

# Economic Status of Parents and Children's Participation in Pre-Primary School in Mlolongo Slum of Machakos County, Kenya

Mwendwa N. Mpekethu<sup>1</sup>, Dr. Rachael W. Kamau Kang'ethe<sup>2</sup>, Dr. Maureen Mweru<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Masters student, School of Education, Department of Early Childhood Education, Kenyatta University, Nairobi, Kenya

<sup>2,3</sup>Lecturer, Department of Early Childhood and Special Needs Education, Kenyatta University, Nairobi, Kenya

**Abstract:** Children who access holistic, quality Early Childhood Development Education services have a better start in learning, and are better prepared for entering and staying in primary school. However, many children are missing out on the stated benefits of early childhood education since a large percentage of the pre-primary children are not attending the early childhood education programmes. The aim of this study was to examine how the economic status of parents influences children's participation in pre-primary in Mlolongo Slum. This study adopted the culture of poverty view by Osca Lewis. The study adopted a descriptive survey design and employed both qualitative and quantitative methods in data collection and analysis. The study employed simple random and purposive sampling to obtain the study sample. The target population in this study was 30 head teachers, 68 pre-primary teachers and 1466 parents in the thirty schools in Mlolongo slum in Athi River Sub-county. Simple random sampling was employed to select 9 schools. The head teachers in the sampled schooled were purposively selected for the study. Simple random sampling was used to select 68 pre-primary teachers and 440 of parents who had children in the 9 pre-primary schools. The study used semi-structured questionnaires to obtain data from teachers and head-teachers, and interview schedules for parents. Piloting was carried out in two pre-primary schools within Mlolongo slum. The findings of the study revealed that majority of parents ran small businesses while others worked as casual laborers which did not provide enough income. The study concluded that the kind of economic activity parents were involved in compelled majority of parents to either leave home very early or arrive very late, thus denying them time for their children. The study recommended that the Boards of Management through County Government should introduce Free Preschool Education. The study further recommended that parents and donors to provide school meals to children so as to attract and retain them in school.

**Keywords:** Economic Status, Children's Participation, Pre-primary

## I. INTRODUCTION

Parents have a vibrant role to play in the life and education of a child and thus parents' participation in their children's education has been shown to be an important variable that positively influences children's education (Epstein, 1997). At pre-primary level, Nokali, Bachman and Votruba-Drzal (2010) assert that that all children aged five years and above to be involved in education activities, many

countries especially the developing ones are still struggling with participation of children in pre-primary education. According to Pleck (2010), most of the factors influencing participation of children in pre-primary education revolve around parents, educational institutions and the community in which they live in.

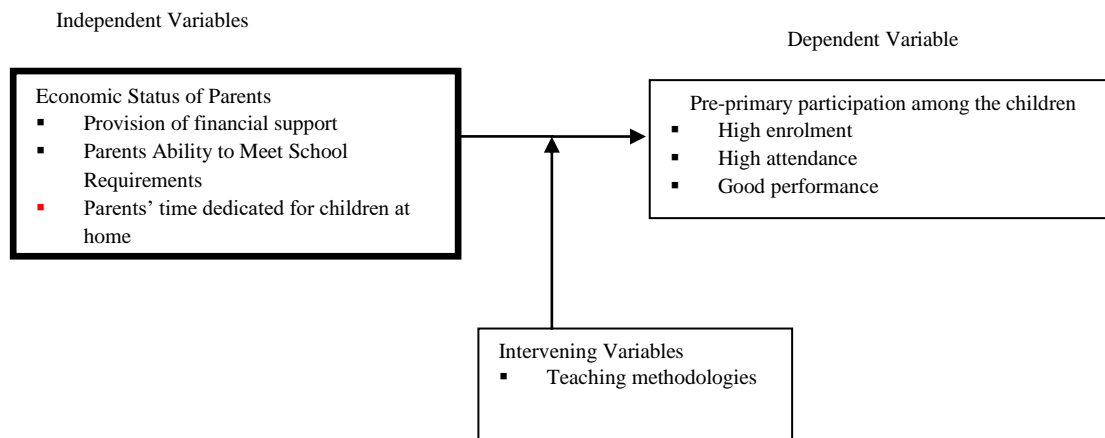
In the United States (U.S) about four million children enroll in kindergarten, elementary grades or pre-primary schools annually for early childhood education (U.S. Department of Education, 2015). This constitutes about 75% of all children aged 3-6 years. In Russia, the enrollment of children in early childhood education for 3-6 years stands at 85% (World Bank, 2015). In Brazil, pre-primary enrollment and attendance rate is about 78% (Education for All 2015 National Review, 2015), a growth by about 20% in the previous five years. While in India, the lower enrollment and participation is associated with factors such as level of income and government input (The Condition of Education, 2018). In china, pre-primary participation is lower compared to the western countries, with 70% of children enrolling in the three year pre-primary program in 2015 (OECD, 2016). However, this is better compared to India, whose enrollment in pre-primary is about 53% for children between 3-5 years (Centre for Early Childhood Education and Development, 2013).

