the sample, the researcher used 10% of total schools; which was four schools.

The researcher used stratified sampling, whereby the researcher separated the respondent into three groups, that is, 40 head teachers, 1,060 parents and 1,070 pupils. Then the researcher used simple random method to select the 10% out of each stratum which resulted to four head teachers out of 40, 106 parents out of 1,060 and 107 children out of a population of 1,070.

### **3.5 Research Instrument**

The researcher used questionnaires, observation and interviews for the respondents. According to (Wiersma 1985), questionnaires are generally less expensive and they do not consume a lot of time in their administration. Therefore, the study employed questionnaires for the head teachers, parents and an interview schedule for the pupils. The questionnaires were divided into two sections A and B. Section A sought and collected demographic data of the respondents. Section B contained questions seeking to

establish parents influence on the performance of pre- school children. Closed and open ended questions were used as a data collection tool.

### **3.5.1 Validity**

An instrument is valid by proving whether items are representing the skills or characteristics that are intended to measure (Otieno 2003). Validity concerns crucial items between concept and indicator (Camines et al, 1979). The validity of the instrument was determined by pre-testing in one public school in Miriga Mieru West Division. The aim of pilot testing was to assess the clarity and validity of the instrument.

The items found to be inappropriate for measuring variables were either discarded or modified to improve the quality of the research instrument thus increasing validity. Questions were simple and brief to avoid ambiguity and misinterpretation by the respondent during the administration of the instrument. Consideration of language helped in assessing clarity of the instrument and it enabled participants to understand the item. Any blank space, inaccurate responses or other weaknesses noticed during pre-test was an indication to a review of the validity of the instrument. Similarly, inconsistency in response to questions indicated weaknesses in the working of an instrument during the first pre-test. In such a case, another pre-test was necessary before the final administration.

### **3.5.2 Reliability**

Reliability is a measure of the degree to which a research instrument yields constant result or data repeated trials (Mugenda, 1999). Reliability in research is influenced by

random error. As random error increases, reliability decreases. The consistency of the result, given by repeated measurement, the higher the reliability of the measuring procedure and the less consistent the result, the lower the reliability.

The process involved going to the field and administering instrument to assess the clarity of the item. The initial responses to the study were used to determine the consistency. Where items were found to be unsuitable they were discarded, wording changed or improved to standardise the instruments.

### **3.6 Procedure for Data Collection**

The researcher approached the district education officer for an introductory to the schools where the research was to be carried out. A visit to the schools where the research was to be carried out was made to make appointments when the questionnaire could be administered in person. The researcher assured the respondents of the confidentiality of any information they gave. Questionnaires were administered to sampled schools to be filled by the respondents who included, head teachers, parents and pupils.

The researcher also requested the school administration for a list of parents who actively participate in school activities and those who did not so as to compare performance.

### **3.7 Data Analysis**

Once the questionnaires and the other measuring instrument had been administered the mass of raw data collection was systematically organised. After data collection, the



researcher conducted a preprocessing of data to correct any errors in the raw data and elimination of any data not needed for the analysis.

The researcher then organised the data systematically as per the research questions and subsequently adopted a coding scheme. The coding scheme facilitated the development of an appropriate data structure to enable its entry into the computer. Data entry and analysis was done using Statistical Packages of Social Sciences (SPSS) for windows version 15.0. Since the study was purely descriptive in nature, descriptive statistics were used in analysis. The data was presented in form of frequency tables and percentages.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### DATA ANALYSIS, PRESENTATION AND INTERPRETATION

#### 4.1 Introduction

This chapter comprises of data analysis, presentation, and the interpretation of study findings. The chapter is divided into subsections where general demographic characteristics of the respondents such as age, marital status and gender are analyzed. In addition, the data is also analysed around key variables relating to the influence of parents on performance of pre-school children in public early childhood schools. Presented below are the key findings incorporating methodologies of mixed types.

#### 4.2 Parents' Attitude Towards Children's Performance In Public Pre-Schools In Miriga Mieru West Division Of Imenti North District.

Out of 173 questionnaires which were filled by parents, 173 were accepted for analysis representing a response rate of 100% which is statistically acceptable.

