

AN INVESTIGATION ON INFLUENCE OF NUTRITION ON PRE-SCHOOL
CHILDREN'S ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE IN WOTE
DIVISION, MAKUENI COUNTY, KENYA

JANE NDAKA

A RESEARCH PROJECT REPORT SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE
AWARD OF MASTER OF EDUCATION DEGREE IN EARLY CHILDHOOD STUDIES OF MOUNT KENYA
UNIVERSITY

OCTOBER, 2015

ABSTRACT

Academic performance of pre-school learners has been poor and has been a concern to many education stakeholders. Thus, the main purpose of the study was to investigate the influence of nutrition on pre-school children's academic performance in Wote Division, Makueni County, Kenya. The study adopted qualitative and quantitative methodology. The study applied concurrent triangulation research design which enabled the researcher to use the quantitative and qualitative methods during the same timeframe and with equal weight. This design generally involves the concurrent collection and analysis of quantitative and qualitative data. Questionnaires, interviews and observation checklist was used to collect data from pre-school managers and pre-school teachers, parents' representatives and preschool learners respectively. Piloting of research instruments was conducted twice amongst one pre-school manager, one pre-school teacher, three parents' representatives and fifteen pre-school learners to establish validity and reliability determined using test retest method. The reliability coefficient was determined using Cronbach's Alpha. Wote Division, has 41 public pre-school centers and thus; the target population of this study was 41 pre-school managers, 79 pre-school teachers, 82 parents' representatives and 2100 pre-school learners all totaling to 2302. The researcher applied The Central Limit Theorem to obtain a sample of 8 pre-school centers, that is, 20% of the targeted 41 pre-schools. Using the same theorem, the researcher sampled 250 respondents, that is, 10.9% of 2302. The researcher applied stratified random sampling to create 3 different strata based on the number of zones each consisting of fourteen pre-schools in Wote Division. From each stratum, two pre-schools were sampled using simple random sampling. The researcher then applied purposive sampling to identify at least two pre-school manager and three pre-school teachers. The researcher then applied simple random sampling to select three parents' representatives and at least 76 pre-school learners from each stratum. Qualitative data was analyzed thematically along the study objectives whereas the basic quantitative data was using OneWay ANOVA in Statistical Packages for Social Science (SPSS version 21). The findings of the study were presented using tables. The study established that nutrition has influence on academic performance of preschool children. That is, diet quality, feeding patterns and availability of food varieties influence preschool children acquisition of basic numeracy, language and creativity skills. The study thus recommends that preschools need to educate parents and children on how to live a healthy lifestyle that includes proper nutrition. Preschools can help school-age children develop healthy eating habits by emitting a consistent health message by ensuring that healthy food choices are offered at school. Preschool administrators need to provide opportunities for staffs to receive education on good nutrition and health in the school environment. Nutrition education makes a difference in making healthy eating choices. Learners at all levels should receive nutrition education that may teach them the skills to make healthy choices not only at school but at home as well. The government should formulate a policy to ensure adherence to the Kenya National Nutrition Action Plan of 2012 which enhances preschool nutrition and children's rights to basic education.