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**Daycare Centres' Preparedness in Enhancing Children's Transition to the Next Level of Schooling in Kiambu County, Kenya**

By

<sup>1</sup>Celestine Ndanu Mwaniki, <sup>2</sup>Peter Changilwa Kigwilu, <sup>1</sup>Shem Mwalw'a

<sup>1</sup>The Catholic University of Eastern Africa

<sup>2</sup>United States International University-Africa

Corresponding Author: cmwaniki@cuea.edu

**Abstract**

The study investigated daycare centres' preparedness in enhancing children's transition to formal education in Kiambu County, Kenya. It was underpinned on Frederick Froebel's kindergarten theory and adopted the convergence parallel mixed methods design. The study targeted daycare centres, caregivers, parents and early childhood education officials. A sample size of 282 respondents from 39 daycare centres took part in the study. These comprised 195 parents who were randomly sampled, nine (9) early childhood education officers who were purposively sampled and 78 caregivers sampled through simple random sampling technique. Validity and reliability of the research instruments was tested by piloting the instruments in 10 daycare centres that did not participate in the actual study. Questionnaires, interview guides and checklists were used to collect quantitative and qualitative data concurrently. Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 21 software was used to analyze quantitative data. Qualitative interviews were transcribed, coded, categorised and analyzed thematically. Both qualitative and quantitative data were compared for interpretation and presented using frequency tables, pie charts, bar graphs, narratives and direct quotations. Ethical considerations were adhered to in the entire study from problem identification to report writing. The study revealed that a majority of the daycare centers lacked essential facilities and resources necessary to prepare children for formal education. The study recommended that the government should closely monitor the activities of daycare centers and train daycare centers caregivers to ensure that they provide quality early childhood education and day care services.

**Key words:** Daycare centres, preparedness, transition, formal education, Kiambu, Kenya

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### **Introduction**

Daycare, sometimes called childcare, is the care of a child during the day, usually done by a person outside the child's immediate family to enable the parent(s)/guardians to work. This care can range from a few children in the home of a caregiver to more formally structured, formal settings where they children learn social skills, language and more. Daycare is not babysitting, as the latter is a temporary, occasional care of a child, often just for an evening or day (Gordon, 2013). Families who do not have a babysitter often opt for an alternative care, usually the daycare where their children can be assisted in toileting and how to relate with other children. The purpose of daycare is to enable the parents to be free for other activities, usually work; the needs of the child are also significant.

Britto and Limlingan (2012) in survey about school readiness for early childhood learners in Finland recommended that those handling early learners should establish school readiness goals in five domains of child development and early learning: language and literacy, cognition and general knowledge, approaches towards learning, physical wellbeing and motor development as well as emotional development. They hold that school readiness is important since it allows caregivers to expand and further develop a child's skills in the specific areas of social interaction. Froebel (1926) opines that play is central to the process and there needs to be a sense of purpose for the child in that play together with an understanding that the child must be viewed holistically as a thinking, feeling person. Play can also be used to help the child learn to be able to work alone and with others. In supporting the holistic development of the child, Pramling and Wagner (2012) explain that all aspects of children's personality, knowledge and skills should be focused on and not a narrow view of development within a particular area.

Simon and Rebecca (2017) argue that taking children to daycare centers assists them to grow. Similarly, Mav (2016) asserts that a high quality child care should have broad learning and development of goals for children which go beyond the narrow academic aims like early literacy and numeracy to cultural, emotional artistic, social, emotional and physical goals. Equally, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (November 1989) underscores the basic rights of every child as the right: to survival; to develop to the fullest; to get protection from harmful influences, abuse and exploitation; and to participate fully in family, cultural and social life. As such, every educator should give the best to enable children to develop holistically.

The environment in which children are raised has an important role in their development. Whilst the environment needs to be safe, it must also encourage curiosity, stimulation and challenge. Indoor and outdoor activities widen the possible areas of learning and vary the environment providing interest and variety (Willinsky, 2015). Froebel saw lack of interaction with other children and a range of adults limits the possible range of the child's learning

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situations and may create problems with social interaction later in life. Data on school readiness stress the importance of understanding the interrelationships between the cognitive, affective and the psychomotor and not just the domains themselves. This evidence emphasizes the time-sensitive relationship of the development of these skills to a child's later school achievement. Alvestad, Bergem and Eide (2013) report that daycare staff is expected to support workflows and care processes with language, and structure them as language-stimulating situations. This is possible through customs including songs, finger play and verse, teaching work with picture books, and much more. Another preparation aspect is the promotion of motor development. Extensive opportunities for motor activities are designed to support secure movement and the development of body awareness, self-acceptance and the attentiveness of the child. This includes physical activities, open spaces, programmes such as rhythmic early education, and song and movement games. Children should also have enough time to make motor advances by themselves. All persons taking care of children at this age have to be skilled enough to offer all this opportunity to children in their centres (Gary, 2016).