In Africa today, more and more children are becoming marginalized as a result of the worsening economic, social and political conditions. The average number of children enrolled in each pre-primary range between 71 and 73% (MoE, 2016). This is below expectation and, it means that many children in Africa do not have access to pre-primary education. In sub-Saharan Africa, enrollment has nearly doubled since 1999 to around 10 million in 2007. The state of pre-primary participation among children in Sub-Saharan Africa is actually worse compared to many other countries. For instance, the pre-primary school enrollment rate for children between 3-5 years in Nigeria is about 42%, which is about 8% lower compared to South Africa (50%), and 12% higher than Ethiopia (30%) (World Bank, 2015).

In Kenya the issue of low enrollment is noted to start at pre-primary level as many children are out of school. Precisely, by the year 2010, 2.1 million children which was 31.34% of the total number were not enrolled (Ogenga, 2010). In 2012, it

was reported that out of about 9.6 million school age children in Kenya, 2.6 million (27%), did not attend school (Murungi, 2012). The situation may even be worse among marginalized communities like Mlolongo slum in Machakos County where children are socially, psychologically, emotionally, economically and educationally deprived. Despite the government’s improvements and introduction of major reforms and innovations in education with expansion of ECDE, recent studies indicate that ECDE is facing many drawbacks. According to the Machakos County Integrated Development Plan, Mlolongo Slum has one of the lowest pre-primary school enrolments in Machakos County. There are a

*Conceptual Framework*



II. LITERATURE REVIEW

*Economic Status of Parents and Children’s Participation*

While investigating the significance of socio-economic resources in early childhood education, Mollborn, Lawrence, James-Hawkins, and Fomby (2016) followed 8600 children from infancy through kindergarten using the U.S. national representative Early Childhood Longitudinal Study-Birth Cohort. The study identified that socio-economic status of the parents determined the cognitive development of children through availability of the right and adequate nutrients, which was essential for enrollment and participation of children in pre-primary schools. This was further supported by Avvisati, Besbas, and Guyon (2015), whose study explained that socio-economic status of parents predicted the level of parental support to their children in school. However, this study did not collect the views of key stakeholders such as teachers and parents.

In a similar study, Kainuwa and Yusuf (2013) investigated the influence of socio-economic status and parental educational background on their children’s education in Nigeria. The researchers reviewed literature on past studies concerning the topic and found out that parents with high socio-economic status and higher education were capable and adequately

number of empirical studies done on slums in general, but there is a paucity of research on pre-primary participation in slums. However, information on what influences children’s pre-primary participation in Mlolongo slums is lacking, therefore this study seeks to examine how economic status of parents influence participation of children in pre-primary schools in Mlolongo Slums hence the gap.

*Purpose of the Study*

The purpose of this study was to examine how the economic status of parents influences children's participation in pre-primary in Mlolongo Slum of Machakos County, Kenya.

Informed to enroll their children in better and more expensive pre-primary schools. This was supported by Eneji, Ubom, Eneji, Ubogo, and Dunnham (2013), who explained that high socio-economic status led to high enrolment and retention in pre-primary schools, however, the use of secondary data only limited the study.

