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## **Home parenting environment as predictor of acquisition of literacy competencies among pre-primary children in Nyamira County, Kenya**

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### **Abstract**

Early Childhood Development (ECDE) is currently the backbone of formal Education systems in both developed and developing nations, Kenya inclusive. To ensure quality pre-primary education, Parental involvement in children's education has been established consistently by various researchers to have a positive impact on any child's academic performance. However, there has been little investigation on how and to what extent parents get involved in their pre-primary children's education through proper parenting. Hence, the current study sought to investigate the influence of home parenting environment on the acquisition of literacy competencies among pre-primary children in Manga Sub-County, Nyamira County, Kenya. The study was based on Epstein's theory of parental involvement. The study employed descriptive survey research design. The units of analysis for the study were 65 public primary schools comprising of 65 head teachers, 65 ECDE pre-school lead teachers, 210 pre-school parents, 210 pre-school children, and 3 ECDE divisional Coordinators. The study sample consisted of 20 head teachers, 136 preschool parents, 136 pre-schoolers, 65 ECDE pre-school lead teachers, and 3 ECDE Divisional Coordinators. The study used Questionnaires and document analysis in data collection. Collected data were analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. Findings of the study revealed that generally at pre-primary school centres, parental involvement was low in terms of provision of conducive home parenting environment. However, the study established that there was a statistically significant positive association between home parenting environment and the acquisition of literacy competencies among pre-schoolers. Further, the study established that home parenting environment accounted for 26.4% (Adjusted coefficient  $R^2=0.264$ ) of the variation in the acquisition of basic literacy competencies.

**Keywords:** home parenting environment, acquisition of literacy competencies, pre-primary children, Kenya

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### **Introduction**

The concept of early childhood education has a long history; it was started with European mothers in the early 1800s who educated children at homes (Riley, 2003) <sup>[40]</sup>. The idea further spread to America during the Industrial Revolution with "infant schools" set up in churches, factories, and private homes to care for the young children while parents were working (Berger, 2000) <sup>[4, 5]</sup>. In recent years, Early Childhood Development has emerged as a theme in international dialogue in education (World Bank, 2010). For instance, the 1989 United Nations adoption on the rights of children began a more visible drive for Early Childhood Development (ECD) on the international stage (Soud, 2009) <sup>[42]</sup>. Closely following this, the Education For All (EFA) initiative from the 1990 world conference on EFA in Jomtien Thailand, the 2000 World Education Forum, Dakar, Senegal and the development of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in the United Nations have all led to an increase in the development of ECDE policies and management in many parts of the world (Myers, 2004) <sup>[35]</sup>. In the last two decades, studies globally have consistently established that quality Early Childhood Development and Education (ECDE) is the backbone of all

formal learning and Education systems (Excell & Linington, 2011). In this regard, quality early childhood programs have been found to have a great potential in determining and shaping the subsequent development of learners, physically, socially, intellectually and mentally (Myers, 2004) <sup>[35]</sup>. Further, Soud (2009) <sup>[42]</sup> indicated that the success or failure of any Education system of any country can be attributed to the quality of its ECDE programmes.

Despite the global need for pre-schoolers' access to quality education, there has been a worrying trend of pre-primary children's acquisition of basic literacy skills and competencies (UNESCO, 2017) <sup>[46]</sup>. Basic literacy skills include the skills of numeracy, social, language and motor (Moon, 2014) <sup>[34]</sup>. Language skills include listening, speaking, reading and writing while basic numeracy skills are the ability of a child to understand and use fundamental mathematical skills like addition, subtraction, multiplication and division (Adlof & Hogan, 2018) <sup>[1]</sup>. On the other hand, social skills are essential in building both personal and interpersonal relationships (Mikami, 2010) <sup>[32]</sup>. Examples of social skills include effective communication

competencies, conflict resolution strategies, active listening, empathy, relationship management and respect (Gregg, 2016)<sup>[25]</sup>. Also, the pre-primary children's development of motor skills enhances the children's physical growth and strengthening of bones, muscles and ability to move freely (Carlson, 2013)<sup>[9]</sup>.

