



EVALUATING THE CHALLENGES FACING PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN COMPETENCE-BASED CURRICULUM IMPLEMENTATION IN PRE-PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN KIAMBU COUNTY, KENYA

Monicah Wanjiku Kang'ara¹,

Margaret Mwangi

¹Master's Student,

School of Education,

Department of Early Childhood and Special Needs Education,

Kenyatta University,

Nairobi, Kenya

²Lecturer, Dr.,

Department of Early Childhood and Special Needs Education,

Kenyatta University,

Nairobi, Kenya

Abstract:

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the challenges faced in parental involvement during the CBC implementation in pre-primary schools. This study was anchored on Vygotsky's theory of social constructivism. The research adopted a descriptive research design, employing both qualitative and quantitative approaches to collect data. The study targeted a population of 736 individuals and sampled 20% of this population, comprising 63 pre-primary school teachers and 84 parents, totalling 147 participants. The teachers and parents were sampled using basic random sampling techniques. To gather information, the study used parent interview schedules and teacher surveys. Expert judgement was used to guarantee the validity of the research instruments, and the test-retest procedure was used to ascertain their dependability. SPSS version 23 was used to code and input quantitative data. Frequencies, percentages, and means were used to analyze the data, and tables, graphs, and figures were used to display the findings. Further, qualitative data were coded and categorized into themes. Findings revealed that the most significant challenge, reported by 63.49% of parents, was low literacy levels, which limited their ability to understand and support the CBC framework. Closely related to this was a lack of awareness about the CBC itself, reported by 57.14% of respondents, highlighting a persistent information gap between schools and families. Time constraints due to work and farming responsibilities (60.32%) were another major barrier, reflecting the rural and semi-rural context of Kiambu, where parents juggle

¹ Correspondence: email monniewanjish@gmail.com

multiple responsibilities. Financial challenges (42.86%) further impeded participation, with some parents unable to afford learning materials or transport to attend meetings. Qualitative findings added rich insights, with parents citing exclusion from key school communications, feeling uninformed, and a lack of flexible meeting schedules as reasons for disengagement. The study concluded that parental participation in the implementation of CBC in Kiambu County's pre-primary schools is hindered by multiple complex challenges, primarily stemming from low literacy levels, lack of CBC awareness, economic hardship, and time constraints. The study recommended that the Ministry of Education should also formulate and enforce a national policy framework that formally integrates early identification, assessment, and intervention of behavioural disorders into the basic education curriculum. Schools, in partnership with educational stakeholders, should organize regular community-based workshops and visual training sessions to simplify the CBC structure for parents, especially those with low literacy levels. These should be scheduled at convenient times (evenings/weekends) and held in familiar community spaces (churches, chief's barazas) to ensure accessibility.

Keywords: challenges; competence-based curriculum implementation; parental involvement; pre-primary schools; teaching and learning

1. Introduction

Parental participation is associated with students' educational outcomes, and Japan has made it a major priority in its educational policy (Otani, 2020). Parental participation is essential for improving academic achievement, according to Saito *et al.* (2023). Tanaka (2021) points out that cultural norms can frequently restrict parental involvement since many parents experience pressure to fulfil traditional responsibilities. This cultural barrier indicates a serious weakness in the ways that schools are encouraging family involvement. In order to acknowledge and honour cultural traditions and encourage active participation, schools should look for ways to modify their methods. According to Reed *et al.* (2021), in the United States, learner engagement and performance in Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC) are greatly enhanced when parents and educators communicate effectively.

Recent Canadian research emphasizes culturally responsive approaches in parental involvement, and acknowledging and integrating parents' cultural backgrounds into educational practices significantly boosts learner engagement (Kugler and Sprott, 2023). However, despite these advances, barriers remain, particularly for marginalized groups. To bridge the gap, schools must empower parents in their children's education by providing tailored resources and training while also recognizing cultural diversity. Swedish parents and educators are increasingly collaborating, and establishing a trusting environment and open communication is key to engaging them effectively (Johansson *et al.*, 2021). However, Lindgren and Rönnerman (2020) note that not all

parents feel empowered to participate, often due to a lack of clarity regarding expectations and activities.

Bianchi *et al.* (2022) show that positive academic outcomes are significantly linked to active parental involvement in Italy. However, the rigid work schedules and cultural expectations regarding educational roles create barriers to participation (Ruggeri *et al.*, 2023). This situation reveals a gap in schools' ability to facilitate parental engagement by offering flexible options that accommodate parents' schedules and responsibilities. Schools should explore initiatives that provide varied opportunities for involvement, recognizing that traditional meeting times may not be feasible for all families. In Australia, Bishop *et al.* (2020) emphasize that while training teachers to engage parents is crucial, systemic inequities persist, often leaving disadvantaged families without adequate support.

In Nigeria, Ogunyemi *et al.* (2022) discovered that parental participation is connected to better educational achievements, yet socio-economic factors and limited communication between parents and schools pose significant challenges. Afolabi *et al.* (2021) argue that the lack of structured communication pathways prevents effective engagement, particularly among parents with lower educational backgrounds. The gap here lies in the need for schools to develop structured communication frameworks that actively include all parents, particularly those who may be less confident in their educational engagement. In Egypt, El-Masri and Mounir (2023) show that parental involvement is essential for improving learner performance. However, socio-cultural barriers can restrict engagement, particularly in lower-income families (Farag, 2021).

It has been found that parental involvement in Tanzania is critical for learner performance (Mosha *et al.*, 2022). However, many parents face challenges such as illiteracy and a lack of understanding of the curriculum (Chacha, 2023). Educational institutions should provide resources and training to empower parents to effectively participate in their children's education. In order to encourage parental involvement, schools must find creative ways to inform and motivate parents about the curriculum. Among Ethiopian parents, Alemayehu and Admassu (2023) stress the importance of parental involvement in children's learning. However, many parents lack awareness of how to engage due to educational and cultural barriers (Hailu & Tesfaye, 2021).

