INFLUENCE OF PLAY ON SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF PRE-SCHOOL CHILDREN IN KYANGWITHYA ZONE, KITUI COUNTY

BY

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DECLARATION

This research project report is my original work and has not been presented for an award of degree in any other University.

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DEDICATION

This research project is dedicated to my dear son Morris Wambua for his support, patience and his outstanding faith in me and his encouragement which obviously made this course possible. To my dad, late mom and my brother and his family, thank you for laying a strong academic foundation for me.

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ABSTRACT

Play is an essential part of children's daily life and it promotes all round child development. Children develop physically, emotionally, socially and intellectually through play. The purpose of this study was to investigate the impact of play on social and emotional development of preschoolers in Kyangwithya Zone, Kitui County. Four research questions were formulated to guide the study. These were; to determine whether the availability of play materials influence children's social and emotional development, to investigate how time allocation for play in pre schools affect social and emotional development in children, to establish whether the presence of the teacher or caregiver in children's play affect children's social and emotional development and lastly, to investigate how different types of play promote social and emotional skills development. The study employed a descriptive survey design which is used in preliminary and exploratory studies to allow researchers to gather information, summarize, present and interpret for the purpose of clarification. The population included 20 teachers, 250 children and 200 parents all residing in Kyangwithya Zone. The sample for the study was selected using stratified random technique and simple random technique, to involve both the public and the private pre schools. Questionnaires and Observation Checklist were used to collect data. The researcher conducted a pilot study in order to pre test the instruments just before the actual data collection. Additionally, in order to test the validity, items in the questionnaire were checked against the research objectives while reliability was checked through test re-test method. Before collection of any data from the respondents, an authorization letter was obtained from the university. After data collection, there was cross examination to ascertain their accuracy, and then frequencies and percentages was used to present the data. It was also established that there was a strong positive correlation ($r = +0.75$) between Availability of play materials and social skills development of children in pre-schools and that the availability of play materials influence social and emotional development significantly ($p<0.05$), there was a significant association ($\chi^2 (1, 4) = 65.423$, $p< 0.05$) between play time and children social emotional development, there was a strong positive correlation $r(1,6) = 0.73$, $P < 0.05$, between presence of the teacher in children's play and children's social emotional skills development and there is a strong positive correlation $r(1,6) = 0.663$, $P < 0.05$ between play type and children's social emotional skills development. The researcher recommended that the schools should provide more varieties of play material to pre-school children as this was likely to improve their social skills and emotional development, the ministry of Education should allow more time for outdoor and play activities in the pre-school timetable so as to expose the children to play more, the pre-school teachers should always be near the children during play so as to motivate the children and also protect them from dangerous play and that the pre-schools should increase the play varieties so as to motivate the children to enjoy playing.

ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

ECD-Early Childhood development

NACECE-National Centre for Early Childhood Education

KICD- Kenya Institute for Curriculum development

MKO- More Knowledgeable Other

ZPD-Zone of Proximal development

DEO- District Education Officer

UNCHR-United Nations High Commissioner for Human rights

CRC- Convention on the Rights of Children.

MOH-Ministry of Health

IT-Information Technology

MDGs-Millennium Development Goals

WHO-World Health Organization

SEKU-South Eastern Kenya University

M-ED-Master of Education

TABLE OF CONTENTS

DECLARATION..... ii

DEDICATION..... iii

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT..... iv

ABSTRACT.....v

LIST OF TABLES.....x

LIST OF FIGURE..... xi

CHAPTER ONE : **INTRODUCTION**.....1

1.0 Background to the Study.....1

1.1 Statement of the Problem.....8

1.2 Purpose of the Study.....10

1.3 Research Objectives.....10

1.4 Research Questions.....10

1.5 Significance of the Study.....11

1.6 The Limitations of the Study.....11

1.7 Delimitations of the Study.....12

1.8 Assumptions of the Study.....12

1.9 Organization of the Study.....12

1.10 Definition of Terms.....14

CHAPTER TWO : **LITERATURE REVIEW**.....16

2.1 Introduction.....16

2.2 Play and Child Development.....16

2.3 Role of Play in promoting Social and Emotional Development.....17

2.4 Importance of Play Materials in promoting Social and Emotional Skills

Development 18
2.5 Time Allocation for Play in Pre-Schools. 19
2.6 Presence of the Teacher in Children's Play 20
2.7 How Different Types of Play Promote Social and Emotional Development among Children 22
2.8 The Social and Emotional Skills Developed During Children Play 24
2.10 Theoretical Framework 25
2.10 Conceptual Framework 27

CHAPTER THREE : **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY** 29
3.1 Introduction 29
3.2 Research Design 29
3.3 Target Population 30
3.4 Sampling Procedures and Sample Size 30
3.5 Research Instruments 31
3.5.1 Questionnaires 31
3.5.2 Observation Schedule 32
3.6 Pilot Study 32
3.6.1 Validity of the Instrument 32
3.6.2 Instrument Reliability 33
3.7 Data Collection Procedures 34
3.8 Data Analysis 34
3.9 Ethical Considerations 35

CHAPTER FOUR : **DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS, INTERPRETATION AND DISCUSSION** 36

4.1 Introduction.....36

4.2 Demographic Data 36

4.2.1 Distribution of Respondents by Gender.....36

4.2.2 Distribution of Respondents by Age.....37

4.2.3 Academic Qualification of Respondents 38

4.2.4 Working Experience of the Respondents.....38

4.3 Availability of Play Materials and Children's Social and Emotional Development ...39

4.4 Time Allocation for Play and Children's Social and Emotional Development.....42

4.5 Presence of the Teacher in the Children's Play and Children's Social and Emotional Development.....44

4.6 Different Types of Play and Children's Social and Emotional Development.....48

CHAPTER FIVE : **SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**.....50

5.1 Introduction.....50

5.2 Summary of the Findings.....50

5.3 Conclusion of the Study.....52

5.4. Recommendations from the Study.....53

5.5 Suggestion for Further Research.....53

REFERENCES 54

APPENDICES 60

Appendix A: Introduction Letter to the Respondents.....60

Appendix B: Questionnaire for Teachers 61

Appendix C: Observation Schedule for Children.....66

LIST OF TABLES

Table 3.1 : Sample Size 31

Table 4.1 : Distribution of Respondents by Gender 37

Table 4.2 : Age Distribution of Respondents..... 37

Table 4.3 : Respondent's Academic Level 38

Table 4. 4 : Respondent's Working Experience 38

Table 4.5 : Presence of Play Materials..... 39

Table 4.6: Play Materials Available in the Classroom 40

Table 4.7 : Relationship between Availability of Play Materials and Social Skills Development 41

Table 4.8: Adequacy of Play and Out-door Activities Time 42

Table 4.9 : Outdoor Activities 43

Table 4. 10: Chi-square Tests for Relationship between Play Time and Children Social Emotional Development 44

Table 4.11: Teachers' Presence Impact on the way Children Play..... 45

Table 4.12: Skills Learned when Children Play in the Presence of the Teachers 46

Table 4.13 : Relationship between Teacher Presence and Social Emotional Skills Development 47

Table 4. 14: Type of Play Activities Children are Engaged in 48

Table 4.15: Relationship between Play Type and Social Emotional Skills Development 49

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 2.1 : Relationships between Variables in the Study 27

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Background to the Study

Play is so important to optimal child's social and emotional development that it has been recognized by the United Nations High Commission for Human Rights (2006) as a right of every child. This birth right is threatened by forces including child labour and exploitation practices, war and neighborhood violence and limited resources available to children living in poverty. However, even these children who are fortunate enough to have abundant available resources and who live in relative peace may not be receiving the full benefits of play. Since every child deserves the opportunity to develop to their unique potential, child caregivers should consider all factors that interfere with optimal development and press for circumstances that allow each child to fully reap the advantages associated with play (Bell &Wolfe, 2004).

Those forces that prevent children in poverty and the working class from benefitting fully from play deserve full and urgent attention. The overriding premise is that play (or some available free time in the case of older children and adolescents) is essential to the cognitive, physical, social and emotional well-being of children and youth (Eccles &Templeton, 2002). Play allows children to use their creativity while developing their imagination, dexterity and physical, cognitive and emotional strength. Play is important to healthy brain development. It is through play that children at a very early age engage and interact in the world around them. Play allows children to create and explore a world

they can master, conquering their fears while practicing adult roles, sometimes in conjunction with other children or adult caregivers. As they master their world, play helps children develop new competencies that lead to enhanced confidence and the resilience that they will need to face future challenges (Hurwitz, 2003).

