

# Trends of Education in Kenya: Inherent Inconsistencies and Challenges of Preschool Education in Kisii County, Kenya

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**Abstract:** Ensuring quality Education during a child's formative years is the responsibility of every government. Devolution of Early Childhood to the county government was a well thought plan but still challenges in the implementation of early childhood Development education (ECDE) still persists. Some counties have employed ECDE teachers while others have not. Majority of these teachers are employed on contract basis and others are paid by parents. Deficiencies exist in facilitating the involvement of all stakeholders. The study is informed by the challenges experienced in policy implementation, as well as inconsistency in preschool education by various county governments. The study aimed at assessing the trends of education in Kenya, inherent inconsistencies and challenges of preschool education in Kisii County, Kenya. The study targeted all 968 (699 public and 269 private) preschools, 968 head teachers, 2357 ECDE teachers, 9 sub county education officers and 9 Sub-County ECDE officers. The sample included 344 head teachers, 657 ECDE teachers, 9 sub county education officers and 9 Sub-County Early Childhood Education Officers in the County. The study administered a questionnaire and an interview schedule. Questionnaires were filled by the head teachers and preschool teachers. The study found that 70.1% of the ECDE centres did not have enough qualified teachers to teach all the three level (baby class, nursery and pre-unit). In addition despite of the fact that play is an integral part of preschool learning only 28.5% of the school had enough playground for the pupils. During interviews head teachers identified the challenge of meagre payment of preschool teachers; lack of physical facilities and lack of land to expand ECDE centres. Generally there is low funding and implementation of ECDE Programmes in Kisii County. There is need for the improvement of ECDE services in Kisii County. The Kisii County government need allocate enough funds in the ECDE Sub-sector. There is also need for regular inspection and monitoring of all ECDE Centre.

## 1. INTRODUCTION:

The Government of Kenya acknowledges the importance of early childhood education as a pillar for accelerating Sustainable Development Objectives (Republic of Kenya, 2006). To ensure quality Education and learning environment during a child's formative years, Education for All first goal stipulates that it is the responsibility of every Government to expand and enhance comprehensive Early Childhood Education. It is imperative for all children to have a worthy start to life (Githinji & Kanga, 2011).

To ensure access to basic Education, currently many developing and developed nations all over the world have been developing and implementing policies to ensure that they achieve Education for all (Kang'ethe, Wakahiu & Michael, 2015). This has spurred several nations, especially in the sub-Saharan, into confronting their historically low access to quality education and children's holistic development (Lewin, 2009). This has brought a remarkable success in attracting several young children into learning institutions (UNESCO, 2008). However, filling classes is not a sufficient process of ensuring access to quality education and Education for all. The goal is geared towards having positive social and economic returns in which improving the quality and access to education is the key emphasis. Unfortunately, the 2010 UNESCO report indicate that not all preschool age children are attending ECDE centres, there has been a relatively low parental involvement among preschool children, very few countries provides free preschool education and many preschool learning centres have poorly established learning environment in most sub-Saharan Africa counties, Kenya inclusive.

Despite the difficulties fronting Early Childhood sub sector in many parts of the world, the early years are internationally recognized as the greatest critical years for the lifetime development of a person (Kang'ethe, Wakahiu & Michael, 2015). In this regard, there is an evidence of a positive correlation between the child's quality of early childhood nurturing, health, environment, learning and future holistic development and academic achievement in subsequent grades in primary, secondary schools and colleges (Bradbury, 2007). In fact most founders of early childhood education have also emphasized on the same fact for instance Froebel, Pestalozzi and Dewey constantly showed that early years are crucial stage of growth of mental and physical capabilities and progress at an astonishing degree (Murunga, 2015).

Over the past three decades, the roles of parents and teachers in the students' academic achievement have changed. In the twentieth century, teachers were perceived as experts and there was no need for parental involvement in their children's education (Porter, 2008). However today, educational theories have consistently shown that parents are collaborative partners of equal status with teachers (Fan and Williams, 2011). Hence, enhancing parent participation has featured as a major learning policy and transformations internationally, for instance in United States and the United Kingdom, parental involvement has been found to have positive relationship with academic achievement of learners (Mattingly, Prislin, McKenzie, Rodriguez and Kayzar, 2002).

To ensure quality basic education, many developing nations like Kenya have dedicated significant amount of resources to expand of pre-school Education in currently. The expansion is thought to contribute to the improvement in enrolment and access to quality education in ECDE centre. However, the efforts have not been impressive and significant over the last two decades. Officially, in Kenya learners aged 4 to 5 years are anticipated to be registered in preschools. By the age 6 pupils are expected to enrol in standard one. In spite of the Government guidelines, presently 65 % of the preschool children in Kenya are not attending preschool education exclusively (MDG's, 2005). Kenya's enrolment is even much lower than some Sub-Saharan countries (MDG's, 2005).

To address the problems inherent in preschool education in Kenya, the Constitution of Kenya (2010) established government administration at two levels, 1 County and national level. In essence Kenya transitioned from a central administration to devolved government. The devolution process presaged the devolution of preschool among other transferred functions. In this regard, Article 43 of the 2010 Constitution declares that each individual has a right to education including that of the preschool children. Further, the Basic Education Act, 2013 targets at giving effect to article 53 of the Constitution, and to encourage and control free elementary learning. However, this has not been the case because there is no county government in Kenya which provide free preschool education.

Currently in many counties preschool educational programme operates on the basis of partnership. The effort by the government to introduce free primary education has made some parents to take children direct to primary school without going through preschool education (Ngaruiya, 2008). Worse still, parents do not understand why primary schooling have to be free and not preschool; they have consequently resisted paying school levies, hence denying preschool a vibrant source of funding.

With the devolution of early childhood education to county government there are still challenges in the implementation of early childhood education. Currently there are disparities in the 47 counties on their priorities in the Implementation of Early childhood education where some counties have employed ECDE teachers while others have not. Even those counties which have employed ECDE teachers, majority of these teachers are employed on contract basis and other are paid by parent. In this regard, there is no clear programme on funding and there is also lack of coordination mechanism facilitating involvement of the stakeholders, County government and national government in the implementation of early childhood education. This has occasioned multiplicity of practices in a number of county government and stakeholders compromising quality preschool programme this necessitated the current study. The study therefore aimed at assessing the trends of education in Kenya, inherent inconsistency and challenges of preschool Education in Kisii County Kenya.