The Kenya County Early Childhood Education Act, 2018 states that for the enjoyment of the right to early childhood education, the County government is responsible for early childhood education. It is her mandate to respect, protect, promote, monitor, supervise and evaluate the right to early childhood education and guarantee mechanisms for its enforcement. County government is also mandated to support and maintain an enabling environment in which children can attain early childhood education and ensure the development of skills and capacity building necessary for achieving an equitable and effective early childhood education system in the county is achieved. However, these skills are not readily available (Ng'asike, 2016). Such loopholes allow operation of daycare centres by people with no background in early childhood development. Hence the need to assess the preparedness of day care centers in enhancing children's transition to formal education in Kiambu County.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Various studies have shown that daycare centres are great places where children benefit greatly and this holds true for babies and toddlers from 0 months to 3 years of age (Snow, 2014). This is a great place for children to meet other children and interact with others on a day to day basis imparting social skills. This may help them to master socialisation socializing skills. A good quality daycare centre should plan various activities for children. These activities help them learn various educational concepts at a young age. There are many daycare centres that may adopt play and learn concept. From reviewed literature, many daycare centres in Kenya and especially Kiambu County lack what it takes to run a daycare centre in terms of staffing, facilities and resources as well as environments. Many daycare centre conditions in this County expose children to sharing of germs. This means children are more susceptible to contracting various kinds of infections and diseases at many low quality daycare centres as observed by Wright (2015) in his study in daycare centres located Nairobi slums. Kiunga (2016) after visiting daycare centres in Kawangware opined that in these centres children learnt good things but they were also exposed to various bad habits where a child may pick up bad words or habits from other

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children. He termed these centres as 'breeding places for monsters'. A report by Murage for The Star Newspaper in July 2019 had shocking news where police officers in Ruiru were investigating an incident in which a two-year-old girl died in a daycare centre. Such observations from different researchers raise concern that need further investigation to address these issues that affect children's physical, social and emotional wellbeing and Kiambu County society at large.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The study was underpinned on Kindergarten system theory by Frederick Froebel. Froebel postulated this theory in 1926 with its emphasis on play and use of 'gifts' (play materials) and 'occupations' (activities). He considered that the effect of early life extended beyond the educational achievement into health and society. Froebel created kindergartens (children's gardens) as he perceived a child's growth to be like a plant growing and thriving where the right conditions exist. He sought to encourage the creation of educational environments that involved practical work and the direct use of materials. Through engaging with the world, understanding unfolds. Hence the significance of play – it is both a creative activity and through it children become aware of their place in the world. He went on to develop special materials (such as shaped wooden bricks and balls – gifts), a series of recommended activities (occupations) and movement activities, and linking set of theories. His original concern was the teaching of young children through educational games in the family. In the later years of his life, this teaching was linked with a demand for the provision of special centres for the care and development of children outside the home. Froebel emphasized on pedagogy which involves having knowledgeable and appropriately qualified professionals to provide skilled informed observation of the children and provide appropriate guidance and teaching. Key to the process of care taking is that it must reach the imaginative, creative, symbolic, linguistic, mathematical, musical, aesthetic, scientific, physical, social, moral, cultural and spiritual aspects of the child. This clearly shows how wide a range of stimulation is required in a daycare centre.

### **Review of Related Literature**

According to United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, 2016), early childhood care and education (ECCE) is more than preparation for primary school. It aims at the holistic development of a child's social, emotional, cognitive and physical needs in order to build a solid and broad foundation for lifelong learning and wellbeing. ECCE has the possibility to nurture caring, capable and responsible future citizens. In this way ECCE is one of the best investments a country can make to promote human resource development, gender equality and social cohesion, and to reduce the costs for later remedial programmes.

On the one hand, Bennet (2011) explains that early care of children is their bedrock of the future success and that of the society. It is also the bedrock and foundation of all learning. On the other hand, Murunga (2015)'s examination of the policy and planning issues arising out of the devolution process in Kenya opined that there is a close relationship between what takes place during the early years (0-3) in the growth of a child and schooling completion rates. These

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scholars emphasize the need for those taking care of children to ensure that they avail what is required to help the children develop fully before they start their formal education.

Britto (2015), writing for UNICEF about formal education readiness, argued that teachers and caregivers are among the most crucial factors in building effective schools and ensuring school readiness. In this "school readiness and transition manual," a child's acquisition of knowledge and understanding is contingent upon opportunities that adults provide for demonstrating existing skills and building ones that are more complex. Suggestions from UNICEF (2012) further give the following facilities for any childcare-giving centre: size and space, safety, mobile furniture, children's home base, toilets, water for hand washing and drinking, hygienic area for food vendors and kitchen, storage of medicine (First Aid), IT centre and library, laboratory, recreational space and fencing.

