

## **Influence Of Teachers Perceptions On Play-Based Activities In Pre-School Curriculum Implementation In Homabay County**

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**ABSTRACT:** Play in Early Childhood Education is paramount in all aspects of growth and development in young children. Play based learning has both developmental and educational benefits. Many children exhibit increased learning difficulties, inability to solve simple problems associated with socialization and control of emotions, many cases of truancy, and aggressive behavior, compounded with total lack of interest towards learning and as a result the study sought to investigate factors influencing teachers perceptions on play-based activities in Pre-school Curriculum Implementation in Homabay County. The study employed concurrent triangulation research design. The study targeted 1257 Pre-school teachers, 908 key informants (lead teachers) and 8 Sub-county directors. The sample size for both pre-school teachers and lead teachers was 297 and 27 respectively. Both Proportionate sampling and Systematic Simple random technique were used to get the actual sample. Purposive sampling technique was used to select the lead teachers and Sub-county directors. Data collection tools were questionnaire, interview schedule, Focus Group Discussion and observation checklist. Data was analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics using Statistical Package for Social Science version 24. The study established varied level of perceptions among the pre-school teachers, some showing fairly strong positive perception and others revealing weak positive perception towards play-based activities in the implementation of preschool curriculum. It was established that many of the pre-school teachers held perception that play-based activities are important because it enable children to develop social, emotional, physical and motor skills necessary in their life.

**KEY WORDS:** Teachers, Perceptions, Play-based, Pre-school, curriculum, implementation

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### **I. INTRODUCTION**

Early childhood educators have long believed that play based activities makes important contributions to children's development and therefore must have a key role in pre-school curriculum. These educationists have also known that play is a rich, varied, and complex process that requires ample time, materials, and resources. However, these teachers face mounting pressure from parents and administrators to provide structured, formal instructions as a result, the amount of time allocated to play has been severely reduced in many early childhood programs (Bodrova & Leong, 2007). Insufficient time for play affects children's growth and development.

Despite the numerous benefits derived from play-based activities for children, time for play has been markedly reduced for some children (Shankoff & Philipps, 2000). This has even affected pre-school children, who have had free play reduced in their schedules to make room for more academics. In the present state, many schools are giving children a less free time and very fewer physical outlets at school. Many schools have reduced time committed to recess, creative arts, and even physical education in an effort to focus on reading and arithmetic. This trend may have implications on children's ability to store new information, because children's cognitive capacity is enhanced by a clear-cut and significant change in activity. (Burdette & Whitaker, 2005).

Zins (2004) states that dialogue between peers, teachers and learners literally becomes a means for helping children scaffold hence develop new concepts and think to higher level concepts. As a result of these dialogues, the concepts learnt by the child through the collaborative process are used to solve problems on their own. This can be properly enhanced during play-based activities. Studies carried by Must (2008) Ashiabi (2007) and Bergen (2004) indicates that deprivation of play-based activities has risk factors on the child which include fussy temperament, slow or delayed developmental milestones and serious health issues. Deprivation of play has short and long term social and emotional effects whereby, morality is eroded, people become insensitive of

other people's feelings, less creative, low self-esteem and become less imaginative and overly emotional Bergen (2004).

In play, the major role of the teacher is to ensure that enough time is allocated and playing materials are provided to all children (Elis, 2000). There has to be enough space for all children to play freely and the teacher should never force any child to an activity if they do not wish to. Instead, he or she should provide simulative environment where children can have genuine play choices and maintain play to an acceptable standards.

According to Schwartman (2008) children play what they know and build on from what is known to unknown. If what they know is stereotyped and biased, it would be reflected in their play. In Pre-school, adults are referred to as teachers. They have a very important role in children play activities. They need to be aware of the value of all activities in the children's aspect of development. Therefore, they need to plan and prepare for the play activities thoroughly. Schwartman (2008) maintains that the teacher should ensure safety of materials such that they do not harm the children as they play. He should also communicate and collaborate with parents concerning children's play. The teacher should lay a guideline which instructs the children of how to play. By doing this, children at times imitate their teacher's words and actions which help them develop their social and emotional skills.

Njoki (2007) asserts that the major role of the teacher during play is to ensure that enough materials for play are provided for the entire group, to ensure that there is enough space for the children and that they have enough time schedule for the play activity. Teacher interventions during play take on many possibilities from assisting with problem solving, questioning, redirecting undesired behaviors, and enticing children into play themes. Curriculum content for young children is play while the teacher's role is to introduce play themes, provide materials and help children expand on their ideas. By helping children when planning roles, encouraging children to talk to peers, posing open-ended questions, and becoming involved in play, the teacher extends and enhances learning (McAfee & Leong, 2010). The teacher also might provide scaffolding to support children's learning and development by asking, "Why does the baby need to see the doctor?" or "How do you think the doctor can help the baby?" This not only provides the child with an opportunity to use expressive language but also provides an opportunity for the child to think and formulate an answer (Bodrova & Leong, 2007).