Undirected play allows children to learn how to work in groups, share, negotiate, resolve conflicts, and learn self-advocacy skills. When play is allowed to be child-driven, children practice decision-making skills, move at their own pace, discover their own areas of interest, and ultimately engage fully in the passions they wish to pursue. Burdette & Whitaker (2005) observes that play is a simple joy that is a cherished part of childhood. Children's trajectory is critically mediated by appropriate, effective relationships with loving and consistent caregivers as they relate to children through play (Shonkoff &Phillips, 2000).When parents observe their children in play or join them in child-driven play, they are given a unique opportunity to see the World from their child's vintage point as the child navigates a world perfectly created just to fit his/her needs.

The Geneva Declaration on the Rights of Children (1986) recognizes play activities in pre-school as a vital activity in developing children's social skills. Following this declaration, the curriculum developers declared in the national goals of education that play promotes individual social skills and self-fulfillment where it provides opportunities for the fullest development of individual talents and personal development. Guidelines states that education enables children to enjoy living and learning through play (Republic of Kenya, 2008).

Piaget (1962) feels that play has a primary role in the child's development; he placed emphasis on play as a factor in the child's responses to the social development. More specifically, play interactions helped children understand that other players have perspectives different than their own. Play, for Piaget, provides children with opportunities to develop social competence through ongoing interactions.

Erickson (1963) on the other hand, maintains there is a relationship between make-believe play and wider society. Make –believe permits children to learn about their social world and to try out new social skills. Moreover, play facilitates the understanding of cultural roles and to integrate accepted social norms into their own personalities. For Erickson, like Piaget, play promotes a child who is socially competent. (Creasey *et al*, 1998).

Vygotsky's social-cultural theory has a significant role for play in that he proposed that make-believe play in the preschool years is vital for the acquisition of social competence. It requires children to initiate an imaginary situation and follow a set of rules to play out situation; the child is able to act separately from reality. This type of play helps children choose between courses of action and also forces young children to control their impulses and subject themselves to the rules of play. Through play, children develop understanding of social norms and try to uphold those social expectations (Vygotsky, 1978).

Play is an essential part of children's daily life and it promotes all round child development (Bell & Wolfe, 2004) children develop physically, emotionally, socially and intellectually through play. Socially, children develop their social skills through play activities. They find a lot of pleasure in play as they explore and discover for themselves.

They also master social skills in a particular play such that they are able to solve problems surrounding them as they play (Ottogan, 1999; Mahindu, 2011; Fisher, 1992). In play, children make friends and learn how to cope with different attitudes in their play mates as they develop strong relationship. Through play children learn about different feelings with other children they share ideas and extend the range of one another's experience. In play, they rehearse roles that they would pick up in their future life. Njoki (2007) states that play is one of the ways in which a child may develop a capacity to deal with stresses and strains of life pressed upon him or her. Play to a child therefore acts as a safety valve that allows a child to relieve and often come into terms with fears and anxieties which have become overwhelming. Njoki (2007) further states that play is one of the most important ways through which people learn. It is a fundamental need for children to develop their social skills. Njoki further contends that play transcends political, social and religious boarders.

Despite the numerous benefits derived from play for both children and parents, time for play has been markedly reduced for some children (Shankoff & Philiphs, 2000).This trend has even affected preschool children, who have had free play reduced in their schedules to make room for more academics. Currently, many school children are given less free time and 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 mathematics. This change 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. A change in academic instructions or class topic does

not offer this clear-cut change in cognitive and social effort and certainly does not offer a physical release (Burdette & Whitaker, 2005).

A formal structured physical education class may not offer the same benefits as free-play recess. Reduced time for physical activity may be contributing to the discordant academic abilities between boys and girls, because schools that promote sedentary styles of learning become a more difficult environment for boys to navigate successfully (Mahoney *et al*, 2006).

Some children are given less time for exploratory play as they are hurried to adapt into adult roles and prepare for their future at early ages. Parents are receiving carefully marketed messages that good parents expose their children to every opportunity to excel, buy a plethora of enrichment tools, and ensure their children participate in a wide variety of activities (Rosenfeld &Wise, 2000). Free child-driven play is decreased, and the down time that allows parents and children some of the most productive time for interaction is at a premium when schedules become highly packed with adult supervised or adult-driven activities. It is left to parents to judge appropriate levels of involvement, but many parents seem to feel as though they are running on a treadmill to keep up yet dare not show their pace for fear their children will fall behind. In addition, some worry they will not be acting as proper parents if they do not participate in this hurried lifestyle (Eccles & Templeton, 2002).

According to Hetherington (2006) children possess the capacity for experiencing deep emotions. When the child sobs, the whole body shakes. When children are happy, they are intensively happy. Their mood swings and temper tantrums are rapid and to the adult,

unpredictable. Young children are unable to manage their emotions. They do not possess the verbal language to express the depth or range of their feelings. For them, the most natural language of communication is through play. Play is a form of self expression, and symbolic play in particular is an important vehicle for expressing feelings. In a safe non-threatening environment, children will communicate the depth of their feelings through play. Skills and competencies of emotional literacy can be learned most effectively through play. Bergen (2004) states that through play, children can have feelings of power over the environment, emotional awareness and sensitivity.

Vygotsky in his social constructivist theory argues that learning through physical activities enhances social development of the child. This involves acquisition of knowledge through action and observation of the reaction of objects in the physical world. Cooperative or supported learning is assumed to take place through the child's participation with others in activities that constitute daily life within the society. Berger (2001) argues that play is a vehicle for social interaction and the leading source of development in the preschool years. Through play, children learn to function beyond their capabilities. Children's mental, language and social development is supported and enhanced by others through social interaction.

Zins (2004) argues that dialogue between peers, teachers and learners literally becomes a means for helping children "scaffold" i.e. 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 when the others are not present. All this is properly enhanced during play. Studies carried by Must (2008) Ashiabi (2007) and Bergen (2004) indicates that deprivation of play opportunity has risk factors on the child

which include fussy, temperament, developmental delay and serious health issues. Bergen (2004) argues that 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. Brockman, Jago, Fox, Thompson & Cartwright (2011) further argues that when children lack play, they are always constantly fatigued and lack agility and peer group popularity and are over dependent. They also end up engaging in socially inappropriate behaviors.

There is a national trend to focus on the academic fundamentals of reading and arithmetic. This trend, spearheaded by free and compulsory primary education in Kenya, is a reaction to the unacceptable educational performance in our children (Dillons, 2006). One of the practical effects of the trend is decreased time left during the school day for other academic subjects, as well as recess, creative arts, and physical education. This trend may have implications for the social and emotional development of children and adolescents. In addition, many after school child care programs prioritize an extension of academics and homework completion over organized play, free play and physical activities (Zins, 2004).

The decrease in free play can also be explained by children being passively entertained through television or computer video games. In sharp contrast to the health benefits of active, creative play and the known developmental benefits of an appropriate level of organized activities, there is ample evidence that this passive entertainment is not protective and in fact has some harmful effects.

Today, social life has completely changed compared to the older days when children were reared by the community whereby the security of the children was an issue of every one in a certain community (Coolahan *et al*, 2000). Children were left to play together the whole day since there was enough security. But today, insecurity of children has become a major concern for parents and teachers due to the increased social problems. As such, children are no longer left to play freely.

In Kitui County, more so Kyangwithya zone, preschool children are facing numerous challenges associated with play, even though many children are motivated to attend school by the thought of meeting and playing with their peers, the question of play materials, time to play, and teachers involvement in their play still arise, since most schools in Kyangwithya are not keen on purchasing play materials for children, hence these little ones are left on their own innovations and creations of play materials which may not be very appealing, but due to the urgency to play, they still use them. Most time in our preschools is spend indoors, and children only go outdoors for a few minutes either to take their meals or visit the washrooms, this teachers have argued that it enables them cover the course work and put emphasis on literacy and numeracy skills, which are vital for the children's academic excellence. It is against this background that the current study intends to establish whether play influences social and emotional development of children.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

In Kyangwithya zone, majority of schools host a large number of children such that the playing fields are overstretched. Most of these fields are open grounds with no facilities that these children can play with. Additionally, private pre-schools have been developed

in residential and rental houses, where these houses have been turned into classrooms, with little or no space for children to play. There are also cases where these pre-schools do not have play materials for children. In other cases too, majority of teachers do not accompany their children to play. Instead, children are left to play on their own without teachers or caregiver's supervision. Due to pressure and rigidity of the curriculum, play time has been slashed down to enable syllabus coverage. Worse still, a number of teachers are reportedly using the strategy of denying children time for play, in order to complete assignments, or as a way of punishment. They have forgotten the English saying that goes "all work without play makes Jack a dull boy" and it is not only John here who gets dull, but the entire class. These issues have raised a lot of concern to the researcher as to whether they have any impact on these children's social and emotional development or not.