### **1.1 Statement of the problems**

Preschool education has confronted innumerable challenges since independence escalating from insufficient financing of the preschool programme. In 2003, president Kibaki's administration declared free primary education and this led to an influx of pupils in the state owned schools. This policy though received well by many Kenyans, it impacted negatively on the preschool subsector. Several young children joined primary schools without essentially completing preschool education since poor parents were relieved the burden of paying fee. The county and national governments financing at this level is negligible compelling other stakeholders to shoulder this burden of supporting the ECD programmes. Devolution of ECD to county government was a well thought plan to enhance early childhood education but there are still challenges in the implementation of Early Childhood Education. Diversity of practices by various county government and stakeholders is compromising the quality of service offered at the ECDE centres. This study therefore aimed at assessing the trends of education in Kenya, inherent inconsistency and challenges of preschool Education in Kisii County Kenya.

### **1.2 Objectives of the study**

- i. Determine the challenges facing preschool Education in Kisii County
- ii. Evaluate the financing mechanisms in Early Childhood Education in Kisii County
- iii. Establish the relationship between parental involvement and pre-schoolers' absenteeism in Kisii County
- iv. Establish the relationship between parental involvement and pre-schoolers' access to quality education in Kisii County

### 1.3 Significance of the Study

The study findings are very vital to the county and national governments by availing important information on the current trends in the execution of early childhood programme, strengths and challenges facing early childhood education in the county government and strategies that can be employed to improve access to quality preschool education. The study findings provide useful information that help scholars gauge the effectiveness of early childhood devolution to county government in Kenya. School managers and educators may use of the results to inspire parents and other stakeholders to get involved in children's education right from pre-school level by introducing and implementing school regulations and policies that will ensure that parents participate in their children's educational matters. This can be through ensuring that parents provide preschool learning materials and support services. Policy makers may use of the findings to make programmes that would hearten programmes that encourage parental involvement in early childhood education, thereby improving the quality of preschool education.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW:

### 2.1 Challenges Facing Preschool Education

In spite of the significance of preschool Education, there are a numerous challenges that remain to pull down its effective execution. These include insufficient instructional resources, socioeconomic issues, large learner/pupil ratio, Poor Payments, monetary constraint (Wanjohi, 2014). In various parts of the world, a good number of preschools lack suitable and sufficient resource. These include lack of appropriately ventilated rooms, apposite furniture, clean water, proper play area, toilets and play things (International Association for the Education of Young Children, 1991). This indicates that instructors have inadequate resources to permit them to implement the preschool Curriculum efficiently. Offenheiser & Holcombe, (2003) contends that lack of teaching and learning resources affects implementation of preschool.

Malnourishment and health issues expressively impair the cognitive processing ability of children. Pupils whose processing capability is impacted by Malnourishment and health issues may need extra hours of teaching to acquire several skills. As such, execution of early childhood programme may prove critical particularly poor nations (van de Linde, 2005). Socio-economic differences affect the carrying out of ECDE programmes across the region, with some being categorized 'marginalized' or arid and Semi-Arid Lands. Regional inequalities have significant impact on access to preschool education; while enrolments in rural and relegated areas are low urban areas have high enrolment (Kilbride & Kilbride, 1990).

Pupil-teacher ratio has been a matter of considerable attention amongst scholars in relation to learning process. Studies show that Pupil/teacher ratio has continued to grow over the years. On average, teacher child ratio for children between 3-8 years olds remains critical. Teachers are not contented with the growing figure of pupils in their classrooms (Dodge & Colker, 1992). Furthermore, still with these high pupil ratios, preschool teachers are poorly salaried and are under the mercy of poor parents who mostly have little or nothing to give.

The Financing Mechanisms in Early Childhood Education Preschool programme in Kenya runs on the basis of collaboration and net-working (Owiye, 2010). The foremost stakeholders in preschool programme are parents, community and the private sector that offer monies and other resources. Additionally other partners are the Kenya Government and its fundamental departments coordinated by county government. NGOs, Civic Organizations, Religious organizations as well as bilateral and multilateral partners have been offering funding to Early Child Education (Emmily, Bota & Mwangi, 2014).

The policy on partnerships targets at improving the participation of several partners in the running of Early Childhood Education services (UNESCO, 2005). The roles of these sponsors were well-defined in the ECD National Policy Framework and standard service guidelines of 2006. Parents are anticipated to offer monetary resources used for procuring instructional resources, remunerate teachers, deliver physical amenities and feed the pupils (MoE, 2005). The community offers facilities such as land and physical structures, mobilise resources, start and manage community services for example provision of clean and safe water (Emmily, Bota & Mwangi, 2014).

The Ministry of Education on the other hand make available policy strategies on capacity building of ECD employees, develops syllabus, trains and certifies early childhood education teachers, manages Early Childhood Education programmes and registers preschools. The Non-Governmental Organizations also supplement the government's efforts by mobilizing resources (UNESCO, 2005). International partners support ECD programmes through resource mobilization, advocacy, and financing ECD programmes (Murundu, Indoshi & Okwara, 2010). For instance the World Bank has supported improvement infrastructure particularly in marginalized areas impacting certainly on quality ECD services (RoK, 2007). In fact, clear policy on funding and involvement of stakeholders is lacking. This has occasioned multiplicity and inconsistency practices offered in the ECD subsector. The effect of involvement the stakeholders in Early Childhood Education are unknown.

The major source of external support has been the World Bank's Early Childhood development loan, aiming underprivileged children aged zero to eight and their parents (UNESCO, 2005). Nevertheless, after the devolution of

Early Childhood Education to county government, most county employed Early Childhood Education teachers on contract basis where some teachers are still employed by parents, the community and the private sector that provide funds to pay teachers. Those teachers employed by county government earns between sh.10 000 to sh. 24 depending the structure of their county government. For those teachers not employed by the county government, tutors' wages average around KSh. 2,000 each month, with great disparities between rural and town preschools (UNESCO, 2005). Whether or not teachers not employed by county government get salaried hinge on mainly on accessibility of parental contributions (Kombo and Gogo, 2004). Consequently teachers' earnings are not constant and vary each month.

