



**WORKING CONDITIONS AND TEACHER PERFORMANCE
IN PUBLIC EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT EDUCATION
CENTRES IN ANABKOI SUB COUNTY, KENYA**

Kimaiyo J. Sharon¹ⁱ,

Moses Kapkiai²,

David Kiprop²

¹Masters Student,

School of Education and Human Resource Development,

Kisii University,

Kisii, Kenya

²PhD, Lecturer,

School of Education and Human Resource Development,

Kisii University,

Kisii, Kenya

Abstract:

The aim of this paper is to investigate how working conditions in early childhood development education centres impact on teacher performance in Kenya. The study employed descriptive survey design. The target population involved 98 ECDE teachers who were selected using simple random sampling, stratified and purposive sampling techniques. The sample size 80 pre-primary teachers from three wards; Kapsoya, Kaptagat and Ainabkoi/Olare divisions. Questionnaires were used to collect data from head teachers and teachers and interview guide for one sub county ECDE officer. Quantitative data collected was coded and entered into SPSS and analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Results show that working conditions ($r=0.418$) had significant ($p<0.05$) influence on teacher work performance. The study concluded that devolving ECDE has had below average effect on pre-primary teacher work performance in Ainabkoi Sub County, Kenya. The study recommends that, there is need for county government to ensure that working conditions in public ECDE centres are improved for the purpose of improving teacher work performance and quality education.

Keywords: working, conditions, teacher, performance, pre-primary school

ⁱ Correspondence: email sharonkimaiyo0@gmail.com

1. Introduction

The quality of education and teacher performance in Early Childhood Development Education is determined by the environment in which teachers operate in. The working conditions of teachers encompass various factors within the school environment; leadership in place, facilities and infrastructure resources, rewards, working time, teacher: pupil ratio and even incentives offered in the workplace to enable teacher to perform their jobs well. The working conditions in ECDE centres perform a significant role in ensuring there is higher teacher satisfaction, retention and also attracting teachers. Nevertheless, the issue of poor working conditions in ECDE centres in various countries across the globe show a great concern for quality basic education provision. For instance, Khan and Iqbal (2012) investigated that the positive school working conditions encourage showing the learning process in early childhood education. They contended that the nature of school physical resources indirectly affects the learning in ECDE. In Kenya, Chepkonga (2017) indicate that facilities of pre-primary schools required appropriate consideration as they provide an extraordinary incentive towards both the teachers and learners' spirit, inspiration and perform in improving curriculum implementation. Nevertheless, studies have shown that the retention, satisfaction, performance and turnover of teachers have been a challenge faced by various education systems across the world.

A research done by The Alliance for Excellent Education (2014) reported that almost 13% of the American workforce of 3.4 million public school teachers either moves or leaves the profession each year which was higher than nurses, architects and police. In Kenya, Wangila (2017) discovered that as a result of poor working conditions in public ECDE centres, a significant number of teachers were contemplating leaving the profession and seeking jobs elsewhere where the conditions of employment and working conditions are favourable. Mary and Elishiba (2010) investigated factors influencing early childhood development teachers' work performance. Findings further showed that the physical conditions in any work environment. Well ventilated and painted classrooms, adequate play area, clean compound, availability of teaching and learning materials contribute to teachers' contentment with the working environment. On the other hand unmaintained physical working conditions, inadequate outdoor play equipment and lack of learning materials de-motivates teachers and impedes performance. Therefore, conditions of learning are crucial in determining quality of education. Mulei *et al.* (2016) found that pupil teacher ratio significantly influences performance of pupils in national exams. There is a research gap concerning, first unlike their study that focused on pupils' performance the current study focuses on teacher performance, secondly their study was based in primary school. Before the devolution of management of ECDE, unfriendly working conditions characterized most ECDE centres (Gakii, 2003; Ngasike, 2004), did a study on pre-primary teacher factors that influence the teacher child relationship in Miriga Meru while Ngasike did a study on teachers use of play as a medium for bridging pre-primary children's mathematical experiences at Kasarani Division, Nairobi. This has