The recent report from head teachers, class teachers and parents of children in schools in Kyangwithya Zone indicates that these children have been exhibiting increased learning difficulties, inability to solve simple problems associated with socialization and control of emotions, many cases of truancy, dropping out of school and aggressive behavior, compounded with total lack of interest towards learning. Additionally, however hard the teachers try to keep these young ones in classes to concentrate on formal lessons, the little the progress posted, with many teachers and parents complaining that the children have increasingly become unable and unwilling to participate in challenging tasks. It is also evident that these children are always constantly fatigued and lack the agility and peer group popularity and have become over dependent .These children are also showing signs of not engaging in socially appropriate behavior. The issues enumerated have raised a lot

of concerns to the researcher as to whether they have any effect on social and emotional development of skills in children or not.

1.2 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate the influence of play on social and emotional development of pre-school children in Kyangwithya Zone, Kitui County, in order to determine whether there is any significant relationship between children play and their social and emotional development.

1.3 Research Objectives

This study was guided by the following objectives:

i. To determine whether the availability of play materials influence children's social and emotional development.
ii. To investigate how time allocation for play in preschools affect social and emotional development of children.
iii. To establish whether the presence of the teacher in children's play affects children's social and emotional development.
iv. To investigate how different types of play promote social and emotional skills development.

1.4 Research Questions

The study was guided by the following research questions:

i. How does availability of play materials influence children's social and emotional development?

ii. In which way does time allocation for play in a preschool situation affect children's social and emotional development?

iii. How does the presence of the teacher in the children's play affect children's social and emotional development?

iv. To what extent do different types of play affect children's social and emotional development?

1.5 Significance of the Study

The findings of this study will be important in different ways. First, the findings will be important to the curriculum developers in evaluating the curriculum and putting emphasis on children play together with allocating more time in the timetable for children to play. Early childhood education teachers will also benefit by understanding the different ways in which play influences children's acquisition of social skills.

The school administrators will be able to identify the importance of child play hence provide adequate facilities for the same. Teachers will also benefit from this study as the findings will necessitate in-service courses to train them in different types of play that promote social skills. Non-governmental organizations, churches and the community also learnt their role in play, by providing for children's playing materials in support of play to promote social skills among preschool children.

1.6 The Limitations of the Study

This study relied on opinions, views and attitudes of the respondents from Kyangwithya Zone hence; this study was not to be used to generalize results in other parts of the country other than Kyangwithya zone only. Subjects under study portrayed or varied the

true picture or behavior during their activities when they realized that they were being observed hence that could slightly affect the results. The study faced financial constraints since a lot of fund was required to facilitate the completion of the study and being self sponsored, the researcher faced a lot of challenges in raising the funds.

1.7 Delimitations of the Study

This study was carried in Kyangwithya Zone, Kitui County and out of a total of 300 respondents from the preschools targeted, 90 were selected to participate in the study and through interviews and observation schedules, rich data was collected. Being a native of the area under study, the researcher interacted easily with the respondents and this yielded reliable results.

1.8 Assumptions of the Study

In this study it was assumed that all the parents and preschool teachers are aware of the importance of play in promoting children's social and emotional development. The preschool teachers are adequately trained and hence are able to conduct play lessons successfully. Lastly that play, like any other activity is allocated adequate time as stipulated in the ECDE curriculum.

1.9 Organization of the Study

The study was organized into three chapters, whereby chapter one included the background to the study, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, objectives of the study, research questions, significance of the study, basic assumptions of the study, limitations, delimitation, definition of key terms and organization of the study. Chapter two included literature review which also comprised of theoretical frame work and

conceptual frame work. Chapter three comprised of methodology to be used in the study. This included research design, population and sampling procedures, research instruments, validity of the study, reliability of the study instruments and lastly data collection procedures.

1.10 Definition of Terms

Child –A human being biologically between the period of birth and puberty also referred to as a minor.

Play - Children's daily behavior and activities which promote their social skills.

Social development- It is the process of social changes in children as they grow toward adulthood.

Emotional development- The child's growing ability to regulate and control emotions and to form secure and fulfilling relationships.

Skills - The behavior that a child learns after engaging in certain activity.

Socialization-It is the lifelong process undergone by a child of inheriting and disseminating norms, customs and ideologies, providing him/her with the skills and habits necessary for participating within their own society.

Adventure -An exciting or unusual experience. It may also be a bold, usually risky undertaking, with an uncertain outcome.

Spontaneous- performed or occurring as a result of sudden inner impulse or inclination and without premeditation or external stimulus.

Peer –A person of the same age, status, or ability as another specified person.

Clarity - Clearness or lucidity to perception or understanding. Freedom from indistinctness or ambiguity.

Stereotype- is a thought that can be adopted about specific types of individuals or certain ways of doing things. These thoughts or beliefs may or may not accurately reflect the reality.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This section presents the literature review. It focuses on characteristics of play and development of social and emotional skills, the role of play in social and emotional skills development, involvement of teachers and caregivers in children's play, theoretical and conceptual framework of the study.

2.2 Play and Child Development

Play is the work of the child (Montessori, 1952) play activities are essential to healthy development of children. The activities engaged in by children both stimulate and influence the pattern of the connections made between the nerve cells. This process influences the development of fine and gross motor skills, language, socialization, personal awareness, emotional well-being, creativity, problem solving and learning ability. The most important role that play has is that it helps children to be active, make choices and practice actions to mastery. They should experience with a wide variety of content (art, music, science, math, social relations) because each is important for the development of a complex and integrated brain. Play that links sensory-motor, cognitive, and social-emotional experiences provides an ideal setting for brain development. She further argued that, the essential dimensions of play include voluntary, enjoyable, purposeful and spontaneous, creativity using problem solving and thwarting emotional problems.

Coolahan and others, (2000) states that play is integral to the academic environment. It ensures social and emotional development of children as well as their cognitive development. It has been shown to help children adjust to the school setting and enhance children's learning readiness, learning behaviors, and problem solving skills. Coolahan and others, (2000) further argues that social emotional learning is best integrated with academic learning; it is concerning if some of the forces that enhance children's ability to learn are elevated at the expense of others. Play and unscheduled time that allow for peer interactions are important components of social –emotional learning (Elis &Arnold, 2006).

2.3 Role of Play in promoting Social and Emotional Development

Erickson (1963) states that a healthy social and emotional development entails the ability to form satisfying, trusting relationships with others, play, communicate, learn, face challenges, and experience and handle a full range of emotions. It is through relationships that young children develop these skills and attributes. Starting from birth, babies are learning who they are by how they are treated. Loving relationships provide young children a sense of comfort, safety and confidence. They teach young children how to form relationships, communicate emotions, and to deal with challenges. Strong positive relationships also help children develop trust, empathy, compassion and a sense of right and wrong (National Centre for Early Childhood Education, 1993).

According to Elkonin (1969) social dramatic play helps children learn to put themselves in another person's place, impersonating them therefore fostering for the growth of empathy and consideration of others. He concludes that play is an important tool for

social and emotional skills development whereby as children play, they learn how to live with others through interaction.

According to Piaget (1962) play supports emotional development by providing a way to express and cope with feelings. Pretend play helps children express feelings in the following ways: Simplifying events by creating an imaginary character, plot or setting to match their emotional state. A child afraid of the dark, for example, might eliminate darkness or night from the play episode, compensating for situations by adding forbidden example, eating biscuits and ice cream for breakfast in play, whereas in reality, this would not be possible. Also it serves in controlling emotional expressions by repeatedly re-enacting unpleasant or frightening experiences. For example, a child might pretend to have an accident on the highway. In addition to expressing feelings, children also learn to cope with their feelings as they act out being angry, sad, or worried in a situation they control (Erickson, 1963). Pretend play allows them to think out aloud about experiences charged with both pleasant and unpleasant feelings.

