

**PRE-SCHOOL TEACHER FACTORS THAT  
INFLUENCE THE TEACHER-CHILD  
RELATIONSHIPS IN MIRIGA MIERU DIVISIONS,  
MERU CENTRAL DISTRICT, KENYA**

**BY**

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## DECLARATION

This thesis is my original work and has not been presented for a degree in any other university

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This thesis has been submitted with our approval as University supervisors

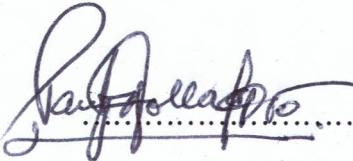
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**DEDICATION**

This thesis is dedicated, with a lot of respect and appreciation, to my  
daddy Mr. Murungi Rukirangi.

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## ABSTRACT

The study was designed to investigate the influence of teachers' teaching experience, parent-teacher relationship, and teacher efficacy on the teacher-child relationship because teachers are prime movers of the educational establishment. To obtain quality education, the teacher-child relationship is an issue that must be addressed in our Kenyan context; so far no study has been done to establish this in Kenya. It is in this light that factors influencing the teacher-child relationship are considered important for investigation.

The study was carried out in Meru Central District. Forty pre-schools were selected: high cost, low cost, and middle cost schools, using the stratified sampling technique. The questionnaire was personally administered to 40 pre-school teachers. The questionnaire had four parts: Part:1 the teacher information survey, Part:2 the student-teacher relationship scale, Part:3 teacher efficacy scale and Part:4 the parent-teacher relationship scale. The collected data was processed using the statistical package for social sciences (SPSS).

The Pearson product moment correlation was used to test the hypotheses in this study. A statistically significant relationship was found to exist between parent-teacher relationship and the teacher-child relationship scores at  $\alpha < 0.05$ . This implied that parent-teacher relationship influences the teacher-child relationship.

The results also showed that statistically there was no significant relationship between teacher's years of teaching experience and the teacher-child

relationship scores at  $\alpha < 0.05$ . This implied that the years of a teachers' teaching experience do not influence the teacher-child relationship.

There was no statistically significant relationship found between a teachers' teacher efficacy and the teacher-child relationship scores at  $\alpha < 0.05$  and this implies that a teachers efficacy does not influence the teacher-child relationship.

From these results, it became clear that the factor that mostly influences the teacher-child relationship is the parent-teacher relationship. It was recommended that additional research is needed to determine the extent to which other factors: such as environmental factors like space and materials, classroom routines, teacher-child ratios, and child factors like problem behavior and gender and their influences on the teacher-child relationship.

Further research is also needed to investigate the teacher-factors and their influence on teacher-child relationship in other geographical regions.

The teachers in charge of the pre-school centers and the local authorities should ensure that the appropriate teacher to child ratio is observed this is to ensure that the classes are not overcrowded and this may improve the teacher-child relationship.

Parents of pre-schools might need to attend seminars on benefits to the children when parents involve in their schooling, how they can build a good relationship with their pre-school teacher; and also how to make friends with their child's teacher.

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Background to the study

Due to the increasing enrollment of young children aged 3-6 years in pre-schools, Early Childhood Education has become an important sector of the Kenyan education system, especially in laying the foundation for the child's socialization and lifelong education. The enrollment trend means that more pre-school teachers are needed to meet this demand. These teachers provide comfort to the young children when they get upset, take care of their hygiene needs, play with them, supervise their play and teach them facts (Berk & Winsler, 1995). Therefore, they play a critical role in these children's' lives and development. The way the teachers relate with their pre-schoolers, or young children influences their relationships.

Young children get involved in social interactions or relationships with other children as well as their teachers in pre-schools and those who do not show social competence and are incapable of maintaining positive social relationships with others are at risk of a variety of school maladjustment or behavioral problems. Therefore, a child's early functioning is often predictive of later behaviour adjustments. Bullock, (1993) did a similar study to this, in the USA with the children of age 3-6 years, and found that, children in pre-schools are socially incompetent. This shows that in such a case a pre-school teacher is expected to teach these children appropriate skills to socialize with others in an appropriate manner.

Pre-school teachers serve as primary social partners for young children on a regular basis. Once children establish a positive relationship with their teachers in early childhood years they may often carry over the same type of relationship to other teachers in early elementary school years. Similarly, children who have secure relationships with their mothers tend to have secure relationships with their pre-school teachers and their peers. Researchers including Pianta and Nimetz (1991), argue that children who do not have secure relationships with their parents are likely to have difficulties establishing a positive relationship with their schoolteachers. Positive teacher-child relationship refers to a warm, close and secure relationship where a child feels loved, free with the teacher and secure, while a negative relationship refers to a situation whereby a child feels unloved, insecure, and not cared for and this comes in with a lot of negativity (Birch & Ladd, 1998).

During the early childhood years, a teacher-child relationship appears to be a stable predictor for the child's early school adjustments and performance, such as interest in school, participation in classroom activities and interactions with other children (Berk & Winsler, 1995). When children have positive relationships with early childhood teachers they are more likely to perform well in pre-school and later in elementary classes than their colleagues who had negative relationships with their pre-school teachers. Also, researchers like Pianta & Steinberg, (1992) support the above when they say children at risk of referral for special education due to behavioral problems are less likely to be referred if they have a positive relationship with their kindergarten teachers.

Therefore, it is necessary for a study to be carried out to find out the influence teacher factors have on the teacher-child relationship in Kenya.

Teacher factors such as the professional status and experience have been reported to be positive teacher factors (Howes, 1997). A negative teacher-child relationship can be changed at a given period in a therapeutic school program (Howes and Ritchie, 1998). Teachers' behaviors have great influence on children's behavior (Arnold et. al, 1998). Teachers training and experience are related to supportive teacher behaviors (Arnold, McWilliams & Arnold, 1989; Howes and Hamilton, 1992). Little is known about the factors that influence teachers' use of supportive and warm approaches and why teachers approach children differently and this influences the teacher-child relationship.

Another factor that has been shown to strongly influence a teachers' interactive behavior with students in the classroom in primary and secondary education is teacher-efficacy. This is a teachers' belief in how teaching affects students' behavior and how confident teachers change students' behaviors and learning (Emmer and Hickman, 1991; Gibson and Dembo, 1984). Teachers with a high self-efficacy appear to work longer with difficult students than teachers with low efficacy (Gibson and Dembo, 1984; Soodak and Podell, 1996). This teacher factor (efficacy) is rarely examined in the samples of pre-school teachers. However, literature leads us to believe that it can be measured with pre-school teachers' and therefore it is reasonable to look at its role in the teacher-child relationships at this level.

Another factor associated with teacher-child relationships is the parent-teacher relationship. When teachers and parents have positive communication and share information about children, they can foster positive parent-teacher relationships (Watkins, 1997). A frequently used model to explain this is a triangular relationship among many parents, children, and teachers based on their interaction process. Pianta, Steinberg & Rollins (1995); Howes et al, (1994) used Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological perspective of child development to explain thoroughly the relationship between the parent-child and teacher-child relationships and the association between parent-child and teacher-child relationships. The study of how teachers feel about their relationships with parents could be a good prediction of the teacher-child relationships. In Kenya, no study has been done on the parent-teacher relationship and its influence on the teacher-child relationship.

In summary, teachers' and children are the two parties involved in a teacher-child relationship. Teacher factors associated with teacher-child relationships with pre-school children have not been examined in Kenya. The teachers' professional status, kinds of professional training, teaching experience, teacher efficacy and teachers' relationship with parents may contribute to the way pre-school teachers relate with their pre-school children. These factors have not been specifically explored in samples of early childhood teachers in Kenya. Therefore, a study was needed to establish the relationship of these pre-school teacher factors that influence the teacher-child relationship.

## 1.2 Statement of the problem

In the recent past Kenya has experienced an increasing number of pre-school centers due to awareness of need and importance of Early Childhood Education. Due to this it is now realized that young children of age 3-6 years spend several hours per day with the pre-school teachers in school. These teachers are entrusted with the responsibility of taking care of the social and academic needs of young children.

The works reviewed in the USA have reported that, during the early childhood years, a teacher-child relationship appears to be a stable predictor of the child's early school adjustment and performance (Berk & Winsler, 1995).

Other studies have reported that a positive teacher-child relationship promotes the desired behavior or learning outcomes, whereas negative relationships result in undesired behaviors or learning outcomes (Arnold, et: al, 1989).

Most of these studies have been done in the western countries but no study has been done to establish the relationship of these teacher factors that influence the teacher-child relationship in Kenya.

It is within this context that this study seeks to find out the influence of the teacher efficacy, the parent-teacher relationship, and the teaching experience on the teacher-child relationship. Also due to the fact that some pre-school children are anti-socialized in learning and may hate the learning process which may lead to school dropouts or mediocre learning; This study, therefore, will establish the relationship of the selected teacher factors in our

Kenyan situation and their effectiveness so as to be able to come up with ways of promoting positive teacher-child relationship to ensure desired behaviors and learning outcomes are achieved.