Whole Building Design Guide (WBDG) (2017) on daycare centres recommends that child development centers should contain a variety of space types depending on the hours they are used; the age of the children attending; the number of children attending; and the setting for the center. The space types may include, but are not limited to the following: Child-friendly rooms (room with enough ventilation and space); Meeting space for children and adults; Child-friendly and adult restrooms; Outdoor and indoor play areas; Office or meeting space for staff whenever they are not attending to the children; first aid facility; Food service space as well as storage space. A child daycare centre needs to be homelike; a place where children can relax and be themselves. It should have ample natural light in all spaces where children will spend time, especially the rooms; have a sense of arrival and welcome upon entering the center for both children and parents; feel being safe and secure; find different places for different kinds of learning; work and play using different furnishings (WBDG, 2017).

Studies (e.g. Bastos, 2011; Ferns & Friendly, 2015; Tyler & Bennet, 2015; Gary, 2017) have reported that most children who benefit from care settings are those that are placed in environments where the adult-to-child ratios are small, meaning that one caregiver is caring for a smaller group of children. When the adult-to-child ratio is low, caregivers are better stimulating, warm, supportive and responsive. Caregivers also tend to be less restrictive with this small number of children placed under their care. They spend less time managing the children and more time nurturing the children's developmental skills. According to the reviewed literature, very little information is available about the preparedness of daycare centres in ensuring that children join formal schooling when they are ready to learn in developing countries like Kenya.

## **Methodology**

This study adopted mixed methods approach, in particular the convergent parallel design that combined quantitative and qualitative data collection methods. Cross-sectional survey and phenomenology designs were used to collect the two types of data. The study targeted 12 sub Counties in Kiambu County, 300 caregivers, 750 parents/guardians as well as 12 County Early Childhood Education officers. A sample size of 282 participants was arrived at using Krejcie and Morgan (1970) formula. A total of 39 daycare centres sampled out of which, 78 caregivers were sampled by use of convenience sampling, 195 parents were randomly sampled and 9 ECDE

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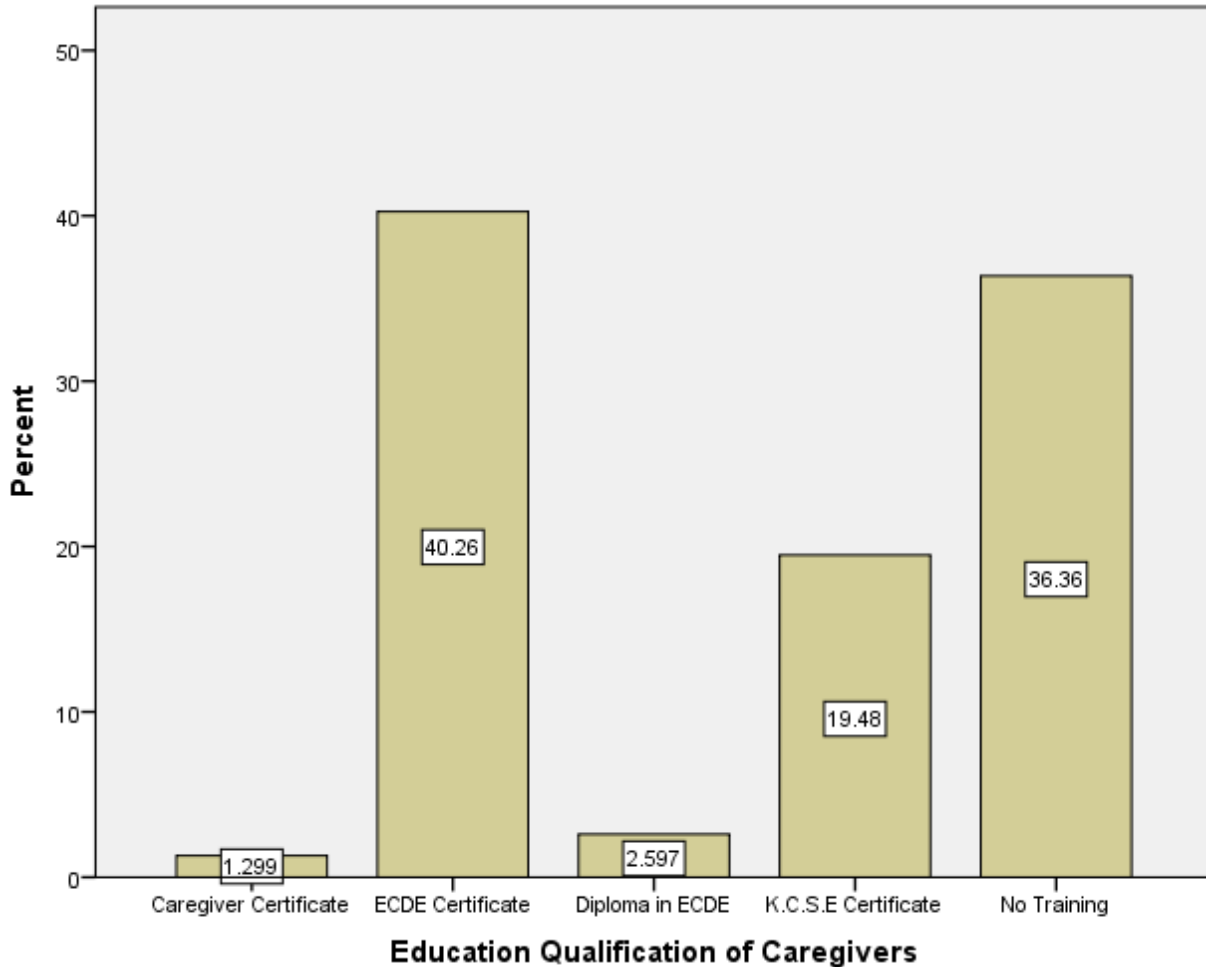
officers were purposively sampled. Data were collected using open and closed-ended questionnaires, checklists and interview guides. Both types of data were collected concurrently. Validity was assured by subjecting the instruments to experts in early childhood development. Reliability of the questionnaire was tested using Cronbach Alpha coefficient. Caregivers' questionnaire had a reliability coefficient of 0.818 while that for parents had an alpha value of 0.715. Cronbach alpha level for the items in the checklist was 0.709. Quantitative data collected were cleaned before being analyzed. The data were then coded by grouping and assigning values to responses from the survey. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software version 21 was used to analyze quantitative data. Qualitative data were coded by identifying broad themes on concepts, behaviours and phrases used, which were interpreted. The findings of quantitative data were reported in form of percentages and frequencies while those from qualitative data were presented in form of narratives and direct quotations.

