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**INFLUENCE OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT ON LEARNING
OUTCOMES AT PUBLIC EARLY CHILDHOOD CENTRES IN
NAIROBI CITY COUNTY, KENYA**

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Influence of Parental Involvement on Learning Outcomes at Public Early Childhood Centres in Nairobi City County, Kenya

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Abstract

Purpose: Parental support is essential in achieving pupils' learning outcomes. The purpose of this article is to discuss how parental involvement in pupils' learning programmes influences pupils' learning outcomes. The study was conducted in public Early Childhood centres in Nairobi City County, Kenya, to investigate the influence of parental involvement in pupils' learning programmes on children's learning outcomes. The problem is that, despite that parents have a responsibility and an influence in the education of their children, not all parents are involved in the learning programmes at the early childhood centres. The objectives of the study were to assess the extent of parental involvement in pupils' learning programmes and to determine the influence of parental involvement in children's learning programmes on learning outcomes.

Methodology: The study employed descriptive survey targeting the 21 public stand-alone early childhood education centres, 2243 children aged 3-5 years, 21 head teachers and all teachers at the learning centres. Quantitative and qualitative data was collected by using structured interview schedules for head teachers, closed questionnaires for teachers and document analysis guide to process pupils' learning outcomes (performance). Records of Pupils of PP1 and PP2 levels from each centre were simple randomly sampled for review. By purposive sampling, 48 teachers were sampled, at least one teacher for each of the levels from the 21 institutions. The study employed, means, percentages and the coefficients in the analysis of the data.

Findings: The study revealed that 38.1 percent of the learning centres had parents who gave less than 50 percent of the expected support and that centres that involved parents in the learning programmes had higher learning outcomes. The conclusion is that parental involvement in the education of their children leads to high learning outcomes.

Unique contribution to theory, practice and policy: The study recommended that The County Government should develop and implement a policy to support establishment and enforcement of a framework through which parents can work in partnership with the teachers at the learning centres. There is need for government instituted structures for sensitization of the parents on their role in the education of their children.

Key Words: *Head teachers, parental involvement, influence, learning outcomes, early childhood centres.*

INTRODUCTION

Parents give vital insight into the child's experience beyond the classroom (Parker, Leeson, Willan & Savage, 2010; Metto & Makewa, 2014) and family support is essential in achieving child learning outcomes, but according to UNESCO (2010) some parents do not see the need of taking a child below five years to school because of the expenses that will be incurred. While Desforges and Abouchaar (2003) noted from their study that experiences in early childhood have the greatest effect on lifetime outcomes (Smith, Robbins, Stagman & Mathur, 2013; Goodall, 2018) reiterated that parental engagement is essential support for school going children especially at the early age. Sylva, Melhuish, Sammons, Siraj-Blatchford and Taggart (2010) further made an observation that parents are likely to identify learning challenges of their children at the early age and those with special needs are likely to be identified at the early childhood age. They further connoted that, effort from the teachers and parents may lead to early interventions helping the child to progress smoothly in his or her education. They noted that parental involvement improved the capacity of the child in fields including reading.

A study conducted by Smith et al., (2013) revealed that school-based parental involvement can have very good outcomes for children's learning achievement yet, from a study by Harris and Goodall (2008) it was observed that parents were not adequately engaged in the education of their children. They recommended parental involvement as an intervention in improving children's performance in their education. One of the gaps created from these studies was the inability to adequately involve parents in the learning of their children. Another gap created was on how engagement of parents impacted on children's learning achievements. The study at the Nairobi City County aimed to address the two gaps by determining the extent to which parents were engaged in the programmes at the early childhood centres and to assess the influence of parents' engagement on the learning outcomes and make recommendations on possible interventions.

Early childhood centres in Kenya were started and managed by the sponsors before the government provided the National Early Childhood Education and Development Policy framework and early childhood development standard guidelines (UNESCO, 2010). Early childhood centres in Kenya were started and sustained by parents and communities (UNESCO, 2007). Some of the earliest centres in Kenya were started by Nairobi City County Government. These centres were mainly established to cater for children of single mothers who worked with the council (Nairobi City County, 2014). According to the Nairobi City County (2014) by 1980, there were 21 such like centres and they are referred to as 'stand-alone' centres. This is because they are not attached to primary schools. This study was limited to these particular early childhood learning centres.