2.4 Importance of Play Materials in promoting Social and Emotional Skills Development

Young children are naturally curious and providing them with high-quality (which may not mean expensive) materials is important to the learning process. Toys that encourage children's imagination help them know that the world is a diverse and wonderful place. While children may clamber for the "toy of the moment" don't let the hype sway decisions made. Jumping ropes, jacks, bean bags, balls, blocks and swings continue to be favorites of children everywhere (Elis &Arnold, 2000). Through play experiences, children learn about play experiences, children learn about themselves, their

environment, and the people in their lives, experiment with different ways to solve problems; develop body control; practice social skills; and express their creativity hence they gain confidence as they choose toys and materials that are of particular interest to them. An environment that encourages children to make their own choices helps them feel safe, valued, adventurous, competent, and confident to take the initiative (Elis &Arnold, 2000).

These two further argues that play materials for children add value to play. Children should be provided with playing materials as a way of enhancing their play. Teachers and parents are required to provide playing materials to their children so as to help them get engaged in meaningful play which influences their social skills development.

2.5 Time Allocation for Play in Pre-Schools.

Early childhood educators have long believed that play 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 on the "basics" 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 development in that it inhibits two of the most mature forms of play groups –dramatic play and constructive play, which often take a considerable amount of time.

Large blocks of time (45-60 minutes) in the daily schedule must also be allocated for play so that children may develop play scenarios, get organized, and then execute their plan (Early Childhood Education Syllabus, 2008). The daily schedules in preschool classrooms that focus on academics and kindergarten readiness often do not provide an opportunity for exploring meaningful and relevant activities. (Well & Drew, 2013).When children are told frequently to "select another centre" or "it is time to move on to something else", they are not allowed enough time to engage with the materials long enough to develop problem solving skills that require persistence and engagement.

According to the preschool guidelines, play activity is acknowledged as a vital activity and thus it is allocated much time on the timetable (ECDE guideline, 1983). The guidelines states that play is the most natural teaching technique which would be properly utilized and practiced to ensure crisis-less transition from home environment. The general objectives of Early childhood Education states that allocation of time to play, enables children to enjoy living and learning through play since it develops the children's self awareness and self esteem (Mahindu, 2011).

Play and outdoor activities are allocated much time than other activities in early childhood education syllabus (2008). The allocation of time is 5 lessons per week of 30 minutes. Again, play activity is incorporated in almost every other subject taught in Early Childhood Education development. (Mahindu, 2011).

2.6 Presence of the Teacher in Children's Play

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 Preschool, adults are referred to as teachers. They have a very important role to play 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 play 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) adds 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).

2.7 How Different Types of Play Promote Social and Emotional Development among Children

Spontaneous play is natural and healthy for children. Children learn best through play. Through play, all areas of a child's development can be enhanced. Play positively supports children's social/emotional, physical, cognitive, language and literacy skills. Play is essential to a child's overall healthy development and enhances self regulation. Hobert (1999) refers to play as children's activity. He also emphasizes that play that is initiated to children at an early age has a list of characteristics which he referrers to as features. These features describe children's play as symbolic in nature since they involve elements of representation (Smith, 2000). Mahindu (2011) asserts that play can be classified in a number of ways according to the skills they provide. She categorized play into four groups: creative play which includes drawing, calligraphic work, modeling, painting and construction. These sentiments are echoed by Frankel and Hobart, (2000) who states that creative play promotes social emotional development and intellectual skills. Physical play promotes co-ordination and co-operation which is an important social skill. It involves climbing, rolling, walking, running, sliding and jumping, while

manipulative play is described as a play that involves children to use their hands. This play develops eye-hands co-ordination.

Imaginative play involves acting out the rules and situations. It develops skills such as manipulative, emotional and social skills. It promotes sharing, self-confidence, language and communicative skills (Frankel &Hobart, 2000). Lastly is co-operative play which involves social interaction with groups and peers and this gives individuals a sense of belonging and identity. Waithera (2006) found out that provision of play materials enhances cognitive development in children. She also found that teacher's organization of play materials in a meaningful and familiar way assisted children in cognitive development. Her study however; did not identify how play influenced social skills hence this study aims to fill this gap.

According to the American Academy of Pediatrics (2014) play teaches a child how to engage with the world from a very early age. Play can be educational as well as fun. You can promote your child's social development by encouraging him to play games that require taking turns, sharing and cooperating. Provide a range of age appropriate puzzles and board games for indoor play. Role playing encourages your child to get involved in role play; helps boost social and emotional development because it requires both verbal and non verbal communication. Put together a box or trunk of dress-up clothes, collect hand puppets and provide a range of props to stimulate your child's imagination during role-play. It will strengthen your child's vocabulary and language skills and will teach her the value of teamwork, sharing and empathy. Creative activities provide your child with an outlet for emotional expression. Let your child experiment with different surfaces, tools and materials. Encourage him to enjoy the process of creating rather than just the

end results. This type of open-ended art gives your child a chance to express himself/herself and release stress without restrictions.

2.8 The Social and Emotional Skills Developed During Children Play

The development of social and emotional health of a child is essential to his appropriate behavior, understanding of life and transition to adulthood (Fisher, 1992). Social emotional development helps shape a child into what he will become later in life by teaching proper reactions to emotional matters. Social skills are all about a child's ability to co-operate and play with others, paying attention to adults and teachers, and making reasonable transitions from activity to activity (Mahindu, 2011). Emotional development is the process of learning how to understand and control emotions. Healthy social and emotional skills developed allows children to develop relationships, master the ability to initiate, discover play and learn, develop persistence and attention, self-regulate their behavior and develop emotional range (Zins, 2004).

As children get older, they need to understand roles and be able to control their behavior. Children first learn social skills by watching how parents and family members behave with each other. Children copy what others do and what they say as they interact with each other. As they play, children learn to follow instructions, directions, cooperate, take turns and share. Play helps young children understand their own emotions, feel proud of what they can do, and develop a sense of who they are (Fisher, 1992).

2.9 The Study Gap

Studies concerning play have been carried in some parts of the world, e.g. a study carried by American Academy of Pediatrics (2014) in the US indicates that lack of play for

children is closely associated with anxiety, depression, suicidal tendencies, feeling of helplessness and obesity. Other numerous studies carried out by researchers like Njoki (2007) Benes (1995) and Zins (2004) indicates that there is a close relationship between play and cognitive &physical development. Most of these studies have been carried abroad and other parts of Africa. However, no single study on play has been done in Kyangwithya Zone, to establish the relationship between play and social and emotional development, where else the children in Kyangwithya continue to exhibit challenges related to play and social and emotional development. Since these studies carried in other areas cannot be generalized, this has compelled the researcher to carry out a study to establish whether there is any considerable relationship between the variables affecting children in Kyangwithya Zone.

2.10 Theoretical Framework

This study was based on Vygotsky's Social development Theory, which is the work of a Russian psychologist Lev Vygotsky (1896-1934), who lived during the Russian Revolution. Vygotsky's theory is one of the foundations of constructivism. It asserts three major themes. First, social interaction plays a fundamental role in the process of cognitive development. He states that every function in the child's cultural development appears twice: first, on the level, and later, on the individual level; first, between people (interpsychological) and then inside the child which he calls intrapsychological (Vitgotsky, 1978). Secondly, the More Knowledgeable Other (MKO) refers to anyone who has a better understanding or a higher ability level than the learner, with respect to a particular task, process, or concept. The MKO is normally thought of as being a teacher, coach, or older adult, but the MKO could also be peers, young person, or even computers.

Thirdly, the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). The ZPD is the distance between a student's ability to perform a task under adult guidance and /or with peer collaboration and the student's ability to solve the problem independently. According to Vygotsky learning occurs in this zone.Vygotsky focused on the connections between people and the socio-cultural context in which they act and interact in shared experiences (Crawford, 1996). According to Vygotsky, humans use tools that develop from a culture, such as speech and writing, to mediate their social environment.