### **1.3 Purpose of the study**

The aim of this study was to find out whether the selected teacher factors influence the relationship teachers have with their pre-school children. The following specific teacher factors were explored:

- a) Pre-school teacher's years of teaching experience and its influence on teacher-child relationships.
- b) Pre-school teachers' efficacy and its influence on teacher-child relationships.
- c) Parent-teacher relationships and their influence on teacher-child relationships.

### **1.4 Objectives of the study**

The following objectives were formulated for the study to find out:

1. Teachers' perceptions about their relationships with their pre-school children in school
2. Teachers' perceptions of their relationships with parents of their pre-school children.
3. The influence of the teachers' beliefs in the teacher-child relationship

### **1.5 Research questions**

The study sought to answer the following research questions.

1. Do teachers' years of teaching experience influence a positive teacher-child relationship?
2. To what extent does a teacher-parent relationship influence the teacher-child relationship? As measured by the parent-teacher relationship scale
3. To what extent does a teacher efficacy influence the teacher child relationship? As measured by the teachers' belief scale.

### **1.6 Significance of the study**

It is hoped that examining teacher factors that influence the teacher-child relationships would provide Early Childhood Educators or practitioners with a rationale to design appropriate programs that would help to foster skills leading to a positive teacher-child relationship. The literature on teacher-child relationships has shown that positive relationships in the early childhood education years have had a great impact on children learning outcomes, social development and early school adjustments in pre-school, and in primary school years (Howes, 1997; Pianta and Steinberg, 1992).

To date, there has been no research on teacher factors in Kenya, therefore, it is hoped that the study would answer some questions regarding to teacher factors that may influence the teacher-child relationships in our Kenyan context.

This study also provides information to fill in the gap in our Kenyan knowledge about teacher-child relationships with pre-school children. Therefore, it is valuable to have information on teacher factors that influence

the teacher-child relationships and how to promote positive teacher-child relationships using these teacher factors.

### **1.7 Basic assumption of the study**

It was assumed that the selected pre-school teachers used in this study were a representative sample of the pre-school teachers in Miriga Mieru Divisions.

It was assumed in this study that the teachers undergoing the training in the time of the study were not trained.

It was also assumed that the parenting styles cited in this study apply to pre-school parents even though parents may vary in some situations in their parenting styles

### **1.8 Scope and limitation**

The study was done in Meru Central District–Miriga Mieru Divisions.

Due to financial and time constraints the researcher did not find it not possible to obtain measures from the total Divisions of Miriga Mieru; therefore, the researcher used Nyaki and Municipality zones, which are, in these divisions, as a representative sample. The sample comprised of pre-school teachers who were trained and not trained in the time of study. Only pre-school institutions were involved in the study and since pre-school teachers are almost exclusively women, gender variable was not included in the study.

## 1.9 Definition of terms

1. **Teacher – child relationship** is a teachers' apparent and overall feeling about how he or she gets along with an individual child.
2. **Parent – teacher relationship** is a teachers' perception of how they feel about the quality of relationships they have with parents of their pre – school children. The term parent includes a guardian or caregiver in case of the orphaned children.
3. **Teacher efficacy** is a teacher's belief in how teaching affects children's learning and how a teacher can use teaching to change a child's learning and behaviors.
4. **Pre-school teacher** is a trained or untrained person who teaches or guides children in pre-school institutions.
5. **Pre-school** is a term used to refer to institutions that deal with children of ages 2-6 years, who have not attained the age of attending primary school.
6. **Relationship** is a series of successive interactions between two individuals involving interchanges across a long period of time. It also refers to a degree of continuity among interactions, such that the current interaction is influenced by the previous interaction and will affect the future interaction in turn.
7. **Teacher factors** in this study refer to either of the following; teacher's efficacy, teacher's teaching experience and the teacher-parent relationship.

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 2.0 Introduction

The following three theories were reviewed for the study. These theories are the ecological system theory, the transactional theory, and the self-efficacy theory. Literature related to the teacher child relationship is also reviewed and the specific hypotheses for the study formulated at the end of this chapter

#### 2.1 The Ecological Theory:

Bronfenbrenner (1979) introduced the theory of ecological systems to the field of developmental psychology to explain human behaviour and development. He stated that the environment in which some individuals grow consists of a hierarchical set of subsystems (micro-system, meso-system, exo-system, and macro-system), which interact with each other and with developing individuals. These subsystems are the social interconnections of developmental contexts (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

The micro-system refers to a setting whereby an individual is part of and is involved in what is taking place; for example, this can be seen in a child's relationship with the teachers at school or with parents at home. The meso-system is the set of relationships that exist between settings associated with the child, such as the relationship between teacher and parent. The exo-system refers to the many settings that influence an individual, but the individual is not directly involved in these settings, for example, parents' working place or the school board. The macro-system includes the social values and beliefs that are

based on an individual's larger community. These cultural and historical issues influence an individual through the exo-system, meso-system, micro and macro systems. Bronfenbrenner (1979) argued that recognition of the adult-child relationship is the key to understanding behavioral changes not only in children but also in parents and teachers. This theory deals with relationships and their influence across the subsystems, and these kinds of relationships especially as we have seen in the case of micro and the meso-system above. Example a child's relationship with the pre-school teacher (micro-system) will be influenced by the relationship the teacher has with the child's parent (meso-system).

## **2.2 Transactional theory**

Sameroff and Chandler (1975) suggested a transactional theory of development that includes the child's nature (biology) and a child's experiences (nurture) in the environment across time to explain the child's development. They argued that a child's development is a result of the interactions between the child and the environment over a period of time. The child and the environment influence each other and also affect each other in subsequent times.

To explain this, Sameroff (1987) used the interactions observed between a child with birth complications and the child's mother to explain transactions leading to poor developmental outcomes. When the child was born with birth complications, the mother felt anxiety during the early months of a child's life and this caused her to interact inappropriately with the child. Due to this, the child had trouble in trying to respond to the mother and this made the child to

have irregular eating and sleeping patterns that the mother in turn viewed as difficult temperament. The mother therefore did not have joy and avoided interacting with this child. If this negative environment and their kind of relationship continue, we can expect the child to be at risk of several developmental delays such as: language delay (Egeland & Sroufe, 1981).

The patterns taking place can be discontinued by changing the environment, and this can prevent poor developmental outcomes. Also, the mother can be helped to adjust her perceptions about birth complications to reduce her anxiety and help her practice better interaction skills with her child. Transactional theory can be applied in teacher-child relationships where by when children go to pre-school, they establish another adult-child relationship with the teacher.

### **2.3 Self - Efficacy Theory**

Self-efficacy is a person's belief about his or her abilities to complete a task. These beliefs influence the way that a person feels, thinks, and motivates him or her to complete goals in life (Bandura, 1977,1995). For example, if an individual feels that he or she will have success in performing a given task, the individual will try hard to achieve the goal. On the other hand, if an individual feels that he or she is going to fail, the individual will not put much effort into the task in order to avoid feelings of failure. Even though self-efficacy is task oriented, it is not an estimation of a person's skills but rather a belief about what the person can complete with the skills they have in different situations

(Bandura, 1997). People with high efficacy are more likely to commit themselves to challenges and to follow them through (Locke & Latham, 1990). They appear to have higher levels of motivation to complete their actions as well as to expect more positive outcomes than people with low self-efficacy do (Bandura, 1995). People with high self-efficacies often have a strong belief that they can control challenging situations from their environment.

Bandura's self-efficacy theory has provided a foundation for early childhood education to examine how teachers' beliefs about themselves and their teaching can influence the teacher-child relationship leading to better learning outcomes (Gibson and Dembo, 1984). The literature has shown that teacher-efficacy influence teachers interactive behaviors with their children in school. Therefore, it is necessary for the study to investigate the influence teacher efficacy has on the teacher-child relationship.

In summary, these theories have provided a foundation for further examination of teacher-child relationships. The ecological theory points to a triangular relationship among teachers, children, parents or guardians. The parent-teacher relationship has not been explored as a factor that influences the teacher-child relationship in Kenya; therefore, it needs to be examined within this triangular relationship. Proponents of the transactional theory assert that the teachers can be a new environmental factor for the continuity or

discontinuity of the young children's interaction patterns with their environment.

Finally, self-efficacy theory encourages investigation of teacher efficacy with the samples of pre-school teachers and their influence on the teacher-child relationship.

