



**TEENAGE MOTHERS' INVOLVEMENT IN THEIR
CHILDREN'S ACQUISITION OF PRE-LITERACY SKILLS:
A CASE OF KILIFI COUNTY, KENYA**

**Henry Murong'aⁱ,
Teresa Mwoma,
Hudson Ouko**
School of Education,
Kenyatta University,
Kenya

Abstract:

Early literacy is an integral part in children's learning. It is crucial in a child's education cycle since it is the basic foundation on which all further learning is built. Many researchers have argued that since parents are the first teachers that a child encounter, it is important to find out how they can be involved in their children's acquisition of pre-literacy skills. The two major ways of parental involvement that have been put forward are provision of resources that promote acquisition of pre-literacy skills and involving children in literary rich engagements. Unfortunately, studies on how teenage mothers can be actively involved in promoting their children's acquisition of pre-literacy skills are scanty. Since teenage mothers are young and most of them depend on their parents for financial support and nurturance, it is important to find out how effective they can get involved in promoting their children's acquisition of pre-literacy skills. Therefore, this article, highlights findings from a study that sought to establish whether teenage mothers are involved adequately in their children's acquisition of pre-literacy skills. The study was based on Bronfenbrenner's Ecological systems theory and employed descriptive survey design. It was carried out in Kilifi County, Kenya and involved a sample of 115 teenage mothers. A questionnaire and interview schedule were utilized to collect data from teenage mothers. Data was analyzed both quantitatively and qualitatively. Findings indicated that teenage mothers are not adequately involved in promoting their children's acquisition of pre-literacy skills. The authors recommend that the government increases resources allocated to pre-primary schools and pre-primary school teachers should sensitize parents on their role in getting involved in their children's education to promote pre-literacy skills.

ⁱ Correspondence: email hmuronga@gmail.com

Keywords: early literacy, parents' involvement, pre-literacy skills, pre-primary children, teenage mothers

1. Introduction

Stimulating children to acquire pre-literacy skills from an early age has been found to influence their academic potential. According to Penn State University Extension (2013), a child's journey to building strong language and literacy skills starts in infancy and continues throughout the early childhood years and beyond. Isaacs and Magnuson (2011) established that children's early language and learning are paramount for their later school readiness and performance. Jenson (2013) pointed that children who receive interventions to promote their acquisition of pre-literacy competences demonstrate better reading proficiency later in school. This implies that adults around the child should do all they can to promote children's acquisition of early literacy skills. Annie (2010) revealed that children who experience difficulties in their vocabulary during early years, are much more likely to experience later reading difficulties than their peers who acquire oral language according to the expected milestones.

Promotion of children's acquisition of pre-literacy skills should not be left to teachers alone but should be a joint venture of all stakeholders in education. According to Nutbrown, Hannon & Morgan (2010), it is hard for pre-primary teachers alone to help build up children's early literacy skills. Parents as the first teachers of their children have a critical role to play in enhancing children's pre-literacy skills. According to Tompkins (2010) parents implement home literacy development through activities such as reading aloud, making time for children to read books a priority, providing books and other materials in the home and talking to children about what they are reading.

1.1 Background to Teenage Mothers' Involvement in their Children's Literacy Activities

Children born to teenage mothers may not enjoy a favorable home learning environment (McCoy & Cole, 2011). One of the reasons is that teenage mothers may not involve their children in literary rich engagements. Stiles (2010) points out that adolescents tend to be self-oriented in nature and less compassionate towards their children. This may deny their children the much needed mother-child interactions such as storytelling which are important for acquisition of pre-literacy skills. Low levels of education among teenage mothers also restrict them from being adequately involved in their children's acquisition of pre-literacy skills. Crugnola, Lerandi, Gazzoti and Allbizzati (2014) confirmed that teenage mothers are less educated and they have limited knowledge on child growth and development. Smith (2012) also asserted that in most cases teenage mothers have not completed their core education and do not have marketable working skills. Angeline et al. (2014) asserted that due to their low level of education, teenage mothers get only low paying and unsatisfying jobs, making it hard to adequately meet their needs and those of their children. Due to limitation of finances, teenage mothers may not be able to provide

a favorable home learning environment (HLE) required for their children's acquisition of pre-literacy skills. The Urban Child Institute (2015) also observed that families started by young parents from low socio-economic status lack adequate resources that promote learning.

Despite the challenges faced by teenage mothers in promoting their children's acquisition of pre-literacy skills, teenage motherhood has remained a problem all over the world. In 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO 2020) reported that 11.6% of all births in the world were due to women aged 15-19 years. Martin et al (2018) revealed that there was a total of 194,377 babies born to teenage mothers aged 15-19 years in the United States in 2017. According to UNPF (2013) approximately 95% of teenage pregnancies occur in the developing countries with 36.4 million women becoming mothers before age 18. Kassa, Arowajolu and Odukogbe (2018) found out that teenage pregnancies in Africa stood at 18.8%. The rate of teenage pregnancy is highest in Eastern Africa (21.5%) and lowest in Northern Africa (9.2%). In the Sub-Saharan Africa, most teenage mothers come from low socio-economic backgrounds and care for their children under very hard circumstances that are not easy to avoid or improve (McDermott, Graham & Hamilton 2011). Due to extreme poverty, teenage mothers may be unable to provide materials needed for a healthy HLE, making their children lag behind in acquiring pre-literacy skills. The high rate of teenage births in the Sub-Saharan Africa is not accompanied by a substantial government support. Many teenage mothers can barely provide the necessary requirements for their children. For instance, Siebert (2016) reports that in Malawi there is no program aimed at helping teenage mothers and many of them end up in cocoa plantations as casual laborers to keep themselves and their children fed. Being casual laborers, their income might not be sufficient to enable them cater for their daily needs, those of their children and buy items that promote a facilitative HLE such as picture books, story books and toys. This is likely to slow down acquisition of pre-literacy skills among children born to teenage mothers.