Teachers consider play as a waste of time and too much emphasis is put on theoretical academic work at the expense of physical education and other play activities (Onguko, 2000). However, deprivation of play has been known to affect child growth and development (Pellegrins 2006). Henderson (2002) also reveals that most pre-schools facilitate teaching without or with very little time for children to play. They lack adequate playing materials for children. This therefore underlines the efforts to rear a child holistically. In addition, children who do not participate in play lack pro-social skills self - confidence and are easily irritable (Morita 2004)

## **II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

Curriculum goals are broad and general statements helpful in the development of programs of instruction or for general goals toward which several years of education might be aimed, such as elementary, middle, and high school courses of study (Pinar, 2012). In it are instructional objectives are precise statements that indicate what students will be able to do as a consequence of instruction (Gronlund, 2004). According to Bloom's Taxonomy, after every learning process, a learner should have acquired new knowledge (cognitive, the head), skill (psychomotor, the hand) and attitude (affective, the heart), which are referred to as holistic education (Clark, 2015). Therefore a teacher training programme should have a curriculum that embraces these aspects.

A research was carried out in Turkey by Ulum (2016) on Bloom's taxonomy in relation to the cognitive domain. The researcher found out that teachers can use the questioning technique to develop skills in higher order thinking in students. Higher order questions were found to stimulate thinking and the development of other cognitive abilities like decision making and problem solving. The cognitive domain is associated with skills such as analysis, synthesis and evaluation which are said to be more useful and transferable for everyday life. The research also found out that generally, in the process of teaching, there is an insufficiency of higher order questioning which hinders acquisition of the much needed skills of problem solving and critical thinking which are essential to life.

A study by Sandberg and Samuelsson (2003) in Sweden on pre-school teachers play experiences then and now, was to describe identify investigate different ways that pre-school teachers view play. The sample size of the study was 20 pre-school teachers, the teachers were interviewed and the data was analyzed qualitatively. The findings of the study were that, Pre-school teachers know that play is important, but not all understand the pedagogy behind play. The interviewers explored teachers' memories of play in their childhood, perceptions of children's play today compared to their own childhood experiences, and their approach to play in their classrooms. Some teachers believed that ideal play was equated to their own play from childhood.

Others believed that children's play today is no different from the kind of play they experienced in childhood and that play is expressive and though it might look different in different periods of time, ultimately it

is the same. Sandberg and Samuelsson (2003) suggested a need for an attitude change and that teachers needed to know that play has pedagogical value. Children want to play, and they need to play, and teachers need to understand the importance of play in pre-school. The current study used FGDs in addition to questionnaires, interviews and observation checklist to determine teacher perceptions on play based activities used in pre-school curriculum implementation

A study by Edern (2010) in the Middle East investigated the challenges pre-school teachers face in the curriculum implementation and whether these challenges differ in relation to teachers' level of education, college they graduated from, the type of school they are working in teaching experience and level of in-service training. The study collected quantitative data by use of questionnaire from 223 pre-school teachers teaching in public and private schools and qualitative data was gathered through interviews with a group of respondents from 223 teachers. The findings were that the most frequently reported issues by the respondents were problems related to evaluation and physical facilities followed by the ones related to teachers planning and attitude. The result showed that the challenges related to physical facilities experienced by pre-school teachers working in kindergartens were significantly different compared to teachers working in private pre-schools. This study focused on pre-school teachers in public schools, will collect data from pre-school teachers as well as sub county directors and will conduct focus group discussion to gather more information.

Lynch (2015) in America, carried a study on the perspective of kindergarten teachers on play in the classroom. The study qualitatively explored a sample of American kindergarten teachers' discussions about play in kindergarten. It was facilitated through a netnographic analysis of kindergarten teachers' discussions on seven teacher message boards. The findings showed that some kindergarten teachers value play-based instruction and find it developmentally appropriate. However, although they find play valuable, these teachers are under pressure of state standards and the stress of meeting all the teaching requirements. Kindergarten has become more academically rigorous and teachers feel pressure to prepare children for standardized tests (Bowdon, 2015). Some kindergarten teachers argue that students are not academically ready for kindergarten because of play-based pre-schools.

