

**READING DIFFICULTIES ON ACADEMIC PERFORMACE  
AMONG STANDARD SEVEN PUPILS IN PUBLIC PRIMARY SCHOOLS,  
BUNGOMA COUNTY, KENYA**

**BY**

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## DECLARATION

I confirm that this research thesis is my original work and has not been presented in any other university/institution for certification. The thesis has been complemented by referenced works duly acknowledged. Where text, data, graphics, pictures or tables have been borrowed from other works including the internet, the sources are specifically accredited through referencing in accordance with anti-plagiarism regulations.

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## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this Research Thesis to my spouse Mary, my daughters Susan and Faith as well as my son Ezra for the encouragement and patience with me during the entire period of the study.

Thank you for many sacrifices.

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## ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

ECDE,	Early Childhood Development Education.
EFA	Education for All
E G R A	Early Grade Reading Assessment.
EMIS	Educational management information services
EUPEK	Enhancement of Universal Primary Education in Kampala
FGD	Focused Group Discussion
INSPRO	Inclusive Schooling Programme
KICD	Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development
KIE	Kenya institute of education
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MOEST	Ministry of Education, Science and Technology
NASMLA	National Assessment System for Monitoring Learner Achievement
NACOSTI	National Council of Science, Technology and Innovation
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
PISA	Programme for International Student Assessment
SACMEQ	Southern Africa Consortium for Measuring Educational Quality
SNE	Special Needs Education
SPSS	Statistical Package for Social Sciences
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
ZPD	Zone of proximal development

## ABSTRACT

The study investigated the influence of reading difficulties on academic performance. The role of school and home environments on the influence of reading difficulties was yet to be investigated in the context of primary schools. The study addressed this research gap by testing for the mediating and moderating effects of school and home environments on the influence of reading difficulties. The objectives of the study were to examine the influence of reading skills difficulties on academic performance, moderating effect of home environment and mediating role of school environment on the influence of reading difficulties of standard 7 pupils within public primary schools in Bungoma County. A descriptive survey research design facilitated the collection of data. Data was collected by use of questionnaires from 179 pupils, 10 focused group discussion, interview schedules from 21 teachers, interview schedules from 11 head teachers and observation schedules. The Sample for the study was from public primary schools within Bungoma County. Purposive sampling technique was used to select Bungoma South Sub-County. A pilot study was carried out on the instruments to find out reliability and validity in a school around Bungoma County. Data from questionnaires was compiled, edited, coded and analysed by use of SPSS programme. From the findings, pupils agreed that reading comprehension difficulties had a negative influence on academic performance and that they had to be good readers in order to perform well. Reading instruction did not have an influence on academic performance. Possession of good language skills had positive influence on academic performance. Cognitive skills included, thinking, logic and understanding influenced academic performance. Pupils with reading difficulty did not read less than others and were neither frustrated nor demotivated. Home environment contributed to academic performance. Inadequate reading materials, frequent absenteeism and high number of pupils in classrooms influenced reading difficulty. Based on the research findings the researcher made the following recommendations: The government should consider ways of building more infrastructures such as library and extra classes to accommodate the large number of pupils in primary schools especially with the advent of the CBC. The government should deploy more teachers in public primary schools to alleviate reading difficulty. Parents should be sensitized on the need to collaborate with schools in order to assist their children to read without difficulty. Schools should come up with measures of helping and motivating pupils with reading difficulties. Due to the high number of pupils in classes teachers need to consider individual attention in order to assuage the problem of reading difficulty among pupils. Suggestions for further research were that a similar study should be carried out in other sub-counties to find out the situation in other areas of the country. Also, the study could be extended to private primary, secondary schools and tertiary institutions. Moreover, studies on other aspects that influence reading difficulty such as mother tongue influence need to be investigated.

# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

The chapter focused on the background to the study, the nature of the problem for investigation, research objectives, research questions, and the significance of the study, scope, limitations, assumptions, theoretical framework and purpose of the study. Finally a conceptual framework to guide the study was presented, as well as the operational definition of key research terms.

### **1.1 Background to the Study**

The ability to read is an essential skill required to understand information presented in text format within and outside the school environment. Reading is crucial for children's future academic, economic, and social success. Literacy skills are required for informed decision-making, personal empowerment, and participation in a global society (Stromquist, 2005). Majority of children are able to learn to read with ease, and have average reading ability, characterized by fluent word identification and adequate comprehension. Unfortunately, for unexplained reasons, pupils are unable to use reading as a learning tool from standard 4 upwards (Lerner, 2006).

Globally, 10% to 15% of English speaking school-aged children have reading difficulties, and 2% to 4% suffer from a difficult referred to as dyslexia. The term dyslexia is usually reserved for more severe or persistent word reading difficulties, but other terms are used such as low reading ability, poor reading, reading difficulties, and reading problems often without clear distinctions among them but sometimes carrying implications about the

proposed causes and the likelihood of successful remediation .Children with reading difficulties perform poorly on measures of word reading and reading comprehension in ways that cannot be attributed to sensory impairments, lack of intellectual ability, or poor reading instruction. Use of the term reading difficulties was valid for the purposes of this study. Reading difficulty is the unanticipated breakdown to read easily owing to mispronunciation, omission, substitution or adding of words (Runo, 2010).

The estimated prevalence rates of reading difficulties in the USA, Britain and New Zealand ranges between 13% and 17%, and vary according to the definitional criteria used. Even with appropriate early interventions, approximately 4-6% could still be expected to experience reading difficulties (Torgessen, 2000). Nigerian primary school children are about three years behind their British or American counterparts and over 30 million Nigerians have graduated from high school with poor reading skills. In Namibia a report of the South African Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality (SACMEQ) found out that grade six learners were unable to read texts with understanding, and recorded the lowest reading performance in the South African Development Communities (SADC) region. The picture was even worse with only 25% of learners reaching the desired levels of reading competence (Mutenda, 2008).

Despite invention of research investigating the causes of reading difficulties, it is still unclear how or why some individuals develop them and whether there are subgroups of children with reading difficulties due to distinct causal factors. The reasons and specifically why this occurred had not been known (Snow, Burns and Griffin 1998). Children with severe reading difficulties continue to struggle in reading as they mature,

demonstrating that at least some reading difficulties are persistent and chronic conditions (Shaywitz & Shaywitz, 2005).

Children with reading difficulties are less likely to graduate from high school and are at a greater risk for future unemployment, underemployment, and incarceration (Norton & Wolf, 2012). Therefore, providing appropriate and early interventions to these children is essential to their future outcomes and can change their overall trajectories. However, developing effective intervention methods requires an assessment, which in turn requires understanding the influence of reading difficulty.

Reading difficulties and poor academic performance has been attributed to internal and external factors (Runo, 2010). However, there had been no attempt to investigate the possible role that significant others in the school and home environment play to unravel the problem of reading difficulties. The focus on school and home factors enhanced our knowledge about the mechanism by which reading difficulties affected reading difficulties. The role of school and home environments on improving literacy is yet to be investigated in the context of primary schools. (Sifuna, 2007).

In regard to the school environment the study examined the mediating effect of school climate, language policy, and teaching strategy on the influence that reading difficulties had on academic performance. The school climate consists of beliefs, values and attitudes shared by actors in the school (Hoy and Miskel, 2001). School climate referred to the quality and character of school life. School climate was based on patterns of

students', parents' and school personnel's experience of school life and reflected norms, goals, values, interpersonal relationships, teaching and learning practices, and organizational structures (schoolclimate.org, 2017). Important school factors for the creation of effective schools in reading literacy included school management and shared vision, school resource factors and classroom teaching factors. The role of school management, in provision of an enabled language policy and language teaching resources, included teachers was investigated in the current study.

Language teaching policy had a mediating effect on the influence of reading difficulties. Home language, played an important role in children's cognitive processes, academic development and achievement. Calls had been made to have preliminary instruction in a child's indigenous language viable (Baur and Medaer, 1992). Snow, Burns and Griffin (1998) added that a reasonable level of oral proficiency in the first language had been attained before any instruction in any language is introduced. The initial language policy in Kenya required that from kindergarten to class three pupils were taught reading in mother tongue. However this has changed and the language policy is to teach in English and Kiswahili. Little effort had been made to establish changes in language policy, thus had mediated the influence of reading difficulties on academic achievement.

Teachers are an important part of a school's resource (Pretorius & Machet, 2004). Classroom teaching factors such as teachers' competency in teaching reading literacy, teacher qualities, teaching goals and reading instruction practices could mediate the influence of reading difficulties on academic performance. The study investigated the

moderating effect that significant others in home environments on the influence of reading difficulties on academic performance.

If there was no one to motivate the child at home as well as in school, it could be very difficult for a child to develop interest in reading. Previous studies had not focused on the possible mediating role of language policy on the effect of reading difficulties on academic performance. Lack of an empirically derived understanding of the mechanism by which language policy, school climate and teaching strategies have on the effect of reading difficulties had been a source of poor performance.

### **1.1.1 Reading Difficulties**

The ability to read has been referred as the process of deriving meaning from print (Njuki & Nakitende, 2013). Without the ability to read effectively, a child experience difficulty in learning because reading forms the foundation for all further learning. Many pupils are not capable to use reading as an instrument for learning in order to get new information, ideas, attitudes, and values from standard 4 upwards. Even after pupils were taught, it is rather regrettable that a significant figure (17.5 per cent) was not capable to read competently at upper class levels (Lerner, 2006). Around 10 to 15 per cent of pupils who go to school had reading difficulties, Mercer and Mercer (2001).

Notable reading difficulties of pupils included problems with vocabulary, word recognition, reading comprehension and reading rate (Lloyd, 1985). Mercer (1987) denoted several types of reading problems typically found among pupils including reading habits, word recognition errors, comprehension errors and miscellaneous symptoms.

Smith et al., (1985) listed several common problems experienced by some pupils who suffered from reading disabilities. These included: omitting letters, syllables or words; inserting extra letters, words or sound; substituting words that look or sound similar; mispronouncing words; repeating words and using improper inflection during oral reading.

Success in other subjects was often brought about by success in reading, good reading ability was the doorway to the attainment and development of know-how in all the school subjects (Grove & Hauptfleisch. 1982). Reading soundly incorporated into our education structures generally, such that educational achievement was almost the same with reading success. It encompassed approximately all work that was done in the classroom and according to Greyling and Joubert (1988), direct association linking academic success and good reading skills were reported.

While there appeared to be anecdotal evidence that reading was linked to academic performance, the question of how failure to read influenced academic performance appeared to be an open one. In particular, how a learner's school environment influenced the extent to which difficulties in reading influenced academic performance was poorly understood issue. Reading was the course of forming meaning through the active contact between the person who read the manuscript and the framework of the reading setting (Wixon, Peters, Weber and Roeber (1987)

Reading was commonly broken down into reading the vocabulary, known as making sense of what was read, also known as understanding (Cooper, Warnoke & Shipman,

1988). The current study focused on the effect of home and school environments on the influence of difficulties in decoding and comprehension on academic performance. Reading difficulties was found to be the most important reason of failure in school (Carmine, Silbert, & Kameenui, 1997). It could also lead to misbehavior, nervousness and be short of driving force (Carmine et al., 1997). Pupils with difficulty in reading English had difficulty in school performance in a broad-spectrum (Chege 1999, Kirigia 1991 & Njoroge 2000).

### **1.1.2 School environment**

School environment referred to a set of relationships that occurred among members of a school community that are determined by structural, personal, and functional factors of the educational institution, which provide distinctiveness to schools. The school environment was an important factor when evaluating student well-being. Previous findings had shown that variables such as physical, academic, and social dimensions influenced school environments. (Moreno-Barahona, 2020)

The school was more often than not the place where most children learn to read; hence it was argued that the school environment itself hamper a child's reading advancement. The current study posited that elements of the school environment including school climate, language policy and teaching strategies, mediate the influence of reading difficulties on academic performance of pupils, in standard seven.

The quality and regularity of interpersonal contacts within the school community that had some bearing on children's cognitive, social and psychological development was referred

to as the school climate (Ben-Avie, Comer, & Haynes, 1996). A school's climate was its surroundings for learning, which included the opinions people, had about the school and whether it was a place where learning had taken place. A positive climate made a school a place where both staff and students wanted to spend a considerable section of their time, being good places designate (Howard & Brainard, 1987).

There had been widespread acknowledgement of the role that a school's climate played in the achievement of its students (Anderson, 1982; Lezotte, 1980). The learning needs of pupils must compel school venture consecutively to cultivate a positive school climate, not the organizational needs of the school (Berlin & Cienkus, 1989). Students felt that they were treated justly; they needed to feel secure, and comprehended the teachers as supportive (Calabrese, 1987; Samdal, 1998). Other studies had reinforced the suggestion that traits allied to a constructive view of school are student involvement in and accountability for the school life and a good association with teachers (Terrell, 1994; Epstein, 1998; Fraser, 1989; Kottkamp & Mulhern, 1987).

Early educational reformers, like Perry (1908), Dewey (1916), and Durkheim (1961), documented that the distinctive culture of a school had an effect on the life and learning of its pupils. However, empirical studies on school climate grew out of organizational research and findings that school-specific processes accounted for most discrepancy in pupils' achievement (Kreft, 1993). Ever since, the research in school climate had increased steadily, and in recent years many countries are showed an ardent interest in

this field. The study focused on establishing whether school climate mediated the influence of reading difficulties on academic performance.

An aspect of the school environment that explained the influence of reading difficulties on academic performance is the language teaching strategy adopted. Grouwns and Koehler (1988) identified teacher and student-related factors that affect learning. Teacher-related factors such as his or her knowledge of English contented how students learn and teaching techniques of particular content and class. For instance, some teachers believed that students learn by explicit examples and repetition and others believed that they learn by discovery or investigation, hence this made their teaching approach to teaching of English different.