Initially, children develop these tools to serve solely as social functions and ways to communicate needs. Vygotsky believed that the internalization of these tools lead to higher thinking skills. Applying the theory to the study, many schools have traditionally held a transmissionist or instructionist model in which a teacher "transmits" information to students. In contrast, Vygostskian theory promotes learning contexts in which students play an active role in learning. Roles of the teacher and student are therefore shifted, as a teacher should collaborate with his or her students in order to help facilitate meaning construction in students. Learning therefore becomes a reciprocal experience between the students, and the teacher. In this study, the role of the teacher is to facilitate children's learning while the children will acquire the required skills through play.

Crowford (1996) argues that the major strength of this theory is that, a child is encouraged to discover and think in new ways and gain new social, emotional and cognitive tools to make sense of the world. Children can obtain help from peers and solve problems, while scaffolding has been used to support learning through play. Kirschner &Sweller (2011) suggests that many constructivist based approaches do not work as well as direct instructions in changing long-term memory. Part of the argument hinges on

findings from cognitive science that limit the amount of information that can exist in working memory at one time. Additionally, this method commonly involves problem solving situations where the learning is self-directed, which if unchecked can lead to potential misconceptions.

2.10 Conceptual Framework

Independent variables

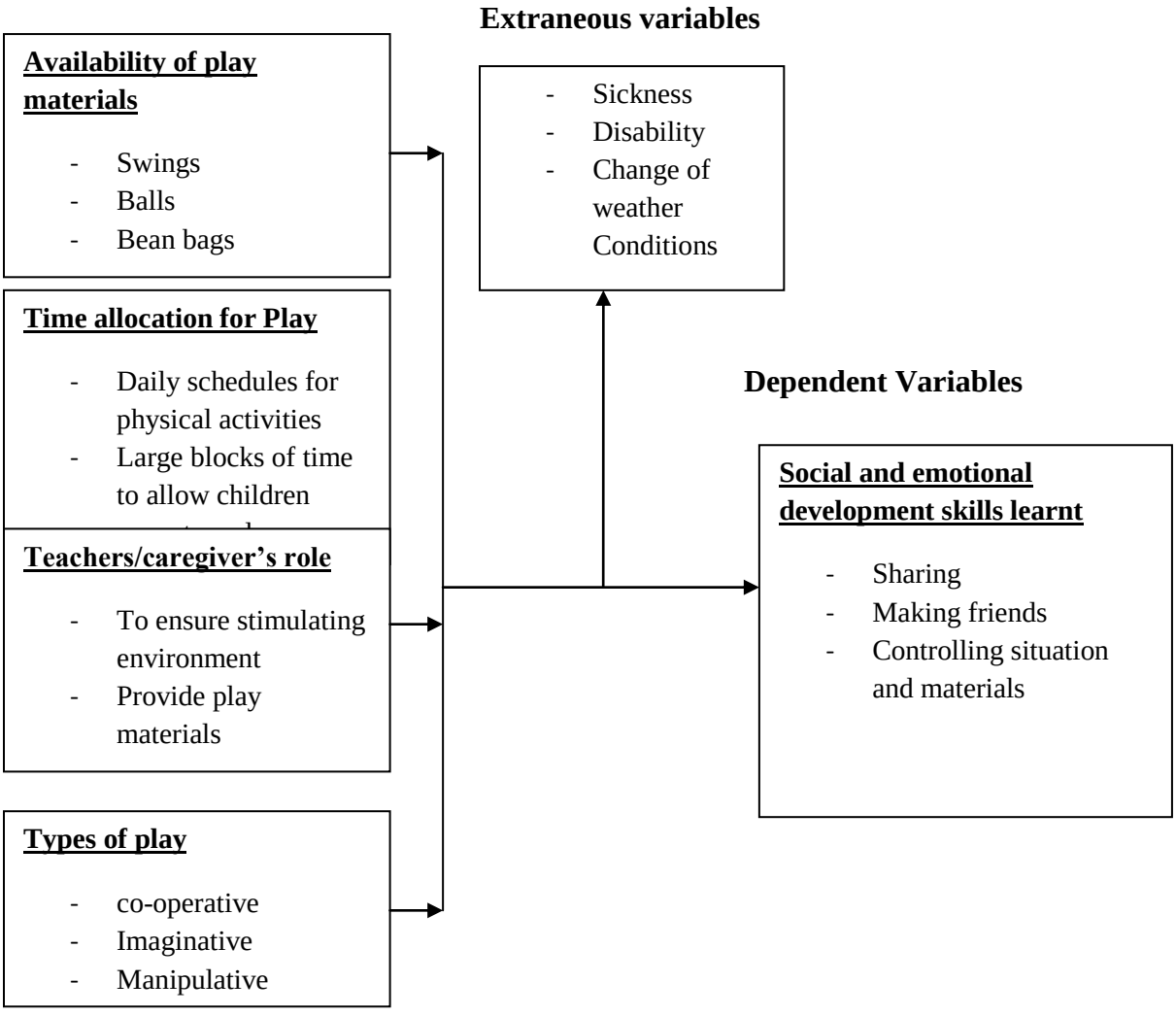

Figure 2.1 : Relationships between Variables in the Study

The conceptual framework is based on Independent, Dependent and Extraneous variables, whereby the manipulation of the independent variables determines the outcome of the dependent variables. The independent variables are; availability of play materials, time allocations for play, teacher's role in play and types of play. All these variables interact with each other during play by children, leading to acquisition of social and emotional skills like sharing, co-operation, empathy, affection and making friends among others, hence eradicating any chances of antisocial behaviors like aggressiveness, incompetence, withdrawal and laziness from learners.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter covered research design, target population, sampling and sample procedures, research instruments, validity of the instruments, reliability of the instrument, data collection procedures and data analysis.

3.2 Research Design

This study adopted a descriptive survey design. According to Jackson (2009) this design is used to obtain information concerning the current status of the phenomena to describe "what exists" with respect to variables or conditions in a situation. In this method, participants answer questions administered through interviews or questionnaires. After participants answer the questions, researchers describe the responses given. In order for the survey to be both reliable and valid it is important that the questions are constructed properly.

This design utilizes both quantitative and qualitative data elements, often within the same study. This means that it can involve collection of qualitative information that can be tabulated along a continuum in numerical form, such as scores on a test or the number of times a person chooses to use a certain feature of a multi-media program, or it can describe categories of information such as gender or patterns of interaction when using technology in a group situation. It involves data gathering, organizing, tabulating, depicting and describing.

3.3 Target Population

Kyangwithya Zone in Kitui central district has 30 pre-schools. Hence, the study targeted 30 Preschools, 250 children and 20 teachers, all totaling to 300.

3.4 Sampling Procedures and Sample Size

Purposive sampling also known as selective or subjective sampling technique was used in selecting the preschools used in the study. According to Patton (2006), purposive sampling focuses on particular characteristics of a population that are of interest, this best enabled the research to answer the research questions. Secondly, simple random sampling was used to select children and teachers from the selected schools. According to Creswell (2011) in this technique, the researcher selects participants (or units such as schools) so that any individual has an equal chance /probability of being selected from the population, and any bias in the population is equally distributed among those chosen. Mugenda and Mugenda (1999) argues that 20% to 30% of the population is adequate, however, the larger the better. The researcher therefore sampled 30% of the preschools, teachers and children.

Table 3.1 : Sample Size

Categories	Totals	Percentages	Selected Number
Pre-schools	30	30%	9
Children	250	30%	75
Teachers	20	30%	6
Total	**300**	**30%**	**90**

3.5 Research Instruments

The study used questionnaires and observation schedules.

3.5.1 Questionnaires

According to Kombo &Tromp (2006) a questionnaire is a research instrument that gathers data over a large sample, it can reach a large number of subjects who are able to read and write independently. A questionnaire enhances anonymity of respondents and uniformity of questions, thus allowing comparability. The questionnaires were administered to the teachers and they had two sections; section one gathered demographic information of the respondents while section two gathered information on the influence of play on social and emotional development. It contained both closed and open ended questions. This study used questionnaires to answer the four research questions as shown in appendix A.

3.5.2 Observation Schedule

This method involves human or mechanical observation of what people actually do or what events take place during a particular situation. “information is collected by observing process at work” (Kombo &Tromp,2006).Observation of human behavior provides an opportunity to come to conclusions based on our observations ,to generate explanations and understandings and even to come up with predictions. The observation schedule was used to collect data on the availability of play fields, materials and pupils interaction with materials, teachers, and peers during play activities.