At pre-primary teaching and learning, the core language skills (reading, writing, listening and speaking) are greatly emphasized (Xhuvani, 2015)<sup>[53]</sup>. Despite the emphasis at the global scale, millions of children have not acquired the basic language skills even after being in school for more than eight years (UNESCO, 2017)<sup>[46]</sup>. Further, according to UNESCO report of 2017, 250 million children globally have not acquired basic language skills even though a half of them have spent four years in school. With a lot of concern in Sub-Sahara Africa, 25% of the youth population are not able to read at all or part of a sentence (EFA Global Monitoring Report, 2014).

In the 20th and 21st centuries, learners' acquisition of basic literacy skills has become an indispensable part of Educational curriculum in Iranian schools (Maleki, Mollae & Khosravi, 2014)<sup>[31]</sup>. Despite all the efforts and investments devoted to cultivate and popularize English language among Iranian learners, the resultant outcome could not live up to the government's expectations whereby majority of learners lack core English language skills (Zahra, 2015)<sup>[54]</sup>. In South Africa, majority of learners usually experience reading, oral and writing difficulties (Govender, 2015)<sup>[24]</sup>. In the National Systemic Evaluation, the overall literacy score for Grade 3 learners in the country was 35.9% while only 44.2% of Grade 3 learners were able to read and 33.6% of them were able to write (Jhingran, 2011). These low levels of language competencies demonstrated by many South African learners in the foundational level are perceived to have catastrophic consequences not only for the learners themselves, but also for the country (Govender, 2015)<sup>[24]</sup>. In other countries like Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Seychelles, South Africa, Swaziland, Tanzania (Mainland), Tanzania (Zanzibar), Uganda and Zimbabwe; majority of grade six pupils still lack the basic language skills which they should have acquired at pre-primary centres (SACMEQ III, 2011)<sup>[41]</sup>. In Zambia, standard two pupils were found to be struggling on literacy skills, that is, the average oral reading fluency rate for the local languages ranged from 1.84 to 8.40 words per minute, correct sounds production ranged from 3.68 to 9.63 letters per minute across the local languages. This is an indication of poor foundation at pre-primary school level (Brombacher & King, 2015)<sup>[7]</sup>. Despite the Government of Kenya's effort to improve the education standard in the country, literacy achievement levels of learners are unsatisfactory with UWEZO report of 2010 showing a dismal reading ability among primary school pupils with over 92% of learners not able to read at class level. Studies done in Nairobi County further revealed that the percentage of class three pupils who could read class two story was only 69.77% (Uwezo, 2011)<sup>[49]</sup>. In Busia County, children's acquisition of core language skills at early years of learning is low with only 36.9% (grade three) able to read grade two work, while 17.7% (grade two) able to read grade two work (Uwezo, 2016). In Nyamira County, the percentage of grade three who could read a grade two level story were only 35.48% while those in grade three who could read grade two level Kiswahili hadithi were only 44.57% (Uwezo, 2011)<sup>[49]</sup>. On the other hand, the children's adoption of pro-social behaviours in Kenya has