The language policy adopted by the school may influenced the extent to which learners were able to read fluently or not by class four, and in effect their academic performance in standard seven. The language policy in Kenya, in the pre-world war II period favored teaching of reading skills in lower primary using mother tongue (Nabea, 2009).

Although this was motivated by the need to produce low cadre staff in administration and restrict empowerment of Kenyans, it may had resulted in enhanced cognitive development of learners at that stage. As Fergusson (2013) echoed, a well-established educational advantage of first literacy in a language familiar to the child is improvement in cognitive development.

The current language policy, however, required reading to be taught in English in lower primary. Whether the policy change had been enabling or disabling learning acquisition of fluency in reading, and hence learning of other subjects from standard four to seven is

an open question. This study focused on establishing whether the current policy explained the influence that learning difficulties have had on academic performance of standard 7 pupils. It enabled us test the presumption that language policy, together with teaching strategy and school climate mediated the influence of reading difficulty on academic performance, of public schools in Bungoma County.

### **1.1.3 Home environment**

The home environment entailed: emotional warmth displayed by parents while interacting with their children; provision of stimulating and learning experiences in the home; and physical surroundings, such as safety of play areas and cleanliness. (Kao, 2011).

The environment at home may contribute negatively to the child's learning through too much pressure from parents and significant others, lack of facilities, poor neighborhood and any other harsh conditions like domestic violence (Gyan, 2014). Research shows that parenthood, especially responsive and motivating parenting practices has significant impact on a child's academic development (Christian, Morrison and Bryant, 1998). By observing particular parental practices that are amenable to adjustment, such as parental involvement, and the means by which these exercises affect academic performance, courses may be built to widen a pupil's academic performance.

Parental concern is related to enhanced academic performance. However, particular means through which parental concern wields its impact on a pupils' academic performance are not completely known (Hills and Craft 2003). Policy initiatives and understanding these mechanisms would inform further research and may lead to the

development of more efficient intervention measures meant to improve pupils' academic performance. The home environment has been found to be positively linked with a child's academic performance. (Hara and Burke, 1998; Hill and Craft, 2003). More so, children whose parents at home are more concerned with their academics have better academic performance than children whose parents are less concerned. Policy makers and researchers not only noted the influence of parental involvement on academic success but have also integrated efforts aimed at increasing parent involvement into larger educational policy initiatives (Keane, 2011). Together with these results of the significance of early academic achievement, a child's academic achievement has been found to be comparatively steady after initial basic school (Entwisle and Hayduk, 1998). It is vital to scrutinize reasons that play a role to early academic achievement and that are open to change. In this regard, home environment is in essence the most important factor.

Particularly, children whose parents at home are more concerned in their education achieve better than those whose parents are occupied to a less significant level. The influence of parent participation on academic achievement has not only been well-known amid researchers, but also among policy makers who have incorporated hard work aimed at ever-increasing parental participation into broader educational policy proposals. Together with these results of the significance of initial educational achievement, a child's educational achievement has been instituted to be comparatively steady after initial basic school (Entwisle and Hayduk, 1998). It is imperative to scrutinize reasons that play a role to early academic achievement and that are open to alteration. Home setting is fundamentally the most imperative feature in this repute.

#### **1.1.4 Academic Performance**

According to (Narad, 2016) academic performance is the knowledge gained which is assessed by marks by a teacher and/or educational goals set by students and teachers to be achieved over a specific period of time. He added that these goals are measured by using continuous assessment or examinations results. Teachers and education officials typically measure achievement using classroom performance, graduation rates and results from standardized tests (York, 2015). Importance of academic performance as a response variable in regard to reading is acknowledged. Being unable to read affects the capability to perform in all other school subjects, and the capability to attain in life away from school. Academic performance can be measured by using actual or perceived scores reported by learners (Arasa, 2004).

Literature reports comparatively great relationship linking self-reported data and definite academic performance (Cole & Gonyea, 2010; Kuncel et al., 2005). In the present study a self-reported measure was used to capture the academic performance of respondents. They were requested to indicate the marks obtained by them in end of the previous term's examination and the current term.

#### **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

While pupils are expected to acquire reading skills by the end of standard four, and use such to learn other subjects in the primary cycle, they often exhibit unexplained reading difficulties when they reach standard seven. As Lerner (2006) points out, pupils are unable to use reading as a learning tool from standard 4 upwards. The problem is that

whereas we expect standard 7 pupils to be able to read in the subject areas, they often have unexplained difficulties. Infact, their performance in English suggests they may have carried over difficulties in reading, from lower primary, perhaps because of non supportive environments at school and home when reading was taught. Reading difficulties and poor academic performance has been attributed to internal and external factors (Runo, 2010).

In Bungoma County, western region of Kenya a predominately rural county with relatively poor literacy outcomes for children (Piper & Mugenda, 2013), was also poorer and schools were more poorly equipped with learning materials. Fewer pupils read books at home, and reported fewer books at home (Piper & Mugenda, 2013).Moreover, the mechanism by which reading difficulties can be mitigated by home and school factors is yet to be understood.

On research, the influence of reading difficulties on academic performance has been either descriptive (Ombra, 2013), or focused on a single predictor and criterion variable (Koskei, 2015).Thus a need exists for a comprehensive view of the mechanism by which reading difficulties have an effect on academic performance, if the challenge of poor performance in the primary level is to be addressed. The present inquiry filled up these conceptual, experimental, relative and methodological mismatches by focusing on the influence that reading difficulties have on academic performance.

### **1.3. Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the study was to investigate the influence of reading difficulties on academic performance among standard seven pupils in public primary schools in Bungoma County, Kenya, and the mediating and moderating role of school environment and home environment on the reading difficulties.

### **1.4 Objectives**

The study was guided by the following objectives

- i. To examine the influence of reading skills difficulties on academic performance of standard 7 pupils within public primary schools in Bungoma County
- ii. To establish the moderating effect of home environment on the influence of reading difficulties of standard 7 pupils within public primary schools in Bungoma County
- iii. To investigate the mediating role of school environment on the influence of reading difficulties of standard 7 pupils within public primary schools in Bungoma County

### **1.5 Research Questions**

The study was steered by the following subsequent questions;

- i. Do reading skills difficulties have a significant influence on academic performance of standard 7 pupils within public primary schools in Bungoma County?
- ii. Does the school environment have a significant mediating effect on the influence of reading difficulties of standard 7 pupils within public primary schools in Bungoma County?
- iii. Does the home environment have a significant moderating effect on the influence of reading difficulties of standard 7 pupils within public primary schools in Bungoma County?

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

The finding in this study is of importance to the teaching of English in primary schools within Kenya and beyond. It should inform language teaching policy by identifying the interventions within and without the school environment required to improve fluency in reading. Empirical evidence on the role of schools and homes in addressing reading difficulties may open new lines of inquiry on the influence of reading difficulties may academic performance. Further, it has provided schools with impetus to initiate interventions that should encourage literary support by significant others in school and at home. Thus the study not only has practical significance but also has options for improving the theory of language acquisition; by establishing home and school factors able to intervene on the influence of reading difficulties on academic performance.

### **1.7 Limitation of the study**

The researcher faced several limitations including negative attitudes of the respondents towards filling the questionnaires; getting time with head teachers at schools; low response rate since the respondents were expected to fill in the questionnaires while they attended to the school timetable; and finally, limited interactions between the researcher, teachers and students since they work under timetables at school. In spite of this, the researcher found convenient time like lunch break and other breaks and also made use of introductory letter to mitigate on the negative attitude.

### **1.8 Delimitation of the study**

The study was concerned with standard seven pupils in primary level and not the other classes because it is assumed that at class seven pupils are able to read without any difficulties.

### **1.9 Assumptions of the study**

Respondents were available during data collection because this was done within the Kenyan academic calendar. Honest responses to the research instruments were availed because they were elaborated to them in case of questions asked. Teachers' didn't influence students' responses because the researcher and his assistants were present during data collection. The schools administration allowed pupils and teachers to fill the questionnaires.

### **1.10 Theoretical Framework**

Vygotsky's socio cultural theory guided the current study (Vygotsky, 1978). Further, Socio cultural theories have been developed by other theorists such as Lave (1988; 1991), Lemke (1990), Rogoff (1990, 2003) and Wertsch (1991). Socio cultural theory is extensively used in discernment of teaching and learning as entrenched in the cultural context of children's on a daily basis and interaction with other people (Verenikina, 2010). Vygotsky's theory is considered relevant in this study since it addresses the significant importance of societal and cultural framework to growth of reading ability.

Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory center of attention is on four aspects of human being cognitive progress, namely mind, tools, Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) and community of practice (Mantero, 2002). Initially, mind lengthens further than a person and people, being socially circulated, making our mental practices and performance depend upon our dealings and consultation with others, and also have an effect on our surroundings, background and the past (Mantero, 2002).

Lave and Wenger (1991) assert that learning, thinking and knowing are relations amid people engaged in activity occurring from the social context and culturally prearranged world. The socio-cultural perspective supposes that human cognition is fashioned through engagement in social activities (Mantero, 2002). The subsequent feature of cognitive advancement, instruments support the rising communicative and cognitive functions in moving from the societal plane to the psychological plane. Language, systems of counting, algebraic symbol systems, and works of art, writing, diagrams, maps and mechanical drawings are tools that are included (Vygotsky, 1981).

Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) is the third aspect. It is the gap linking the real developmental level, as dogged by impartial problem solving, and the stage of possible expansion, as determined through problem solving beneath mature support or in alliance with additional able cohorts (Vygotsky, 1978). Where learning as subject domain is viewed as a process of becoming a member of a community of practice as the fourth aspect of cognitive development (Mason, 2007). A group of people who are recognized as having a special expertise in some area of significant cultural practice is referred to as a community of practice (Nuthall, 1997).

Socio cultural theories are relevant in the current investigation on how reading difficulties influence academic performance. The social cultural framework provides a basis for testing the role of school and home environment in explaining the process by which reading difficulties influence academic performance. This is because social cultural theories consider language learning as being entrenched within communal occurrences

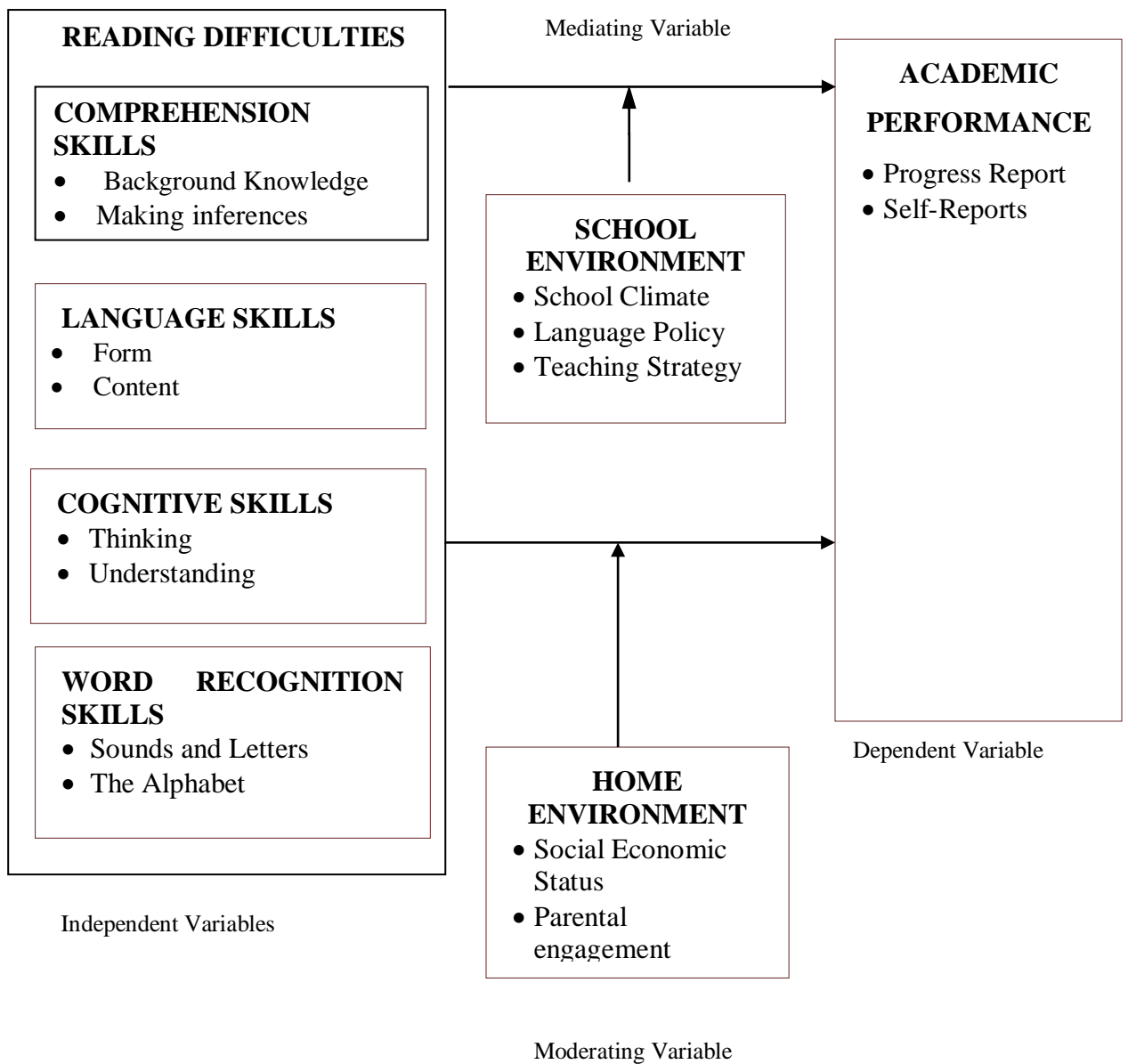
and taking place as a learner work together with other individuals, entities, and incidents in the mutual settings (Vygotsky, 1978). Language development emerges from social interactions as stated by Vygotsky. Language learning is also considered as a social mediation where socially acquired knowledge becomes internalized is deliberated in the theory (Cook, 2008). Individuals gain control of and restructure their cognitive processes during mediation as knowledge is internalized during social activity as stated by Vygotsky (Lightbown & Spada, 2006).