In Kenya, the rampant cases of pregnancy among school age girls in 2018 caught the attention of the cabinet secretary in charge of education and she ordered the ministry's quality assurance team to investigate and file a report of all cases of pregnancy among school girls (Nyamai, 2018). This followed reports that many candidates in the 2018 Kenya Certificate of Primary Education sat for their examinations in labor ward. Nyamai (2018) adds that many other girls had given birth prior to the examination day while some others were expectant at the time of sitting for their examinations. The Kenya Demographic Health Survey Report (2014) documents that 15% of women aged 15-19 years have already had a birth and 3% are pregnant with their first child. Another study by UWEZO (2015) found out that 34 in 100 children in Kenya were born to teenage mothers. The same study established that school readiness (which pre-literacy skills are part of) among children aged under 7 years enrolled in school is low and disparate.

In Kilifi County, 21.8% of women aged 15-19 years have begun child bearing, making it one of the counties with highest cases of teenage pregnancies (Kenya Demographic Health Survey Report 2014). According to Njoka (2016), there is

widespread consensus across Kilifi that the issue of teenage pregnancies in the county is pervasive. He adds that public administrators, religious leaders and the general public all agree that it is a problem that requires urgent attention. In a report released by the Children's Affairs Department of Kilifi County and published in the Daily Nation, Lwanga (2018) reports that Kilifi County has one of the highest numbers of teenage pregnancies in the country. The report puts the number of teenagers who got pregnant within the year 2018 as 13,624 for girls aged 15-19 years and an additional 290 for girls aged 10-14 years. The high number of teenage pregnancies resulting to high number of teenage births means that among the children joining pre-school in Kilifi county, there is a big number of them that is born to teenage mothers. This comes amid reports that 68% of class 3 pupils in Kilifi County cannot read a class 2 story (UWEZO, 2013). There may be a correlation between high rate of teenage motherhood and low acquisition of early literacy skills hence low reading levels. Regardless of the high rate of teenage motherhood in the country, measures put into place seem to favor teenage mothers at the expense of their children. Studies conducted in the country on parental involvement in children's literacy and care have not addressed the issue of children born to teenage mothers adequately. Mwoma (2017) revealed that children who have supportive parents performed better than those whose parents did not support them by providing text books and other materials. Opiyo (2017) pointed out that highly educated parents were more involved in their children's literacy than parents with low levels of education. Wambiri and Ndani (2015) established that the number of years a caregiver spent in school had significant effects on caregivers direct and indirect behavior and strategies with children around print. In another study, Mwoma et al. (2019) that training community health volunteers on the care of child development enabled them to guide caregivers more effectively. None of these studies focused on teenage mothers, bearing in mind that teenage mothers have special challenges in caring for their children compared to older mothers (Almond and Curie 2011). The Kenya back to school policy states that teenage mothers should be allowed back to school after child birth (Omwancha, 2012). Whether teenage mothers get adequate time and resources to promote their children's acquisition of pre-literacy skills is a matter that remains unraveled and this is what inspired the authors of this article to conduct a study on Teenage Mothers' Involvement in their Children's Acquisition of Pre-Literacy Skills in Kilifi County, Kenya.

1.2 Theoretical Underpinning

This article is anchored on Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Model (1990) as outlined by Berk (2000). The model focuses on the development of a child in the light of the system of relationships that surround him/her. This theory consists of five complex layers of the surroundings and each layer affects the development of a child. The innermost layer is called the microsystem. It consists of the immediate environment in which the child lives. This may be the home, school, peer group or community. The second layer is the mesosystem. It includes the interactions of different microsystems which a child finds himself/herself in. These may include linkages between home and school, peer group and

family or family and church. The third layer consists of exosystems. These are the settings that a child does not have direct contact with but affects him/her, for example, loss of a job by a parent may affect a child. The macrosystem, which is the fourth layer encompasses cultural and societal beliefs and programming that influence a child's development. The fifth and last layer is called the chronosystem. It consists of systematic happenings to an individual such as divorce, death of a family member and other life altering events. The interaction between factors in the child, his/her family, community, surroundings and social structure greatly influence his/her development. It is important to note that conflicts in one layer will ripple out through other layers.

This study focused on the mesosystem layer because it is about teenage mothers' involvement in their children's acquisition of pre-literacy skills. The mesosystem encompasses interactions of the different microsystems which the developing child finds himself/herself in. It is a system of microsystems and involves linkages between different microsystems, for example, the school and the family. In the mesosystem layer, a person's individual microsystems do not function independently but are intertwined and exert influence upon one another. The current study is on teenage mothers' involvement in their children's acquisition of pre-literacy skills. Therefore, the two microsystems involved are home and the school. The relationship between home and school forms the child's mesosystem. The home is the first social construction that a child encounters in life and it plays a great role in promoting development of early literacy skills. This is done through activities such as storytelling, shared book reading and providing resources necessary for promotion of pre-literacy skills such as picture books and toys. If a child's parents get involved in helping children in work related to school, the child's development is affected positively through harmony and like-mindedness. Such a child is likely to easily acquire pre-literacy skills such as letter identification, sound knowledge, oral blending and oral segmentation. On the other hand, if the teenage mothers do not get involved in promoting the activities done in school, the child experiences disequilibrium and conflicting thoughts. Such a child may have difficulties in acquiring early literacy skills.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Teenage Mothers' Involvement in their Children's Acquisition of Pre-Literacy Skills