been deteriorating in the past five years (Agasa, Oigara & Shitandi, 2011)<sup>[2]</sup>. The pupils engage in different misconducts like disobedience, sneaking out of school and indiscipline cases are on the rise as from preschool level. In addition, Stima (2011)<sup>[43]</sup> observes that the number of primary school children in Kisii County had been found to involve themselves in all kinds of misbehaviours that included absenteeism and lack of respect for authority resulting into many cases school dropouts, and poor academic performance in school. This brings some doubt on pre-primary children's acquisition of social skill and the extent parents get engaged in their children's learning. To explain the extent parents should be involved in their children's learning outcomes and acquisition of basic literacy skills, Epstein's theory provides a comprehensive description of various aspects of parental involvement whereby home parenting environment play a key role in enhancing learning (Epstein, 2016; Epstein, Sanders, Simon, Salinas, Jansorn and Voorhis, 2002)<sup>[18,20]</sup>. However over the past 50 years, the roles of parents and teachers in the pre-schoolers learning outcomes have changed. In the twentieth century, teachers were perceived as experts and there was no need for parental involvement in their children's education (Porter, 2002)<sup>[37]</sup>. However today, educational theories have consistently shown that parents play a key role in their children's learning (Fan and Chen, 2001). However in Manga sub-county where the study was conducted, the available statistics at Nyamira director's office of education (2015) did show worrying trends of the extent to which parents participated in their children's learning whereby only 18% of parents provide conducive home parenting environment. Despite the growing importance of Early Childhood Education (ECE) in Kenya, many challenges have continued to pull down its effective implementation (UNESCO, 2007). Available studies in Kenya indicate that a large proportion of primary pupils who enroll in grade one do not complete the primary cycle within the prescribed eight-year period and a significant number do not complete primary education at all due to lack core competencies (Cheruiyot, 2005)<sup>[10]</sup>. Out of the total enrolment in standard one, only 47% of girls and 48% of boys complete the primary cycle. Repetition rate is as high as 15% and transition rate is low especially for girls with only 27% proceeding to the secondary schools (Kathuri, 2005). This scenario has been attributed to, among other factors, poor foundation in lower primary schools and pre-schools (Cheruiyot, 2005)<sup>[10]</sup>. Also, other studies have indicated that parents who show little or no interest in their children's education have children who are frequently absent from school, perform poorly, repeat classes, and drop out of school (Gitonga, 1997)<sup>[23]</sup>. Despite many countries' effort to improve its basic education, the global unsatisfactory learners' acquisition of basic literacy competencies in their early years of learning elicits some doubts on parental engagements at pre-primary schools. To date, there is no impressive solution to the problem, hence a need for the present study to investigate into the influence of home parenting on pre-primary children's acquisition of basic literacy competencies that includes language skills, numeracy skills, social skills and motor skills

### **Material and Research Methodology**

The study adopted descriptive survey research design. The study was conducted in Manga Sub-County, Nyamira County, Kenya. The level of parental involvement in the sub-county is low with

only 15.7% of the parents provided a good home parenting environment that fosters learning (SCDE, 2015). The units of analysis for this study were 65 public pre-primary schools while the study targeted 65 headteachers, 210 parents, 210 preschool children, 65 ECDE pre-school lead teachers, and 3 ECDE divisional Coordinators. The sample sizes for pre-school parents and pre-school children was each 136, however, the sample size of 65 for ECDE lead teachers were selected through saturation sampling technique. Also, 20 head teachers were selected while 3 ECDE divisional coordinators were selected using a saturation sampling technique. The study employed the use of Questionnaires and document analysis in collecting data.

This study adopted the triangulation approach to ensure the validity of the instruments. Triangulation is a powerful way of ensuring concurrent validity (Campbell & Fiske, 1959) [8]. By so doing, areas that had been overlooked by one method were strengthened and checked by the other. The cross-checking of data through multiple method approach made the data collected valid. This is in line with Cresswell (2009) who contends that the use of the multi-model technique to data collection averts the possibility of having invalid and unreliable data. The reliability of the instrument was tested during the piloting stage using the test-retest method. Data was analysed using both descriptive and inferential statistics.

## Results and Discussion

### Introduction

This section presents the findings and interpretation of the study as indicated in the research methodology.

The results presented both descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics were used to describe the views of the respondents on each sub-scale, while the inferential statistics aided to make inferences and draw conclusions. Statistical tests, Pearson Product-Moment of Correlation, and multiple regression analyses were used to investigate the relationship between the variables. All tests of significance were computed at  $\alpha = 0.05$ . The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 21.0 was used to analyze the quantitative data.

