

## AN INVESTIGATION OF PARENTAL FACTOR AS A DETERMINANT OF CHILD TRANSITION READINESS FROM PRE-SCHOOL TO PRIMARY SCHOOL IN RUIRU, KIAMBU COUNTY KENYA

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### ABSTRACT

*It is undisputable fact that parents are the primary care givers of their children. The gist of the study was to investigate parents as determinant of children readiness transiting from pre-school to primary one in Ruiru sub- county, Kiambu County in Kenya. The results should assist parents and the government in realizing the importance of successful transition and especially from pre-school to primary one. The study employed mixed methodology in data collection and analysis. Both quantitative and qualitative data were collected concurrently. To ensure all the identified sub-groups in the target population were well represented, the study applied stratified sampling and simple random sampling. Questionnaires and interviews were used to collect the data. Pilot study was carried out to test the reliability of the instruments. Through the appraisal and guidance of the experts in the early childhood department, Mount Kenya University, the validity of the instruments was established. The quantitative data was analyzed with the use of tables, frequencies and a percentage while qualitative data collected was thematically analyzed. The study found out that transition of some children and especially from pre-school to primary one is a challenge. The researchers concluded that parents have a great role in relation to influencing the transition of their pre-schoolers joining primary school. However inadequate resources undermine parent's ability to provide for their children adequately. The study recommends that the government should socially and economically empower the parents and also include the early childhood programmes in the free education.*

**Keywords:** Parental factor, Readiness, transition, pre-schoolers, holistic development, single parenthood

### INTRODUCTION

In any given society or nation in the world, value of children can never be over-emphasized. For a country to have a serious or real development, it must protect and safeguard its natural resources in order to ensure its future. It is undeniable that numerous studies have been conducted by scholars and experts who have intensively and critically examined a ready child for school, a ready school for the child and transition among others, Adams (2004), Crinc and Lamberty (1994), Fabian and Dunlop (2002), Kids (2005), Einarsdottir (2007). However much less has been done to investigate the parents as a determinant factor in child readiness transiting from pre-school to primary one and especially in nowadays when the Kenyans society has undergone various social economical changes and family structures changes. Kabiru and Njenga (2007), Swadner, Kabiru and Njenga (2000), Whiting, Edwards (2003).

Signing diverse global policy frameworks, the government of Kenya clearly displayed its commitment to the wellbeing of young children. Starting with the (1989), United Nations convention on the rights of the child (UNC) which was closely followed by the rights and welfare of the child by African charter (1990), as well as the millennium development goals

(MDGs) (2000). Moreover Kenya took part and endorsed the deliberations of Jomtien World conference (1990) on education for all (EFA) and also the world education forum (2000), Dakar, Senegal. The government of Kenya has further shown a great concern for substantial improvement of young children's well-being by enacting (2001), children's act which consolidated the provision of the various laws that affected children.

It is irrefutable according to Thompson (2002), Arnold, Bartlett and Meralli (2006), that parents are the main primary care givers. They provide children with care and attention, love, basic health care, good nutrition, quality education, adequate shelter, safe community, early stimulation among others. Children according to WHO (2004), are a real reflection of their parents as well as the society. Adults are what they are now mainly because of what their parents and society did or failed to do for them when they were children. A study carried out in Kenya established that due to breakdown of the traditional extended family, breakdown of values, migration, introduction of a money economy as well as hiring of housekeepers, parents are not adequately helping their children to grow holistically and hence not ready for school, Mc Clelland, Morrison and Holmes (2000).

Starting of the primary schooling is known to be one of the significant transitions in children's life. However transition has been established to be a challenge to early childhood particularly if the children do not meet the expected standards of physical, intellectual and social emotional development in order to fulfill their school requirements and to assimilate the school curriculum, Ngaruiya (2006), UNICEF (2006), Raver (2002), Crinic and Lamberty (1994), Elnersdottir (2007). A research carried out by Kagan (1990), established that at the starting time of primary one, children who are ready to learn have higher chances of completing primary school, secondary school as well as tertiary education levels. Additionally they have higher chances of contributing positively to society as caring and productive citizens. On the other hand, Kagan goes on to say those pre-schoolers who at the starting time of primary are not ready to learn, have higher chances of repeating a grade and require special educational services as well as emotional difficulties and drop out of schools. Consequently this leads to increased cost to the government along with the whole society through government expenditure, reduction of productivity in revenue and inability to provide essential society functions. Therefore this study sought to investigate parental factor as a determinant of child readiness transiting from pre-school to primary one in Ruiru sub-County, Kiambu county, Kenya.