Ministry of Education in 2006 initiated Community Support Grants to support marginalized populations as a grant fund. The main objective of the fund was to enhance the capacity of parents and communities to improve and sustain the quality of and access to ECDE services by these communities. However the grant benefited only a small percentage of public Early Childhood Education centres attached to public primary schools (Manani, 2007). A circular from the MoE dated 21st June 2012 and addressed to all County Directors of Education and DEOs redirected the utilization of Community Support Grant to just teachers' salary top-up and purchase of instructional materials. Only 10 Early Childhood Education teachers from every constituency benefited from the programme leaving many trained teachers out. This is below the stakeholders' expectations of employment of teachers by the government.

A study carried out by Owiye (2010) on supervision of resources in ECDE centres in Bungoma Sub-county revealed that provision of resources depend on sponsorship, locality and type of the centre. It was also clear that teacher remuneration was poor and lacked opportunities for professional development. The study recommended that teachers should be provided a good working condition so as to enhance effective teaching and learning. Linda, Cathy and Margaret (2008) studied outcome of Early Childhood Education in New Zealand on participating learners and their parents. The study used cost-benefit analysis to determine the economic returns from Early Childhood Education. The research determined that devoting in quality Early Childhood Education has cost saving to the state and moreover to children. Public expenditure for Early Childhood programmes results are worthy returns in terms of lifelong earnings and lessening of special educational services (RoK, 2005).

## 2.2 Parental Involvement and Pre-schoolers' Access to Quality Education

Wendy (1997) categorised parental involvement into three: behavioural, Cognitive/intellectual and personal involvement. Behavioural involvement includes parental participation in activities such as attending school meetings, cognitive/intellectual involvement shows the extent parents expose their youngsters to intellectually interesting activities for example visiting the library, whereas individual involvement is concerned with knowing about and keeping abreast the child's progress at school. Moreover Desforges and Abouchaar (2003), observes that parental participation should take into account the contact with schools to share information; involvement in school occasions; volunteering work at school and school committees s. These submissions support the Epstein's (1995) six kinds of parental participation which are additionally elucidated by Hatchuel Tabernik and Associates (2004).

In USA, El Nokali, Bachman, and Votruba-Drzal (2010) found parental involvement as composite activities such as attending teacher-parent forums; volunteering; attending institutional occasions; fundraising and many more. Participation at school was found ominously associated to learner's readiness skills. El Nokali et al found moderate effect of parental participation on pupils' scores. Additionally, there was stronger parent-school relationships for instance parental-teacher meetings, was meticulously related with improved reading accomplishment. Other studies conducted in UK have further shown that good parental participation leads to teachers having a reduced workload and positive attitude towards teaching (Fan & Williams, 2010; Monadjem, 2003). Kgaffe (2001) and Tan and Goldberg (2009) have also support these finding by indicating that through parental involvement, teachers are appreciated by parents and increase understanding to diverse parental situations, gain familiarity of pupil's homes and home activities.

In Nigeria, research study suggests that schools benefited from improved parental participation. As described by Olsen and Fuller (2010), parental participation activities that are efficiently planned result in considerable benefits to pupils, parents, educators and schools. Children achieve more, irrespective of race, socio-economic status and parental educational level. The Olsen et al (2010) further indicated that children of more involved parents were found to have higher self-confidence and motivation towards school.

In Australian a study by Lawson (2000) investigated the association between home literacy, school literacy and pedagogy in the early and middle years of schooling. Low academic achievement in English by students across the western suburbs of Sydney had suggested a need for this research. A stronger relationship between parents and teachers was evidenced after these workshops even though a one-way delivery model was used to disseminate information. The focus of communications from the schools broadened from merely sharing information about a child's learning to enabling parents to provide for their children's learning in a specific programme. Similarly, the significance of the children's home setting and home learning was also highlighted by the ACSO (Australian Council of State Schools Organisation, 2006), which observes that families have the main influence on the children's

development such as language and social discourse. This happens in non-formal talking during breakfast, conversation on in the bus, or reading stories at home. This essentially lasts nearly in the entire life time an individual.

Kingsley (2011) did a study in Ghana on parental participation and learner's academic success. The sample included schools in central area of Ghana. The pupils were between fifteen and twenty years of age. Part of the finding showed that there was a very significant connection between mothers' school participation and pupil's academic accomplishment. The correlation coefficient was roughly 0.287.

### 3. METHOD:

The study adopted a descriptive survey design to assessing the trends of education in Kenya: inherent inconsistency and challenges of preschool Education in Kisii County Kenya. The design allowed speedy collection of data from the sample (Cohen and Manion, 1980). The design is also ideal because it allows the collection of information about people's opinions and habits (Orodho, 2009). The study targeted all the 968 (699 public and 269 private) Early Childhood Education centres, 968 head teachers, 2357 ECDE teachers, 9 Sub county education officers and 9 Sub- County Early Childhood Education Officers in the County. The sample size for the study included 344 head teachers, 657 ECDE teachers, 9 Sub county education officers and 9 Sub- County Early Childhood Education Officers in the County. Data was gathered using questionnaires and interview schedule. Questionnaires were given to the head teachers, and Early Childhood Education teachers. According to Orodho (2009), questionnaires are the most efficient ways of reaching several respondents within a short time. Interview Schedule was used to collect data from the Sub county education officers and sub-county Early childhood education to give in-depth information. Interviews involved conversations that are used to gain individual information, understanding, attitudes, positions, or opinions using already prepared list of questions (Orodho, 2009). This permitted the structuring of a rich description of the varied data (Shapira, Arar and Azaiza, 2010). Data analysis involved the process of summarizing, categorizing, rearranging and ordering collected raw data according to the objectives and research questions that guide the study (Mbwesa, 2006). Thematic analysis was used to analyse the qualitative data collected.

#### 3.1 Location of the Study

The study area will be Kisii County in Kenya. The county is inhabited mostly by the Gusii people. It is bordered by Nyamira to the east, Homa Bay to the north west, Migori to the west, Narok to the south, Kisumu to the north, and Bomet to the south. The area lies between latitude 00 30' and 100 South and longitude 34 38' and 350 East. It covers an area of 1,332.7 km<sup>2</sup>. Kisii County has a total of 1,101 Primary Schools and 363 Secondary Schools. There are about 51% Kenyans living below the poverty line in Kisii county. The known and documented challenges Kisii county faces is that education standards have dropped dramatically in the area, hereby leaving room for illiteracy to take its detrimental course. This brings some doubt on the quality and effectiveness of preschool education. Due to a high poverty index of the county, expenditure for children's learning at preschool centres are relatively high for many residents hence the level of literacy is quite low (Kisii County, 2013). It is against this available information that Kisii County was selected for this study.

