PARENTAL PARTICIPATION IN EARLY CHILDHOOD CARE AND EDUCATION: AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF KNOWLEDGE AND BEHAVIOURS OF PARENTS IN NAKAWA DIVISION, KAMPALA

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A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL WORK AND SOCIAL ADMINISTRATION IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD OF A BACHELORS DEGREE IN SOCIAL WORK AND SOCIAL ADMINISTRATION OF MAKERERE UNIVERSITY KAMPALA.

OCTOBER 2018
DECLARATION

I, TORACH RICHARD DANIEL, declare that this dissertation is from my original work and has never been presented for publication or award of a degree in any other institution of learning but is rather being submitted in partial fulfillment for the award in a Bachelor’s Degree of Social Work and Social Administration from Makerere University.

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Signature: ................................ Date: ............................................

12/10/2018
DEDICATION.

This dissertation is dedicated to my late parents Mr. and Mrs. Odong and to my brother Mr. Oryem John Kenny for his continued support and guidance.
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May God bless you all abundantly!
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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS
ECCE – Early Childhood Care and Education.
EfA – Education for All
CwDs – Children with Disabilities
GoU – Government of Uganda
MDD – Music Dance and Drama
MGLSD – Ministry of Gender Labour and Social Development
NIECD – National Integrated Early Childhood Development
OECD – Organisation For Economic Co-orporation and Development
PhD – Doctor of Philosophy
PI – Parental Involvement
PTA – Parent Teachers Meeting
SDG – Sustainable Development Goals
SES – Social Economic Status
SWSA – Social Work and Social Administration
ABSTRACT.
Parental involvement during preschool has been linked with stronger pre-literacy skills, acquisition of mathematical skills, well-developed social skills, and positive attitudes towards school. This qualitative study was conducted in Nakawa Division, as to examine parental participation while exploring the knowledge and behaviours of parents towards their roles and responsibilities in the early learning and care of their children. It was conducted as a cross sectional study with a sample of fifteen (15) parents, selected through purposive sampling. Data was collected through personal interviews using open ended questions. The study found out that parents had a high level knowledge regarding the need for parental participation in early childhood care and education. Parents were also actively involved in early childhood care and education. However, not all the respondents were actively involved, most especially the fathers as they claimed about always being caught up by their jobs, but they still created time to interact and play with the children. The parents also responded positively to the state of communication between them and the school as they claimed it was efficient and effective since the school always called and contacted them in case of any programs and activities. The study then recommends for support to be provided to parents as way of increasing their involvement in early learning and care so as to enhance the growth, development and academic performances of their children.
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

The qualitative study set out to investigate parental participation in early childhood care and education (ECCE). The focus of the study was on establishing the knowledge and behaviours of parents regarding their responsibilities in early childhood care and education of their children. This chapter presents the background of the study, problem statement, research objectives and questions, and the scope of the study. The key concepts used in this study are also presented, as well as a description of organization of the thesis.

1.1 Background

Parents have always been viewed by society as occupying a central role in their children’s education. Beginning with the colonial schools, parents were expected to be involved with school governance, the support of curriculum, the selection of teachers, and the backing of religious teachings (Hiatt, 1994).

Parental involvement refers to the participation of parents in regular two-way and meaningful communication involving student academic learning and other school activities (Holloway, 2018). Parental involvement in the education of children has for long been considered to be a crucial contributor to the educational outcomes of children (Holloway, 2018). In the United States, a number of state educational agencies (SEA) and local educational agencies (LEAs) have implemented plans to engage parents in their children’s schooling (ibid).

Among the western countries, there has been advocacy for parental involvement in education over the last three decades, as a result of studies verifying its importance in children’s development (Anderson, K.J., and K.M. Minke., 2007). Studies have shown that parental involvement in children’s is associated with positive child outcomes, such as academic achievement and socio-emotional well-being (Li, H., and N. Rao., 2000).

A study to determine the levels of parental involvement in children’s education in lower classes, found out that children whose parents regularly consulted teachers were high achievers compared to those who rarely consulted teachers(Susan E, M., & Minnesota L., 2006).
According to Powell, (2010), parents’ active involvement in their children’s learning has been shown to improve children’s academic, behavioral, and social outcomes. This greatly improves on their interaction with others thus resulting into sustainable growth and development of children. The benefits of parental involvement transcend the child and extend to the school and community. Parental involvement benefits the school by providing a number of valuable resources, for example, parent volunteers for different school activities. It also bridges the gap and builds strong relationship between parents and the school through parents participating in the different school activities (Lau. E., Rao. N, Li H, 2012).

The pre-school years present crucial opportunities for parental involvement in children’s early education (Arnold et al, 2008). As previous research has suggested that parental involvement is critical during the early years, the period when children come to realize their role as learners and adjust to the education system (Hill, N.E., and L.C. Taylor, 2004).

The preschool era is also considered as the period of early childhood care and education, the first stage of formal learning for children. It promotes the moral, physical, mental and social development of a child, and builds a solid foundation for lifelong learning and wellbeing (Young, 2000).

In the United States, the genesis of early childhood education is traced to European settler mothers in the early 1800’s that educated children outside their homes. (Lipoff, 2011).

In Uganda, early childhood education was introduced in the 1930s by the colonial administrators and Goan Indians to prepare children for formal education (Ejuu G. , 2012). In 1993, an early childhood education and care policy began to emerge in response to the Education Policy Review Commission Report, which observed a lack of government control over the quality of the curriculum, teaching methods, facilities, age of entry and quality of teachers (GoU, 2000).

Later on the Education Act 2008 recognized pre-primary education as the first level of education in Uganda. The ECD education sector policy recognizes four programs; day care centers, home based centers, community centers and Nursery Schools.

However, majority of these centers (about 80%) are in the hands of the private sector, and out of the financial reach of most Uganda.
To harmonize the provision of services to children in their formative years, the government of Uganda developed the National Integrated Early Childhood Development (NIECD) policy in 2016. The policy is comprised of seven policy actions, one of which focuses on the area of early childhood care and education.

The study focus of the Early Education and Care policy action is on increasing access to equitable, quality, integrated, inclusive and developmentally appropriate early learning and stimulation opportunities for all children below eight years in Uganda (GOU, 2016).

The policy identified and recognized parents as the main and primary caregivers to children, mandated to play various roles in early childhood care and education (GOU, 2016).

It is against this background that this study was conceptualized to obtain insights on the participation of parents in early childhood care and education in Uganda.

1.2 Statement of the Research Problem

The active involvement of parents in their children’s education during the early years has been shown to improve children’s academic, behavioral, and social outcomes (Powell, D. R., Son, S., File, N., & San Juan, R. R., 2010). Despite this, there is evidence to suggest that in Africa, parent’s participation in their children’s early education is limited as they (parents) have limited understanding of their roles and how they can get involved (Copland, 2017).

Anecdotal evidence suggests that once parents send their children into formal school, the teachers have the primary responsibility to enforce learning. Learning, training and teaching therefore has become a major sole responsibility of teachers or substitute parents (Van wyk, 2000, p. 261).

In the Ugandan context, there is a dearth of literature on parental participation in early childhood care and education. A report by the Ministry of Education indicated that childcare and development had shifted from being a family and community responsibility to more formal or school setting of providing care to children (Ministry of Education and sports, 2007).

The extent to which parents in Uganda are knowledgeable about their responsibility in early childhood care and education still remains unknown. In addition, little is known about parental involvement practices in the early school years among Ugandan parents.
Therefore this exploratory study sought to establish parent’s knowledge of their responsibilities as well as their behaviours in supporting the early care and education of their children.

1.3 Purpose and Objectives of study

The main purpose of the study was to examine parental participation while exploring parent’s knowledge regarding their responsibilities as well as involvement in early childhood care and education of their children.

1.3.1 General objectives

The overall objective of the study was to examine parental participation in early childhood care and education among parents of Nakawa Division, Kampala.

1.3.2 Specific objectives

The specific objectives were as follows:

1. To explore the knowledge of parents regarding their roles and responsibilities in Early Childhood care and education for their children.
2. To describe parental behaviours and involvement in early childhood care and education for their children.

1.4 Research Questions

1. What do parents know about their roles and responsibilities in the areas early childhood care and education?
2. How do parents in Nakawa Division participate in early childhood care and education?
1.5 Scope of study

The study was conducted in Nakawa Division, one of the five (5) Administrative Divisions of Kampala. The division consists of 22 parishes with 640 villages and 6 settlements of Banda, Bukoto I, Butabika, Kinawataka, Mambo Bado Kisenyi Luzira and Naguru. The qualitative study was conducted as a cross-sectional study as it sought to generate in-depth information about parental participation in early childhood care and education, at a single point in time.

The study primarily focused on parental participation while examining key issues of knowledge and behaviors of the parents towards their roles and responsibilities in early childhood care and education. Although the idea of early childhood care and education has been conceptualized broadly to include learning and stimulation that take place as soon as conception takes place, this study has limited itself to the preschool setting, which normally begins at the age of three (3). An exploration of earlier learning was done, for the purpose of establishing parents’ knowledge regarding when learning begins, but the main focus of the study is around the preschools, which are also variously referred to as nursery schools or kindergartens.