Learning outcomes is what is achieved after a pupil has undergone certain experiences at the learning institution. This is explained by indicators of a pupil being able to do some activities differently from his or her earlier ways of doing them or being able to do what they could not do earlier. At the age of 3-5 years, focus is mainly on their personal, social and emotional development as well as language and physical development (Koza, 2010). Given that these are critical years for providing a firm foundation for learning, a stable and nurturing environment provided by both parents and teachers is very important (Goodall, 2018; Morgan, 2017; Harris, Andrew & Goodall, 2009).

It is expected that by the time a child is leaving pre-school, he or she should be equipped with specific knowledge and skills and be in a position to play freely with others, share little things, dress and eat by themselves (Parker et al., 2010). Children's learning experiences at the early childhood centres should support development of their large motor skills and be able to throw and kick a ball (Jacobs & Crowley, 2007). According to Republic of Kenya (2008) at this level, cognitive development is expected to take place and the children should demonstrate knowledge of basic quantitative and numeric concepts. The experience of the children at the early childhood learning centres should further enable them to match pictures with sounds, recognize shapes and write some arithmetic as well as numbering (Meece & Daniels, 2008). These learning outcomes cannot be attained without the support of the parents (Desforges et al., 2003; Morgan, 2017).

It is further expected that pre-school learning should prepare children for school readiness, which means, preparing a child to move from home or pre-primary to formal primary school classroom. They should therefore, get to primary school with basic skills and abilities that will enable them regulate their behaviour and emotions (UNESCO, 2015). It is therefore important to conclude that, if the children's early experiences are not supportive, then fostering of their learning continuity will be affected. Upon taking note of these observations, this study therefore, focused at the learning outcomes and aimed to determine how influential parental involvement is, with hope of identifying interventions supportive of parental engagement.

Through a study, Desforges et al., (2003) noted that, parental engagement at the learning centres is strongly influenced by the child's level of attainment. They further revealed that the scale of impact of parental engagement in the learning outcomes is evident across all social classes and ethnic groups. This would make the findings from this study be applicable to wider groups and areas. Jones and George (2006); Townsend (2011) further proposed that management of the learning institutions was key in providing a collaborative environment for attainment of the institutional goals, where collaborative environment includes parents. In Kenya, management of the early childhood centres is by head teachers alongside the Parents Teachers Associations (PTA) (Republic of Kenya, 2014a), but it is not all parents who actively participate through such associations (Goodall, 2018). Individual involvement of all parents is important for reasons that, they have unique knowledge about their children, they can foster continuity with learning at home and it can promote parents' positive attitude towards the education of their children, which in turn, will positively influence the learning outcomes (Morgan, 2017; Goodall, 2018).

Strategic planning by the early childhood centres' managers is needed for effective involvement of parents. This is because of the importance of having them involved and yet at times, it is a

challenge to involve them. Head teachers require to identify working strategies and best methods of engaging parents (Goodall, 2018). Harris, Andrew and Goodall (2009) propose that teachers and parents can develop professional partnership whereby teachers organize events, meetings and activities in which they invite parents. Head teachers can guide parents on how to support their children while at home in curriculum related activities, how to volunteer their services at the centres and involve parents in decision making (Desforges et al., 2003; Morgan, 2017). Harris et al., (2009); Morgan (2017) further state that the head teachers can work with parents to acquire learning resources and that parents can be engaged by building a mutual understanding in which information and knowledge is shared among the parents and teachers. This can be done through meetings; parents should not just be given reports but they should get a chance of communicating with the management of the learning centres (Goodall & Vurhaus, 2010).