#### 3.2 Materials:

The study administered a questionnaire and an interview schedule. Questionnaires were filled by the head teachers and preschool teachers. The interviews were administered to 9 sub county education officers and 9 Sub-County ECDE officers.

## 4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### 4.1 Challenges Facing Preschool Education

To obtain results in relation to the challenges facing the implementation of early Childhood education and ECDE policy guidelines in Kisii county, Primary school respondents filled the items in the questionnaire on a Likert scale ranging from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree. The results indicated that various challenges seriously hindered the implementation of early childhood education in Kisii County. On assessing whether preschool centres have enough ECDE teachers, it was observed with a lot of concern that despite the county government started employing ECDE teachers, 70.1% of the ECDE centres did not have enough teachers to teach all the three level (baby class, nursery and pre-unity) while only very few of the respondents at 30.3% who observed that they did not have high pupil-teacher ratio in their ECDE classes which made teach child contact more close and effective. Further, it established that 58.4% of the preschool centres did not have sufficient learning resources, 64.3% did not have sufficient classrooms while only about one third (33.7%) of the school were well funded by the County government, National government, local communities and Parents to provide quality ECDE education.

Similarly, majority of head teachers at 71.2% observed that parents and guardians of preschool children did not support ECDE centres by funding schools to acquire teaching and learning resources. Due to this low funding of ECDE centres in the County, a high proportion (64.5%) of ECDE centres did not enough furniture that were

appropriate for children at the ECDE Centre. In some instances, some preschool centres were found to use primary school desks which were no appropriate for them when writing and majority of the preschool children were found to sit on the floor. However, 66% of the Head teachers observed that in their ECDE centres they had qualified and experienced ECDE teachers.

Despite of the fact that play is an integral part of preschool learning and teacher, the study established that only 28.5% of the head teachers who observed that in their school they had enough playground for the pupils while 66.5% of the Head teachers observed that they did not have sufficient play materials in their school. In spite of the fact that the county government employed ECDE teachers on contract in the county, 67% of the Head teachers observed that the ECDE teachers were not paid in relation to their qualification and most cases those pay by parents and community their pay were irregular depending on the parents' payment of fees.

From the above findings, the study establishes that there was insufficient learning resources and monetary funding leading to unsuccessful implementation of ECDE policy, and higher teacher-pupil ratio with poor payments. Furthermore, there is lack of good will from the government. Insufficient essential facilities such as desks, chairs, and tables are also a big challenge. Lastly, playgrounds facilities such as swings, slides, among other things are either missing or do not meet the standards. Teachers are also poorly remunerated and they have no job security since some are hired by the county government on contract basis and others by individual schools where individual school resolve how much they pay teachers. In line with this, the teachers also lamented over inadequate learning materials. The teachers specified that preschools barely afford them reference resource materials making learning difficult. This study is similar to Karanja and Githinji, (2011) who associated non-implementation of the early child education to inadequate financing, ineffective policy design, low involvement of target groups, scarcity of skilled teachers, poor terms of service, and increased number of orphans. It's therefore true to say that these challenges are interrelated.

#### **4.2 The challenges the Sub-County ECDE officers faced when implementing ECDE policies in the county**

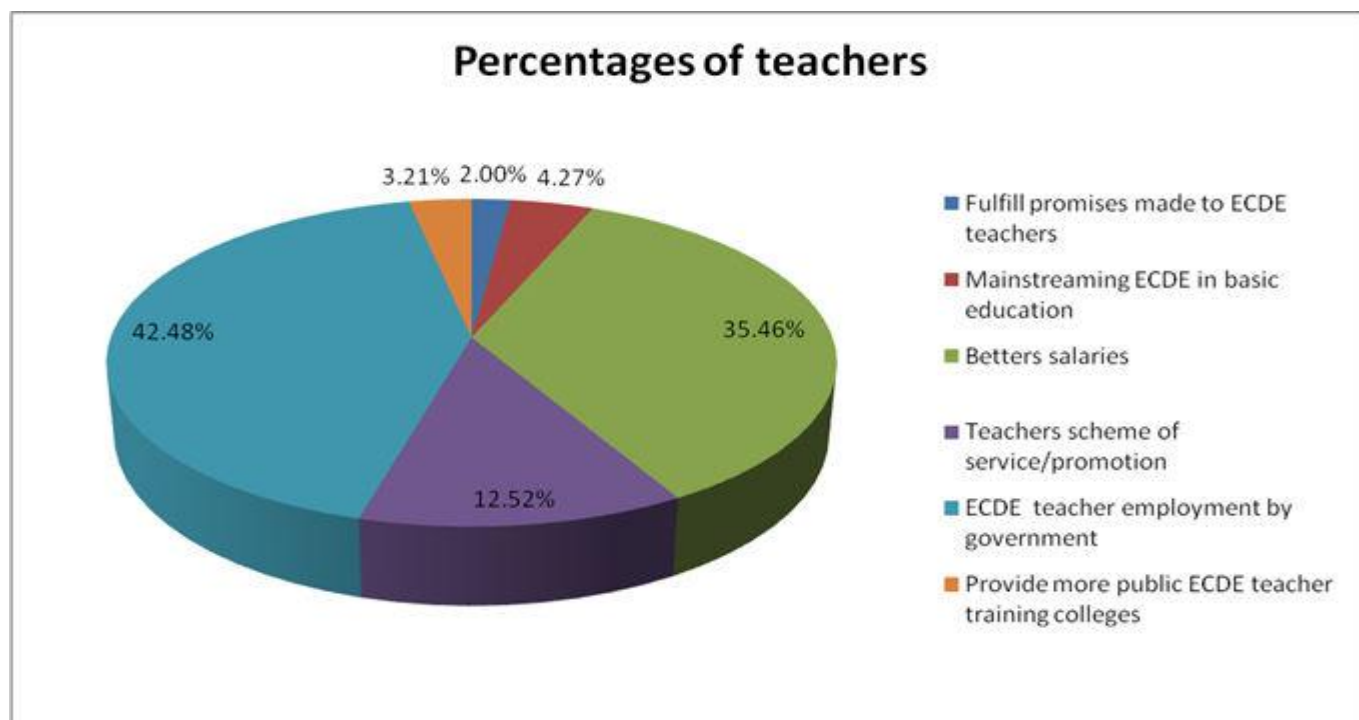
The study also pursued to explore the main challenges faced by Sub-County ECDE officers in implementing ECDE policy. Through interview with the Sub-County ECDE officers, it was established that there was lack of prioritising Early Childhood issues by the County government; negative attitude towards Early Childhood has impacted negatively in the execution Early Childhood policy, particularly concerning the inadequate of contribution of monetary resources to assist in the employment ECD teachers. In fact a plan to have teachers employed was shelved in spite of being in the county's budgetary estimates due to other unrelenting priorities.

