

# Family Income Dynamics' Ramification Pre-Primary School Pupils' Reading Readiness in Siaya in Kenya

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**Abstract:** The role of the family in the life of an individual child cannot be overemphasized. Available studies globally have shown that family dynamics have a significant influence on reading readiness of pupils at the early years of school. Many attempts have been made by the government and different organizations to improve reading but not equal effort is put to promote reading readiness. This study therefore explored family dynamics that influence reading readiness among pre-primary school pupils in rural pre-schools in Siaya, Kenya. The study adopted a descriptive research design which allowed for in-depth exploration of the study variables. This study was guided by Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory. The dependent variable for the study is pre-primary pupils' reading readiness while the independent variables were family dynamics. The target population of the study was pre-primary school pupils in Siaya County. The study adopted stratified random sampling to sample schools as public and private pre-primary schools while purposive sampling was used to select Siaya County for the study. A sample of 96 public pre-primary school pupils and 16 private pre-primary school pupils were sampled for the study. Questionnaires and reading readiness checklists were utilized for data collection. Reading readiness test/checklist analyses gathered pupils' reading readiness data while questionnaire was used to collect data from the parents. Data collected was analyzed using inferential and descriptive statistics with the help of statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) version 20. Pearson product moment of correlation was used to test the null hypothesis at  $p \geq 0.5$

The key findings showed that parental socio-economic statuses significantly influenced pupils' reading readiness. The main recommendation was that the government and the county government specifically should promote parents' economic status to promote reading competence levels among early grade learners which can be a great boost for the overall academic performance in higher grades.

**Key words:** Family income, reading readiness, pre-primary schools, pre-primary school pupils, reading, and competence.

## I. STUDY BACKGROUND

Reading readiness among early grade learners is a sure indicator of how learners' transition readiness to subsequent grades. Reading is a process that motivates the reader to acquire new ideas, thoughts and develop imaginative skills. It involves imitating words, speaking in learnt vocabulary and making sense of written texts. Reading competence is important for pupils' academic advancement and future societies' social and economic development. It is the foundation to all other subject areas for comprehension and enables the learner to answer questions (Bird, 2008).

Inspire the foregoing revelation many children of school going age may not manage a reading task meant for their rightful grade. Globally, more than 796 million people cannot read and write while around 20% of the English speaking children reach the age of 11 unable to read confidently (UNESCO 2008). This is attributed to many factors amongst them family socio-economic status. Family income is the sum of the income of the adult members of the family. It includes every form of income e.g. salaries, wages or investment gains. A research by Tamis-LeMonda and Rodriguez (2014) in USA found out that children from low-income families tend to have less advanced vocabulary compared to their peers from high-income families from as early as three years. The difference in vocabulary widen until age 5 when they enter school. This resulted in reading readiness deficiency in pre-primary school and first grade.

Safwat and Shekhany (2014) in their study in Egypt aver that the relationship between parent-child interaction and language development points out that family income has a strong significant relationship and a strong predictor of language development. The study concentrated on language in general. The current study is going to be specific to reading readiness and its relationship to family income

In Kenya, Onderi, Kiplangat and Awino (2014) on investigating (the factors behind poor academic performance in the Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE), established that poor performance in all the subjects including languages were related to among other factors family income.

There is a clear indication from the studies the need for acquisition of adequate knowledge on pre-primary school pupils reading readiness. It was also important for similar studies to be conducted in pre-primary schools since many studies had been done in higher levels of learning and not in pre-primary school. This has resulted in a deficit of knowledge in pre-primary school pupils reading readiness. The current study aimed to find out the state of reading readiness of the pupils in pre-primary schools since they are supposed to read when they get to class one.

## II. METHODOLOGY

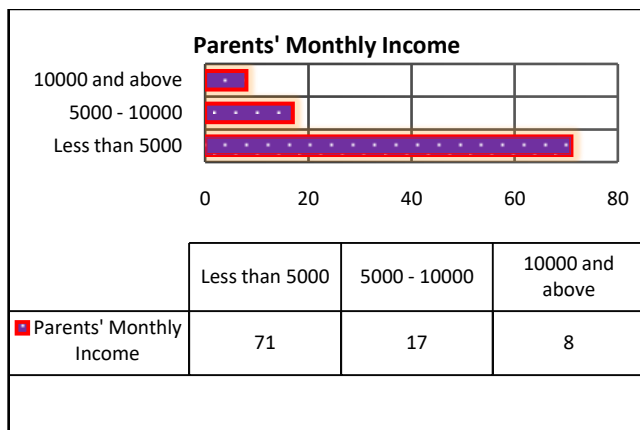
The researcher adopted the descriptive survey design in an attempt to investigate family income and reading readiness of pupils in pre-primary schools in Siaya County, Kenya. The target population was pre-primary II pupils. Questionnaires and reading readiness test/checklist-analysis was used.