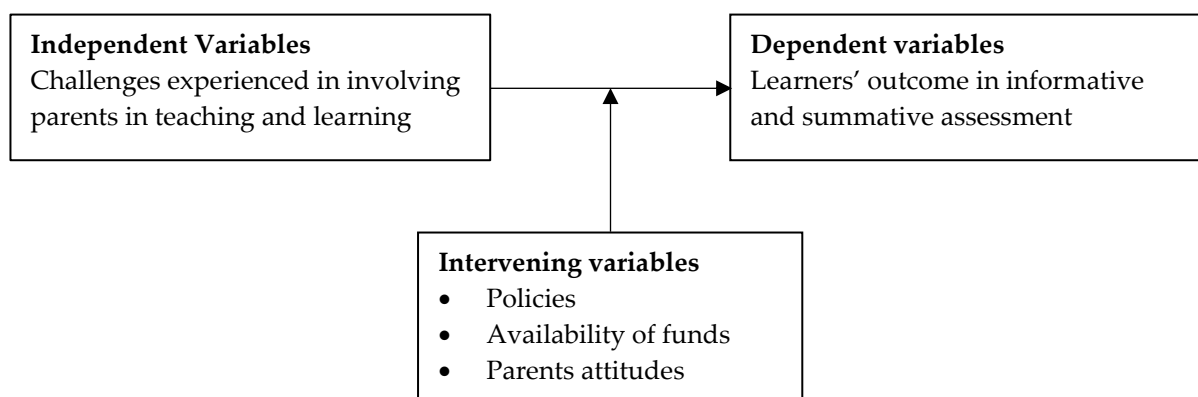
In Kenya, parental involvement is seen as essential for enhancing learner performance in CBC. Kamau *et al.* (2023) note that although parents are keen to support their children, they frequently encounter obstacles like work commitments and a lack of understanding of the CBC framework. According to Syomwene (2022), teachers in Kenya have been engaging parents in developing pupils' literacy skills through activities such as home reading, writing assignments, storytelling, singing, and the provision of learning materials. Otieno *et al.* (2021) highlight persistent challenges in engaging parents from low socio-economic backgrounds, which often result in these parents feeling alienated from the school system. This disconnect results in lower levels of involvement and poorer learner outcomes. Given this context, the research examined the methods used for early

identification of learners with behaviour disorders and how these relate to their educational achievement in Kiambu County's pre-primary schools.

1.1 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to evaluate the challenges faced in parental involvement during the CBC implementation in pre-primary schools.

1.2 Conceptual Framework



2. Literature Review

This section discusses the theoretical framework and the literature related to the study topic.

2.1 Theoretical Framework

This study was guided by Vygotsky's theory of learning/social constructivism, in which collaborative learning is emphasized. Post-revolutionary Communist psychologist Lev Vygotsky developed this theory. He witnessed the learning world defined by interpersonal relationships between learners, teachers, peers, or learners and adults (Vygotsky, 1980). He also believed in wider social-cultural and historical impacts on the learning environment (Vygotsky, 1980). Researchers have stressed that children's essential learning occurs through social interaction, showing the need for an active family and community (Lawton, 2017). Central to the theory of Vygotsky is what is termed the Proximal Development Zone (ZPD), a zone or gap for kids, and how much they can achieve and attain by knowing more (Carrol, 2000). The activity of gaining more knowledge and being better-informed is steered by better-informed parents and teachers. ZPD by Vygotsky refers to the observation that children start by not performing a particular task when learning how to handle a particular task or gain knowledge. However, they can perform the task with assistance from an adult (Vygotsky, 1980). In the thinking of Vygotsky, learning extends into the household and the surroundings outside of school. This renders the theory relevant for the present study, which focuses

on parental involvement in teaching and learning of children, where by parents are expected to actively participate in their children's learning.

Vygotsky considers that children are not only ready with their own knowledge, but also with the addition of assistance and motivation (Wood, 1988), and that both teachers and parents undoubtedly need to participate directly in children's development. In Vygotsky's view, important children's learning takes place through interaction with a skilled teacher. Based on Vygotsky, learning should be an interactive and collaborative activity. Children observe and interpret the parents' and teachers' instructions or actions, after which the information is internalized. The internalization of these guidelines or activities directs the performance of children and leads to advanced thought. The primary educators are parents and families. Parenting should supplement the efforts of the teachers outside the classroom (Kombombwe, 2019). It is therefore important for parents to cooperate with schools by recognising and collaborating with teachers to enhance the skills and capabilities of their children. Thus, the purpose of this study was to determine the degree of parental involvement in pre-primary education.

This study was guided by Vygotsky's theory of learning/social constructivism, in which collaborative learning is emphasised. Post-revolutionary Communist psychologist Lev Vygotsky developed this theory. He witnessed the learning world defined by interpersonal relationships between learners, teachers, peers, or learners and adults (Vygotsky, 1980). He also believed in wider social-cultural and historical impacts on the learning environment (Vygotsky, 1980). Researchers have stressed that children's essential learning occurs through social interaction, showing the need for an active family and community (Lawton, 2017). Central to the theory of Vygotsky is what is termed the Proximal Development Zone (ZPD), a zone or gap for kids, and how much they can achieve and attain by knowing more (Carrol, 2000). The activity of gaining more knowledge and being better informed is steered through by better-informed parents and teachers. ZPD by Vygotsky refers to the observation that children start by not performing a particular task when learning how to handle a particular task or gain knowledge. However, they can perform the task with assistance from an adult (Vygotsky, 1980). In the thinking of Vygotsky, learning extends into the household and the surroundings outside of school. This renders the theory relevant for the present study, which focuses on parental involvement in the teaching and learning of children, where parents are expected to actively participate in their children's learning.

Vygotsky considers that children are not only ready with their own knowledge but also with the addition of assistance and motivation (Wood, 1988), and that both teachers and parents undoubtedly need to participate directly in a child's development. In Vygotsky's view, important children's learning takes place through interaction with a skilled teacher. Based on Vygotsky, learning should be an interactive and collaborative activity. Children observe and interpret the parents' and teachers' instructions or actions, after which the information is internalised. The internalisation of these guidelines or activities directs the performance of children and leads to advanced thought. The primary educators are parents and families. Parenting should supplement the efforts of the

teachers outside the classroom (Kombombwe, 2019). It is, therefore, important for parents to cooperate with schools by recognising and collaborating with teachers to enhance the skills and capabilities of their children. Thus, the purpose of this study was to determine the degree of parental involvement in pre-primary education.