Another important challenge was the lack of good will from the politicians who did not appreciate the significance of Early Childhood Education; there was also lack of assistance from the head-teachers and inadequate information by teachers on the current policy, expressly on their responsibilities in the application of the early childhood policy. Other themes derived from the head teachers' interview included poor wages for teachers; inadequate physical facilities poor payment of fees by parents, insufficient land for expansion of preschool centres which was similarly mentioned as a big difficult, particularly in the towns.

The ECDE teachers were majorly concerned with the challenge of the adjournment of the implementation of early childhood policy framework commendations, often mentioning the recommendation that providing for hiring of at best two ECDE teachers in all state owned elementary schools by 2010. Certainly, if this would have occurred, it would have gone a long way in improving the preschool teacher's terms of service.

#### **4.3 Policy Priorities According to the ECD Teachers**

Early childhood Education Teachers were asked to state the important urgent areas they would need to be addressed. The findings are shown in Figure 4.1



**Figure 4.1 Policy Priorities According to the ECD Teachers**

The results in figure 4.1 demonstrate that the main priority for teachers is employment as noted by 42% of the respondents. Being on payroll is closely associated to improved earnings. It is useful to note that the teachers did not cite concerns on learning resources or aspects such as quality of preschools which is the key emphasis of the ECDE policy framework. Conceivably these results underscores the challenges facing preschool teachers as they pursue their welfare matters.

**4.3.1 Policy challenges experienced in devolving ECDE to County Governments**

During the interviews with Sub county ECDE education officers, Primary school head teachers, preschool teachers and sub county Education offices, the following challenges have been experienced:

**4.3.2 Teacher Management**

There seems to be misunderstanding as to whether the devolved units should employ and supervise the preschool teachers. The 2010 Kenyan constitution solely mandates the Teachers Service Commission (TSC) to hire and manage the teachers. This might have been the cause of employing the ECDE teachers on contract basis where the diploma holders are paid sh 16 000 and certificate holder sh. 14000. These are inadequate wages.

**4.3.3 Access to Early Childhood Education**

The Early Childhood Education Policy stipulate on the importance of improving access, for example it mandates the state and communities to establish ECDE centres at a walking distance of not more than one kilometre. This allows preschools to be initiated nearly in all neighbourhoods such as shopping centres, and even in the homes and also establishment by private investors. This has greatly compromised the quality of early childhood education in Kisii County. Furthermore, the County Governments is not providing money to private school to permit children's access for quality Early Childhood Education services.

**4.3.4 Quality and Standards**

The devolved unit has been facing challenges in monitoring preschools. There were no indicators that the county Government of Kisii has the modalities of monitoring and maintaining early childhood standards.

**4.3.5 The ICT component**

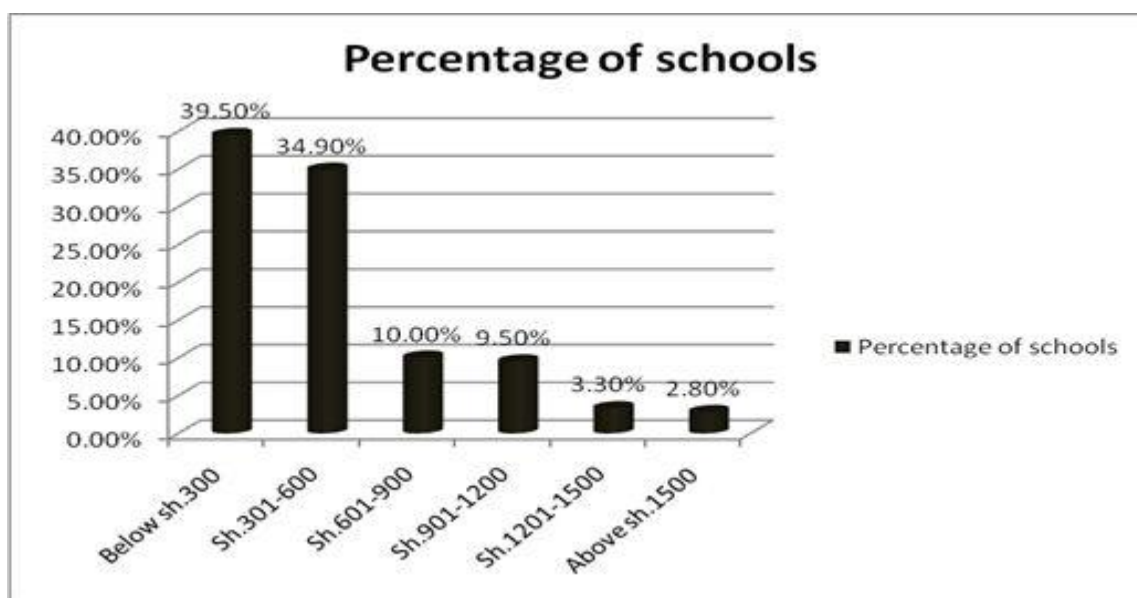
The devolved Governments are responsible of Information and Communication Technology in the counties. It is anticipated that preschool learners will transit to grade one and efficiently use laptops and smart in their learning. There is no clear policy on admission requirement of the children as they join primary schools.

**4.3.6 Children with Special Needs**

The Special Needs Education is still the responsibility of the state. The devolved government are yet to design a policy that will address Special Needs Education issues at the early childhood education level.