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## Findings and Discussion

### Qualification and Experience of Caregivers

The study sought to determine the qualification of caregivers in the daycare centers in Kiambu County. The findings are indicated in Figure 1.



**Figure 1: Education Qualification of Caregivers**

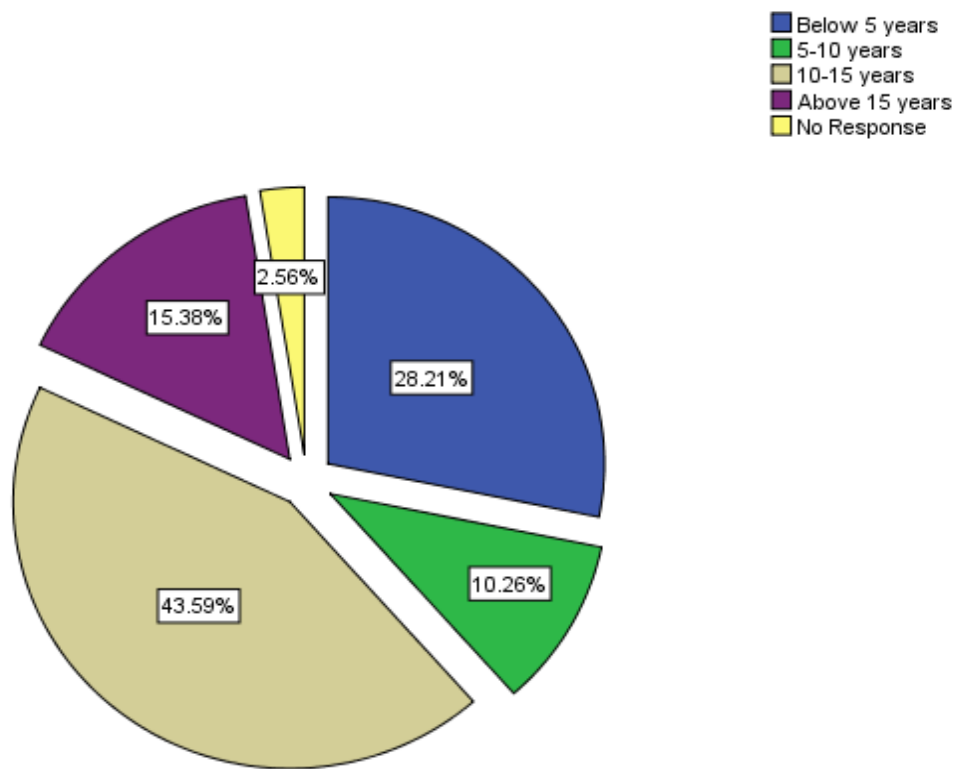
Source: Field Data, 2020

Figure 1 indicates that 15 (19.5%) of caregivers who took part in this study had only the KCSE certificate, two (2.6%) of them had a diploma in early childhood education, a minimal number of caregivers one (1.3%) had a caregiver training with caregiver certificate, Many of these caregivers 31(40.3%) had ECDE training certificates. A good number of them, 28 (36.4) had no training at all related to care giving and one (1.35%) did not respond to this question. These findings might mean that any willing person could start offering this type of service. According

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to reviewed literature, daycare staff need to be as nannies because ECDE training is given to those people who need to take care of children of three years and above but not 0 – 3 years. The implication of the findings sure that Kiambu daycare centres lack they right care staff hence, no or very little assistance is given that can enable this age of children grow holistically (Pramling & Wagner, 2012).