While there are a number of stakeholders in early childhood care and education including teachers, parents, government ministries, departments and agencies, this current study was primarily focused on one stakeholder, the parent. It included fifteen (15) parents with children below the age of eight (8), and were the primary caretakers of their children, and were selected through non-probability sampling techniques of purposive sampling from the approached pre-primary schools in the study area. The data was collected over a period of eight days through personal interviews using an open-ended interview guide. Data was analysed using thematic analysis.

1.6 Justification of the study

The study findings generate new knowledge on perceptions and attitudes towards parental involvement in early childhood development education in Uganda. The findings may also be used as reference for policy suggestions, formulations and improvements of the current NIECD policy, and other related policies on early childhood development.
The study findings shall be used as reference and guidance to future researchers and scholars with interest in early childhood care and education.

1.7 Definition of key concepts

The key concepts used in the study are defined to provide clarity:

**Early childhood development:** is the first stage of growth from time of conception to age of 8 years as in Uganda but however the international community tends to define it as a period up to the age of 6. This period is recognized as a critical time in the life of a human being. It is the period during which investments made in the life of an individual are most likely to yield long time benefits for that individual and also for society as a collective.

**Early childhood care and education:** is the first stage of care and learning that a child under both formal (school) and informal education (home). Early childhood care and education 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. Although children begin to learn about the world around them from a very early age – including during the prenatal, perinatal (immediately before and after birth) and postnatal period, in this study, early childhood care and education is limited to the period during which children go to preschool, for formal learning.

**Parent:** is a legal and biological guardian of a child, as they have the legal and primary responsibility to nurture and groom their children into responsible citizens. They are expected to invest an array of resources, including emotional, financial, time, cultural into the care and upbringing of children.

**Participation:** is the act of getting involved in activities, a case study of early childhood education and care. The study looks at getting involved as fulfilling the different roles and responsibilities.

1.8 Organisation of the dissertation

This dissertation is divided into five chapters. The first chapter presents the background, problem statement, objectives, research questions, scope and definition of key terms. Chapter two looks at literature review on different documents, reports and writings on early childhood care and education by different authors. Chapter three includes the methodology of the study, and
provides a description of how the research was conducted. It presents an overview the research design, study population, data collection methods and analysis, as well as challenges that arose during the research process. Chapter four covers data analysis and presentation of findings, while chapter five presents a summary for findings, recommendations and conclusion from the study.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This section presents a review of literature, on early childhood care and education. The literature is organized under themes of legal and policy context, knowledge of parents, parental behaviours and benefits of participation in ECCE and a theoretical framework.

2.2 Legal and policy context on early childhood care and education

Early Childhood Development (ECD) is a period of a child’s life from 0-8 years. It is a process through which children grow and thrive physically, mentally, socially, emotionally and morally. ECD includes basically four stages; conception to birth, 0-3years, 3-6years, 6-8years (GOU, 2016).

Over the past years, National Governments, international bodies including United Nations under its agency UNICEF, and humanitarian bodies like Save the Children have all specialized in research about state of early childhood development both at the local and international level. Researchers, policy makers and practitioners have all attributed the importance of parental involvement in children’s education because of the benefits that arise when parents and early years’ practitioners work together for children’s interests (Kernana, 2012).

The OECD has identified five levers as key policies to encourage the quality of early childhood care and education including, setting out quality goals and regulations, designing and implementing curriculum and standards, improving qualifications, trainings and working conditions, engaging families and communities, advancing data collection, research and monitoring, basing on the above levers, Portugal selected designing and implementing curriculum and standards as a policy theme with reference countries in focus for international comparison being Australia and Scotland (Taguma, M., Litjens, I. & Makwecki, K., 2012).
Under goal four (4) of the sustainable development goals, early childhood development (ECD) is aimed at ensuring inclusive and equitable education and learning opportunities for all. It indicated that in 2014, two (2) out of three (3) children worldwide participated in pre-primary or primary education in the year prior to the official entrance age for primary school compared to only four (4) in ten (10) children in the poorest countries (United Nations, 2017).

In Uganda, an early childhood education and care policy began to emerge in 1993 in response to the Education Policy Review Commission Report, which observed a lack of government control over the quality of the curriculum, teaching methods, facilities, age of entry. Quality of teachers and pre-school levied (GoU, 2000). The Government of Uganda is cognizant of the fact that effective ECD programming requires effective integration and harmonization of policies across sectors and has therefore developed the National Integrated Early Childhood Development policy of Uganda targeting children from conception to 8 years” (GOU, 2016).

The implementation of the NIECD Policy through MGLSD shall undertake a multi-sectoral approach with contributions and participation of stakeholders from various entities in accordance with their primary mandates including parents, teachers, different Ministries and departments within the country (GOU, 2016).

Therefore the primary stakeholders that are the parents have been mandated to play a number of roles that include: provide enabling environment, to meet all the needs of the child in the different ECD age cohorts; 0-3, 3–6, 6-8, for holistic development, do early brain stimulation for proper future development of the child, act as reservoirs for culture and pass on the positive aspects to the children, inculcate life skills, spiritual and moral values in all children for character development, provide primary health care and ensure early detection and assessment of disabilities and engage appropriate interventions to mitigate the disability, ensure registration of the child at birth and death and acquire certificates in either case for all Children including those with disabilities (CwDs) (GOU, 2016).

The NIECD policy is based on a number guiding principles that include holistic development of the child, equity in access to ECD services, context specific, family and community engagement, good governance and Accountability, rights based approach, public-private partnership and inclusive and complementary service provisions.
It is also constituted of seven (7) policy actions that include Early Childhood Care and Education, Food Security and Nutrition, Child Protection, Primary Health Care, Sanitation and Environment, Family strengthening and support, Communication, Advocacy and Resource mobilisation and lastly Multi sectorial partnerships and coordination (GOU, 2016).

With the current study having focused on the policy actions which is early childhood care and education as a priority so as to examine parental involvement while exploring parent’s knowledge and behaviours towards their responsibilities in the early learning and care of children. Under this policy action, the Government of Uganda will ensure that children’s early learning at all stages of development is implemented and supported, and will focus on increasing access to equitable, quality, integrated, inclusive and developmentally appropriate early learning and stimulation opportunities and programs for all children below eight years in Uganda (GOU, 2016).

The Government of Uganda shall also ensure implementation and support of early learning centres and ensure protection of children from conception to 8 years (GOU, March, 2016) therefore the policy action will be aimed at increasing equity, equality and promoted growth and development of children into efficient and effective citizens. This initiative can be supported by stakeholders especially the parents and teachers thus this will be based on their knowledge and attitudes towards their participation in early childhood learning and care.

On the other hand, the Education Act 2008 recognizes pre-primary education as the first level of education in Uganda, as the NIECD education sector policy recognizes four programmes; day care centers, home based centers, community centres and nursery schools. However, majority of these centers (about 80%) are in the hands of the private sector, and out of the financial reach of most Ugandans. There are very few children benefiting from institutionalized ECD centers, the rest sit at homes with their parents, yet the services given to the parents to be able to address the ECD needs of those Children are minimal (Government of Uganda, 2008).

The Education for All (EFA) Assessment report sidelined recommendations and guidelines to be followed thus government commitment in seeing early childhood as crucial to the holistic
development of an individual (Lenira, 2002). This was adapted from the drafted NIECD policy (GOU, 2016).

However, it was established that childcare and development had shifted from being a family and community responsibility to more formal setting. This basically means that the provision of childcare and education is being shifted from the role of the family that includes parents, relatives and guardians to a more formal setting that involves child care centres, kindergarten and nursery schools under the supervision of teachers (Ministry of Education and sports, 2007).

Based on findings by the Ministry of Education in Uganda, most of the nursery schools countrywide were neither licensed nor registered with inadequate supervision and inspection by the inspectorate as most Districts Inspectors of Schools did not feel it was their mandate to supervise these institutions (Ministry of Education and sports, 2007).

This was against the Education act of 2008 that required all private schools to be registered by the Permanent Secretary, chief Administrative officer or town clerk under section 34 whom when satisfied with their operation after a period of two school years, would issue a certificate of registration and classification (GoU, 2008).

However, this act of not registering was being attributed to the lack of an existing guiding policy of which five years later, an early childhood development policy was launched. A study on Status of implementation of the ECD Policy in Uganda, was conducted to evaluate its effectiveness in being used to provide quality early childhood services, and the results of this study may be used to inform the policy review and cover any gaps (Dr. Ejuu, 2012).

Based on previous studies, it was stated that the lack of policy were a barrier to parental involvement as voluntary participation by schools results in uneven practice with an absence of specific legislation on parental involvement (Hornyby, 2000). Also pointed out was the inconsistency within different educational sectors and government policy also account for the practice of poor attitude towards parental involvement (Hornyby, 2000).