3.6 Pilot Study

The researcher conducted a pilot study in order to pre-test the instruments just before the actual data collection. The researcher visited 3 preschools which were not involved in the main study. The purpose of the pilot study was to reveal deficiencies in the design of the proposed study or procedure so that they could be addressed before the actual study. It was also meant to test the effectiveness of the data collection tools and make the necessary adjustments. The researcher visited the pilot schools and after sampling the respondents, administered Questionnaires to the teachers and also filled observation checklist for children. Afterwards, the validity and reliability of these instruments was checked and corrections made.

3.6.1 Validity of the Instrument

According to Kombo & Tromp (2006), validity of a test is a measure of how well a test measures what it is supposed to measure. In order to ensure this, the validity was used where the items in the questionnaire were checked against the research objective. An expert judgment was also sought from the supervisor who assisted the researcher in the

validation of the instruments. The validity helped in identifying items in the questionnaire that needed restating and removing those that were not important in the study. Content validation process was used to determine the extent to which a set of test tasks provides a relevant and representative sample of the domain of tasks under consideration. According to Creswell (2011) content validation is done so that the tools we construct using this specification aids in constructing a test that produces results that represents both the content areas and the objectives we wish to measure.

3.6.2 Instrument Reliability

Creswell (2011) asserts that reliability of measurements concerns the degree to which a particular measuring procedure gives similar results over a number of repeated trials. It also refers to the consistency of an instrument to yield similar results at different times. The researcher used test re-tests method in order to establish the reliability of the instruments. Test re-test method is applied where a test is given to respondents then after some time given again, gives the same results. The researcher made a comparison between answers obtained in the test and re-test of questionnaires. A Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Coefficient formula was used.

$$r = N\sum xy - (\sum x)(\sum Y)$$

$$\sqrt{[N\sum (X)^2 - (X^2)[N\sum (Y)^2 - (\sum Y)^2}$$

According to Mugenda &Mugenda (1999) a correlation coefficient expresses the degree of relationship between two sets of scores by numbers ranging from +1.00 from -1.00 to +1.00 to -1.00.A perfect positive correlation is indicated by a coefficient of +1.00 and a perfect negative correlation by a coefficient of -1.00. He further asserts that a correlation

coefficient of .00 lays midways between these extremes and indicates no relationship between the two sets of scores. A coefficient of 0.80 or more will simply show that there is high reliability of data and for this study it was 0.88.

3.7 Data Collection Procedures

Before the collection of any data from the target population, an authorization letter was sought from the Board of Postgraduate Studies, South Eastern Kenya University, to help the researcher to request for permission letter from The National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI), to be allowed to collect the required data from the sampled schools. After that, the researcher contacted the District Education Officer to seek permission of conducting the study in his area of jurisdiction. The researcher then made preliminary visits, created rapport and made appointments with the respondents of the sampled schools on when to revisit and collect data. On the material day, the researcher visited the respondents selected, administered questionnaires and filled the observation checklists.

3.8 Data Analysis

Data analysis is the process of bringing meaning to raw data collected (Mugenda & Mugenda, 1999). After the data were collected, there was cross-examination to ascertain their accuracy, competence and identity of those items that were wrongly responded to, spelling mistakes and blank spaces. Quantitative data were then entered into the computer for analysis using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) computer software version 12.0 for windows to generate frequencies (f) and percentages (%), which were then used to discuss the findings. Tables were used to present the data. Qualitative data were analyzed thematically. In the analysis of the research questions, all items focusing

on a given research question was analyzed together and conclusions made. Data from the observation schedule was qualitative and were grouped and analyzed together while quantitative data were presented in numbers and in percentages.

3.9 Ethical Considerations

Before data collection, an introductory letter was obtained from the University. On production of the introductory letter, permission to carry out research was granted by the relevant authority. The researcher ensured that confidentiality was honored and information obtained used only for the purpose of this study. Informed consent was sought in acquiring participants for the study, and all the participants were expected to participate willingly. Individuals had the option to withdraw from participation. Consent was sought from parents to allow their children to participate in the study. The dignity, privacy and interest of the participants was respected and protected. Data obtained remained confidential and all participants remained anonymous. Appropriate credit was given to all those who participated in the study.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS, INTERPRETATION AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter data was presented, analyzed, interpreted and discussed. The purpose of this study was to investigate the influence of play on social and emotional development of pre-school children in Kyangwithya Zone, Kitui County. The study sought to; determine whether the availability of play materials influence children's social and emotional development, to investigate how time allocation for play in preschools affect social and emotional development of children, to establish whether the presence of the teacher in children's play affects children's social and emotional development and to investigate how different types of play promote social and emotional skills development. The sample size for the study was 6 preschool teachers and 75 children. Data for this study was collected using the questionnaires for teachers and observation list for children. The collected data was analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics.

4.2 Demographic Data

The researcher sought to establish the demographic data for the respondents before presenting data relating to the objectives of the study. The demographic data included; respondent's gender, age bracket, academic qualification and working experience.

4.2.1 Distribution of Respondents by Gender

The researcher first sought to know the gender of the respondents so as to establish whether the study was gender sensitive. The results were shown in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1 : Distribution of Respondents by Gender

Gender	Frequency	Percent
Female	5	83.3
Male	1	16.70
Total	**6**	**100.0**

Table 4.1 revealed that, majority (83.3%) of the respondents interviewed ware female while 16.70% were female. This shows that there was a gender imbalance in the gender distribution of respondents however this was not likely to affect the results of the study.

4.2.2 Distribution of Respondents by Age

The study sought to investigate the age distribution of the respondents with the aim of establishing whether the various age brackets were represented in the study. The results were presented in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2 : Age Distribution of Respondents

Age bracket	Frequency	Percent
Below 25	1	16.7
26-35	1	16.7
36-45	3	50.0
Over 45	1	16.7
Total	**6**	**100.0**

Table 4.2 revealed that, majority (50%) of the respondents were 36 – 45 years of age with the rest of age brackets having equal age distribution of 16.7%

4.2.3 Academic Qualification of Respondents

The researcher sought to investigate the academic qualification for respondents. The results were presented in Table 4.3.

Table 4.3 : Respondent's Academic Level

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Certificate	3	50.0
Diploma	2	33.3
Graduate	1	16.7
Total	**6**	**100.0**

The data in Table 4.3 shows that majority (50%) of the respondents had a certificate as their highest level of Education while the least (16%) was a graduate. This shows that all the respondents were qualified to teach pre-schools and were therefore in a better position to give quality information relating to the study.

4.2.4 Working Experience of the Respondents

The researcher sought to establish the length of service of the respondents as a pre-school teacher. The responses were presented in Table 4.4.

Table 4. 4 : Respondent's Working Experience

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
5 years and below	3	50.0
6 – 10	2	33.3
11 – 15	1	16.7
16 and above	0	0.0
Total	**6**	**100.0**

The data in Table 4.4 shows that majority (50%) of the respondents had worked for 5 years and below as pre-school teachers. This shows that they had an experience which could lead to gathering enough information for this study.

4.3 Availability of Play Materials and Children's Social and Emotional Development

This study first sought to determine whether the availability of play materials influence children's social and emotional development. The researcher first requested the respondents to indicate whether they had play materials in their classrooms.

Table 4.5 : Presence of Play Materials

Presence	Frequency	Percent
Yes	6	100.0
No	0	0.00
Total	**6**	**100.0**

It was reported by 100% that they had play materials in their classrooms (Table 4.5). This shows that the teachers understood the importance of having play materials in their classrooms. As a result they were in a position to give information on whether the play materials influenced children's social and emotional development. The respondents were further requested to indicate play materials available in their classroom.

Table 4.6: Play Materials Available in the Classroom

Materials	Available	Not available	Total (%)
Balls	6(100%)	0 (0%)	**6(100%)**
Swings	3(50%)	3 (50%)	**6(100%)**
Slides	0 (0%)	6(100%)	**6(100%)**
Beanbags	0(0%)	6(100%)	**6(100%)**
Tyres	6(100%)	0 (0%)	**6(100%)**
Dolls	2(33.3%)	4(66.7%)	**6(100%)**
Toy cars	2(33.3%)	4(66.7%)	**6(100%)**
Mean	**3(50%)**	**3 (50%)**	**6(100%)**

Table 4.6 show that all the pre-schools 100% had balls and tyres while all the schools lacked slides and beanbags. It was also observed that dolls and toys were not many in most pre-schools (66.7%). Although there were some play materials in all the schools it was reported that they were not adequate.