They contend that with too much play, there is not a focus on academics and therefore students are behind on kindergarten curriculum standards (Lynch, 2015). The public has critiqued kindergarten classrooms because of the academic pressures put on the students (Bowdon, 2015). As a result, play has diminished in the kindergarten classroom. Instead of school districts buying art supplies, dramatic play materials, or sand and water tables, they are buying textbooks and workbooks (Bowdon, 2015). Because academics has a priority over play in the kindergarten setting, the pre-school setting is experiencing the trickle down where many teachers and administrators want students to be more academically prepared. The current study was not only focused on pre-school teachers to determine teacher perceptions on play based activities but also included in the study lead teachers and sub county directors as key informants.

A study carried out in Southwest United States of America by Saracho and Olivia (2001) on the role and perception of teachers in promoting literacy during periods of play for Spanish speaking children. The study had a population of 40 teachers. Data were collected through systematic videotaped observations during the children's play periods. Inductive content analysis was the method used to analyze the data The finding of the study were; teachers are expected to provide teaching and learning material during learning/play process. The study had an inadequate study population of 40 teachers as compared to this study which has a larger study population. This study was also meant to find out the role of teachers in preparation for play activities in ECDE centers and it was not specific to one subject area but on the curriculum implementation process.

Saide (2009) carried out a study in Britain on teachers' roles in children's literacy – related play found out that; teachers should act as a role model and guide in the process of teaching and learning through literacy-related play for effective curriculum implementation in pre-schools. Even though the study employed descriptive survey design as the proposed study, it involved 60 teachers and 120 pre-school children which was a smaller sample size as compared to the sample size of this study that will involve Pre-school teachers lead teachers and sub county directors. It examined the perception and attitudes of teachers in integration of play activities, in pre-school curriculum in Homa Bay County, Kenya which is a different area of a study from Britain.

A study carried out in Europe, Britain by Sarah (2013) on teachers' roles in promoting literacy in the context of play, assessed the role of kindergarten teachers in order to promote literacy during children's play. The study revealed that; teachers act as; discussion leaders, storytellers, examiners and decision makers. While the study used observation only as a method of data collection, the current study used different methods of data collection that included; questionnaire, interviews, observation checklist and FGDs. This study also found out the perception and attitudes of teachers in integration of play activities in the entire pre-school curriculum implementation other than looking at use of play in a specific aspect of curriculum like literacy only.

A study conducted in the Northern Ireland by Sheehy (2011) on the effects of formal curriculum and testing in Early Childhood Education used a survey design to conduct the research. Questionnaires and

interview guides were used as data collection instruments in the study. Both descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyze the data. The study found out that teachers can only achieve their designed goals and objectives only when all the areas of development are integrated in the methodologies that are interactive, practical and enjoyable. The current study is similar to the reviewed study in that the study used questionnaires and interview guides as the key instruments for data collection. The present study was different to the reviewed study in that it investigated teacher perceptions on play-based activities in pre-school. The reviewed study also revealed that there must be a school policy that supports the implementation of the curriculum.

According to Gronland (2013) who did his study in Norway studied; how to write and to use instructional play based materials on pre-school learners to determine their performance. This study was quantitative, a small survey, related on subjective evaluations of early childhood teachers in a questionnaire. Self-evaluations were used in the study to achieve an overview based on a considerable number of Norwegian early childhood teachers, about the most frequently used subject areas for everyday activities with children. The early childhood teachers were asked about the subject-relations of their own daily activities with the children, of their kindergarten's focuses, and of their own interests related to science, technology, environmental issues and sustainability. The data were collected by the use of a semi-structured questionnaire with open and closed questions, and presented by use of SPSS. A questionnaire is a common tool to investigate obtainability and frequency, and it is suitable to investigate interests. The questionnaire were sent by e-mail to 142 randomly selected kindergartens in Norway – both regular kindergartens and nature kindergartens – after a personal request by telephone. The addressees are members of the kindergarten staff whose role is that of a pedagogical educator for groups of children, called early childhood teachers in this study. The study found out that use of play based materials helps the teacher to plan what he/she is about to teach and how he/she is to teach in class. It also helps the teacher to select materials, methods and type of assessment he/she should give to his/her learners, it also help the teacher to evaluate him or herself on what he/she has taught. The aim of the study was to examine the implementation of the curriculum as the education policy dictates. It was also to improve the use of play based materials in relation to the selected instructional materials while the present study will focus on the implementation of ECDE curriculum, availability and use of instructional materials. The current research focused on the both the learner and teacher's own evaluation contrary to the reviewed study that was learner-based evaluation only.