changed minimally in post devolution Kenya. ECDE teachers are compelled to work in hazardous and unhealthy conditions and this impact negatively on their performance. Akala *et al.* (2014) opine that factors such as, poor working conditions have continued to undermine teacher performance in Kenya. County governments have not created working conditions that enable ECDE teachers to interact positively with the children therefore the productivity and efficiency of teachers are directly affected by how they work and their working conditions. According to Uasin Gishu County Development Plan 2013-2017, the physical facilities for ECDE in the county was at 10%. However, the county hoped to improve this from 10%-50%. This paper investigates how working conditions affects teacher performance in public pre-primary centres in Ainabkoi Sub County. The Kenya education policy (Basic Education Act, 2013) requires that schools should be conducive for learning. Public pre-primary centres are not exception to this policy requirement. Therefore, county governments are tasked with ensuring that the environments in public pre-primary centres are conducive to facilitate learning. However, the extent at which learning environment affects the performance of teachers has not been adequately studied in Kenya, the focus of this paper.

2. Purpose of the Paper

In an effort to better understand the issue of ECDE teacher workplace performance, the focus of this study is on pre-primary teacher working conditions in public pre-primary centres in Ainabkoi Sub County, Uasin Gishu County, Kenya.

2.1 Literature Review

Various research studies have been done to examine how working conditions influence of working conditions on teacher performance in schools. In North Carolina in the United States of America, Moore (2019) determined the impact of beginning teacher support and teacher working conditions on the retention of beginning teachers in high poverty school districts. Moore examined Title I and Low Wealth funded school districts in the South-Eastern quadrant of the state. Results indicated that mentors and school leadership had the potential to impact retention of beginning teachers.

A study by Tayyab (2010) in India focused on factors affecting motivational level of teachers at secondary school level. The findings were that teachers were not satisfied with their working conditions. The study recommended that teachers should get training and be paid according to their qualifications. The study was based at the secondary school level. Akyem (2010) research determined teacher development in the country. The findings were that work and working situations of teachers directly affect their productivity and efficiency. The study recommended that refresher and in service courses be organized for teachers, for these updates the teachers both in content and teaching skills. The study looked at teachers in general and adopted a qualitative approach. In Pakistan, Shakeel and Aslam (2019) examined the problems faced by teachers in implementing ECDE in primary schools. A descriptive research design was

applied. All the primary schools located in Lahore district were targeted where a sample of 200 pre-primary teachers were selected randomly (100 rural and 100 urban schools). Questionnaire was used for data collection. It was discovered that many teachers were not aware of pre-primary schools standards in terms of the environmental requirements. This is because materials for use in classroom instruction were found not to be enough in addition to facilities. Male and female teachers had different perceptions on standards of ECDE implementation in schools.

In Ghana, Lemaire et al. (2013) examined stakeholders in early childhood education perceptions of their roles in the implementation of early childhood education programmes. NGOs, community members, parents, pre-primary teachers and members of religious organisations were the target population. Collection of data was through use of questionnaire and structured interview guide. Results showed that stakeholders had low perceptions of pre-primary education and this affected performance of their roles. For instance, whereby the government failed to provide adequate resources and training to the teachers, the performance of teachers was significantly affected in Western Region of Ghana. A study conducted in Togo by Akyem (2010) to determine teacher development in the country. The findings were that work and working situations of teachers directly affect their productivity and efficiency. The study recommended that refresher and in service courses be organized for teachers, updates the teachers both in content and teaching skills. The study looked at teachers in general and adopted a qualitative approach. This study employed both qualitative and quantitative approach and will look at these training approaches that devolved government of Uasin Gishu has done on ECDE teachers.