Recommendations on strengthening school polices towards parental involvement in early childhood care and education could be of great benefit to children and the community at large as this could therefore can be undertaken through trainings, seminars, workshops and parent-teachers meetings so as to boost their knowledge and produce positive response to towards their participation in early childhood development and care (Daniel, 2011).
In a study by Honig, (1979), he stated that a parent’s ‘Bill of Rights’ should include rights to: knowledge about child development both emotional and cognitive, observation skills for more effective parenting, alternative strategies for problem prevention and discipline, knowledge about how to use home based learning experiences for children, language tools and storytelling skills, awareness of being the most important early teachers of their children.

2.3 Knowledge of parents regarding their participation in terms of roles and responsibilities in early learning and care of children.

Knowledge refers to a set of facts, information and ideas acquired by a person. Therefore this section includes the literature from different scholars about parental knowledge in ECCE. Parenting is multidimensional and must to respond to the needs of children, develop both depth and breadth of knowledge, ranging from being aware of developing milestones and norms that help in keeping children safe and healthy to understanding the roles professionals like educators, childcare workers, health workers, social workers, social systems like institutions, law and policies that interact with families in support parenting (Breiner H, Ford M, Gadsden VL., 2016).

It was argued that knowledge on specific ways in which parents can help children develop cognitive and academic skills like skills in math, is limited. However parents who know about how children develop language are more likely to have children with emergent literacy skills for example letter sound awareness relative to parents who do not (Ladd et al, 2011).

The importance of parent’s knowledge in child development is a primary theme of many efforts to supporting parenting, as the Evidence-Based recommendations by the American Psychological Association Task Force on Evidence based Practice with children and Adolescents and the WHO emphasized the need for policy and program initiatives to promote parenting knowledge (World Health Organisation, 2009). This is being aimed at increasing and guiding the levels of parenting in early childhood care and education. The support for the importance of parenting knowledge to parenting practices is found in multiple sources and is applicable to a range of cognitive and social emotional behaviours. Several studies that have shown that parents especially the mothers with high knowledge of child development are more likely to provide
books and learning material tailored to children’s interests, age and engage in more reading, talking and storytelling relative to parents with less knowledge. (Grusec, 2011).

It is also reported that a parent who understands and knows what their children is working on at preschool, has better senses of their children’s competency and which areas they need to improve on confidence and ability (Spreeuwenberg, 2015). For example hen a parent is in contact with their children’s school, they can easily follow up their social interaction, academic performances as this can easily enable parents to identify any gaps in child’s development and fill them up immediately.

Fathers understanding of their young children’s development in language and literacy is associated with being better prepared to support their children (Carbrera N J., Fitzgerald H E., Bradley R H., RoggmanL., 2014). It is also argued that parents who do not know that learning begins at birth are less likely to be engaged in practices that promote learning during infancy. They also usually fail to appreciate the importance of exposing the infants to hearing and language development. This is evidenced by findings on mothers who assumed that very young children are not attentive have been found to be less likely to respond to their children’s attempts to interact and engage with them. (Putnam S.P., Sanson A.v., Rothbart M.k., 2002).

Stronger evidence of the role of knowledge towards child development in supporting parents outcome stated that parents of young children showed to increase in knowledge about children’s development and practices pertaining ECD. (Yousafzai A K, Rasheed M A, Rizvi A, Amstrong R, Bhutta Z A., 2015). Some studies have found direct associations between parental knowledge and child outcomes including reduced behavioral challenges and improvements on measures of cognitive and motor performances (Rowe M L. Coker D, Pan B A., 2004).

The focus on parental knowledge as a point of intervention is important because parent’s knowledge of child-development is related to their practices and behaviours (Okagaki L & Bingham G E., 2005). This is evidenced by mother who have strong knowledge about child development have been found to interact more with their children positively compared to those with less knowledge. Parents who understand child development are also less likely to have age inappropriate expectations for their children which affects the use of appropriate discipline, nature and quality of parent child interactions (Huang et all, 2005). However, there has been a
variation in parent’s knowledge about childrearing as studies suggest that parents with higher levels of education tend to know more about child developmental milestones and processes compared to those with low levels of education (Huang K.Y., Caughy, Genevro J.L, 2005).

Parents knowledge of how to meet their children’s basic physical an emotional needs as well as of how to read infant cues and signals can improve the synchronicity between parent and child, ensue proper growth and development. Parental knowledge on infant behaviours is associated with positive changes in the home environment. This therefore looks at whenever parents express knowledge on their children’s needs and go ahead to meet them, then in the long run this shall boost on their growth and development. For example when parents are able to provide the need love and security, basic needs like food, health care to their children, this will boost their attachment, bond between the parent and child as well as their mental, emotional and physical wellbeing.

Given the fact that parental knowledge is a risk factor for child development across a range of domains, the clear understanding of the mechanisms by which parental knowledge impacts on children development and behaviours is limited (Sandra et all, 2014). Studies that have assessed for changes in parenting knowledge have been limited methodologically as similarly there is no clear explication of the link between parental knowledge, behaviours, and mood (ibid). This therefore states that, however much knowledge of parents is a factor that influences the growth and development of children, there is limited literature to indicate how knowledge impacts the development of children.

According to Besser et al, (2009), teaching emotional communication skills to parents that target relationship building should improve the parent-child bond and increase child compliance to parental requests. Parents who learn positive interaction skills can help to develop their child’s self-esteem, providing attention and demonstrating approval for what they are doing. Requiring parents to practice with their own child during program sessions is helpful due to the complicated nature of the skills being taught.

This type of practice allows the training facilitator to provide immediate reinforcement and corrective feedback to ensure parents’ mastery of the skills. Therefore with this knowledge and
skills we see parents being able to full responsibilities by practically getting involved with their children in different activities at home and at school.

A study conducted by Lau, (2012), noted that most parents are particularly reluctant to participate in formal school bodies, such as the Parent Teacher Association (PTA) and the School Board, as parents considered such involvement as official and worried that their lack of knowledge would result in their vices being ignored (Lau . E., Rao. N, Li H, 2012).

Although children spend the largest proportion of their young lives in their direct home environment, out-of-home care has become increasingly popular since the 1980s, due to higher female labour participation rates and increasing awareness of the benefits of ECCE (Litjens, I. and M. Taguma, 2010), (OECD, 2006). Therefore here we look at circumstances where the parents shall have an increased awareness on the benefits of ECCE which in turn will boost their participation.

2.4 Parental involvement and behaviours in early childhood care and education.

This study looks at parental involvement in terms of the way parents are being engaged that is the responsibilities they play in early childhood care and education of their children both at home and school. Parental involvement has greatly been advocated for in western countries since the 1980s, as a result of studies verifying its importance in children’s development (Anderson, K.J., and K.M. Minke., 2007), (Ice, C.L., and K.V. Hoover-Dempsey. , 2011). However, based on my own review, there is limited indigenous literature on advocacy and verification of importance of parental participation.

Two forms of parental involvement were revealed that include spontaneous paternal interactions and planned interventions, and it was stated that spontaneous paternal interactions indirectly supported the child, through factors like having high expectations and socio-economic status and confidence impacted on this interaction. (Desforges, C & Abouchaar,A., 2003). Parent involvement has been associated with mothers responding to child-related issues, as in most cases the responsibility rests on mothers (Kernana, 2012). While some parents want to be
involved or aspire for involvement, not all of them can be involved to the same extent (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development., 2001:124).

For parental involvement to thrive, the support of the school, practitioners and strong written policy are inevitable. Therefore strengthening of school policies for parental involvement is backed by literature because of the range of benefits for children and communities too (Daniel, 2011). Parents and families are important in the life of children’s learning, development and achievement (OCECD, 2012). With this we look at the support provided by parents and families can boost the children’s confidence and thus this also increases their participation in the different social activities.

This also looks at parents and families as the core care takers of children since they are the most close to them, therefore their involvement determines the children’s development. Therefore, according to findings by (Pelletier, J., and Brent, J.M., 2002), parental involvement is acknowledged to be very important as children develop skills, adjust to their new school environment and realise their roles as learners during this crucial period as the first six years of a child’s life have been recognised as the most critical ones for optimal development (Mishra, 2012).

It is now acknowledged that the systematic provision of early childhood care and education helps in development of a child such as improving group socialisation, inculcation of healthy habits, stimulation of creative learning processes and enhanced cope for overall personality development thus ECCE must be promoted as holistic input for psycho-social, nutritional, health and educational development of children (Mishra, 2012).

According to research by Powell, et all (2010) parental involvement has been said to have facilitated children’s development of pre-literacy skills such as phonological awareness and letter name knowledge. As these skills can be of great benefit towards their growth and development, as the transition to preschool marks the beginning of an important relationship between home and school.

In the recent decades, research has shown that parents’ participation in their children’s learning and development can have positive effect (Van Steensel,R., McElvany,N.,Kuurvers,J., and
Herppich, S., 2011). In agreement with this, we can see that whenever parents participate in their children’s wellbeing then the outcomes shall tend to be effective in terms of growth and development, social interactions. However this shall be proven in the study findings.