According to Gwimbi (2006) Zimbabwe, study on the attitude towards language and frequency of language activities as in the classroom of teachers who work in private school and those who work in public schools. The study adopted cross-sectional descriptive survey design which was formed from curriculum implementation theory by Gross 1971. The study used questionnaire and interview schedules. It targeted a population of 408 teachers, 306 ECDE teachers in Public Pre- Schools and 102 head teachers. Saturated sampling was used in sampling 102 ECDE lead teachers, study used semi-structured questionnaire to collect data from the lead teachers who were key informants. Stratified sampling was used in sampling schools as they are zoned; simple random sampling was used in selection of 33 pre-schools in their respective zones. The 33 head teachers were the informants. The study used interview schedules for both the head teachers and 33 ECDE teachers. The result indicated that pre-school teachers who work in private holds more positive attitude towards teaching than their counterparts who work in public pre-schools and this is due to motivation in all aspects. It also revealed that teachers in private schools are closely supervised and therefore provide numerous language activities compared to public pre-school teachers and this enhanced language acquisition to the learners. The current study focused on the attitude of the pre-school teachers in public pre-school and did not compare their attitude with the attitude of teachers in private schools.

A study by Milimu (2008) in Kakamega municipality Kenya, on attitudes of ECDE teachers towards science curriculum had a population of 238 teachers as the only respondents in the study. The finds were that early childhood education is relevant to children as it lays the foundation for adulthood as this is the period when a child undergoes fast growth changes in mental, physical, social, emotional and spiritual development. That science plays a vital role in human development and survival. In This study sample seems inadequate because teachers being the only respondents used in the study could not give in-depth and accurate information as compared to the current study which incorporated pre-school teachers as main respondents while lead teachers and sub county directors were key informants. Milimu's (2008) study also narrowed down to implementation of science curriculum in ECDE centre's only while this study focused on the aspects of play based activities and its influence on the implementation of entire ECDE curriculum and not specific subject.

A study by Githinji's (2008) carried out in Kiambu District Kenya points out that; child's play activities tend to enable children to develop social, emotional, physical and motor skills needed throughout one's life.. The study established that; pre-school teachers and managers ranked lecture method of teaching fast and play as third in relevance, in contributing to the learning process at pre-school level. It was evident that; education level, pre-school training and professional qualification of teachers played a significant role in forming or shaping pre-school staff perception of the impact early childhood play activities on the development

of social, emotional, cognitive and motor physical development. The study had a small inadequate sample of 150 pre-schools teachers and managers which might have not given accurate information compared to the current study that had a larger sample expected to give rise to more accurate information

A study by Murundu et.al... (2014) carried out in Kenya to establish the role of teachers in integration of play in Early Childhood Development and Education (ECDE) curriculum. The study was based on Descriptive survey design. It involved; 430 teachers drawn from 215 pre-schools (33% of the study population) and 1 District Program Officer, selected using Simple random sampling and saturated sampling techniques respectively. Data was collected by a questionnaire, an interview schedule and a lesson observation schedule. The study found out that: Most teachers do not fulfill some of the roles specified to them in integration of play in ECDE curriculum. This inhibits the role of teachers in integration of play in ECDE curriculum. The study recommended that: Regular in-service training should be given to teachers to enable them learn their role and how to integrate play in ECDE curriculum. The proposed study used FGDs alongside interviews, questionnaires and observation checklist to draw insights into the teacher perception and attitudes in pre-school curriculum implementation.

Ogott et al (2011) carried out another study meant to find out teacher's attitudes towards selection, development and use of language material with regards to target task, human, administrative and physical factors. The study was based on descriptive survey design as the current study, though it only employed attitude test questionnaires only as a method of data collection which may seem inadequate for accuracy of the data collected, while the current study will employ interviews, lesson observation schedule and questionnaires which are expected to yield more accurate data. The study found out that most teachers had a positive attitude towards target task human factors, physical factors and administrative factors with regard to language material selection, development and use. This study on the other hand was to find out the role of a teacher in preparation for play activities in ECDE centers.

### **III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The study used mixed method research approach. This approach draws the strength of both quantitative and qualitative approaches. According to Oxman et al (2009) mixed methods approach can be used in exploring behavioral process that cannot be captured by using either quantitative or qualitative methods in isolation. Use of both quantitative and qualitative provides rich answers to the research questions. The approach enabled the study to gather adequate information that provided a better understanding of a research problem and answering the entire research questions other than using qualitative or quantitative research approach alone (Creswell and Plano Clark 2011). It increases the overall strength of a study by enhancing the validity and trustworthiness of data collected (Denscombe 2010). Thereason behindmixedmethodis thatboth approachesmaybeinsufficientbythemselvesbutinthisstudy,eitherfilledinthegapsoftheothertoprovide differentevidencethatcouldbecorroborated(Mugendaand Mugenda, 2003).