The experience of caregivers in this sector is vital. The more experienced a caregiver is, the better the care this person is expected to offer to the children. The study sought to know the experience the caregivers who participated in this study had on childcare by ticking (✓) the category they fell under. Figure 2 presents these findings.



**Figure 2: Caregiver Experience**

Source: Field data, 2020

Figure 2 shows that 15.38 % (12) of the sampled caregivers for this study had done this job for more than 15 years. This means that daycare services had existed for a long period before this study was conducted. First, the biggest percentage, 43.59% (34) of the caregivers in Kiambu



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County had an experience between 10 – 15 years of taking care of children. 28.21% (22) caregivers had taken care of children for more than 5 years while 10.26% (8) caregivers had an experience between 5 -10 years. Two, 56% (2) caregivers did not respond to this section of the questionnaire. From the study’s point of view, many children in Kiambu County have passed through the hands of child centre caregivers. The fear here is that the experiences these children have undergone through might affect their formal schooling negatively since poor start in learning will result in poor future in most cases (Alvestad, Bergem & Eide, 2013).

### Daycare Center Preparedness

Daycare centres need to satisfactorily meet some criteria before and during operation. Such criteria include the kind of staff, facilities/resources as well as learning opportunities. The study sought to know how parents rated these areas of preparedness. To provide this information, parents indicated the degree of agreement to statements related to these areas. Table 1 presents their responses.

**Table 1: Daycare Preparedness**

*n = 195*

Aspect of the Criteria	Degree of Satisfaction									
	VU		NS		U		S		VS	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
a. Staffing										
1. Qualification	120	61.5	56	28.7	15	7.7	3	1.5	1	0.5
2. Experience	64	32.8	104	53.3	21	10.8	4	2.1	2	1.0
3. Staff-child ratio	16	8.2	27	1.8	66	33.8	82	42.1	4	2.1
b. Facilities										
1. Room space	78	40.0	98	50.3	9	4.6	10	5.1	-	-
2. Ventilation	80	41.0	85	43.6	27	13.8	2	1.0	1	0.5
3. Diapering	63	32.3	88	45.1	41	21.0	3	1.5	-	-
4. Handwashing sinks/basins	41	21.0	73	37.4	74	37.9	6	3.1	1	0.5
5. Toilets/latrines/washrooms	46	23.6	57	29.2	68	34.9	23	11.8	1	0.5
6. Mattresses/sleeping bags	11	5.6	22	11.3	97	49.3	61	31.3	3	1.5
Existing Opportunities to Prepare Children to Formal Education										
1. learning atmosphere	46	2.6	111	56.9	26	13.3	10	5.1	-	-
2. Cleanliness and sanitation	85	43.6	66	33.8	34	17.4	9	4.6	-	-
3. Safety	52	26.7	93	47.7	42	21.5	8	4.1	-	-
4. Children’s happiness	40	20.5	95	48.7	54	27.7	5	2.6	1	0.5
5. Play for better interaction	13	6.7	21	10.8	83	42.6	74	37.9	4	2.1

Source: Field data, 2020

Key: VU- Very Unsatisfactory; NS- Not Satisfactory; U-Uncertain ; S- Satisfactory; VS- Very Satisfactory

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According to Table 1 parents' responses about daycare staff qualification shows that caregivers' qualifications were unsatisfactory as rated by 120 (61.5%) parents, 56 (28.7%) of the parents rated staff qualification as not satisfactory, 15 (7.7%) were not certain about staff qualification while only three (1.5%) and one (0.5%) rated staffing qualification as satisfactory and very satisfactory respectively. These findings are an indication that the kind of preparation the children received was more of formal learning since a bigger number of the caregivers were trained as ECDE teachers as indicated in Figure 1. According to many researchers, daycare children need to be cared for differently from way young children are cared for in nursery and other early learners' care.

On rating staff experience, 64 (32.8%) parents indicated that staff experience was very unsatisfactory, 104 (53.3%) said that these caregivers had no caregiver experience, 21 (10.8%) were uncertain while four (2.1%) and two (1.0%) expressed that caregiver experience was satisfactory and very satisfactory respectively. When responding on staff-child ration, 82 (42.1%) of the parents who took part in this study said that staff-child ratio was satisfactory. sixty-six (33.8%) of them were uncertain on staff-child ratio, 27 (1.8%) said that the caregivers-child ratio was not satisfactory. The least number four (2.1%) indicated that the ratio was very satisfactory. Parents rating of staff experience imply that what took place in the daycare centres left parents doubting the experience of the caregivers. Figure 2 findings contradict those in Table 1 which gives an impression that caregivers had enough experience to care for this age of children. This situation is alarming and calls for the government to evaluate these centres and establish the truth on what takes place. In addition parents need to be enlightened of the need to verify care centres that can provide quality care.