According to Lantolf (2001), the human mind as a system is capable of higher order thinking, which is culturally shaped as visualized by Vygotsky. This insinuates that there is an edge involving a symbolic object, which is language, and thinking; some of these processes include learning, intentional attention and memory, logical thinking, and problem solving, among others. Despite the fact that these concepts are neither a single unit nor completely independent, they are closely related: speaking is the public realization of what once was a private thought (Lantolf, 2001). The concept of internalization is also important within the socio cultural theory applied to language acquisition. This is the convergence of thinking with culturally created mediational artifacts, above all those which are linguistically organized (Lantolf, 2001). The source of consciousness comes from the outside world, and it is achieved through social interaction. During this procedure, cultural objects suppose a psychological function by reorganizing the relationship of the individuals to their social environment, and generally carry it into future performance (Lantolf & Thorne, 2007).

In summary, the Socio cultural perspective provides a suitable framework for understanding the mediating role of school environment in addition to the moderating function of home environment on the influence of reading difficulties on academic achievement. The framework has been chosen as a basis for understanding how academic performance can be enhanced by focusing on the role of significant others in the school and home environment on reading difficulty.

### **1.11 Conceptual Framework**

The conceptual model (Figure 1.1) commences the arguments offered in the literature review. It puts forward the researcher's schematization of the connections of present study variables.



**Figure 1.1 Conceptual Framework**

Source: Author (2020)

In the conceptual framework in Figure 1.1 the independent variable was reading difficulty which entails skills in comprehension, language, cognitive and word recognition. The dependent variable was academic performance determined by progress and self-reports. The intervening variables are the role of home and school environment which have a bearing on reading difficulty and thus influence academic performance.

The mechanism by which reading difficulties influence academic performance of pupils is dependent on their interaction with significant others in their environment both at school and at home. The significant others may include parents, sibling and relatives at home and teachers and peers at school. The influence of reading difficulties on academic performance, is mediated by the interactions with significant others in the school environment. The interactions at school are with teachers and peers within the control of the school. On the other hand, the interaction with significant others at home is under less control of the school and therefore moderates reading difficulties.

As shown in Figure 1.1, the school climate, language policy and teaching strategies are to mediate the influence that reading fluency or absence of the same. On the other hand, the language learning support provided at home can moderate the magnitude to which reading difficulties influence academic performance. Further, the parent's education, their occupation and engagement are either to enhance or reduce the influence on reading difficulties.

### **1.12 Operational Definition of Terms**

**Academic Performance:** The marks obtained by the students in end of term examination, and is Categorized as High, Above Average, Average, below average and Low

**Home Environment:** The home environment entails: emotional warmth displayed by parents while interacting with their children; provision of stimulating and learning experiences in the home; and physical surroundings, such as safety of play areas and cleanliness.

**Knowledge background:** world knowledge that the reader brings to the act of reading which includes facts, personal knowledge and school based knowledge.

<b>Pre-Schoolers:</b>	School going children of ages 3 to 6 years
<b>Reading Difficulty:</b>	Refers to the unexpected failure to read fluently and this includes mispronouncing, omitting, substituting as well as adding words
<b>Reading Skills:</b>	The child's ability to decode and comprehend text, such as pronunciation, sentence construction and making inferences
<b>School environment:</b>	School environment refers to the set of relationships that occur among members of a school community that are determined by structural, personal, and functional factors of the educational institution, which provide distinctiveness to schools.
<b>Vocabulary:</b>	The knowledge of a word's meaning

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE**

#### **2.0 Introduction**

This portion presented reviews on what other scholars had done in reference to the objectives of the study and focused on four major themes which emerged repeatedly throughout the literature. The first theme study examined the influence of reading difficulties on academic performance. The second one established the moderating effect of home environment on the influence of reading difficulties. Finally the third one investigated the mediating role of school environment on the influence of reading difficulties of standard 7 pupils within public primary schools in Bungoma County.

#### **2.1 Reading Difficulty and Academic performance**

##### **2.1.1 Reading difficulties**

Defining reading difficulty is not an easier task because many scholars have come up with different meanings depending on the area of study. For example reading difficulty has been defined as the unanticipated breakdown to read easily owing to mispronunciation, omission, substitution or adding of words (Runo, 2010). Also Karanja's (2015) found out in her study that it is the mispronunciation, omission of words, addition of words, and substitution of words to be common difficulties, in the context of secondary schools. However for this study Vygotsky socio-cultural perspective supposes that human cognition is fashioned through engagement in social activities (Mantero, 2002). If therefore there is lack of such engagements then it follows that a child may develop a problem in his ability to read. From this perspective the definition of

reading difficulty is lack of proper reading ability due to inadequacies in the social engagement process of a child at an early age.

The studies of Runo (2010) and Karanja (2015) clearly outlined the nature of reading difficulties which were most prevalent among students in most secondary schools in Kenya. The researcher focused on the nature of the same difficulties at the primary school level. So as to establish the prevalence and effect on academic performance of pupils. In spite of that, it may have seemed logical that such errors may have had effects on performance of students even in primary level where reading was taught till grade 4 and learners were expected to apply the skills in content areas.

Different studies did focus on different levels of education. For example Karanja (2015), focused on the secondary level of education, the work by Mwanamukubi, (2013) sought to describe reading difficulties at grade six in schools in Zambia. The fact that these researchers established the prevalence of reading difficulty in secondary schools, this study sought to find out the situation and the effect on academic performance at the primary level where the problem could have emanated from.

The study by Mwanamukubi, (2013) was descriptive in nature, thereby not informative of the nature of relationship between the reported difficulties of omitting, substituting, adding words, mispronunciation and academic achievement in subject areas. The current study sought to provide empirical knowledge of how significant the influence of reading difficulties were on academic performance at the primary school cycle in standard seven.

Some authors itemized the types of difficulties. Sultna (2016) argued that advanced level tertiary students of Bangladesh had a difficulty in vocabulary. The study limited itself to one aspect that caused difficulty in reading, that is, vocabulary. Tertiary participants did not have a difficulty in comprehension in contrast to studies in the secondary and primary schools. Improved reading skills involved teachers which explained the need for the input of other stake holders. Summarizing, rereading, scanning, using prior knowledge and discussing things with others were described as the strategies that were mostly used by pupils.

The other issue addressed by studies reviewed was the aspect of training of teachers bringing about reading difficulty. For example, Ahmad (2011) contended that verb forms, narration, conjunctions, prepositions, articles, sentence arrangements and reading comprehension were difficulties in learning found to have faced schools. This was due to the teachers in Provincial government schools not being satisfactorily trained and had no sufficient acquaintance of teaching methodologies of teaching English. A proportional inquiry into the quality of difficulties made the study to coincide with mule (2015) who discussed the causes of reading difficulty. The discussion on the reasons that affected the learning of English by the secondary school students is common and similar answers had been realized by wanjiku (2015). These studies blamed the reading difficulties among pupils being caused by teachers not being qualified and therefore it became a real concern.

In an international Journal of Educational Development, a study was carried out in Kenya from 2013 to 2014 on a randomized controlled trial of mother-tongue literacy instruction, the Primary Math and Reading (PRIMR). Effects of mother-tongue literacy instruction in Kenya and its effects on student learning in English, Kiswahili, and mathematics were examined in secondary schools. There were no added advantages for English or Kiswahili learning results beyond the non-mother-tongue group from assignment to the mother-tongue group. The mother-tongue group had somewhat lower mathematics outcomes and a minute influence on the usage of mother tongue in other subjects was realized on an assignment to the mother- tongue cluster (Piper, 2014).

The influence from the four kinds of reading skills, namely comprehension, language, cognitive, word cognition, and academic performance, had not yet been clarified. It was not obvious which category of reading was most important in the context of primary grades. The current study investigated the influence of each reading skill difficulty on academic performance to establish which one is a statistically significant predictor of academic performance of standard seven pupils in schools within Bungoma County.

### **2.1.2 Influence of Reading Difficulties on Academic Performance.**

The influence of reading difficulties on academic performance is considered to be an increasingly important research theme owing to its relationship to learner's motivation, behavior, and failure in school (Carmin, Silber and Kameenui, 2015). It is amazing how large of an impact reading skills play in the academic, social and emotional well-being of every individual. Those who naturally develop reading skills do not often realize the

positive impact these skills play in their life (Angela, 2010). A research conducted in Kenya highlights that learners with problems in reading English have problems in school performance in general (Chege 1999, Kirigia 1991 & Njoroge 2000). Poor reading skills impact students emotionally by negatively influencing their self-esteem. Struggling with a skill that many of their peers pick up naturally makes many students feel incapable and unintelligent. This is unfortunate because reading problems are rarely a result of the student's personal effort (Angela, 2010).

Also poor reading skills impact students socially. A common finding in sociology and psychology is that students naturally become friends with peers that are similar to them in academic standing. In correlation, academic success is often tied to involvement in other positive activities and a sharp decline in truancy, drug use, and other types of experimentation. According to a recent report from the Annie E. Casey Foundation, 68% of America's 4th graders read below grade level last school year. The necessity of literacy skills in today's society makes this statistic troublesome. Reading skills strongly impact students' academic success as well as their emotional and social well-being (Angela, 2010). Also others researchers have argued that there existed a strong constructive relationship flanked by superficial academic performance and reading comprehension (Onkoba, 2014). The correlation study also limited the exposure of the relation for it did not provide the relation in empirical statistical manner. It was limited because it associated the variables by putting them in a parallel form then compared them and therefore no other factors could be realized. Comprehension difficulties were also found to be caused by decoding deficits, poor retention, vocabulary deficiency and lack

of inferences. The study was carried out in a city setup as well as in one term which therefore makes it limited to a given term or region.

Onkoba (2014) highlights that a few learners experience comprehension difficulties seen in the forms of slow reading rate, skipping words and letters which caused their performance to be average. The purpose of reading is to comprehend the information in the text so as to benefit the reader. Therefore this study brought out clearly the difficult of comprehension in various forms as outlined above. It benefited the current study in that it was one of the reading difficulties that were to be investigated. Also a correlation between comprehension difficulties and academic performance was established. Teachers used methods like demonstration, discussion, and observation in teaching comprehension. The methods used by the teachers addressed the needs of the proficient readers and slow readers implying that methods used by teachers had an effect on reading comprehension. However this study was carried out in Nairobi and in standard three.

Likewise, Chege (1999) argued that reading comprehension and performance had a positive correlation and performance of boys and girls in reading comprehension had no significant difference. This raised the issue of gender in academic performance. The study coincided with most other studies though other studies differed on the issue of boys and girls in reading comprehension. Further, the correlation values between reading comprehension, Mathematics and Science were not significant for the girls. This coincides with the Cimmiyotti, (2013) study in mathematics whereby, Girls performed better than boys in Math and Science subjects in whom traditionally boys performed better. There is no coherent result in the study and therefore it does not give clear data.

Also this study was carried in Machakos and dealt with standard eight pupils. The study did not consider the various components of reading comprehension and how each of these contributed to academic achievement for both boys and girls.

However, other scholars dealt with subjects' areas such mathematics as well as the studies being carried out in the west. Such as Cimmiyotti, (2013) in the USA examined the relationship linking reading and academic performance. It differed with the study theme in assessment of the concept of reading whereas the current concept was on reading difficulties. The sub- themes of the current study concurred with those in the study; such as comprehension, fluency, and vocabulary on reading performance. At the early elementary level among grades two through five, a correlation linking reading and mathematics performance was found. Between reading and mathematics performance there was no connection among second grade. At grades three, four, and five, a link was also found. The study did not deal with the relationship between reading or math and another subject area that is highly reliant on skills from both, such as science. However the current study intended to investigate English reading difficulty in the seventh grade which is a higher grade than the ones considered in this study. Therefore reading difficulties influences pupils emotionally, socially and academically.

## **2.2 Moderating effect of home environment on the influence of reading difficulties**

Mwanamukubi, (2013) states that poverty, illiteracy levels of parents or guardians, contributes to reading difficulties. Home environment is therefore important for a child to be able to read and to do well academically but, the home set up that enables the child to be influenced from reading difficulties is not stated. Also the parents plus guardians level

of education play a very imperative role in the readability of the children. Therefore significant others at home and social economics situation were found to help in alleviating the problem of reading difficulty at primary schools.

Additionally, the nature of lighting system and availability of a reading table at home affected the reading ability of learners. The issue of light performed a big function on how a child could be capable to see what one was reading especially at night and early in the morning. The inquiry on the type of light and table required remained unanswered. The author had addressed two home physical facilities which were limiting and from it the conclusion had been drawn. This could not give empirical data to have drawn a conclusion. While the level of study was among grade six pupils the current one was among class seven pupils

Further, socioeconomic status of the parent impacted positively on the participation of children in ECE through factors like parental involvement, education level, attitudes and occupation (Murai, 2015). The author agreed with (Mwanamkubi 2013) on the Social economic status of the parents. However, the study brought the issue of parental involvement but has not stated to what extent the parent should have been involved. Is it only within the home set up or to extend to the school in order to support the child fully? The study also did not clearly state education level, attitudes and occupation of the parents. This study has also left out the issue of guardians which could not be ignored.

The methodology used benefited the current study apart from the descriptive survey being limited at least inferential statistics were more empirical. This study was carried at ECE a center which did not concur with the current study. Similarly,(Murungi ,2012) claim that home environment that was noisy, lack space for reading, and long distances between school and home undesirably affected pupils' performance. This study agreed with the two studies prior to this one; however the study had described the home environment being quiet environment. What aspects of the home set up made noise in such homes was not really described. Moreover the study agreed with Mwanamkubi (2013) on the issue of lack space for reading, including the table where the child read from determined how one was able to read. Long distances between school and home affected pupils' performance and still raised the question on whether those from shorter distances performed well. This study was carried out at the primary school level which is similar to the study.