For this study, the target population comprised of 1252 pre-school teachers who were the main respondents, 906 lead teachers and 8 Sub- County directors who were the key informants in the study. The number of public ECDE Centers in Homabay County is 906 (MEO, Homabay County 2016). The research adopted, proportionate sampling systematic random and purposive sampling techniques due to the nature of the target population in order to obtain the sample size, various sampling procedures were used as explained below. The study used questionnaires, interviews, observation and focus grouped discussions in an attempt to provide answers to the research questions. Data was collected by use of the questionnaires and interview teachers' lesson observation schedule in order to get the desired information. For effective administration, the questionnaires, interview schedule and lesson observation schedule was administered to various respondents by the researcher and research assistant. Data collected from administrations of the questionnaire was analyzed quantitatively while data from the interviews, Focus group discussions observation, were analyzed qualitative.

### **IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS**

This study was to investigate influence of teachers' perceptions on play-based activities in pre-school curriculum implementation in Homabay County. It was addressed by exploring the teachers' perceptions on play-based activities in pre-school curriculum implementation, followed by an inferential statistics to establish whether there was any statistical significant influence of teachers' perceptions on play-based activities in pre-school curriculum implementation. In exploring the perception of the preschool teachers, they were presented with ten-itemed-questionnaire on perception towards play-based activities which was based on a five-point-Likert-scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). The preschool teachers' views were summarized in percentage frequencies as shown in the tables below

#### **Questionnaire Return Rate**

The table below shows the summary of return rate of questionnaires from the respondents, reveals that the

questionnaires were adequate for the study.

**Questionnaire Return Rate**

Respondents	Questionnaires administered	Questionnaires returned	Return rate (%)
Pre-school teachers	297	202	68.8

Source: Survey data (2018)

The above table shows that from a total of 297 questionnaires administered to the preschool teachers, 202 of them were received for data analysis, which is equivalent to 68.8% response rate. Morgan (2006) and Onen (2009) propose that a 50% return rate is adequate, 60% is good enough while the return rate of above 70% is very good. Visser, Krosnick, Marquette and Curtin (2000) on their part observed that surveys with response rates of above 50% for survey data collected from homogeneous population is adequate enough to yield accurate measurements. Grounded on these assertions, the current study’s questionnaire return rate of 68.8% is therefore considered good enough. The noted high response rate was attributed to the fact that the questionnaires were personally administered by the researcher to the respondents. The researcher also pre-notified the study participants of the intended and intention of the study, communicated aggressively to track responses and sent reminders to stimulate participation. In addition, the questionnaires were simple, friendly to pre-school teachers whom were assured of confidentiality of the data collected.

**Respondents’ Demographic Information**

The study sought to investigate the demographic characteristics of the respondents. Demographic information was considered necessary for the determination of whether the respondents were representative sample of the target population for generalization of the results of the study. The demographic information investigated include gender and age.

**Gender and Age of the Preschool Teacher Respondents**

The table below shows the gender and age information of the pre-school teachers who took part in the survey.

**Demographic Information of the Respondents**

Bio-data	Count	Percent	Cumulative percentage
<b>Gender</b>			
Male	13	6.4	6.4
Female	189	93.6	100.0
Total	202	100.0	
<b>Age (Years)</b>			
≤ 30	71	35.1	35.1
31-40	97	48.0	83.1
41-50	28	13.9	97.0
≥ 51	6	3.0	100.0
Total	202	100.0	

Source: Survey Data (2018)

It is evident from the above table that a significant majority 189 (93.6%) of the students were males, with female students being only slightly more than a third of the respondents. This may not be surprising because it is generally believed that male teachers inherently are not keen to teach preschool learners. Pre-school education is generally viewed as female teachers’ dominance. However, it is noted that although only 13 (6.4%) of the sampled teachers were males, both gender was represented in the study.

On their ages, it was established from the results of the survey that majority 97 (48.0%) of the respondents were aged between 31 and 40 years. Only 6 (3.0%) of the preschool teacher respondents were aged fifty one years and above, while those under thirty years formed 71 (35.1%) of the entire population of pre-school teachers sampled for the study. These findings imply that most of the pre-school teachers were still young and were able to effectively indulge in play based activities in pre-school curriculum implementation.

**Table: Preschool Teachers’ Perception on Play-Based Activities**

ITEM	1	2	3	4	5	Mean	SD
It is not very easy to include play-based activities during teaching and learning process.	26 (12.9%)	38 (18.8%)	15 (7.4%)	53 (26.2%)	70 (34.7%)	3.51	1.45
Play enhances academic effective curriculum implementation.	1 (0.5%)	1 (0.5%)	15 (7.4%)	50 (24.8%)	135 (66.8%)	4.57	0.69
I have knowledge in planning and organizing play-based activities for learners.	0 (0.0%)	4 (2.0%)	20 (9.9%)	80 (39.6%)	98 (48.5%)	4.35	0.74
The teachers’ role is to guide learner during play-based activities.	0 (0.0%)	9 (4.5%)	15 (7.4%)	54 (26.7%)	124 (61.4%)	4.45	0.81