Njeri (2014) investigated the impact of instructional materials of performance on number writing among pre-school children in Kamukunji Sub County. The research design used was quasi experimental. It had control group and experimental group whose data was tabulated on the pre-test and post-test observation checklist. The 5 pre-schools head teachers and 15 pre-school teachers completed questionnaires which were analyzed using both qualitative and quantitative methods. Children in the experimental groups who used instructional materials in activities performed better than the other two groups. Material used helped to identify children's different multiple intelligences as well as children's interest and ability which helped in grouping them. Teachers learnt that they could use children's errors as learning agents to understand the child's thinking and hence become a basis of assisting the children. The study by Njeri was done one year after devolution and therefore the impact of instructional materials provision would have not had significant impact on teacher performance. Okongo, Ngao, Rop and Nyongesa (2015) examined whether availability of teaching and learning resources influenced implementation of inclusive education in pre-school Centers in Nyamira North sub-county. The study employed descriptive survey research design. The target population was 134 head teachers in 134 pre-school centers, 402 pre-school teachers, 12 Education officers and 938 pre-school parents. Data was collected using questionnaires and observation checklists. Findings revealed that there were inadequate teaching and

learning resources at pre-school centers in Nyamira North sub-county. 78 percent of the respondents revealed that inadequate resources affected the implementation of inclusive education. The gap created from the research is that the dependent variable was inclusive education and this study checks on teacher performance.

Echaune, Maiyo, Poipoi and Atyang (2017) investigated the suitability of teaching and learning environment in public pre-primary education in Busia County, Kenya. They targeted all public pre-primary teachers and all head teachers of public primary schools in the County. A total of 36 public primary schools were sampled randomly, 36 head teachers and 144 pre-primary education teachers participated in the study. Data was collected using observation schedule, questionnaire, and document analysis guide. Findings revealed that most of public pre-primary education centers had inadequate provision of outdoor play material such as swings, ladders and climbers. Most of public schools lacked proper sanitation facilities such as toilets for preschool learners. In most centers, children were learning under poor conditions, classrooms had dusty floors and poorly ventilated. This means that classrooms were in poor condition. Melly and Mwangi (2018) investigated the influence of level of integration of creative activities in teaching and learning and the provision of resources for creative activities. The research employed survey research design. Structured questionnaires and unstructured interview guides were used to collect data from 80 preschool teachers and 12 head teachers respectively. Most teachers indicted their head teachers of relegating provision of essential materials for creative activities to the periphery. They recommended that in order to adequately cater for all essential creative activities, there should be a vote head in all schools' budget specifically to cater for ECDE creative materials. The focus by Melly and Mwangi was on head teachers' role whereas this study seeks to know how working environment has been improved by county governments to ensure teachers perform their duties as expected.

3. Materials and Methods

This study was conducted in Ainabkoi Sub County, Uasin Gishu County. The research was conducted in three administrative divisions of the sub county namely: Kapsoya, Kaptagat and Ainabkoi/Olare divisions. The study was guided by descriptive survey research design. The target population involved 98 pre-primary teachers. A sample size 49 pre-primary teachers were chosen to represent the whole target population. Data collection was done through use of questionnaires for teachers. Analysis of data collected was done using qualitative and quantitative methods. Quantitative data was analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics with the help of statistical product and service solutions computer software.

4. Results and Discussions

This study investigated the effect of working conditions and pre-school teacher performance. The teachers were asked to indicate the degree of their agreement or

disagreement on how working conditions influence their work performance. The eight statements were measured on the following scale: Strongly Disagree (1), Disagree (2), Uncertain (3), Agree (4) and Strongly Agree (5). Results are therefore presented in Table 4.12.