##### 4.2.1 Gender distribution among parents

Table 4.1 shows that 23.7% of the respondents were males while 76.3% were females.

**Table 4.1: Gender Distribution Among Parents**

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	25	23.7
Female	80	76.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>105</b>	<b>100</b>

From the table, women were slightly more than males. This implied that women were more actively involved in the education of their children than males.

#### **4.2.2 Gender Distribution Among Pupils**

Table 4.2 shows that 41.0% of the respondents were males while 59.0% were females.

**Table 4.2: Pupils Gender Distribution**

<b>Gender</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Female	62	59.0
Male	43	41.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>105</b>	<b>100.0</b>

According to the table, schools had slightly a higher number of girls than boys in school contrary to the usual believe that a girl child does not have access to education. This supports the vision 2030 by the Kenyan government to have equal education opportunities for all.

### 4.2.3 Pupils' Distribution by Age

Table 4.3 shows the distribution of pupils by age.

**Table 4.3: Pupils Age**

<b>Age</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
3	4	3.8
4	35	33.3
5	34	32.4
6	26	24.8
7	4	3.8
8	1	1.0
10	1	1.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>105</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Table 4.3 shows that majority (94.2%) of the pupils were aged between three and six years, 3.8% were aged seven years, 1.0% were aged 8 years and another 1.0% were aged 10 years. Generally, this represented the age of pupils in early childhood education where majority were aged between three years and six years.

### **4.3 Home Environment for Children in Public Pre-Schools In Miriga Mieru West Division Of Imenti North District.**

#### **4.3.1 Marital Status Among Parents**

According to family structure, whether a child's parents were married, divorced, single, remarried, or cohabiting had a significant influence on children's educational

performance and affected educational achievement at all educational levels. It influenced these outcomes in part because family structure affected a range of child behaviors that bore directly on educational success, such as school misbehavior, drug and alcohol consumption, sexual activity and teen pregnancy, and psychological distress. Table 4.4 summarises marital status of parents.

**Table 4.4: Marital Status**

<b>Marital status</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Married	75	71.1
Single	30	28.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>105</b>	<b>100</b>

According to the table, majority (71.1%) of the parents were married and minority (28.9%) single. This indicated that most families were stable and the influences of family structure on early childhood learners were minimal.

### **4.3.2 Pupils' Guardians**

Table 4.5 shows the distribution of guardians to pre-school children. Pupils in stable families who were raised by both parents were advantaged since they got maximum parental love and care as opposed to those stayed with single parent or another member of the family.

**Table 4.5: Pupils' Guardian**

<b>Guardian</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Aunt	2	1.90
Aunt and cousin	1	0.95
Cousin	1	0.95
Father	9	8.57
Father and siblings	1	0.95
Father and stepmother	1	0.95
Grandfather	1	0.95
Grandmother	4	3.81
Grandmother and sister	1	0.95
Grandparents	2	1.90
Guardian	1	0.95
Mother	35	33.33
Mother and father	41	39.05
Mother and sister	2	1.90
Mum and aunt	1	0.95
Mum and cousin	1	0.95
Sister	1	0.95
<b>Total</b>	<b>105</b>	<b>100</b>

Even though majority (39.05%) of the pupils were under the custodian of both parents, there was still a large percentage that lived with single parent, aunties, and even grandparents. Staying away from both parents had serious implications on the performance of the pre-school children.

### **4.3.3 Activities That Pre-School Children Were Involved In**

Pre-school children are supposed to be involved in play and sleeping. This helps them to discover more, grow and develop. Table 4.6 summarises the activities pre-school children were involved in before getting to school.

**Table 4.6 Activity Pre-School Children Are Involved In**

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Playing	87	82.86
Sleeping	7	6.67
Looking after the baby	10	9.52
Modeling and writing on the floor	12	11.43
Helping mum and dad with work at home	30	28.57
<b>N=105</b>		

According to the table, majority of the (82.86%) children were involved in playing which is essential for this stage of development. Other activities included modeling and writing on the floor (11.43%) and helping their parents with work at home. This indicated that majority of the pre-school children found some time to participate in extracurricular activities which enhanced and supplemented learning. Involvement in such activities helped improve academic performance of the children.