Teenage mothers may have difficulties in getting involved in assisting their children acquire pre-literacy skills. According to UNICEF (2016) teenage pregnancy is a situation where a teenage girl who is between 13 years and 19 years. Therefore, in this study, a teenage mother refers to a female parent who between ages 13-19 years at the time of her first birth. Teenage mothers are school-age children and in most cases, they totally depend on their parents or guardians for financial support and upkeep. Research has shown that when teenage mothers are forced to take care of another life, they do not do it optimally. Edzisani and Tholene (2012) found out that teenage mothers are affected

both socially and emotionally during pregnancy and even after they have given birth. Edzisani and Tholene (2012) add that once a teenager has given birth, she is most likely to have a low self-image and low self-esteem and this can happen when she is neither in school nor in employment. Mangeli, Rayyam, Cheraghi and Tirgari (2017) observed that teenage mothers have role conflicts and they wander between two worlds. That is, being a mother or being a student. This means that it can be difficult for them to concentrate on their children's acquisition of pre-literacy skills. Clarke (2014) defined parental involvement in education as practices and provisions that support early learning and a healthy development. This means that for effective parental involvement, there must be direct parent-child engagements that promote acquisition of pre-literacy skills and parents should also provide materials that promote acquisition of pre-literacy skills. Teenage mothers may not be able to be adequately involved in the necessary practices and make adequate provisions such as picture books. One of the reasons is because most teenage mothers are also likely to be single mothers. According to Kennedy, Dunplay, Dwyer, Hayes, Marsh, O'Conner and Shiel (2012) single parents usually have a hard time in playing both the roles of breadwinner and other parental responsibilities. Some of these responsibilities that they may fail to give priority include engaging children in literary rich conversations and shared book reading. Consequently, children born to teenage mothers are likely to lag behind their peers in acquisition of pre-literacy skills.

In their study, Froiland, Peterson & Davidson (2013) found out that children's success in education is determined by parental involvement in education and what they expect from their children. Froiland, Peterson and Davidson (2013) further stated that parents who expect their children to perform well in their studies get involved in assisting them while parents who expect their children to perform poorly are most likely not to involve themselves in their children's learning process. In a study carried out in Sweden, Alivernini (2013) established that the amount of books and other reading materials provided in a family had a great influence in the development of a child's reading ability. According to Lawson (2012), mothers should use words that provoke a child to have a conversation with them. This promotes acquisition of vocabulary and development of other linguistic skills. Blythe (2011) noted that rhymes and songs of diversified cultural backgrounds are rich in mother tongue and prepares the child's ear, voice and brain for language.

Despite all these studies (Froiland, Peterson and Davidson, 2013; Alivernini, 2013; Lawson, 2012 and Blythe, 2012) underscoring the relevance of parents' involvement in their children's education, teenage mothers may not be adequately involved in their children's acquisition of pre-literacy skills and this may result in children born to teenage mothers lagging behind their peers in acquisition of pre-literacy skills. According to Raising Children (2014) teenage mothers tend to be more engaged in trying to catch up with their peers that they do not have much time to monitor their children's growth and development. They might also decide to complete their education first so as to get a good job. This is likely to deny their children mother-child interactions necessary for acquisition of pre-literacy skills. Yulianti, Denessen and Droop (2018) established that

parents show higher levels of involvement in education when mothers had higher levels of education. Contrary to this, teenage mothers are mostly of low education since they drop out school due to child birth (Karra and Lee, 2012). This puts children born to teenage mothers at a disadvantage since their mothers may not adequately get involved in their acquisition of pre-literacy skills.

In a study conducted in Lusaka, Zambia, Chansa-Kabali (2014) asserts that children whose parents have a reading culture are usually ahead of their peers in acquiring early literacy skills. Various studies carried out in Kenya also show that parental involvement in education is paramount for children's success. In a recent study, Ngure, Mwoma and Buna (2019) sought to establish the levels of reading skills among grade three pupils in Nairobi County. The results were that most grade three pupils in public primary schools were below average in reading words and had difficulties in figuring out sounds and letters. Among solutions suggested was that it was important for various stakeholders, among them parents to come together and develop learning resource materials to help children acquire reading skills. In another study, Mwenda (2017) sought to establish the rate of parental involvement in their children's education in Laikipia county by interviewing teachers. 66.6% of the teachers interviewed disclosed that parents are not adequately involved in assisting children with homework and did not provide adequate learning resources. However, children whose parents were involved in helping them do homework and providing learning resources performed better in literacy activities than their peers whose parents were not involved in education. Mwenda (2017) captured data on parental involvement by interviewing teachers. In the current study parents themselves were interviewed since they are likely to give more accurate information. In a study conducted in Langata Sub-county, Nairobi, (Kathomi 2015) established that there is a positive correlation between parental involvement and literacy development of pre-primary school pupils. Kathomi (2015) conducted her study in an urban setting. It was important to conduct another study in a different setting and establish whether there are similarities and differences. The current study was carried out in Magarini Sub-County, which is mainly a rural setting. Obilloh (2014) found out that parental involvement influences reading readiness of pupils in pre-primary schools. He pointed out that parents who were involved in pre-primary pupils' reading readiness actually facilitated their children's acquisition of reading skills. Manduku (2017) revealed that parental participation in education is a vital factor that influences performance. He added that parental involvement includes encouraging children to learn, assisting children with homework, providing adequate time for learning, guiding children through activities and decision making.

Mwoma (2010) established that children are likely to do better in school when fathers are involved in their education than when their fathers are not involved in their education. Obilloh (2014) and Manduku (2017) based their studies on involvement of both parents while Mwoma (2010) based her study on paternal involvement in education. None of these studies (Mwoma, 2010, Obilloh, 2014 and Manduku, 2017) focused on teenage mothers' involvement in their children's education. The current study therefore

sought to fill this gap by investigating teenage mothers' involvement in their children's acquisition of pre-literacy in Magarini Sub-County, Kilifi County.

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This study employed descriptive survey design. The design was selected because the researchers did not intend to manipulate variables but aimed at describing how they affect each other in their natural form. Mugenda and Mugenda (2003) maintain that descriptive survey is a method of collecting data in order to answer questions concerning the current status of the problem under study without manipulating them. In this study, the researchers intended to establish the extent of teenage mothers' involvement in their children's acquisition of pre-literacy skills as it is without any form of manipulation.