Lecture method is more effective in learning process than play based teaching.	57 (28.2%)	71 (35.1%)	19 (9.4%)	20 (9.9%)	35 (17.3%)	2.53	1.43
Play-activities waste valuable time for academic work.	73 (36.1%)	63 (31.2%)	23 (11.4%)	11 (5.4%)	32 (15.8%)	2.34	1.42
Academics have more priority over play in pre-school.	50 (24.8%)	41 (20.3%)	32 (15.8%)	25 (12.4%)	54 (26.7%)	2.96	1.54
Teachers are adequately trained on use of play activities in teaching and learning.	4 (2.0%)	12 (5.9%)	17 (8.4%)	69 (34.2%)	100 (49.5%)	4.23	0.97
It is difficult to integrate play-activities in curriculum implementation	40 (19.8%)	51 (25.2%)	31 (15.3%)	38 (18.8%)	42 (20.8%)	2.96	1.44
Child's play activities enable children to develop social, emotional, physical and motor skills need in their life.	1 (0.5%)	2 (1.0%)	15 (7.4%)	31 (15.3%)	153 (75.7%)	4.65	0.70
<b>Mean average perception of teachers on Play-based activities in implementation of preschool curriculum</b>						<b>3.65</b>	<b>0.58</b>

Key: 1-Strongly Disagree, 2-Disagree, 3-Undecided, 4-Agree, 5-Strongly Agree and SD-Standard Deviation

Source: Survey data (2018)

The findings of the study established that the preschool teachers in Homabay County held varied level of perception towards play-based activities in the implementation of preschool curriculum, with some of them showing fairly strong positive perception and others revealing weak positive perception towards play-based activities in the implementation of preschool curriculum.

This was reflected by an average mean perception of 3.65 (SD=0.58), with the item “Child’s play activities enable children to develop social, emotional, physical and motor skills needed in their life.” receiving the highest rating of 4.65 (SD=0.70). A significant majority 184 (91.0%) of the preschool teachers sampled for the survey unanimously agreed that play-based activities is important because it enable children to develop social, emotional, physical and motor skills necessary in their life. A representative qualitative data obtained during the focus group discussions with the pre-school lead teachers also revealed that most of the teachers acknowledge that play based activities play important role in the child’s growth and development

“Learning in the early years should just be play and nothing else. Through the play based activities child learn and achieve a lot in all the areas of growth and development we have seen thins practically and even through our training in the colleges” [focus group discussions, 3]

This finding is also supported by Sandberg and Samuelsson (2003) findings that, Preschool teachers know that play is important, however not all understand the pedagogy behind play.

Likewise, more than two thirds 135 (66.8%) of the preschool teachers strongly agreed that play enhances effective academic curriculum implementation, which reflect a strong positive perception (mean=4.57; standard deviation=0.69) of the teachers towards play-based activities.

On the contrary, more than a fifth 43 (21.2%) of the preschool teachers held a general belief that play-based activities waste valuable time for academic work, indicating a low perception rate of 2.34 (SD=1.42) and close to a third 64 (31.7%) of them believed that it is not very easy to include play-based activities during teaching and learning process. Representative statement from the focus group discussions with one of the preschool lead teachers also reveal there is more pressure on the academic achievement than any other activity that is developmentally appropriate for the learns One of the preschool lead teachers said;

“We are experiencing a lot of pressure from the administration and even parents all that they expect is for the children to be able to read write and do simple mathematics and even speak good English most of the parties involved don’t care about what is the right thing for the learn but the results in the report book” [Focus group discussion, 2]

This finding is echoed by Lynch (2015) which showed that some kindergarten teachers value play-based instruction and find it developmentally appropriate. However, although they find play valuable, these teachers are under pressure of state standards and the stress of meeting all the teaching requirements.

It emerged that a sizeable proportion 128 (63.3%) of preschool teachers were of the belief that lecture method is more effective in learning process than play based teaching. 91 (45.0%) of the preschool teachers who participated in the survey held a perception that it is difficult to integrate play-activities in curriculum implementation. This is echoed by Githinji’s (2008) findings that; pre-school teachers and managers ranked lecture method of teaching fast and play as third in relevance, in contributing to the learning process at preschool level.