#### **4.4 Children’s Parents’ Level Of Education In Public Pre-Schools In Miriga Mieru West Division Imenti North District**

According to the findings, highly educated parents had greater success in providing their children with cognitive and language skills that contributed to early success in school.

Table 4.7 shows the educational level of parents.

**Table 4.7: Educational Levels Among Parents**

<b>Educational level</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Primary	63	60.1
Secondary	38	36.4
College	4	3.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>105</b>	<b>100</b>

According to table 4.7, 60.1% of parents had primary education, 36.4% secondary and 3.5% college education. This placed the parents' fraternity in a particularly good position in terms of capacity building (skills and knowledge acquisition) and created better basis for achievement of better results. However, the parents who had primary level of education as their highest level proved an impediment in quality of early childhood education if this was coupled with a lack of any other professional qualification.

#### **4.5 Economic Status Of Parents Among Children In Public Pre-Schools In Miriga**

##### **Mieru West Division Imenti North District.**

High occupational status coupled with high educational level status meant that the parents provided the necessary learning facilities and assisted the children with school work. This parental involvement lacked in parents whose education and occupation was low.



**Table 4.8: Parents' Occupation**

<b>Occupation</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Formal employment	21	20.23
Informal employment	23	21.39
Self employment	43	41.04
Unemployed	18	17.34
<b>Total</b>	<b>105</b>	<b>100.00</b>

From the table, fewer (20.23%) parents were in formal employment, while the bulk of the respondents were either self-employed (41.04%) or in the informal sector (21.39%). This finding clearly indicated that there was a challenge in the area of employment and this affected performance of pre-school children.

#### **4.6 The Parent's Common Child Rearing Practices Among Children In Public Pre-Schools In Miriga Mieru West Division Imenti North District.**

##### **4.6.1. Helping Children Do Their Homework**

Table 4.9 shows that 89.6% of parents always helped their children with school work and assignments, while 10.4% never helped them out.

**Table 4.9: Helping Children Do Their Homework By Parents**

<b>Help with homework</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Yes	94	89.6
No	11	10.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>105</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Parents involvement in their children’s learning positively affected their academic performance. This was commendable for the parents because they helped with assignments.

#### **4.6.2 Homework For Early Childhood Development Pupils From Teachers**

Pre-school children were requested to indicate whether they were normally given some homework to do. Table 4.10 shows the results.

**Table 4.10: Homework From Teachers**

<b>Given homework by teachers</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Yes	105	100.0
No	0	0.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>105</b>	<b>100.0</b>

From the table, it was clear that all (100%) pre-school children were given assignments by their teachers. This was positive for learning particularly when it came to assessment of how much children had gained.

### 4.6.3 Parents' Help With Assignments

Table 4.11 shows that 77.1% of respondents agreed that their parents helped them with school work and assignments while 22.9% disagreed.

**Table 4.11: Parents' Help With Assignments**

<b>Helped</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Yes	81	77.1
No	24	22.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>105</b>	<b>100.0</b>

This was admirable for the parents because they helped with assignments and children improved their school grades.

### 4.6.4 Person Responsible With Checking School Work

Table 4.12 shows that majority (79.0%) of the respondents acknowledged that mothers were responsible for checking school work. Other respondents said that fathers (32.4%), brothers (12.4%) and sisters (10.5%) checked their school work.

**Table 4.12: Person Responsible For Checking School Work**

<b>Person responsible</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Father	34	32.4
Mother	83	79.0
Brothers	13	12.4
Sisters	11	10.5
Guardian	5	4.8
<b>N=105</b>		

This finding indicated that mothers were more concerned by the education of their children than fathers and any other group. This was proved by the highest percentage (79.0%), which was reflected from the mother participation in checking homework.

#### **4.6.5 Feeding Of The Pre-School Children**

Parents were requested to indicate whether their children fed well. Table 4.13 shows the results.