3.2 Location of the Study

This study was carried out in Magarini Sub-County of Kilifi County. The major town of the Sub-County is Marafa town which is about 42 kilometers from Malindi town. The major economic activities in the area are salt mining and palm wine tapping. Agriculture is also practised but the rains are unreliable. Due to this, poverty levels are very high. It is common to see young school girls being involved in sexual affairs with the palm wine tappers and motorbike operators so as to get food and other basic requirements that their parents are unable to provide. Studies carried out in the Sub-County (Njeru, 2016; Lwanga, 2018) have revealed that there is a high prevalence of teenage motherhood. Very little is known about the education of children born to teenage mothers in the sub-county.

3.3 Participants

The participants of this research consisted of 115 teenage mothers who were purposively selected from the study area. The participants had children in either public or private pre-primary school within the study area. The area under study had 180 public pre-primary schools and 30 private pre-primary schools spread in 6 zones as shown on table 1, out of which 18 public pre-primary schools and 6 pre-primary schools were sampled for the purpose of the study.

Table 1: Sampling Frame

Zone	Public Pre-Primary Schools	Sampled Pre-Primary Schools	Private Pre-Primary Schools	Sampled Private Pre-Primary Schools	Teenage Mothers
Garashi	32	3	2	1	12
Marafa	50	5	4	1	18
Gongoni	33	3	8	1	30
Sabaki	7	1	3	1	10
Adu East	30	3	5	1	28
Adu West	28	3	8	1	17
Total	180	18	30	6	115

3.4 Materials

In this study a questionnaire and an interview schedule were used to obtain information from teenage mothers. The questionnaire consisted of 19 questions which were subdivided into sections A and B. Section A captured demographic information of the respondents such as age at first birth, marital status, education level, occupation and monthly income. Section B captured information on parental involvement in practices and provisions that promote acquisition of pre-literacy skills among children such as parents reading for pleasure as models, shared book reading, creating time for children to read and assisting children to do homework.

The interview schedule was used to collect information on teenage mothers' knowledge on their role in children's acquisition of pre-literacy skills. The reason for using an interview schedule was because it enables both the researcher and the respondent to clarify information which may not be clear. McLead (2014) asserts that the advantage of using an interview schedule is because it allows clarifying of issues between the researcher and the respondent. The interview schedule consisted of four questions which were read to the respondents by the pre-primary teachers. The respondents were required to outline what they thought were their role in promoting their children's acquisition of pre-literacy skills, whether/how they had modified their houses/rooms to ensure that their children had a favorable HLE, challenges they faced in providing a healthy HLE for their children and strategies they had put in place to overcome the challenges.

3.5 Data Collection Techniques

Data was collected within a span of one month. During the first two weeks, the researcher visited teachers, pupils and parents so that they familiarize with the nature of the study and see the importance of giving true and accurate information. The parents were also briefed on the questionnaires and informed that their children would take part in the research. During the third week, questionnaires were distributed to parents. They were filled within a span of two weeks. The researcher was always within reach to clarify any issues and he was assisted by respective pre-primary teachers. The questionnaires were collected immediately after being filled.

3.6 Data Analysis

Data collected were edited, coded and then analyzed both qualitatively and quantitatively. Descriptive statistics were used to analyze data from the questionnaire. This was done by first re-arranging responses according to the objectives and then using frequency counts, percentages and cross tabulations. Data from the interview schedule was analyzed qualitatively. This was through thematic and narrative analysis. In thematic analysis, deductive approach was used. Deductive approach involves having a pre-determined frame work of the analysis and testing it against the collected data. In this case the pre-determined themes included teenage mothers' knowledge on their roles in promoting their children's acquisition of pre-literacy skills, modifications made in the

house to ensure a suitable HLE, limitations to provision of a suitable HLE and strategies put in place to overcome challenges faced in provision of a suitable HLE. Since the researcher also intended to bring in new information, a second method (narrative analysis) was also be used. The first step in narrative approach is gathering stories which in this case were done by conducting interviews to teenage mothers. The responses were then compared and contrasted to seek new interpretations.

4. Results and Discussion

The study sought to establish whether teenage mothers adequately get involved in their children's acquisition of pre-literacy skills. Findings on this are presented under the themes; age of teenage mothers at birth, involving children in activities around print, provision of resources that promote acquisition of pre-literacy skills and teenage mothers' knowledge on their role in their children's acquisition of pre-literacy skills.

4.1 Age of Teenage Mothers

Participants were asked to state the age at which their first birth happened. Table 2 presents findings on this variable.

Table 2: Age of Teenage Mothers

Age at First Birth (in years)	Number (n=115)	Percentage (%)
13	5	4.4%
14	8	7.0%
15	14	12.2%
16	20	17.4%
17	25	21.7%
18	23	20%
19	20	17.4%
Total	115	100%

Table 2 above shows that majority of teenage mothers in Magarini Sub-County (21.7%) gave birth when they were 17 years old. The second highest (20%) number of births was recorded among teenagers aged 18 years. The study also established that 17.4% of all teenage births occurred among teenagers aged 16 years, with those aged 19 years contributing a similar percentage. There were 14 teenage mothers who were reported to have given birth at the age of 15 years, accounting for 12.2% of all teenage births while 7.0% of the teenage mothers gave birth at the age of 14 years. The least teenage birth rate was recorded among teenagers aged thirteen years which contributed 4.4% of all teenage births. It can also be seen that 72 (62.6%) teenage mothers had their first birth at 17 years and below (which is below the legal consent age for sex) while 43 (37.4%) of the teenage mothers had their first birth at ages 18 and 19 years.

The current study has revealed that teenage motherhood in Magarini Sub-County starts as early as 13 years. A 13-year-old child is most likely to be in school and fully

reliant on parents for all financial needs and upkeep. When a school girl gives birth, she may not be able to adequately meet all developmental needs of her child. Developmental needs include acquisition of pre-literacy skills. A teenage mother may either decide to go back to school after childbirth or spend a lot of time fending for her child, thereby denying the child the much needed mother-child interactions for development of pre-literacy skills and they may not get adequate time to assist their children do homework. Consequently, children born to teenage mothers are likely to lag behind their peers in acquiring pre-literacy skills such as letter identification, sound naming, oral blending and oral segmentation. This may make them have low efficacy, low self-esteem and negative attitude towards reading.