2.2 Empirical Literature

Parents are recognised to be important in their children's education, but there remain a number of challenges that must be addressed. It is well-documented that parental engagement benefits children, but there are several obstacles that prevent parents from effectively participating. In a qualitative study by Brown (2023) in the United States, parental perceptions of involvement in K-3 education were examined using Epstein's model. Semi-structured interviews with nine parents identified barriers such as communication issues, time constraints, trust problems, and inadequate decision-making processes. There is a thematic gap in the study, as it fails to address the differences in parental involvement across socio-economic backgrounds. Ribeiro *et al.* (2021) conducted an online survey in Portugal during the COVID-19 lockdown, examining parents' home-based involvement in their children's education and identifying factors like socio-demographic characteristics and the distance-learning environment that influenced parental engagement. The results showed that parents mainly monitored their children's attention and task completion during online classes. While the study highlights key factors affecting parental involvement, it lacks a longitudinal perspective on how these experiences may change post-pandemic, revealing a temporal gap in the literature.

An examination of rural Bangladeshi parents' engagement practices was conducted by Hasnat and Kabir (2024). Observations in five rural secondary schools, as well as group discussions and semi-structured interviews, were used in this qualitative case study. Findings indicated that factors such as parental literacy, poverty, and first-generation schooling significantly hindered parental engagement. However, while the study emphasises the importance of context-specific initiatives, it does not address the broader implications of these barriers on learners' academic performance, creating a thematic gap that warrants further exploration. In Zanzibar, Ali *et al.* (2021) investigated the hurdles teachers encounter in implementing the pre-primary education (PPE) curriculum. According to the study, insufficient resources, minimal parental involvement, and overcrowded classrooms are the most significant challenges facing pre-primary teachers, head teachers, and quality assurance officers. However, this study does not delve into how these challenges specifically affect the quality of education, thus revealing a contextual gap in understanding the implications for learner learning outcomes.

Swila *et al.* (2024) explored parental awareness and participation in school feeding programmes in Tanzania. Utilising a mixed-methods approach, the study found that while most parents did not actively engage in monitoring the programme, they were involved in joint planning sessions. The limited financial and material contributions by parents highlighted the challenges of engagement. Despite the breadth of data collected,

the research primarily focuses on a specific programme, lacking a comprehensive view of parental involvement in other educational contexts, which indicates a thematic gap. In Tanzania, Shukia and Marobo (2024) examined parental engagement in pre-primary education within socioeconomically disadvantaged areas. They found that engagement was below expectations due to various socio-economic barriers, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. However, the study did not explore the long-term impact of these barriers on children's educational outcomes, indicating a temporal gap.

In Kenya, Mwenje *et al.* (2020) analysed parental involvement in home-based learning activities for early years' education. The research revealed generally weak involvement, with no significant difference between male and female participation. Higher educational levels among parents correlated with increased involvement. This study provided valuable insights but did not explore how these patterns manifested in different socio-economic contexts, indicating a contextual gap. Ogembo (2024) investigated the challenges and opportunities in implementing Kenya's CBC. The study identified several challenges, including financial constraints, a shortage of qualified teachers, and the need for ongoing professional development. However, it did not sufficiently address how these implementation challenges directly affect parental involvement, highlighting a gap that could be addressed by further research.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design and Target Population

The study employed a descriptive research design, integrating both qualitative and quantitative approaches for data collection. Descriptive research design was particularly effective in educational settings as it captured the complexity of human experiences in a natural context without manipulation (Smith *et al.*, 2021). Descriptive designs allowed for the collection of rich, detailed data through various methods, enhancing the reliability of findings (Stoecker & Avila, 2021). The target population for the study comprises 316 pre-primary school teachers and 420 parents across all 158 pre-primary schools in Githunguri Sub-County (MoE, 2020). This diverse population is crucial for obtaining a representative sample that reflects varying perspectives on parental involvement. By including both teachers and parents, the study aims to gain a comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing learner performance within the CBC framework. Targeting both groups is grounded in the literature, suggesting that effective communication and collaboration between parents and teachers significantly contribute to learner success (Epstein, 2021). This dual approach allows for a more holistic view of the educational ecosystem surrounding pre-primary learners.

3.2 Sampling Technique and Sample Size

The study utilized purposive sampling to select Githunguri Sub-County as the locale. This method was effective when specific characteristics were needed in the sample, allowing the researcher to focus on individuals with relevant experience or knowledge

(Teddle & Yu, 2020). Following this, stratified sampling was used to categorize schools by wards, ensuring representation from each area. Random sampling was then employed to select 32 schools, providing a diverse yet manageable sample size for the study. Simple random sampling was further used to identify 63 teachers, ensuring that every teacher had an equal chance of being selected, thereby reducing selection bias. Determining an appropriate sample size was critical for the study's generalizability. Following Mugenda and Mugenda's (2020) guidelines, a sample size of 20% of the target population was utilized. This approach resulted in a total sample of 147 participants (63 teachers and 84 parents), which was deemed sufficient for statistical analysis while maintaining a manageable scope for qualitative interviews.

3.3 Research Instruments

Data was collected using a questionnaire for teachers and a semi-structured interview schedule for parents, ensuring a comprehensive approach to data collection. The questionnaire designed for this study incorporated a variety of question types to capture both quantitative and qualitative data effectively. As noted by Creswell (2021), questionnaires are particularly advantageous for gathering extensive information in a timely manner, making them well-suited for the objectives of this research. Semi-structured interview schedules will be used to collect data from the teachers two weeks after the questionnaires were administered. This method was particularly beneficial because it struck a balance between allowing flexibility in responses and ensuring that essential topics were systematically addressed (Goyes & Sandberg, 2024). The interview questions focused on several critical themes. First, the extent of parental engagement in their children's learning was explored, allowing parents to describe their involvement in educational activities such as assisting with homework, attending school events, and communicating with teachers.

3.4 Pilot Study

The pilot study was conducted in two pre-primary schools in Kiambu County, which did not participate in the main study. Pre-testing was crucial for refining the research instruments and ensuring clarity and relevance (Cruchinho *et al.*, 2024). The pilot helped identify any ambiguous questions and tested the feasibility of the data collection process, ultimately enhancing the validity of the research tools. Feedback from the pilot study was used to make necessary adjustments to the instruments, ensuring they effectively captured the intended information.