## **STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

Today it is a well-accepted reality that children of today are the leaders of tomorrow. It is therefore very crucial according to WHO (2004), UNICEF (2006), for any society and nation to empower and especially parents who are the main primary care givers to provide the young ones with basic needs for health, care, food, protection, affection, interaction, stimulation and learning through exploration and discovery. If these needs are not met young children are denied a firm and strong foundation for achieving their full potential.

Supportive parenting and simulating home environments are perceived to be among the strongest predictors of child readiness as well as school performance during pre-school, primary school and even beyond. However some of parents and families who are the first or primary care givers of their children have to deal with difficult and challenging circumstances, for example, financial difficulties, divorce or separation, changes in family structures, health issues, language and cultural difference as well as crisis in the family like alcoholism, large families, polygamous families and also single parent-hood. This complicates the ability to help their children realize their full potential.

To add on to this, the decision makers in the Kenyan government do not invest adequately in the early years. Additionally, parents and families are ill equipped in dealing with conflicts and life problems even in the face of pressing economic needs. Since children are the future of the country, unhealthy, deviant and poorly behaved children automatically displays an unclear and a shaky future for any society or nation.

The parents, family, the community as well as the government must work together to help children acquire their full potential. To this end, this study sought to investigate the parent as a determinant factor of children readiness transiting from pre-school to primary school in Ruiru Sub County in Kiambu hence grow up to be productive and to contribute effectively to their families, society and the nation at large.

### **PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

The purpose of the study was to investigate the parent as a determinant of child readiness transiting from pre-school to primary school in Ruiru sub-county, Kiambu county, Kenya.

### **OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

1. To determine parents related factors influencing child readiness transiting from pre-school to primary school in Ruiru sub-county, Kiambu county, Kenya.

### **RESEARCH QUESTION**

1. What are the parents' related factors influencing child readiness transiting from pre-school to primary one in Ruiru sub-county, Kiambu County, Kenya?

### **SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

The study could be important to the government who would acknowledge the importance of the early years of an individual and therefore enhance investment in services for young children. The government can also improve the living standards of Kenyan communities, supporting the parents adequately so that they can be able to raise children who are healthy holistically.

The parents will also benefit in that they will acquire more knowledge on child development and prioritize the services that are most crucial to child's holistic development.

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **Parents related factors influencing child readiness transiting from pre-school to primary one in Ruiru sub-county.**

##### ***Parental Economic Status***

Experts and scholars have unanimously underscored the usefulness of the first six years of life. During this period the environmental experiences are important enough in influencing an individual's life by either enhancing or inhibiting realization of potential in life. This is the fastest period of growth and development in all children's aspects which include physical, emotional, social, spiritual, moral as well as mental. According to Kabiru and Njenga (2007), Grantham, Sally (2007), Dubois, Nadine et al (2009), Gakuru and Koech (1995), all these areas are equally vital and children cannot however unfold fully their potentialities if one of these areas is ignored or forgotten. Holistic development is vital for child readiness for school and their ability to participate in different learning environment. It is therefore the responsibility of all those working with children whether parents, teachers as well as

members of community to provide health care, nutrition and also education during the important and formative years of early childhood.

The greatest predictions of a ready child, is a ready family. This is especially because the parents as well as care givers are believed to be the primary teachers, models and also providers. Brofenbrenner and Mom's, (1998), outlines the family as one of the major components in the shaping of children's early years development. Rhode, (2002), asserts that preparing children to start school rests with not individual child but the families and communities.

A great deal of research proposes that how transition are experienced make a significant difference to young ones in the first months of new transition as well as having longer terms impact, Fabian and Dunlop (2002), Moore and Scarupa (2001). This is mainly because the later experiences are affected positively by the extent to which they feel successful in the first transition. Successful transitions are perceived to be cost effective and helps in the rate of retention at primary school as well as reducing the importance of later social and educational remedies.