## **2.4 Parent – child Relationships**

The term parenting seems to indicate more about parents' behaviors but it also includes the interactions between parents and children. Literature suggests that parents have their own ways of interacting with their children. The interactions between parents and children have been categorized into four parenting styles that indicate different parent-child relationships and bring out the different developmental outcomes (Baumrind, 1966). The four parenting styles are authoritative, authoritarian, permissive and uninvolved or rejecting. These styles may influence the relationship children have with their fellow children, teachers, guardians and parents. Therefore, it is necessary to review these parenting styles and find out how they are likely to influence the teacher-child relationships.

### **2.4.1 Authoritative**

Authoritative parenting refers to parents who use highly demanding as well as responsive interactions with their children (Baumrind, 1966; 1971). The authoritative parents are more likely to direct children's activities with firm control and demands for mature social behaviors and independence, as well as accept and respect children's individual interests. These parents also share

their reasons for rules with their children and encourage communication about problems or questions (Baumrind, 1966; 1971).

Parents who use an authoritative approach to interact with their children are more likely to have children with high academic competence, better psychosocial development, and lower levels of behavioral problems than the other three types of parenting (Smetana, 1995). Children from authoritative parenting families showed high self-efficacy concept, capacities for leadership and were more likely to be accepted by their kindergarten peers (Parish and McCluskey, 1993). These children are also competent, self reliant, not aggressive, socially mature, responsible and adjusted better when they went in school (Konchaska, 1997).

#### **2.4.2 Authoritarian**

Authoritarian parenting refers to parents who are highly demanding but minimally responsive to their children. This type of parenting is emotionally hostile to children and is likely to employ physical punishment. These parents view obedience as a critical value and use punishments and forceful approaches to keep their children behaving within parental expectations. These parents do not favor verbal exchange and they discourage their children from negotiating (Baumrind, 1966, 1971). Parents who use restrictive and hostile attitudes towards their children (authoritarian parenting) are more likely to have children with low self-efficacy or concepts (Parish and McCluskey 1993). Mothers who use hostile interactions (authoritarian) with children are

more likely to have pre-school children with behavioral problems, and negative peer interactions (Campbell, 1994). This parenting style tends to produce children who are irresponsible, distrustful, and difficulty to adjust in school (Harrist, 1993; Smetana, 1995). They are likely to be hostile to their peers but submissive or cowering when interacting with aggressive peers (Harrist, 1993; Rice, 1996).

### **2.4.3 Permissive**

Permissive parents generally are less demanding but more highly responsive to their children. These parents try to satisfy their children's desires as much as possible. The children regulate their own rules in the family.

Permissive parenting is totally child-centered with very little control exercised over the children. Parents who use this approach do not attempt to set many rules and responsibilities for their children, and accept most of their children's desires, impulses, and actions (Baumrind, 1996; 1971). Children from permissive parenting families are more likely to use forceful behaviors towards their peers (Lamborn, Mounts, Steinberg, Dornbuschi, 1991). Permissive parents view rules as the child's personal issue and are less likely to manipulate the rules (Smetana, 1995). Children from permissive families are more likely to be viewed as irresponsible, aggressive, highly anxious, dependent, and self-centered. When these children get a little older, they often feel insecure and not certain about their future (Rice, 1996).

#### **2.4.4 Uninvolved or Rejecting**

This parenting refers to parents who are less demanding than other parents and less responsive to their children. These parents are unwilling or unable to interact with their children in any way. They avoid their children physically, as well as psychologically (Baumrind, 1966; 1971). They neither demand anything of their children nor respond to them; they purposefully disengage themselves from them. These parents try to do whatever is needed to minimize the time and effort to interact with the children (Maccoby, and Martin, 1983).

Children from rejecting homes have poor school outcomes, as compared to other peers from other types of parenting families (Lamborn et al; 1991). Parents who use uninvolved or the rejecting parenting style are more likely to have children who perform at lower levels in play with their peers (Campbell, 1994). This style is considered as dysfunctional parenting. Such parents are also seen as neglecting their children (Egeland and Sroufe, 1981). The children from these families have difficulties in engaging themselves in school activities or with others; they are more likely to suffer psychological and somatic problems, as well as drug abuse problems in adolescence (Baumrind, 1991; Lamborn, et: al., 1991).

#### **2.5 Review of Teacher – child Relationships**

A relationship can be defined as a series of successive interactions between two individuals involving interchanges across a long period of time. The relationship also refers to a degree of continuity among interactions, such that the current

interaction is influenced by the previous interaction and will affect the future interaction in turn (Hinde, 1979). It is gradually recognized that children form their relationship patterns towards others based on their personal memories, experiences, emotions, and expectations connected with their first or most important relationship, such as parent – child relationships (Hinde & Stevenson, 1987). Therefore, how teachers interact with these children will improve on **their positive relationships** or change their negative relationship to be positive depending on what experiences the children had. A relationship can be recognized to be positive or negative, close or conflicted.

Many researchers have used insider's information to examine the teacher-child relationships. Insiders are individuals who are involved in the relationship being studied and they give information like self-reports or scales (Olson, 1977). Teachers and mothers (also fathers and guardians included) may share some similar roles in terms of caring for and educating young children, and there are some similarities between mother-child relationships and teacher-child relationships. Teachers however, are different from parents in the role they play in pre-schools. For example, in homes there are likely to be one or two parents to deal with one or more children; but in pre-school centers one teacher has to deal with 15-30 children or even more. In addition, teachers have concerns and responsibilities towards these children in school that are different from parents' interactions with children at home. The involvement between a teacher and a child and positive or negative emotional quality of the involvement contributes to teacher-child relationships (Pianta, Nimetz & Bennet, 1997). Much has been

done on the teacher child relationship in the developed countries, therefore we need to establish the kind of relationship teachers and children have in Kenya.

The teacher-child relationships can be best measured by using information gathered from the teachers' self-reports through the teacher-child relationship scale.

## **2.6 Teacher-child Relationships and Children's Developmental Outcomes**

Young children gradually establish relationships with their pre-school teachers when they attend school. Literature has focused on children's relationships with their early childhood teachers and how teacher-child relationships are related to children's peer relationships, early school adjustments, school performance, and behavioral problems (Howes, 1997; Pianta, et. al., 1997).

Pianta et: al (1995) investigated children's relationship with their early childhood teachers and their influence during the first two years of USA elementary schooling. A total of 436 children received several developmental tests, including cognition, language, motor skills and behavioral adjustment over the beginning at entry into school to the second grade period. Kindergarten and second grade teachers completed the teacher-child relationship scale to measure their teacher-child relationships. The results showed that children with warm and close relationships with their kindergarten teachers had more positive teacher-child relationships with their second grade teachers than children who had conflicted or over dependent relationships with their kindergarten teachers.

Children who were at a high risk of retention or referral for special education were less likely to be retained or referred if they had a positive relationship with their kindergarten teachers than the children who had a conflicted relationship with their kindergarten teachers. Other researchers show that children with positive relationship with the pre-school teachers are likely to be reported by their kindergarten teachers as having better work habits and more frustration tolerance than the children with negative relationships with the pre-school teachers. The children with positive teacher-child relationships also perform better on language and conceptual knowledge assessments. Also children with positive relationships with their kindergarten teachers are more likely to continue the same positive relationships with their first and second grade teachers, and be rated by teachers as better adjusted than children with negative relationships with their kindergarten teachers (Nimetz, 1992; Pianta & Steinberg, 1992).

The literature has shown that a teacher-child relationship not only influences a child's learning and social development, but also is a stable predictor for the child's early school adjustment and performance. Continuity exists between the following dyads: the parent-child, the teacher-child and the pre-school teachers and standard one teacher's, regardless of positive or negative relationships. Positive teacher-child relationship can be used as protective factor for young children. Teachers can play an important role of supportive environment (third person) in a child's micro system (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) or a new interaction partner for discontinuity of a negative parent-child relationship (Sameroff, 1987).

## **2.7 Factors Influencing Teacher-child Relationships**

It will be beyond the scope of this study to list every possible direct or indirect factor that is potentially related to teacher-child relationships. Therefore, this section will be focused only on two of the most important components that are immediately related to teacher-child relationships. The two are environmental factors and teacher factors; they are discussed in the following paragraphs.

### **2.7.1 Environmental Factors**

There is evidence to show that relationships between individuals are influenced by their environmental contexts. This section will illustrate only two of these factors: these are classroom space, materials and routines. They are the most common factors that have been discussed in the literature regarding teacher-child relationships.

#### **2.7.1.1 Space and Materials**

Researchers have argued that environmental settings strongly influence children's learning as well as their physical and emotional comfort (Nordquist & Twardosz, 1990). Space and material arrangements are often the first thought for encouraging or changing children's behaviors during teacher-child interactions. When a classroom has too much open space, children are more likely to run around the classroom. On the other hand, when a classroom is too crowded, it increases chances for children's conflicts. And in such a situation a teacher will spend much time dealing with disruptions (Greenman, 1988). And the teacher will be focused more on behavioral management or discipline than on pleasant teaching. An average of 50 square feet is considered appropriate space for each child in a pre-school classroom (Hildebrand, 1991). Spatial

arrangements can reduce or prevent children's problematic behaviors. A well-arranged classroom space not only attracts children's attention in activities but also facilitates their teaching (Graham & Bryant, 1993).