3.5 Validity and Reliability

To determine if the study tools are measuring what they are intended to test, content validity was employed (Creswell, 2021). In order to make sure that all variables are sufficiently covered and that all items are understandable to the respondents, the researcher first went over each item in the instruments. Second, the supervisor examined each question's ability to measure the relevant constructs and sought expert opinion.

Third, peer debriefing was also employed to make sure that the instruments' items could provide the desired outcomes. By guaranteeing that the instruments precisely measured the desired constructs, this procedure improved the study's validity (Hill & Tyson, 2020). The instruments' dependability was evaluated using the test-retest procedure. The researcher assessed the consistency of the responses by giving the same instruments to the same respondents twice (Orodho, 2020). The use of Cronbach's alpha to compute reliability coefficients was instrumental; a coefficient of 0.73 indicated acceptable reliability, ensuring that the instruments yielded stable results across different administrations.

3.6 Data Collection Procedure

Once the questionnaire was finalized, it was administered to the selected teachers in the sampled schools. The researcher scheduled visits to the schools to distribute the questionnaires. Participants received detailed instructions on how to fill out the questionnaire, with a focus on the significance of providing truthful and considerate answers. To ensure a high response rate, the researcher collected the completed questionnaires after two days, providing an opportunity for teachers to ask questions or seek clarification if needed. The semi-structured interviews were conducted after the questionnaires had been administered. The researcher scheduled individual interviews with the selected parents, ensuring a comfortable and private setting to encourage open dialogue. With the parents' permission, the interviews were audio-recorded in order to precisely capture their answers. The researcher also took notes to supplement the audio data. Each interview was designed to last approximately 30 to 45 minutes, allowing sufficient time for parents to share their experiences and insights in detail.

3.7 Data Processing and Analysis

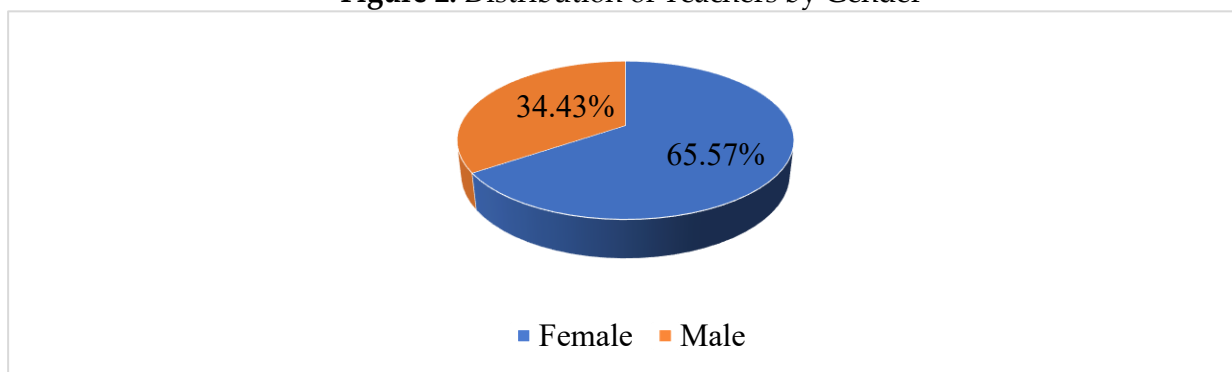
Data analysis was systematic, involving both quantitative and qualitative methods. Following data collection, the quantitative information obtained from the surveys was coded and imported into SPSS version 22 for analysis. Descriptive statistics such as frequencies, percentages, and means were calculated, providing an overview of the data (Field, 2018). Results were visually represented using tables and graphs for clarity. For qualitative data from the interviews, NVivo was used to code the data into relevant themes. This tool allowed in-depth exploration of complex data sets, such as interviews and open-ended survey responses, enabling the researcher to identify themes, patterns, and insights that were crucial for understanding the nuances of parental engagement (Saldana & Omasta, 2021). This process involved coding the data, grouping similar codes, and developing overarching themes that reflected the study's objectives.

4. Study Results

4.1: Demographic Information

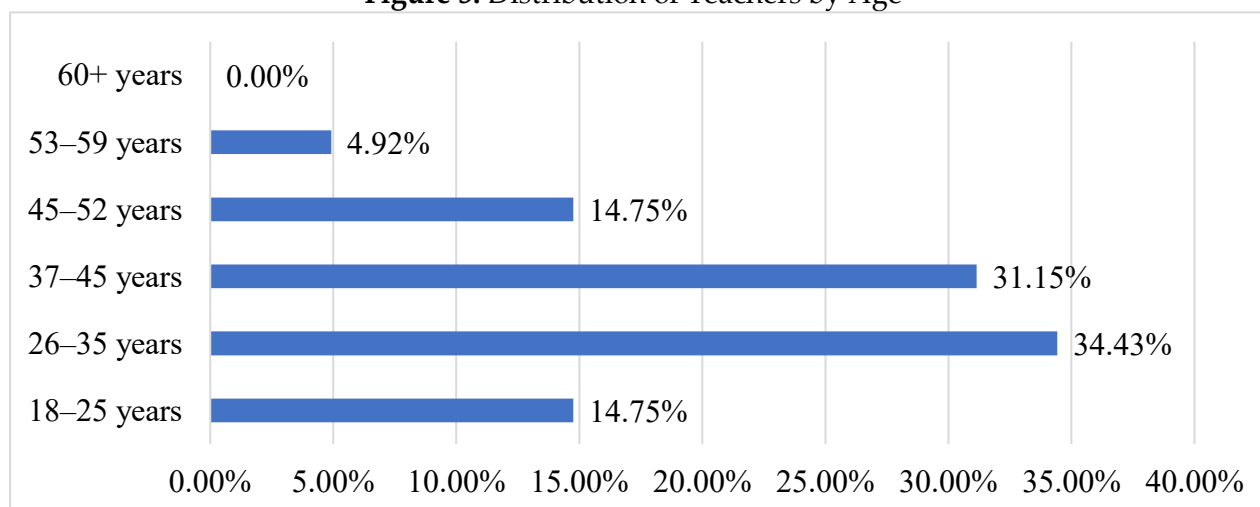
A total of 147 respondents were initially targeted, comprising 63 teachers and 84 parents. Out of the 63 teachers sampled, 61 participated in the interviews and questionnaires, resulting in a high response rate of 97%. Similarly, out of 84 parents selected for interviews, 81 were successfully reached and engaged, yielding a response rate of 96%. In total, the study achieved an overall response rate of 97%, which is significantly high and well above the commonly accepted threshold for educational and social science research, typically cited at 70%. Table 2 presents the findings of the teachers by gender.