The researcher further sought to establish whether there was a relationship between presence of play materials and social skill development using Pearson correlation coefficient as shown in Table 4.7.

Table 4.7 : Relationship between Availability of Play Materials and Social Skills Development

		Availability of Play materials	Social skills development
Availability of play materials	Pearson Correlation	1	0.75
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.001
	N	6	6
Social skills development	Pearson Correlation	0.75	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.001	
	N	6	6

There seem to be a strong positive correlation (r = +0.75) between availability of play materials and Social skills development of children in pre-schools. There is also a significant difference ($p<0.05$).This means that if there are more play materials and are well used then the children are likely to have a good social skills development in our pre-schools. These results resonates with Elis (2000) who argues that children should be provided with playing materials as a way of enhancing their play since play materials for children add value to play. Teachers and parents are therefore required to provide playing materials to their children so as to help them get engaged in meaningful play which influences their social skills development.

Coolahan (2000) states that play is integral to the academic environment. It ensures social and emotional development of children as well as their cognitive development and that it

has been shown to help children adjust to the school setting and enhance children's learning readiness, learning behaviors, and problem solving skills. Coolahan (2000) further argues that social emotional learning is best integrated with academic learning; it is concerning if some of the forces that enhance children's ability to learn are elevated at the expense of others. Play and unscheduled time that allow for peer interactions are important components of social –emotional learning (Elias &Arnold, 2006). This can only be achieved if there are play materials in the schools.

4.4 Time Allocation for Play and Children's Social and Emotional Development

The second objective for this study was to investigate how time allocation for play in pre-schools affects social and emotional development of children. The researcher requested the respondents to indicate whether the time allocated for play and out-door activities was adequate. The responses were indicated in Table 4.8.

Table 4.8: Adequacy of Play and Out-door Activities Time

Presence	Frequency	Percent
Yes	6	100.0
No	0	0.00
Total	**6**	**100.0**

Table 4.8 revealed that, in all the schools (100%) the allocated time for play and out – door activities was not adequate. This means that the schools should reduce classroom activities so as to increase out-door and play time. The researcher further requested the

respondents to indicate the out-door activities enjoyed by their children. The responses were presented in Table 4.9.

Table 4.9 : Outdoor Activities

Activities	Enjoyed	Not enjoyed	Total (%)
Climbing	3(50%)	3 (50%)	**6(100%)**
Swinging	2(33.3%)	4 (66.7%)	**6(100%)**
Construction	6(100%)	0(0%)	**6(100%)**
Role playing	6(100%)	0(0%)	**6(100%)**
Mean	**4(66.7%)**	**2 (33.3%)**	**6(100%)**

Table 4.9 revealed that majority (100%) of the children enjoyed construction and role playing with 50% enjoying climbing. It was however reported that only 33.3% enjoyed swinging. The researcher further used Chi-square test to determine whether there was an association between play time and children social emotional development. The results were presented in Table 4.10.

Table 4. 10: Chi-square Tests for Relationship between Play Time and Children Social Emotional Development

	Value	Df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	62.423[a]	4	.000
Likelihood Ratio	7.642	4	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	19.111	1	.000
N of Valid Cases	6		

a. 8 cells (75.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .05.

Table 4.10 revealed that there was significant association (χ^2 (1, 4) = 65.423, $p < 0.05$) between play time and children social emotional development. This implies that children need more play time so as to improve their social emotional development. These results agrees with Mahindu, (2011) who argues that, play activity is a vital activity and thus it should be allocated much time on the timetable since play is the most natural teaching technique which would be properly utilized and practiced to ensure crisis-less transition from home environment. This is because allocation of time to play enables children to enjoy living and learning through play since it develops the children's self awareness and self esteem and thus develop socially and emotionally.

4.5 Presence of the Teacher in the Children's Play and Children's Social and Emotional Development

The third objective for this study was to establish whether the presence of the teacher in children's play affects children's social and emotional development. To achieve this objective the researcher first sought to establish the opinion of teachers on whether

teacher's presence has any impact on the way children play. The responses were presented in Table 4.11.

Table 4.11: Teachers' Presence Impact on the way Children Play

Presence	Frequency	Percent
Yes	6	100.0
No	0	0.00
Total	**6**	**100.0**

Table 4.11 revealed that, all respondents agreed that (100%) teachers' presence has impact on the way children play. This is because they guide the children during play and also provide security for the children as well as helping the children to learn some skills beyond their knowledge.

The researcher further requested the respondents to indicate the skills likely to be learned by their children in the presence of the teachers. The responses were presented in Table 4.12.

Table 4.12: Skills Learned when Children Play in the Presence of the Teachers

Skills	Learned	Not learned	Total (%)
Turn taking	6(100%)	0 (0%)	**6(100%)**
Sharing	6(100%)	0 (0%)	**6(100%)**
Solving disputes	6(100%)	0 (0%)	**6(100%)**
Patience	3(50%)	3(50%)	**6(100%)**
Co-operation	6(100%)	0 (0%)	**6(100%)**
Making friendship	4(66.7%)	2(33.3%)	**6(100%)**
Empathy	2(33.3%)	4(66.7%)	**6(100%)**
Group work	6(100%)	0 (0%)	**6(100%)**

Table 4.12 revealed all the respondents (100%) indicated that the skills learned by children playing in the presence of teachers includes; turn taking sharing, sharing, solving disputes, cooperation and group work. It was also established that the teachers' presence did not impact empathy to a great extent (66.7%). Data collected from observation schedule showed that most children exhibited sharing, turn taking and competence during play, all represented by (66%) .

The researcher further sought to establish the relationship between presence of the teacher in children's play and children's social emotional skills development. The results were presented in Table 4.13.

Table 4.13 : Relationship between Teacher Presence and Social Emotional Skills Development

		Teacher presence	Social emotional skills development
Teacher presence	Pearson Correlation	1	0.73
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.001
	N	6	6
Social emotional skills development	Pearson Correlation	0.73	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.001	
	N	6	6

There seem to be a strong positive correlation r (1, 6) = 0.73, P < 0.05, between presence of the teacher in children's play and children's social emotional skills development. This implies that although the children develop their social emotional skills when teachers are there during play the relationship is very strong. These results resonates with McAfee &Leong (2010) who argues that 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.

4.6 Different Types of Play and Children's Social and Emotional Development

The last objective for this study was to investigate how different types of play promote social and emotional skills development. To achieve this objective the researcher requested the respondents to indicate the kind of play activities the children are engaged in. The results were presented in Table 4.14.

Table 4. 14: Type of Play Activities Children are Engaged in

Type of play	Always	Sometimes	Never
1.Co-operative play e.g. group work	4(66.7%)	2(33.3%)	0 (0%)
2. Manipulative play e.g. construction	2(33.3%)	2(33.3%)	2 (33.3%)
3.Pretend play e.g. role playing	4(66.7%)	2(33.3%)	0 (0%)
4.Creative play e.g. drawing, singing, acting	5(83.3%)	1(16.7%)	0 (0%)
5 Physical play e.g. climbing trees, swinging	4(66.7%)	2(33.3%)	0 (0%)
6.Imaginative play e.g. imagining an event	1(16.7%)	2(33.3%)	3 (50%)

Table 4.14 majority of children (83.3%) engage in creative play followed by manipulative play, co-operative play, and physical play each with (66.7%). The least play type is the imaginative play (16.7%).

The researcher further sought to establish the relationship between type of play and skills and emotional development using Pearson correlation coefficient. The results were presented in table 4.15.

Table 4.15: Relationship between Play Type and Social Emotional Skills Development

		Play type	Social and Emotional development
Play type	Pearson Correlation	1	0.663
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.001
	N	6	6
Social and Emotional development	Pearson Correlation	0.663	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.001	
	N	6	6

There seem to be a strong positive correlation r (1,6) = 0.663, P < 0.05,between play type and children's social emotional skills development. This means that if the types are increased the social and emotional skills would develop more. This agrees with the American Academy of Pediatrics (2014) who argues that different types of play teach your child how to engage with the world from a very early age. This is because different types of play can be educational as well as fun. You can promote your child's social development by encouraging him to play games that require taking turns, sharing and cooperating. One can also provide a range of age appropriate puzzles and board games for indoor play.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the summary of the findings, conclusions, recommendations and suggestions for further research.