A study by Desforges et al. (2003) stated that parental involvement in the learning of their children lead to pupils' high achievement and adjustment. Morgan (2017) and Goodall (2018) narrated the benefits of involving the parents in the learning of their children as follows; easy communication of the learning concerns of the pupils, parents will bring skills that can benefit the learning of the children, parents will support in decision making, parent-teacher relationship will be cordial creating a conducive environment for learning programmes, parents can encourage children and children's attitude towards school will be more positive and children are likely to learn past the age of 16 years. Further to that, Morgan (2017) states that parents have a right to know what is going on in the lives of their children and to participate in making decisions that affect their children's education. On the same note, Morgan (2017) further reiterated that parents have a responsibility to support in the education of their children and it is their right to be involved in the programmes of their children's education. This study at Nairobi hoped to establish the extent to which parental involvement in their children's learning influenced pupils' learning outcomes at the early childhood learning centres. The gap this study covered was on the means of parental engagement and how learning outcomes were influenced and provided possible interventions through recommendations.

A study by Harris and Goodall (2008) connoted that, involving parents is one of the greatest challenges of learning institutions. Goodall et al., (2010), Harris et al., (2009) noted that, some parents did not get involved because of their personal experiences. At the same time, from a study by Smith et al., (2013), it was observed that a number of variables influenced parental involvement in the education of their children and these included the education level of parents and their economic status. They lamented that, policymakers needed to develop a plan for engaging parents and concluded by stating that, parental involvement offers the greatest opportunities for children to realize their full potential. Head teachers' success in involving parents will be in regard to his or her consideration of the situation or circumstances of the parents such as poverty, lack of information from the learning centre, time constraints due to other duties and parental uncertainty (Goodall et al., 2010; Morgan, 2017). Gaps created from these studies were that, some parents were unable or did not get involved in the learning of their children and that teachers had a challenge in involving some of the parents. This study at the Nairobi City County aimed at finding out the strategies head teachers used to manage the inability of some parents to get involved in the

learning of their children. This study also hoped to establish the most effective strategy that institutions could use to involve the parents in the learning of their children.

Management aspects of early childhood centres in Kenya that justified this study can closely be related to the New Zealand system that has been reported by Thorntone, Wansbrough, Philip, Aitken and Tamati (2009) in a study carried out in New Zealand on Early Childhood Education that noted that leadership as a factor was identified with quality. They concluded that leadership in early childhood may not be contextualized in the same manner as it is used in the other parts of the schooling system. The study in Nairobi was an attempt to establish how leadership is contextualized in early childhood centres while noting that engaging parents in the education of the pupils, will depend on the type of leadership at the learning centre. Further information from a study conducted by Muirjs, Aubrey, Harris, & Briggs, (2004) on early childhood leadership and parental involvement state effective leadership strategies as evidence for better learning outcomes. These studies give gaps on leadership strategies that this study in Nairobi City County covered and gave recommendations for advancement on leadership skills for the head teachers of the early childhood learning centres.

This study also made reference to a study conducted by Delaware Early Childhood Council (2009) that found out that 2/3 of five years old children did not enter the next level with necessary proficiencies for success. The gap in this study was on partnership between the teachers and the families of the pupils, following which, the researchers advocated for partnership between the learning institutions and families of early childhood school going children. In response to policy gaps from the study of Delaware, this study in public early childhood centres in Nairobi came up with specific recommendations to Nairobi City County Government to establish a framework through which parents would be more involved in the learning of their children. The Delaware study was important to relate with having taken note of the observations of Desforjes et al., (2003) that parents are an essential partner in the education of their children although some parents attached little significance to it.

From a discussion paper on early years' leaders involving parents in their children's learning, Whalley (2002) stated that, when parents and early childhood professionals create an equal partnership to share knowledge and experiences, a stimulating environment is created that supports the child's progress. The gap that was created from this discussion was on whether the teachers and parents worked in partnership and if they did, how it worked. This further led to another gap on the extent the partnership influenced pupils' learning outcomes. This discussion related well to the findings from a study by Sylva et al., (2010) that discovered that where parents became involved in educational leadership and worked with their children on their activities while at home, child learning outcomes were strong. Their observation is supported by the fact that parents may engage children in newly learned skills while at home. Parents, for instance, can have sessions of storytelling at family level and help children link personal events experienced at home and school. Further to that, supporting parenting and stimulating home environments are among the most powerful predictors of school performance during and beyond primary school as observed by Metto et al., (2014). This study at the Nairobi City County aimed at covering these gaps by hoping to find if there existed any kind of partnership between the teachers of the early childhood centres

and the parents. This study further gave recommendations on how to strengthen partnership between teachers and parents based on the findings from the study.