Figure 2: Distribution of Teachers by Gender



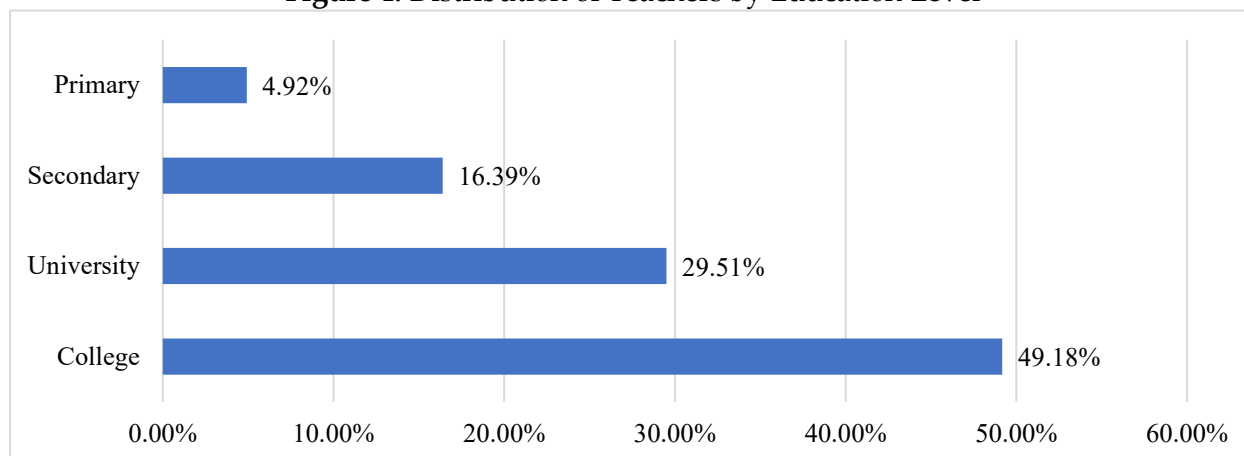
Findings in Figure 2 indicate that the majority of the respondents (65.57%) were female. This aligns with the trend in Kenya's pre-primary teaching profession, where females dominate due to societal norms and historical preferences in early childhood education. Gender-sensitive interventions may need to factor in female-majority roles in caregiving and educational settings. Male involvement strategies might be less pronounced unless deliberately reinforced.

Figure 3: Distribution of Teachers by Age



As shown in Figure 3, the majority of the respondents (65.58%) fall between ages 26–45, indicating a mature but still relatively young workforce. A very small number of senior teachers (above 53) were involved. This age distribution suggests an active and potentially dynamic workforce open to adapting new pedagogical models like the CBC. Mentorship programs may be limited due to the low number of older, more experienced educators.

Figure 4: Distribution of Teachers by Education Level



As indicated in Figure 4, the majority (49.18%) have college-level qualifications, and nearly 30% have university degrees. A minority still have only secondary or primary education, which may affect the implementation of more technical CBC aspects. The relatively high level of academic qualification among respondents indicates strong potential for effective CBC implementation. However, capacity-building efforts may still be needed, particularly among those with only secondary or primary education.

4.2 Challenges Faced in Parental Involvement during the CBC Implementation in Pre-Primary Schools

This study sought to evaluate the challenges faced in parental involvement during the CBC implementation in pre-primary schools. Both quantitative and qualitative methods were used to analyse the data as presented and discussed under the following sub-sections:

Table 1: Challenges Hindering Parental Involvement

Challenge	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Low literacy levels of parents	40	63.49%
Time constraints (work, farming)	38	60.32%
Lack of awareness about CBC	36	57.14%
Financial challenges	27	42.86%
Poor parent-school communication	24	38.10%
Cultural beliefs/traditional attitudes	22	34.92%

Table 1 identifies the major obstacles to parental involvement in CBC implementation in Kiambu County's pre-primary schools. The highest-reported challenge was low literacy levels of parents (63.49%), followed closely by time constraints (60.32%) and lack of awareness about CBC (57.14%). These findings are strongly aligned with existing literature. For example, Hasnat and Kabir (2024) reported that in rural Bangladesh, low parental literacy and first-generation schooling were major barriers to meaningful engagement. Similarly, Mwenje *et al.* (2020) noted in Kenya that parents with lower education levels demonstrated lower levels of involvement, indicating a clear correlation between literacy and engagement in children's education. The time constraint issue mirrors the findings of Brown (2023), who highlighted work and scheduling conflicts as significant deterrents to parental participation in early education in the United States. This is particularly relevant in Kiambu County, where many parents are engaged in informal labour, farming, or small businesses that do not offer flexible hours. Lack of awareness about CBC, as cited by 57.14% of respondents, resonates with Ogembo (2024), who found that knowledge gaps regarding CBC were a recurring theme in implementation challenges across Kenya. These knowledge gaps prevent parents from supporting at-home learning, thereby reducing their potential impact on learner outcomes.

Financial challenges (42.86%) also emerged as a significant barrier, reinforcing the findings by Swila *et al.* (2024) in Tanzania, where limited financial resources hindered parental contributions to school programs. The impact of economic hardship was similarly reflected in the qualitative data from this study, where some parents expressed shame or reluctance when asked to provide materials, as exemplified by a quote: *"I can't afford books or crayons. Sometimes I feel ashamed when asked to buy school materials."* Other factors, such as poor parent-school communication (38.10%) and cultural beliefs/traditional attitudes (34.92%), also mirrored findings in the literature. Brown (2023) highlighted communication breakdowns and trust deficits as critical barriers,

while Ali *et al.* (2021) in Zanzibar noted minimal parental involvement due to entrenched beliefs that education is the sole domain of teachers. These beliefs are particularly pertinent in Kiambu, where such sentiments were expressed in qualitative interviews.