Teachers need to provide enough appropriate materials; toys in play areas and limit the number of children on each area. Sometimes it is necessary to provide individualized materials so as to engage children on task. When children stay on task, they learn and do not have time to cause trouble. Therefore, teachers also can concentrate on their teaching other than solving conflicts.

#### **2.7.1.2 Routine**

Classroom routine has been defined as activities or events that occur on a predictable or regular basis like in group activities or outdoor play (Bricker and Cripe, 1992). A daily classroom routine provides a social framework, a flexible structure, a supportive curriculum, and an environmental context for young children's interests. A consistent daily routine helps young children to anticipate what is going to happen next, and it also gives them a feeling of control (Hohmann & Weikart, 1995).

When a classroom does not have routine, there is a good possibility of increasing negative teacher-child relationships especially with children who have short attention span and those who do not follow the teacher's directives. When each routine is arranged with reasonable time schedules based on a child's attention spans and the nature of activities, children's inappropriate behaviors are likely to decrease (McEvoy, Fox, & Rosenberg, 1991).

## **2.8 Teacher factors**

### **2.8.1 Education and Experience**

Teachers' educational backgrounds and experiences with young children are common variables in the literature of teacher-child relationships. Teachers' professional status is related to teaching behaviors and interactions they have with children (Howes, 1997). Teachers who are more experienced on early childhood education have positive relationship with their pre-school children as compared to their colleagues who are less experienced. They are also likely to use positive interactions with children and less likely to use punishments towards children. When teachers use supportive, warm interactions with children, they are more likely to have positive relationship with their pre-school children. (Hamilton and Howes, 1992; Holloway, & Reichhart-Ericson, 1988).

Trained teachers have increased knowledge of child development and have secure relationships with their children (Howes and Ritchie, 1998). Training in child development or more experience with young children is related to positive teacher-child relationships. Therefore, it is expected that an experienced teacher with training on early childhood education will have a positive relationship hence both training and experience are very important in determining the kind of relationship teachers have with their pre-school children. Another factor that is associated with teacher-child relationship is teacher efficacy.

### **2.8.2 Teacher efficacy**

Teacher efficacy refers to how teacher's beliefs in teaching can change children's behaviors. Teacher efficacy is identified as an important variable to

explain differences in teaching effectiveness (Gibson and Dembo, 1984; Soodak and Podell, 1996). Hence teacher efficacy is an important factor in teacher-child relationship. It has been found that teachers with high self-efficacy are less likely to use external control and more likely to trust children's autonomy in solving classroom conflicts (Emmer, & Hickman, 1991) and teachers with low teacher efficacy are more likely to use external control to support student learning such as tangible rewards or punishments.

Teachers with low teacher efficacy appear to be easily disturbed by disruptions of routines, and use more restrictive approaches during small group activities than Teachers with high teacher-efficacy hence having negative teacher-child relationship. (Gibson & Dembo, 1984). Also, research has shown that teachers with lower teacher efficacy seem to be uncomfortable with children who show mild learning problems while teachers with high teacher-efficacy seem to have more positive attitudes towards children with special needs, including children with behavioral disorders. Positive teacher child-relationship is more likely to be expected between teachers with high teacher-efficacy and the children they teach (Soodak & Podell, 1986). Also teachers' beliefs and attitudes can impact interactive behaviors to children, teachers' beliefs about their role and teaching appear to strongly influence the way teachers interact with children and their teacher-child relationships (Boulton, 1997). Another important factor associated with the teacher-child relationship is the parent-teacher relationship.

## **2.9 Parent- teacher Relationships**

Parent-teacher communication has always been viewed as an important indicator of the quality of education (Watkins, 1997). Effective communication between teachers and parents increases parental involvement in children's schooling and brings about positive educational outcomes for the children (Grolnick, Benjet, Kurowiski & Apostoleris, 1997). When parents and teachers have effective communication, not only the teachers are able to know more about what happens at the children's homes, but also the parents are more likely to be involved in their children's school activities (McBride and Lin, 1996). To involve parents, effective communication is needed and this will also establish positive parent- teacher relationship (Watkins, 1997).

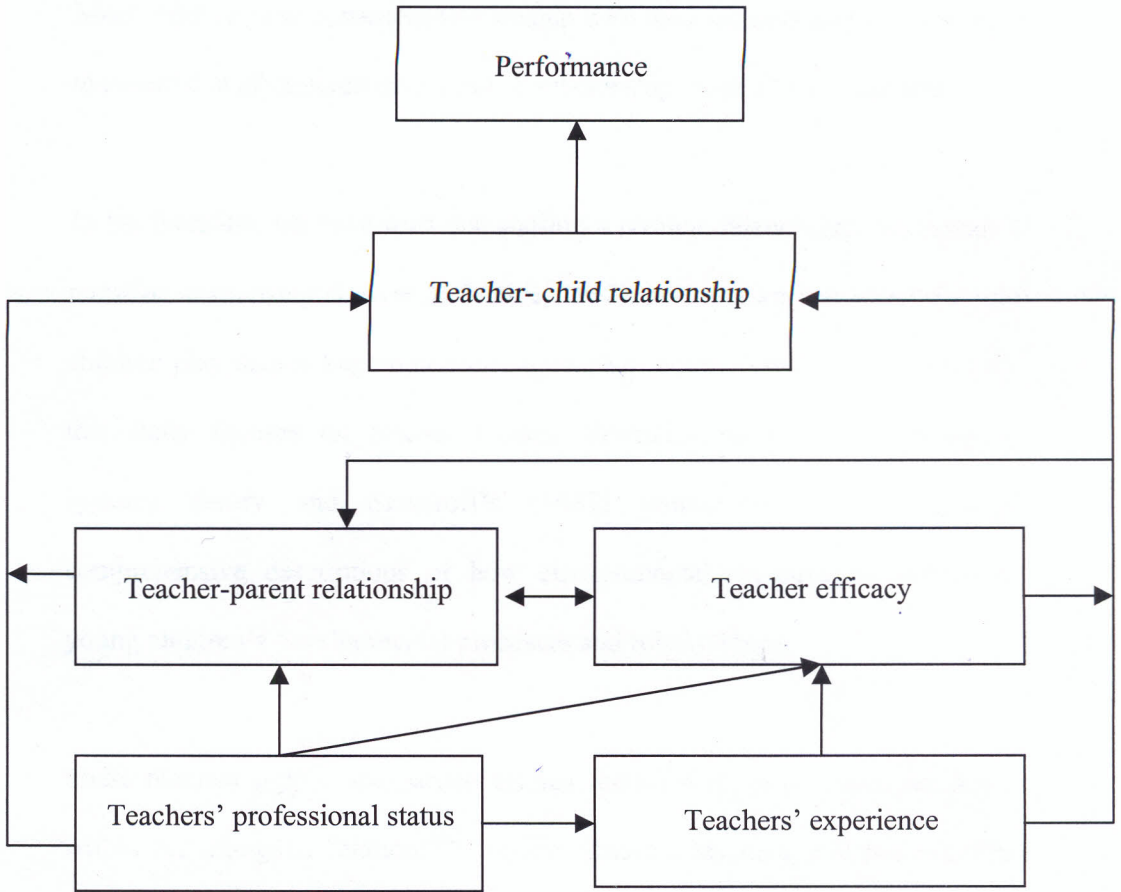
Teachers' attitudes and behaviors towards families or parents are considered as important factors related to parental involvement, teachers with positive attitudes towards parental involvement are more likely to promote a positive parent- teacher relationship (Grolnick, et al., 1997; Jones, White, & Aeby, & Benson, 1997). We need to investigate the role played by parent-teacher relationship in the teacher-child relationship. If we expect teachers to bring out the most optimal learning outcomes in children.

## **2.10 Conceptual Framework**

Teacher factors that influence the teacher-child relationship seem to be interrelated. It was anticipated that a teachers' professional status would influence the teacher-child relationship, the parent- teacher relationship and the teacher efficacy. Teacher efficacy as a factor would influence the teacher-child relationship, and the parent-teacher relationship since we know that most pre-school teachers' feel inferior when dealing with parents of their children who mostly are more educated. A teachers' education experience determines the teacher efficacy and the kind of relationship the teacher will have with the parents and in turn, it will affect the teacher-child relationship.

The teacher-parent relationship, in turn, influence the kind of relationship the teacher will have with the child. Hence, we realize that each factor contributes to teacher-child relationship and not only influences the teacher-child relationship but also the other factors such that; no one factor can be said to influence the teacher-child relationship by itself. The interaction of these factors will affect the child's performance, the child's interest in school, school adjustment, the child's interaction, a child's class participation and behaviors. Table 1.1 below shows how these factors are related to the teacher-child relationship.