Additionally (Michubu, 2013) concurred with murai (2015) on financial and material support influenced students' academic performance. Also, the study was carried out at the secondary school level which differed with the current study. In addition, parental level of education had no effect on students' academic performance. This argument differed with most of the other studies which held that parental level of education had an effect on students' academic performance (Murai, 2015).

Moreover, Kithinji (2014) asserted that socioeconomic background of parents affected pupils' performance. As mentioned earlier the study differed with (Michubu, 2013) argument that socioeconomic background of parents did not affect pupils' performance.

Further inadequate teaching and learning resources affected pupils' performance. The issue of empirical evidence of the study had to be posited in order to have a statistical base. Also children in the school participated in their parents' economic activities hence disrupted their learning leading to reduced performance. The study by Murungi, (2012) was carried at primary school level and at the KCPE class differing with current study. The author had also posted a picture of pupils' absenteeism which affected their academic performance.

In addition, M' Ikiugu (2014) contended that socioeconomic background of parents affected pupils' performance. Inadequate teaching and learning resources affected pupils' performance. Materials intended to enhance the teaching and learning process were inadequate hence affected the performance of pupils. Child labour made pupils keep on thinking about money rather than studies and hence performed poorly as they lost interest in academic work.

Moreover, family condition contributed by poverty affected children's academic performance. (Anyango 2007) contended that Parents are not able to provide for their children with learning resources thus affected their academic performance. Similarly other researchers like (Michubu, 2013), (murai (2015) indicated that poor families were unable to provide for their children with a learning environment which affected their learning. Absenteeism from schools to do other jobs at home affected academic performance of the Children. The conclusion was limited because it implied that if the family condition is fair or good then the children would have performed well in their academics which may not have been the case.

While Geske and Ozola (2007), concurred with (Kithinji (2014) that there was a great impact of students' reading achievements on the socioeconomic situation of the family, parents' education and reading aloud to the child. Also, students who like to read for enjoyment and belong to families where parents spend a lot of time on reading did well in reading tests. While the studies on the influence of home environment suggested that parental engagement and social economic status are important, they did not provide a comprehensive explanation of the influence of reading difficulties on academic performance. In particular, there is limited knowledge on how home environment moderated the influence of reading difficulties on academic performance of pupils. While, this research was done at the primary school level in Latvia, the current one was done in Bungoma and at standard seven.

Mother tongue contributed positively towards the learning of the English language in pre-schools. Currently, Njogu( 2015) argued that Language policy and enough learning materials were not there in pre-schools, however mother tongue contributed positively towards the learning of the English language in pre-schools. Parents had a negative attitude towards the use of mother tongue as a medium of instruction. Mother tongue spoken in different areas and had different structures which created a question about how all the language structures could equally influence English language.

Association of parents and children at the pre-school age influenced pupils reading literacy. Collaboration at age of 10 is not that significant any longer, apart from usual

mutual visits to a library or a bookstore. Geske (2008) stated that children from families with one or two children had better achievements in reading literacy because they had comparatively more books and their parents had good education. Therefore it was argued that the fewer the children in the family the higher the literacy level and vice versa. Reading of comics in the 4th grade could not be characterized as a factor facilitating reading literacy. Better achievements in reading literacy was noted among the students who read different stories, poetry, parts of fiction books or plays at school at least once a week. The 4th grade students' wrote answers to the questions on what they had read, as well as artistic projects on read material and reading aloud at school are not the additional factors that promoted reading literacy (Gülhan, 2018). Most of the studies had been done at the pre-school children level.

Similarly, Odawo (2013) stated that pre-school children whose parents attained degree level of education had higher rates of performance in language, and those who attained KCSE certificate level and below had lower performance. Therefore, households' composition, parental income, level of education, and parental occupation influenced performance in language activities on pre-school pupils, in Kenya. This did not give a clear statistically data to show how education level influenced performance in language among the preschool. Students who watched education programs and spend less time on TV were found to do better in their language activity. Kiarie, (2015) indicated that students who watched educational movies did well in language compared to those who watched other movies, yet students preferred watching movies and soap operas to educational programs. Further, watching of late night movies left them with no time for

homework, made them late in waking up and sleepy in class. Unselected programs and spending too much time on TV contributed to below average performance in class. The type of movies determined effects of television viewing on English language performance in secondary schools. This depended on the home setup whether rural or urban areas which raise the issues of homes that have television sets.

Home support literacy explained a considerable inconsistency in marks in reading success. Snow *et al.* (1995) performed a longitudinal research project for over thirteen years for a group of culturally varied children from low earnings families in Boston. The results of the survey determined that home support for literacy and kindergarten classroom excellence explained a considerable ratio of the discrepancy in marks in reading achievements. Home factors contributed more strongly, on average, than school factors. Leslie and Allen (1999) asserted that time spent on reading was strongly associated with individual reading at school and home. Leisure reading was found to be positively associated with reading increases as it helped increase student motivation to read. Parental participation in supporting home reading of kids had a constructive effect on reading development. Finally, in relation to teaching strategies it was established that an evaluation based, thoroughly designed small group trained approach improved reading levels. Also the same study examined the effectiveness of an early literacy intervention on reading skills of children in grades 1-4.

Also, Ouya 2015 asserted that the students who did not have interest in English affected their performance in English language. Interest constituted the attitude the learners had

towards the language as the interest here represented the attitude learners had towards the language. While the study was carried among students in day secondary schools the current one was in public primary school. This study brought a new idea of interest and attitude in improving performance in English language. Most of the learners seemed to have been exposed late to the language and other reasons which include use of mother tongue as language of instruction, non-comprehensive teaching methods and lack of language practice and use at an early age. Predominance of teachers involved were of the view that the teaching and learning materials were inadequate for effective teaching hence contributed to low students' achievement in English language learning and mastery and utilization.

Rowe (1995) established that reading at home had a long lasting impression on reading accomplishments. Also; a strong component of working with parents to support children's reading skills at home had been included in reading programmes. A longitudinal study carried out in 100 schools in the state of Victoria in Australia on aspects that had an effect on students' literacy progress. The study revealed that factors at student level, teacher level and school level influenced students' achievement and progress in reading, while using both quantitative and qualitative methods to identify the key factors.

Subsequently, Clarke (2014) asserted that residing in a countryside society manipulated parents' contact to resources, such as libraries, which in turn influenced children's literacy, which negatively induced countryside children's kindergarten reading marks.

The comparison of rural to urban community and accessibility to resources affecting children's literacy raised an argument that needs to be addressed. The current study examined the schools within rural and urban areas for there is a general consensus that urban areas have more resources than rural areas. Moreover, Ngigi(2014) indicated that lack of involvement of parents in school activities hindered efforts to actualize the curriculum leading to poor performance.

### **2.3 The effect of school environment on the influence of reading difficulties on academic performance**

There developed a body of literature that offered proof to a connection that linked school environment and student attainment (Ulaine and Moran, 2008; Bergen, 2014; Dagneu, 2014; Orangi, 2016). The unexamined links between school factors and student achievement were school climate, language policy and teaching strategies. School climate, language policy and teaching strategies were mediating variables, explained at least in part, the influence that reading difficulties had on academic performance. It was viewed that a poor school climate, inappropriate language policy, or poor teaching strategies led to poor reading skills and hence reduced performance in academics. Therefore school factors were viewed to be responsible for the drop in achievement incase reading skills were inadequate. The current study investigated the mediating effect of school environment

Further it was found that the Ministry of Education provided few reading materials which caused lack of reading materials in the school while the lower primary school

learners had no access to the libraries. Also, certain kids did not attend nursery schools leading to reading problems. Therefore, kids started primary school with inadequate literate acquaintance and ability's in pertinent fields such as broad oral aptitudes; the ability to go to the resonances of verbal communication as discrete from its meaning; familiarity with the essential rationales and devices of reading, and letter knowledge.

Hartney (2011) asserted that a barrier to learning writing is insufficient exposure to the target language. Accordingly teachers did not work with individual learners and gave more attention to those with reading difficulties due to the classes being overcrowded. The research was conducted among the Grade 3 learners of English as a Second Language at one primary school while the current study was carried among class seven pupils. English as a Second Language referred to specialized approaches to language teaching designed for those whose primary language is not English (Nordquist, 2019). Insufficient exposure to the target language raised the idea that where children learn in mother tongue in the ECE achieved the target language. The target language in that case was English because in Kenyan system of education it was the language of most examination. The English language structure was different from Kenyan mother tongue languages which were a challenge to some pupils hence causing reading difficulty.

Furthermore, Nyabalathe (2012) stated that most of the teachers in the district were young and professionally qualified. Therefore, what they only lacked was effective induction, supervision, in-service courses and provision of adequate relevant teaching-learning resources thus affected performance of students in KCSE examinations.

Supplementary aspects affecting performance in Kenya certificate of secondary education included; drug abuse, alcoholism, peer influence and problems associated with sexual misbehavior.

The study concurred to Nyandiko (2016) on educators who have been in the occupation for a long period simply predisposed pre-school children more than those who were fresh from colleges. They encouraged the children in the reading activities. Those who were certificate holders had poor concept of content knowledge, and had no time for reflection which incidentally lowered the performance of children in reading. Teachers' qualification which affected academic performance was queried in the current study on the aspects of teaching strategy. The other argument was about the individual pupil's behaviour that influenced their performance which brought ideas about the school climate.

Likewise, Kanya (2014) discussed similar aspects as Nyandiko (2016) and Nyabalathe (2012) on teacher's effectiveness in handling discrete differences influenced children's language success. The strategies the teachers employed to handle individual differences; also how they organized the English language classrooms as well as their academic and professional qualifications influenced language achievement among pre scholars. It also raised an inquiry in the current study on children's language achievement being influenced by teacher's efficacy in handling individual differences. It explained teaching strategy which was a sub theme in the current study.

Thereafter, Mutua (2015) insisted that learning styles and academic achievement for the primordial learners and among male and female students has a strong positive and statistically significant relationship. There is no significant difference between learning style preference among male and female students and among high and low academic achievement groups. While the study was carried out among secondary school students, the current study was carried in primary schools. Learning style was the new idea discussed by the study which brings in a new knowledge to the current study.

Furthermore Uline and Moran (2008) indicated that there is a mediating role in the relationship between facility, quality and student achievement played by school climate. A link between the value of school facilities and learner attainment in English and mathematics was realized. The current study focused on the possible mediating role of school environment, such as climate, teaching strategies and language policy on the effect of reading difficulties on academic performance. The study concurred with the current one in the aspect of school climate influencing student success.

Further Bergren (2014) argued that students' achievement and teachers' job satisfaction is influenced by selected school climate factors such as social economic status (SES), attendance and school size collectively. School size had the least influence on students' achievement whereas SES had the most influence, when the factors were examined individually. While the research was conducted in the Middle schools of the

commonwealth of Virginia, the current one was carried in Bungoma County. The study was similar to one of Uline and Moran (2008) in the area of school climate

Dagnew (2014) asserted that the rest of the aspects impacted on students' academic achievement apart from security and maintenance of the school aspect. Security and school aspect had been left out among those aspects that impacted on students' academic achievement but in areas where there is insecurity students cannot learn well. This can be proved by reports availed from regions that are insecure such as the one in the next paragraph.

According to USAID, of the 4.7 million school-aged population of the total Somali population of 12.3 million, 972,000 children or one out of every five Somali student-aged children is displaced. USAID's assessments further suggested that even those children who were in school were not learning. Furthermore, Somalia had one of the world's lowest enrollment rates for primary schools with only 30% of children in Somalia attending school of which only 40% are girls. In terms of adult literacy, at 40%, Somalia had the third-lowest literacy rate among ten neighboring sub-Saharan countries, lower only than Ethiopia (39%) and South Sudan (27%) (Hassan, 2020).

Therefore most studies indicated that school climate plays a big role in student's academic achievement. The current study focused on school climate as a determinant of pupils' academic performance in primary schools while the concentration of this research was on selected school climate aspects and their influence on students' academic achievement in a secondary school. Likewise, Osher, Spier, Kendziora and Cai (2009)

agreed with Dagnev (2014) on changes in student achievement in reading, writing and mathematics, had been positively associated with school climate.

Orangi (2016) stated that majority of standard three pupils were at word level, further there was a considerable link between pupils reading achievement levels and pupil-teacher ratio, textbook-pupil ratio, story books-pupil ratio and charts-pupil ratio. This study comes up with a vital contribution of teacher-pupil ratio which in other studies indicated that without it there is no individual attention by the teachers to the pupils. Availability of reading materials had also been stated as affecting reading achievement (Michubu, 2013, Murai (2015) levels of standard three pupils in Kenya sub-county, Kisii County.

Equally, Mule (2012) argued that the cause of reading difficulties was inadequate English reading materials, improper teaching methodology and insufficient English language development. Inadequate English reading materials had been mentioned widely as one of the major causes of reading difficulties; however this ignored the issue of interest as posited by Ouya (2015). The basic argument was that if learners were provided with adequate materials in English then they were going to be able to read with ease.

This may not be true for some learners have all resources but they lack the interest ( Anyango 2007). Mwoma(2017) stated that reading materials play a critical role in children's reading ability. Absenteeism from school negatively influenced children's reading ability is an argument that agreed with other authors ( Michubu, 2013,Murai 2015) Teaching methodology may not be a hundred percent contributing to reading

ability (Mwanamkubi 2013). However, this study concurred with the current one on the teacher strategy. This study was carried out among pupils in grade four which was lower in comparison to the current one which was carried at class seven in Kenyan system of education.

However, it was found out that the cause of lack of English language development is inadequate teacher-learner interaction during the English lessons as indicated in a study held in Ogongo circuit in Namibia. Mule (2012) agreed with Chisamba (2014), affirmed that the teaching of reading comprehension in the old traditions of sounding out words using flash cards and answering more comprehension questions. However Chisamba (2014) discussed the case of teaching of reading comprehension in the old traditions of sounding out words using flash cards and answering more comprehension questions.