Table 2: Strategies to Improve Parental Involvement

Strategy	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Regular parental workshops on CBC	42	66.67%
Improved parent-teacher meetings	40	63.49%
Use of mobile SMS and WhatsApp	38	60.32%
Flexibility in meeting schedules	29	46.03%
Parent representative committees	27	42.86%

In response to these challenges, several teacher-endorsed strategies were identified. The most supported approach was regular parental workshops on CBC (66.67%). This strategy directly addresses the knowledge gap and supports Wainwright *et al.* (2024), who argued that teacher training and parent education are critical to overcoming deficit thinking and enabling parents to engage more confidently in their children's learning. Likewise, Syomwene (2022) found that such workshops significantly enhanced collaboration in CBC implementation in Kenya. Improved parent-teacher meetings (63.49%) and the use of mobile communication tools like SMS and WhatsApp (60.32%) reflect a practical approach suited to the Kenyan context, where mobile phone usage is high even among rural populations. These findings are in line with Ribeiro *et al.* (2021), who showed that digital tools enabled sustained parental involvement during the COVID-19 lockdown, especially in monitoring home-based learning.

The suggestion of flexibility in meeting schedules (46.03%) also ties back to the issue of time constraints. In the qualitative data, several parents requested meetings to be held on weekends or evenings “*We need more flexible meeting times because some of us work until late.*” This is consistent with Brown (2023) and Shukia & Marobo (2024), both of whom found that rigid schedules discourage parent attendance and reduce participation in school-related activities. The establishment of parent representative committees (42.86%) indicates a move toward participatory governance and inclusive decision-making, aligning with the findings of Lunga (2024) in Zimbabwe, where teacher-parent partnerships were shown to enhance educational outcomes and community trust. This also supports Epstein’s theory of overlapping spheres of influence, which emphasizes shared responsibility among schools, families, and communities. Qualitative thematic analysis was conducted to identify common themes and patterns in parents' experiences with rehabilitation services.

4.3 Qualitative Data Analysis

The most frequently cited challenge was lack of time due to work obligations. The following themes emerged from the interviews:

4.3.1 Time Constraints and Economic Hardships

Many parents expressed that while they wanted to be more involved, work commitments left them with little energy or time.

"I come home tired from work and sometimes forget to check the diary or help with reading." (Female parent 15, aged 34 years).

Another participant supported the above sentiment by adding that;

"My work schedule does not allow me to attend school meetings regularly" (Female parent 17, aged 34 years).

Economic hardship also emerged, with some parents unable to provide learning materials or even transport to attend meetings, as one participant lamented:

"I can't afford books or crayons. Sometimes I feel ashamed when asked to buy school materials." (Female parent 16, aged 48 years).

The above findings are consistent with Brown (2023), who identified time constraints and economic limitations as barriers to effective parental involvement. Similarly, Hasnat and Kabir (2024) reported that parental illiteracy and poverty in rural Bangladesh negatively affected school engagement. Shukia and Marobo (2024) also found that socio-economic barriers—particularly in underprivileged Tanzanian areas resulted in minimal parental participation. In the context of Kiambu County, this underscores the importance of tailoring parental involvement strategies to accommodate economic realities and time limitations. Unlike Swila *et al.* (2024), who focused on program-specific parental participation (school feeding programs), this study highlights broader economic and temporal barriers across various CBC activities.

4.3.2 Limited Understanding of CBC

Many parents were still confused or misinformed about CBC, which hindered their ability to assist their children meaningfully. Those with lower education levels particularly struggled with the curriculum demands.

"I only went to primary school. I don't know how this CBC works. It's very different from my time." (Female parent 19, aged 45 years).

This illustrates a clear knowledge gap that schools need to bridge through consistent, inclusive CBC orientation and support materials. This theme resonates with Mwenje *et al.* (2020), who found that higher parental education levels were associated with increased involvement in early learning activities. Similarly, Ali *et al.* (2021) pointed out that limited parental knowledge was a major barrier to effective curriculum

implementation in Zanzibar. Ogembo (2024) also highlighted the lack of professional development among teachers and poor parental understanding of CBC as critical implementation challenges though this study takes it a step further by linking knowledge gaps directly to reduced parental engagement. Therefore, this theme is corroborated and extended by the literature, especially within the Kenyan context. The evidence calls for regular CBC sensitization and workshops tailored to parents with varying literacy levels.

4.3.3 Suggestions for Better Engagement

Parents had clear suggestions to enhance involvement. These included more frequent communication, weekend or flexible meetings, visual instructions on CBC tasks, and CBC training workshops for parents.

"Schools should teach parents about CBC and how to help our children." (Male parent 23, aged 49 years).

Another participant supported the above sentiment by adding that;

"We need more flexible meeting times because some of us work until late." (Female parent 22, aged 37 years).

These suggestions imply that institutional flexibility and parent empowerment are key to successful CBC implementation. The findings are consistent with Ribeiro *et al.* (2021), who suggested that understanding parental needs, especially during stressful periods like lockdowns, was key to better engagement. However, the current study adds a more context-specific lens, revealing localized and actionable insights that schools in Kiambu can implement immediately. Moreover, this aligns with the participatory emphasis seen in Swila *et al.* (2024) and Ali *et al.* (2021), though those studies did not present such concrete parent-led recommendations. This shows a new contribution to the literature by providing parents' direct suggestions on improving CBC involvement a practical input missing in much of the academic discourse.

4.3.4 Feeling Excluded or Uninformed

Some parents reported feeling sidelined, particularly when information was relayed through a select group or when they lacked access to digital platforms.

"I always find out about meetings from other parents. I don't know why I'm not informed." (Female parent 27, aged 38 years).

Another participant supported the above sentiment by adding that:

"Sometimes I feel we are only invited when there's a fee to be paid, not to discuss learning." (Female parent 31, aged 41 years).

These feelings mirror those identified by Brown (2023) in the U.S., where parents cited poor communication and inadequate decision-making as limiting involvement. This finding is particularly important in the CBC setting, where active partnership between school and home is a fundamental principle. Unlike Ogembo (2024) and Ali *et al.* (2021), who discussed institutional challenges broadly, this study reveals emotional and relational barriers that contribute to disengagement. This points to a thematic gap in previous literature, which often overlooks the interpersonal aspects of exclusion. This theme thereby extends the existing body of research by illuminating emotional disconnects and the need for more inclusive communication systems.