School readiness is seen as the child having acquired the suitable and appropriate knowledge, skills as well as attitude and abilities that will assist the child to cope with the school requirements, challenges among others, Crinc and Lamberly (1994), Colorado (2003). Therefore the sum of child's cognitive, physical and social-emotional development can be referred to as readiness. Sylvia et al (2004), asserts that readiness does not emerge suddenly when children are starting primary school but start way back to the prior-to-school years as children take part in a wide range of different context and setting.

The parents undoubtedly are the main primary care givers and educators of their children. They provide love, affection, proper nutrition as well as stimulation security, protection and other needs. According to Thompson (2002), WHO (2004), Adams (2004), Kabiru and Njenga (2007), it is therefore the parents responsibility to mould the small children into responsible and productive citizen of the society and nation at large. Stimulating children involves creating time to be with children, listening, talking to them, praising them, playing with them and providing them with a lot of materials to play with, providing them with opportunities to express themselves and make own choices.

Additionally, parents must be a good role model of their children. Quality nurturing and early stimulation has a lasting influence on children mainly because they copy and have ambitions to be like their parents. Children who are well brought up have positive self-esteem, secure, consistent emotionally stable and self-motivated, UNICEF (2006). Thompson (2002) goes to say that these children are also confident in exploring and mastering new challenges a long with benefiting from the school learning environment, Adams (2004).

Evidence from different studies, Young (2000), Mc Clelland, Morrison and Holmes (2000), Heckman and Masteror (2007), have shown that the economic status of a nation as well as the family plays a major role in relation to child's readiness for school. Weitzman (2003,) goes on to say that this is a fundamental concern mainly because inadequate resources undermines parents ability to provide for their children adequately. In the world today of cash economy, a significant number of women are seem to shift from long traditional work regular way which mostly entailed subsistence agriculture and management of house to new type of paid employment in the commercial sector.

Also, most of the land nowadays is used for cash crops leaving very little land for food crops hence families producing inadequate food to eat. As a result this has led to serious implication on the health, nutrition and lives of the young ones. In order to maintain their

families as dictated by the high cost of living in most families in Ruiru Sub County, some of the women are forced to work in places that are far from their homes. Therefore it is difficult for them to check on the welfare of their children in course of the day. This is undoubtedly a clear indication, according to Kabiru and Njenga (2007) that most of the women do not take care of their young ones and especially during the first years which are most critical in an individual's life. This according to UNICEF (2006), by the time young ones enter pre-school and then primary school, they will not have attained a level of development that would possibly help them adapt to the challenges of formal schooling.

Different studies have demonstrated that poverty adversely affect children in all aspects including intellectual capabilities, academic behavior and achievement as well as their health. Poverty means poor diet that leads to poor behavior as well as cognitive development in infinite and children. Weitzman asserts that, after the age of three years, damage caused by severe malnutrition is difficult to reverse, Rono (1990), Whiting, Edward (2003), Weitzman, (2003).

### **Programmes**

The Kenyan early childhood development policy framework is based on strong beliefs that are accepted universally as forming the strong foundation of quality early childhood development services and programs including ensuring those young children's holistic needs are met so as to maximize realization of their full potential. The policy further acknowledges and realizes that the primary caregivers are parents and families. Therefore they need the empowerment and support so as to play their role effectively, Young (2000), Thompson, (2002), WHO (2004). However according to a study done by UNICEF (2006), the government of Kenya or rather the decision makers do not seem to acknowledge fully the importance of investing in the early years of life. This was clearly demonstrated with among others the introduction of free primary education (FPE) (2003), where the pre-schoolers were left out. Any society or nation interested in her continuity, stability and a promising future should not underestimate the lives, education, health and general foundation of her children. Moreover parents and families are not adequately empowered hence are not able to play their crucial role as primary care givers, Kabiru and Njenga (2007).

Numerous studies from around the world, Ngaruiya (2006), Njoroge (1994), Currie (2001), Mwaura (2005), Mwaura and Nyamweya, (2006), point that young ones who take part in pre-school programmes do not only perform better in schools, but also are healthier and are more productive economically later in life as adults and also are perceived to be balanced emotionally and socially responsible. This is mainly because pre-school is ideally suited for providing for all round developments of the child including stimulation, intellectual, spiritual and emotional as well as physical. This is what makes pre-schoolers to be perceived as ready for primary school.

