

**BARRIERS TO PLAY-BASED LEARNING AMONG PRE-PRIMARY SCHOOL
PUPILS IN THE KANGEMI INFORMAL SETTLEMENT
OF NAIROBI CITY COUNTY, KENYA**



BY

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DECLARATION

I declare that this proposal is my original work and has not been presented in any other institution for consideration. This research proposal has been completed by referenced sources, all fully acknowledged. Where text, data or tables have been borrowed from other sources, including the internet, they are specifically accredited and reference cited in accordance and in line with anti-plagiarism regulations.

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This proposal has been submitted for appraisal with my approval as a University Supervisor

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ABSTRACT

Despite global research showing that children learn best through play during their early years, children are still heavily exposed to academically directed pre-primary education, particularly among urban areas in the developing world. Research globally and regionally has identified key barriers to play-based learning in urban low-income communities, including; limited teacher training and a lack of understanding regarding the benefits of play, poor parental perceptions of play, limited space and furnishings, lack of access to materials for play and insufficient teacher-to-child ratios. Despite these results, research has not been conducted within Kenya, and Nairobi's informal settlements specifically. The purpose of this study was therefore to investigate the barriers that are inhibiting the use of play-based learning for Kenya's pre-primary schools within Nairobi's informal settlements. Fifty-one pre-primary school teachers within the Kangemi Ward were sampled using multistage sampling. Cross-sectional descriptive design was employed, using a questionnaire for teachers and play-based learning observation checklist for pre-primary classrooms obtaining both quantitative and qualitative data regarding the usage of and barriers to play-based learning. Pre-testing confirmed validity of the research instruments, and an acceptable reliability was found with a cronbach alpha value of 0.745. Quantitative data from the questionnaire and checklist was analysed using descriptive statistics, including means, frequencies, and ranges, presented as graphs, charts and tables for each quantitative variable in the study. Qualitative data from open-ended questions were analysed through the identification of major themes and trends regarding teachers' perceptions of play and perceived barriers to play-based learning. The major patterns and trends were presented, in addition to direct observation notes and teacher quotes. The main findings of the study indicated a low-level of play-based learning opportunities, with a high prevalence of barriers to its implementation among pre-primary schools within the Kangemi informal settlement. The key barriers that exist are across the pre-primary school sector, with the presence of teacher-related, parent-related and school related barriers. The teacher-related barriers to play-based learning included a lack of training in play-based learning, limited knowledge on how to promote play-based learning and reported barriers of insufficient time, space and materials to enable the practice. Parental pressure was also found to play a role in inhibiting the use of play-based learning as teachers indicated that parents desire strict academics and often see play as a waste of time, influencing how teachers teach. Lastly, the results show the presence of school-related barriers to play-based learning, identified as the unavailability of play materials and facilities, poor availability of child-friendly spaces and very poor teacher to child ratios. The combination of all these factors has resulted in a lack of play-based learning among the sampled pre-primary schools. In result, this study recommends that national curriculum, teacher training programs and pre-primary school management and coordination actors incorporate training and sensitization opportunities to build knowledge and skills within play-based learning for practitioners, as well as promote the importance of its usage among stakeholders.