**Table 4.13: Feeding Of The Pre-School Children**

<b>Feed well</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Yes	99	94.2
No	06	5.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>105</b>	<b>100.0</b>

From the table, majority (94.2%) of the respondents acknowledged that the children were well fed. There was a strong link between good nutrition and academic performance. When nutritional needs are met, children perform better academically than those with poor nutrition.

#### **4.6.6 Attendance Of School Meetings**

Parents were requested to indicate whether they attended school meetings. Table 4.14 shows the results.

**Table 4.14: Attendance Of School Meetings**

<b>Attendance</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Yes	90	86.1
No	15	13.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>105</b>	<b>100.0</b>

The table shows that 86.1% of respondents attended all major school meetings regularly and promptly yet 13.9% indicated that they did not attend school meetings. This was admirable for the parents, because it helped in monitoring and evaluating the children progress in school and, consequently, this can improve pupils' school grades.

#### **4.6.7 Participation In School Activities**

Parents were requested to indicate whether they participated in school activities. Table 4.15 shows the results.

**Table 4.15: Participation In School Activities**

<b>Participation</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Yes	81	77.5
No	24	22.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>105</b>	<b>100.0</b>

According to the table 77.5% of parents participated in all major school activities, while 22.5% did not. Again this was commendable for the parents because it made them acquaint themselves with children's progress at school.

#### 4.6.8 Taking Children Out For Leisure

Parents were requested to indicate whether they usually take their children out for leisure activities. Table 4.16 shows the results.

**Table 4.16: Taking Children Out For Leisure**

<b>Taking Children For Leisure</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Yes	60	57.2
No	45	42.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>105</b>	<b>100.0</b>

The table illustrates that 57.2% of the parents took their pre-school children out for leisure, while 42.8% did not. This was also a positive contributor to performance of pre-school children since the pre-scholar home environment, including the nature and quality of play and leisure activities was critical to pre-school children's cognitive development and readiness for school.

#### 4.6.9 Activities That Parents And Pre-School Children Do Together

Table 4.17 summarises the activities some of the activities that parents and pre-school children got involved in together.

**Table 4.17: Activities That Parents And Pre-School Children Do Together**

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Reading story books	24	23.12
Watching movies	30	28.90
Story telling	33	31.79
Swimming	7	6.36
Going to church	2	1.73
Going for shopping	2	1.73
<b>Total</b>	<b>N=105</b>	<b>100.0</b>

From the table, it was noted that several activities were done together, like reading story books together (23.12%), storytelling together (31.8%). Such activities are also essential to pre-school children's cognitive development and readiness for school.

#### **4.6.10 Encouraging Pre-School Children To Read At Home**

Parents were requested to indicate whether they encouraged pre-school children to read at home. Table 4.18 shows the results.

**Table 4.18 Encouraging Pre-School Children To Read At Home**

<b>Reading at home</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Never	7	6.9
Once in a while	29	27.7
Often	42	39.3
Very often	27	26.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>105</b>	<b>100.0</b>

The table demonstrated that at some point majority (93.1%) of the parents encouraged pre-school children to read while at home, yet minority (6.9%) never encouraged the pupils to read at home. This was further evidence that parents actively participated in their children’s pre-school education.

#### **4.6.11 Arrangement For Private Tuition For Pre-School Children While At Home**

Parents were requested to indicate whether they usually arranged for private tuition for pre-school children while at home. Table 4.19 shows the results.

**Table 4.19: Arrangement For Private Tuition For Pre-School Children At Home**

<b>Private tuition</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Never	49	46.2
Once in a while	30	28.9
Often	16	15.0
Very often	10	9.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>105</b>	<b>100.0</b>

According to the table, majority (53.8%) of the respondents indicated that that they at least at one point arranged for tuition for their pre-school children either once (28.9%), often (15.0%) or very often (9.8%). Such private tuitions helped children to understand and enjoy their mainstream subjects. In addition, it enabled teaching to be undertaken according to individual needs.



#### 4.6.12 Expression Of Concern When Children Get Low Marks

Respondents were requested to indicate whether they expressed concern when their children get low marks. Table 4.20 shows the results.