Descriptive statistics such as, percentages, mean and standard deviation were used to describe the basic features of data into simple summaries in the study while inferential statistics such as Pearson’s product moment of correlation used to test if there was statistically significant relationship between family characteristics and reading readiness of pre-primary school pupils. Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 20 was used for analysing the data.

III. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

General information on Family Income

The study sought to establish the total income of the families where pre-primary school pupils’ came from. The income was categorized into three levels as: *Less than 5000*, *5000 – 10000* and *above 10000*



The table above shows that the majority (71 of 96) parents whose pre-primary school pupils’ participated in the study had a monthly income of less than 5000 shillings. The results also show that 17 of the 96 families earned between 5000 and 10000 shillings per month while only 8 of the sampled children had parents who earned more than 10000 per month. This implies that the majority of the parents in the study area lived on less than two dollars per day which is termed as the poverty line.

Influence of family income on reading readiness of pupils in pre-primary schools

The research sought to answer the research question as to whether family income had significant effects on pre-primary pupils’ reading readiness competencies. The table below presents the results thereof.

Monthly Income * Highest Level of Reading Cross-tabulation					
Count					
		Highest Level of Reading			Total
		Level One	Level two	Level three	
Monthly Income	Less than 5000	45	20	6	71
	5000 - 10000	8	6	3	17
	10000 and above	0	2	6	8
Total		53	28	15	96

The table above shows that only 6 out of 71 children from households where parents earned less than 5000 shillings were able to reach level three of reading readiness test. 3 out of 17 of those from households where parents earned between 5000 and 10000 shillings reached level three. Of eight (8) children whose parents earned more than 10000 shillings per month six (6) of them reached level three while none remained at level one.

To determine the relationship between family income and pupils’ reading readiness, the researchers run a Pearson’s correlation coefficient. The results are illustrated in the table below.

Symmetric Measures					
		Value	Asymp. Std. Error <sup>a</sup>	Approx. T <sup>b</sup>	Approx. Sig.
Interval by Interval	Pearson's R	.449	.095	4.875	.000 <sup>c</sup>
Ordinal by Ordinal	Spearman Correlation	.368	.101	3.838	.000 <sup>c</sup>
N of Valid Cases		96			
a. Not assuming the null hypothesis.					
b. Using the asymptotic standard error assuming the null hypothesis.					
c. Based on normal approximation.					

The table shows that Pearson’s coefficient was 0.449 showing a reasonable relationship between parental income and pre-primary school pupils reading readiness. The findings show that the higher the family income the higher the probability of the pre-primary pupils’ readiness to read and the lower the family income the lower the chances of the pre-primary school pupils’ reading readiness skills.

The findings of the study agree with Isaac and Magnuson’s (2011) study that used data from the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study- Birth (ECLS-B) Cohort in the United States of America to estimate the associations between family income and children’s school readiness measured by academic skills, behaviour, and physical health at school entry. The (ECLS-B) study found large gaps in the measures of school readiness across groups of children defined by family income. Such differences were much smaller, however, when potential confounds were included as controls in regressions. In multivariate models, they found out significant, but modest, links between household income and measures of children’s achievement and behaviour. The study observed that an additional \$1,000 of average income throughout early childhood resulted in about a 0.015 standard deviation in reading for children in low-income families, with smaller effects in children’s behaviours. Therefore this study observed that, children living in poverty are much less likely to have cognitive and early literacy readiness skills than are children living above the poverty threshold. The findings of the current

study further agree with Safwat and Sheikhy's (2014) study in Egypt which established the relationship of parent-child interaction and language development. The study pointed out that family income has a strong significant relationship and is a strong predictor of language development. It was established that the family and particularly the family's socio-economic status of income is an important factor and variable in early reading readiness among young children.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

This study builds on family dynamics and its association with reading readiness. It specifically focuses on family income. Family income is a factor that influences pre-primary school pupils' reading readiness. It was established that pre-primary school pupils whose parents earned more were a grade higher in reading readiness than the pre-primary school pupils whose parents earned lower. This implies that if these family dynamics are improved children are likely to have a better head start in reading and thus progress fairly well in reading, academic and social life. The study strongly recommends that both the central government and county governments should invest in improving the income levels of parents if education levels are to be improved even in later grades. There is need for future studies to explore influence of only the other factors

outside income including type of family's relationships with pupils' reading readiness.

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