

Abstract

This paper presents the findings on availability and use of play materials in play and their influence on social and emotional development of pre-school children in Kyangwithya zone, Kitui County, Kenya. Within this broad aim, the paper provides a better understanding on the importance of play materials, as a catalyst for play, which further enhances social and emotional development. The development of this study was influenced by various concerns of educational stakeholders as to whether pre-schoolers were provided with enough play materials and how these play materials promoted play and social and emotional development. The data collection methods involved questionnaires and observation schedules. A total of 9 pre-schools, 75 preschoolers and 6 teachers were involved in the study. The selection was done through purposive sampling and simple random sampling. It was found out that majority of the schools had play materials. However, these materials were not adequate for the children, hence this did not support variety that promote and stimulate prolonged play, which enhances social and emotional development. Also, there was a strong positive correlation ($r=+0.75$) between availability of play materials and social development of children and a significant difference ($p<0.05$). These means that if there is more variety of play materials and are well used, the children are likely to have good social and emotional development. The paper recommends that the schools should provide more varied assortment of play material to pre-school children as this is likely to improve their social and emotional development. On the whole, the study's findings are seen to be of particular relevance to curriculum developers, administrators and teachers in Kenya