**Table 4.20 Expression Of Concern When A Child Gets Low Marks At School**

<b>Concern</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Never	12	11.6
Occasionally	44	42.4
Often	26	24.5
Very often	23	21.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>105</b>	<b>100.0</b>

From the table, majority (88.4%) of the parents claimed to express concern when their children got low marks. This was further evidence that parents played an active role in ensuring academic achievement of their pre-school children.

#### 4.6.13 Discussion Of Academic Progress

Children's academic needs keep on changing regularly. Parents and teachers, therefore, need to meet more often to discuss the progress of a child with the view of assessing the progress of the child. This helps in coming up with remedies to challenges that children may be experiencing as they go through the learning process.

**Table 4.21: Discussion Of A Child's Academic Progress**

<b>Discussion</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Never	23	22.0
Occasionally	41	38.7
Often	21	20.2
Very often	20	19.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>105</b>	<b>100.0</b>

From the table, majority (78.0%) of the parents claimed to be involved in discussions about their children’s academic progress. This was further evidence that parents played an active role to ensure academic achievement of pre-school children.

#### **4.7 Head Teacher’s Questionnaire Analysis**

##### **4.7.1 Staff Meetings With Parents And Teachers**

Head teachers were requested to indicate whether they usually have school meetings with teachers and parents. Table 4.22 shows the results.

**Table 4.22: Meetings with Early Childhood Development Parents And Teachers**

<b>Meetings</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Yes	4	100.0
No	0	0.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>100.0</b>

The table shows that all (100%) of respondents held school meetings each term with the teachers and parents. This was admirable for the parents because it helped in monitoring and evaluating of children progress in school. Consequently, this can improve pupils' school grades.

#### **4.7.2 Challenges Faced By Head Teachers In Executing The Early Childhood**

##### **Development Programme**

There were several challenges that faced the Early Childhood Development section in the schools interviewed. Table 4.23 summarises the challenges

**Table 4.23: Challenges**

<b>Challenge</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Pupils absenteeism	3	75
Failure to pay school fees by parents	4	100
Insufficient learning materials	2	50
<b>N=4</b>		

According to table 4.23, head teachers cited the failure to pay fees by parents as one of the major challenges facing the Early Childhood Development Programme. This was a clear indication that parents affected performance of the pre-school children, especially when they were sent home to collect fees. Other challenges included pupils' absenteeism (75%) and insufficient learning materials (50%).

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **5.1 Introduction**

This section gives a summary of the findings, conclusions and recommendations. The main objective of the study was to evaluate the parents' influence on the pre-school children performance in Miriga Mieru Division of Imenti North District. The specific objectives were to find out the common child rearing practices by early childhood parents, to establish the economic status of parents among early childhood learners, to investigate home environment for early childhood learners in public pre-schools and to investigate Early Childhood Development parents' level of education in Miriga Mieru division Imenti North District.

#### **5.2 Summary Of The Findings**

According to the family structure, there was a significant influence on children's educational performance. It influenced children's behaviour both positively and negatively, which bore directly on educational success or failure. Majority (71.1%) of the parents were married and minority (28.9%) single. This indicated that most families were stable and the influences of family structure on Early Childhood Development learners were minimal. This was in line with Charlton and George, 1923, who supported that children with serious learning problems often came from homes characterised by family disturbances, such as divorced and violence.

Highly educated parents had greater success in providing their children with cognitive and language skills that contributed to early success in school. At least 100% of parents had acquired formal education (primary to secondary and college levels). However, the highest (60.1%) number of parents with primary level of education as their highest level might prove an impediment in quality of Early Childhood Development education if this is coupled with lack of any other professional qualification. According to (Sticht, T. G and McDonald, 1990), highly educated parents have greater success in providing their children with cognitive and language skills.

High occupational status coupled with high educational level status meant that parents provided the necessary learning facilities and assisted children with school work. Findings from the study indicated that fewer (20.23%) parents were in formal employment. This finding clearly indicated that there was a challenge in the area of employment and this affected performance of pre-school children (Mabal, 1996).

The study established that 89.6% of parents always help their children with school work and assignments. This is commendable for the parents because by helping with assignments, children improve their school grades. This was in line with earlier findings from parents who also ascertained that they helped their children with assignments (Desforges, 2003).