It raised a debate on the most appropriate way of teaching comprehension whether the old or the new. However this study brings out the current study's theme of teaching strategy. Also this study agreed with Nyabalathe (2012) on lack of teacher education and development, large classes, inadequate resources, and lack of commitment. This is also expected to be investigated on the current study in the area of school climate. While this study was carried in Malawi the current one will be carried out in Kenya.

Moreover, Marias (2014) challenged the assertion by Mule (2012) on inadequacies of physical resources that would assist in implementation of inclusive education. Ogero (2015) also debated on inadequate resources including lack of materials and congested

classrooms posed a great challenge to teachers from implementation of quality Inclusive Education. At the same time, the learning resources available were not adapted to the needs of children with SNE and had contributed to them staying away from schools as they felt they are not fully accommodated within the settings existing in public primary schools. This study was carried in primary school therefore was relevant to the current study.

Later, Maaga (2014) indicated that both the teacher and the students found out that the use of learning aids in teaching is beneficial. The talk and chalk method of teaching use is reduced. Also it was established that teachers improvised teaching aids to improve their content delivery in class. It was established that teachers' use of relevant and quality instructional materials to teach their lessons. The role of learning aids in teaching English in Starehe was studied on teachers' perception.

Silas (2012) indicated that in acquisition of reading skills, most public primary schools lack resources to cater for learners with difficulties. Also learners with difficulties in acquisition of reading skills are due to lack of clear government policy on acquisition of reading skills and the curriculum being too rigid. In addition most teachers see it as a bother to teach the learners who lower the mean score thus having a negative attitude towards those with difficulties in acquisition of reading skills. Further, most of the head teachers found it difficult to instill the support to learners with the problem of acquisition of reading skills in their schools for they were not trained in special needs education. This study was carried out to investigate factors influencing the acquisition of reading skills among learners with disabilities in Kilifi County of Coast Province.

Moreover, Nyambura (2015) indicated that inadequate school resources including textbooks, exercise books, desks, school feeding programs and libraries impact on learner academic achievement. The classes were adequate but small in size which resulted in overcrowding. Also low parental involvement, poor leadership, lack of accountability and low achievement pressure on the head teachers and teachers also had an impact on learner achievement.

Elsewhere, Nyaswabu (2013) Group discussions was found as the main method used in teaching since it is participative and involves all the students specially the weak students who may need extra emphasis on difficult areas. A positive attitude towards English was recognized and as such students had consistently improved in their performance since 2008. Public secondary schools in the division were found to be well equipped with classrooms and libraries.

The teachers of English were found to be adequately trained with the basic requirements to teach English. Also the teachers were said to be receiving regular in-service trainings especially through the NES and Ministry of Education. The students' major challenges in learning English were said to be; frequent use of mother tongue by students, uncooperative teachers, misunderstanding of concepts like grammar, spelling, pronunciation and poor writing skills. Tott (2014) asserts that low self-esteem and academic performance has a significant relationship. Stigma and academic performance has a significant relationship. Conversely, longer school time tables demotivate pupils

thereby impacting negatively on their enthusiasm to learn. Moreover, Kimatu (2013) alleged that wastage in primary school pupils and pupils' negative attitude towards education had a significant relationship. Some combined learning with other activities and the school environment was also found not to be conducive for learning. Such pupils kept on dropping out of school while some schoolgirls dropped out because of being sexually harassed by their male schoolmates and some teachers.

Poor motivation of teachers by the administration as well as the slow rate of promotion and upgrading by the ministry, high number of elderly teachers, absenteeism and lateness among the teachers, failure to cover the syllabus in time, poor teaching methods, negative attitudes and inadequate attention to poor performers negatively affects the performance of students. Poverty, poor attitudes, absenteeism, lack of support at home and language weakness influenced learner achievement in public primary schools. Also location of school influenced academic achievement of learners, with isolated schools performing poorly than schools that were easily accessible.

In the current study the interactions between the children and significant others had an effect on the influence of reading difficulties and academic performance. The significance of the school environment in determining the influence of reading difficulties on academic performance is important to address, even though the school is usually the place where most children learn to read, In the current study we will explore the effect of school factors on the influence of reading difficulties on academic

performance of students in the final grade of the primary cycle in schools within Bungoma County, in Kenya.

This study extends previous research which acknowledges that the school environment itself can also hinder a child's reading development. To enhance knowledge on mechanisms by which reading difficulties influence academic performance. This study proposes to reply to the inquiry of the mediating role of school factors, school climate, language policy, and language teaching strategies, on the influence of reading difficulties on academic performance.

#### **2.4 Summary of Empirical Literature and Research Gaps**

As of the reviewed literature, various authorities on reading difficulty and academic achievement by other researchers have been advanced. Literature was reviewed according to the objectives of the study. The literature review from global and regional studies provided gaps to be filled. Findings indicated that selected school climate factors such as social economic status (SES), attendance and school size collectively had an influence on students' achievement and teachers' job satisfaction, globally and regionally.

Most of the studies reviewed focused on itemizing the nature of difficulties therefore not much empirical work has been undertaken to examine the scenery of the association between diverse forms of reading difficulties and academic performance in the perspective of primary schools. On moderating effect of home environment on the

influence of reading difficulties, studies reviewed stated that, socioeconomic status of the parent impacts positively on the participation of children (Murai, 2015). However the methodology used to arrive at this conclusion is descriptive which does not give clear statistical relationship. Also Mother tongue has a positive contribution towards the study of the English language in pre-schools. Nevertheless the level of pre-school is where pupils learn to read whereas the current study level is where pupils read to learn.

School climate acts a mediating role in the relationship between facility value and student success Uline and Moran (2008). Group discussions was found to be the main method used in teaching since it involved all the students especially the weak students who needed extra emphasis on difficult areas Nyaswabu (2013). Time spent on reading was strongly associated with independent reading at school and home, Kiarie, (2015), Leslie and Allen (1999). Availability of print material both at home and school significantly affects leisure reading, Siror (2015).

A child needs to be motivated at home as well as in school; it will be very difficult for a child to develop interest in reading Ojanen, (2007). Gaps that were found included, the connection between reading difficulties and academic performance, the moderating influence of home environment, the mediating role of school environment, and the combined influence of reading difficulties, home and school surroundings on the academic performance of primary schools pupils. Also, while many studies used longitudinal and descriptive methodologies the current study will use descriptive research design

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

This chapter presented the methods that were employed to achieve research objectives. The chapter was structured into research design, variables, location of the study, target population, sampling techniques and sample size, research instruments, pilot study, validity and reliability of the instruments, data collection and data analysis and finally logistical and ethical considerations.

#### **3.1 Research Design**

The research adopted a descriptive study design. Descriptive research is a type of design that describes a population, situation, or phenomenon that is being studied. It focuses on answering the how, what, when, and where questions, rather than the why. It takes a problem with little or no relevant information and gives it a befitting description using qualitative and quantitative research methods. Descriptive research aims to accurately describe a research problem (Formplus, 2020).

Sekaran (2006) points out that a descriptive survey is undertaken in order to determine and explain the traits of the variables of benefit in a situation. The researcher studied individuals and phenomenon in their natural setting hence chose quantitative approach as well as qualitative (Creswell, 2005). Orodho (2003) describes it as the scheme, outline or plan that is used to generate responses to study problems. It is a method of gathering information by interrogating or administering a questionnaire to a sample of individuals. The design was considered most appropriate as it enabled the researcher to reach many

subjects within limited time (Kothari, 1985). The descriptive survey design describes the state of affairs as it exists and it is used when collecting information about people's attitudes, opinions, habits or any of the variety of education or social issues thus was considered most appropriate for the study.

### **3.2 Study Variables**

Variables are the main thoughts that the researcher seeks to collect information to address the rationale of their studies (Creswell, 2005). These include independent, intervening and dependent variables.

#### **3.2.1 Independent Variable**

The primary independent variable in this study, was reading difficulties. The parameters used to measure reading difficulty included comprehension, language, cognitive and word recognition skills. This is posited to influence academic performance through two intermediate and variables namely home and school environment

#### **3.2.2 Intervening Variables**

In this study, intervening variables that explain the effect of reading difficulties on academic performance were school and home environment. The study proposes that school environment mediate the link between reading difficulties and academic performance while home environment moderate the relationship.

### **3.2.3 Dependent Variable**

The response variable, also known as the dependent variable, in this study was academic achievement.

### **3.3 Location of the study**

The survey was carried out in Bungoma County, Western locality of Kenya. The county has a population of 1.6 million people coupled with rural unemployment and has started putting pressure on land and other natural resources. The Bukusu tribe occupy much of the county as well other tribes which are majorly in towns. The Bukusu are a sub-ethnic group of the Luhya community. The economy of the county is mainly agricultural and experiences high rainfalls throughout the year. It has nine sub counties, which include Bungoma central, East, West, North, South, Bumula, Cheptais, Mt Elgon and Kimilili. Bungoma south sub -County has been purposively sampled for the following reasons. There is no proof that any research on reading difficulties has been carried out in this sub-county. This sub-county is considered to be geographically and socio-economically inclusive given that it has schools within and outside the town centre. Also, the area has varied academic performance of good and poor performers.

The researcher is also a teacher in one of the secondary schools in the county. Therefore, he has adequate knowledge and experience regarding issues of academics. The sub-county has a total of 143 public primary schools which will be the study target. Bungoma South is bordered by Mount Elgon on the North, Kimilili on the North East, Webuye on the East and Bungoma West on the West. It lies at an altitude of 1200-2000m above the sea level.

### **3.4 Target population**

According to Ogula (2005), population refers to any group of institutions, people or objects that have common characteristics. This study used a sample selected from 868 primary schools in Bungoma county, Western region schools. The researcher selected Bungoma County because he was a teacher in one of the secondary schools in the county. Therefore, he had adequate knowledge and experience regarding issues of academics. The population of interest consisted of all standard seven pupils in the 143 public primary schools within Bungoma south sub-County. The elimination of school fees from public primary education under the Free Primary Education (FPE) Policy in Kenya in 2003 increased enrollment by 22 percent in the first year alone. Some experts also suggested that the FPE reduced the quality of education in public schools and increased the number of students who transferred from public to private schools (Nishimura, 2012). The choice of public primary schools was because of the quality of education being compromised in comparison to private schools hence a likelihood of a higher prevalence of reading difficult among pupils.

The total standard seven pupils in these primary schools were 17,860 in term 1 of 2019 (NEMIS Bungoma County, 2019). The study targeted 10% of these schools that was 14 schools. Most of the primary schools were mixed schools; therefore an equivalent number of girls and boys were chosen. Reading difficulties of learners in upper primary that were expected to have transitioned to reading for learning was the focus of this study. The choice of Standard seven was because it was a class prior to the candidate class and

thus pupils were expected to read with ease. Standard seven was also selected because class eight was always busy as candidates prepared for the national exams.

### **3.5 Sampling Methods and Sample size**

This section represented the sampling techniques which were used by the researcher in determining the size of the sample on which the study was carried out. It involved formulating a procedure of selecting the respondents to be included in the sample.

#### **3.5.1 Sampling Techniques**

Sampling is a process or technique of choosing a sub-group from a population to participate in a study; it is the process of selecting a number of individuals for a study in such a way that the individuals selected represent the large group from which they were selected (Ogula, 2005).

#### **3.5.2 Sample size**

The sample size was selected using 10% as postulated by Mugenda and Mugenda (2003). In a descriptive research a sample size, 10% is acceptable (Ary, 1990). Purposive sampling was used to select 10% of the nine sub-counties, which therefore gave Bungoma South sub-county. 10% of 143 schools were selected in Bungoma South Sub-County; the study sampled 14 schools with a population of 1786 standard seven pupils by use of random sampling. Also, 10 % of the 1786 pupils was selected to be involved in the study, 179 pupils were selected by use of Simple random sampling. The advantage of simple random sampling is that it allows selection of respondents without biasness. This method also provides equal opportunity of selection for each member of the population (Kerlinger, 1973). A sample size of 179 standard seven pupils, 21 teachers, and 14 head

teachers from fourteen schools were selected for the study. Thus the total respondent sample size was tabulated in Table 3.1.

**Table 3. 1 Sample size**

SCHOOL	NUMBER OF PUPILS	SELECTED PUPILS	TEACHERS	HEAD TEACHERS
Bungoma District Education Board	350	35	3	1
Musikoma	150	15	2	1
Moi District Education Board	334	33	3	1
Mupeli District Education Board	130	13	1	1
Bungoma Muslim	80	8	1	1
Central Baptist	85	9	1	1
Sinoko District Education Board	73	7	1	1
Sio Roman Catholic	120	12	2	1
Mukhaweli	89	9	1	1
Kanduyi District Education Board	120	12	2	1
Makutano District Education Board	90	9	1	1
Mukholi	80	8	1	1
Kitinda	40	4	1	1
Samoya Roman Catholic	45	5	1	1
Total	1786	179	21	14

### **3.7 Research Instruments**

The study adopted use of questionnaires for pupils, interview schedules for teachers, interview schedules for head teachers, observation schedule and focused group discussion for pupils as instruments of data collection.

#### **3.7.1 Questionnaire**

This are carefully designed written instruments for collecting data directly from people through questions or statements. A questionnaire was preferred as a data collection instrument because it provides the respondent with freedom to respond to the questions at his/her own time without coercion or intimidation, that is, they are free from bias of the

interviewer ( Fraenkel & Wallen, 2008). A questionnaire is also cost effective on the side of time. It involved use of open-ended and closed-ended questions (Orodho, 2003).

The method gives respondents enough time to reflect on questions before answering. Closed ended survey questionnaire for pupils consisting of sections for respondent demographics, influence of reading difficulties on academic performance, moderating role of home environment, and mediating role of school environment was used. The questionnaire was prepared and contained closed ended questions. The questionnaire was divided into three sections of yes, no and don't know to obtain information on the variables in the study. These values were used to compute the rates of responses after data had been collected. A questionnaire was preferred in this study because it enabled the researcher to collect a large quantity of data from pupils within a short period of time.

