

Factors Affecting Class Attendance in Public Early Childhood Development Education Centres in Nandi East District, Nandi County, Kenya.

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ABSTRACT

School attendance is significant factor in academic outcomes. However, suboptimal school attendance is a common occurrence in schools in sub-Saharan nations including Kenya adversely impacting on pupils academic development.

The purpose of this study was to investigate factors affecting class attendance in public ECDE centres in order to enhance academic standards in Nandi East District. The study was based on Abraham Maslow's theory, (1987) of the Hierarchy of needs as cited by McLeod, (2007). The study adopted a descriptive survey research design and the population for the study was defined as ECDE teachers and head teachers of the selected schools. Stratified random sampling and simple random sampling were used to choose schools to participate in the study. The total sample size was 140 respondents. The methods used for data collection were interviews for head teachers and questionnaires for teachers. The results showed that: lack of sufficient physical resources, learner characteristics, teacher characteristics and lack of parental involvement affected class attendance in ECDE schools in Nandi East District. The study therefore recommended that: Public ECDE management should proactively engage in resource mobilization to ensure that their schools are well equipped for effective teaching that would consequently improve class attendance. Public ECDE management should provide mechanisms to provide meals at the schools premises to aid the pupils nutritionally and also help retain them in school. The Management should further initiate promotion of counselling and motivational sessions to their pupils to assist them develop better emotional and social status that would be helpful to ensure class attendance is consequently improved. The management should further introduce and facilitate continuous professional development. Public ECDE management should involve parents and other stakeholders to enhance ECDE attendance.

INTRODUCTION

Early childhood is the time in a child's life starting at conception and includes early days of pre and elementary school usually up to the age of eight years. It is the learning activities of nursery school children (NACECE, 2009). Kenya is working towards attaining universal access and completion of primary school by 2015 so as to fulfil Millennium Development Goals. The Ministry of Education (2008) sees the role that preschools play in preparing the Kenyan children towards meeting this target. It emphasizes provision of suitable learning resources, qualified staff, appropriate curriculum and appropriate play activities to ensure quality and success at this level.

The Republic of Kenya, Vision 2030 (2007) for education sector should entail universally effective education for sustainable growth and development. The vision 2030 aim for eliminating poverty is to reduce significantly people living in absolute poverty. Its aim is to provide accessibility across different dimension. It should improve attendance for school children and provide a wide range of facilities like health and proper sanitation. MDG's and Vision 2030 are related to this study in that to complete a full course of primary and to have globally competitive quality education all the aspects of quality physical learning resources should be met. There should be quality physical facilities and equipment and availability of good quality instructional materials. Children's characteristics for example, health and nutritional status of children, should be satisfactory. The environment for teaching in ECDE centres should be improved. Parents should be sensitized on the importance of their participation in schools as active participation motivates learning to high academic achievement, better learning attendance, lower dropout rates and more successful transitions to high grades.

According to Bruner, Discher & Chang (2011), frequent absenteeism leads to a lot of school drop outs among children. Hammond, Linton, Smink, & Drew (2007) assert that early identification of absenteeism tendencies is vital to effective prevention of absenteeism and truancy in schools. It further emphasizes the importance of identifying the problem at the beginning of elementary classes as the problem becomes very difficult to eradicate when a child has grown up. The ECDE level is therefore a key in countering issues of non-attendance as children are still undergoing a lot of cognitive and social development and can easily be shaped when still young.

Research by the National Centre for School Engagement (2007) asserts that the main contributors of academic achievement are attendance, attachment and achievement. Pupils are more likely to have the morale of going to school, if they have good and viable relationships with the school environment and the administration at large.

According to UNICEF (2010), the school administration, parents and teachers should remove the whole collection of obstacles to school attendance. It cites some of the contributing factors to school absenteeism as uninteresting and irrelevant curriculum, poor pupil-teacher relationships, high pupil-teacher ratio, poor school facilities, improper class placement that is above or below abilities, lack of parent-school communication and involvement.

School attendance has continually improved in low-income countries recently, though they continuously experience problems such as small classes, lack of facilities, inadequate reading materials and lack of teachers. (UNESCO, 2008). Malnutrition and poor health, illiteracy among parents and unavailability of pre-school education, poor trained teachers combined with schools without enough resources leads to poor achievement of basic education (Banerjee & Duflo, 2006).

In Sub-Saharan Africa, the challenges are widely known, where both quality and attendance are significant problems (EFA, 2008). It has the highest amount of school drop outs and the lowest ratio of teachers to pupils and low primary completion rates.

In India, lack of school attendance and increased repetition rates affects students. Poor children from poor backgrounds and living in remote areas are likely to face these challenges. (Govinda and Bandyopadhyay, 2008). Pupils' school attendance is affected by the quality of facilities in the school and the social amenities that it provides. Many studies argue that there is need to improve the living conditions in schools in order to foster school enrolment and attendance. (Mehrota, Panchamukhi & Srivastava, 2005).