Young ones who attended early childhood programmes as well as those who did not were tracked down, Mwaura, (2005), Mwaura and Nyamweya, (2006). The study established that those children who participated in pre-school programmes were advantaged. The advantages continued even up to primary school level throughout the three grades that were tracked.

However, according to a study that was carried out by Kabiru and Njenga (2007), the proportional to the overall education budget, the total expenditure on pre-schoolers programme is very low. Additionally, the government lacks enough intervention as well as coordination. This coupled with inadequate awareness of the importance of the first six years of a child leads to young children getting poor services provided by untrained teachers who

do not have adequate knowledge and skills for providing children with rich and stimulating learning experiences, Ngaruiya (2006), Mwaura and Nyamweya (2006), Mwaura (2005).

A study carried out in Kenya shows that children and particularly from poor households lack access to pre-school programmes. Numerous pre-schools are managed at a sub-standard level, poor infrastructure, lack of facilities, lack of playing area, no playing materials. The study also indicated that their parents cannot afford to take them to high cost school where they can have access to quality programme. Consequently the ability of these pre-schoolers to learn is decreased mainly due to lack of quality care as well as stimulation at the suitable age. Despite the free primary education, these pre-schoolers will in most cases enter primary school disadvantaged, WHO (2004), Ngaruiya (2006), UNICEF (2006). Failure to provide pre-schoolers with quality care often results in those children entering school late as well as dropping out consequently laying a ground for a downward economic and social trajectory in adulthood.

### **Traditional Family Structure Break Down**

Numerous studies today have confirmed in agreement that there are more nuclear families as well as single parent families, Williams and Erica (2003), Cappizzano, Tout, Adams, (2006), Australia Bureau of Statistics (2007), Chelin (2009), Rampel and Catherine (2010), Benokraitis and Njole (2012), Lavington and Smadars, (2014). This is a clear indication that the tradition child care support that was provided by the extended family structure is hardly available for most of the parents.

In the past, child rearing was the responsibility of the community, mainly because children did not only belong to the biological parents but also the whole society which had the responsibility of ensuring the suitable discipline, enhancing positive growth and development of all children.

However, due to various rapid changes that the global as well as Kenyan society has undergone, the traditional child rearing patterns have been disintegrated and therefore nuclear and single families. This is mostly as a result of separation, divorce, death, as well as urbanization which has increased and especially among men who move in search of job consequently leaving women to shoulder the burden of work and children alone, UNICEF (2001), Cheline, (2009), Benokraitis and Njole (2012).

As a result according to Ngaruiya, (2006), Njoroge, (1994), Kabiru and Njenga, (2007), mothers tend to spend longer hours working and this results into leaving their children without appropriate and adequate care. These children are also said to lack guidance from their fathers and especially boys often lack models to identify themselves with. Ruiru is a well-known place for agricultural activities and especially its big coffee farms. Some parents carry with them their children to those coffee plantations. In most cases the work environment is not healthy, WHO (2004), due to the chemicals used. This is as a result of grandparents, older siblings as well as other community members not available to play their role in the rearing of the children.

Moreover, breakdown of values have also accelerated the influx of adolescent mothers. As a result, the long cherished and observed cultural values have declined and this leads to devastating effects on the quality of the lives of young children who unfortunately have neither the power nor the voice to fight for their rights. In most cases these adolescent mothers lack knowledge and skills to look after their children adequately. Therefore their children will enter pre-school as well as primary one against all expectations of physical, social-emotional and also intellectual development that children must have so as to meet their

school requirements and to fully understand the school curriculum Crinc and Lamberly (1994), Corolado, (2003), Kids, (2005), Kabiru and Njenga (2007).

In order for women working away from home to be able to cope with their career, jobs as well as child care roles, they often employ child minders to take care of their children in their absence. In most cases women lament that these child minders are young and lack adequate experience. While others are said to be emotionally immature, these child minders are said to take these jobs because of lack of any other better employment mainly because they are inadequately motivated as well as getting very little out of it.

Consequently, those child minders frequently change jobs making it rather difficult for the young ones to develop any significant attachment to any of them. According to WHO, (2004), the development of attachment that occurs during the first years of life is a significant milestone in the growth as well as the development of young children. This is likely, according to Fabian, and Dunlop (2002), to influence children's learning life in pre-school as well as when they are joining primary school.