The General Systems Theory by Ludwig Bertalanffy of 1928 was the most suitable to relate to this study because of its description of how the elements of the system relate leading to specific results. A system in this case is any set of distinct parts that can interact to form a complex whole (Jones & George, 2006). This system has three stages: the input, the conversion and the output. In this study, the early childhood centres were taken as an open system where the head teacher is tasked with the responsibility of bringing all the elements together and in this case, the elements include resources, teachers and parents. In the application of this theory to this study, the interaction among the stakeholders where the parents are part, lead to the output which in this case are the pupil's learning outcomes. The interaction of the elements therefore determines the end result or learning outcomes. The way the elements interact is determined by the head teachers' strategies and in this case, the strategies applied to involve the parents would influence the learning outcomes. It is when children are able to read, jump or solve their simple problems and get the best entry behaviour to primary and higher learning, that society shall benefit from the early childhood centres and therefore, this becomes the output from the system.

Given the importance accrued to parental involvement in the education of their children, head teachers as managers, need to organize strategically for effective engagement of the parents. Head teachers need to evaluate parental importance, identify their needs and develop an action plan of involving each of the parents. Successful management will be when effective strategies are applied on how to adequately work with parents to improve pupils' learning outcomes (Jones & George, 2006; Harris, Andrew & Goodall, 2009).

Problem Statement

Parents need to be involved in the learning of their children at the early childhood education centres. Head teachers and teachers struggle to get all parents involved, yet parental involvement influences children's learning outcomes positively. Studies have been conducted in the area of parental importance in the education of their children, but still, there are a number of parents who are not significantly involved in their children's education and because of this, it was necessary for this study to be conducted. This study was conducted to find out the influence of parental involvement in pupils' learning outcomes and recommend the best strategies of engaging parents more significantly in the learning programmes of their children so as to improve the learning outcomes.

Objectives

This study sought to establish the extent of parental involvement in pupils' learning programmes at the early childhood centres at the public early childhood learning centres in Nairobi City County, Kenya.

The study was to further to determine the influence of parental involvement in early childhood programmes on children's learning outcomes at the early childhood centres in Nairobi City County, Kenya.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed descriptive survey because of its efficiency in systematically collecting data from educational settings while providing comprehensive information about a situation (Fowler, 2002; Mukherjee & Albon, 2012). The study was both qualitative and quantitative with the head teachers responding to a structured interview schedule, teachers responding to a questionnaire and pupils' performance documents reviewed. The target population was from the 21 public early childhood centres in Nairobi City County, all teachers at the 21 centres, 21 head teachers and 2243 children (Nairobi City County, 2014). Progress reports of at least one class of pupils of PP 1 and PP 2 levels were simple randomly sampled for document review. From the categorised list of teachers per district and per centre given by the county education office, a stratified list of teachers for each level was obtained from the centres from which 48 teachers teaching PP1 and PP2 were purposively sampled to acquire at least one teacher for each of the levels from the 21 institutions to participate in the study.

For purposes of ensuring validity of the instruments, the questions were prepared in line with the objectives of the study and reference made to documents guiding on how to guard against validity of research instruments. Validity was also ensured by conducting research with a representative sample, over 50 percent of the targeted population. The instrument was piloted in two of the study centres that were randomly sampled from the list that had been received from the government offices. The objective of the pilot was to further the interaction for subject selection, understand the population characteristics and the effect of the research environment which proved quite valuable. After piloting, the instruments were adjusted adequately. Reliability of the questionnaires and the structured interview schedule was arrived at by conducting a test-retest still using the two institutions where the piloting for validity testing was done. The two sets of results were then correlated and the results were 0.745 and 0.729 respectively indicating that there was significant relationship between them. At the same time, the respondents had been assured of confidentiality so they were ready to divulge information as best as they could therefore, strengthening reliability.