In a research done in Botswana, 18% of preschools employed untrained teachers. This could have led to a situation where teachers could not provide young children with proper guidance, care and education. It is well understood that a prescribed ECE curriculum should be able to guide teachers; both trained as well as untrained ones, in their deliberations and ensure that the activities that are practised in the classrooms are developmentally appropriate for the children (Bose, Monau & Masole, 2007).

The issue of school attendance has continued to alarm many governments in Africa for example in Mauritania, absenteeism within the public-school systems were found to have reached a crisis point whereby 30% of all students at the national level are chronic absentees (Reimer & Smink, 2005).

Unstable school attendance for pupils is mainly due to inefficient facilities in the schools, unsupportive community and personal academic ability (McCray, 2006). A study done in Uganda shows minimal improvement attendance rate. The issue of school absenteeism is common in pre-schools, middle and upper primary schools (Reid, 2003).

In Kenya, the gross enrolment rate in primary school was 87% in 2000, proceeding to FPE. FPE had led to an improvement in school admission to over 100% (World Bank, 2004). Though the enrolment and access has improved there are other barriers that contribute to irregular school attendance among learners.

Given the critical role which ECDE plays in the overall development of an individual, it is of paramount importance to understand the hiccups it encounters with a view of finding solutions for them. Towards this end, this study hoped to find out the factors affecting class attendance in Nandi East District, with focus on learner characteristics, teacher characteristics, physical learning resources and parental involvement as possible factors affecting class attendance.

There are factors in schools that cause children absenteeism as well as contributing to poor attendance and early dropout. ECDE centres should provide quality physical learning resources. The health and nutritional status of children should be satisfactory. Teachers are the main tool for creating an effective learning environment. Parent involvement in school activities increases the quality of learning and makes the teachers work easier.

The DICECE (2012) Nandi East district annual assessment report shows that there is an increase in the number of children in public ECDE centres being away from school for days and even weeks which has led to poor academic standards in public ECDE centres. According to the government of Kenya (2003) there are a number of challenges that hinder class attendance which if not addressed, opportunities that would have otherwise been available for children to maximize their holistic development and therefore their potential in life will be foreclosed. It is on these issues, that research was carried out in the public ECDE centres in Nandi East district, Nandi County to analyze the factors affecting class attendance in ECDE.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study used a descriptive survey research design. The study was aimed at gathering information from respondents on the factors affecting class attendance. Primary data was obtained using questionnaires and interviews while secondary data was found from various books and journals some from the internet.

This study was carried out in ECDE centres and primary schools in Nandi East District of Nandi County, located in western region of Kenya. The district has five educational zones namely: Nandi Hills, Chebarus, Koilot, Mogobich and Ollessos. The district has a multicultural outlook owing to presence of several tea farms which have attracted people from different parts in Kenya who come looking for jobs.

In this study, head teachers and ECDE teachers in Nandi East District made up the target population. The target population was drawn from 95 ECDE centres. The target population constituted 95 head teachers and 611 teachers from the 95 public ECDE centres. (Nandi East, DICECE (2012)

The researcher stratified schools into educational zones. This was followed by selection of schools in each zone (stratum) by use of simple random sampling techniques. Stratified sampling involves dividing the population into sub-groups of the same kind after which a sample random sampling is used to select school in each sub-group According to Orodho (2009), 30% of the research population can be studied therefore, 30% of 95 schools in this study was 28 schools. Head teachers were purposively selected from each of the selected schools making a sample size of 28 head teachers. Simple random sampling technique was used to select two teachers from pre-school and two teachers from lower primary making a total number of four teachers per school. The sample size of teachers was 112. The total sample size was therefore 140 respondents. The population sample is represented in Table 1

Table 1: Sample size

| Zone | No. of schools30% of the target | No. of head teachers | No. of Teachers |
|---------------|---------------------------------|----------------------|-----------------|
| Chebarus | 7 | 7 | 28 |
| Nandihills | 6 | 6 | 24 |
| Mogobich | 5 | 5 | 20 |
| OlLessos | 5 | 5 | 20 |
| Koilot | 5 | 5 | 20 |
| Totals | 28 | 28 | 112 |

Questionnaires and interview schedules were used to collect data relevant to this study.

The researcher sought authority to conduct research from National Council for Science and Technology before proceeding to the field. After acquiring the research permit, the researcher further sought clearance from the Nandi county commissioner and the county education office to conduct research in the selected ECDE centres. The researcher then sought permission from the head teachers of the selected centres to be allowed to conduct the study before administering the research tools. The questionnaires were administered to preschool teachers and the head teachers of the selected schools were interviewed. The information obtained from the interviews was recorded manually and the questionnaires were collected immediately after they had been completely filled.