### Rating of Acquisition of Basic Literacy Competencies

Preschoolers' acquisition of basic literacy competencies was assessed using a rating scale adopted from the Kenya School Readiness Assessment Tool developed by the Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology. The lead teachers were asked to rate the selected children, whose parents were taking part in the study, on a scale of 1 to 5 using 24 itemized questionnaire. The ratings were based on the indicators of Language Competencies, Numeracy Competencies, Social Competencies, and Motor Competencies, which forms the main aspect of basic literacy competencies among preschool children. The assessment was made in reference to the progress records maintained continuously over the learning period. It was therefore a good indicator of the preschool learning outcome in basic literacy competencies; it is a standardized instrument and a reliable measure. The results were summarized in the means and confidence interval of means as shown in Table 1.

**Table 1:** Rating of Basic Literacy Competencies by L/Teacher (n=116)

<b>Language Competencies</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>95% CI</b>
1. Follows verbal directions	2.250	[2.057, 2.443]
2. Has appropriate vocabulary for the level of maturity	2.129	[1.936, 2.323]
3. Tell a short story	2.172	[1.963, 2.382]
4. Sounds letters of the alphabet	2.121	[1.935, 2.306]
5. Complete simple writing pattern based on letters	2.138	[1.958, 2.318]
6. Read and write three-letter words.	2.233	[2.049, 2.416]
Mean average	2.174	[1.980, 2.367]
<b>Numeracy Competencies</b>		
7. Rote count numbers 1-50	3.121	[2.996, 3.246]
8. Perform operations (put together/take away) on numbers 1-9	2.310	[2.205, 2.415]
9. Compare size/heaviness of objects	3.483	[3.357, 3.608]
10. Identify different shapes	2.931	[2.812, 3.050]
11. Tell different times of the day based on daily routine	2.483	[2.370, 2.596]
12. Match numbers with equivalent real objects/items	3.112	[3.003, 3.221]
Mean average	2.907	[2.713, 3.101]
<b>Social Competencies</b>		
13. Play cooperatively with other children	4.362	[4.174, 4.551]
14. Follow rules given by a teacher/adult	4.069	[3.831, 4.307]
15. Demonstrate self-control in different situations	3.293	[3.063, 3.523]
16. Name the colour of the National flag	3.793	[3.546, 4.040]
17. Follow class routines	3.086	[2.813, 3.359]
18. Identify landmarks near home	3.121	[2.996, 3.246]
Mean average	3.621	[3.427, 3.815]
<b>Motor Competencies</b>		
19. The child throws a ball at a target	2.922	[2.676, 3.169]
20. The child catches a ball thrown at some distance	2.233	[2.041, 2.424]
21. The child makes coordinated movement in a singing game	2.259	[2.073, 2.445]
22. The child paste shapes to form artwork	2.293	[2.091, 2.495]
23. Model different objects using clay/plasticine	2.440	[2.206, 2.673]

24. Makes simple structures using locally available materials	2.190	[1.958, 2.422]
Mean average	2.389	[2.195, 2.583]
Mean average rating of literacy competencies	<b>2.771</b>	[2.712, 2.843]

**Key:** 1.00-1.80 (Very low); 1.81-2.60 (Low); 2.61-3.40 (Moderate), 3.41-4.20 (High); 4.21-5.00 (Very high) Source: Survey data (2019)

The survey results reveal that there was a generally moderate level of acquisition of basic literacy competencies among preschool learners in Manga Sub-County. This was reflected by an overall rating of 2.771 at 95% CI [2.712, 2.843] in the literacy competencies scale of 1 to 5. This implies that many of the preschool learners only exhibited moderate or below-average skills in most of the basic literacy competency indicators. The findings of the study further show that language competencies were rated the least at 2.174 among the basic literacy skill, meaning that many of the preschoolers lacked the skills of comprehension, speaking, writing, and reading. For example, the mean rating in all the indicators of language competencies were all rated between 2.12 to 2.25, indicating that many of them were not able to use appropriate vocabulary for their level of maturity such as tell any short story, sounds letters of the alphabet correctly, complete simple writing pattern based on letters and to read and write three-letter words correctly. However, the children had the highest competencies in social skills at a mean rating of 3.62, with the indicators ranging from 3.12 to 4.36, indicating slightly above moderate rating in social skills. However, this reflects that although many of the children could play cooperatively with other children, at least follow some rules given by a teacher/adult, demonstrate some self-control in different situations, follow class routines and identify some landmarks near their home, not all could effectively display these social skills.