According to Kenya National Bureau of Statistics on a study conducted about poverty levels revealed over 45.2 percent of Kenyan population living below the world recommended poverty line. These people are incapable of acquiring proper dietary needs, medical care, and hygienic habitats. Children who are born to such parents are pre-disposed to disadvantaged access to education right from conception to primary school age. Although several studies have established a correlation between parental economic status with children participation in pre-primary activities, this study aim at looking at different ways parents living in Machakos county raises money to establish their economic situation.

III. METHODOLOGY

*Research Design and Target Population*

The study employed a descriptive survey design involving both qualitative and quantitative approaches. A survey study gathers data at a particular point and time with the intention of describing the nature of the existing conditions, identifying the standards against which existing conditions can be compared as well as determining the relationship between

specific events (Orodho, 2009). Survey techniques are very useful in describing the characteristics of a large population. The target population of this study was thirty (30) head teachers, sixty eight (68) pre-primary teachers and 1,466 parents who had pre-primary children attending schools in Mlolongo slums. Therefore, the total target population was 1,564.

#### *Sampling Technique and Sample Size*

The study employed purposive and simple random sampling techniques. After purposively sampling the 30 registered pre-primary schools, simple random sampling was employed to get 30% of the schools which was 9 schools that were included in the study. The head teachers in the sampled schools were purposively selected for the study. Simple random sampling was used to select 20 pre-primary teachers in the 9 schools and 440 parents who had children in the 9 pre-primary centres. The sample size comprised of 9 head teachers, 20 teachers and 440 parents. Thus, the total number of respondents was 469.

#### *Research Instruments*

Questionnaires for head teachers and teachers were designed and used for data collection. Interview schedules for parents were also used to obtain the data required to meet the specific objectives of the study (Frankel & Wallen, 2003). Interview schedules were administered to the parents/guardians. There were ten questions in the interview schedules. Interviews were conducted orally, and answers to the questions were recorded on a piece of paper by the researcher.

#### *Pilot Study*

A pilot study was conducted in two schools in Mlolongo slum. The pilot study helped the researcher to discover any weaknesses in the instruments, check for clarity of the questions and modify the research instruments before the actual study. The schools were not included in the main study. Content validity was enhanced by seeking for experts in the area of Early Childhood Studies including lecturers in the Early Childhood Studies department at Kenyatta University who scrutinized the questionnaires and interview schedule. Test-retest method was used to estimate the reliability of the questionnaires. A Spearman rank order correlation was applied to compute the correlation coefficient and reliability level was 0.6.

#### *Data Collection Procedure*

Prior to the main study, the researcher visited the selected schools and made orientations and also notified the school administrators of their selection for study. During the visit, arrangements were made regarding when collection of data was to be done. Primary data was obtained from head teachers, teachers and parents from the sampled schools using questionnaires and interview schedules. Parents were invited by the head teachers for a meeting, where interviews were administered to sampled parents. Teachers and head teachers selected for the study were given questionnaires to fill, which

were collected immediately after completion. The respondents were given adequate explanation before responding to the items. The researcher made all possible attempts to ensure that the data to be attained from questionnaires and interview schedules were valid and reliable. To ensure this, the researcher established a good rapport with respondents and assured them that the information they gave would be treated with utmost confidentiality.

#### *Data Processing and Analysis*

The researcher collected both qualitative and quantitative data and this was analyzed accordingly. Data collected from questionnaires and the interview schedules was organized into themes. Qualitative data was thematically presented in narrative form and where possible in tabular form. Descriptive statistics formed the basis of this analysis. The data was analyzed using thematic approach. Quantitative data was entered into a computer and then analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 22. The information was then presented using tables.

## IV. STUDY RESULTS

This section entails the following: source of parental income, time parents leave and arrive home from work, parents' ability to meet school requirements and challenges experienced by parents in educating their pre-primary children.