In this study, descriptive and inferential statistical techniques were used in analysing data Closed ended questions were coded and entered into SPSS version 20 for analysis by use of frequencies, percentages and means as per the objectives of the study. Open ended questions were summarized according to each objective of the study and themes that emerged. Pearson's Correlations analysis was used to indicate the relationship that exists between the dependent variables (class attendance) and factors affecting class attendance (independent variables). The results of data analysis were presented in tables, figures and graphs. This therefore formed the basis of interpretation, discussion, conclusion and recommendations of the research.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

General characteristics of the respondents

The study was informed by teachers who are critical in determining the factors affecting class attendance in public ECDE centres in order to enhance academic standards in Nandi East District. There were 112 respondents comprising of teachers. All (100%) the targeted respondents gave their responses in all questions asked. Respondents were asked to give general information regarding their background.

The majority at 63.4% of the teacher respondents were female while only 36.6% were male. This implies that female dominated children teaching at the preschools in the wider Nandi East region. This may have affected the influence of boys to have interest in pre-schooling leading to poor attendance due to lack of male role models.

On their ages, majority of the respondents at 30.4% were aged between 26-28 years followed by 28.6% aged between 29-31 years, 21.4% above 31 years, 10.7% between 21-25 years and finally 8.9% below 20 years. This is an indication that a majority of respondents were adequately exposed to issues of factors affecting pupil absenteeism in ECDE having created the impression from their ages that they were mature enough to comprehend the issues under investigation. Most (72.3%) of the respondents were married while the remaining 27.7% were single. Dudeket al., (2007) mentions that the early childhood teaching profession is taking a shift from the traditional single and mostly young teachers to a more experienced married folk which he argues is effective.

The respondents had served for varied number of years at their work stations at varied positions in the schools.

Table 2. Level of education and level of experience

| | | | Level of Experience | | | | Total |
|--------------------|---------|------------------------------|---------------------|------------|-------------|---------------|--------|
| | | | Below 5 years | 5-10 years | 11-15 years | over 15 years | |
| Level of Education | P1 | Count | 3 | 13 | 15 | 28 | 59 |
| | | % within Level of Experience | 25.0% | 65.0% | 48.4% | 57.1% | 52.7% |
| | | % of Total | 2.7% | 11.6% | 13.4% | 25.0% | 52.7% |
| | Diploma | Count | 7 | 5 | 10 | 13 | 35 |
| | | % within Level of Experience | 58.3% | 25.0% | 32.3% | 26.5% | 31.2% |
| | | % of Total | 6.2% | 4.5% | 8.9% | 11.6% | 31.2% |
| | B. Ed | Count | 2 | 2 | 4 | 5 | 13 |
| | | % within Level of Experience | 16.7% | 10.0% | 12.9% | 10.2% | 11.6% |
| | | % of Total | 1.8% | 1.8% | 3.6% | 4.5% | 11.6% |
| | M.Ed | Count | 0 | 0 | 2 | 3 | 5 |
| | | % within Level of Experience | .0% | .0% | 6.5% | 6.1% | 4.5% |
| | | % of Total | .0% | .0% | 1.8% | 2.7% | 4.5% |
| Total | | Count | 12 | 20 | 31 | 49 | 112 |
| | | % within Level of Experience | 100.0% | 100.0% | 100.0% | 100.0% | 100.0% |
| | | % of Total | 10.7% | 17.9% | 27.7% | 43.8% | 100.0% |

On work experience, slightly less than half at 43.8% had worked for more than 15 years. This was followed by 27.7% between 11-15 years, 17.9% between 5-10 years and 10.7% below 5 years. This implies that majority of respondents were fairly experienced. The level of experience indicated above is significant because Maxwell, (2007) argues that the credibility of the information gathered in any study is informed by the many years of the respondents' service to the institution. The experience proves the validity and reliability of the information obtained. Their skills, knowledge and expertise had been tested for a long period hence their perception on the matter under study had been influenced by their experience.

Class Attendance

Class attendance is very crucial for learners' academic performance. Hence, it was paramount to assess the level of attendance in the sampled school as shown in figure 1 below.