### **3.7.2 Interview schedule**

An interview guide is a broad-spectrum plan that an interviewer adheres to. The guide approach is anticipated to guarantee that the equal universal region of information are assembled from each interviewee, this presents additional focal point than the conversational method but still agrees to a level of liberty and adaptability in getting the information from the interviewee (Nyonje, 2015). It's a list of questions or topics that the interviewer anticipates to investigate in each interview. The interview schedule consisted of two sections the background information which collected the bio data of respondents and the research themes interview questions.

The interview schedule was administered to the English subject teachers and head teachers seeking their personal opinion on factors that influenced reading difficulties on academic performance of learners in their specific schools. The interviews were organized and conducted in the respective sampled schools. The interview schedule were preferred in this study because it's often superior to other data-gathering devices, since people are usually more willing to talk than to write and helped to collect information not able to be solicited by the questionnaires and other instruments.

In-depth information was obtained by this instrument since different aspects of academic performance among pupils are well understood by the teachers and hence interview schedules helped the researcher to acquire as more information as possible. The schedule probed for answers within the school, among teachers themselves. Interviews also made it possible for the interviewer to explain more explicitly the investigation's purpose and to clarify in case of misinterpretation of questions (Best & Kahn, 2003).

### **3.7.3 Observation schedule**

An observation schedule helps the researcher to identify a set of behaviours to be observed (Nyonje, 2015). An observation offers the investigator a chance to collect "live" data from naturally happening societal occurrences. Observation facilitates the researcher used to collect data on the physical setting, human setting, interactional setting and the program setting. An observation schedule was used for direct observation of the presence and condition of various aspects of school environment. It consisted of a structured guideline which helped to observe qualitatively and quantitatively and described the various school facilities and aspects which included library, classroom, and number of students in class

seven, number of lessons a class seven English teacher had, wall charts among others. Direct observation presents data in its natural form, makes the observer an active participant in the study and permits time to think about what is occurring rather than on how to record it (Kombo & Tromp, 2006).

The observation consisted of an assessment of reading comprehension, which entailed four progressive levels adapted from (uwezo, 2016).

#### **3.7.4 Focused group discussion**

Focused group discussion is mostly used in qualitative research method and is a type of an in depth interview achieved in a cluster whose encounters portray traits definite with regard to the proposal, size, composition and interview procedure. The focal point or object of analysis is the interaction inside the group (Morgan, 1988). A cautiously planned discussion designed to obtain perceptions on a defined area of interest in a permissive, non-threatening environment is the focus group guide. Also a list of questions you plan to ask the participants during the focus group sessions is referred to as the discussion guides. (Nyonje, 2015).

The focus group discussions was conducted with the pupils and was preferred because it sought their opinions on personal, school resources and classroom practices that influenced their reading ability and academic performance and was relatively easier to propel or conduct and allowed exploration of topics. The characteristics of our focused group included the following; 5-10 pupils in each group, comfortable environment where pupils were seated in a circle and went on with the discussion. Every group had a

moderator who used predetermined questions. The analysis and reporting used verifiable procedures.

### **3.8 Pilot Study**

Pilot study was done in Sikata primary school. The school was purposively selected because it is in the same geographical area with the schools for the main study. Sample of the pilot study comprised 20 students from standard seven 2 teachers of English of the same class and one head teacher from the same school. The pilot study enabled the researcher to identify items that required modification as well as familiarized with research instruments and its administration procedure. This led to simplification of the questionnaire items language for pupils to understand. The focused group discussions questions were also reduced to facilitate for adequate discussions within the available time. The institution and individuals sampled for pilot study were not included in the main study.

#### **3.8.1 Validity of research instruments**

According to Mugenda and Mugenda (2003) a degree to which data collected using a particular instrument represents a specific domain of indicators or content of particular concept is referred to as content validity. The measure of how well an instrument measures what is supposed to be measured is the Validity The researcher analyzed the questionnaires on the content, construct and face validity with the help of the supervisors. The instruments were then tested through pilot study in Sikata primary school and their teachers randomly selected .This group finally was excluded from the main study.

Corrections also were done as required to increase the content validity and language clarity.

### **3.8.2 Reliability**

The consistency of measurement and frequently assessed using the test - retest reliability method referred to as reliability (Shanghverzy, 1997). It is a measure of how consistent the outcome of analysis should be. The researcher used test - retest method in which case, same instrument(s) were administered twice to the same group of sampled subjects with a time lapse between the first test and the second test of 3 weeks .This estimated the degree to which the same results could be obtained with a repeat measure. Scores were correlated and a correlation coefficient of 0.8 was considered high enough to judge the instruments as reliable for the study.

### **3. 9 Data Collection procedure**

The researcher obtained permission from the National commission for science and Technology and Innovation prior to going to the field for data collection. The researcher sent a self-introductory letter to the county education office in Bungoma County and the head teachers of the schools for the proposed study explaining the purpose of the research and request for their permission, co-operation and participation in the research. The researcher took sets of questionnaire in person to all the selected schools. The researcher took the instruments in person to the respondents and collect immediately after they had been completed.

### **3.10 Data Analysis**

Inspection of the data pieces was first done and then classified and coded according to the pattern of responses that were given by the respondents from the questionnaires and responses recorded during interviews and focus group discussions as well as the records in the observation schedule.

The completed questionnaires were checked for completeness and consistency before coding and processing the responses. The analysis of data relied on Statistical Packages for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Descriptive statistics enable us to present data in a more meaningful way which allows simpler interpretation of the data (Statistics, 2019). Descriptive statistics techniques which were used to analyze open-ended items as well as the interviews and focus group discussions included means, frequencies and percentages.

Qualitative data was generated from the open ended questions. The researcher then noted down the frequent responses of participants on various issues, give explanation, interpretation and conclusion. The data was analyzed using key themes and reported in narrative style using the themes as sub-headings. Specifically the researcher developed a summary report identifying major themes and topics and the association between them as they come up in discussions and use graphics and direct quotations to present the findings. A conclusion in regards to the influence was then made according to the judgment of the analyst (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003).

### **3.11 Logistical and Ethical Considerations**

The researcher got authorization to carry out the research from the National Council of Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI), after being registered by the Graduate School of Kenyatta University. A list of schools was obtained from the County Education Officer in Bungoma County. The copies of authorization letter from NACOSTI were distributed to relevant offices in the Ministry of Education and relevant schools in the district. The researcher sought consent from head teachers to familiarize with teachers and pupils a few days before the inception of the data collection. All respondents in the study were treated with respect and were assured that the information they would give would be kept with secrecy and be used for the rationale of the study. No respondent was forced to take part in the study.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **DATA PRESENTATIONS, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS**

#### **4.1 Introduction**

This chapter presented analysis of the findings from the study on reading difficulties and academic performance of pupils in public primary schools within Bungoma County, Kenya. Data was collected using questionnaires for pupils, interview schedules for teachers, head teachers interview schedule, focused group discussion for pupils and observation schedule. The return rate for the 292 respondents was 100%. This was because the researcher took time and had research assistants who helped in the administration of the research instruments and collection of data.

The chapter was subdivided into two main sections. Section one presented the background information for respondents for purposes of sample description. Section two presented the results of the research questions formulated in the study which were to examine the influence of reading difficulties on academic performance, to establish the moderating effect of home environment on the influence of reading difficulties on academic performance and to investigate the mediating role of school environment on the influence of reading difficulties on academic performance. These were discussed in form of themes. The collected data was compiled into frequencies and percentages and analyses were presented in tables and charts for the purposes of interpretation.

## **4.2 Respondents' Demographic Information**

Respondent's participation by percentage was as follows; pupils questionnaires were 179 (61.3%), participants in the focused group discussions were 83(28.4%), teachers interviewed were 21(7.2%) and head teachers interviewed were 9(3.1%). The response rate was 100 % which the researcher found to be a satisfactory representation of the target population. The research progressed because Mugenda and Mugenda (2010) contends that a 75% and above return rate is sufficient since it is representative of the sample.

Pupils and teachers personal information was sought to give an insight on the respondents' characteristics which included gender, age, teacher's level of academic education and working experience, parents occupation as well as the family structure of the pupils.

### **4.2.1 Background information for the pupils**

The researcher sought to find out the background information of the pupils and the results were presented using tables of frequency and percentages and figures. This was to enable the researcher obtain characteristics of the sample involved in the study.

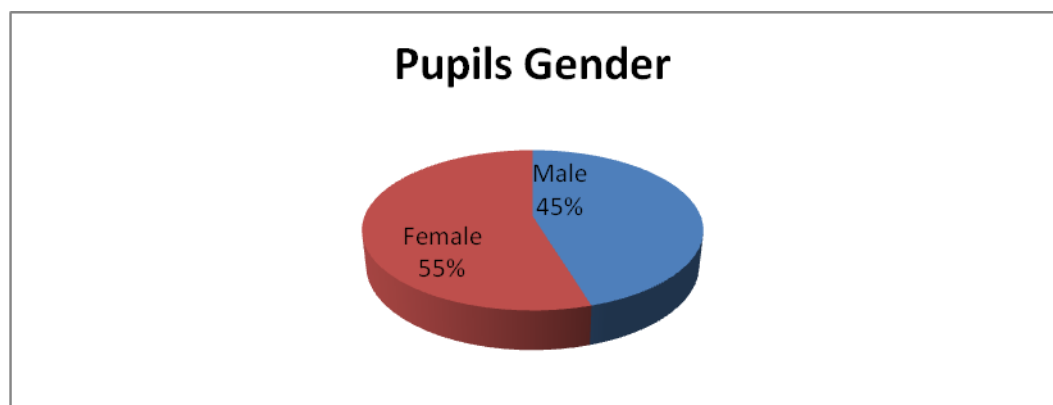
#### **4.2.1.1 Gender of the Respondents and Learner Academic Performance**

The study sought to find the gender of the respondents since reading difficulties and academic performance varies between male and female pupils (Wangu, 2014). The rates of enrolment in Bungoma County tend to be higher for the girls in relation to the boys. This trend agrees with (EMIS, 2014) which reported that girls enrolment was higher in standard seven. Teacher's gender was also considered since the sex of primary teachers

has been found to influence performance, particularly of girls with statistics showing that pupils taught by female teachers perform better than those taught by male teachers (UNESCO, 2005)

#### 4.2.1.2 Gender of pupils

The sampled population comprised of 179 pupils from public primary schools, both females & males as indicated in figure 4.1



**Figure 4. 1 pupils' gender**

The findings report that female pupil respondents formed 54.7% percentage of the sample while 45.3% percentages were males. This was corroborated by observation of the class pupils' registers which showed that females were more than males. This shows that more girls than boys are now in school. This trend agrees with (EMIS, 2014) which reported that girls enrolment was higher in standard seven. Also Gender disparity among the pupils had been listed as one of the challenges facing the education sector in pockets of poverty in rural areas (Republic of Kenya, 2013).

#### 4.2.2 Number of children in family

The researcher sought to establish on average the number of siblings. Information about the number of children in a family was presented using frequencies and percentages. Table 4.1 below shows the number of children in a family as reported by pupils who participated in the study.

Number of Children	Frequency	Percent
1-3	43	24
4-6	79	44.2
7-9	47	27.2
10 and above	10	5.6
Total	179	100.0

**Table 4. 1. Number of children in family**

The researcher found out that most pupils came from families that had an average of 4-6 children. Such numbers of children in a family were of benefit to their fellow siblings. Thus Reuter and Yunik, 1973, found out that through interactions, children emulate others and this perfects their ability in identifying sounds .Otto, 2009 also purported that the presence of siblings enhances grammar in children and perfection of other abilities. In contrast, a research by Downey (1995) suggests that the more children in a family, the more leanly spread the time and economic resources were at home. Similarly, Muola (2010) and Akhtar (2012), underlined that, a parent with a small family were in a position to give attention, encouragement, stimulation and support with schoolwork as well as provided for the physical needs of the child.

In reference to Vygotsky, Zone of proximal development applies here whereby the significant others in the family support each other to learn reading. Also a family size of 4-6 doesn't put a strain on the family's economic resources in providing education.

#### 4.2.3 Birth position in the family

To help determine the level of parental involvement in their education, the researcher sought to find out the birth position of the pupils. Interconnected risk factors to poor reading achievement are birth position and family size. Studies suggested that first born children have parents involved in their education more than children in the last positions. Prochaska & Norcross, 2003) referred to it as the order a child was born into a family or child's position in the family structure. Information on birth order in the family was shown in Table 4.2 below.

Birth position	Frequency	Percent
1-3	109	66.5
4-6	44	24.7
7-9	15	6.3
10-12	1	0.6
Total	179	100.0

**Table 4. 2 Birth order in the family**

Most of the pupils reported to be between the first and third birth position in their families. The average mean of the birth order being 1-3. Esping, (2003) who explained that birth position of 1-3 children had greater abilities to continue with their education thus raised their IQ scores. Francis Galton cited by Esping also said that firstborns are

frequently extra famous because they are more probable to be treated as companions by parents, which often instilled responsibility in children. The same researcher in citing the Resource Dilution Model assumes that firstborns had the luxury of accessing 100% of their parents' resources until their siblings arrive. The financial resources are divided accordingly, reducing the parental resources received by anyone child when families grow (Blake, 1981).

#### **4.2.4 Parents occupation**

The researcher sought to know the parents occupation so as to establish how they collaborated in their children's academic performance and their attempt to solve their children reading difficulty. Information about the occupation of parents was presented using frequencies and percentages. Table 4.3 below shows the occupation of parents as reported by pupils who participated in the study.

