Many educational programmes have identified cognitive development as a priority domain at all levels of education. Hence, there is great value placed on good academic performance in Kenya too. Poor performance becomes a major concern to teachers, parents and educationalists. Early childhood years are very important in every individual because what children experience makes a foundation for future learning. Factors known to influence cognitive development in children include; teachers, out of door play and home background. Teachers may not be aware of the impact of their verbal behaviour in the classroom.

The purpose of this study was to investigate, therefore the relationship between pre-school children's cognitive performance and their teachers' verbal behaviour. It also investigated the children's cognitive performance by age and gender.

This study used a two research designs. A quasi-experimental design was used in the explanation of children's cognitive performances. An ex-post facto design was used for the exploration of the teachers' verbal behaviour. To measures children's cognitive performance the Teaching (Set A) and Post-teaching (Set B) in modified CATM Tests was used. These tests include concepts of colour, shape, size and analogy in four levels of difficulty. An ex post facto design was used to examine the verbal behaviour of teachers according to adapted FIAC categories.

The population sample size of the study was 120 children in pre-schools randomly selected from six purposively selected pre-schools and 12 pre-school teachers from the selected schools within Nakuru Municipality. The pre-schools were selected from management categories: Private, Religious and Municipal. In each category of schools 4 teachers 20 boys and 20 girls from each group, were purposively selected for the study.

The three research instruments used were: modified CATM Test, adapted FIAC Observation Schedule and Teachers Questionnaire. The scores for each instruments were recorded on separate score sheets for each child and teacher. The subject independent variables in this study were age and gender of the pre-school children. The dependent variables were the children's cognitive performance and their teachers' observed categories of verbal behaviour. The data were analyzed using both qualitative and quantitative techniques. The main descriptive data were tabulation of frequencies, mean, range and percentages. To analyze the data, a t-Test for 2 independent samples was used to test 3 hypotheses to determine significant differences in children's cognitive performance in modified CATM Tests. A Spearman's rho (r) Test was used to examine significant relationships of 1 null hypotheses between children's cognitive performance and their teacher's categories of verbal behaviour at Alpha level of 0.5. A Statistical Package of Social Sciences (SPSS) was used for computation.

Major findings in this study indicated that there was an improvement in cognitive performance of all children in modified CATM Set B. Children who did well in Set A continued to perform even better in set B, showing some "Learning Potential" after the first exposure, practice and scaffolding from researcher during Teaching Test. There was a significant negative relationship between children's cognitive performance and some teacher's categories of Indirect verbal behaviour. Finally, there was a significant positive relationship between children's cognitive performance and one of their teacher's categories of Direct verbal behaviour - "giving explanation".
This study has implications concerning the relationship between children's cognitive performance and teacher's observed categories of verbal behaviour. Neither the Direct or Indirect teacher's verbal behaviour had a relationship with children's cognitive performance. However, the results showed that when children are taught individually, they are able to improve their performance in cognitive development. Teacher's verbal behaviour in the FIAC category of 'explaining' had a positive relationship with children's cognitive performance. Thus, some children seemed to depend on the teacher instead of self in task performance where the teacher often was the centre of learning.

Therefore some of the recommendations that have been made as a result of these studies are:

- Pre-school teachers should practice individual teaching more often to scaffold children's difficulties in problem solving to move them to a higher zone of cognitive development.
- Teachers should try to use more Indirect categories of verbal behaviours of increase children's participation in classroom activities.
- Curriculum developers should review training content to focus more on teachers' verbal behaviour in classrooms.
- Curriculum developers should involve pre-school teachers in the inception of the curriculum implementation to create a strong bond of ownership.
- Further research, using other cognitive performance testing instruments in both rural and urban pre-schools should be done to compare children's cognitive performance and their teachers' categories of verbal behaviour.

In conclusion, this research results have shown that children improve their cognitive performance when the researcher used individual scaffolding to meet each child's need. It has also been observed that age and gender does not make significant difference in cognitive performance of children in "preoperational stage" according to Piaget. However, some of the boys appeared more dependent on the researcher which lowered their Post-teaching Test. The observation of teachers' behaviour in classroom was seen to contradict their knowledge level in child development and in teaching, methods. Regular supervision of pre-school teacher to ensure that they practice in class what they learned in training without giving in to pressure to teach for academic excellence.