Regarding, numeracy competencies, the children had a mean rating of 2.90, an indication that they, on average, had moderate abilities in numeracy skills. Whereas they had a mean rating of above 3.00 in rote counting of numbers 1-50, comparison of size/heaviness of objects and in the matching of numbers with equivalent real objects/items, they recorded lower rating in performing operations (put together/take away) on numbers (mean=2.31), identification of different shapes (mean=2.93) and telling different times of the day based on daily routine (mean=2.48).

Equally, on motor Competencies, the children had a mean rating of 2.38. This indicates that many of the children had low motor competencies. For instance, only the item “throwing a ball at a target” received an above-average rating (mean=2.92), but the rest of the indicators had ratings less than 2.50. This means that most of the children were not able to satisfactorily perform basic motor skills, like to catch a ball thrown at some distance (mean=2.23), to make coordinated movement in a singing game (mean=2.26), to paste shapes to form artwork (mean=2.29), to model different objects using clay/plasticine (mean=2.44) or to make simple structures using locally available materials (mean=2.19).

Further, the study sought to explore the mean average literacy competencies among the preschool children. Table 2 shows the mean average literacy competencies rating frequencies among the preschool children in Manga Sub-County.

**Table 2:** Basic Literacy Competencies Children Rating Frequencies

Performance index	Number of children	Frequency %	Cumulative Frequency %
1.00-1.80	4	3.45	3.45
1.81-2.60	28	24.14	27.59
2.61-3.40	67	57.76	85.35
3.41-4.20	12	10.34	95.69
4.21-5.00	5	4.31	100.0
TOTAL	116	100.00	

Source: Survey data (2019)

From Table 2, it is clear that many preschoolers had a low average mean rating in basic literacy competencies, with 27.6% of them having either low or very low literacy competency ratings. The children with moderate literacy competencies formed more than half (57.8%) of the children who took part in the survey, while only 14.6% of them had appropriate competencies in basic literacy.

This finding confirms that many children in pre-primary schools in Manga Sub-County lack adequate competencies in language, numeracy, motor, and social skills.

**Home Parenting and Acquisition of Basic Literacy Competencies among Preschool Children**

The section provides findings on the influence of home parenting environment on acquisition of literacy competencies among pre-primary children.

**Views of Preschool Parents on their Involvement in Home Parenting**

The preschool parents were asked to rate their level of involvement in-home parenting. They were given Likert scaled questionnaire, with indicators of home parenting and their responses were summarized in percentage frequencies as shown in Table 3.

**Table 3:** Preschool Parents’ Response on Parent Involvement Home Parenting (n=116)

Statement	SA	A	U	D	SD	Mean
I discuss with my child on his/her academic school progress.	65 (56.0%)	26 (22.4%)	10 (8.6%)	7 (6.0%)	8 (6.9%)	4.12
I talk to my child about activities he/she does at school	69 (59.5%)	24 (20.7%)	18 (15.5%)	3 (2.6%)	2 (1.7%)	4.34