Occupation	Frequency	Percent
formal	55	30.7
informal	124	69.3
Total	179	100.0

**Table 4. 3 Parents occupation**

A majority of the pupils 69.3% reported that their parents worked in the informal sector, while 30.7% reported to be in the formal sector. Also, on parents' occupation, pupils in the focused group discussion reported that a few of their parents were employed by the government such as teachers, doctors and policemen. But majorities as in the questionnaires were self-employed working as hairdressers, clergymen, motor bike riders,

mechanics, welders, business people, touts and drivers. This was also reiterated by most of the teachers who said that many of the pupils come from poor, single parent, illiterate, busy parents, poor grandparents, orphaned and a few from middle class families.

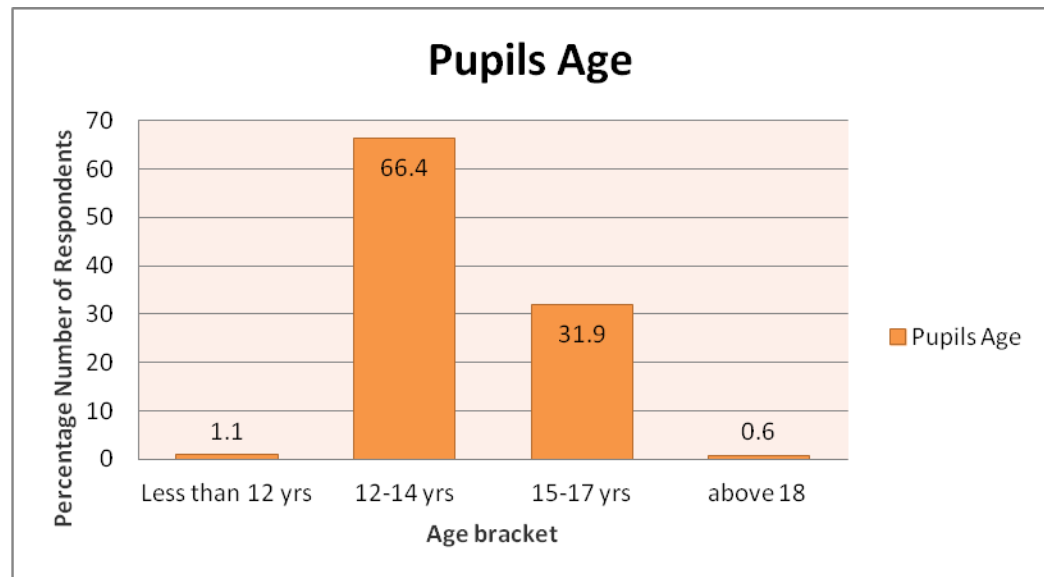
The better the parental background, the better the results of the pupils, therefore the financial status of parents had a significant positive relationship with the pupils' academic performance, (Olayiwola et al., 2011). In agreement Glewwe (2002), argued that parents with low financial status would be unable to offer fundamental needs to their children to enable them learn comfortably in school or even afford to take them to better schools. Also Sclafani (2004) stated that low background status perpetuates education deprivation since unemployed parents were likely to find it difficult to pay school fees and meet other educational expenses for their children.

#### **4.2.5 Other people staying with the family apart from parents and siblings**

In answer to this, most of the pupils reported to be staying with extended relatives such as grandparents, uncles and aunties. The reason for this was to find out the interferences level whether it was higher or lower. Depending on the kind of other persons staying with the pupils at home apart from parents there was no interference into the reading environment at home. Similarly Kioko, (2000) found out that language fluency is influenced by the presence of the other siblings.

#### 4.2.6 Age of pupils

The pupil's age would help determine whether there were any over or under age learners which may be affecting performance. Therefore respondent's age was important to the study and the results were as indicated in figure 4.2



**Figure 4. 2 pupils Age**

The mean age of pupils in the study was 12-14 years with majority of the respondents falling in the age bracket of 12 to 14 years which formed 66.4 percent of the pupil' respondents while only a paltry 1.1 percent of the respondents were below 12 years with 31.9 percent of pupils being 15-17 years, and a mere 0.6 percent being above 18 years of age. The government policy on pupils' age at such a level is 12-13 years. A significant percentage being over age was due to repetition and starting school late due to poverty as Yu and Thomas (2007) found that being over-age negatively affects performance. This also implied that they have taken time to get to class seven because of reading difficulty.

#### 4.2.7 Type of Nursery school attended

Information about the type of nursery school that pupils attended was presented using frequencies and percentages. This was intended to find out whether parents with children in public or private nursery schools were involved with their education and if the type of nursery school that a pupil attended has an impact on their reading. There were two categories that were studied, that are public and private nursery schools. Table 4.4 below shows the type of nursery school that pupils attended.

Type of Nursery school	Frequency	Percent
PUBLIC	135	75.4
PRIVATE	44	24.6
Total	179	100.0

**Table 4. 4 Type of Nursery school attended.**

The results indicated that, 75.4% of the pupils attended nursery schools in public institutions while 24.6% attended private nursery schools. This agreed with (EMIS 2014) which indicated that most pupils attended public nursery schools. According to Koech (2010), parents in private schools are more likely to be concerned with their children's education than those in public schools thus pupils from private nursery schools are expected to be better at reading compared to their public counterparts. Mwoma (2008) also established that fathers with children in private schools got involved in their children's education more than fathers who had children in public schools. Similarly UWEZO (2010) indicated that children who attend private schools had better results than those who attended public schools in Kenya.

Also LeFevre (2009) stated that there is positive effect on cognitive development and academic achievement in high quality intensive early childhood programs. Hence, the key to later education of the children are Early Childhood Education programs promoting academic skills (Cascio, 2004). Also, in agreement to the findings, Blau and Currie (2004) asserted that increase in average grades; class participation and self-control in primary school were important for future success in life and were achieved by attending pre-school.

#### **4.2.8 Number of streams**

Information about the number of streams in schools was presented using frequencies and percentages. This was to find out the teachers work load so as to unearth whether there was individual attention to the pupils by the teachers. There were four categories that were determined by the researcher that is one, two, three and four streams. Table 4.5 below shows the number of streams in schools.

Number of streams	Frequency	Percent
ONE	81	45.3
TWO	89	49.7
FOUR	9	5.0
Total	179	100.0

**Table 4. 5 Number of streams**

Most schools had two streams with an exception of one which had four and few had one stream. The head teachers reported that the number of teachers of English was insufficient.

#### **4.2.9 Number of pupils**

The researcher also needed to find out the class enrolment in the sampled schools in order to assess the teacher's workload and the results are as indicated below in Table

Number of pupils in a stream	Frequency
20-40	29
41-45	47
46-50	36
51 and above	67
Total	179

**Table 4. 6 Number of pupils**

The average number of pupils in class seven streams in the schools visited by the researcher was 52 pupils. From the focused group discussion, the influence of class population on reading and academic performance, was reported as there was a lot of noise leading to lack of concentration, playing in class and at times, lack of close monitoring from teachers made some pupils' not concentrate when the lesson was on. Sometimes it was difficult to understand while some students just hid among others and slept. Others resorted to reading storybooks when the lesson was on and teachers were just giving out work and attend to other duties.

Therefore class enrollment was a contributing feature to poor performance since a standardized class enrollment required 40 students per class (RoK, 2005). Similarly,

Perry (1995) found out that a small class size was more important to school achievement. Also, Normore (2006) noted that the quality of teaching and instruction delivery was impacted by large class size and over populated schools. Increase in the possibilities for mass failure and students lack of interest in school was influenced by overcrowded classrooms. Similarly, Nye et al. (2004) also agreed that with some evidence of larger effects for minority students, class-size reduction led to immediate increase in academic achievement in both reading and mathematics,

#### **4.2.10 Pupils academic performance at the end of the term**

Information about the Pupils performance at the end of the term was analysed using frequencies and percentages. It was intended to find out how pupils are performing generally in all the subjects so as to find out the effect of reading difficulty on academic performance. The researcher collected data on the marks for term one and two at the beginning of third term. This was because third term exams had not been done when the data was being collected. Therefore these were the marks that were available and could be corroborated. Table 4.7 below show the Pupils performance at the end of the term.

### Classification of marks

Overall marks	Term one		Term two	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
100-200	47	26.3	46	25.7
200-250	69	38.5	55	30.7
250-300	42	23.5	47	26.3
300-350	15	8.4	26	14.5
350 above	6	3.4	5	2.8
Total	179	100.0	179	100

**Table 4.7 Academic Performance of pupils at end of terms exams**

From the table above most of the pupils got between 200-250 marks in both term one and two. Having a percentage of 38.5 and 30.7 in both term one and two respectively. This was in tandem with teachers and head teachers reporting that many of their pupils scored grade C in their end of term exams.

In the focused group discussion Selphine a pupil from Kitinda primary school reported that, *“The class position of those who don’t understand what they read normally is at the bottom of the class”*. While Martha a teacher in Kitinda primary school also reported that, *“Poor reading skills give poor results while good reading skills reflect excellent performance”*. This agreed with (Duru & Koklu, 2011) who asserted that significance for understanding and performance in school was when pupils engaged in continuous reading which improved their vocabulary but also their comprehension of concepts.

#### 4.2.11 English marks at the end of term

Information about the Pupils English marks at the end of term was analysed using frequencies and percentages. Tables 4.8 and 4.9 below showed the Pupils English marks at the end of term.

#### English marks for Term one

English marks	Urban		Rural	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
0-29	0	0	10	7.6
30-34	6	12.8	9	6.8
35-39	1	2.13	13	9.85
40-44	7	14.9	30	22.72
45-49	8	17.02	11	8.3
50-54	11	23.4	26	19.7
55-59	6	12.8	13	9.85
60-64	4	8.5	8	6.08
65-69	1	2.3	7	5.3
70-79	3	6.4	5	3.8
Total	47	100	132	100

**Table 4. 8 English marks for Term one**

### English marks for Term two

English marks	Urban		Rural	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
0-29	1	2.13	12	9.1
30-34	3	6.4	13	9.85
35-39	6	12.8	14	10.61
40-44	3	6.4	21	15.91
45-49	6	12.8	20	15.15
50-54	9	19.15	20	15.15
55-59	7	14.9	0	0
60-64	4	8.51	1	0.7
65-69	1	2.13	7	5.3
70-74	2	4.3	0	0
75-79	3	6.4	2	1.5
80-100	2	4.3	2	1.5
Total	47	100	132	100

**Table 4. 9 English marks for Term one**

Most pupils scored between 40-54 marks in English in both term one and two with pupils from urban schools having a higher frequency in scoring 50 and above marks. This agreed with Wilkinson & Silliman, (2008) who state that being proficient in the language of instruction enables pupils' successes in school, Malekela (2003) also argued that, if the learner is handicapped in the language of instruction, then, learning may not take place as the teacher and the pupil will not be communicating thus the language of instruction plays a critical role in learning. Malekela continued to state that pupils who have high

proficiency in English are expected to perform well in English as a subject and in other school subjects due to the relationship between English Language Proficiency and academic achievement.

### **4.2.3 Background information on Teachers**

The researcher also sought to find out the background information of the teachers and the results were presented using tables of frequency and percentages. This was to enable the researcher obtain characteristics of teachers sample involved in the study.

#### **4.2.3.1 Teachers gender**

On the teachers gender there were 8 males and 13 Females. These were teachers of English in the sampled standard seven classes in public schools in Bungoma County. This implied that there were more female teachers of English in public primary schools in Bungoma County.

#### **4.2.3.2 Teachers age**

Information about teachers' age was presented using frequencies. Table. 4.10 below showed teachers' age.

Age	Females	Males	Total
20-29	3	2	5
30-39	7	2	9
40-49	2	4	6
50-59	1	0	1
Total	13	8	21

**Table 4.10: Teachers age**

On the age bracket 20-29 years category, there were 5 teachers, in the ages between 30-39 there were 9 teachers, 40-49 years there were 6 teachers and 1 in the age bracket of 50-59. In agreement to what (Nannyonjo, 2007) indicated that the age of the teachers had been found to influence performance negatively with students' test scores declining as teachers get older.

#### **4.2.3.3 Teachers qualification**

Information about teachers 'qualification was presented using frequencies. Table 4.11 below shows teachers' qualification.

Qualifications	Females	Males	Total
Degree	4	1	5
Diploma	2	3	5
ATS	1	0	1
P1 certificate	6	4	10
Totals	13	8	21

**Table 4.11 Teachers qualification**

The distribution of teachers by their level of education showed that majority of the teachers, 10 had an education level of P1, 1 had an ATS (approved teacher status) qualification, followed by 5 with diploma in education while 5 had a degree. These finding were in agreement with Moset (2007) who noted that the effectiveness of any curriculum depends on the quality of teachers that were there to translate the syllabus into practical instructional materials in class.

These findings agreed with teacher Lilian’s from Musikoma primary school statements that *“Reading difficulty is not related to staff qualification therefore is not cause of poor academic performance.”* These findings contrast those by Oketch (1986) who found that teacher’s qualification was significantly related to the children’s achievement.

The low academic performance despite the levels of training concurred with Atherton (2009) and Nannyonjo (2007) who found no effect of teachers’ education levels on learner academic achievement. Glewwe et al. (2011) also found little evidence of the impact of teachers’ level of education on student test scores.

#### **4.2.3.4 Teaching subjects**

Information about the teaching subjects of teachers’ interviewed was presented using frequencies. Table 4.12 below showed teaching subjects combination of teachers’ interviewed.

<b>Teaching Subjects</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
Eng only	3
Eng/SST	3
Eng/science	2
Eng/Kisw	2
Eng/CRE	5
Eng/CRE/Science	2
Eng /cre/science/maths	2
Eng /cre/SST	2

**Table. 4.12: Teaching subjects overall**

Teachers also reported having done English as one of their combination subjects in

college. 11 out of 21 teachers of standard seven taught English and CRE then 2 taught English with social and CRE, other 2 taught English with science and math's. 3 out of the 21 taught English only while 3 taught English and social studies and two taught English and science. 2 out of the 21 teachers of English taught English and Kiswahili.