### **Play**

The importance of play in the promotion of holistic development of young children is undeniably agreed upon by many researchers and experts including Azar and Beth, (2002), Ashiabi (2007), Gray and Peter, (2011), Hirst, Kathy, Golinkoff, Roberta, Berk, Laura, and singer, Dorothy, (2006) , Piaget, (1962), Power and Thomas, (2000), WHO, (2004), Thompson (2002). Aspects of development include physical, emotional, social, spiritual, mental and moral as well as aesthetic and language, Kabiru and Njenga (2007).

Stevens and Karen, (2009), Kavanaugh and Robert (2011), argued that play acts as an integrating mechanism that allow the young ones to draw heavily upon experiences, show them significantly different methods and making connections as well as exploring opportunities and finally creating sense and meaning. It combines cognitive processes and skills that are essential and help in learning, Kabiru and Njenga (2007), asserts that play is done for the sake of enjoyment but without rewards. Play is also perceived as the life and work of children. It is a spontaneous pleasurable activity that child engage in, Piaget (1962), Bandura (1973).

Play is the obvious language of childhood where one can clearly see and hear the complete young one functioning, disclosing his/her concern, worries, conflicts information, wishes, hopes as well as pleasures and questions. During play the young children learn to interact with others, how to go about resolving disagreement and learn to deal with feelings and also gain a sense of achievement, Downey and Cordon, (2004), Mcelwain and Village (2005). Children coming to school with the expected characteristics are able to get along with other children. Additionally they are said to be more likely to perform better in schools as compared to the ones who lack these characteristics. On the other hand children with behavior challenges are perceived to as difficult to teach and in most cases, they are not liked by peers and teachers. Consequently, they develop low self-esteem, lose motivation for learning and at times they withdraw from peers and other times they face social rejection, Tsao (2002), Hurst, (2003).

It is a wide spread evident that the ability to carry out and maintain social relationship is the most important to child's preparedness for school. Kagen (1990) asserts that young children deprived off their chance of playing, tend to develop brains which are 20-30% smaller than expected for their age. Despite the potential of play, it is unfortunate that some parents according to Kabiru and Njenga (2007) are unable to buy their children play materials, or

take their children to ECDE programmes where play materials are provided as well as space for playing and qualified teachers in handling play.

Additionally some parents have a negative attitude towards play and especially at home perceiving it as time wasting while others due to ignorance prevent their children to play outdoor activities because their children will be dirty. This is a clear demonstration that children are denied opportunities to develop holistically which would have acted as a spring board to school readiness.

### **Home learning environment**

According to Sylvia et al (2004), home learning environment entails the activities creating learning chances to children. These are activities that enable the child to be ready for school. These activities include reading for children, teaching them songs, poems, and painting among others. Sylvia emphasized that parents whether poor or rich can set off their young ones to a good start by having activities at home that promote learning mainly because what parents do with their young ones is more valuable than who the parents are.

Supportive parenting together with home environment, according to Brofenbrenner and Moms, (1998), Mwaura, (2005), Thompson (2002), are said to be some of the strongest predictors of school readiness, performance during pre-school, primary school and beyond. Disparity in education level of parents is also said to influence the readiness of a child for school. A study that was carried out in Pakistan established that young children whose mothers had some education are said to spend more minutes on educational activities at home than young ones whose mothers had a little or no education at all. This is a clear indication that parental level of education is a critical factor for indicating child's readiness for school, future progress as well as a development, Dockett and Perry (2007).

The world conference on education for all which took place at Jomtien, (1990), to which Kenya is a signatory re-affirmed the commitment of the government to the realization of Universal Primary Education (U.P.E). To push the agenda for the attainment of (UPE) forward, the free primary education was declared in January (2003). Unfortunately the ECDE services were not included. These services continued to be provided by parents and the local community.

This brought up major challenges including parents opting to send their children to class one because it is cost free compared to ECDE which had a cost. Other parents opted to remain with their children at home until they attain the age of joining primary school which is free. This was worsened by the fact that in Kenya it is not a pre-condition for children to have attended pre-school before attending primary school, Ngaruiya, (2006), UNESCO, (2005). According to the free primary education policy, children attend primary school with or without ECDE experience. Therefore in class one there are children from different pre-schools as well as those from home directly. Consequently, since not all children attends pre-school then the differences in school readiness.