The exercise of data collection began by obtaining letters of introduction from the University of Nairobi and the Nairobi County offices. A permit for research was also obtained from the National Commission for Science and Technology and Innovation. Before the questionnaires were administered, interview conducted and document review done, permission was sought from the head teachers who gave the researcher their convenient date when to go and collect the data.

Descriptive and inferential statistics including the means, frequencies, percentages, standard deviations and coefficient correlations were employed to describe the data findings. The quantitative data collected from document review, structured interview schedules and from the questionnaires was edited and coded using themes that contain related concepts. The data was statistically analysed through the SPSS version 16.0.

The qualitative data collected from the interviews with the head teachers was classified into ideas and editing done. It was coded and cohesive themes were produced depending on the objectives of the study and the data analysed. Interpretation was made and conclusions drawn together with the analysed quantitative data. When interpreting the data, triangulation of different types of data was found to be very useful as comparisons were made and contrasting results found out and

explanations given. Triangulation in this case was essential in that the different sources of data complemented each other and deepened understanding of the study topic. In this particular case, responses from head teachers through interview schedules and review of records of pupils' performance, served as key data that was complemented by responses from the teachers by use of questionnaires. The results of the analysis of the data were done in means and percentages that made it much easier to relate the independent and dependent variables. After attaining the means and percentages, coefficient of correlation was also used to determine the strength of the relationship between the variables, parental involvement in the learning of their children against the pupils' learning outcomes. Reporting was done based on the data that was summarised on tables.

The study observed ethical consideration by seeking prior permission from the centres and authority from the relevant agencies which included the government agencies of National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI) and the Nairobi City County Education Department. Permission was also sought from the head teachers and teachers prior to data collection by providing them with an informed consent form to sign beforehand. The respondents were assured of their confidentiality. The researcher also recognized the important contributions of the respondents by appreciating and acknowledging their valuable contributions.

FINDINGS AND PRESENTATION

Table 1 describes the extent to which parents were involved in the learning activities of their children. It is based on responses from the 21 head teachers on how active the parents were towards pupils' learning programmes.

Table 1: Percentage of parental involvement in the learning programmes at the Centres

Parental involvement	Frequency	Percent
Above 75%	2	9.5
60% - 74%	6	28.6
50% - 59%	5	23.8
30% - 49%	6	28.6
Below 29%	2	9.5
Total	21	100

Table 1 shows comparable levels that parents got involved in the learning activities at the centres. More than 10 of the centres had over 50% parental involvement in the learning of their children, however, 38.1% of the centres had parental involvement at 49% and below. In support of this study, several authors have shown that pupils whose families are more knowledgeable, supportive and involved in their education perform better academically, exhibit more positive attitudes toward school, have higher academic expectations and show more positive behavior (Sheldon, 2019). Goodall and Vurhaus (2010) recommended that parents be sensitized on how to support the learning of their children. Goodall (2018) explains that some parents may not participate in the learning of their children due to attitudinal and logistical barriers such as lack of time.

Table 2 explains how the parents were involved in the learning activities at the centres. This was response from the head teachers.

Table2: Ways of parental involvement in pupils' learning

Parental Support	Frequency	Percent
Funding centre projects	2	9.50%
Information on child progress	3	14.30%
Involvement in learning programmes	6	28.60%
Provide learning materials	10	47.60%
Total	21	100

Table 2 shows the kind of support provided by parents to the Centre's. The highest support the centres received from the parents was in the provision of learning materials at 47.6%, being involved in pupils' learning programmes was 28.6%, and the least being funding Centre projects that was at 9.5%. A study by Whaley (2002); Harris, Andrew and Goodall (2009) observed that when parents and early childhood professionals create an equal partnership in which their knowledge and experiences are shared, a stimulating situation that is advantageous to the children is created. According to Morgan (2017) head teachers should guide parents on how they can support the centres in their services and resources. Harris et al., (2009) noted that good management involves creation of a collaborative environment, and in this case engaging parents.