In responding to the room space in the daycare centres, 98 (50.3%) of the parents expressed that they were not satisfied by the room space in the daycare centres. Seventy-eight (40.0%) of sampled parents said that the room was very unsatisfactory. None of the parents indicated that the rooms were very satisfactory. According to these parents, ventilation in these rooms was also wanting. Eighty-five (43.6%) of them expressed that they were not satisfied with ventilation in the care rooms. Eighty (41.0%) said that ventilation was very unsatisfactory while only two (1.0%) were uncertain and one (0.5%) of the parents said that ventilation in the care centres where his/her children were very satisfactory ventilation.

Most of the daycare centres did not have satisfactory diapering rooms in fact, 88 (45.1%) of the parents confirmed that diapering was unsatisfactory, 63 (32%) expressed that this facility was very unsatisfactory and only three (1.5%) said that diapering was satisfactory. Twenty one (3.0%) of the parents were not certain. When rating the daycares in terms of hand-washing basins, 68 (34.9%) of the parents were not certain whether these facilities were satisfactory or not, 57 (29.2%) said that the facilities were not satisfactory while 46 (23.6%) expressed that these facilities were very unsatisfactory. The number of respondents who rated these facilities as satisfactory was 23 (11.8%) and only one parent said that they were very satisfactory. When rating toilets/latrines/washrooms, 68 (34.9%) of the parents said that these facilities were not satisfactory while 46 (23.6%) rated them as very unsatisfactory. The minority of parents 23 (11.8) and 1 (0.5%) rated them as satisfactory and very satisfactory respectively. Mattresses/sleeping

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bags were rated as unsatisfactory by 97 (49.3%) parents, rated as satisfactory by 61 (31.3%), while 22 (11.3%) parents were uncertain.

The other item rated by parents was the learning atmosphere. According to 111 (56.9%) of the parents, the learning atmosphere was unsatisfactory and 46 (23.6%) of the parents rated it as very unsatisfactory. Only 10 (5.1%) parents rated the learning environments as satisfactory. The daycare centres' cleanliness and sanitation was rated as very unsatisfactory by 85 (43.6%) and satisfactory by 66 (33.8%) of the parents who took part in this study. There were only nine (4.6%) parents who rated these two areas as satisfactory however, 34 (17.4%) of the parents were uncertain.

Parents also rated the daycare centres on safety measures where 93 (47.7%) expressed that safety of the daycares was unsatisfactory and 52 (26.7%) rated it as very unsatisfactory. Out of the 195 parents who took part in this study, only eight (4.1%) of them rated safety as satisfactory. Children's happiness was rated as unsatisfactory by 95 (48.7%) parents, very unsatisfactory by 40 (20.5%) parents and satisfactory by five (2.6%) parents. Finally, play for better interaction as a strategy put in place to prepare children for formal education was rated as not satisfactory by 83 (42.6%) of the parents who took part in this study while 74 rated the same as satisfactory. Thirteen (6.7%) rated this strategy as very unsatisfactory. Schochet (2017) suggests that it is crucial to ensure that children are safe in spite of where they live. On the one hand, children should not be under the care of those whose record of care for children is not known. On the other hand children learn through play, hence they need to be engaged more on play activities to enable them transit to formal schools while ready and healthy (Hamm & Kashen, 2017). This is what is expected in daycare centres located in Kiambu County.

Parents, as indicated in Table 1, asserted that daycare learning atmosphere was not satisfactory. 111 (56.9%) of the parents expressed these views. Other 46 (23.6%) rated the learning atmosphere as very unsatisfactory. Only 10 (5.1%) of the 195 parents rated the learning atmospheres as satisfactory and none of the parents rated them as very satisfactory. When rating cleanliness, 85 (43.6%) of the parents said that cleanliness and sanitation was very unsatisfactory in these daycare centres, 66 (33.8%) rated sanitation as not satisfactory and only 9 (4.6%) of the parents said that sanitation was satisfactory. Schochet (2017) highlights the how quality daycare entails where staff ratio, experience and qualification is a determinant of good quality. Other factors cited by this author are; safety, learning opportunities as well as hygiene. Failure to meet these requirements as a childcare facility therefore means poor provision of services to children. Ninety three (47.7%) parents rated daycare safety as not satisfactory and 52 (26.7%) said that safety of children was very unsatisfactory. However, 95 (48.7%) of these parents indicated that children happiness was not satisfactory while 40 (20.5%) of the parents rated children happiness as very unsatisfactory. Many parents were not certain on whether children were allowed to interact freely as they played. This was a view from 83 (42.6%) of the parents sampled for this study. 74 (37.9%) of the parents indicated that children had free interaction play in the centres.