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

In order to provide an expanded understanding of the research problem, the study employed mixed methodology in data collection and analysis. The mixed methodology utilized the strength of both quantitative and qualitative approaches which was collected concurrently, Creswell and Piano (2007). The population of the study included parents with pre-school children, pre-school teachers as well as pre-school children in Ruiru sub-county in Kenya. To ensure the entire identified sub - groups in the target population were well represented in the sample in the same population that they existed in, the study applied Stratified sampling



along with simple random sampling. The data was collected using questionnaires and interviews. Through the appraisal and guidance of the experts in the early childhood department Mount Kenya University, the validity of instruments was established while the reliability of the instruments was established through a pilot study. The quantitative data collected was analyzed with the use of descriptive statistical techniques including tables, frequencies and percentages. The qualitative data collected was thematically analyzed.

## RESULT FINDINGS

### Provisions of play materials in ECDE programmes

Regarding the availability of the outdoors equipment in ECDE programmes, most ECDE teachers admitted that their programmes do not have enough equipment as shown in table 1 below:

**Table 1. Availability of outdoor equipment in ECDE programmes.**

<i>Availability of Outdoor equipment</i>	<i>Yes</i>		<i>No</i>		<i>Total</i>	
	<i>F</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>%</i>
Swings	16	38	26	62	42	100
Climbing frames	14	33	28	67	42	100
Fixed tyres	17	40	25	60	42	100
Rings	20	48	22	52	42	100
Water play	10	24	32	76	42	100
See Saw	15	36	27	64	42	100
Sand pit/box	20	48	22	52	42	100
Sliding ladder	12	29	30	71	42	100

The most lacking one according to the study was water play 32 (76%), which was followed by sliding ladder 30 (71%). Seesaw 27 (64%). Swings 26 (62%). Fixed tyres 25 (60%). Rings and sand pit had 22 (52%) each. This is a clear indication that some of the outdoor equipment are not available in most of the ECDE programmes. This shows that most pre-school children and particularly from poor households lack access to programmes where the outdoors equipment are available. Consequently decreasing their ability to develop holistically which is vital for pre-school children readiness for primary school and their ability to participate in different learning environments.

### Parental Marital Status

**Table 2. Parental Marital Status**

<i>Marital status</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage (%)</i>
Single	131	35
Married	243	65
<i>Total</i>	<i>374</i>	<i>100</i>

Regarding parental marital status 131 (35%) admitted that they are single while 243 (65%) are in marriage. This is a clear indication that single parenthood and especially single

motherhood that was unheard of decades ago is becoming a societal trend as well as nuclear families. This is mostly as a result of separation, divorce, death among other factors. In absence of one parent the other has to shoulder the burden of work as well as adequate parentage. This clearly shows these single parents and especially single mothers who make up the majority, spend longer hours working which results into leaving their children and in particular pre-schoolers without appropriate and adequate care. Consequently these pre-schoolers enter primary one against some expectations that they must have so as to meet primary school requirements.

**Parental involvement in developing appropriate physical activities for their pre-schoolers**

**Table 3. Parental involvement in developing appropriate physical activities for pre-schoolers**

<i>Physical activity</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage (%)</i>
Jumping skills	30	8
Playing with a ball	82	22
Running skills	79	21
Singing games	56	15
None	127	34
<i>Total</i>	<i>374</i>	<i>100</i>

On the parental involvement in developing appropriate activities for their pre-schoolers as shown in table 3, most parents 127 (34%), admitted that they are not involved at all in developing any activity for their pre-schoolers. 82 (22%) play ball with their pre-schoolers, 79 (21%) involve themselves in running skills, 56 (15%) involve themselves in singing games while only 30 (8%) are involved in jumping skills. This clearly indicates that despite the importance of physical activities which is one of the most aspects that promote holistic development of the pre-schoolers, most parents do not develop them. This shows that some of the pre-schoolers enter primary one without full benefits of physical activities which include development of gross motor skills, body balance and coordination as well as eye-hand coordination.