The findings of the current study are in agreement with UNPF (2013) which reported that teenage pregnancies remain a challenge requiring urgent resolution the world over. The findings of the current study are also in tandem with Martin et al. (2018) who established that the number of children born to teenage mothers is high. Martin et al (2018) revealed that there was a total of 194,377 babies born to teenage mothers aged 15-19 years in the United States in 2017. The findings of the current study also agree with those of Kassa, Arowojolu and Odukogbe (2018) who documented that there is a high rate of teenage motherhood in Africa. Findings similar to those of the current study were revealed by Kenya Demographic Health Survey (2014) which documented that 15% of women aged 15-19 years have already had their first birth. The findings of the current study also confirm Njoka (2016) who pointed out that the issue of teenage pregnancies in Kilifi county is pervasive and requires urgent attention.

4.2 Involving Children in Activities Around Print

The authors intended to establish whether teenage mothers involve their children in activities around print. Activities around print were relevant to the study since they promote acquisition of pre-literacy skills. These activities around print included parents reading for pleasure, reading stories to children, creating time for children to read and assisting children to do homework. Selected teenage mothers were asked how often they involved their children in these activities and the responses that they were required to be given were; always, rarely or never. The responses were recorded as shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Involving Children in Activities Around Print

Activities	Frequency					
	Always		Rarely		Not at All	
	Tally	%	Tally	%	Tally	%
Read for pleasure	17	14.8%	32	27.8%	66	57.4%
Shared book reading	20	17.4%	38	33.0%	57	49.6%
Create a rich Home Learning Environment	67	58.3%	40	34.8%	8	7.0%
Assist the child to do school work	43	37.4%	56	48.7%	16	13.9%

Table 3 shows that only 17 (14.8%) teenage mothers read for pleasure as models for their children to imitate. It also shows that 32 (27.8%) rarely read for pleasure and the majority

of the teenage mothers (57.4%) do not read for pleasure at all. It can also be seen that only 20 (17.4%) teenage mothers read story or picture books to their children whereas 33.0% rarely do so. The study also established that regardless of the relevance of shared book reading in acquisition of pre-literacy skills, 49.6% of the teenage mothers do not involve their children in shared book reading at all. On creating a stimulating home learning environment, it was established that 67.0% of the parents always create a healthy environment for their children to read when at home and 34.8% of the parents rarely create a stimulating environment for their children to read while at home. Only 8 (7.0%) teenage mothers said that they did not give provide a stimulating environment for their children to read while at home. A few parents (37.4%) said that they always help their children in doing homework while 48.7% said that they rarely assist their children to do homework. It was also established that 13.9% of the teenage mothers do not help their children to do work given in school at all. Therefore, it can be concluded that the majority of teenage mothers do not adequately engage their children in activities around print. Due to inadequate engagement in activities around print, children born to teenage mothers may acquire pre-literacy skills at a slower pace than other children. This may in turn delay their reading development and make them have a negative attitude towards reading and education in general thereby hampering self-development.

The findings of this study are in agreement with those of Wambiri and Ndani (2015). In their study, Wambiri and Ndani (2015) established that the number of years a caregiver spent in school had significant effects on caregivers direct and indirect behavior and strategies with children around print. Having spent a considerably few years in school, teenage mothers seemed to have little interest in involving their children in activities around print. The findings of the current study are also similar to those of Edzisani and Tholene (2012) who established that teenage mothers may not adequately get involved in their children's development since they are socially and emotionally affected during pregnancy and even after childbirth. The findings of the current study also concur with Kennedy et al (2012) who asserted that teenage mothers may be much engrossed in fending for their children or going back to school that they may not get adequate time to attend to their children's developmental needs.

4.3 Provision of Learning Resources

The authors intended to establish whether teenage mothers are adequately involved in providing resources that promote acquisition of pre-literacy skills among their children. The resources included picture/story books, toys, locally made materials and writing materials. The teenage mothers were required to state how frequently they provide the resources, that is always, rarely or never. The responses were recorded as in Table 4.

Table 4: Provision of Resources

Activities	Frequency					
	Always		Rarely		Never	
	Tally	%	Tally	%	Tally	%
Provide story/picture book	12	10.4%	39	33.9%	64	55.7%
Buy toys	28	24.3	30	26.1%	57	49.6%
Innovate play materials	23	20%	35	30.4%	57	49.6%
Buy writing materials	32	27.8%	27	23.5%	56	48.7

According to table 4 above, only 10.4% of teenage mothers always provide story/picture books to their pre-primary children. The table also shows that 33.9% of the teenage mothers provide story/picture books to their children rarely. However, more than half (55.7%) of the teenage mothers do not provide picture/story books to their pre-primary children at all. It can also be seen that less than one third (24.3%) of the teenage mothers always buy toys to their children while 26.1% of the teenage mothers rarely buy toys for their children. The study established that almost half (49.6%) of teenage mothers do not buy toys for their children at all. On innovating play materials for children, it was established that 20% of the teenage mothers always did it while 30.4% rarely innovate play materials for their children. A good number of teenage mothers (49.6%) confessed that they never innovate play materials for their pre-primary children. As far as buying writing materials is concerned, 27.8% of the teenage mothers said that they always bought reading materials for their children while 23% said that they rarely buy reading materials for their children. The study found out that a great majority of the teenage mothers in Magarini Sub-County never buy writing materials for their children and that their children totally relied on writing materials provided by the county government. Therefore, it can be concluded that teenage mothers from Magarini Sub-County do not provide adequate resources that promote children's acquisition of pre-literacy skills. Since provision of resources such as books, toys and pencils has been associated with development of pre-literacy skills (Ndarihорanye and Ndayambaje 2012), children born to teenage mothers are likely to lag behind their peers in acquiring pre-literacy skills. This may in turn make them incompetent in reading, lower their self-esteem and limit their education achievement. The findings of the current study are in line to those of The Urban Child Institute (2015) which revealed that families started by young parents from low socio-economic status lack adequate resources that promote learning. The findings of this study also concur with Opiyo (2017). He found out that low socio-economic households may not be in a position to avail basic literacy resources that support children's reading development such as toys, crayons, pictures and pencils.