Parental participation and collaboration are related as it is a key component for parental involvement in diverse social work arenas such as schools (Kurtz, P., and Barth, R.P., 1989). This looks at the coordination and working together between the parents and teachers for the wellbeing of children. A child’s first experiences in school are often the parents’ first experiences as critical stakeholders in their child’s formal schooling, therefore parental involvement during preschool may also allow parents to develop skills in working collaboratively with school personnel such as the teachers (Jeffries, 2012). Thus parental participation in the early learning of children is seen to be paramount a way of boosting fast growth and development of children.

While determining the level of parental involvement in their children’s education in lower classes, it was found out that children who parents regularly consulted teachers were high achievers compared to those who rarely consulted teachers (Susan E, M., & Minnesota L., 2006). The study also recommended parents to involve themselves effectively in their children’s education by being friendly to teachers (Susan E, M., & Minnesota L., 2006).

According to Spreeuwenberg, (2015), parental involvement also helps to extend teaching outside the classroom, and creates a more positive experience for children to perform better when in school. It was also stated that it’s essential for parents to support learning both at home and at school. The study went ahead to report that parents who are in tune of what’s happening in their children pre-schools classroom or child care facility are better able to establish a connection between what is learned at school and what takes place at home.

With this, its argued that parents who participated in the care and learning of their children were in position to understand whatever their children learn, what they are exposed to at school and can easily link their learning a school with the home based activities.

Regarding parental participation in ECCE, the Government of Uganda mandated parents to play a number of roles regarding early childhood care and education. These roles include; providing enabling environment, to meet all the needs of the child in the different ECD age cohorts; 0-3, 3–6, 6-8, for holistic development, do early brain stimulation for proper future development of the child, act as reservoirs for culture and pass on the positive aspects to the
children, inculcate life skills, spiritual and moral values in all children for character development, provide primary health care and ensure early detection and assessment of disabilities and engage appropriate interventions to mitigate the disability, ensure registration of the child at birth and death and acquire certificates in either case for all children including CwDs (GOU, 2016).

Given the above mandated roles, the current study also found out what roles parents have played and are still playing in early care and learning of their children.

A study set to examine how parents and teachers perceive parental involvement in elementary school based on Epstein’s 6 typologies of parental involvement found out that parents and teachers strongly perceived communication as the most important type of parental involvement, as it increases co-operation and understanding between the school and parents (Herrell O., 2011).

The six (6) types of parental involvement suggested by (Epstein J., 2001) include:
Parenting: that helps all families establish home environments to support children as students.
Communicating: that looks at design effective forms of school-to-home and home-to-school communications about school programs and children's progress.
Volunteering: Recruit and organize parent help and support. Such as school volunteer program, parent room or family center for volunteer work and annual postcard survey to identify all available talents, times, and locations of volunteers.
Learning at home: provides information and ideas to families about how to help students at home with homework and other curriculum-related activities, decisions, and planning.
Decision making: includes families being participants in school decisions and develop parent leaders and representatives. It can include an active PTA/PTO or other parent organizations, advisory councils, or committees and district level advisory councils and committees.
Collaborating with community: involves coordinating resources and services from the community for families, students, and the school, and provide services to the community such as information for students and families on community health, cultural, recreational, social support, and other programs or services and community activities that link to learning skills and talents, including summer programs for students.

Given the fact that the six (6) typologies have a great influence on parental involvement in early childhood development as they are linked to their roles (Epstein E. a., 2009). It has been, stated
that fathers had limited involvement in early learning and school readiness activities with children under 5 years (UNICEF, 2014). It also stated that more of the mothers are involved in early learning activities than the fathers, as less educated fathers tend to hold low income jobs with longer working hours which limit their availability and involvement and as the number of children and family size increases, the fathers involvement in each child’s education decreases (Lau, 2016).

It has been stated that parents particularly the fathers with a low socioeconomic status (SES) tend to lack the skills and knowledge required to support parental involvement (Lau, 2016). With various studies having confirmed that father’s education and income independently affect parental involvement (Hoover-Dempsey, K., and Sandler, H., 1997). The findings indicated that fathers did not engage in a single early learning activity with their child in 29% of households.

Parents tend to leave children under inadequate supervision as limited care is provided by the substitute parents or care givers including teachers, baby sitters and maids.

In the report, recommendations were come up with to increase communication to parents about the benefits of enrolling children into Kindergarten and play based learning (UNICEF, August, 2014). Therefore, this statement was used as a stand point to understand if the same scenario is being persistent especially in the study area, as it was seen in the findings that parents also agreed that a number of colleagues were being less involved in early care an learning if their children as in the due course, they bring in other care takers or substitute parents so as to provide care to children on their behalf.

According to Kernana, (2012) some factors such as goals and agendas of parents and teachers, attitudes and policy may influence the promotion or impede parental involvement in children’s education however, there are still some advantages. However, active parental involvement according to a group of researchers promotes children’s interest in and responsibility for learning and it suggested that children find a deal of motivation when their parents and/or families are active participants in their education (Gonzalez-DeHass, A. R., Willems, P. P., & Holbein, M. F., 2005). The kind of motivation children find grants them more effort and to take up greater personal responsibility for learning.
2.5 Benefits of parental involvement.

Parental involvement is seen to breed a number of benefits like determining the academic achievement of children and has a significant impact on children’s education, as schools look for programs to improve its efficiency (Mahmood, 2013). Parental involvement in preschool includes not only meeting the children’s needs for education, but also supporting children’s development (Kocyigita, 2015). This can be through providing care and the different basic needs of children that is the physical and emotional needs. Therefore we look at benefits of parental involvement at a preschool level ranging from improvement in reading level to students showing improvement in their understanding, which allows them to move to the next level (Huang, G. H. C., & Mason, K. L., 2008).

With this we look at cases when parents get involved in the care and education of their children, they end up motivating them emotionally so as to improve their studies and grades also as a way of impressing the parents.

For instance when apparent reads or studies with the child, this will give the child that scene of belief that the parents supports and loves them thus will find it easier to memorize and remember what they study.

Parental involvement is seen to build up a strong relationship together with the academic achievement of a child in preschool (Mahmood, 2013). Parental involvement is also associated with increased reading and mathematics skills, improved social skills, and better academic motivation. With this, we look at parents getting involved in the learning of their children, will build up a number of skills together with a number of talents because their participating builds a child’s confidence to do things (ibid). For instance when children see what parents do, they end up imitating the same so parents need to get involved with their to set up a good example for their children since at that stage they are perceived as last learners.

Parental involvement has been shown to improve the academic performance of low-income students by preventing the negative outcomes of living in low-income households, such as failure in school or committing crimes (Waanders, C., Mendez, J. L., & Downer, J. T., 2007).
Although researchers conducting studies about parental involvement agree that this involvement is beneficial for children’s academic achievement in areas such as reading, they do not discuss details about how it works (Alhashem, 2016).

Helping children with their homework and daily interactive reading means parents are committed to improving their children’s skills through those shared activities at home. This home involvement allows parents to see the improvement in their children and alert teachers to areas where they have difficulty, thus working with teachers for the benefit of their children (Alhashem, 2016). In agreement with his statement, parental involvement has helped parents to build and shape up the different skills of their children especially at home. When parents and children do certain activities together, they end up gaining the skill and art of doing it which in future they can do even without supervision of parents. For example when parents get involved with their children in the farm and show them how it’s done, with time they gain the skills and can do it on their own.

Parental involvement facilitated children’s development of pre-literacy skills such as phonological awareness and letter name knowledge. These skills can be of great benefit towards their growth and development, as the transition to preschool marks the beginning of an important relationship between home and school (Powell et al., 2010). Therefore it being urged that parents are supposed to increase on their involvement in activities both at home and at school so as to practically harvest the fruits of their participation, not only to them but to the school and children.

2.6 Theoretical framework

A theoretical framework is a collection of interrelated concepts, like a theory and guides the research determining what things you will measure and what statistical relationships are being looked for (Borgatti, 1996). Previous researchers and scholars such as Ama Doe, (2015) with writings on early childhood development have based on a theoretical framework by about the ecological systems theory of development (Brofenbrenner, 1979).

My study did not primarily base on the framework but borrowed some aspect of it, such as the micro system whereby it looked at the immediate environment of the child that are the parents, family and the school. It also based on the meso system that looks at the interactions between the
different persons in a child’s microsystem (Paquette, 2001). For instance the study had scenarios of the active interaction between a child’s teacher and/or school and the parent, as this was based on the levels of communication between the two parties.

The study was primarily based on a framework that identified six (6) types of parental involvement suggested by (Epstein J., 2001). These include:

- Parenting: that helps all families establish home environments to support children as students.
- Communicating: that looks at design effective forms of school-to-home and home-to-school communications about school programs and children's progress.
- Volunteering: Recruit and organize parent help and support. Such as School volunteer program, parent room or family center for volunteer work and annual postcard survey to identify all available talents, times, and locations of volunteers.
- Learning at home: provides information and ideas to families about how to help students at home with homework and other curriculum-related activities, decisions, and planning.
- Decision making: includes families being participants in school decisions and develop parent leaders and representatives. It can include an active PTA/PTO or other parent organizations, advisory councils, or committees and district level advisory councils and committees.
- Collaborating with community: involves coordinating resources and services from the community for families, students, and the school, and provide services to the community such as information for students and families on community health, cultural, recreational, social support, and other programs or services and community activities that link to learning skills and talents for students.