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### **Adequacy of Daycare Facilities**

By use of questionnaires, the study investigated the availability and degree of adequacy of learning rooms, toilet/latrines, hand wash basin, diapering room, fence, swings, playground, small chairs, mattresses, tables, beds, first aid kit, refrigerator and jiko/microwave/stove. The caregivers were required to indicate the degree of adequacy of available facilities in daycare centres of their children. Data collected is as indicated in Table 2

**Table 2: Rating of the Degree of Adequacy of Facilities**

Facility	n = 78									
	VA	%	A	%	I	%	U	%	VI	%
Learning rooms	6	7.7	11	14.1	4	5.1	6	7.7	51	56.9
Toilet/Latrines	3	4	22	28.2	35	44.8	2	2.6	16	20.4
Wash hand basin	4	5.1	17	21.8	46	59.0	5	6.4	6	7.7
Diapering room	4	5.1	10	12.9	44	56.4	3	3.8	17	21.8
A fence	18	23.1	8	10.3	24	30.7	2	2.6	26	33.3
Swings	3	3.8	19	24.4	14	17.9	6	7.7	36	46.2
Playground	2	2.6	28	35.8	29	37.2	1	1.3	18	23.1
Small chairs	1	1.3	49	62.8	18	23.1	4	5.1	6	7.7
Mattresses	2	2.6	45	57.7	6	7.7	2	2.6	23	29.5
Tables	1	1.3	29	37.2	7	8.9	6	7.7	35	44.9
Beds	1	1.3	5	6.4	13	16.7	7	8.9	52	66.7
First aid kit	1	1.3	5	6.4	14	17.9	2	2.6	56	71.8
Refrigerator	1	1.3	9	11.5	9	11.5	0	0	59	75.7
Jiko/microwave/stove	2	2.6	63	80.7	11	14.1	0	0	2	2.6

Key: VA = Very adequate, A = Adequate, I = Inadequate, U = Uncertain, and VI = Very inadequate.

Source: Field data, 2020

Table 2 indicates that learning rooms in the sampled daycares were very inadequate with a frequency of 51 56.9% caregiver response. Only six (7.7%) of the respondents said that they had very adequate learning rooms. However, there were six (7.7%) of the respondent that were not certain on the adequacy of their learning/play rooms. In terms of security, 26 (33.3%) of the daycare centres the majority of participants indicated that fencing of the facility was very in adequate, 24 (30.7%) response showed that fencing was in adequate, eight (23.1%) indicated that their fence was very adequate and eight (23.1 %) also indicated that their fencing was adequate. These results concur with the findings in Table 1 in relation to learning rooms. As shown in Table 1, they were rated as vey inadequate. Having adequate facilities are very necessary for child learning and growth (Britto & Limlingan, 2012).

The daycare centres lacked swings and other play facilities as indicated by 36 (46.2%) respondents for this study. These respondents showed that swings were very in adequate. Three (3.8%) said that they had very adequate swings which was a very small percentage of

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representation. Six (7.7 %) of these respondents were not certain whether what they had was adequate or not. Thelin (2009) emphasizes that outdoor play for young children helps them with their sensory development because when they are playing outdoors and interacting freely with one another they are using all of their physical senses. The findings in Table 1 and Table 2 demonstrate lack of enough opportunities for children's play and interaction.

Most of the daycare centres were in rented buildings with no playground of their own as indicated by the responses in Table 2. According to this table, 29 (37.2%) respondents stated that the playgrounds were inadequate, 28 (35.8%) indicating that they had adequate places for children play and 1 respondent stating that he/she was not certain. Although play is very important in child's physical and social development and growth, the results show that much more should be done by childcare service providers in Kiambu County. Small chairs for children to sit on were not a problem in Kiambu daycare centres. This is evident from caregiver responses in table 4 where 49 (62.8%) indicated that they had adequate chairs for their children to sit on. Six (7.7%) respondents said that they had inadequate small chairs for the children. Mattresses for children to sleep on were adequate at a response rate of 45 (57.7%) while only 23 (29.5%) caregivers indicated that they had very inadequate mattresses in their care centres. This according to the study means that the caregivers engaged children in sitting and sleeping that is why the small chairs were adequate. For such age of children sitting and sleeping only for most part of the day might not be helping the children grow holistically. These findings confirm the findings in Table 1. The daycares lacked necessary facilities to holistically prepare children for transition to formal education.

From the data given, availability of tables that suited this age category was wanting, 35 (44.9 %) of the respondents indicated that tables were very inadequate in their care centre, 29 (37.2 %) said that they had adequate tables while only one respondent indicated that in their centre they had very adequate tables for the children to use. When responding to the question on the adequacy of beds for children to sleep on in the daycare centres, one (1.3 %) of the respondents that took part in this study indicated that they had very adequate beds. 13 (16.7) indicated that the beds they had were adequate. Seven (2.6%) were uncertain. The biggest number of respondents, 52 (66.7%) expressed that the beds they had were very inadequate for the number of children they had. These findings confirm what the findings in Table 1 indicated. It is therefore evident that availability of quality daycare facilities is wanting and contradicts what Froebel (2003) in his Kindergarten theory opined, "...a child should be understood as a plant growing and thriving where the right conditions exist."