I talk to the child about other things that happen at school (for example contact with classmates, incidents on the playground)	77 (66.4%)	19 (16.4%)	15 (12.9%)	2 (1.7%)	3 (2.6%)	4.42
I try to find out what the child likes doing at school	67 (57.7%)	19 (16.4%)	20 (17.2%)	4 (2.6%)	5 (4.3%)	4.17
I talk with the child about his/ her behaviours	80 (68.9%)	20 (17.2%)	7 (5.2%)	4 (2.6%)	5 (4.3%)	4.43
I set rules about how long the child is allowed to play	73 (62.9%)	25 (21.6%)	12 (10.3%)	2 (1.7%)	3 (2.6%)	4.38
There are rules about the television programs the child is allowed to watch	72 (62.1%)	22 (18.9%)	17 (14.7%)	3 (2.6%)	3 (2.6%)	4.38
I Praise my child's school achievements	84 (72.4%)	15 (12.9%)	12 (10.3%)	3 (2.6%)	1 (0.7%)	4.51
I control the child's behaviours at home	98 (84.5%)	7 (6.0%)	6 (5.2%)	2 (1.7%)	3 (2.6%)	4.66
I guide and counsel my child	83 (71.5%)	22 (19.0%)	5 (4.3%)	2 (1.7%)	4 (3.4%)	4.53
Mean average rating on home parenting						4.39

**Key:** SA-Strongly Agree (5); A-Agree (4); U-Undecided (3); Disagree (2); SD-Strongly Disagree (1)

**Source:** Survey data (2019)

The finding of the study established that although many of the parents with children at pre-primary centres in Manga Sub-County held a general feeling that they have been strongly involved in-home parenting of their children, some accepted that they had not adequately provided home parenting environment. This was revealed by their mean overall rating of 4.39 on a scale of 1 to 5, with the indicators ranging from a lowest of 4 to a highest of 4.66. For instance, although over three-quarters of the parents, 91(78.4%), alluded that they always discussed with their children on their school academic progress, 15 (12.9%) accepted that they rarely discussed with their children on matters of academic progress, while 10(8.6%) were undecided on the question, translating to a mean of 4.12 on the Likert scale. This means that although most parents discussed the academic progress with their children to check on their performance, others did not. Moreover, when probed on whether they talked to their children on school matters, only 93 (71.6%) of the preschool parents confirmed that they do, but 18 (15.5%) were undecided on this question, while 5 (4.3%) indicated they do not, translating to a mean of 4.34 on the Likert scale.

The study also found that whereas 96 (82.8%) of the parents agreed that they could talk to their children about other things that happen at school (for example contact with classmates, incidents on the playground), 15 (12.9%) of the preschool parents neither agreed nor disagreed with the statement, while 5 (4.3%) confirmed they could not talk to their children about the things that happen at school. The item scored a mean of 4.42, an indication that although many parents agreed that they talk to their children about things that happen at school, some vehemently refused. On whether parents want to find out what the pre-schoolers do at school, while 86(74.1%) of the preschool parents alluded that they always find out what their children do at school, some 9(7.8%) asserted that they rarely find out what their children do at school and a further 20(17.2%) were neutral on this statement. This finding is partly in line with that of Arthur (2011) who conducted a qualitative study in Australia on parents' conceptions of their roles as home educators of their children, where the study findings indicated that the majority of parents perceived themselves as partners in educating their children.

The study also found that as a way of providing a good home environment for pre-schoolers, some of the parents set rules to be followed while others do not. For example, although 98(84.5%) of the preschool parents agreed that they set rules about how long the children were allowed to play, 5(4.3%) agreed that they do not set any rules regarding playing and another 12(10.3%) of them were non-committal on the matter, translating to a mean response of 4.38 on this statement. Likewise, whereas 94 (81.0%) agreed that there were rules about the television programs their

children were allowed to watch, 17(14.6%) neither agreed nor disagreed with the statement, while 6(5.2%) confirmed that they have no such rules on watching television programs. Generally, the item scored a mean of 4.38 on the statement, an indication that although many parents set rules for TV viewing at home, others do not. This finding is in line with that of El Nokali *et al.* (2010) [17] whose study found positive connections between family involvement at school and children's academic outcomes. This implies that homes that provided a good learning environment for the learners were those which set rules on what the children do.