**Home learning environment**

**Table 4. How often parents read books for their children**

<i>Parents perception attributes</i>	<i>Often</i>		<i>Rarely</i>		<i>Not read at all</i>		<i>Occasionally</i>		<i>Totals</i>
	<i>F</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>%</i>	
How often parents read books for their children	60	16.00	100	26.7	117	31.3	97	26.0	100

Key: F = Frequency, % = Percentage

Regarding how often parents read books for their pre-schoolers as shown in table 4, most parents 117 (31.3%), admitted that they do not read at all for their pre-schoolers. 100 (26.7%) rarely read for their pre-schoolers. 97 (26.0%) read for their children occasionally while only 60 (16.0%) often read for their pre-schoolers. Reading for pre-schoolers is one of the activities that enable them to be ready for primary one and even beyond. The above findings clearly indicate that some of the pre-schoolers lack supportive parenting together with home

learning environment that are said to be some of the strongest predictors of school readiness and especially for pre-schoolers joining primary one. This shows that due to economic demands, most of the parents are too busy to spend time with their pre-schoolers, read for them among other things. Consequently the pre-schoolers enter primary one having not attained a level of development that would possibly help them adapt to the challenges of formal schooling.

**Availability of printed materials at home**

According to table 5 below in regard to printed materials at home, some parents 94 (25%) admitted that they have none at home. 67 (18%) have magazines, 112 (30%) have books, 26(7%) have newspaper while 75 (20%) have wall hangings. This is a clear indication that most of the pre-schoolers are denied reading opportunities that would enable them to join primary one ready. Consequently these pre-schoolers join primary one having not fulfilled its requirements due to lack of stimulating environment at home.

**Table 5. Printed materials at home**

<i>Material</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage (%)</i>
Books	112	30
Newspapers	26	7
Magazines	67	18
Wall hangings	75	20
None	94	25
<i>Total</i>	<i>374</i>	<i>100</i>

**Educational level of parents**

**Table 6. Educational level of parents**

<i>Level</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage (%)</i>
University	52	14
Diploma college	60	16
Secondary	127	34
Primary	105	28
Below primary	30	8
<i>Total</i>	<i>374</i>	<i>100</i>

On the educational level of parents as shown in table 9.6, most parents 127(34%) went up to secondary level, 105 (28%) primary level, 52(14%) university level while 30 (8%) were below primary level. This clearly shows that parental level of education is a major factor in indicating pre-schoolers readiness for primary one. Parents with some education are said to spend more time on educational activities with their pre-schoolers than parents with little or no education at all.

**CONCLUSIONS**

The major aim of this study was to investigate parent as determinant of child readiness transiting from pre-school to primary one in Ruiru sub - county in Kenya. The study made the following conclusion:

1. Parents have a great role in relation to influencing as well as determining the readiness of their pre-school children joining primary school. However inadequate resources undermine parent's ability to cater as well as providing for their young ones adequately. Consequently most parents cannot afford to take their children to pre-school where they can access quality programmes as well as providing for all round developments.
2. The study also concluded that in the proportional to the overall education budget, the total expenditure on pre-school programme is very low. Moreover the government lacks enough interventions as well as coordination which lead to pre-school children getting poor services provided by untrained teachers who do not have adequate knowledge and skills for providing children with rich and stimulating learning environment.
3. The study also concluded that due to various rapid economic changes in the world and Kenya in particular, most mothers shifted from long traditional work regular way in the management of the house to new type of paid employment in the commercial sector. This clearly indicated that they spend longer hours working and this result into leaving their children without appropriate and adequate care.
4. Additionally, the study concluded that some parents lack awareness of the importance of the first six years of a child. This is mainly because despite the importance of play in developing the child grows holistically some parents do not give them the opportunity to play.
5. Home learning environment activities that create learning chances to children and enable them to be ready for school are not available in some homes. There are no adequate print materials like books, newspapers, magazines, among others. In some households where there are available parents rarely read for their children.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The following recommendations were made:

1. The government should socially and economically empower the parents in order to enable them to contribute to the education of their children and become more enlightened and thus better able to provide the kind of supportive environment their pre-school children need. The government should also include the early childhood programmes in the free education.
2. Parents should be sensitized mostly on the importance of the first years of children which are most critical in an individual's life. They should create time to be with their children, play with them, create home learning environment activities that create learning chances to children which in return enable them to be ready and especially when joining primary school.
3. The government should have enough interventions as well as coordination so as to ensure that pre-school children get good services provided by trained teachers with adequate knowledge and skills for providing children with rich and stimulating learning experiences.

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