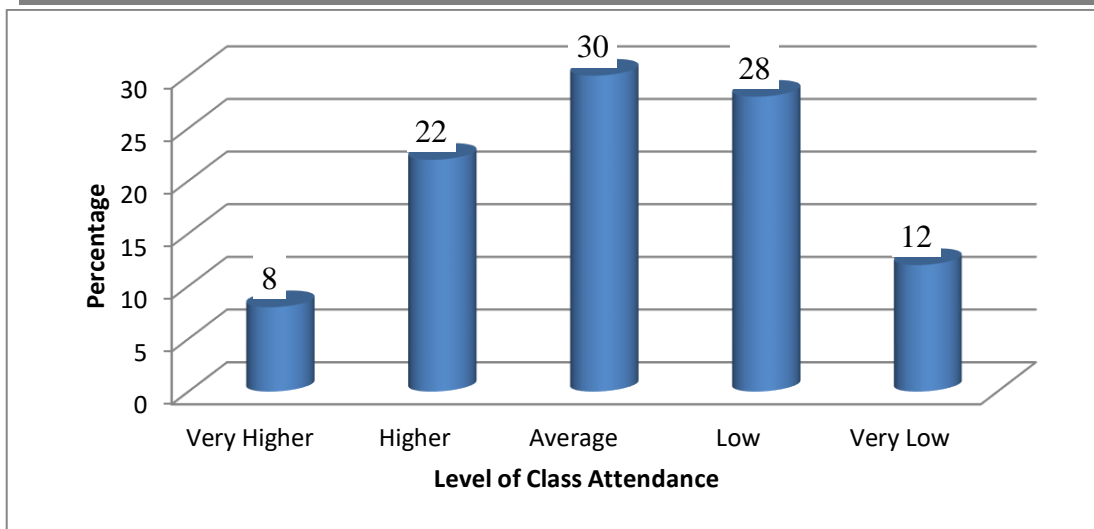


Fig. 1 Class Attendance

Findings from Fig. 1 indicate that most (30%) of the ECDE had average level of ECDE learners class attendance, followed by 22% of ECDE with higher class attendance 8% of ECDE with very higher-class attendance. However, 28% and 12% of ECDEs had low and very low-class attendance, hence giving more support on the need of this study to identify factors determining ECDE learner class attendance.

Physical learning resources that affect class attendance

The first objective sought to determine the physical learning resources that affect class attendance. The result first shows the availability of the physical resources and then its effect on class attendance. The result is as seen in Table 3 and Table 4

Table 3: Availability of physical resources

| Resources/ Facilities | Available and Adequate | | Available but Inadequate | | Unavailable | | Total | |
|---------------------------------------|------------------------|---------|--------------------------|---------|-------------|---------|-------|---------|
| | Count | Percent | Count | Percent | Count | Percent | Count | Percent |
| Textbooks and Supplementary materials | 15 | 13.4% | 67 | 59.8% | 30 | 26.8% | 112 | 100% |
| Furniture | 15 | 13.4% | 64 | 57.1% | 33 | 29.5% | 112 | 100% |
| Classrooms and pit latrines | 15 | 13.4% | 66 | 58.9% | 31 | 27.7% | 112 | 100% |
| Play materials | 15 | 13.4% | 70 | 62.5% | 27 | 24.1% | 112 | 100% |
| Playground | 16 | 14.3% | 73 | 65.2% | 23 | 20.5% | 112 | 100% |

From Table 3 it is clear that majority of the respondents at 59.8% mentioned that text books and supplementary materials were available but were inadequate. Only 26.8% were unavailable and 13.4% were available and adequate. This implies that there were insufficient text books and supplementary materials in ECDE schools. This agrees with Mwai, (2003) who mentions that the most important aspect in physical learning resources is accessibility to learning materials. He further adds that in the learning process it is important that the materials used and the content learned is relevant to the age of the learners. The availability of quality instructional materials stimulates interest of the learners and improves performance. However, Cohen (2005) says that often such materials and textbooks are often insufficient thus negatively impacting on the learning process.

Similarly, 57.1% of the respondents indicated that furniture was available but inadequate, 29.5% of the respondents reported that furniture was unavailable and only 13.4% cited that furniture were available. This implies that ECDE schools did not have sufficient furniture for effective learning. Moore and Sugiyama, (2007) mention that most early childhood education centres lack adequate physical learning facilities such as furniture.

In most centres furniture is available but not adequate. Some of those available do not suit the physical size of the children. Some desks are higher than the size of the small children making them write on them while standing. This makes children uncomfortable as they get tired standing for long periods.

On availability of classrooms and pit latrines, 58.9% of the respondents indicated that they were available but inadequate, 27.7% of the respondents cited that they were unavailable while 13.4% of the respondents indicated that classrooms and pit latrines were available. This gives an indication of a problem with class rooms for learning and pit latrines. Looking at this finding it ties with the idea from educational practitioners who emphasizes the importance of adequate space in the classrooms. Weitzman (2004) asserted that the environment is crucial for child's development; hence children environments need to be adequate in stimuli. As a result, there is need for provision of physical space like classrooms that are endearing to pupils enough to make them not skip school.

Further, 62.5% of the respondents cited that play materials were available but inadequate, 24.1% reported that play materials were unavailable while 13.4% of the respondents cited that play materials were available. This implies that there was lack of play materials. Dudek, Baumann &Henz (2007) mentions that play materials that enhance conversation enables children to practice the learnt vocabulary and to improve their language skills. The availability valuable opportunities is necessary a situation that is rarely the case considering the occasional lack of such materials.

Similarly, 65.3% of the respondents reported that playgrounds were available in their schools but were inadequate, 20.5% of the respondents indicated that play grounds were unavailable in their schools and only 14.3% of the respondents reported that play grounds were available in their schools. This gives an indication that the available playgrounds in most schools were not considered big enough to effectively accommodate the pupils. Playgrounds like play materials are important and this finding of its inadequacy agrees with much literature that also found the lack of playgrounds to be a common feature in early childhood schools (Dudek, Baumann &Henz, 2007; CECDE, 2006).