Based on the above framework, the study was able to generate findings on parental involvement while looking at typologies of parenting that is how parents get involved with their children at home and at school, communicating and collaborating that looked at the relationship between the school and parents, learning at home that specifically explained the home based activities.

Early childhood development is also based on a number of theories such as: Behavioural that looks at ones way of conduct, attitudes both publically and in private. This is best explained by
what the parent and child do reading their respective responsibilities, Cognitive theories that look at thinking abilities of the child, conflict theories that cover the way children solve, perceive and respond to misunderstandings, judgments and negative attitudes, Social theories that look at the child’s interaction with the society where they belong. Thus these come out to explain how parental involvement (PI) in ECCE is being structured in society that is how parents could be basing on these theories to exhibit their roles and responsibilities.

In conclusion, a number of researchers and scholars from other foreign nations have conducted studies early childhood development education and care including (Fasina, 2011), (Ama Doe, 2015), (Becher, 1984) (Jeffries, 2012) and (Odum, 2011). However, currently few studies have been conducted in Uganda on PI in early childhood care and education. Therefore this interested me to conduct an exploratory study on parental participation in ECCE while basing in one of the urban area of Uganda that is Nakawa Division. This was also aimed widening and adding to the scoop of information on parental participation in the early care and education.
CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This section provides an overview of the methods that were used during the study. It includes the research design, study population, data collection tools, ethical dilemmas and challenges that arose during the research process.

3.2 Research Design

This is a cross-sectional study that employed an exploratory design and a qualitative approach to generate in-depth information about parental participation in early childhood care and education.

3.3 Study Area

The study was conducted in Nakawa Division one of the five Administrative Divisions of Kampala. It is comprised of 22 parishes with 640 villages and 6 informal settlements of Banda, Bukoto I, Butabika, Kinawataka, Mambo Bado Kisenyi Luzira and Naguru a population of locate approximately 222,900 people. It hosts assortment of public and statutory bodies including the Uganda Revenue Authority, Luzira Maximum Security Prison, Butabika national referral hospital and Mbuya military hospital. The division is home to two public universities, and also hosts the police and military headquarters. It has an industrial park and an array of corporate businesses. Alongside these, the division also has a diversity of small scale and artisan trade businesses. Accordingly it is comprised of a mixture of residents from different ethnic and economic backgrounds. The area is characterized by both formal and informal settlements of about 26,065 residential units and education facilities ranging from kindergarten, day care to secondary schools.

The study area has got over 120 schools that focus on early childhood care and education. These schools are privately owned, and provide services for children from different socio-economic backgrounds. The schools tend to be exclusive, targeting children of a particular socio-economic background. The study area comprised on different categories of occupants and families ranging from the low income, middle income, high income earners and families. It also comprised of different activities such trade and business including the large, medium and small scale,
agriculture mostly on a small scale, transport, education, with the occupants being employed in both formal and informal sector.

3.4 Study Population

The primary population of the study were parents with children under the age of eight and were in nursery schools. Both male and female parents were included in this study.

3.5 Sample size and selection

The study sample included fifteen (15) parents with children below the age of eight (8) years and were in nursery schools. The participants of the study were selected through a non-probability sampling technique of purposive and convenience sampling. Parents who presently had children in school were selected because they had relevant and current experience related to the study.

I started by identifying schools in the division based on convenience and access. I approached four (4) kindergartens include Banda Junior, Little Burnies nursery and day care, Huseeya Primary school and Kisule nursery and Primary school. Permission was sought from the school administration who allowed me to interview the parents as they came by to pick and drop children to school. All the schools I approached allowed me to conduct the study from their premises, and to talk to the parents. In total, I approached twenty six (26) parents as they came to school to drop or pick up their children, and requested them to participate in the study. Among these, eleven (11) parents declined, and fifteen (15) parents accepted to be part of the study.

Table showing the schools and number of parents approached.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Schools approached</th>
<th>Number of parents approached</th>
<th>Number of parents that declined</th>
<th>Number of parents interviewed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Banda junior</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Little Burnies nursery and day care.</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Huseeya Primary school</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kisule nursery and Primary school</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 1: Schools and parents approached.

3.6 Data Collection

Data was collected through personal interviews using open ended questions in an interview guide. The data collection tool used is attached to this report as appendix two. Data collection was conducted over a period of eight (8) days. I interviewed each of the parents and the average time for each interview was fifty-five minutes. The interviews were recorded on a device with the consent and permission of the respondents. I also took some interview notes to record responses and follow on questions that I was interested in probing further.

3.7 Data Analysis

Data analysis was preceded by transcribing the interview which is transformation of recorded information from a device into written format. Interview transcripts were prepared for every interview, verbatim. After transcribing the interviews. I carefully read and reviewed each interview transcript to identify the key themes that were emerging, through the transcribed data thoroughly.

Then next proceeded to organizing into categories, patterns and themes basing on the study specific objectives. The information was later on undertaken through discussion of the findings to explain into details what was gotten from the respondents while in the field during data collection. Lastly was data interpretation that involved drawing of conclusions and making recommendations from the information that have been collected inform of what was seen or heard while in the field.

3.8 Ethical Considerations

Research ethics are especially interested in the analysis of ethical issues that are raised when people are involved as participants in research (Walton, n.d). In all aspects of academic writings, researchers must adhere to right behaviours in conducting and disseminating research findings (Blumberg, B, Copper D & Schindler P, 2005). My study applied research ethics by first was preparation of a proposal and acquisition of an introductory letter from the department that acted as an informed consent while in the field.
During data collection, I sought for permission form the school administration to interview parents who came by to drop and pick their children. I also sought for permission from the participants that are the parents to be part of my study. I ensured privacy and confidentiality of the respondents that is protecting the respondent’s initials and personal information from the public during and after data collection and analysis.

3.9 Challenges during the study
A number of challenges arose during the process of data collection. Many of the approached participants didn’t have time to take part in the study as they proclaimed to be in a rush for other activities and work. Inadequate resources in terms of finances and funds hindered and greatly limitation the research process thus leading to having a very small respondent’s base for the study so as to fit my budget.
CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter includes the characteristics of respondents, findings and discussion of the study. The study was conducted in Nakawa Division, Kampala, with its main purpose set to examine parent’s knowledge regarding their responsibilities as well as their behaviours in supporting early childhood care and education of their children. The study was organised around two specific objectives that were set out to explore the knowledge of parents regarding their roles and responsibilities and to describe parental behaviours in early childhood care and education for their children. The exploratory study included fifteen (15) parents selected through a non-probability sampling technique of purposive sampling from the approached pre-primary schools within the study area. The data was collected through personal interviews using an interview guide with open ended questions (see appendix 2), and was recorded on device with the consent and permission of the participants.

4.2 Characteristics of Respondents

To contextualize the study, I begin this chapter by describing the participants of the study. The exploratory and qualitative study comprised of fifteen (15) respondents, that is eight (8) male respondents/fathers and seven (7) female respondents/mothers.

All the participants of the study were parents with biological children, however two (2) of them were caretakers and guardians to other children from relatives. All the children were below eight (8) years and were under formal education. Eight (8) of these participants also had much children who were in higher primary. None of the participants had any of their children enrolled beyond primary level.

Marital status

Eleven (11) of the participants were married, three (3) were single parents and at the time of the study, one participant had separated with her partner. The single and separated were all female participants.
**Table 2 Showing Characteristics of Study respondents**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic of participant.</th>
<th>Number of participants.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>MARITAL STATUS</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Divorced/separated</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>EMPLOYMENT STATUS</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self employed</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formal sector</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployed</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>EDUCATION LEVELS</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PhD</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master’s degree</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor’s degree</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undergraduates</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S.6 certificate</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Employment status**

Ten (10) parents are employed in the formal sector with two (2) being self-employed. The other three (3) who comprised of two (2) students and a house wife were unemployed.

**Education levels**

All the fifteen (15) participants had some level of education with one participant having the highest that is a PhD, three (3) had a Master’s degree, eight (8) had a Bachelors’ Degrees, one (1) participant had a Diploma, another with a S.6 certificate and last two (2) were still in university.
4.3 Knowledge of parents on their participation in early childhood care and education.

One of the objectives of the study was to explore the knowledge of parents regarding their roles and responsibilities in early childhood care and education for their children. Knowledge refers to a set of facts, information and ideas acquired by a person. Therefore under this theme, being presented is the information on what the respondents knew about their responsibilities in early learning and care of their children. The participants also had information on what kind of activities, and how they are supposed to get involved with their children both at home or at school.