Table 1: Teachers Responses on Working Conditions in Public Pre-School Centres

	Frequency	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Uncertain	Agree	Strongly Agree	M	SD
i	County government has provided adequate reference materials to us to aid teaching and learning process	8 (10.1%)	19 (24.1%)	11 (13.9%)	24 (30.4%)	17 (21.5%)	3.2911	1.3219
ii	County government has facilitated acquisition of playing kits	35 (44.3)	27 (34.2%)	8 (10.1%)	7 (8.9%)	2 (2.5%)	1.9114	1.0645
iii	All our classes are spacious to facilitate movement of teachers and learners	24 (30.4%)	12 (15.2%)	13 (16.5%)	24 (30.4%)	6 (7.6%)	2.6962	1.3808
iv	All classes are well ventilated and proper lighting	12 (15.2%)	12 (15.2%)	11 (13.9%)	34 (43.0%)	10 (12.7%)	3.2278	1.2905
v	The teacher: pupil ratio is manageable	25 (31.6%)	42 (53.2%)	0 (0.0%)	6 (7.6%)	6 (7.6%)	2.0633	1.1474
vi	There is enough space for conducting outdoor activities in school	25 (31.6%)	6 (7.6%)	0 (0.0%)	36 (45.6%)	12 (15.2%)	3.0506	1.5599
vii	There is good communication between county ECDE field officers and us	10 (12.7%)	7 (8.9%)	22 (27.8%)	28 (35.4%)	12 (15.2%)	3.3165	1.2147
viii	The county government has ensured that school environment is safe to facilitate learning	18 (22.8%)	18 (22.8%)	6 (7.6%)	25 (31.6%)	12 (15.2%)	2.9367	1.4442
							2.8117	1.3030

Results in Table 1 show that 24 (30.4%) of pre-school teachers agreed that the county government has provided adequate reference materials to aid in teaching and learning process. However, 19 (24.1%) disagreed with the statement. The result henceforth shows that the county government provision of reference materials is at moderate level (M=3.29 and SD=1.32) in the sub county. This means that teachers have to look and purchase their

own reference materials to aid their classroom instructional learning processes. Study results also shows that 35 (44.3%) of pre-school teachers strongly disagreed and 27 (34.2%) disagreed that county government has enabled their institutions to acquire playing kits. The mean statistics shows ($M=1.91$ and $SD=1.06$) majority of teachers tended to agree. Therefore, as part of promotional of outdoor events, most pre-school teachers are unable to implement the extracurricular activities outside classroom since games facilities, kits and resources like balls, swings have not been provided by county government.

Thirdly, the research result reveal that 24 (30.4%) of pre-school teachers strongly disagreed while the same proportion strongly agree that all of their classrooms were spacious to facilitate movement of learners and teacher during classroom instruction. The result therefore shows that that pre-school teachers were undecided ($M=2.69$ and $SD=1.38$) on the statement. This suggests that some classrooms are overcrowded making the classroom congested while others are spacious to facilitate learning in public pre-school centres in Ainabkoi Sub County. Further, statistics shows that 34 (43.0%) of pre-school teachers agreed and 10 (12.7%) that all of their classrooms were ventilated and there was proper lighting. The result therefore shows that the mean obtained was at average level ($M=3.22$ and $SD=1.29$) level. This means that there are classes (30.4%) that have no proper ventilation and lighting therefore making learning impossible for learners against the recommended standard for pre-school learning. This means that instructional processes cannot be performed to the standards in classrooms that have poor lighting.

When asked as to whether learner – teacher ratio was manageable, 25 (31.6%) strongly disagreed, 42 (53.2%) disagreed and 12 (15.2%) agreed. The result henceforth shows that the learner population is high ($M=2.06$ and $SD=1.14$) making it impossible for teachers to manage pre-school classrooms in Ainabkoi. When the ratio of learners is high compared to the instructors' available, teachers' ability to deliver the curriculum content in classroom becomes difficult. When asked as to whether there was enough space for conducting outdoor activities, 25 (31.6%) strongly disagreed, 6 (7.6%) disagreed, 36 (45.6%) agreed and 12 (15.2%) strongly agreed. The result therefore shows that teachers were undecided ($M=3.05$ and $SD=1.55$) on the statement. This means some schools have enough land for outdoor activities while others do not. Most of those found to have are those that are attached to primary schools hence ending up sharing with them.