Effect of physical resources on class attendance

The respondents were asked to rate their agreement on a three-point likert scale questions on effects of physical resources on class attendance. The results are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Effect of physical resources on class attendance

| Statements | Agree | | Neutral | | Disagree | | Total | |
|---|-------|-------|---------|------|----------|-------|-------|------|
| | F | % | F | % | F | % | F | % |
| There are not enough instructional materials which then affects class attendance | 82 | 73.2% | 8 | 7.1% | 22 | 19.6% | 112 | 100% |
| The furniture found in the ECDE classrooms are not adequate and of great quality which then affect class attendance | 78 | 69.6% | 10 | 8.9% | 24 | 21.4% | 112 | 100% |
| There are not enough classrooms and pit latrines which then affects class attendance | 81 | 72.3% | 8 | 7.1% | 23 | 20.5% | 112 | 100% |
| There are no enough play materials which then affect class attendance | 75 | 67.0% | 11 | 9.8% | 26 | 23.2% | 112 | 100% |
| The physical space is not rich hence class attendance is hindered | 80 | 71.4% | 9 | 8.0% | 23 | 20.5% | 112 | 100% |

From Table 4. it was found out that 73.2% respondents agreed with the statement that there were not enough instructional materials in their schools and therefore affected class attendance, 19.6% respondents disagreed with the statement while 7.1% respondents were neutral. This implies that the lack of sufficient instructional materials like textbooks affected class attendance of pupils. Curtis & Carter, 2005; Moore & Sugiyama (2007) argue that adequate space is important for children to explore and learn independently either as an individual or as a group. An environment with enough learning materials is the most influential in early learning which consequently fosters class attendance.

Similarly, 69.6% of the respondents were in agreement with the statement that the furniture found in the ECDE classrooms were not adequate and of great quality and affect class attendance, 21.4% of the respondents disagreed with the statement while 8.9% of the respondents were undecided on the statement. This implies that there were occasions where lack of necessary furniture like desks, chairs among other educational aiding furniture was insufficient consequently affecting class attendance. This finding agrees with numerous literature that argue that from the outset where furniture to help educate pupils is missing or insufficient parents are unwilling to bring their children to that particular school (Cohen, 2005; Berger, 2008).

On whether there were not enough classrooms and pit latrines which then affected class attendance, 72.3% of the respondents agreed with the statement, 20.5% disagreed with the statement while 7.1% of the respondents were undecided. This implies that there was a lack of enough classroom space and pit latrines in many ECDE schools. This is an aspect that literature has reviewed. For instance Moore and Sugiyama (2007) notes that adequate learning space and well-designed classrooms encourage exploration and play which make learners gain competence in the learning process thus making school attractive

Further, 67.0% of the respondents agreed with the statement that there were not enough play materials in their schools and therefore affected class attendance, 23.2% respondents disagreed while 9.8% respondents were undecided on the statement. This implies that play materials that have often been touted to be effective and thus necessary for effective learning was insufficient. Play is the most effective method of teaching preschool children for it encourages participation of all learners when carrying out teaching and learning activities (Bruns, Walker, Zabel, Matarese, Estep, Harburger& Mosby,2010). Children who engage in reading and writing activities through play get more attracted to schooling than those not engaged (Bilton, 2010). However if such materials are not available and used well, such needful class attendance would be hampered.

Notwithstanding, 71.4% respondents agreed with the statement that physical space was not rich hindering class attendance, 20.5% respondents were in disagreement with the statement while 8.1% respondents were undecided. This gives an indication that the aesthetics of available space was unappealing. As earlier discussed, for attractive learning space it is argued that the physical space needs to be rich with proper and eye-catching decor that makes small pupils want to stay and learn more. Berger (2008) found that where such space was unattractive, truancy often became the only way disappointed and unmotivated pupils learnt to cope with the situation which is not encouraging.

Learners' characteristics that affect class attendance

The second objective sought to establish the learners' characteristics that affected class attendance. To achieve this objective, the respondents were asked to indicate their agreement/disagreement on a three point likert scale questions. The result is presented in Table 5.