4.4 Teenage Mothers' Knowledge on their Role in Children's Acquisition of Literacy Skills

An interview schedule was administered to teenage mothers to establish how far they understood their role in promoting their children's acquisition of pre-literacy skills. The interview schedule also aimed at capturing any new information concerning teenage

motherhood. The teenage mothers were required to explain what they thought was their role in promoting their children's ability to acquire pre-literacy skills; modifications they had made to their houses/rooms to ensure comfort of their children when reading/doing homework; to identify challenges they faced in providing a friendlier HLE for their children and to outline strategies they had put in place to overcome the challenges. Their responses were as captured below.

The current study established that teenage mothers have little knowledge on their role in promoting their children's ability to acquire pre-literacy skills. One of the teenage mothers interviewed had this to say, *"It is the role of the teachers to ensure that pupils are well taught. My role as parent is to provide basic needs such as food, clothing and shelter. The government should provide books and other learning materials."* On modification of houses to provide a space for the children to read picture/story books, one of the teenage mothers had this to say, *"In our home there are only two mud-walled houses and a make-shift structure that we use as a kitchen. One of the houses is for my parents and my siblings and I share the other one. Each of the houses has only one room and they are congested, therefore my daughter together with my siblings who are still in school do their studies outside before the sun sets"*. Financial constraints were sighted as the major challenge in providing a friendlier HLE.

One of the teenage mothers said:

"All those things that you mention-table, chair, books and lantern lamp- have to be purchased using money. My boyfriend, who had promised to marry me ran away when I disclosed to him that I was pregnant. I am the sole breadwinner not only for my son but also for my siblings. My dad passed away two years ago, and my mother is terminally ill. I do casual work which include washing clothes for people at a fee, weeding and babysitting. My earnings are so little that there is barely anything left after I've bought food. Recently, one of my siblings was given a solar powered lamp by World Vision which I believe will help them with their studies."

Another teenage mother said,

"It's is hard for me to help my son in his studies since I don't have enough time. I work in a restaurant at the trading center where I am supposed to report for work at six o'clock in the morning and we usually close late at night. When I reach home, I find my son already asleep."

One of the strategies teenage mothers have for addressing their financial challenges include taking up vocational courses. One of them said,

"The father of my daughter is a married man and he has never given any financial support to me. I save a small amount of money every month and after a few years I will be able to join a tailoring course. Equipped with that course, I will be able to meet my daughter's needs in a more effective way. Though it will be late, better late than never."

Response from interviews showed clearly that the respondents did not fully understand their role in promoting their children's acquisition of pre-literacy skills. It is also evident that financial constraint is the major challenge facing teenage mothers in providing learning resources for their children. Some teenage mothers are also much engrossed in casual labor that they do not have much time to attend to their children's developmental needs. Some respondents also stated that the fathers of their children are either former school mates or married men who have never contacted them since they became pregnant. Due to financial constraints teenage mothers are unable to provide resources that promote acquisition of pre-literacy skills among their children such as story/picture books. They also do not get enough time to engage their children in literary rich interactions since they are busy doing casual work to enable them to meet their financial needs and those of their children.

The end result is that children born to teenage mothers are likely to lag behind their peers in acquisition of pre-literacy skills such as letter recognition, sound naming, oral blending and oral segmentation. When children do not fully acquire pre-literacy skills, they are likely to have difficulties in reading, transitional challenges and a low self-esteem. The findings of the current study are line with those of McCoy and Cole (2011) who established that due to financial constraints and low education level, children born to teenage mothers may not enjoy a favorable home learning environment. The current findings are also similar to those of Angeline et al (2014) who asserted that due to their low level of education, teenage mothers get only low paying and unsatisfying jobs, making it hard to adequately meet their needs and those of their children. The findings of the current study also agree with those of Kennedy et al (2012) who found out that single mothers find it difficult to balance between childcare and being the sole breadwinner.

5. Recommendations

The study sought to explore whether teenage mothers get involved in their children's acquisition of pre-literacy skills. The findings revealed that teenage mothers do not adequately involve themselves in their children's acquisition of pre-literacy skills. Therefore, the authors recommend that the county government in conjunction with pre-primary teachers should initiate programs aimed at sensitizing pre-primary parents on their roles. The current study established that teenage mothers do not provide adequate resources that would promote their children's acquisition of pre-literacy skills. The authors recommend that donor agents such as Faith Based Organizations, Non-Governmental Organizations and the county governments should step in to assist pre-primary schools with learning resources such as picture/story books and play materials. Insufficient time among working teenage mothers was identified as one of the factors limiting mother-child interactions. This study recommends that employers working with teenage mothers should consider releasing them early so that they can get some time to attend to their children's developmental needs. Source of light was also identified as

challenge. The authors of this study recommend that donor agents consider providing children born to teenage mothers from poor backgrounds with solar powered lamps to enable them do work given at school comfortably.