**Figure 1.1: A conceptual framework of factors related to teacher child relationship**



### **2.11 Summary**

The literature reviewed has shown that teacher-child relationship influences children's social development and early school adjustment. Positive teacher-child relationships are related to positive developmental outcomes for children. Most children have consistent relationship with their teachers and it is important to ensure that all children have positive relationships with all their teachers.

In the literature, we have seen that starting a positive relationship can change a negative relationship (Howes & Ritchie, 1998). Much is known about the role children play than is known concerning teacher factors. This is the reason why this study focuses on teacher factors. Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems theory and Sameroff's (1987) transactional theory provide comprehensive descriptions of how environmental organization influences young children's developmental processes and relationships.

These theories support the parent- teacher relationship, as an important factor within the triangular relationship among children, teachers, and parents. The parent-teacher relationships also appear to have potential influences on teacher-child relationship. In addition, Bandura's self-efficacy theory illustrates how self-efficacy theory influences a teacher's behavior towards children. These theories support the idea that a further understanding of these teacher factors can help to promote positive teacher-child relationships.

## 2.12 Specific Hypotheses

On the basis of the studies that have been reviewed, the following three research hypotheses were formulated.

- H<sub>1</sub> . A significant relationship exists between a teachers' years teaching experience in a pre-school and the teacher -child relationship.
- H<sub>2</sub> A significant relationship exists between teachers' teacher efficacy and teacher-child relationship.
- H<sub>3</sub> A significant relationship exists between the parent-teacher relationship and teacher-child relationship.

## CHAPTER 3

### RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

#### 3.0 Introduction

This study was an *expost-facto* design in which the researcher investigated the role teacher factors play in the teacher-child relationship. An *expost-facto* research design is defined as, a systematic empirical inquiry in which the scientist does not have direct control of independent variables because their manifestation has already occurred or because they are inherently not manipulable. Inferences about relationships among variables are made without direct intervention from concomitant variation of dependent and independent variables. This study design was selected mainly because, besides collecting and describing the relevant data for the study, it also explored the existence of certain relationships among the independent and dependent variables.

#### 3.1 Variables

The dependent variable was the teacher-child relationship, which was measured using the teacher-child relationship scale. The independent variables were teachers' years of teaching experience and a teachers' professional status, teacher efficacy, and the parent-teacher relationship. These independent variables were measured using teacher information survey, the teacher belief scale, and the parent teacher-relationship scale found in the appendix A. The scales used were tested for reliability and validity by different researchers and have been used in the fields of Early Childhood Education (Birch & Ladd, 1997, 1998; Elicker, Noppe, & Noppe, 1997;

Nimetz, 1992; Pianta, Steinberg, & Rollins, 1995; Pianta, 1996; Soodak & Podell, 1996).

### 3.2 Locations and Population.

Miriga Mieru divisions were selected for the study to reduce financial constraints to the researcher. The sample for the study included 40 pre-school teachers who dealt with children of ages 2-6 years in the selected schools of Nyaki and Municipality zones in Miriga-Mieru Divisions. These education zones were preferred because they represent diversity in social status, socio-economic level, and ethnic composition. In addition, these zones are close to one another greatly reducing transport expenses. The pre-schools involved can be classified as follows: High cost schools, Middle and Low cost schools. The classifications are based on the availability of physical facilities in the playground, permanency of the school buildings, classroom space and the means of transport of the children to the schools.

**Table 3.1 Classification of schools**

TYPE OF SCHOOL	NO. OF SCHOOLS
High cost	10 schools
Low cost	10 schools
Middle cost	20 schools
Total	40 Pre-schools

At the time of the study, Meru Central District Kenya, in totality had 475 teachers of whom 2 were men, 327 of these teachers were trained, 86 teachers were on training and 62 teachers were not trained at all. It has a total of 380

pre-schools of which 51 are private. There was a total of 15,181 children in these schools of which 7,365 were girls and 7,816 are boys.

The Miriga –Mieru divisions are: Miriga-Mieru East and Miriga Mieru-West, every Division has 2 zones. Miriga-Mieru West has Municipality and Ntima zones while Miriga-Mieru East has Nyaki and Giaki zones. For the current study, the researcher focused on two zones of Miriga-Mieru Divisions called Nyaki and municipality zones.

### **3.3 Sampling and Sampling Procedures.**

To decide which schools were to participate in the study, a list of all schools in the two zones was obtained from Meru Central District Center for Early Childhood Education. These schools were divided into three categories: high cost schools, low cost schools and middle cost schools, (the classifications are based on the availability of physical facilities in the playground, permanency of the school buildings, classroom space and the means of transport of the children to the schools). Each category was labeled separately and put in respective boxes. A stratified sampling and a lottery method (simple random sampling) were used in which names of all the schools in each category were written on slip papers. These slips were put into their respective boxes labeled low cost, high cost and middle cost then they were mixed thoroughly. Without looking into the boxes, the researcher opened the low cost box and picked 10 slips one after the other, then the high cost schools box and picked 10 slips also one after the other and finally the middle cost schools box was opened

whereby the researcher picked 20 slips one after the other because the names of the schools in this category had more schools than the other classifications. The names of the schools that were picked can be found in the appendices.

Since most schools had more than one teacher, another lottery had to be conducted in each school in order to get the one teacher to participate in the study. Therefore, the researcher gave all pre- school teachers in one school, pieces of papers and requested them to write their names, then folded them nicely and rolled them into small balls then returned them to the researcher, who put them in a small container and mixed them thoroughly, then opened the container and picked one paper after opening and reading the name in it, the teacher whose name was read participated in the study and this process was done in all the schools that had more than one pre- school teacher.

To select the child to be used in the study in all the respective schools, the researcher used the attendance register to list all the names of the children, in every class whose teacher participated in the study then rolled them into small balls, put them in a container and mixed them thoroughly, then opened the container and picked one paper and read the name in it. The teacher then was asked to think of that child while answering the teacher-child relationship scale. Municipality and Nyaki zones were purposively selected because they represent a diversity of social status, socio-economical level and ethnic composition, and are close to one another reducing transport expenses greatly.

### **3.4 Research Instrument**

The study utilized a questionnaire to collect data. The questionnaire had four parts: Part: 1 teachers' information survey, part: 2 student-teacher relationship scale, and part: 3 the guardian/parent-teacher relationship scale, and part: 4 teachers' belief scale. The teacher was to fill all the four parts of this questionnaire. This instrument is discussed below and can be referred to in the appendix A.

#### **3.4.1 Teacher Information Survey**

These were short items developed to collect the necessary background information about teachers. The information provided in this part included: The teachers' age and gender, professional status, and years of teaching experience with young children in early childhood education.

#### **3.4.2 The Student-Teacher Relationship Scale**

The student-teacher relationship scale is a 28-item standardized rating scale, which assesses teachers' perceptions about their relationships with individual students (Pianta, 1992). The student-teacher relationship scale is based on child-adult relationship theories and research on early school experiences. The items are valid for exploring teacher-child relationships. There are several reasons for using this scale. First this scale has high reliability and validity to detect positive and negative teacher-child relationships. As indicated in the past researches at both pre-school and kindergarten levels (Birch and Ladd, 1997, 1998; Nimetz, 1992; Pianta, Steinberg & Rollins, 1995). The scale also contains very short simple statements that took a few minutes to complete.

### **3.4.3 Teacher Belief Scale**

The teacher belief scale is a 34-item rating scale designed to examine early childhood teachers' perceptions of own teacher efficacy. Some of these item statements have been selected from the teacher efficacy scale (Soodak and Podell, 1996), which originally contained 34 items but due to their appropriateness with the pre-school teachers, 32 items that seemed to have more validity and reliability in the pre-school were selected so as to be able to reveal beliefs about how teaching could influence student behaviors, as well as their abilities to implement effective teaching that could bring about desired outcomes in children. In order to adapt to our Kenyan (local) context some wording changes were made. The researcher made sure that the wording changed was as similar as possible to the original version in order not to interfere with the construct validity.

The teachers were asked to rate each item for its applicability to their beliefs about teaching, as it was indicated during data collection.

### **3.4.4 Parent-Teacher Relationship Scale**

The parent-teacher relationship scale is a 30 item adapted version of the parent-caregiver relationship scale that was developed by Elicker, Noppe and Noppe (1997) this scale was to be filled by pre-school teachers. The original version had 35 items and all were based on the literature of parent-teacher relationships. The parent-teacher relationship scale contains good levels of reliability and validity, it is also the most recently available scale for assessing early childhood teachers' relationship with parents and contained only 30 short statements that took a few minutes to complete.