Table 5. Learners' characteristics that affect class attendance

| Statements | Agree | | Neutral | | Disagree | | Total | |
|--|-------|-------|---------|------|----------|-------|-------|------|
| | F | % | Ft | % | F | % | F | % |
| Poor health state interferes with school attendance in children | 91 | 81.2% | 6 | 5.4% | 15 | 13.4% | 112 | 100% |
| Hunger makes children often less alert in the learning process | 85 | 75.9% | 8 | 7.1% | 19 | 17.0% | 112 | 100% |
| Malnutrition is common and often leads to infection of common illness among children leading to absenteeism | 88 | 78.6% | 8 | 7.1% | 16 | 14.3% | 112 | 100% |
| Children with poor social and emotional competence when entering school are more likely to have high absenteeism | 88 | 78.6% | 8 | 7.1% | 16 | 14.3% | 112 | 100% |
| Children with learning difficulties miss school as they develop low-self esteem and incompetence in class. | 78 | 69.6% | 6 | 5.4% | 28 | 25.0% | 112 | 100% |

From Table 5 it is clear that a majority of the respondents at 81.2% agreed with the assertion that poor health state interfered with school attendance by children. Only 13.4% disagreed and 5.4% were neutral. This implies that the respondents appreciated that health issues were a factor affecting class attendance of pupils. Health problems, from literature, have been found to affect the child physically and mentally hence interfering with his/her readiness for learning and the personality of the individuals (Dudek, Baumann &Henz, 2007; Berger, 2008). Further, a child with poor health cannot capture what he/she is being taught consequently because most of the time they are away from school and their grades in school is always low. (Michealowa, 2004).

Similarly, 75.9% respondents agreed with the statement that hunger made children often less alert in the learning process, 17.0% respondents were in disagreement with the statement while 7.1% were undecided. This implies that where hunger was a feature in the lives of pupils, the learning experience consequently suffered. Mwai (2003) predicts such a situation when he notes that children going to school with empty stomachs cannot concentrate hence the learning process is inhibited. Many children who come from poor backgrounds attend preschool and spend long periods of the day without eating. Children who go to school without eating any food are less alert during the lessons as their attention is split between focusing on learning activities and worrying about hunger hence negatively affecting class attendance.

On whether malnutrition was common and often led to infection common illness among children leading to absenteeism, 78.6% respondents agreed with the statement, 14.3% respondents disagreed with the statement while 7.1% respondents were neutral. This brings in the factor of malnutrition which seems to negatively impact on class attendance. Such a finding is agreed to in literature by Barnett, (2004) who argues that malnutrition is one of the common and probably most prevalent causes of absenteeism in primary schools and particularly in schools set in rural areas.

Further, 78.6% respondents agreed with the statement that children with poor social and emotional competence when enrolled in preschool had a higher rate of absenteeism, 14.3% respondents disagreed with the statement while 7.1% respondents were undecided. This gives an indication that the factor of social and emotional competence was one that appeared among learner characteristics and which then affected class attendance. Children's ability to manage emotions characterizes socio-emotional well being and develops social skills on how to relate well with others. They establish and maintain relations with others (Hamilton &Redmund, 2010).

Furthermore, 69.6% of the respondents agreed with the statement that children with learning difficulties missed school as they always developed low-self esteem and incompetence in class, 25.0% respondents disagreed with the statement while 5.4% respondents were undecided. This implies that learning difficulties have a central place as a factor leading to absenteeism. This is an aspect agreed to in literature. Shonkoff& Phillips, (2006) note low self-esteem particularly create a situation that often makes children hate schools and participate in missing class.

Teachers' characteristics that influence class attendance

The third objective sought to establish the teachers' characteristics that affected class attendance. To achieve this objective, the participants were asked to indicate their agreement/disagreement on a three-point likert scale questions in the questionnaire. Their responses were scored and the result are presented in Table 4.6

Table 6. Teachers' characteristics that affect class attendance

| Statements | Agree | | Neutral | | Disagree | | Total | |
|--------------------------------------|-------|-------|---------|-------|----------|-------|-------|------|
| | F | % | F | % | F | % | F | % |
| Teacher qualification and training | 62 | 55.4% | 12 | 10.7% | 38 | 33.9% | 112 | 100% |
| Teachers-pupil interaction | 89 | 79.5% | 6 | 5.4% | 17 | 15.2% | 112 | 100% |
| Use of appropriate teaching methods. | 59 | 52.7% | 13 | 11.6% | 40 | 35.7% | 112 | 100% |
| Teacher motivation | 91 | 81.2% | 3 | 2.7% | 18 | 16.1% | 112 | 100% |

From Table 6 it is clear that a majority of the respondents at 55.4% agreed that teacher qualification and training were characteristic that affected class attendance, 33.9% respondents disagreed with the statement while 10.7% respondents were neutral. This implies that the level of teacher training and qualifications improved or degraded class attendance. When the children join early childhood education centres, it is observed that there is important association between the nature of teachers' professionalism and quality and the pupil quality of learning. Teachers should be motivated so as to perform their duties whole heartedly (Mwai, 2003). Further, research on child care quality show that the quality of a child's performance is as a result of a teacher who can either be a crucial asset or a major barrier on the foundation that they instil in young children as they start off their formal childhood education experience (Espinoza, 2010).

Further, 79.5% respondents agreed with the statement that teacher-pupil interaction was a factor that affected class attendance, 15.2% respondents disagreed while 5.4% respondents were neutral. This is a testament of a need for effective and positive teacher-pupil interaction as it seems to affect class attendance. Hanushek, (2005) in agreeing with this finding argue that one of the main teachers characteristics that hinder effective class attendance is a negative teacher-pupil interaction characterized by lack of professionalism, creativity, motivation and quality on the part of the teachers.