References

- Alivernini, F. (2013). An Exploration of the Gap Between Highest and Lowest Ability Readers Across 20 Countries. *Educational Studies*, 39 (4), 399-417.
- Amond, D. & Currie, J. (2011). Killing Me Softly: The Fetal Origins Hypothesis. *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 25, 153-172.
- Annie, E. (2010). *Early Warning: Why Reading by the End of Third Grade Matters*. Baltimore, M.D., USA: Annie E. Casey Foundation.
- Aseda, R. (2014). *Tackle Teenage Pregnancies to spur Development*. *Rural Reports Dec 17th 2014*. Retrieved from <https://ruralreporters.com/kenya-tackle-teenage-pregnancies-to-spur-development/>.
- Blythe, S. (2011). *In an Interview with The Guardian*, Sunday 8th May 2011.
- Brofenbrenner, U. (1990). *Discovering What Families do*. In *Rebuilding the Nest: A New Commitment to the American Family*. Family Service America as in Berk, L. (2000). *Child Development (5th ed)*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.
- Chansa-Kabali, T. (2014). *The Acquisition of Early Reading Skills: The Influence of Home Literacy Environment in Lusaka, Zambia*: Unpublished PhD Thesis. University of Jyvaskyla.
- Clarke, B. (2014). Parent and Teacher Rating Scales in the Evaluation of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder: Contribution to Diagnosis in Clinically Referred Children. *Journal of Development and Behavioral Pediatrics*, 27, (3), 209-218.
- Crugnola, R., Lerardi, E., Gazzotti, S., & Albizzati, A. (2014). Motherhood in Adolescent Mothers: Maternal Attachment, Mother-Infant Styles of Interaction and Emotion Regulation at Three Months. *Journal of Infant Behavior Development*. 37, 44-56, 2014
- Edzisani, S. & Tholene, S. (2012). *Quality of Good Life with Teenage Motherhood: Journal of Psychology in Africa*, 22:3, 429-434, DOI.10.1080/14330237.2012.10820550.
- Froiland, J. (2013). Positive Parenting and Parental Involvement: Keys to Healthy Child Development. *Colorado Society of School Psychologists Newsletter*, 27, 4-5.
- Gay (1981). *Educational Research: Competencies for analysis and application*. Columbus, Toronto and London: Charles E. Maryhill publishing company.
- Isaacs, J. & Magnuson, K. (2011). *Income and Education as Predictors of Children's School Readiness*. Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution.
- Janson, J. M. (2013). *Risk, Resilience and Positive Youth Development: Developing Effective Community Programs for High Risk Youth Lessons from the Denver Bridge Project*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Karra, M. & Lee, M. (2012). *Human Capital Consequences of Teenage Childbearing in South Africa*. Washington, D.C.: Population Reference Bureau. Retrieved from

- <https://scholar.harvard.edu/mkarra/publications/human-capital-consequences-teenage-childbearing-south-africa>
- Kassa, G. M., Arowojolu, A. O. & Odukogbe, A. A. (2018). *Prevalence and Determiners of Adolescent Pregnancy in Africa: A systematic Review and Meta-Analysis*. 15, 195-197
- Kathomi, M. (2015). *Parental Involvement and the Literacy Development of Pre-Scholars in Langata Division, Nairobi*. (M.Ed. Thesis, University of Nairobi).
- Kennedy, E., Dunplay, E., Dwyer, B., Hayes, G., Marsh, J., O'Conner, M., & Shiel, G. (2012). *Literacy in Early Childhood and Primary Education (3-8 years)*. NCCA Report 15, 8-12.
- Kenya Demographic Health Survey (2014). *Working for a World Free Poverty*. Nairobi: Kenya National Bureau of Statistics.
- Lawson, K. (2012). *The real power of parental reading aloud: exploring the affective and Attentional Dimensions*. Australian journal of Education 56 (3), 257-272.
- Lwanga, C. (2018 November 7). *Finger Pointing as Kilifi Reports 14000 Teenage Pregnancies*. Daily Nation, Retrieved from <https://www.nation.co.ke/counties/kilifi/Alarm-as-Kilifi-reports-14-000-teen-pregnancies-/1183282-4837642-c992bhz/index.html>
- Manduku, J. (2017). Influence of Parental Participation on Academic Performance Among Children in Early Childhood Development and Education Centers Waldai Zone, Kericho County, Kenya. *International E-Journal of Advances in Education*, 3 (7), 199-208.
- Mangeli, M., Rayyan, M., Cheraghi, M. A. & Tirgan, B. (2017). Exploring the Challenges of Adolescent Mothers from their Life Experiences in the Transition to Motherhood: A Qualitative Study. *Journal of Family and Reproductive Health*, 11, (31) 165-173.
- Martin, J. A., Hamilton, B. E., Osterman, M. J., Driscoll, A. K. & Drake, P. (2017). *Births: Final Data for 2017 National Vital Statistics Reports: National Centre for Disease Control and Prevention*. 67, (8), 55-69, 2018.
- McCoy, E., & Cole, (2011). *A snapshot of local support for literacy: 2010 survey*. London: National Literacy Trust.
- McDermott, E., Graham, H. & Hamilton, V. (2011). *Experiences of Being a Teenage Mother in the UK: A Report of a Systematic Review of a Qualitative Studies*. Lancaster: Lancaster University.
- McLead, K. (2014). Orientating to Assembling: Qualitative Inquiry for More-Than Human Worlds. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods* 13, 377-394, 2014.
- Mugenda, O. & Mugenda, A. (2003). *Research methods: Quantitative and Qualitative Approaches* Nairobi: Act Press.
- Mwenda, C. (2017). *Influence of the Determinants of Parental Involvement in Lower Primary School Pupils' Homework in Laikipia County*. Unpublished M.Ed. Project. Kenyatta University.
- Mwoma, T. (2010). *Paternal Involvement in Children's Education: An Implication of Children's Performance at Pre-School in Gucha District, Kenya*. Doctoral Dissertation. Kenyatta University.