However, some 31 (15.3%) of the respondents remained non-committal on the level of difficulty of integration of play-based activities in the preschool curriculum, while 80 (39.6%) of them said they faced no difficulty in its integration preschool curriculum implementation. In fact, majority 178 (88.1%) of the preschool teachers indicated that they had sufficient knowledge in planning and organization of play-based activities for learners, as reflected by a mean response rate of 4.35 (SD=0.74). A representative qualitative data obtained

during the interviews of sub county directors also revealed that most of the teachers experience varied challenges in the field in regards to play based activities hence difficulties in curriculum implementation

“Most of the public pre-school lack a lot of facilities in terms of learning materials and other physical facilities and this makes it difficult for them to incorporate play the way is expected of them and they end up using inappropriate ways of handling the child” [sub county directors 5]

This finding is also echoed by Edern (2010) which showed that the most frequently reported challenges by the teachers were problems related to evaluation and physical facilities followed by the ones related to teachers planning and attitude. The result showed that the challenges related to physical facilities experienced by pre-school teachers working in kindergartens were significantly different compared to teachers working in private pre-schools.

On teachers’ role during play-based activities in the classroom, the results of the survey show that most 124 (61.4%) of the preschool teachers strongly believed that their role was to guide learners during play-based activities. In fact, more than four out of five 169 (83.7%) of the preschool teachers who were surveyed had a general perception that they were adequately trained on use of play-based activities in teaching and learning, therefore its integration into the curriculum implementation ought not to be difficult. Similarly, qualitative information obtained from the interview with the sub county directors, also found that teachers understand their role in the curriculum implementation in regard to play based activities and are knowledgeable on their role as guides. One of the sub county directors said;

“A part from college training the County Government schedules in-service training and seminar for us. The teachers are more than equipped to understand their job descriptions pertaining teaching and learning. However some teachers are just lazy in doing what they are expected to do” [Sub county director 1]

This supports the findings by Saide (2009) on teachers’ roles in children’s literacy related play found out that; teachers should act as a role model and guide in the process of teaching and learning through literacy-related play for effective curriculum implementation in preschools. Moreover, a study carried out by Saracho and Olivia (2001) on the role and perception of teachers in promoting literacy during periods of play for Spanish speaking children teachers are expected to guide and provide teaching and learning material during learning/play process. However, the findings differed from a study by Murundu et.al... (2014) whose finding indicated that, most teachers do not fulfill some of the roles specified to them in integration of play in ECDE curriculum. This inhibits the role of teachers in integration of play in ECDE curriculum.

**Inferential Statistics**

The study used inferential statistics to establish whether there was any statistical significant relationship between the predictor variables (classroom environmental characteristics, teachers’ perceptions on play-based activities, instructional practices, availability and appropriateness of content play-based materials) and dependent variable (curriculum implementation). Further, multiple regression was used to provide information about the relative contribution of each of the independent variables on the dependent variable and to develop a model to describe the optimal level of pre-school curriculum implementation in view of play-based activities

A bivariate Pearson’s Product-Moment Coefficient of Correlation analysis was conducted to establish whether there was any statistical significant influence of teachers’ perception on play-based activities on pre-school curriculum implementation. The SPSS output in the below table shows the correlation results.

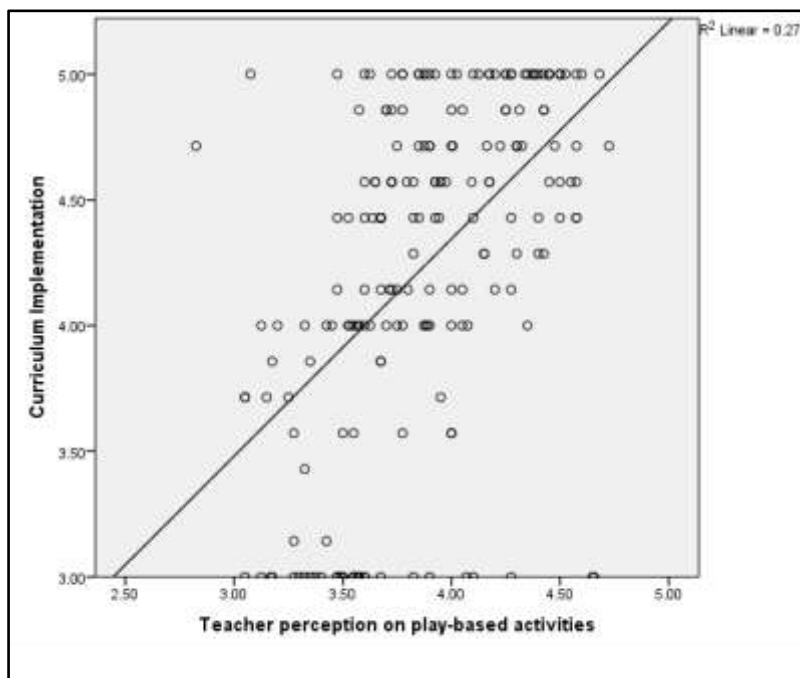
**Correlation between Teachers’ Perception on play-based activities and Pre-School Curriculum Implementation**