4.3.1 Knowledge about the age at which children begin to learn

Parents were asked about the age at which children begin to learn. There were various responses, including learning at birth, a few weeks after birth, at age of two and upon onset of brain development. For example, one of the female respondents said that:

“Children begin to learn at birth. Because when the newborn is produced, they are exposed to new world whereby they are set to learn different skills such as how to suckle milk, demand attention from parents and care givers by crying”.

Another male respondents replied as he said that:

“It depends as different children begin to learn at different ages and actually this depends on the support, opportunities and platforms offered to them by the parents. So we see some starting to learn at 1 year, 2years, others even at birth. So the age ranges basing on a number of supporting factors both natural and artificial”.

One of the female respondents stated that:

“Children begin to learn when the brain also begins to develop. Because it is the center for learning and controlling the different body organs and activities.so usually this begins at the time of conception as the fetus is developing in the womb”.

One male respondent said:

“Children’s learning ranges on a number of issues where by we see those learning basics of life and survival like eating, excretion, and then academic learning. So to me I say learning begins at point when the main drive that the brain begins to develop and the parent’s stimulation to learning plays a great role as parents need to boost their children’s learning right from day one”.
The study findings show that parents have varied perspectives regarding when children begin to learn. While some believe that learning starts at birth, others indicated different time periods, up to the age of two. The available research indicates that learning for children takes place upon conception. Knowledge of a parent regarding the age at which a child begins to learn will influence the kind of behaviours they engage in to stimulate children and provide them with learning experiences. In this study, none of the parents demonstrated knowledge about prenatal learning, implying that parents in this area need to be sensitized more about the learning opportunities for children in the prenatal stage.

The study also examined the parents on their knowledge about when children are to be enrolled into formal education as they were asked on when they enroll their children into school.

They responded by stating different ages ranging from the age of two, three, and four years. For example, one of the male respondent said:

“Given the fact that home based education is important and states the foundation for the child’s mental and physical development, nursery education is also important as it plays a great role in shaping children so therefore I enroll my children at the age three (3). This because I want them to first undergo the required preparations at while home that is set up a strong foundation for them, then there after that school (formal education) can add on the other part of the professional training”.

Three (3) respondents argued that they enroll their children at the age of two (2). They responded to this saying they are always busy with work and this does not allow them to fully be with the children while at home.

For example, one of the respondents said:

“I and my wife are all bankers and therefore the professional does not give parents enough time to be with their children, so As a result, we decided to enroll the child in to day care at a very tender, at least so he can be under the care of some one. Since the job cannot permit my wife to carry him to work on a daily basis”.

Another of the female respondent’s argued that:

“I enrolled my daughter at the age of two years, first of all me and my wife are working and we do not believe in having maids or baby sitters and my wife is given a leave of one year so the other year we would use relatives and when it got hectic, we enrolled her at age two into day care as also it helps her interact with peers whom cannot find at home”.

30
The last respondent who is a hairstylist said:

“I enrolled my child at age of two because I feel that she should start to interact with her peers and then also the nature of my work is not good for her health so I prefer that during my working ours, she can be at school. Actually the school I enrolled her in is just opposite my saloon so I can easily follow her up at any time”.

Another parent preferred to enroll his children at a much later stage that is four years as he claimed that:

“I do not take my children to day care so those years I just leave them to be at home, interact with their siblings and also give me a chance to set a good foundation for them as the join formal education. So in the due course I usually enroll them directly into top class that’s for one year then they move to primary the following year”.

4.3.2 Parent’s knowledge on the different roles and responsibilities early care and learning

Parents in this study were asked about the different roles that they had in the area of early learning and education. The varied responses of parents were organized in four areas including provision of a favorable environment for learning, participation in school activities, meeting emotional needs of learners, and engaging children physically.

(a) Providing a favorable environment and platform

The findings show that parents were knowledgeable that they have the responsibility to provide an environment in which children can learn. They demonstrated knowledge of the different things that they are supposed to do, to create an atmosphere in which children can be supported to learn, including provision of different learning materials such as reading and drawing books, educative movies cartoons that help in language development and toys, helping them with their homework, holiday packages and homework to ensure all the work is well done.

For example, one of the parents said:

“Parents should provide a conducive learning environment for their children like reading materials, books, play toys, educative movies and documentaries so as to aid their learning mostly at home. Then also parents need to provide love, care, and security to their children, ensure they are healthy, eating good food, not exposing them to negative environment like violence, poor sanitation and hygiene, obscenity. And also they should ensure they take the children to school, provide them with proper and best education by getting them good schools and also ensuring interaction with peers”.
(b) School activities

Parents also indicated and argued that parents are supposed to be part of the different school activities and programs where by they are to actively get involved like sports day, parents’ day, PTA meetings. The parents are also supposed to pay their children’s school fees right in time, pay for trips and tours for their children. One of the parents said:

“For me as apparent I never miss any school activity whenever am called upon by the school to attend. Like now for the past two years have always been actively involved in the different school programs then of recent I was selected as the chairperson of PTA. So I would like to ague other parents to continue participating as in one way or the other, there are benefits form this both to us, say the school and the children”.

(c) Emotional needs.

The parents stated these responsibilities including the need for parents to providing love, care, attention, attachment and security to the children. Parents should also be in position of creating a bond together with the children as well as getting along.

One of the male parents responded that;

“Parents should play roles like educating their children, being their children’s safe guards as they provide care and security, they can also play, read, do curricular activities with the children. Then also parents should ensure they always correct the children when they do wrong, provide them with conducive environment and platform for expression and involvement in life activities to explore talents and skills”.

(d) Physically engaged with the children.

The parents knew how to physically engage with their children. These include responsibilities that parents should play such participating in the school activities and programs, ensuring children are ready for school, taking and picking from school, playing with the children, engaging in sports and exercises, learning together, cleaning up the children and feeding the children on balanced meal so as to ensure good health.

A female respondent also quoted that:

“Parents should play roles like ensuring good health and proper nutrition of the children, ensuring education, enrolling them in a number of curricular activates lie sports, games, cleaning, cooking while at home, and then also keep in touch with teachers at school”.
Another parent argued that:

“Parents should always be there physically for their children. What I mean is that they have to do what their children do, but should always remember to do the right things, for example they should do washing, cleaning, cooking playing, and farming together with their children as this helps them to learn a lot of life skills”.

### 4.3.3 Parent’s knowledge on benefits of parental involvement

The study explored the knowledge of parents regarding benefits that can be accrued from parental involvement in education. The parents were also knowledgeable on the benefits that could arise from parental participation in the early learning and care of their children.

With this, they also suggested and encouraged that all other parents to continue participating in the early learning and care of their children as it yields benefits like; providing love and care for the children, building confidence of the children, creating a strong bond, helps identify talents and skills, it enable parents fulfill their duties and responsibilities, also helps in monitoring child growth patterns of the children, helps parents learn a lot from the children especially during school activities where they learn songs, games, stories and others.

During the interviews, one of the parents responded by saying that:

“Parental participation bridges the gap between parents and their children as they tend to be closer to the children, understand them thus building strong bonds and attachment”.

One of the female parent’s argued that:

“Just imagine a life where apparent neglects their own children, it would be really bad for the children, participation of parents therefore shows love and care to the children, it sets a good example for the children for instance when parents participate by doing the right things, the children will observe and imitate the same. It then creating strong bonds, encouraging them to always do good and correcting their mistakes. It also helps to identify children’s talents and skills”.

Another one parent said:

“my participation first of all motivates the children in whatever the children do such as the games, sports home activities because when they see me around or doing it the get motivated to do same.it also enabled them identify talents like my daughter now exhibits talents of fashion and design”.
The study also on the other side examined the respondents on any cases of negative issues arising from parental participation. The findings stated that thirteen (13) of the respondents did not agree to this as the two (2) who agreed to it said:

“especially in cases where parents tend to provide too much love and care and do not concentrate on correcting mistakes, like they don’t beat (punish), talk to them when they do wrong thus this leads to unpleasant behaviors that affects the children and society upon growth as we see aggressive children, ill mannered, less concerned about life, unwilling to listen to corrections and also being not respectful to adults and society”.

Another one of the male respondents said:

“For the negative maybe it breeds out this scenario of too much pampering of the children especially when parents provide too much love and care to the children, this because they don’t want to annoy them so they tend to do whatever they ask, even when in wrong they don’t punish and his just spoils the child”.

4.4 Parental involvement and behaviors in early childhood care and education.

One of the objectives of the study was to describe the behavior of parents with regard to their involvement in early childhood care and education. Parents provided feedback on activities that they engage in, both at home and in the schools to enhance education of their children.

While at home we look at parents getting involved in activities like cooking, cleaning the home, reading and writing, playing, watching, exercise and evening walks together with the children. Some of the respondents also got involved with their children while at their work places so as to exploit their different talents.