Majority (94.2%) of the respondents acknowledged that the children were well fed. There was a strong link between good nutrition and academic performance. When children's basic nutritional needs are met, they perform better academically than those with poor nutrition. This was supported by (Myer, 1992)

The majority of the parents (86.1%) attended all major school meetings regularly and promptly. In addition, parents indicated that they participated in major school activities. This helped in monitoring and evaluation of children progress in school consequently this helped improve pupils' school grades. According to (Desforges, 2003) a large body of evidence demonstrates a strong and positive link between parent's involvement and interest in children's learning.

The study also established that several activities were done together like reading story books (23.12%), storytelling (31.8%). Such activities were also essential to pre-school children's cognitive development and readiness for school. Parental interest in children's activities has a more significant impact on achievement of early age. (Feinstein and Symmon, 1999).

The majority of the parents (88.0%) claimed to be involved in discussions about their children's academic progress. This was further evidence that parents played an active role in ensuring positive academic achievement of their pre-school children. Children's academic needs keeps on changing regularly. Parents and teachers therefore need to meet more often to discuss the progress of a child with the view of assessing the progress of the child. This helps in coming up with remedies to challenges that children may be experiencing as they go through the learning process (Desforges, 2003).

The study also found that school enrolment had a higher number of girls than boys contrary to the usual believe that a girl child does not have access to education. This supports the vision 2030 by the Kenyan government to have equal education opportunities for all.

Even though the majority (39.05%) of the pupils was under the custodian of both parents, there was still a large percentage that stayed with single parent and guardians. Staying away from both parents had serious implications on the performance of the pre-school children. (Wedge and Essen, 1982) argues that such conditions within the home or the family exposes the pre-school children to experiences which render them more vulnerable to the onset of learning.

Pre-school children are supposed to be involved much play and sleeping. This helps them to discover more and grow and develop. Table 4.18 summarises the activities pre-school children were involved in before getting to school.

Eighty two percent were involved in play, which is essential for this stage of development. Other activities included modeling and writing on the floor (11.43%) and helping their parents with work at home. Involvement in such activities improved academic performance of the children. This was supported by (Desforges, 2003).

Head teachers cited the failure to pay fees by parents as one of the major challenges facing the Early Childhood Development Programme. This was a clear indication parent's affected performance of the preschool children, especially when they were sent home to collect fees. Other challenges included pupils' absenteeism (75%) and insufficient learning materials (50%). As indicated by (Psacharopoulos, and Woodhall, 1985), the level of family income was one of the most powerful influences on demand of Education, poor families found it difficult to support education for their children.

### **5.3 Conclusions**

The findings of the study have supported previous findings which have indicated a positive relationship between academic achievement in pre-school children and parental involvement in their education. Home environment is one of the determinants of academic achievement. An academically favourable home environment is likely to enhance the child's motivation to achieve academic success which in turn will contribute to good performance in school.

### **5.4 Recommendations**

The following recommendations were made:

- 1) Many parents may not be aware of the influence of various home environmental factors on the academic achievement of their children. It is recommended that, teachers, educationists and leaders should try to create awareness in parents on the importance of the home environment on academic achievement which can improve the children's performance.
- 2) Parents need to be informed that they can contribute to the education of their children through encouragement, provision of learning facilities, and active assistance among other strategies.
- 3) Parents need to know their role in the education of their children so that they do not put the blame entirely on teachers when their children do not perform well in school.
- 4) Precaution should be taken when it comes to parental encouragement, since unreasonably high demand and too much pressure for good performance made



by some parents on their children may cause anxiety and fear of failure, which may affect the child's academic performance negatively.

- 5) For the various family variables to have a significant effect on children's academic achievement, parents should set achievable targets within their means.

### **5.5 Areas Of Further Research**

The researcher proposes the following areas of further research:

- 1) The study finding revealed that women parents were more involved in provision of resources for the child education than men. However, further research ought to be conducted to establish the degree of gender participation in the promotion of early childhood education.
- 2) Carry out research to find out how nutrition affects performance on the pre-school children.