Table 3 is based on responses from the head teachers on how they dealt with the non-supportive parents at their centres.

Table 3: Dealing with non-supportive parents

Strategy	Frequency	Percent
Write memos to parents to be more active	10	47.6
Work with those available	7	33.3
Use Parents Teachers Association to reach them	4	19
Total	21	100

Table 3 shows that most head teachers (47.6%) wrote memos to reach out to non-supportive parents while 33.3% preferred working with those who were available and 19 % reached the parents though the PTA. Whaley (2002) observed that some head teachers or managers do not recognize the role of parents indicating that they did not understand whether the competencies of parents would contribute to children's learning. Meanwhile, Goodall & Vurhaus (2010) in a report, noted that parental engagement has a significant impact on children's learning, hence suggested the need to support parental involvement in the education of their children. On affirming the need to involve all parents in the education of their children, Morgan (2017) reiterated that, it was the parents' responsibility to participate in the programmes at the centres and it was their right to be given a chance to make decisions that affect their children's education. These findings relate to an observation made by Goodall (2018) that there are barriers that would make some parents not to actively participate in their children's' learning programmes and Morgan (2017) advised that

head teachers should keenly strategize on how to engage all parents having in mind their circumstances. They suggest the need for schools to come up with a parental involvement strategy.

Table 4 describes how the frequency of holding meetings with parents related with the learning outcomes at the early childhood learning centres. Holding meetings was one of the strategies employed by the head teachers at the learning centres.

Table 4: Frequency of meetings with parents against cumulative learning outcomes

Class	PP 2			PP 1			
	Once per term	Twice in term	Thrice in term	Weekly	Once per term	Twice in term	Weekly
Frequencies							
Means							
No. Excellent	9.5	8.1	5.3	11	8.9	10	18.7
No. Good	4.9	3.1	0.2	5	3.3	2.7	9.3
No Average	2.5	1.7	0.3	3	3.4	6.2	4.4
No. Below average	1.7	2.8	1.8	1.8	3.2	2.9	2.8
No. Slow	1.6	1.8	6.7	0.6	2.4	1.7	2.6

Table 4 presents the findings on the frequency of meetings with parents against cumulative results of learning outcomes in writing name in correct spelling, writing most letters in alphabet, communicating fluently in English, reading simple English words, recognize geometrical shapes, writing numerals up-to 20 or above and pupils eating on their own. From the findings, frequent meetings with parents had the highest influence on the learning outcomes with a mean of 11.0 for PP2 in weekly meetings and 18.7 for PP1 in weekly meetings both being at excellent performance. In all the learning outcomes, the trend shows that the more frequent meetings were held, the higher the learning outcomes. The findings are supported by a report by Verspoor (2006) that regular meetings should be held with a focus to discuss on teaching and learning problems associated with the children. The study is further affirmed by Ceka and Murati (2016) who established that when parents were more involved in their children's schooling, the pupils tended to do better in test and complete their homework's more often. The relationship between the frequency of engaging parents and learning outcomes is affirmed by Desforges et al., (2003) who connoted that the impact of parental engagement in the learning outcomes is evident across all social classes and levels. This was further reiterated by Topor, Keane, Shelton, & Calkinsb, (2011) who affirmed the above findings that parental involvement in a child's education is consistently found to be positively associated with a child's academic performance. As noted in the review of literature, the reason for higher learning outcomes due to frequent parent –teacher meetings, could be related to pupils' attitude change, parental appreciation of their role and higher teacher motivation.

Table 5 describes the results of the correlation between parental involvement strategies that included involving parents in the learning activities of the pupils, how actively parents were engaged at the learning centres and strategies used to follow up on non-active parents against the learning outcomes in communicating fluently in simple English, contributing to group stories and pupils eating on their own.