Similarly, although majority 105 (90.5%) of the parents confirmed that they control their children's behaviors at home, 6 (5.2%) were neutral on this statement, while 5 (4.3%) were in disagreement with the statement, reflecting a mean rating of 4.66 an indication that many agreed on the statement but not all. Another 105 (90.5%) agreed that they guide and counsel their children while at home, 5(4.3%) were neutral when on this question, but 5 (4.3%) confirmed that they hardly guide and counsel their children while at home. In general, the statement scored a mean of 4.53 implying that although many parents agreed on this statement, not all of them. This implies that whereas most of the parents were controlling their children's behavior while at home for good behavior development, others do not have any control. The finding is supported by Jeynes (2005) who conducted a meta-analysis study in the USA that found that a good number of parents were supportive, loving, helpful and maintaining an adequate level of discipline to their children.

### **Regression Analysis: Influence of Home Parenting on Acquisition of Basic Literacy Competencies in Preschool Education.**

**H<sub>0</sub>:** *There is no statistical significant influence of home parenting on the acquisition of basic literacy competencies in pre-primary education.*

To investigate the influence of home parenting on an acquisition of basic literacy competencies among preschoolers, the null hypothesis was tested using simple linear regression analysis, with the investigated null hypothesis being  $H_0: \beta_1 = 0$  and the corresponding alternative hypothesis being  $H_1: \beta_1 \neq 0$ . If the null hypothesis is true, then from  $E(Y) = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X$  the population mean of  $Y$  is  $\beta_1$  for every  $X$  value, which indicates that  $X$  (home parenting) does not influence  $Y$  (acquisition of basic literacy competencies) and the alternative being that home parenting environment associated to the acquisition of basic literacy competencies. The significant level ( $p$ -value) was set at .05, such that if the  $p$ -value was less than 0.05, the null hypothesis would

be rejected and the conclusion reached that a significant difference exists. If the p-value was larger than 0.05, it would be concluded that a significant difference does not exist. Table 4 shows a regression model on the influence of home parenting on the acquisition of basic literacy competencies in pre-primary education.

**Table 4:** Model Summary- Influence on Home Parenting Environment on Acquisition of Basic Literacy Competencies

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.520 <sup>a</sup>	.271	.264	9.89473
a. Predictors: (Constant), Home Parenting Environment				
b. Dependent Variable: Acquisition of basic literacy competency				

The model summary reveals that home parenting accounted for 26.4% (Adjusted coefficient  $R^2=.264$ ) of the variation in the acquisition of basic literacy competencies among preschool children. This finding suggests that variation in the level of home parenting practices explained 26.4% of the variability acquisition of basic literacy competencies. However, to establish whether home parenting practices were indeed a significant predictor of

**Table 6:** Regression Coefficients: Influence on Home Parenting Environment on Acquisition of Basic Literacy Competencies

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	95.0% Confidence Interval for B		
	B	Std. Error	Beta			Lower Bound	Upper Bound	
1	(Constant)	25.469	4.953	5.143	.000	15.658	35.280	
	Home Parenting Environment	11.310	1.739	.520	6.505	.000	7.866	14.754
a. Dependent Variable: Acquisition of basic literacy competency								

$Y = \alpha + \beta X_1 + \epsilon$ , where Y= Acquisition of basic literacy competency;  $X_1$ = Home Parenting Environment Practices and  $\epsilon$  is the error term

$Y = 25.469 + 11.310X_1 + \epsilon$ .

From the analysis, there is a statistically significant positive unstandardized co-efficient of 11.310 within a 95% C.I (7.866, 14.754) as indicated by the coefficient matrix. Given that there is a significant p-value ( $t= 6.505$ ;  $p<.05$ ) of the unstandardized co-efficient value, there is sufficient evidence to reject the null hypothesis ( $\beta_1 = 0$ ). Hence, the null hypothesis that “*there is no statistically significant influence of home parenting environment on the acquisition of basic literacy competencies in pre-primary education*” was rejected. Subsequently, the alternative hypothesis was supported and it was concluded that there is a statistically significant influence of home parenting environment on the acquisition of basic literacy competencies in pre-primary education.