For example one female respondent said that:

“I engaged my children into fashion and design to teach them the basics of survival, then I ensure on the other hand they get the formal education as every morning I prepare them for school, pack lunch, take them and pick them up, then also keep in touch with their different class teachers and school parents. Then at home they are always engaged in cleaning, the girl can cook though foods like fries, rice, then also washing clothes and utensil. Then I also make sure their talents are well exploited as I always support the boy in one of the football academy at proline”.

Parents also indicated that they are supposed to be part of the different school activities and programs where by they are to actively get involved like sports day, parents day, PTA meetings. The parents are also supposed to pay their children’s school fees right in time, pay for trips and tours for their children.
One of the male parents said:

“For me as apparent I never miss any school activity whenever am called upon by the school to attend. Like now for the past two years have always been actively involved in the different school programs then of recent I was selected as the chairperson of PTA. So I would like to agree other parents to continue participating as in one way or the other, there are benefits from this both to us, say the school and the children”.

While basing on the knowledge parents exhibited about their participation, they were in position to also play their different responsibilities in early care and learning of the children. This was also being based on typology of parenting, learning at home and collaborating with the community. Therefore the findings on parental behaviours have been categorized into four major roles and responsibilities that include:

(a) Providing a Conducive learning environment

While based on Epstein’s typology of learning at home, the parents provided the children with a favorable environment and platform to boost their learning experiences. This includes providing the children with different learning materials such as reading and drawing books, educative movies and toys, helping them with their homework and assignments and also checking their books and homework to ensure all the work is well done and perfect, then keeping in touch with the class teachers and school more frequently, providing a platform to explore their talents as one of the respondents commented by saying,

“Parents should provide a conducive learning environment for their children like reading materials, books, play toys, educative movies and documentaries so as to aid their learning mostly at home. Then also parents need to provide love, care, and security to their children, ensure they are healthy, eating good food, not exposing them to negative environment like violence, poor sanitation and hygiene, obscenity. And also they should ensure they take the children to school, provide them with proper and best education by getting them good schools and also ensuring interaction with peers”.

In providing a conducive environment for children, one of the married couples/ respondents said:

“they always ensure that their children have all they want for their studies as we were able to build a study room for them and equipped it with different text books, other learning material like magazines, story books, also we put up a television room where they specifically only watch educative films. We also allow them watch other movies, cartoons but always under our supervision. We also ensure they do their homework and holiday packages early enough, then also we bought toys that they can always play with their friends”.

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While in based one framework of collaboration with the community, parents have been able to provide a platform for the children to exploit their talents.

For example one female respondents said:

“I was able to work with one football academy in Kampala and enrolled my son so as to boost his football talent and skills”.

(b) Meeting the different emotional needs of the children

These included, providing love, care and security as they acted as their children’s safe guards, Attention to the children and their needs such as food, clothing. Parents were also be in position to create a strong bond together with the children as well as getting along.

One of the female parents responded that;

“Parents play roles like educating their children, being their children’s safe guards as they provide care and security, they can also play, read, do curricular activities with the children. Then also parents should ensure they always correct the children when they do wrong, provide them with conducive environment and platform for expression and involvement in life activities to explore talents and skills”.

(c) Creating grounds for social interactions for the children

The parents did this by allowing the children play with peers and friends, ensure participation in the different school activities such as sports day, gala, parent teachers meetings, playing with the children and learning through storytelling with all this being aimed at boosting the children’s confidence and their participation in society.

During the interviews, one female parent said:

“I always plays with her son, as they read story books, watch cartoons together, we also get involved in washing together, and cleaning the house the rooms, the compound as this helps him to learn work. Then I also take evening walks with him, go to the market so as to expose the boy to social world and enable him get used to society. Then I also ensured he plays and interacts with other children in the neighborhood so as to avoid him being lonely. I also managed to get for him a school where he can be enrolled into formal education as this will also boost his interaction and participation in society”.

One of the female respondent/parent also argued that:

“I always ensure that my children interact and play with their friends and peers as I and other parents in the neighborhood have provided them with the different toys, books, bicycles and many other that they use while playing. This has helped to sharpen their interaction in society”.

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The respondents also got involved with their children at school by participating in the different school activities including sports day, sports gala, parent teachers meeting, science exhibitions, visitations or academic days, then also school trips that we contribute to by paying for them, cultural day, Music Dance and Drama exhibitions. One of the female parent’s said:

“The school has activities like sports day, then the sports gala for football, net ball, music dance and drama, cultural day, they also have parent teachers meetings on some occasions to discuss the children’s performances. There is also the science exhibition day when these children show us lot of scientific innovations even in agriculture though this also involves the primary section”.

During the study, I found out that some of the respondents especially the fathers were less involved especially in the school activities as they were represented by their partners. They also claimed it wasn’t according to their will but their different jobs, work schedules. During the interviews, they always referred to their partners as the perfect respondents for that particular question.

For example one of the male parent responded that:

“The school has numerous activities, which my wife/Madame would have answered best but I know of some like sports day, science exhibition, visitation or academic days, then also school trips but our participation is in form of payment for the children”.

The study was also based on one of Epstein’s parenting type of Communicating that looks at design effective forms of school-to-home and home-to-school communications about school programs and children’s progress. The findings stated that there was effective communication between the school, and parents, as al the respondents said they always have the contacts of the different class teachers that eases the communication and helps them to get more involved in the different school activities. For example one of the male respondents said;

“I can’t criticize it because its efficient as we all m maintain good and effective communication with each other (school)”.

One other female respondent also said that

“I have no problem with the communication bit of it, as it is just fine since we are always update in time in case of any activities or needs by the school”.

During the interview, a female respondents reported that:

“For my daughter’s school always calls her for their activities such as the sports day, cultural day, and atleast I attend whenever called upon because its m y duty. This is also aimed at ensuring maximum cooperation with the school and providing a conducive environment for my children to learn because if both parents and the school are always
in contact and are working together then it’s very good for the children that is their learning.

The study findings also established that parents always volunteered in different school activities such as engaging in decision making as members of the PTA. This influenced the children to enhance their learning and social interactions as the parents played great role in stirring their behaviours. For instance one of the male parents who is a member of the PTA at Banda junior said,

“I always visit the school on a daily basis and keep in touch with the teachers. Then on a weekly basis we have the PTA meetings where we discuss the performance and wellbeing of the children. This has helped to enhance their behaviours, performances and social interactions”.

The parents also said they involve their children in vital and productive activities like agriculture, whereby one of the respondents together with their children always during the weekends go to the farm to feed the animals, clean the farm. For this one of the male responded said:

“Now you see over the weekend whenever I and my children are free from work and school respectively, we go to the farm where I teach my children to look after the poultry birds and the pigs. And with time they have been able to pick up so much interest in agriculture”.

Another one female parent said;

“I, my spouse and my children always visit the farm over the weekends and holidays. With his we are trying to show and build the children towards being productive, self-reliant and also teaching them the basic of survival in farming and agriculture right from young age”.

During the study, the parents also responded to question on an increase in less involvement of parents in the learning and care of their children. The respondents said this has resulted into increase use of care takers like maids, baby sitters, taking to school at a much early age as some of them could still not be ready for exposure to formal education, as at times it greatly affects growth and development because the children don’t get the much required care, education and attention from parents.

One of the parents who is an international business man said:

“given the fact that he is always on the move, and has less tome for his children, though he creates time, is against the use of care takers like maids, and baby sitters who tend to provided half-baked love and care to the children. That’s why I decided for my wife should stay with the children at home till they have fully grown to certain level and enroll them in school then she can resume her work”.
In conclusion, the study found out that the participants (parents) had high levels of knowledge regarding their participation of which as a result, on the other hand this enabled them to get involved in the earl care and education of their children.

4.5 Discussion of Findings

The exploratory study that was investigating on parental participation in early childhood care and education of children, was primarily based on Epstein’s six (6) typologies of parental involvement (Epstein E. a., 2009). It also borrowed some aspects of Bronfenbrenner’s micro and meso ecological systems theory, where by it look at the immediate environment being comprised of the parents and the school and the interactions between the micro systems. However, it also borrowed some aspects of the meso system under Bronfenbrenner’s ecological systems theory that looks at interactions between different persons in the child’s micro system (Brofenbrenner, 1979).

It was found out that there is an interaction between the child’s school and the parents. This was in line with Epstein’s typology of parental involvement that is communication (Epstein J. , 2001). In response, all the respondents exhibited a positive response towards the state of communication between them and the children’s school as they all urged that they were in good terms and contact with the school since they get all the information on whatever happens at school right in time.

For example one of the male respondents said she can’t criticize it because it’s efficient as they all maintain good and effective communication with each other (school and parents)”.

The study also found out that parents were highly knowledgeable about their different roles and responsibilities in the early learning of their children as they exhibited knowledge on the different aspects such as when children begin to learn, when they enroll their children in to school, what roles parents are supposed to play and the benefits of their participation in the early care and learning of children.

According to Ladd (2011), parents who know about how children develop language are more likely to have children emergent literacy skills for example letter sound awareness relative to parents who do not. This basically means that he parents who know and support their children’s language development through providing the different learning materials like reading/story books, educative movies and cartoons, toys. The parents were also able to boost their children’s
language development through encouraging them to interact and play with their peers and friends as they get to learn from each other.