5. Conclusion

The study concludes that parental participation in the implementation of CBC in Kiambu County's pre-primary schools is hindered by multiple complex challenges, primarily stemming from low literacy levels, lack of CBC awareness, economic hardship, and time constraints. The cultural notion that educational responsibility lies solely with teachers, compounded by inadequate communication from schools, further alienates parents from active participation. The study also finds that parents are not inherently disinterested but face real and perceived barriers that limit their capacity to engage. The combination of systemic limitations and contextual realities points to a need for a more inclusive and flexible approach in CBC implementation that recognizes parents as co-educators. Addressing these challenges is not only essential for improving learner performance but also for achieving the holistic goals of Kenya's CBC.

6. Recommendations

- 1) The study recommended that the Ministry of Education, in collaboration with local schools, should design structured training programs for parents to build their capacity in CBC instructional approaches. These workshops should offer practical strategies for supporting learning at home and clarifying CBC expectations. Tailored outreach should address socio-economic and literacy disparities among parents to foster inclusive involvement.
- 2) Schools should adopt structured and inclusive communication strategies such as school-based digital platforms (e.g., WhatsApp, bulk SMS, school apps) and printed newsletters to ensure that all parents, regardless of digital literacy, stay informed. Teachers should also be trained in parent engagement protocols that emphasize clear, regular, and culturally sensitive communication. These practices would increase parental awareness and empower them to take an active role in their children's learning journey.

Acknowledgement

I thank God that I was able to complete this course successfully.

I would also want to express my gratitude to a number of individuals who have greatly aided me in carrying out this research. First, I would like to thank Dr. Margaret Mwangi, my supervisor, who has been helping and correcting me throughout the process. Her helpful advice enabled this project to meet the necessary requirements.

I particularly value the help I got from the early childhood and special education department instructors when I was taking the course. The abilities and recognition they gained from their instruction were crucial in carrying out this study. I am also grateful to the whole management of Kenyatta University for giving me the chance to study there. Special thanks to Mary Gitata for the support and tireless effort during this study.

I want to sincerely thank my family for all of their help and encouragement while I was studying. Last but not least, I would like to thank all of my friends and classmates who have supported me during this course, especially by giving me wonderful motivation to keep going.

Creative Commons License Statement

This research work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License. To view a copy of this license, visit <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0>. To view the complete legal code, visit <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/legalcode.en>. Under the terms of this license, members of the community may copy, distribute, and transmit the article, provided that proper, prominent, and unambiguous attribution is given to the authors, and the material is not used for commercial purposes or modified in any way. Reuse is only allowed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License.

Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

About the Author(s)

Monicah Wanjiku Kang'ara is a highly experienced Early Childhood Educator with a strong commitment to inclusive learning and child-centered pedagogy. She holds a Diploma in Early Childhood Development and Education (ECDE), a Bachelor's Degree in Early Childhood Development, and a Master's Degree in Education. Her academic and professional journey reflects a deep passion for fostering holistic development and meaningful learning experiences for young children. Monicah's research interests focus on parental involvement, competency-based curriculum implementation, and inclusive practices in early childhood education. She continues to contribute to the advancement of quality education through both her teaching practice and scholarly work.

Dr. Margaret Mwangi is a professional in Early Childhood Education (ECE). She holds a PhD in ECE, a Master's Degree in ECE, and a Bachelor's Degree in ECE, all from Kenyatta University. Dr Mwangi is currently a lecturer in the Department of Early Childhood and Special Needs Education at Kenyatta University. Besides facilitating learning at the

University, she is an academic supervisor, an examiner, a mentor, a trainer and a researcher. She has an unwavering passion for understanding how children grow and develop, and the factors that are likely to hinder their full development. Her PhD research was on "Parental involvement and strategies used by teachers to support children's transition from pre-primary to primary school in Kiambu County". During her Master's study, she conducted a research study on Pre-primary school teachers' use of English as a medium of communication among children whose English is a second or a third language". She is competent in planning and implementing Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC) after engaging in developing the curriculum designs and sequence at the Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development (KICD). Currently, Dr Mwangi is a researcher at KU WEE HUB conducting research on "A Randomized Evaluation of the Effects of a Preschool Intervention on Child Learning and Women's Economic Empowerment in Tharaka Nithi County, Kenya (Curriculum Intervention Team). In this research project, Kenyatta University is in collaboration with Yale University, Tharaka Nithi County, Bangor University, Common Goal Research, among other partners. Dr Mwangi has published several papers in peer-reviewed journals.

References

- Alemayehu, S. & Admassu, K. (2023). The role of parental involvement in educational outcomes in Ethiopia. *Ethiopian Journal of Education and Science*, 18(1), 45-60.
- Ali, A. C., Mligo, I. R., & Nsolezi, F. S. (2022). Challenges experienced by teachers in implementing the pre-primary education in Zanzibar. *East African Journal of Education and Social Sciences (EAJESS)*, 3(5), 104-110. Retrieved from <https://eajess.ac.tz/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/EAJESS-3-5-0224.pdf>
- Bianchi, F. & Giannini, T. (2022). The impact of parental involvement on early childhood education in Italy. *Journal of Early Childhood Research*, 20(2), 133-150.
- Brown, K. N. (2023). *Strategies for Strengthening and Encouraging Parent Involvement to Support Academic Achievement* (Doctoral dissertation, Walden University). Retrieved from <https://eric.ed.gov/?q=strengthening&pg=4&id=ED640346>
- Chacha, M. (2023). Bridging the gap: Parental engagement in pre-primary education in Tanzania. *Tanzanian Journal of Education Research*, 12(4), 78-90.
- Creswell, J. W. (2021). *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*. SAGE Publications. Retrieved from https://www.ucg.ac.me/skladiste/blog_609332/objava_105202/fajlovi/Creswell.pdf
- Cruchinho, P., López-Franco, M. D., Capelas, M. L., Almeida, S., Bennett, P. M., Miranda da Silva, M., ... & Gaspar, F. (2024). Translation, Cross-Cultural Adaptation, and Validation of Measurement Instruments: A Practical Guideline for Novice Researchers. *Journal of Multidisciplinary Healthcare*, 2701-2728. <https://doi.org/10.2147/JMDH.S419714>