Study findings also showed that 28 (35.4%) of pre-school teachers agreed but 22 (27.8%) were undecided on the statement that there was good communication between the Sub County ECDE field officers and them. This means that good communication between ECDE field officers and pre-school teachers is at average level ($M=3.31$ and $SD=1.21$). It also implies that some teachers have good rapport with their quality assurance and standards officers while others have not. Findings also showed that 25 (31.6%) of pre-school teachers agreed while 18 (22.8%) disagreed that the county government had ensured the school environment was safe to aid in learning. This means that to a moderate level ($M=2.93$ and $SD=1.44$), county government has made efforts to

ensure that the school environment is safe and secure for learning through putting up of school fence.

Composite data showed that teachers agreed that the working conditions in their pre-schools had been promoted by county government to a moderate level ($M=2.81$ and $SD=1.30$). This means that more effort to ensure conducive learning is enhanced; the county government has ensured working conditions are better to facilitate higher productivity by teachers.

To establish the effect of working conditions and teacher work performance, a correlation analysis was computed. The results are given in Table 2.

Table 2: Effect of Working Conditions on Teacher Work Performance

		Working Conditions	Teachers Work Performance
Working Conditions	Pearson Correlation	1	.418**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	79	79
Teachers Work Performance	Pearson Correlation	.418**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	79	79

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Results show that there exist significant positive effect ($r=0.418$ and $p=0.001$) between working conditions and pre-school teacher work performance in Ainabkoi Sub County. The result implies that improvement in working conditions would result to improvement in teacher work performance in pre-schools. Therefore, county government have a significant role to play to ensure that working conditions in pre-schools match policy standards which would ensure teachers realise their curriculum goals. Through open ended questions, the pre-school teachers were asked to indicate their views on their current working conditions towards their performance in school. Their responses are summarised in Table 3.

Table 3: Pre-school Teachers Views on Contribution of Working Conditions on their Performance

Views	Frequency	Percent
Is not bad and makes our work as teachers busy in curricular and co-curricular activities	31	39.2
Ensure teachers are able to meet their expectations in teaching learners to acquire knowledge and skills	6	7.6
Learners are motivated	12	15.2
Lack of proper remuneration has contributed to low motivation hence uncertain about the future	6	7.6
More facilities for learning	6	7.6
No enough playing fields for co-curricular activities	12	15.2
None response	6	7.6
Total	79	100.0

According to 31 (39.2%) of pre-school teachers, the conditions in their schools were not bad as such as it ensures that they implement inside and outdoor activities. Further, 12 (15.2%) of teachers said that their pre-school pupils are motivated and 6 (7.6%) said that good working environment ensures that they are in a position to meet their expectations in teaching learners to acquired required knowledge. However, some complained that they did not have enough playing fields for undertaking co-curricular activities while others said that there is need for more facilities to enhance learning. Generally, most teachers perceive that improvement in working conditions would significantly result to improvement in their service delivery levels.

5. Conclusions and Recommendations

The working conditions of pre-schools are supposed to be convenient for teachers and learners. This will ensure that curriculum is implemented well without hitches. The study result showed that teachers rated moderately the following as what has been improved in their schools; good communication between ECDE field officers and pre-school teachers (M=3.31), provision of reference materials to aid in teaching and learning (M=3.29) and ensuring all classes are ventilated and lighting (M=3.22). However, to a lower extent the following working conditions were ranked; spacious classrooms (M=2.69), teacher pupil ratio is manageable (M=2.06) and county government facilitation of acquisition of playing kits (M=1.91). Average data showed that working conditions were maintained at moderate level (M=2.81). Computed correlation statistics showed that there existed significant positive effect ($p < 0.05$) between working conditions and teachers' performance in public pre-school centres in Ainabkoi Sub County. To address working conditions, there is need for county government to consider purchasing land for schools that have no adequate playing fields or those that share with primary counterparts. There is also need for construction and expansion of classroom facilities to accommodate large number of learners being admitted in those institutions.

Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare no conflicts of interests.

About the Author

The corresponding author is a masters student at Kisii University, Kenya. She is a specialist in Early Childhood Education matters and currently teaching at various middle level teacher training colleges in Eldoret, town. The other two co-authors are supervisors of her masters thesis and their input has been of great value in shaping the outcome of this work. The author can be contacted via her corresponding email address provided at the initial page of this paper.

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