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## APPENDIX I : HEAD OF INSTITUTION QUESTIONNAIRE

### Introduction

Please respond to each of the questions by ticking the appropriate response or giving your opinion as honestly as possible. Your responses will be highly confidential and will be used by the researcher for the purpose of this study only. Therefore, DO NOT write your name anywhere in this questionnaire. You are kindly requested to respond to all the items that are applicable to you.

1. Gender

Male  Female

2. Age

25-30 years  31-40 years  41-50 years

3. Teaching experience

1-5 years  6-10 years  11-15 years  15years & above

4. How many years have you been to the present station?

1-5 years  6-10 years  11-15 years  15years & above

5. How many years have you been a head teacher?

1-5 years  6-10 years  11-15 years  15years & above

5. Does your school have an ECD SECTION?

Yes  No

6. What is the enrolment of ECD learners

Boys  Girls  Total

7. Do you normally have staff meeting with ECD Teachers and Parents?

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8. If yes above (8) how often?

Weekly

Termly

Yearly

9. What are some of the challenges do you experience as a head teacher ECD section?

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10. Does your school have a feeding programme?

Yes

No

11. Who finances the feeding programme?

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12. Is your school sponsored?

Yes

No

13. If Yes to (13) above: By who?

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14. Do you give incentives to encourage ECD learners?

Yes

No

15. How many children were enrolled in pre- school for the last four years?

<b>YEARS</b>	<b>NO. OF CHILDREN</b>	<b>BOYS</b>	<b>GIRLS</b>
2006			
2007			
2008			
2009			

**APPENDIX II: LEARNERS INTERVIEW SCHEDULE**

Please respond to each of the questions by ticking the appropriate response or giving your opinion as honestly as possible. Your responses will be highly confidential and will be used by the researcher for the purpose of this study only. Therefore, DO NOT write your name anywhere in this questionnaire. You are kindly requested to respond to all the items that are applicable to you.

1. Gender

Male       Female

2. How old are you.....

3. Where do you live?.....

4. Whom do you live with?.....

5. What is the occupation of your parents?.....

6. What were you doing before you started coming to school?

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7. What kind of work do you do at home when you are free?

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8. Who are your friends?

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9. Does your teacher give you homework?

Yes

No

10. Do your parents assist you in doing your homework?

Yes

No

11. Show by ticking in the appropriate box who among your family members below check your schoolwork.

	Yes	No			
Father					
Mother					
Brothers					
Sisters					
Guardian					

**THANK FOR YOUR CONTRIBUTION AND CO-OPERATION**

### APPENDIX III: PRE- SCHOOL PARENTS QUESTIONNAIRE

Please respond to each of the questions by ticking the appropriate response or giving your opinion as honestly as possible. Your responses will be highly confidential and will be used by the researcher for the purpose of this study only. Therefore, DO NOT write your name anywhere in this questionnaire. You are kindly requested to respond to all the items that are applicable to you.

1. Gender

Male  Female

2. Marital Status

Married  Single

3. What is your level of education.....

4. Do you help your child do homework?

Yes  No

5. What is your occupation?.....

6. What do you do during your free time?

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7. Do your child/children feed well?

Yes  No

8. What type of food do they prefer most?

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9. Do you know your child's teacher by name?

Yes  No

10. Do you attend school meetings?

Yes  No

11. Do you participate in school activities?

Yes  No

12. Do you take your child out for leisure?

Yes  No

13. If your answer is "Yes" in 12 (above) which of the following activities do you do with your child?

	Yes	No
Reading story books		
Watching movies		
Story telling		
Swimming		
Others (specify)		

14. Do you encourage your pre- school child to read at home?

Never [ ], once in a while [ ], often [ ], very often [ ]

15. Do you arrange for private tuition for your child while at home?

Never [ ], once in a while [ ] often [ ], very often [ ]

16. Do you express concern when your child gets low marks at school?

Never [ ], Occasionally [ ], often [ ], very often

17. Do you go to school to discuss your child's academic progress?

Never [ ], occasionally [ ], often [ ], very often [ ]

**THANK FOR YOUR CONTRIBUTION AND CO-OPERATION**