**4.3.7 The Financing Mechanisms in Early Childhood Education**

The study also determined the nature of monetary provision by parents in the preschools in Kisii County. The head teachers were required to indicate the amount paid by parents as fees. The findings were are presented in figure 4.2



**Figure 4.2** Amounts of money paid by parents to pay ECDE teacher

From figure 4.2, it is apparent that in majority (74.40%) of preschool centres, parents paid less than Kshs.600 per child per term per to support the payment of ECDE teachers and acquire teaching learning materials. Though affordable to many poor households and the unemployed, the fees charged were too low which is perceived to compromise the quality of ECDE education where schools will not be able to purchase teaching and learning material and pay their ECDE teachers who were not employed by the county Government. The study further established that in about one fifth (19.5%) of the schools, Parents with ECDE children paid between 601 and 1200 per child per term. It was also established that it was only in 6.1% of the preschool centres where parents with ECDE children paid above 1200 per term per child which mainly private ECDE centres. Generally the study established that in spite of the fact that the county government is supposed to provide ECDE Education in the county, still parents are to provide for their pupil’s education. During the interview with the Sub county ECDE education officers, it was additionally noted that the introduction of free primary (FPE) in 2003 negatively affected the ECDE programme in county. Parents felt that ECDE is not a priority and therefore several parents have chosen to keep children at home, until they attain the age of joining grade one. Further parents fail to pay school levies. This scenario has impacted on preschool programmes especially the school feeding programme where less than 5% of the ECDE centres that had effective feeding programme and ECDE salaries. These findings are in line with those of Karanja (2015) who established that prior enthusiasms before FPE have declined.

Despite the affordable fee paid at preschool centres, it was observed by 78.4% of the head teachers are still faced many defaulting parents. This is attributed to free schooling and parents do not comprehend why they should pay fees at the preschools (UNESCO/OECD, 2005). The above results are dissimilar to that of Kombo and Gogo (2004) who carried study in Nairobi which established that 80.1 % of the preschools charged below fifteen thousand shillings per year. The results additionally revealed that there was no uniformity in fees payment among preschools.

**Table 4.1** Utilization of funds from parents

Primary school Head teachers were asked to show how the monies from parent were used. The responses are shown in Table 4.1.

Utilization of funds from parents	Percentage of Head teacher
Attending teachers’ seminars and workshops	6.21%
Buying of table, and chairs	16.76%
Paying teacher’s salaries	58.42%
Purchasing of instructional resources	10.82%
Feeding the children	2.47%
Maintenance of ECDE equipment	3.65%
Any other expenses	1.67%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>

From Table 4.1, majority of the preschools used their monies pay ECDE teachers as reported by 68.42% of the head teachers. The study also establishes that it was only 16.76% was used to procure desks, chairs and tables



while 10.82% of funds collected was used to acquire instructional materials. Despite the relevance of frequent teachers’ workshops and seminars, only 6.21% of the funds collected from parents is used to facilitate teachers workshops or seminars. The study further established that the feeding programme and maintenance of ECDE equipment were not among the major priorities in many ECDE centres.

**4.3.8 Funding of teachers’ salaries**

The ECDE teachers were asked to specify the sponsors who fund their remunerations. The findings are presented in Table 4.2:

**Table 4.2: Funding of teachers’ salaries**

	Sponsors who funded ECDE teachers’ salaries	Percentage of teachers	Average amount of salary paid to majority of the ECDE teachers per month
1	County government	42.21%	Sh.14000
2	Parents	53.72%	Sh.3000
3	Community well-wishers	1.06%	Sh.20000
4	Sponsors and churches	1.21%	Sh.18000
5	NGO/ CBO	1.8%	Sh.28000

Findings show that parents bear a big burden of paying teacher’s salary as reported by 53.72% of the teachers. However majority of the teachers paid by parents were given a salary of sh.3000 per month. The findings further indicated that the county government had employed 42.21% of the ECDE teachers in the county. The study also established that 1.06%, 1.21% and 1.8% of the ECDE teachers who drew their salaries from the Community well-wishers, Sponsors/churches and NGO/ CBO respectively. The findings lastly demonstrate that there was a widespread disparity in teacher’s salaries. Conspicuously a huge percentage of teachers, 53.72% earned a salary of Kshs. 3,000 and sometimes less per month, while 42.21 % earned an average of Kshs 14000. A small percentage of teachers (4.07%) received over eighteen thousand shillings per month.

**4.4 Parental Involvement and Preschool Children's School Absenteeism**

The study sought to establish the extent various elements of parental involvement influence preschool children’s absenteeism. To achieve this, multiple regression analysis was conducted and the results are presented as follows.

The regression model was;

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1X_1 + \beta_2X_2 + \beta_3X_3 + \beta_4X_4 + \beta_5X_5 + \beta_6X_6$$

Where

Y is preschool children’s absenteeism.

$\beta$  = Regression coefficient

$X_1$ = Effective home school communications on preschool children’s learning

$X_2$ = Volunteering in school activities related to preschool learning

$X_3$ = Parental decision–making on preschool learning

$X_4$ = Collaborating with the community to support preschool education

$X_5$ = Appropriate parenting

$X_6$ = Providing effective home learning environment

**Table 4.3 Model Summary of the association between parental Involvement and Children's Absenteeism**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	-.625 <sup>a</sup>	.390	.378	6.010

a. Predictors: (Constant), Providing effective home learning environment , Appropriate Parenting , Collaborating with the community, Decision–making, Effective home school Communications , Volunteering in school activities

As reflected in table 4.3, the six elements of parental involvement (Providing effective home learning environment , Appropriate Parenting , Collaborating with the community, Decision–making, Effective home school Communications and Volunteering in school activities) that were investigated, explain 37.8% of the preschool children’s absenteeism as represented by the adjusted R<sup>2</sup>. Also, the correlation coefficient  $r = -0.625$  indicates that there is a moderate negative combined correlation between parental involvement and preschool children’s absenteeism as predicted by the regression model.