An improvement of parental involvement in-home parenting practices by one unit results in 11.310 units of improvement in the level of acquisition of basic literacy competencies among the preschoolers. On the same note, an improvement of parental involvement in-home parenting practices by one standard deviation results in an improvement of acquisition of basic literacy competencies by 0.520 standard deviations, as reflected by the Beta value of 0.520. These findings concurred with Odhiambo (2005) who also found that the home parenting environment was as important as what goes on in the school. The study further found that parents and teachers have a crucial role to play to make sure that every child becomes a high achiever. Parental influence has been identified as an important factor affecting pupil achievement. Similarly, Bitengo (2009) revealed that fathers’ involvement in their children’s education was significantly related to children’s performance at preschool.

acquisition of basic literacy competencies among the preschoolers, Analysis of Variance was conducted, as suggested by Creswell (2014), as shown below in Table 5.

**Table 5:** ANOVA: Influence on Home Parenting Environment on Acquisition of Basic Literacy Competencies

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	
1	Regression	4143.256	1	4143.256	42.319	.000 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	11161.256	114	97.906		
	Total	15304.512	115			
a. Dependent Variable: Acquisition of basic literacy competency						
b. Predictors: (Constant), Home Parenting Environment						

It is evident that the level of parental involvement in-home parenting practices is a significant predictor of the acquisition of basic literacy competencies among preschoolers,  $F(1, 114) = 42.319$ ,  $p<.05$ . This means that the level of acquisition of basic literacy competencies among the preschoolers can be significantly predicted from the level of parental involvement in-home parenting practices. Table 6 below shows the values of the coefficients of the regression model.

**Summary of Findings and Conclusion**

This section presents a summary and conclusion of the findings of the study. From the descriptive findings, it emerged that although a few of parents with children at preschool in Manga Sub-County were adequately involved in-home parenting of their children, others did not offer their children a good home learning environment. The study further established that while some of the parents occasionally discussed with their children on their school progress, talk about school, set rules regarding television programs, control behavior, and praise their child for academic achievements, some of the parents never did this at all. Generally, the parents scored an average rating on the home parenting environment, an indication that their involvement in-home parenting for preschoolers was moderate. However, the findings established that there was a statistically significant relationship between home parenting environment and the acquisition of basic literacy competencies among preschoolers. The variation in the level of home parenting practices explained more than one out of the four cases of the variability acquisition of basic literacy competencies. The study revealed that the level of acquisition of basic literacy competencies among the preschoolers can be significantly predicted from the level of parental involvement in-home parenting practices.

**Conclusion of the study findings**

From the findings of the study, it can be concluded that only a small proportion of preschool parents in Manga Sub-County were adequately involved in-home parenting of their children, others were not effectively involved in the home learning environment

for their preschool children. In addition, it can be concluded that there is a direct relationship between home parenting and the acquisition of basic literacy competencies among preschool children. Preschool children whose parents are adequately involved in their education and provided with suitable home learning environments have chances of acquiring better basic literacy competencies than their counterparts whose parents do not provide as much.

### Recommendations of the study findings

The following were the recommendations made from this study in light of the findings:

- The board of management of primary school should organize seminars with parents to discuss on the importance of parental involvement in terms of creating conducive home parenting environment.
- The Ministry of Education should organize a course or seminar to equip parents with necessary skills related to appropriate parental involvement practises and children's acquisition of basic literacy competencies in line with the new competency based curriculum in Kenya.
- Parents should provide material, emotional and educational support to their pre-primary children. This is because the current study established that a good number of children lived in home environment characterized by parental low engagement in pre-primary children's learning.
- The pre-primary teachers should sensitize parents with children at pre-primary centres on the importance of parental engagement in terms of creating conducive home parenting environment
- Parents should be educated on their role as parents and the importance of getting involved in the education of their children. This can be organized by the Ministry of Education with the help of the primary school head teachers.

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