### **3.5 Variables**

The dependent variable was the teacher-child relationship, which was measured using the student-teacher relationship scale. The independent variables were the years of teaching experience, a teachers' professional status, teacher efficacy, and parent- teacher relationship. These independent variables were measured using teacher information survey, the teacher belief scale, and the parent teacher-relationship scale. The scales used were tested for reliability and validity by different researchers and have been used in the fields of Early Childhood Education (Birch& Ladd, 1997,1998; Elicker, Noppe, & Noppe, 1997; Nimetz, 1992; Pianta, Steinberg, & Rollins, 1995; Pianta, 1996; Soodak & Podell, 1996).

### **3.6 Pilot Study**

The researcher did a pilot study in the month of April 2002, with a randomly selected sample of 10 pre-school teachers that were not used in the main study. The 10 pre-schools that were used in the pilot study were classified as follows: 2 from the high cost class, 2 from the middle cost class and 6 from the low cost class. The purpose of this pilot study was to enhance the validity and reliability of the research instruments and they were found to be highly reliable. The piloting further sought to establish if the items used were clear to the teachers.

### **3.7 Reliability And Validity of the Instrument**

The three rating scales used in the study are the student- teacher relationship scale, the parent-teacher relationship scale and the teachers' belief scale. The student- teacher relationship scale is standardized and therefore no internal

consistency results are presented for it. The results of internal consistency for the teachers' belief scale and parent-teacher relationship scale were as follows: Cronbach's alpha was used to estimate reliability and it was computed for these two scales. The coefficient alpha for the teacher's belief scale (N= 32) was computed using SPSS program and the value of alpha was  $\alpha= 0.7769$  thus confirming high reliability. The parent-teacher relationship scale (N = 30) similarly had a high reliability of  $=0.8593$ .

### **3.8 Data Collection Procedures**

The instrument was administered on individual basis. Each teacher was given the questionnaire to fill once the researcher arrived, and collected after filling. The participants were given adequate explanations before responding to the items. It was estimated that the process took around one hour and thirty minutes.

### **3.9 Methods of Data Analysis**

After scoring the three scales and the demographic survey, the data files were prepared for computer analysis. The data was processed using the SPSS-statistical package for social sciences. Mean scores for the three scales were calculated and were categorized into: Low (below the group mean) and High (above the group mean). Descriptive statistics for each scale and summary statistics were computed. Results were in the form of tables giving percentages, and means. Inferential statistics were used to test the hypotheses where Pearson correlation was used to measure how variables were related and to test for significant relationship at  $\alpha =0.05$ .

This means that at  $\alpha < 0.05$  there is a significant relationship and at  $\alpha > 0.05$  there is no significant relationships.

The hypotheses tested were:

- H<sub>1</sub> A significant relationship exists between teachers' years of teaching experience and teacher-child relationship.
- H<sub>2</sub> A significant relationship exists between teachers' teacher efficacy and teacher-child relationship.
- H<sub>3</sub> A significant relationship exists between parent-teacher relationship and teacher-child relationship.

## CHAPTER 4

### RESEARCH FINDINGS

#### 4.0 Introduction

In this chapter, an attempt has been made to explain teacher factors that influence the relationship teachers have with their nursery school children. To do this, a demographic survey and 3 rating scales were used to survey pre-school teachers of 2-6 year old children in Nyaki and Municipality Zones, Miriga Mieru Divisions, Meru Central District Kenya, about their teacher-child relationships.

#### 4.1 Survey response

During the months of May-July 2002, the researcher went to the field and individually administered questionnaires to 40 nursery school teachers in their respective classrooms of 2-6 year old children. The researcher gave each teacher the questionnaire and explained what needed to be done and also answered questions that the respondents had, and then waited for the respondent to fill the questionnaire. When completed *the researcher* I took it with me and proceeded to the next school until the 40 pre-school teachers were covered.

#### 4.2 Results Description

Teachers were requested to give their basic information in the teacher information survey; therefore, they responded to the questions with regard to their gender, age, professional status and number of years of teaching experience. This demographic information is summarized below.

Majority of the nursery school teachers who participated in the study were females 39 (97.5%) and one male (1) constituting 2.5%. The teachers' ages ranged from 21 to 51 years. Most teachers (75%) were lying between 21-40 years and fewer teachers (25%) ranging between 41 to 51 years. Table 4.1 explains this further.

**Table 4.1 Range of the pre-school teachers' age in Miriga-Mieru Divisions, Meru Central District, 2002**

Age range	Number of teachers	Percent
Between 21 and 30	16	40.0
Between 31 and 40	14	35.0
Between 41 and 50	6	15.0
51 and above	4	10.0
Total	40	100.0

Having known the range of the years of pre-school teachers involved in the study we now look at their professional status so as to know how many teachers were trained and how many were not trained, this is reported in table 4.2 below.

**Table 4.2 Pre-School Teachers' professional status in Miriga-Mieru Divisions, Meru Central District, 2002**

	Number of teachers	Percent
Un trained	11	27.5
Trained	29	72.5
	40	100.0

Table 4.2 shows that very few teachers had no training while the majority were trained in early childhood education. Having known the above

information we can finally find out their years of teaching experience in table 4.3. Below, this table shows that the largest proportion (65%) of the studied teachers had teaching experience of between 1 and 10 years with nursery school children. Only (5%) of the teachers who participated in the study had more than twenty years of teaching experience in nursery school the table is presented below.

**Table 4.3 Teaching experience of pre-school teachers in Miriga-Mieru Divisions, Meru Central District, 2002**

Years of teaching experience	Number of teachers	Percent
1-10	26	65.0
10-20	12	30.0
20-30	2	5.0
Total	40	100.0

#### 4.3 Statistical Data Analysis

The study was guided by 3 research questions and results of data analyzes are presented independently for each of these research questions. The data obtained were analyzed at an alpha level of 0.05 or 95% (probability) for all statistical tests.

#### 4.4 Interpretation of the Scores

In reviewing the total scores on the teacher-child relationship scale for these 40 teachers, only 21 (52.5%) were found to have what would be considered to be positive relationships with their children. These teachers perceived their

relationships more positively than other teachers and had mean total scores above the group mean, which was 3.02 (group mean). Other teachers 19 (47.5%) were considered to have negative relationship with their children because their mean was below the group mean as shown in table 4.4

**Table 4.4 Mean scores of the student-teacher relationship scale**

	Number of teachers	Percent
Low (below the group mean)	19	47.5
High (above the group mean)	21	52.5
Total	40	100.0

Similar mean score results were realized in the parent- teacher relationship scale.

The teachers' belief scale was used to assess teachers' perceived efficacy and the mean scores for the scale revealed that 22 teachers (55%) were having low teacher efficacy, only 18 (45%) of the teachers had high teacher efficacy. The teachers' with low and high efficacy were determined by the mean scores (scores below the group mean-low efficacy and scores above the group mean-high efficacy).

**Table 4.5 Mean scores of the teachers' belief scale**

	Number of teachers	Percent
Low (below the group mean)	22	55.0
High (above the group mean)	18	45.0
	40	100.0

The mean scores were used to differentiate these higher and lower groups because of several reasons. First: The mean score is appropriate for internal and ratio data. Second: The mean score has been used as an estimate for the population in most inferential statistics. Third: the mean score is practical because it is more stable and easier to calculate than either the mode or the median.

The mean score for each scale was used to differentiate high and low scoring groups on both dependent and independent variables in the study. The mean scores for the three scales were student-teacher relationship scale 3.02, parent-teacher relationship scale 2.66, and teacher's belief scale 2.77

**Table 4.6 Mean scores for the various scales.**

SCALES	TEACHERS	MEAN
Student teacher scale	40	3.0156
Parent teacher scale	40	2.6558
Teacher's belief scale	40	2.7735

## 4.5 Results

The hypotheses tested in the study are as follows.

- H<sub>1</sub> A significant relationship exists between teacher's years of teaching experience and the teacher -child relationship.
- H<sub>2</sub> A significant relationship exists between a teachers teacher efficacy and teacher child relationship.
- H<sub>3</sub> A significant relationship exists between parent -teacher relationship and teacher child relationship.

The results are presented in the order, which they follow above, and the tables indicating the mean scores and correlation coefficients are presented below as reference for the hypotheses.