#### *Source of Income*

Table 1: Parents' Sources of Income

Source of income	Frequency	Percentage (N=368)
Shop keeping	97	26.25%
Tailor	12	3.13%
Depend on husband	16	4.38%
Driving cars/taxi	16	4.38%
Watchmen/guards	12	3.13%
social worker	21	5.63%
washing clothes	14	3.75%
Bar attendant	5	1.25%
Salonist	23	6.25%
Sell groundnuts	7	1.88%
selling mutumba	5	1.25%
Driving boda boda	21	5.63%
helped by relative	12	3.13%
Sell sukumawiki	5	1.25%
sell water	7	1.88%
Selling githeri	5	1.25%
casual labourer	16	4.38%
house keeper	7	1.88%
employed in supermarket	5	1.25%
un employed	12	3.13%

work in a quarry	5	1.25%
cooking mandazi	9	2.50%
Hair cutting	16	4.38%
farming	7	1.88%
Hawking various items	12	3.13%

\*Multiple responses

Findings in Table 1 revealed that most of the parents were engaged in shop keeping business (26.25%). On the other hand, 6.25% were salonnists, 5.63% were social workers, 4.3% indicated they were casual labourers while 4.38% indicated they were in hair cutting business (Kinyozi). Basically, it comes out clearly that most of the parents who participated in this study were involved in small businesses ventures. The implication is that these businesses do not get enough income for them to pay school fees for their children. In addition, the parents may commit a lot of their time to business thus compromising education of their pre-primary children. Other parents serve as house keepers and due to the low income of the parents, they are not able to buy school uniform, pay school fees and meet other school needs. This makes the school administration keep on sending home children who have not met the school basic requirements.

*Time Parents Leave and Arrive Home from Work*

Table 2: Parents' Time of Departure for Work

Time	Frequency	Percent (N=368)
4.00am	21	5.63%
5.00am	44	11.88%
5.30 am	18	5.00%
6.00am	53	14.38%
7.00am	51	13.75%
7.30 am	44	11.88%
8.00 am	25	6.88%
8.30 am	12	3.13%
9.00am	21	5.63%
1.00pm	7	1.88%
2.00 pm	12	3.13%
6.00 pm	14	3.75%
6.30 pm	9	2.50%
no time	39	10.63%

\*Multiple responses

Findings in Table 2 show that majority of the parents left for work between 6.am and 7.30 am. For instance, 14.38% indicate that they left for work at 6 am, 13.75% indicated they left at 7.am while 11.88% indicated 7.30 am. The implication was that working parents parted with their children at early hours, probably even before they wake up. However, the 10% who indicated that they left for work at no time meant that they were not involved in any economic activity. It was also

established that all the 10% were women, and they mostly indicated that they depended on their husbands for their livelihoods.

*Parents' time of arrival from work*

Table 3: Parents' time of arrival from work

Time of arrival from work	Frequency	Percentage (N=368)
4.00pm	25	6.88%
5.00pm	28	7.50%
5.30 pm	28	7.50%
6.00pm	51	13.75%
6.30 pm	9	2.50%
7.00 pm	23	6.25%
7.30 pm	21	5.63%
8.00pm	60	16.25%
9.00 pm	41	11.25%
9.30pm	14	3.75%
10.00pm	16	4.38%
11.00pm	25	6.88%
6.00 am	7	1.88%
7.30 am	5	1.25%
no time	16	4.38%

Findings in Table 3 show that majority of the parents arrive from work between 6 pm and 8 pm, with majority (16.25%) adopting the latter and close proportion adopting the former (13.75%). These findings imply that a substantial number of children do not see their parents in the morning before they go to school. Furthermore, a larger number of children do not see their parents before they go to bed as majority of their parents arrive late. Some parents arrived as late as between 9.00pm and 11.00pm. Consequently, they may have minimal chance of interacting with their children for guidance, love, assisting them do their homework, as well as sharing the days experiences at school. Arasa (2004) reported a positive association between parents' participation in their children's academic work and academic performance. The absence of the above could be the contributor of children's absence from school, lateness, and also dislike of school.

*Parents Ability to Meet School Requirements*

Table 4: Parents Ability to Meet School Requirements

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	32	8.70%
No	304	82.60%
No Answer	7	1.90%
Somehow	25	6.80%
Total	368	100%



From Table 4 it can be seen that 82.6% of the parents revealed that they were not able to meet the basic school requirements. Only 8.70% explicitly said they were able to meet school requirements. Another 6.88% said they were somehow able to meet the school requirements. This basically implies that majority of the parents had their children not smoothly participating in pre-primary activities effectively. It is only a meager 8.70% whose children comfortably participated well as their parents were able to meet the school requirements. This corroborates with the finding of Blanden, Del-Bono, McNally and Rabe (2016) that individuals with low income levels are likely to forego certain basic necessities considering the circumstances and social requirements of the family.