The study sought to determine the adequacy of First Aid Kits in day care centres. In their responses one (1.3 %) caregiver indicated that they had very adequate First Aid Kit in their centre. Fourteen (17.9 %) indicated that what they had was inadequate, however the majority 56 (71.8 %) indicated that the availability of First Aid Kit could be rated as very inadequate. Respondent X said, "What the parents pay is so little that we cannot afford to buy a first aid kit." Similar data was obtained on availability of a refrigerator to store children's food for preservation purposes. Only one (1.3%) of the caregivers indicated that she had a refrigerator to store children's food. Nine (11.5%) said that what they used was inadequate and 59 (75.7%)

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indicated that they had no refrigerator at all which was equivalent to the response, very inadequate. Similar observations are in table one where essential resources and facilities are unsatisfactory. Safety of children is key in daycare facilities and lack of first aid kit exposes children to the risk of suffering in case of any accident or sickness while in the daycare centre.

The study sought information on availability and adequacy of Jiko/microwave/stove to warm children's food in case it was cold. In responding to this question, two (2.6%) participants indicated that what they had was very adequate, 63 indicated that the jikos/microwaves/stoves were adequate while those who expressed that these essential facilities were very inadequate were only two. According to the study, the caregivers in Kiambu County had no problem in warming food for children to feed on when time to eat came. This information justifies why many of these respondents (35.3%) indicated that one of the major jobs they did in care giving was feeding the children as illustrated earlier in Figure 2.

From what the study established, after use of a checklist, the information given by the caregivers was 90% confirmed. What could be termed as learning rooms were actually people's houses apart from three daycare centres that had rented some premises to give these services. In most of these facilities, common latrines were used. The facilities that were used by care centres were the same used in neighborhood. Very little children used Portis for toileting. There were basins to wash hands before children took their meals. There were no specific diapering rooms instead, the same rooms used for care taking were the same where diapering took place. Most of these centres had ordinary sofa set seats which family members shared with the children supposed to be cared for. There were mattresses for these children to sleep on whenever they fell sick however, in some of these facilities the mattress was one against a big number of children. Observed also was that First-Aid kits lacked in majority of these care centres. In general, the facilities in the daycare centres were not adequate enough to prepare these children for formal education. Herman and Kerrie (2010) recommended that daycare centres should put in place quality and adequate facilities and resources such as rooms for active play and such rooms should be spacious enough for interaction as well as observing children's safety and hygiene. The daycare centres investigated in this study had not met most of these requirements.

The researcher in a view to get data from ECDE officers enquired to know measures education office had put in place to address the challenges put across by caregivers and parents. ECDE Officer I was recorded saying;

It is true that all is not well with what is taking place in the name of daycare centres. What is taking place is total mess with people's children. People think that it is cheaper to pay a care centre, than it does, to employ a caregiver at home, not know cheap is expensive. Some of these caregivers have not even acquired an 'O' level certificate. One wonders what they do with these kids. They pose as if they offer some sort of teaching services but this is misleading the children. If I were to be asked, I would recommend that all these service providers go for nanny training before they start these services. Kenya has not reached there, daycare centres are still thought to be at early childhood education (Interview, 16 March 2020).

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ECDE officer A suggested that proper monitoring was necessary so as to understand what was taking place. The officer said;

The only remedy to these mushrooming facilities was to do proper monitoring of the services these people purport to offer. We have had cases of child trafficking and such could even be exercised through such places. It is not safe at all to take children to such places where no legal authority is in place. If not through the ministry of education, there should be any other government office entitled to monitor these businesses and laid down standards be followed to ensure quality services are rendered. By so doing the innocent children can be rescued from the hands of these quacks posing as private ECDE teachers (Interview, 19 March 2020).

ECDE office C had this to say, "What is required is a policy regarding child daycare units, without that, things will continue worsening."

### **Conclusion**

From findings of this study, it was revealed that there are many daycare centres in Kiambu County and the number is increasing rapidly every other day. Almost all of these daycare centres are neither registered nor licensed to operate. The operations of these care centres are known by the Kiambu County education offices however the County is still working on the policies that would govern this sector. According to them, Early Childhood Education policy, which covers children aged 3 to 5 years was not clear about age 0-3 year old children who attended daycare centres. Most of these care centres were run by people as private businesses, most of them operating in peoples' houses. The care services were offered in all the nine Sub Counties sampled for this study, however, the manner in which the services are offered was wanting. According to the findings, most of them lacked essential resources that could assist these children to learn the basics in readiness for formal education. Learning for this age of children is through play, however most of the care facilities confined children in small rooms that neither allowed for free interaction nor active play. There were no playgrounds in most of the daycare centres as required for institutions that offer such services. Even though the caregivers handled this delicate age of children, they had no training as well as certificates to prove their state of qualification and health. First aid kits lacked in most of the care centres as well.

In conclusion, quality childcare services are required and can help in preparing children for formal education. There is also need to understand that this is the foundation for children's future lives hence what takes place in their lives at this stage can determine their success or failure in future. Daycare services should therefore, not be taken as a place to mince money from parents but to assist children to grow holistically considering the domains of growth and learning. For this to succeed, daycare centres need to mind about the staff-child ratio, staff qualifications and experience, facilities and resources, as well as adherence to children's health, hygiene and security.

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