**Table 4.7 Characteristics of mean score distribution (N= 40)**

Variables	Mean	Std. deviation
Years of teaching experience	9.25	6.10
Teacher-child relationship	3.02	0.41
Parent-teacher relationship	2.66	0.29
Teachers efficacy	2.77	0.20

**Table 4.8 Correlation coefficients for the teacher -child relationship and the selected factors in Miriga-Mieru Divisions, Meru Central District, 2002**

Factors	Teacher-Child relationship	
	Pearson product moment Corr. Coeff (r)	Sig Level $\alpha=0.05$
Years of teaching experience	0.137	0.399*
Teachers efficacy	-0.037	0.0821*
Parent-teacher relationship	0.317	0.05

\* Not significant at  $\alpha=0.05$

The Pearson product moment correlation was used to test the relationship between the years of teaching experience and the teacher-child relationship (Table 4.8). The results indicate that, statistically there was no significant relationship ( $\alpha = 0.399 > 0.05$ .) The correlation between years of teaching experience and teacher-child relationship scores was  $r = 0.137$ . The results therefore show a weak positive relationship that was not significant. This means that the hypothesis was rejected, since the influence of years of teaching experience only marginally contributes to positive teacher-child relationship as assessed by the questionnaire utilized in the study.

The Pearson product moment correlation coefficient was used to test the relationship between the independent variable teacher efficacy and the dependent variable teacher-child relationship (Table 4.8). The results indicate that statistically there was no significant relationship ( $\alpha = 0.82 > 0.05$ ). The correlation between the teacher efficacy and teacher-child relationship was  $r = 0.04$  and was not significant (0.82). Thus, no relationship between the two variables, hypothesis two was therefore rejected.

The Pearson product moment correlation coefficient was used to determine the relationship between parent-teacher relationship and the teacher child relationship. (Table 4.8). The results show a significant positive relationship between the parent- teacher relationship and the teacher -child relationship ( $r = 0.317$ ;  $p = 0.05$ ). This means that the hypothesis was accepted.

## CHAPTER 5

### SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS DISCUSSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 5.0 Introduction

This chapter represents the summary of the study and discusses the results of the findings and the conclusions, which reflect the attempted answers to the specific questions that were examined. This chapter is divided into four sections: the first section deals with the summary of the study, the second section deals with the discussion and conclusions, the third section provides implications of the study, and finally the last section provides recommendations for further research.

#### 5.1 Summaries of the Study

The study was carried to find out whether pre-school teacher factors influence the relationship teachers have with their pre-school children. The research involved 40 pre-school teachers from 40 pre-schools selected by use of simple random sampling technique from all pre-schools in the Municipality zone and Nyaki zone respectively in Miriga Mieru Divisions, Meru Central District Kenya.

The *expost- facto* research design was adopted for the study mainly because besides collecting and describing the relevant data; the study also explored the existence of certain relationships among the independent and the dependent variables. Correlation analysis was used to test the hypotheses on the relationship (association between two variables). The Pearson product moment

was used to test the significant difference of the variables at  $\alpha = 0.05$  this means at  $\alpha < 0.05$ , there was a significant difference and  $\alpha > 0.05$  there was no significant difference. The findings of the study are summarized and discussed in the next section.

## **5.2 Discussions**

### **5.2.1 teachers' teaching experience and the teacher-child relationship**

The results indicated that statistically no significant relationship existed between teachers' years of teaching experience in a pre-school and the teacher-child relationship. This implied that teacher's years of teaching experience does not influence the teacher-child relationship because the teacher-child relationship of the teachers with more years of teaching experience and teacher-child relationship of teachers with less years of teaching experience appeared to have no influence on their teacher-child relationship. As regards the relationship of years of teaching experience and the teacher-child relationship, the above findings are different from the studies reviewed in the literature which suggest that more years of teaching experience with young children are related to positive teacher-child relationship but it supports or confirms findings by Boulton 1997 who noted that years of teaching experience does not guarantee better interaction skills.

It was hypothesized that there would be a positive relationship between a teacher's years of teaching experience in a pre-school and their teacher-child relationship; the more the years of teaching experience the more positive the

teacher-child relationship would be and the less experienced the more negative the teacher-child relationship would be. But the results of the study did not support the hypothesis because relationships of both teachers with less and more years of teaching experience were not statistically significant. Therefore, years of teaching experience do not influence the teacher-child relationship.

A possible explanation to this could be that teachers who have been long in the system have not developed good relationship with the children, and new teachers in the system had no time to develop a good relationship with the children probably because they copy behaviors of the old teachers. Therefore, they do not pay attention or emphasis on teacher-child interpersonal relationship and it may be true because the curriculum is academic oriented. In addition, teachers might have devised inappropriate ways of solving difficulties faced, like inflicting pain when redirecting behavior and at the same time tangible rewards like sweets to reinforce a good behavior, this may lead to inconsistent relationships even though these teachers are experienced in the way challenges are met.

### **5.2.2 Teachers' efficacy and the teacher-child relationship**

Statistically, there was no significant relationship between the teachers with high teacher efficacy and teacher-child relationship in fact there was a negative relationship. This means that in the current study, teacher efficacy did not influence the teacher-child relationship. A possible explanation to this could be that teachers who think they are aware of the teachers' role in

changing a child's learning behavior do not in fact promote a positive relationship with their pupils.

It also seems that teachers do not translate their beliefs in changing pupils behavior and this can be seen in our Kenyan system which is examination oriented and does not seem to have time to pay to individual learner's needs, feelings and attitudes.

The researcher also observed that most classes were overcrowded, so teachers did have time to attend to every individual's needs and had no time or little time to know pupils personally and well. These findings seem to support Woolfolk, et: al (1990), that teacher efficacy seems to be forgotten after training and especially when teachers have been in the field for a number of years and he adds that increasing teacher efficacy may be easier during pre-service training than after.

### **5.2.3 Parent-teacher relationship and the teacher-child relationship**

A significant positive relationship was found to exist between parent-teacher relationship and teacher-child relationship. These findings support the hypothesis, which suggested that positive teacher-child relationship, influences the teacher-child relationship.

Possible explanations for this could be that when teachers have a positive relationship with the parents of their pre-school children, they trust them and take most opinions the parents give on matters to be important. They feel that

they can rely on them, and see them to be caring. They take them as good friends and, in turn, they treat their children with the same feelings of loving, caring and being helpful to them and this may influence (significantly) to a more positive teacher-child relationship. The findings of this study support McBride & Lin, (1996) and Watkins, (1997) .Who say that, the parent-teacher communication is the first step in establishing a positive teacher -child relationship. It also affirms Bernhard, et: al (1998), investigated a troubled parent-teacher relationship in an early childhood education setting. They found that parents and teachers seemed not to know their basic expectations of each other, and disagreed where it concerned parental involvement and child rearing practices at home. This reflected a negative teacher-parent relationship, hence poor learning outcomes for their children. Therefore, it is reasonable to conclude that the parent-teacher relationship influences the teacher -child relationship and the current study confirms these findings.

### **5.3 Conclusion**

This study has shown that the years of teaching experience in a pre-school and the pre-school teacher efficacy do not influence the teacher-child relationship, whereas the findings strongly show that the parent- teacher relationship influences the teacher-child relationship.

Although the teaching experience and the teacher efficacy were not statistically significant at  $\alpha=0.05$  in the study, in practice they are also important factors in enhancing the teacher-child relationship. Therefore it is important not only to ensure that the parent –teacher relationship is maintained

but also the teachers experience and the teachers' efficacy are developed among pre-school teachers. Unless this is done the teacher-child relationship may be evasive in pre-schools.

#### **5.4 Implications of the Research Findings**

The main implications of this study are:

##### **a) Implications for Individual Teachers**

It is important that individual teachers should assess each of the factors identified in this study to be important in teacher-child relationship, which include teacher efficacy, teaching experience and the teacher-child relationship. This may help them to determine how to relate to these factors personally. For example, they would be able to identify factors, which might potentially lead them to have a negative relationship with the children. They could then take steps to reduce or avoid the possibility of having a negative teacher-child relationship. Basically, incorporating individual assessment of possible causes of negative teacher-child relationship, and developing possible management techniques towards it can prevent negative teacher-child relationship and promote positive teacher-child relationship and allow professional growth.

##### **b) Implication for Policy Issues**

Those in charge of policy issues such as, the Kenya Institute of Education (KIE) and the Ministry of Education (MOE) have a vital role to play in promoting the positive teacher-child relationship. They must acknowledge that positive teacher-child relationships lead to impressing learning outcomes for

the children; therefore, they should ensure that they design programs that will foster skills that will lead to good teacher-child relationships. Therefore, the curriculum may need to be reviewed to ensure its adjustment.

Those involved with policy issues should, therefore, familiarize themselves with the antecedents of a negative teacher-child relationship. To promote a positive teacher-child relationship the local education authorities may need to introduce in-service, induction or refresher courses on benefits of parental involvement in pre-school, influences of teacher efficacy and its effects on school performance and implications for pre-school teachers. The researcher would also wish to suggest that parents of pre-schools might need to attend seminars on benefits to the children when parents involve in their schooling, how they can build a good relationship with their pre-school teacher; and also how to make friends with your child's teacher.