## V. CONCLUSION

Participation in pre-school education among children is anchored on school attendance, positive attitudes, social competence and good academic skills. Thus it can be concluded that participation was a critical issue among pre-primary learners which was caused by persistent poverty leading to low participation. The fact that most parents were either coming home late or leaving very early for work (mostly casual), meant that they did not have much time and concern for their children.

## VI. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1) The study recommends the parents and donors to provide school meals to children so as to attract and retain them in school.
- 2) The study recommends that the Boards of Management through County Government should introduce Free Preschool Education.

## REFERENCES

- [1] Akindele, N. (2012). *Reading Culture, Parental Involvement and Children's Development in Formative Years: The Covenant University Experience*. Ota, Ogun State, Nigeria: Covenant University.
- [2] Arasa, J. N. (2004). *Cognitive correlates of English reading achievement among the standard three pupils in the slums of Nairobi*. A Ph.D Research Thesis. Kenyatta University.
- [3] Avvisati, F., Besbas, B., & Guyon, N. (2010). Parental Involvement in School: A Literature Review. *Revue D'économie Politique*, 120(5), 759. doi: 10.3917/redp.205.0759
- [4] Blanden, J., Del Bono, E., McNally, S., & Rabe, B. (2016). Universal Pre-school Education: The Case of Public Funding with Private Provision. *The Economic Journal*, 126(592), 682-723.
- [5] Centre for Early Childhood Education and Development (2013). *Early Childhood Education in India: A Snapshot* [Ebook]. Retrieved from <http://ceced.net/NEW-BOOK-2-DC.pdf>
- [6] Education for All (2015). National Review-Brazil. (2015). [Ebook]. Retrieved from <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0023/002300/230021e.pdf>
- [7] Enej, C., Ubom, B., Ubogo, G., & Dunammah, A. (2013). *Influence of family types and parent's socioeconomic status on school dropout among female students in the Old Ogoja Zone of Cross River, Nigeria* [Ebook].
- [8] Epstein, (2003). *Parental involvement Frame work and sample practices. Social intervention Potential and constrains*. New York.
- [9] MOE, (2016). *Free Primary Education: Every Child in School*. Nairobi: Government Printers
- [10] Mollborn, S., Lawrence, E., James-Hawkins, L., & Fomby, P. (2014). When do socioeconomic resources matter most in early childhood?. *Advances In Life Course Research*, 20, 56-69. doi: 10.1016/j.alcr.2014.03.001
- [11] Murungi, C.G. (2012). Early Childhood Education for the Pre-primary Age Going Children: The Issue of Low Enrolment in Kenya. *Journal of Education and Practice*. vol 3, No 6
- [12] Nokali, N.E., Bachman, H. J., & Votruba-Drzal, E. (2010) Within- and between-child parent involvement and academic and social skills in elementary school. *Child Development*, 81(3), 988 -1005.
- [13] OECD. (2016). *Education in China: A Snapshot* [Ebook]. Retrieved from <https://www.oecd.org/china/Education-in-China-a-snapshot.pdf>
- [14] Ogenga, P. A (2010). *Impact of Violent Conflict on Internal Efficiency of Secondary Schools in Mt. Elgon District, Kenya*. Unpublished Master's Thesis, Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology
- [15] Orodho, A. J. (2009). *Elements of Education & Social Science Research Methods* (2<sup>nd</sup> Ed.) Maseno, Kenya: Kenezja Publisher.
- [16] Pleck, J. H. (2010). Paternal involvement. *The role of the father in child development*, 58.
- [17] The Condition of Education. (2018). *Pre-primary and Kindergarten Enrollment* [Ebook]. Retrieved from [https://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/pdf/coe\\_cfa.pdf](https://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/pdf/coe_cfa.pdf)
- [18] World Bank. (2015). School enrollment, pre-primary (% gross) | Data. Retrieved from <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SE.PRE.ENRR?view=chart>