Table 5: Parental involvement in children's learning vis-à-vis their (children's) Learning outcomes (mean scores)

Extent of strategy implementation at the Early Childhood Centres	Parental involvement strategies			Learning outcomes		
	Extent of parental engagement in Pupils' learning activities	Extent of active parental involvement	Dealing with non-supportive parents	Communicating fluently in English	Contributing to group stories	Eating on their own
Percentage %	Percentage %			Mean Score		
Yes	90.5	76.2	57.1	3.96	4.16	4.00
No	9.5	23.8	42.9	1.32	1.79	1.42
Total	100	100	100			

Table 5 shows cross-tabulation results between the implementation of specific parental involvement practices such as engagement in pupils' learning activities (90.5%), adoption of measures that induce active parental involvement in management of centre affairs (76.2%) and encouraging non-supportive parents (57.1%) all resulted to positive child learning outcomes specifically on their ability to communicate fluently in simple English with a mean of 3.96, improved pupils' ability to contribute in group stories at a mean of 4.16 and improved ability in children eating on their own at a mean of 4.00. Conversely, for Early Childhood Education Centres that failed to implement the afore mentioned strategies, registered low pupils' learning outcomes whereby all the mean scores for the aforementioned learning outcomes (1.32, 1.79 and 1.42) scored lower means. The findings concur with Ahan (2009) who found a strong positive correlation between parental involvement in school learning activities and children's learning outcomes. Further study by Desforges et al., (2003) showed that aspects of parental involvement in the learning of the children such as reading stories to the children at an early age at home improved a child's reading performance and such a child was likely going to be able to recognize letters of the alphabet and count to 20 or higher, write and read at an early age compared to children whose parents were not involved in their learning. This suggests therefore that, head teachers who guide parents on how to participate in the learning of the children even while at home are likely to realize higher learning outcomes (Metto et al., 2014).

DISCUSSION

Not all parents were involved in the learning of their children and centres that engaged parents more, posted higher learning outcomes. Those who got involved supported in providing learning materials, giving feedback regarding pupils' learning responses while at home, supporting centre projects and being actively engaged in the activities of the children such as sports and coming for meetings with teachers whenever invited. Slightly above 50 percent of the centres got above 50 percent of expected parental support in the learning programmes of the pupils. The results showed

that a bigger number of parents supported in providing learning materials. The head teachers also stated that they attempted to encourage support from all the parents by writing memos to them and communicating to them through the Parents' Teachers' Association. From the responses, there were head teachers who did not follow up on the non-active parents they preferred working with those who were available. This was a strategy by these head teachers and probably they had reasons for preferring to do that and this is one of the gaps created by this study. Why could some head teachers not follow up on the non-active parents?

When the learning outcomes were cross tabulated with the frequency of holding meetings between the teachers and the parents, the results were that, weekly meetings led to higher learning outcomes compared to holding meetings three times, two times or once a term. This indicated that the more frequent the interaction between the teachers and the parents the higher the learning outcomes. The results revealed that, there was a relationship between the parental involvement in the learning process of their children and the pupils' learning outcomes at the public early childhood centres in Nairobi City County. Since involving parents in the learning of their children lead to higher learning outcomes, then strategies need to be sought to enable all parents actively get engaged at the learning centres. The head teachers as the managers of the centres need to take the initiative of creating an environment that would accommodate all the parents.

CONCLUSION

Most of the early childhood learning centres got support from parents in terms of materials for learning and teaching. There were parents who were not actively engaged in the learning activities of their children. The more frequent the parents were involved in meetings with teachers, the higher the learning outcomes. Head teachers' strategies of involving parents in the learning of their children influenced the child learning outcomes positively. Those centres that did not involve parents adequately in the learning of their children had lower learning outcomes.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- The County Government should develop and implement a policy to support establishment and enforcement of a framework through which parents can work in partnership with the teachers at the learning centres.
- There is need for government instituted structures for sensitization of the parents on their role in the education of their children.
- The county government would organize for regular training for the head teachers and the teachers to equip them with skills on how to establish structures that would include parents in the learning centres.
- The county government needs to identify interventions that are effective in supporting parental involvement, particularly those who are not significantly involved in their children's education or who are not involved at all.

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