#### **c) Implications for Teacher Trainers**

Those involved with pre and in-service teacher training programs play an important role also in promoting positive teacher-child relationships. They must promote positive teacher-child relationship be able to help prepare teachers for the problems they are likely to face and possible ways of solving these problems. They must help teachers to recognize factors, which contribute to negative teacher-child relationships and provide them with ways of to have a more positive relationship and maintain it.

### **5.5 Recommendations of the study and for Further Research**

The findings of this study were based on a sample of pre-school teachers in Meru Mieru Divisions in Meru Kenya. It appears that this was the first study of its kind, analyzing the relationship between teachers' teaching experience, teacher efficacy, and parent-teacher relationships and their influence on teacher-child relationships among pre-school teachers.

It is, therefore, recommended that the study be replicated on the basis of an expanded sample, in other groups of educational institutions like the primary schools and other geographical regions of the country should be used as a sample for such a study. Also classroom observation and teachers and parents interviews can be used. Further research is recommended with respect to other factors that influence the teacher-child relationship. Some of these factors that merit investigation; environmental factors like space and materials, classroom routines, teacher-child ratios, and child factors including problem behavior, gender and disabilities.

The teachers in charge of the pre-school centers and the local authorities should ensure that the appropriate teacher to child ratio is observed this is to ensure that the classes are not overcrowded and this may improve the teacher-child relationship. Parents of pre-schools might also need to attend seminars on benefits to the children when parents involve in their schooling, how they can build a good relationship with their pre-school teacher; and also how to make friends with their child's teacher.

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## APPENDIX A: TEACHERS QUESTIONNAIRE

### QUESTIONNAIRES

This questionnaire has four ~~got~~ parts namely: Part:1 the teacher information survey, Part:2 the student-teacher relationship scale, Part:3 the parent-teacher relationship scale and Part: 4 the teachers belief scale. Each part has got the instructions on what you are supposed to do, so please read and understand before you answer. Remember to answer all the questions.

Kindly fill in. The information will be strictly for educational purposes and will also be treated with confidentiality.

### **Part 1: Teacher information survey**

This page is asking you for basic information. Most items require you to place a mark in the appropriate space provided and a few will also require you write own answers.

1. Teachers name (optional):

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2. Sex: Male                      Female

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3. Age: Less than 20:  21-30:  31-40:  41-50:  Above 50

4. What is your professional status?

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5. Number of years of teaching experience in the area of early childhood education (children of 3-6 years):

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19	When this child is misbehaving, he or she responds well to my look or tone of voice.	1	2	3	4
20	Dealing with this child drains my energy.	1	2	3	4
21	I've noticed this child copying my behaviors or ways of doing things.	1	2	3	4
22	When this child arrived in a bad mood, I know we are in for a long and difficult day.	1	2	3	4
23	This child's feelings towards me can be unpredictable or can change drastically.	1	2	3	4
24	Despite my best efforts, I'm uncomfortable with how this child and I have gotten along.	1	2	3	4
25	This child whines or cries when he or she wants something from me.	1	2	3	4
26	This child is sneaky or manipulative with me.	1	2	3	4
27	This child openly shares his or her feelings and experiences with me.	1	2	3	4
28	My interactions with this child make me feel effective and confident.	1	2	3	4

### Part 3: Parent – teacher relationship scale

Teachers name: (optional) \_\_\_\_\_

Child's name: (optional) \_\_\_\_\_

Please reflect on the degree to which each of the following statements currently applies to your relationship with the child's parent. Using the scale below, circle the appropriate number for each item. (Think about the parent/caregiver with whom you have the most in-depth or most frequent contacts).

Strongly Disagree 1	Disagree 2	Agree 3	Strongly agree 4
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1	I trust that his parent will tell me important things about her/his child.	1	2	3	4
2	If there is a problem, this parent and I always talk about it soon.	1	2	3	4
3	I truly value this parent's opinions on most matters.	1	2	3	4
4	This parent is someone I can rely on.	1	2	3	4
5	I feel that this parent genuinely cares for her or his child.	1	2	3	4
6	This parent and I rarely take time to discuss the child's care/development.	1	2	3	4
7	I have a great deal of personal respect for this parent.	1	2	3	4
8	Overall, this parent is a caring person.	1	2	3	4
9	This parent has knowledge and skills needed to be a good parent.	1	2	3	4
10	I like to work closely with this parent in order to gain a better understanding of her/his child.	1	2	3	4
11	This parent and I almost always agree about how to care for or handle the child.	1	2	3	4
12	This parent is really my friend.	1	2	3	4
13	I am sometimes concerned that this parent will discuss things about me with others.	1	2	3	4
14	My communication with this parent is always very open and honest.	1	2	3	4
15	This parent and I really seem to value our relationship with each other.	1	2	3	4

16	This parent does not seem to be interested or concerned about me.	1	2	3	4
17	This parent is not as knowledgeable about child development as I would like her/him to be.	1	2	3	4
18	I feel that this parent and I have different values concerning how best to meet the child's needs.	1	2	3	4
19	I am interested in what is going on in this parent's life at home or at work.	1	2	3	4
20	Sometimes I don't respect this parent's opinions about child rearing especially when they differ from mine.	1	2	3	4
21	When I need help, I know that this parent will go out of her or his way for me.	1	2	3	4
22	This parent gives me valuable suggestions about working with her or his child.	1	2	3	4
23	I consider this parent to be a true partner in raising or educating this child.	1	2	3	4
24	I usually agree with how and when this parent handles her or his child's in an appropriate behaviour.	1	2	3	4
25	I really like this parent as a person and enjoy being around her or him.	1	2	3	4
26	I don't feel confident that this child is as well off with her or his parent as with me.	1	2	3	4
27	I admire the way this parent works with her or his child.	1	2	3	4
28	I think that this parent views me as a paid employee, rather than as an equal partner in raising or educating this child.	1	2	3	4
29	The overall approach of this parent to raising young children closely matches my own.	1	2	3	4
30	I feel that this parent is an excellent person all around.	1	2	3	4

### Part 4: Teacher Beliefs

Please read each statement below and think about how much you agree or disagree with the statement using the scale below. Circle the appropriate number for each statement

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4

1. When a child does better than usual, many times it is because I extend a little extra effort.	1	2	3	4
2. I can effectively manage my students' behaviour.	1	2	3	4
3. The hours in my class have little influence on children compared to the influences of home environment.	1	2	3	4
4. The amount that a child can learn is primarily related to family background.	1	2	3	4
5. When a child learns to wait to be called on, it is because I have set clear classroom rules.	1	2	3	4
6. If children aren't disciplined home, they aren't likely to accept any discipline at school.	1	2	3	4
7. Hereditary factors are more important than teaching in determining how well a child does in childcare or preschool.	1	2	3	4
8. When a child is having a difficulty with an activity/task, I am usually able to adjust the activity/task to his/her level or ability.	1	2	3	4
9. My efforts during a conflict between children is useless in ending it.	1	2	3	4
10. When a child performs exceptionally well on one day, it is usually because I found better ways of teaching the child.	1	2	3	4
11. Children learn more from television than from teachers.	1	2	3	4
12. When I really try, I can get through to most difficult children.	1	2	3	4
13. I am ill prepared to help children with emotional problems.	1	2	3	4

14. A teacher is very limited in what he/she can achieve because a child's home environment is a large influence on the child's development.	1	2	3	4
15. When a child is verbally abusive to another child, I can usually prevent the conflict from escalating.	1	2	3	4
17. If a child masters a new concept quickly, this might be because I knew the necessary steps in teaching that concept.	1	2	3	4
18. Teachers with good behavior management skills can overcome the aggression that children learn by watching movies and television.	1	2	3	4
19. If parents would do more with their children, I could do more.	1	2	3	4
20. I can usually help children who show hyperactive behavior.	1	2	3	4
21. If a child did not remember information I presented in a previous session I would know how to increase his/her retention in the next session.	1	2	3	4
22. Some children are simply uncontrollable.	1	2	3	4
23. If a child in my class becomes disruptive and noisy, I feel assured that I know some techniques to redirect the child quickly.	1	2	3	4
24. If my children are difficult to control on a particular day, I am able to gain control of the class.	1	2	3	4
25. The influences of a child's home experience can be overcome by good teaching.	1	2	3	4
26. When children watch too much violence on television, teachers are unable to manage their behavior in the classroom.	1	2	3	4
27. If one of my children couldn't do an activity/task, I would be able to accurately assess whether the activity/task was at the correct level of difficulty.	1	2	3	4
28. When a child is angry, there is little I can do.	1	2	3	4
29. Even a teacher with good teaching abilities may not reach many children.	1	2	3	4
30. When a child does well in childcare/preschool, it is most likely due to the child's innate ability.	1	2	3	4
31. How much a child learns is influenced more by the child's genetic make-up than by teaching.	1	2	3	4
32. If a child is withdrawn and isolated, I know ways of helping the child open up.	1	2	3	4