- El-Masri, A. & Mounir, H. (2023). Parental involvement and learner performance in Egypt: An empirical study. *Egyptian Journal of Educational Studies*, 15(2), 99-114.
- Farag, H. (2021). Socio-cultural barriers to parental involvement in education: An Egyptian perspective. *Middle East Journal of Educational Research*, 11(1), 23-38.
- Field, A. (2018). *Discovering Statistics Using SPSS*. SAGE Publications. Retrieved from https://books.google.ro/books/about/Discovering_Statistics_Using_IBM_SPSS_St.html?id=Nf3TEAAQBAJ&redir_esc=y
- Goyes, D. R., & Sandberg, S. (2024). Trust, nuance, and care: Advantages and challenges of repeat qualitative interviews. *Qualitative Research* 25(2). <https://doi.org/10.1177/14687941241246159>
- Hailu, Y. & Tesfaye, S. (2021). Community education initiatives and parental involvement in Ethiopian pre-primary schools. *East African Journal of Education and Social Sciences*, 2(3), 88-97.
- Hasnat, M. A., & Kabir, S. A. (2024). Rural Parents' Engagement in Secondary Schools: Current Practices, Problems and Prospects. *International Journal of Research in Education and Science*, 10(1), 83-99. <https://doi.org/10.46328/ijres.3331>
- Kamau, G., Njoroge, P., & Muriuki, J. (2023). Challenges of parental involvement in competency-based education in Kenya. *Kenya Journal of Education*, 8(1), 55-71.
- Kugler, A. & Sprott, K. (2023). Cultural responsiveness in parental involvement: Insights from Canada. *Canadian Journal of Education Administration and Policy*, 2023(2), 12-29.
- Lindgren, A. & Rönnerman, K. (2020). Parents' perceptions of involvement in early childhood education in Sweden. *International Journal of Early Years Education*, 28(3), 217-230.
- Lunga, P. (2024). Parent-teacher partnerships to enhance education for sustainable development: Early childhood development education learning centres in Zimbabwe. *Journal of Education*, (95), 91-111. <https://doi.org/10.17159/2520-9868/i95a05>
- Ministry of Education. (2020). *Annual Report on Educational Statistics*.
- Mugenda, O. M., & Mugenda, A. G. (2020). *Research Methods: Quantitative and Qualitative Approaches*. African Centre for Technology Studies Press. Retrieved from https://books.google.ro/books/about/Research_Methods.html?id=4WyrAAAACA&redir_esc=y
- Mwenje, M., Githui, P., & Mwarari, C. (2020). Assessment of parental involvement in home-based learning activities in public primary schools: A case of children in early years of learning in Nyeri and Nairobi counties, Kenya. Retrieved from https://www.researchgate.net/publication/343041647_Assessment_of_Parental_Involvement_in_Home-Based_Learning_Activities_in_Public_Primary_Schools_A_Case_of_Children_in_early_Years_of_Learning_in_Nyeri_and_Nairobi_Counties_Kenya_International_Journal_o

- Ogembo, P. O. (2024). Implementation of Competency Based Education (CBC) In Kenya: Challenges and Opportunities. *International Journal of Teaching and Learning*, 2(9), 2507-2526. Retrieved from <https://injotel.org/index.php/12/article/view/224>
- Orodho, J. A. (2020). *Techniques of Writing Research Proposals and Reports in Education and Social Sciences*. Kanezja Publishers.
- Otani, M. (2020). Parental involvement and academic achievement among elementary and middle school learners. *Asia Pacific Education Review*, 21(1), 1-25. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12564-019-09614-z>
- Otieno, R., Karanja, M., & Ngugi, W. (2021). Socio-economic factors affecting parental involvement in Kenya. *East African Journal of Education and Social Sciences*, 3(2), 45-58.
- Reed, M., Park, E., & Moore, L. (2021). The role of parental involvement in learner success: A U.S. perspective. *American Educational Research Journal*, 58(4), 778-803.
- Ribeiro, L. M., Cunha, R. S., Silva, M. C. A. E., Carvalho, M., & Vital, M. L. (2021). Parental involvement during pandemic times: Challenges and opportunities. *Education Sciences*, 11(6), 302. <https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci11060302>
- Ruggeri, C., Bianchi, F., & Giannini, T. (2023). Parental involvement in education: The Italian experience. *Journal of Educational Research*, 16(1), 22-37.
- Shukia, R., & Marobo, S. (2024). Parental Engagement in Children's Pre-Primary Education in Marginalized Communities in Tanzania Before and During the COVID-19 Era. *Journal of Research in Childhood Education*, 38(sup1), S61-S76. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02568543.2023.2281556>
- Smith, W. M., Funk, R., Voigt, M., & Uhing, K. (2021). Research design and methodology. *Transformational Change Efforts: Learner Engagement in Mathematics through an Institutional Network for Active Learning*, 19-34.
- Stoecker, R., & Avila, E. (2021). From mixed methods to strategic research design. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 24(6), 627-640. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13645579.2020.1799639>
- Swila, M. J., Seni, A. J., & Machumu, H. (2024). Parents' Awareness, Forms, and Extent of Participation in Supporting Pre-Primary Schools' Feeding Programmes in Tanzania. *Artha Journal of Social Sciences*, 23(3), 25-47. <https://doi.org/10.12724/ajss.70.2>
- Syomwene, A. (2022). Parental involvement strategies and challenges in development of pupils' literacy skills in the implementation of competency based curriculum in early year's education in Kenya. *European Journal of Education and Pedagogy*, 3(2), 53-59. Retrieved from <https://www.ej-edu.org/index.php/ejedu/article/view/273>
- Tanaka, H. (2021). Cultural influences on parental involvement in education in Japan. *Asian Journal of Education and Social Studies*, 15(2), 12-28.
- Teddlie, C., & Yu, F. (2020). Mixed methods sampling: A typology with examples. *Journal of Mixed Methods Research*, 4(2), 77-100). Retrieved from <https://scispace.com/pdf/mixed-methods-sampling-a-typology-with-examples-48xef4bqib.pdf>

- Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes*. *Harvard University Press*. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctvjf9vz4>
- Vygotsky, L. S. (1986). *Thought and language*. MIT Press. Retrieved from https://books.google.ro/books/about/Thought_and_Language_revised_and_expanded.html?id=B9HCIB0P6d4C&redir_esc=y