**Table 4.4 Coefficient of parental involvement and preschool children’s absenteeism**

Coefficients <sup>a</sup>						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	26.155	1.047		24.989	.000
	Effective home school Communications	-1.638	.313	-.278	-5.239	.000
	Volunteering in school activities	-.360	.305	-.073	-1.178	.240
	Decision–making	-.467	.294	-.088	-1.591	.113
	Collaborating with the community	-.826	.314	-.157	-2.632	.009
	Appropriate Parenting	-.572	.235	-.120	-2.438	.015
	Providing effective home learning environment	-.996	.256	-.198	-3.889	.000

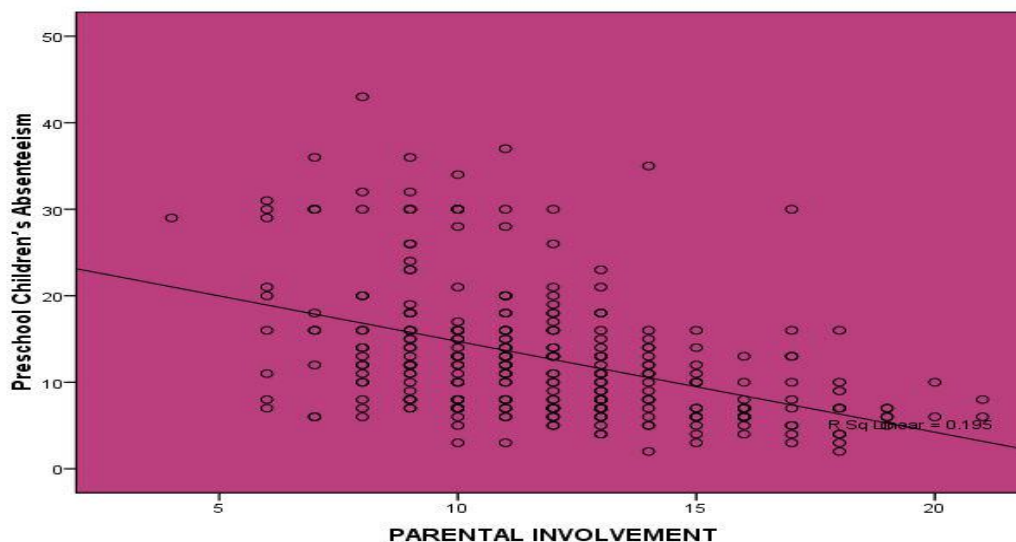
**a. Dependent Variable: Preschool Children's School Absenteeism**

The regression equation will be;

$$Y = 26.155 - 1.638 X_1 - .360 X_2 - .467 X_3 - .826 X_4 - .572 X_5 - .996 X_6 + \pi$$

Table 4.4 show the results of the joint effect of parental effective home school Communications, volunteering in school activities, decision–making, collaborating with the community in supporting preschool education, appropriate Parenting and providing effective home learning environment on preschool children’s school absenteeism. The regression equation has established that taking all factors into account (Providing effective home learning environment , Appropriate Parenting , Collaborating with the community, Decision–making, Effective home school Communications and Volunteering in school activities) constant at zero, preschool children’s absenteeism will have an index of 26.155. The results also shows that taking all other independent variables at zero, a unit increase in parental effective home school Communications will lead to a 1.638 decrease in the preschool children’s absenteeism. The *P*-value was 0.000 which is less than 0.05 and thus the relationship between parental effective home school Communications and preschool children’s absenteeism was significant. The results further shows that a unit increase in parental volunteering in school activities related to preschool learning will lead to a 0.360 decrease in the scores of preschool children’s absenteeism. However the *P*-value was 0.240 which is greater than 0.05 and thus the relationship between parental volunteering in school activities related to preschool learning and preschool children’s school absenteeism is not significant. It is also observed that a unit increase in parental decision–making on preschool learning, collaborating with the community to support preschool education, appropriate parenting and providing effective home learning environment will lead to a 0.467, 0.826, 0.572 and 0.996 decrease in preschool children absenteeism respectively. Parental effective home school Communications had the greatest effect on reducing preschool children’s absenteeism among the six element of parental involvement asseses.

To further illustrate the association between parental involvement and preschool children’s absenteeism in ECDE centres, a scatter plot was generated as shown in Figure 4.3.



**Figure 4.3 Scatter diagram on relationship between parental involvement and children’s absenteeism**

The scatter plot indicates that there were some evident of a negative correlation between parental involvement and preschool children’s absenteeism in preschool centres, as the pattern of dots seems to slope from lower right to upper left. This implies that accumulatively as the parents improve their effective home learning environment, appropriate parenting, collaborating with the community, decision–making, effective home school communications and volunteering in school activities, the rate of preschool children’s absenteeism tend to decreases.

**4.5 Parental Involvement and Preschool Children's access to quality education**

The study sought to establish the extent various elements of parental involvement influence preschool children’s access to quality education. To achieve this, multiple regression analysis was conducted and the results are presented as follows.

**Table 4.5 Model Summary for Parental Involvement and Preschool Children's access**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.893 <sup>a</sup>	.798	.794	10.030

a. Predictors: (Constant), Providing effective home learning environment , Appropriate Parenting , Collaborating with the community, Decision–making, Effective home school Communications , Volunteering in school activities

As reflected in table 4.5, the six elements of parental involvement (Providing effective home learning environment , Appropriate Parenting , Collaborating with the community, Decision–making, Effective home school Communications and Volunteering in school activities) that were investigated, explain 79.4% of the preschool children’s access to quality preschool education as stipulated in early childhood policy guideline as represented by the adjusted R<sup>2</sup>. Also, the correlation coefficient  $r = 0.893$  indicates that there is a strong positive combined correlation between parental involvement and preschool children’s access to quality education.

**Table 4.6 Coefficient of parental involvement and preschool children’s access to quality education**

Coefficients <sup>a</sup>		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
Model		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	12.607	1.747		7.217	.000
	Effective home school Communications	4.494	.522	.263	8.611	.000
	Volunteering in school activities	3.369	.509	.236	6.612	.000
	Decision–making	3.765	.490	.246	7.681	.000
	Collaborating with the community	3.464	.524	.227	6.616	.000
	Appropriate Parenting	1.935	.392	.140	4.939	.000
	Providing effective home learning environment	2.775	.427	.190	6.493	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Preschool children's access to quality education

