

**AN INVESTIGATION OF THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF PARENTAL
CHARACTERISTICS ON THE ENROLMENT RATES OF
PRESCHOOL LEARNERS IN NDOLELI DIVISION, MERU COUNTY**

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ABSTRACT

Academic performance of preschool children from poor socio-economic backgrounds has registered low academic grades. Thus, the study intended to investigate the contributions of parental characteristics on enrolment rates in Ndoleli Division in Meru County. The literature was reviewed based on the contributions of parents' level of education, parental income, family type and parental attitude on enrolment rates of preschool children. The study adopted both quantitative and qualitative methods. Questionnaires and focused group interviews were used to collect data. The study applied explanatory sequential research design which involved mixing both quantitative and qualitative research and methods in a single study. The target population for this study comprised 29 head teachers, 50 preschool teachers and 600 parents with children at preschool levels all totaling to 679. Using The Central Limit Theorem, the researcher will sample 8 preschools (27.59% of 679). Based on this theorem, the researcher sampled 150 respondents. The researcher applied stratified random sampling to create 6 different strata based on the number of zones each consisting of 5 preschools. From each stratum, 1 preschool was selected using simple random sampling. The researcher then applied purposive sampling to identify at least 1 head teacher and 2 preschool teachers considering preschools which have registered the lowest enrolment rates. Purposive sampling was appropriate for selecting head teachers and preschool teachers. The researcher applied simple random sampling to select 22 parents' representatives from each stratum to avoid the feeling of bias amongst the respondents. Analysis of data was done through identifying common themes from the respondents' description of their experiences. Frequency counts of the responses were then obtained to generate descriptive information about the respondents and to illustrate the general trend of findings on the various variables under investigation. Qualitative data was analyzed along the set objectives whereas the basic quantitative data was analyzed using Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) in Statistical Packages for Social Sciences (SPSS Version 21). The findings of the study were presented using tables and charts. The study has established that majority of the respondents hold the view that parental characteristics such as level of education, incomes, family types and attitudes have a relationship with enrollment rates of preschool children, that they enhance enrollment of large number of learners, enhance new admissions and improved enrollment rates. The study thus concludes that parental level of education; parental incomes, family types and parental attitudes contribute immensely towards the enrollment rates amongst preschool children. It thus recommends that parents should be advised to pursue academic seminars and adult education programmes to make them aware of their roles in improving the enrollment rates of preschool children. They should invest their incomes towards sending their children to school by providing the pre-requisite resources for learning. The government and other education stakeholders should organize workshops where parents from different family types can be advised to mind the academic welfare of their children by sending them to schools despite family challenges. Parents should develop positive attitude towards their children's education which should then act as a motivator to their children to attend schools. The government should formulate a policy to enforce Adult Literacy, School Feeding and other programmes designed to attract more preschool children to schools.