Similarly, 52.7% respondents agreed with the statement that use of appropriate teaching methods was a factor that affected class attendance, 35.7% respondents disagreed with the statement while 11.6% respondents were undecided. This implies that teaching methods were significant pointer to class attendance. In a research, Rice (2008) found categories of teacher attributes that contribute to teacher quality and consequently affected class attendance. Among the attributes, appropriate teaching methods was found to be paramount to keep pupils glued in class as it offered a pacesetter for consequent efforts by teachers to make classes attractive.

Finally, 81.2% respondents were in agreement with the statement that teacher motivation was a factor that affected class attendance, 16.1% respondents disagreed with the statement while 2.7% respondents were neutral. This implies that teacher motivation had a significant and central role to play in ensuring class attendance by pupils in ECDE. This is supported by UNICEF (2010) report that In Kenya teachers' attitude and behaviour which are associated with teachers' characteristics affect learning of a child which is also the crucial for their job satisfaction.

Parental involvements that affect class attendance

The fourth objective sought to establish parental involvement that affects class attendance. The result are presented in Table 7

Table 7. Parental involvements that affect class attendance

| Statements | Agree | | Neutral | | Disagree | | Total | |
|--|-------|------|---------|-----|----------|------|-------|-----|
| | F | % | F | % | F | % | F | % |
| Parents in ECD centres don't actively participate in provision of facilities, equipment and materials | 68 | 60.7 | 10 | 8.9 | 34 | 30.4 | 112 | 100 |
| Parents don't actively participate in classroom events like PTA meeting and other social and service events in ECDE | 61 | 54.5 | 6 | 5.4 | 45 | 40.2 | 112 | 100 |
| There is no direct and regular contact with teachers by parents | 72 | 64.3 | 11 | 9.8 | 29 | 25.9 | 112 | 100 |
| Parents don't meet children School needs for example School uniform, writing materials and paying School fees promptly | 79 | 70.5 | 8 | 7.1 | 25 | 22.3 | 112 | 100 |
| Parents don't actively promote learning in home thus affecting class attendance | 70 | 62.5 | 10 | 8.9 | 32 | 28.6 | 112 | 100 |

From Table 7 it is clear that majority at 60.7% agreed that parents in ECD centres did not actively participate in provision of facilities, equipment and materials which affected class attendance. Only 30.4% respondents disagreed while 8.9% respondents were undecided. This implies that parents' seemingly inability to provide needful materials to their children hindered class attendance. It has been noted in literature; parents are the first

teachers in their children's life and always remain the most important role models in their universe. (Farguhar, 2003). They prepare them for the transition from informal to formal education especially when they participate in their early childhood education programs by providing necessary materials and when such is then not provided, class attendance gets hampered.

Similarly, 54.5% respondents agreed with the statement that parents did not actively participate in classroom events like PTA meeting and other social and service events in ECDE, 40.2% respondents disagreed while 5.4% were neutral. This implies that parent involvement as far as them keeping up with meetings in school was a factor that affected class attendance. Carlisle, Stanley & Kemple, (2005) suggest that parental involvement in school activities should include parents participating in classroom, social events, make sure he/she attends PTA meeting and board meetings. They further argued that parent involvement is essential contributor to both psychological and emotional development of a child.

Further, 64.3% respondents agreed with the statement that there was no direct and regular contact with teachers by parents, 25.9% respondents disagreed while 9.8% were neutral. This gives an indication that the contact with teachers by parents was an aspect appreciated as part of the driver of class attendance. To ensure children get adequate care parents and teachers need to collaborate, thus enhancing child development (NACECE, 2009). Parent role involves helping teachers to prepare curriculum that has social changes and provides for child development (Berger, 2008).

On whether parents did not meet children School needs for example School uniform, writing materials and paying School fees promptly, 70.5% respondents agreed with the statement, 22.3% disagreed, and 7.1% were neutral. This implies that there was a feeling among teachers that class attendance was hampered because parents did not meet their basic responsibilities to ensure children are kept in school. Sylvia, Malhuish, Sammons & Taggart, (2004) noted that what parents do is more important than who they are and when they don't meet their responsibilities, class attendance inevitably dips.

Similarly, 62.5% respondents agreed with the statement that parents did not actively promote learning in home thus affecting class attendance, 28.6% respondents disagreed while 8.9% respondents were undecided. This implies that parents extra help at home was also central to promoting class attendance. Siddigi, Irwin & Hertzman (2007) point out the family environment as a factor in promoting education quality, access and attendance. They argue that a parent's extra help through help with homework promotes love for school which then lead to high class attendance.