Curriculum Implementation	Pearson Correlation	1	.521**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	202	202
Teacher perception on play-based activities	Pearson Correlation	.521**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	202	202

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

The table above indicates that there is a statistically significant (n=202; r =.521; p < 0.05) positive correlation between teachers’ perception on play-based activities and pre-school curriculum implementation. Therefore, given that the p-value was less than .05, the null hypothesis that “There is no statistically significant influence of teachers’ perceptions on play-based activities in pre-school curriculum implementation in Homabay County” was rejected. Hence, it was concluded that there is significant positive correlation between teachers’ perceptions on play-based activities and pre-school curriculum implementation, with high positive teachers’ perception on play-based activities associated with more effective pre-school curriculum implementation and vice versa. To further illustrate this relationship, a scatter plot was generated as shown in the Figure below





**Scatter plot graph:** Teachers’ perception on Play-Based Activities and Pre-school Curriculum Implementation  
 The scatter plot shows that there were signs of positive correlation teachers’ perceptions on play-based activities and pre-school curriculum implementation. The pattern of the dots slopes from lower left to upper right, indicating a positive correlation between the two variables. This was further shown by a line of best fit whose slope reveals a positive relationship between the two variables. In addition, the coordinate points clearly scatter around the line of best fit forming a visible pattern. Given the fact that the scatters tend to concentrate along the identity line indicates that the relationship was significant. However, to estimate the level of influence of teachers’ perception towards play-based activities on pre-school curriculum implementation, a coefficient of determination was computed. This was done using of regression analysis and the results were as shown in the table below

**Model Summary on Regression Analysis of Teachers’ Perception towards Play-Based Activities on Pre-School Curriculum Implementation**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.521 <sup>a</sup>	.271	.268	.58668

a. Predictors: (Constant), Teacher perception on play-based activities  
 b. Dependent Variable: Curriculum Implementation

The model shows that teachers’ perception towards play-based activities accounted for 27.1%, as signified by  $R^2=.271$ , of the variation in pre-school curriculum implementation in Homabay County. This was a plausible amount of effect of a predictor on a dependent variable. However, to determine whether teachers’ perception towards play-based activities was a significant predictor of pre-school curriculum implementation, Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was computed as shown in the table below

**ANOVA –Influence of Teachers’ Perception towards Play-Based Activities on Pre-School Curriculum Implementation**

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	25.629	1	25.629	74.463	.000 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	68.838	200	.344		
	Total	94.468	201			

a. Dependent Variable: Curriculum Implementation  
 b. Predictors: (Constant), Teacher perception on play-based activities

The finding of the study reveals that teachers’ perception towards play-based activities statistically significantly predict pre-school curriculum implementation,  $F(1, 200) = 74.463$ ,  $p < .05$ , revealing that the regression model is a good fit of the data. This means that the information on the teachers’ perception towards play-based activities is useful information in predicting the level pre-school curriculum implementation.

Similarly a study Sheehy (2011) on the effects of formal curriculum and testing in Early Childhood Education revealed that teachers can only achieve their designed goals and objectives only when all the areas of development are integrated in the methodologies that are interactive, practical and enjoyable

## V. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study was to determine the influence of teachers' perceptions towards play-based activities on pre-school curriculum implementation in Homabay County. The findings of the study established that there was varied level of perceptions among the pre-school teachers, with some of them showing fairly strong positive perception and others revealing weak positive perception towards play-based activities in the implementation of preschool curriculum. It was established that many of the pre-school teachers held perception that play-based activities is important because it enable children to develop social, emotional, physical and motor skills necessary in their life. However, although many of the preschool teachers had a general perception that they were adequately trained on use of play-based activities in teaching and learning, some of them felt they were not adequately trained on integration of play in teaching/learning. Equally, it came out that some of the teachers held a general belief that; play-based activities waste valuable time for academic work and that it is not very easy to incorporate it in teaching and learning process. On the relationship between teachers' perception towards play-based activities and curriculum implementation, it was established that there was a statistical significant ( $n=202$ ;  $r =.521$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ) positive correlation between them. Similarly, a response from the sub county directors shows that most of the ECDE teachers are well trained and have the skills required for their practice. Responses from the pre-school lead teachers confirm that teachers view play as a waste of time because of the societal pressure for academic achievement than holistic development of the learners. Teachers' perception towards play-based activities was proved to be a significant predictor [ $F(1, 200) = 74.463$ ,  $p < .05$ ] to pre-school curriculum implementation, accounting for about 27%, as signified by  $R^2=.271$ , of the variation in pre-school curriculum implementation in Homabay County. Similarly, it was established that for each one unit improvement in positive teachers' perception towards play-based activities, there is a corresponding improvement in pre-school curriculum implementation of .205 units

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