- Mwoma, T. (2017). *Children's Reading Ability in Early Primary School Reading: Challenges of a Kenyan Rural Community*. *Issues in Educational Research*, 27(2), 347-364.
- Mwoma, T., Wekulo, P., Haycraft, E., Murage, E., Wanjohi, M., Kimuywe, J., Kinuthia, E., Muriuki, P., Pearson, N., Okelo, K., Onyango, S., Kadenge, O., Samburu, B., Mwangi, S., Kabaka, S., Tauta, C., & Griffiths, P. (2019). *Experiences of Incorporating Support for Early Childhood Development into the Baby Friendly Community Initiative in Rural Kenya* *Journal of the British Academy*. 8(S2), 103-132
<https://bettercarenetwork.org/sites/default/files/2020-04/JBA-8s2-05-Mwoma-et-al.pdf>.
- Ndarihорanye, E. & Ndayambaje, D. (2012). *Socio-Economic Problems Affecting Early Childhood Education*. Kigali: KIE.
- Ngure, W., Mwoma, T. & Buna, Y. (2019). *Investigating the Reading Levels of Reading Skills Among Grade Three Pupils in Nairobi County, Kenya: European Journal of Education*.
- Njoka, J. (2016). *Teenage Pregnancy in Kilifi County of Kenya*. Nairobi: Faith to Action.
- Nutbrown, C., Hannon, P. & Morgan, A. (2010). *Early Literacy Work with Families Policy Practice and Research*. London: Sage Publications.
- Nyamai, F. (2018, November 1). *CS Amina Orders Probe as Girls Deliver During Exam Daily Nation*, Retrieved from <https://www.google.com/amp/s/www.nation.co.ke/news/CS-orders-probe-on-teen-pregnancies/1056-4832262-view-asAMP-xhm1kkz/index.html>
- Obilloh, W. (2014). *Family Characteristics Influencing Reading Readiness of pupils in Pre-Primary Schools in Siaya County*. Unpublished Med Thesis. Kenyatta University.
- Omwancha, K. (2012). *The Implementation of an Educational Re-entry Policy for Girls after Teenage Pregnancy: A Case Study of Public Secondary Schools in Kuria District, Kenya*. PhD Thesis, Victoria University of Wellington.
- Opiyo, R. (2017). *Home Literacy Environment and Development of Early Literacy Abilities of 3-4-Year-Old Children in Kakamega Central Sub-County, Kenya*. (PhD Thesis, Kenyatta University).
- Penn State University (2013). *Building a Base for Strong Language and Emergent Literacy: Engaging with Young Children*. Retrieved from www.extension.psy.edu/youth/betterkidcarenews/2013/building.
- Raising Children (2014). *The Australian Parenting Website*. Retrieved from <https://raisingchildren.net.au/grown-ups/family-diversity/parents-like-me/parenting-as-a-teen>.
- Siebert, V. (2016 January 7). *The girls who had to grow up too soon: Heart-Wrenching Photos Spotlight, the Plight of Teen Mothers in Africa who are Forced to Care for Babies when they are still just Children themselves*, Daily Mail, Retrieved on 16/10/2018 from, <https://www.google.com/amp/s/www.dailymail.co.uk/femail/article-3389289/amp/The-girls-grow-soon-Heart-wrenching-photo-series-spotlights-plight-teen-mothers-Africa-forced-birth-babies-just-children-themselves.html>.

- Smith, W. (2012). *Financial problems faced by teen mothers*. Prezzi.com. Retrieved from <https://prezi.com/ps8rwbxlyum/financial-problems-faced-by-teen-mothers>.
- Stiles, A.S. (2010). *Case Study of an Intervention to Enhance Maternal Sensitivity in Adolescent Mothers*. *Journal of Obstetrics, Gynecological and Neonatal Nursing*, 39, 723-733.
- The Urban Child Institute (2015). *Children do better when they are not raised by children*. Retrieved from www.urbanchildinstitute.org/articles/research-policy/overviews/children-do-better-when-they-are-not-raised-by-children.
- Tompkins, G., (2010). *Listening Activities at Home*. Pearson Ally Beacon: Prentice Hall.
- UNICEF (2016). *Young People and Family Planning: Teenage Mothers*. Retrieved from https://limun.org.uk/FCKfiles/File/2016_UNICEF_Guide.pdf.
- United Nations Population Fund (2013). *Motherhood in Childhood: Facing the Challenge of Adolescent Pregnancy*. New York, UNFPA. <https://www.unfpa.org/news/teen-mothers-kenya-become-powerful-advocates-change>.
- UWEZO Assessment Report (2013). *Are Our Children Learning? Annual Learning Assessment Kenya 2013: Summary and Key Findings*.
- UWEZO East Africa (2015). *Annual learning assessment report in 2014: Are our children learning?* Downloaded from <https://www.twaweza.org/go/uwezo-kenya-2015-ala>
- Wambiri, G. N. & Ndani, M. N. (2015). Relative contributions of caregivers' level of education, role definition and average household income to care giver involvement in children's emergent reading. *Journal of Education and Practice*, 6(24) 108 – 215.
- World Health Organization (2020). *Teenage Pregnancy Fact Sheet*. Retrieved from <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/adolescent-pregnancy>.
- Yulianti, K., Denessen, E., & Droop, M. (2018). The Influence of Parental Involvement on Children: A Study in Elementary Schools in Indonesia. *International Journal About Parents in Education* 10, 14-32.

Henry Murong'a, Teresa Mwoma, Hudson Ouko
TEENAGE MOTHERS' INVOLVEMENT IN THEIR CHILDREN'S ACQUISITION OF
PRE-LITERACY SKILLS: A CASE OF KILIFI COUNTY, KENYA

Creative Commons licensing terms

Author(s) will retain the copyright of their published articles agreeing that a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC BY 4.0) terms will be applied to their work. Under the terms of this license, no permission is required from the author(s) or publisher for members of the community to copy, distribute, transmit or adapt the article content, providing a proper, prominent and unambiguous attribution to the authors in a manner that makes clear that the materials are being reused under permission of a Creative Commons License. Views, opinions and conclusions expressed in this research article are views, opinions and conclusions of the author(s). Open Access Publishing Group and European Journal of Education Studies shall not be responsible or answerable for any loss, damage or liability caused in relation to/arising out of conflicts of interest, copyright violations and inappropriate or inaccurate use of any kind content related or integrated into the research work. All the published works are meeting the Open Access Publishing requirements and can be freely accessed, shared, modified, distributed and used in educational, commercial and non-commercial purposes under a [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License \(CC BY 4.0\)](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).