Analysis of responses from the Interview Schedule

The head teachers from their interviews noted that there were no enough instructional materials which then affected class attendance, basically agreeing with the teachers; they further noted that the furniture found in the ECDE classroom were inadequate and not of great quality, there were no enough classrooms and pit latrines there were no enough play materials which then affected class attendance. Finally, the physical space was not rich hence class attendance was hindered.

Based on the second objective, the head teachers from their interviews said that poor health state interfered with school attendance of children. They further noted that hunger made children often less alert in the learning process. Moreover, malnutrition was common and often led to infection common illness among children leading to absenteeism. Finally, the head teachers noted that children with learning difficulties missed school as they always developed low-self esteem and incompetence in class.

Based on the third objective, the head teachers asserted that teacher qualification and training was one teacher characteristic that affected class attendance. Teacher-pupil interaction was a factor that affected class attendance and further, use of appropriate teaching methods was a factor that affected class attendance. Finally, teacher motivation was a factor that affected class attendance.

Based on the fourth objective, the head teachers said that parents in ECD centres did not actively participate in provision of facilities, equipment and materials which affected class attendance. They further did not actively participate in classroom events like PTA meeting and other social and service events in ECDE. Parents did not

also meet children School needs for example School uniform, writing materials and paying School fees promptly. Finally, they did not actively promote learning in home thus affecting class attendance.

Correlation analysis

As part of the analysis, Pearson's Correlation Analysis was done on the Independent Variables and the dependent variables. Summative scales were used to the correlation. The results is as seen on Table 8

Table 8. Correlations analysis

| | | Class Attendance | Teacher Character | Physical Resources | Parent Involvement | Learner Character |
|--------------------|---------------------|------------------|-------------------|--------------------|--------------------|-------------------|
| Class Attendance | Pearson Correlation | 1 | | | | |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | | | | | |
| | N | 112 | | | | |
| Teacher Character | Pearson Correlation | .635** | 1 | | | |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | .000 | | | | |
| | N | 112 | 112 | | | |
| Physical Resources | Pearson Correlation | .615** | .431** | 1 | | |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | .000 | .000 | | | |
| | N | 112 | 112 | 112 | | |
| Parent Involvement | Pearson Correlation | .558** | .400** | .157** | 1 | |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | .000 | .000 | .002 | | |
| | N | 112 | 112 | 112 | 112 | |
| Learner Character | Pearson Correlation | .701** | .258** | .128 | .527** | 1 |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | .000 | .005 | .000 | .000 | |
| | N | 112 | 112 | 112 | 112 | 112 |

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

Pearson correlation analysis was conducted to examine the relationship between the variables. Study finding indicate that learner characteristic have the highest significant and positive relationship with class attendance ($r=0.701$, $p<0.01$), teacher characteristic had positive and significant correlation with class attendance ($r=0.635$ $p<0.01$). Similarly, physical resources had positive and significant relationship with class attendance ($r=0.615$ $p<0.01$), while parental involvement had the least positive and correlation with class attendance ($r=0.558$ $p<0.01$).

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusions

Based on the objectives and findings of the study, the following are the conclusions:

- Inadequate physical resources in the ECDE schools. These included: instructional materials, furniture, classrooms and pit latrines, play materials and finally, the physical space. It can therefore be shown that lack of sufficient physical resources influenced negatively class attendance in ECDE schools in Nandi East District.
- The learner characteristics that affected class attendance were: poor health state, hunger, malnutrition, poor social and emotional competence, and learning difficulties. It can therefore be shown that some learner characteristics influence negatively pupils' class attendance in ECDE schools in Nandi East District.
- On the teacher characteristics it was found out that teacher qualification and training, teacher-pupil interaction, use of appropriate teaching methods and teacher motivation influenced pupils' class attendance in ECDE centres in Nandi East District. This shows that there are some teacher characteristics which could negatively influence pupils' class attendance.
- Further, it was noted that parents in ECD centres did not actively participate in provision of facilities, equipment and materials, participate in classroom events like PTA meeting and other social and service events in ECDE and had no direct and regular contact with teachers influenced negatively pupils' class attendance since they were not involved in their children's schooling. It emerged that lack of parental involvement affected class attendance in ECDE schools in Nandi East District.

Recommendations of the Study

Based on the objectives and conclusions this study recommends the following:

- Public ECDE management should proactively engage in resource mobilization to ensure that their schools are well equipped with materials like play materials, textbooks among others for effective teaching that would improve class attendance.
- The head teachers together with the ECDE teachers should organize for regular school meetings to discuss ways and means of collecting the resource materials to improve their centres.
- There is need for public ECDE management to provide meals at the schools. The management should further initiate promotional, counselling and motivational sessions to their pupils to help them develop better emotional and social status that would be helpful to ensure class attendance is improved.
- Teachers should try as much as possible to vary and enrich their teaching methods to cater for all children, generate interest and increase their continuity in school. The schools, classrooms and teachers should be child-friendly. A teacher should cater for individual needs as children are different in terms of their background, ages and experiences.

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