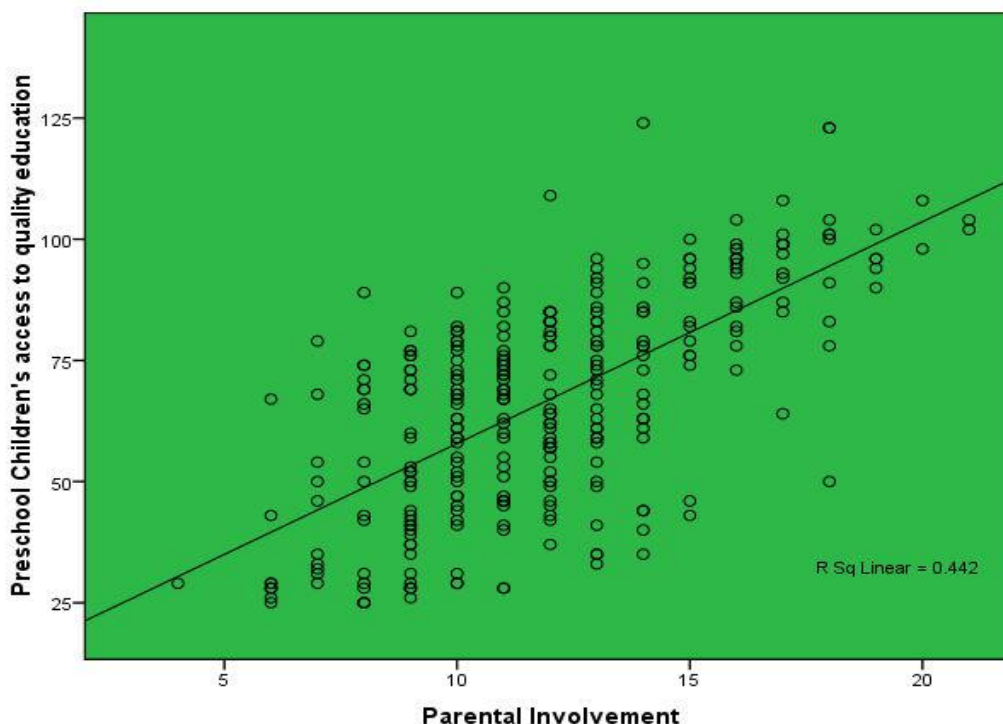
The regression equation will be;

$$Y = 12.607 + 4.494 X_1 + 3.369 X_2 + 3.765 X_3 + 3.464 X_4 + 1.935 X_5 + 2.775 X_6 + \pi$$

Table 4.6 show the results of the joint effect of parental effective home school Communications, volunteering in school activities, decision–making, collaborating with the community in supporting preschool education, appropriate Parenting and providing effective home learning environment on preschool children’s access to quality education as guided by the early childhood policy guideline. The regression equation has established that taking all factors into account (Providing effective home learning environment , Appropriate Parenting , Collaborating with the community, Decision–making, Effective home school Communications and Volunteering in school activities) constant at zero, preschool children’s access to quality education will have an index of 12.607. The results also shows that taking all other independent variables at zero, a unit increase in parental effective home school Communications will lead to a 4.494 increase in the preschool children’s access to quality education. The results further shows that a unit increase in parental volunteering in school activities related to preschool learning will lead to a 3.369 increase in the scores of preschool children’s access to quality education. It is also observed that a unit increase in parental decision–making on preschool learning, collaborating with the community to support preschool education, appropriate parenting and providing effective home learning environment will lead to a 3.765, 3.464, 1.935 and 2.775 increase in preschool children access to quality education respectively. It further established that there was a significant relationship between parental decision–making on preschool learning, collaborating with

the community to support preschool education, appropriate parenting, providing effective home learning environment and preschool children’s access to quality education. Parental effective home school Communications had the greatest positive effects on preschool children’s access to quality education.

Further, the study sought to illustrate the relationship between parental involvement and preschool children’s access to quality education as follows.



**Figure 4.4 scatter diagram on parental involvement and preschool children’s access to quality**

The scatter plot indicates that there were some evident of a positive correlation between parental involvement and preschool children’s access to quality education, as the pattern of dots seems to slope from lower left to upper right. This implies that as parental involvement is improved, preschool children’s access to quality education improves respectively.

#### 4.6 Summary of Findings

The study established that various challenges seriously hindered the implementation of Early Childhood Education in Kisii County. Some of the challenges included lack of enough ECDE teachers, high pupil-teacher ratio, insufficient learning resources, insufficient classrooms and furniture appropriate for preschool children and most learning centres were found to share playground with primary pupils. The county further faced some challenges as they sought to implement ECDE policy guideline.

The study further established that the six elements of parental involvement (Providing effective home learning environment , Appropriate Parenting , Collaborating with the community, Decision–making, Effective home school Communications and Volunteering in school activities) that were investigated explained 37.8% and 79.4% of the preschool children’s absenteeism and access to quality preschool education as represented by the adjusted R<sup>2</sup> respectively. The study also established that there were evident of a significant association between parental involvement and preschool children’s access to quality education. However the relation was negative between parental involvement and preschool children’s absenteeism in preschool centres.

#### 5. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- It is the objective of all educational systems and, indeed, all stakeholders to seek to improve the students’ holistic development and education at the formative years. In regard to the current results, the following recommendations are made with the view of improving quality preschool Education.
- Based on the study it is essential for the Ministry of education to ensure that early childhood is mainstreamed into basic education hence provide funding. This will ensure quality ECDE services in various County governments.
- There is need to create awareness on the early childhood policy framework among all early childhood stakeholders. This can fulfil requirements such as the provision of basic quality preschool resources.

- There is need to enhance awareness among parents about the importance of early childhood education for long life academic achievement.
- Teacher should make available a welcoming atmosphere for parents to come up and converse their children's academic advancement and other matters of concern through parent/ teacher gatherings and social events.
- Teachers should involve parents in school assessments and improvement plans so that parents, teachers and other educational stakeholder build consensus on key 'quality' pointers for the school that will improve preschool children's access to quality education.
- Additional research should be carried out in another geographical setting to authenticate the current findings and investigate whether the findings have any implications with Kenyan preschool children.
- There is need for an equivalent study to be replicated using a bigger sample size in other parts of the country. The study can cover teacher characteristics, school climate and their influence on preschool children's access to quality education

## 6. CONCLUSION:

The results of the current study are significant for Kenyan Education system owing to the fact that improving the quality of education and reducing the challenges facing various counties in Kenya will have a positive impact on the long persisting challenges related to the attainment of Education for All and Sustainable Development Goal by 2030. In addition, the obtained results could serve as a foundation for developing a theoretical model for investigating the direct and indirect implication of the fore-mentioned factors on improving the education standards in Kenya. Generally, these conclusions serve as a parameter for all Educational experts to develop and implement policies that may possibly aid enhancement of preschool programme. Finally finding fill up the existing gap on existing trends of pre-schoolers' access to quality education. This also gives room for conclusive countrywide and global research.

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