5.2 Summary of the Findings

The purpose of this study was to investigate the impact of play on social and emotional development of preschoolers in Kyangwithya Zone, Kitui County. Four research questions were formulated to guide the study. These were; to determine whether the availability of play materials influence children's social and emotional development, to investigate how time allocation for play in pre schools affect social and emotional development in children, to establish whether the presence of the teacher or caregiver in children's play affect children's social and emotional development and lastly, to investigate how different types of play promote social and emotional skills development. The study employed a descriptive survey design which is used in preliminary and exploratory studies to allow researchers to gather information from 6 pre-school teachers using the questionnaires as the main research instruments The collected data was analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics which included frequency distribution tables, Pearson correlation coefficients and Chi-square.

The study established that all pre-schools 100% had balls and tyres while all the schools lacked slides and beanbags. It was also observed that dolls and toys were not many in most pre- schools (66.7%).Although there were some play materials in all the schools it

was reported that they were not adequate. It was also established that there was a strong positive correlation (r = +0.75) between Availability of play materials and Social skills development of children in pre-schools and that the availability of play materials influence social and emotional development significantly ($p<0.05$).

The study too established that majority (100%) of the children enjoyed construction and role playing with 50% enjoying climbing and only 33.3% enjoying swinging. It was also established that there was a significant association (χ^2 (1, 4) = 65.423, $p< 0.05$) between play time and children's social emotional development. This implies that children need more play time so as to improve their social emotional development.

The study established that, all respondents agreed that (100%) teachers' presence has impact on the way children play. This is because they guide the children during play and also provide security for the children as well as helping the children to learn some skills beyond their knowledge. Also all the respondents (100%) indicated that the skills learned by children playing in the presence of teachers include; turn taking sharing, sharing, solving disputes, cooperation and group work. It was also established that the teachers' presence did not impact empathy to a great extent (66.7%). There was also strong positive correlation r (1, 6) = 0.73, $P < 0.05$, between presence of the teacher in children's play and children's social emotional skills development.

The study has established that majority of children (83.3%) engage in creative play followed by manipulative play, co-operative play, and physical play each with (66.7%). The least play type is the imaginative play (16.7%). The study also established that there is a strong positive correlation r (1, 6) = 0.663, $P < 0.05$, between play type and

children's social and emotional development. This means that if the types are increased the social and emotional skills would develop more.

5.3 Conclusion of the Study

Based on the findings of this study the researcher made the following conclusions; the availability of play materials significantly influenced the social skills and emotional development of children in pre-schools. This is because children need play materials to be motivated to take part in play which consequently improves social skills and emotional development. The researcher also concluded the amount of time allocated for play significantly influences social and emotional development of children in pre-schools. The more children played the better for their social and emotional development.

Thirdly the researcher concluded that the teachers' presence during children's' play was very important as it influenced the children social skills and emotional development by providing guidance on difficulty pays as well as providing security. The researcher finally concluded that the children who engaged in different types of play significantly improved their social skills and emotional development. This is because every play has a certain part it plays in the Social and Emotional development of a child and therefore the more the better.

5.4. Recommendations from the Study

After interpreting the data for this study and making conclusions, the research made the following recommendations:-

i. The schools should provide more varieties of play material to pre-school children as this is likely to improve their social skills and emotional development.

ii. The Ministry of Education should allow more time for outdoor and play activities in the pre-school timetable so as to expose the children to more play.

iii. The pre-school teachers should always be near the children during play so as to motivate the children and also protect them from dangerous play.

iv. The pre-schools should increase the play varieties so as to motivate the children to enjoy playing.

5.5 Suggestion for Further Research

The purpose of this study was to investigate the impact of play on social and emotional development of preschoolers. Further research can be done on the following.

i. The impact of play on cognitive development.

ii. The negative effect of play on child morals.

iii. The impact of play on social and emotional development of primary school pupils.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Introduction Letter to the Respondents

Winnie M. Wathu

South Eastern Kenya University

P.O BOX 170-90200

KITUI

Dear Sir/Madam.

RE; RESEARCH STUDY

I am a student from South Eastern Kenya University (SEKU) Kitui Campus, pursuing Master of Education in Early Childhood Development and Education (ECDE). Currently, I am in the process of undertaking a research on The Impact of Play on Social and Emotional Development of Pre-school children in Kyangwithya Zone, Kitui County.

I therefore kindly request to be granted permission to carry out the study in your school. Thank You.

Yours Faithfully,

Winnie M. Wathu.

E56/KIT/20429/2013.

M.ED-ECDE Student,

SEKU – Kitui Campus.

Appendix B: Questionnaire for Teachers

This questionnaire aims at investigating the impact of play on children's social emotional skills development in pre-schools in Kyangwithya Zone, Kitui County. Please answer all questions as honestly as possible. Do not write your name. Thank you.

SECTION A: **Demographic data**

1. What is your gender?

   Male ☐ Female ☐

2. What is your age bracket?

   25 and below ☐ 36-45 ☐

   26-35 ☐ 45 and above ☐

3. What is your highest educational qualification?

   Certificate ☐

   Diploma ☐

   Graduate ☐

   Others (specify)_____

4. What type of school do you teach in?

   Private ☐

   Public ☐

5. For how long have you been a pre-school teacher?

   5 years and below ☐ 11-15 years ☐

   6-10 years ☐ 16 and above ☐

6. How long have you taught in your current pre-school?

   Less than 1 year ☐ 3-5 years ☐

   1-2 years ☐ over 10 years ☐

7. Do you find the time allocated for play in the time table adequate?

   Yes ☐ No ☐

SECTION B: Impact of Play on Social and Emotional Development

1) Do you have playing materials in your classroom?

Yes ☐ No ☐

2) Please, tick the playing materials available in your classroom

   a) Balls ☐

   b) Swings ☐

   c) Slides ☐

   d) Bean bags ☐

   e) Tyres ☐

   f) Dolls ☐

   g) Toy cars ☐

3) Are these playing materials locally made or purchased? _____

4) Do your children often use these playing materials during play?

   Yes ☐ No ☐

5) Are these playing materials adequate for the children in your class

Yes ☐ No ☐

6) According to the timetable, how many times do your children go out to play?

_____

7) How often do you take or accompany your children for outdoor activities?

a. Very often ☐
b. Often ☐
c. Sometime ☐
d. Rarely ☐
e. Very rarely ☐
f. Not at all ☐

8) Which outdoor activities do your children often enjoy engaging in?

a. Climbing ☐
b. Swinging ☐
c. Construction ☐
d. Role playing ☐

9) Do you think that the time allocated for out-door activities and play in the timetable is adequate?

Yes ☐ No ☐

10) If No, what do you suggest should be done to ensure that children engage fully and satisfactorily in outdoor and play activities?

_____

_____

11) Do you ever join children in their play?

Yes ☐ No ☐

12) What difference does it make when you join these children in play?

_____

13) Do you think your presence in children's play has any impact on the way these children play?

Yes ☐ No ☐

14) Which skills are they likely to learn when they are involved in outdoor play activities?

a. Turn taking ☐
b. Sharing ☐
c. Solving disputes ☐
d. Patience ☐
e. Co-operation ☐
f. Making friends ☐
g. Empathy ☐
h. Group work ☐

15) How often do your children engage in the following activities?

ACTIVITY	**Always**	**Sometimes**	**Never**
a) Playing in groups			
b) Playing alone			
c) Sharing play materials			

16) Fill in the type of social play your children are mostly engaged in by ticking (✓) where applicable.

Type of play	**Always**	**Sometimes**	**Never**
1.Co-operative play e.g. group work			
2. Manipulative play e.g. construction			
3.Pretend play e.g. role playing			
4.Creative play e.g. drawing, singing, acting			
5 Physical play e.g. climbing trees, swinging			
6.Imaginative play e.g. imagining an event			

17). Please tick against the choices given which best indicate your level of agreement with the information requested

	Strongly agree	**Agree**	**Undecided**	**Disagree**	**Strongly disagree**
1. All children always engage in play regardless of time or weather					
2. children often fight over playing materials					
3. Adults like teachers and caregivers play a great role in directing children during play as well as security					
4. Children can play the whole day without getting tired					

Appendix C: Observation Schedule for Children

Items to be observed	Comments
Sharing	
Co-operation	
Turn taking	
Responsibility	
Friendliness	
Competence	
Empathy	
Good relation	