The parents also expressed knowledge regarding a number of issues under early childhood development care and education such as when the children begin to learn as they responded with arrange of time periods from time of brain development to the age of two years. They also classified learning as basic survival and academic learning. The parents also expressed knowledge about enrolment of children in formal education (school) as they responded with by stating a number of years from two to four years.

In recent decades, research has shown that parent’s participation in their children’s learning has and development can have positive effect on their growth and development (Van Steensel et al, 2011). In agreement with this statement, we can see that whenever parents participate in their children’s life, the outcome shall tend to be effective in terms of their growth and development. Parents’ active involvement in their children’s learning experiences have also been shown to improve children’s academic outcomes, as this is backed up by the frequent parental involvement in the care and learning of their children. It was also found out that the parents always participated in the school activities when called upon by the school so as to set a good example for the children that we love and care for them.

But however, a report by UNICEF stated that more of the mothers are involved in early learning activities than the fathers (UNICEF, August, 2014). It was also reported that working with children tends to be seen as a predominantly female occupation, yet male careers have much to offer such as working as role models for boys. Therefore the study, was in agreement with this as the male respondents/fathers seemed to be less involved especially in the school activities compared to the female respondents. They also claimed it wasn’t according to their will, but due to their different jobs, work schedules and limited free time.

As for this, during the interviews, they always referred to their partners as the perfect respondents for that particular questions. For example one of the male parent/father responded that; the school has numerous activities, which his wife/Madame would have answered best but for him he knows of some activities like sports day, science exhibition, visitation or academic days, then also school trips but their participation is in form of payment for the children to
attend”. Other studies also stated that parents who participated in schools expressed higher levels of satisfaction with both the school and own child’s achievement (Herman, J.L., & Yeh, J.P, 1983).

The parent’s attitudes and behaviors change as a result of involvement with their children’s learning experiences (Henderson, A. & Berla, N., 1994). Therefore as he parent participates in the early learning and care of their children, they tend to build more interest and positive attitude that helps them to play their different responsibilities.

Also during the interviews, the parents were in agreement with the statement that there is an increase in less involvement of parents in the learning and care of their children. They also claimed this was due to the nature of their professions that always takes away free time from the children. Therefore, during the interviews, four (4) of the respondents also said this had resulted into increase use of care takers like maids, baby sitters and taking children to school at a much early age when many could still not ready thus greatly affected their growth and development as they don’t get much care and attention from parents.

In conclusion I found out that, when parents were asked about their involvement in the different activities and programs both at home and at school, they all provided a positive response since they all participated by playing their roles and responsibilities. This they quoted that it’s a good example for the children as it also helps in building their self-confidence and increases their active participation in society. The responses by the parents show that they have a positive attitude towards the school activity as to why he makes sure he always attends when called upon. The positive response therefore pushes them to always participate by playing their different roles and responsibilities in the early care and learning of children.
CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS.

5.0 Introduction

This chapter looks at the summary of findings, conclusions and recommendations of the study.

5.1 Summary of findings

The study was set to investigate on parental participation while exploring parent’s knowledge and behaviours towards their responsibilities in early care and learning of their children. It found out that all the fifteen (15) respondents were aware of their roles and responsibilities as they had clear information on what kind of activities and how they are supposed to get involved with their children either at home or at school. They were also aware of a number of issues such as when children begin to learn, when to enroll children under formal education. The parents also expressed knowledge on the benefits that arose by participating in the early care and learning of children.

While basing on Epstein’s six (6) typologies of parental involvement (Epstein E. a., 2009) , the major role that the parents played according to my findings was providing a conducive learning environment for their children by creating a favorable atmosphere and platform to boost their learning experiences, as they always ensured that they devise means of securing with different learning materials such as text books, educative movies and toys, helping them with their homework.

I also I identified other roles such attending school events and programs as, the parents also kept in touch with the class teachers and school more frequently as the level of communication between the parents and the school was good since they always contact each other in case of any activity or program at school. The parents also participated both at school and at home, whereby at school they got involved in the different school actives such as the sports day, galas, PTA meetings, MDD, cultural day. They also got involved partially incases whereby they contributed financially to different activates like paying for swimming, school, trips, children’s parties and graduation. While at home we look at these parents getting involved with their children in
activities like cooking, cleaning the home, reading and writing, playing, watching television together, exercise and evening walks together.

Some of the respondents also get involved in exploiting the different talents of their children and engaging them in the different works of life like agriculture, fashion, business and in sports like football.

Given the facts that all the respondents responded towards their duties such as attending the different school activities, some of the fathers were partially involved, but always found time for some activities either at school or at home. For this, they claimed it wasn’t to their will but due to the nature of their professions, work schedules and limited free time, as during the interviews, they always referred to their partners as the perfect respondents for that particular question.

5.2 Conclusion

In conclusion, the exploratory study that was set to examine parental participation in early childhood care and education was able to fulfil the specific objectives that were aimed to explore the knowledge of parents regarding their roles and responsibilities and to describe parental behaviours and involvement in terms of roles and responsibilities in early childhood care and education for children. It was also in position to answer the research questions of what parents know about their roles and responsibilities in early childhood care and education, and how do parents in Nakawa Division participate in early childhood care and education?

Based on the study findings, it indicated that parents were highly knowledgeable of their different roles and responsibilities benefits of their participation, therefore as a result, they always participated in the different activities and programs with their children both at home and at schools. The study also concluded that there existed good and efficient communication between the parents and teachers since it helps to know how children are performing, coping up at school, get to know of any activities or programs at school.
5.3 Recommendations

The exploratory study on parental participation found out that parents were involved in the early learning and care of their children within the study area. However, not all the respondents were actively involved especially the fathers who claimed that were always caught up with their professions and jobs thus ended up giving less time to get involved with their children. Therefore, I recommend all the fathers to increase on their participation in the different activities and programs with their children either at home or at school by creating more time for them amidst their professional demands. This will help to create a much stronger father child bond.

Parents should also not only perceive and respond to their sole roles and responsibilities as sending children to school and providing scholastic materials (Van wyk, 2000, p. 261), but should be in position to participate in the other activities and programs with their children both at home and at school for example home-based activities like cooking, cleaning, reading, sports, adventure and attending school programs like sports day, PTA meetings. This shall therefore increase on levels of parental participation.

Parent and teacher/school relationship and communication should be strengthened and boosted by having an early, clear, fast and convenient exchange of information between the school and parents regarding any form of activities or programs so as to increase on parental participation.

All the nursery schools countrywide should be licensed and registered with adequate supervision and inspection by the District Inspector of Schools as a requirement by the Education Act 2008. This is aimed at having quality services provided to children and parents by the schools.

Awareness campaigns and advertisements about parental participation in early childhood care and education and its benefits to parents, children and public should be boosted and increased country wide and worldwide.

I would also like to call for more researchers and scholars to carry out studies on early childhood development care and education more particular on parental participation and involvement so as to widen the scope of information in the field of early care and education of children.
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Appendix one: Methodological Matrix.
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Appendix two: Interview guide.

MAKERERE UNIVERSITY
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL WORK AND SOCIAL ADMINISTRATION.

RESEARCH INTERVIEW GUIDE.

I am Torach Richard Daniel, a student from Makerere University pursuing a Bachelor’s degree in Social Work and Social Administration. Am on an academic purpose to collect data for a research that explores parental participation in the early care and learning of children. This is in preparation of a dissertation that is a requirement for award of my degree from Makerere University.

I kindly seek for your permission to take part in this study. Your views and comments shall be of great value towards the research. Privacy and confidentiality shall be highly put to consideration during and after the interview. A number of questions shall guide the interview, therefore I once again seek for your permission to record this interaction.

So before we begin, would you like to ask any questions?

The interview guide consists of sections therefore we shall begin with a few questions on:

SECTION ONE: Respondent’s Personal Information.

- What is your marital status?
- Sex?
- What is your occupation?
- Where do you stay?
- What is your highest level of education?
- How many children do you have?
- Are they your biological children?
- How old are the children?
SECTION TWO: Research Questions.

I am now going to ask you about the role of parents and learning of children.

1. At what age do children begin to learn (Probe for reasons why)?
2. At what age do you normally/or will enroll your child (ren) into school (Probe: why respondent enrolls at that age)?
3. What roles should parents play in the early care and learning of their children?
4. What specific and practical things/roles have you (and/or your spouse) contributed towards the early care and learning of your children?
5. What activities/programs happen in this school in which parent’s participation is required? (Probe: how often do you participate and why)?
6. Comment about the communication between the school and parents (Probe: Do you know what the child learning and any expectations)?
7. Do you think it’s of any benefit for parents to participate in the care and early learning of young children both at home and school (Probe for reasons why)?
8. Could there be any negative outcomes of Parental participation in the care and learning of children?
9. As we end, do you agree with the idea that increasingly more parents are less involved in the care and education of their children (Probe for reasons why)?

Thank you so much for your cooperation and contribution towards my study.