#### 4.2.3.5 Teaching experience

Information about the teaching experience of teachers' interviewed was presented using frequencies. Table 4.13 below showed teachers' teaching experience categories.

Category	Frequency
1-5	5
6-10	12
11-15	2
16-20	1
20-25	1
Totals	21

**Table 4.13: Teaching experience**

The results indicated that 12 of the respondents had 6-10 years experience in teaching English in primary schools. 5 of the teachers had taught between 1-5 years, 2 had taught 11-15 years and 1 teacher had 16-20 years' experience and 1 teacher had 20-25 years of experience in teaching English in primary schools. Teacher quality was usually defined in terms of years of experience and level of training as indicated by Nyangacha, 2008, who found out that trained teachers have the knowledge to deliver the contents of the syllabus adequately since they are equipped with the right skills and knowledge of teaching of the English language.

This finding concurred with Koniewski (2014) and Nannyonjo (2007) who found that teachers at the start of their careers with less than three years' experience were less effective than those with more experience. Better results were achieved by pupils of teachers with more than five years' experience. Also, Eshiwani (2003) found out that a teacher's qualification correlated with the quality of knowledge imparted in their learners.

### **4.3 Reading Difficulties and Academic Performance**

Objective one dealt with reading difficulties and academic performance. Among the conventional reading difficulties included problems with vocabulary, word recognition, reading comprehension, language skills issues, cognitive skills, reading instructions and reading rate ( Feagans, 1983), the researcher singled out reading comprehension, language skills, cognitive skills and reading instructions as a major contributor to reading difficulty and poor academic performance and sought to investigate the main comprehension difficulties, language skills, cognitive skills and reading instructions in relation to reading difficulty and academic performance.

#### **4.3.1 Reading comprehension Difficulties and Academic Performance**

The researcher sought to find out how comprehension difficulties affect class performance. Comprehension is an understanding of what has been read. A complex cognitive process that involved a connection between the reader and the text that ultimately conveyed meaning was referred to as reading comprehension. The results were presented in Table 4.14 below.

	<b>Questions on Reading Comprehension Difficulties and Academic Performance</b>	YES	NO	DON'T KNOW
		F (%)	F (%)	F (%)
1.	Pupils Should be good readers in order to read in other subjects	147(82.1)	27(15.1)	5(2.8)
2.	Understanding what I read makes me perform well in class	170(95)	6(3.4)	3(1.7)
3.	If I am weak at reading I would have problems in my class performance	105(58.7)	55(30.7)	19(10.6)
4.	Reading comprehension majorly relates with social studies performance	92(51.4)	70(39.1)	17(9.5)
5.	Reading comprehension is related to understanding of science texts	87(48.6)	71(39.7)	21(11.7)
6.	vocabulary majorly relates to pupils comprehension marks	127(70.9)	32(17.9)	20(11.2)
7.	Reading skills are not majorly related to math's performance	99(55.3)	65(36.3)	15(8.4)
8.	Class performance is related to the ability of the pupils to understand what they read.	150(83.8)	22(12.3)	7(3.9)

**Table 4. 14 Reading comprehension Difficulties and Academic Performance.**

Pupils were asked whether they should be good readers in order to read in other subjects, 82.1 % of the pupils said yes to the above statement, 15.1% said no with 2.8% said that they didn't know. A mean of 1.21 was realized indicating that pupil's concurred with the fact that they had to be good readers in order to read in other subjects.

On whether understanding what they red made them to perform well in class, 95% said yes, 3.4% said no, while 1.7% said they didn't know. A mean of 1.07 denoted a strong agreement with understanding what one red as a cause of performing well in class. In support to the pupils' assertion from the teachers' interview schedule, a teacher Wamwanya said,

*“Reading skills correlates to academic performance thus a majority of the pupils read*

*without understanding and in some cases the situation is worse especially in the rural schools”.*

The results were in tandem with the Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development (KICD) primary education syllabus (2002) which indicated that good reading improved academic performance and that it helped in the study of all other subjects in schools.

If being weak at reading made one to have problems in class performance, 58.7% agreed with this statement, 30.7% said no with 10.6% indicated that they didn't know. A mean of 1.52 was realized implying that pupils agreed that being weak at reading posed problems to their performance in class. In agreement to the above assertion from pupils FGD, respondent number 6 of Ranje primary reported that *“class position of those who don't understand what they read normally is at the bottom of the class”*. The results concurred with Ricket, List and Lerner (1989) findings that reading difficulties were the prime causes of failure in school. Also several researches had supported the fact that pupils with reading difficulties did not actively participate in class and their own learning (Brown and Pall, 1982) and therefore had a major influence on pupil's ability to read Polloway, (2001).

On reading comprehension majorly being related with social studies performance, 51.4% agreed with the assertion, with 39.1 saying no and 9.5% saying they didn't know. A mean of 1.58 signified that pupils basically agreed with social studies performance being a product of being able to read comprehension. In relation of reading comprehension to understanding of science texts, 48.6% agreed with the proclamation, 39.7% said no while

11.7% didn't know if reading relates to understanding science texts. A mean of 1.63 designated a disagreement on reading comprehension being related to understanding of science texts. In contrast a study by Cromley (2009) revealed that reading comprehension correlated highly (0.819) with proficiency of learners in science.

When asked as to whether vocabulary majorly related to pupils' comprehension marks, 70.9% said yes, 17.9% said no while 11.2% said they didn't know. A mean of 1.40 connoted an agreement with vocabulary being related to comprehension marks. On reading skills not being majorly related to math's performance, 55.3% were in the yes category and 36.3% said no while 8.4% said they didn't know. A mean of 1.53 suggested that quite a significant number of pupils agreed to reading skills not being majorly related to math's performance. In contrast Vilenius-Tuohimaa, et al. (2008) study, found that text comprehension skills were related to the ability of students to solve math word problems. On class performance being related to the ability of the pupils to understand what they read, 83% said yes with 12.3% saying no and 3.9% saying they didn't know. This implied that a mean of 1.20 agreed with class performance being related to understanding what they read. In agreement, from pupils FGD, a Pupil respondent number 3 from Sio primary reported that

*“most of the pupils in classes don't understand what they read”*. Also in agreement to the above from observation schedule a teacher of English Jesca said *“I'm forced to explain to the pupils in Kiswahili trying to make them understand what we are reading in English”*.

All the eight questions got a bigger percent in the yes category which indicated an agreement with comprehension difficulties affecting class performance. Therefore, the general trend of means scores in this section suggested that pupils agreed with the fact that they have to be good readers in order to perform well academically. From the focused group discussions, Novian a pupil at Samoya primary school said that “*being good readers makes one to perform well academically*”. This concurred with (Bowyer-Grane & Snowling 2005, McGee & Johnson 2003,) who found out that there wasn’t an area in the school curriculum that did not demand an ability to read.

Reading skills were important tools that pupils needed to become academically successful. Good readers were better students than poor readers in every subject area. Even when a pupil studied practical or mathematical subjects he or she had to read instructions before starting to solve the task. When they read a text the goal was to understand its content. It was a process that exceeded decoding, and included comprehension processes of the word, sentence, and text level. A child who did not learn to read and comprehend in the early school years had severe difficulties also in studying other school subjects. McCarthy (1991) observed that good readers know what they read and therefore understood what they read.

### 4.3.2 Language Skills and Academic performance

The researcher sought to establish how language skills affected class performance. The results were presented in Table 4.15 below.

	Questions on Language Skills and Academic performance	YES	NO	DON'T KNOW
		F (%)	F (%)	F (%)
9.	My spoken vocabulary skills helps my reading and class performance	132(73.7)	38(21.2)	9(5.0)
10.	The number of words which i know makes me to succeed in class performance	117(65.4)	46(25.7)	16(8.9)
11.	Understanding of meanings of several words ensures my success in class performance	135(75.4)	37(20.7)	7(3.9)
12.	English language grammar makes reading and spelling difficult to me	73(40.8)	99(55.3)	7(3.9)
13.	I find it difficult to remember what I read	72(40.2)	94(52.5)	13(7.3)

**Table 4. 15 Language Skills and Academic performance**

When pupils were presented with a question on whether spoken vocabulary skills boosted their reading and class performance, 73.7% said yes , 21.2% said no while 5% said they didn't know. A mean of 1.31 showed an agreement with the fact that spoken vocabulary skills boosted reading and class performance. In support, from the teachers' interview schedule, a teacher from Siaka Primary reported that, "*oral vocabulary skills enhance pupils reading and academic success as it's the only source of reading in many cases*".

On the issue of the number of words that pupils knew, if they made them to succeed in class performance. 65.4% were in the yes category, 25.7% said no with a paltry 8.9% saying they didn't know. Agreement was backed by a mean of 1.44 on the number of words they knew making them to succeed in class performance.

If understanding of the meaning of several words ensured success in class performance, 75.4% said yes with 20.7% said no while 3.9% said they didn't know. A mean of 1.28 signified that understanding of the meaning of several words ensured success in class performance. On English language grammar making reading and spelling difficult to them, 55.3% said no with 40.8% saying yes while 3.9% saying they didn't know. A mean of 1.63 suggested disagreement on the issue of English language grammar made reading and spelling difficult to them. In agreement, from the teachers' interview schedule, a teacher by the name Isabella reported that, "*most of the difficulties pupils experience include; poor pronunciation, lack of comprehension, poor reading speed, vocabulary and lack of enough reading materials*".

The above assertion was supported from the observation schedule whereby it was observed that, *Pupils who came from the rural areas were not fluent as pupils from urban schools who conversed well with confidence in English, some of the pupils even gave out meaning of vocabularies correctly.*

On whether they found it difficult to keep what they read in the short-term memory, 52.5% said no, 40.2% said yes with 7.3% said they didn't know. A mean of 1.67 indicated difference of opinion on whether they found it difficult to keep what they read in the short-term memory. In contrast to the pupils, from the teacher interview schedule, teacher Oscar said that,

*"the pupils tend to forget all that they read therefore they need to be reminded regularly"*

Pupils accepted that possession of language skills boosted academic performance. This was in agreement with (Pressley 2002, Snow et al 2002,) who asserted that good comprehenders needed an extensive vocabulary, for comprehension did not occur if the

reader did not understand the individual words. However, good readers' comprehension processes included comprehension above the word level. Knowledge of vocabulary included understanding the relation between words called morphological knowledge and strategies for working out new words (Naggy, Diakidoy and Anderson, 1993).

### 4.3.3 Cognitive skills and academic performance

Cognitive skills are the ways that the brain remembers reasons, holds attention, solves problems, thinks, reads and learns (Indeed, 2021). These skills had a direct bearing on intelligence. The researcher sought to find out the effect of Intelligence on class performance. The results are presented in Table 4.16 below.

	<b>Questions on Cognitive Skills and Academic performance</b>	YES	NO	DON'T KNOW
		F (%)	F (%)	F (%)
14.	My difficulty with reading makes learning of other subjects difficult	98(54.7)	73(40.8)	8(4.5)
15.	My experience with reading difficulty makes me read less than others	85(47.5)	88(49.2)	6(3.4)
16.	Reading takes a lot of effort, is frustrating and not motivating	50(27.9)	120(67.0)	9(5.0)
17.	My reading difficulties leads to lesser amounts of reading practice	57(31.8)	107(59.8)	15(8.4)
18.	My parents and teachers have low expectations of my reading abilities	40(22.3)	123(68.7)	16(8.9)

**Table 4. 16 cognitive skills and academic performance**

Whether difficulty with reading made learning of other subjects difficult, 54.7% were of the opinion yes, 40.8% said no and 4.5% said they didn't know. This translated to a mean of 1.50 which suggested that pupils agreed that difficulty with reading made learning of other subjects difficult. Whether experience with reading difficulty made them read less

than others, 49.2% said no with 47.5% said yes and 3.4% said they didn't know. A mean of 1.56 connoted pupils were not in agreement that experience with reading difficulty made them read less than others.

When they were asked whether reading took a lot of effort and was frustrating and not motivating 67% said no, 27.9% said yes with 5% said they didn't know. A mean of 1.77 showed dissents that reading took a lot of effort, was frustrating and not motivating. This was in contrast, from the teachers' interview schedule, by teacher Lillian reporting that, *“reading difficulty affects pupils in various ways including poor academic performance, lack of confidence in speaking the language, poor comprehension and hate of the language”*.

On whether reading difficulties led to lesser amounts of reading practice, 59.8% said no with 31.8% and 8.4% said they didn't know. A mean of 1.77 exhibited disputed reading difficulties leading to lesser amounts of reading practice.

On the issue of parents and teachers having had lower expectations of their reading abilities, 68.7% said no 22.3% said yes and 8.9% said they didn't know. With a mean of 1.87 pupils were incongruent with parents and teachers lower expectations of their reading abilities. Similarly Mwoma (2017) established that support from teachers and parents as well as available learning materials improved performance of the learners in reading.

Cognition which was the process of knowing, acquiring knowledge and understanding through thought and through the senses being related to reading in that vocabulary development in a pupil helps them to understand and acquire knowledge in other subjects. Pupils agreed that possession of cognitive skills that were the oral translation of text with speed and accuracy had a positive bearing on academic performance. These results tally with wanjiku (1999) study who found there was a significant positive correlation between reading comprehension and intelligence. Also Weir and Khalifa (2008) established that, cognitive development of children was also observed in reading

#### 4.3.4 Reading instruction and academic performance

The researcher sought to find out the effect of reading instruction and class performance.

The results were presented in Table 4.17 below.

	<b>Questions on Reading instructions and Academic Performance</b>	YES	NO	DON'T KNOW
		F (%)	F (%)	F (%)
19.	In our class reading is a skill that is no longer taught	64(35.8)	104(58.1)	11(6.1)
20.	It is assumed that we have learnt to read and are able to read to learn	95(53.1)	73(40.8)	11(6.1)
21.	It becomes increasingly difficult for me to understand what I read	50(27.9)	118(65.9)	11(6.1)
22.	Importance is placed on written text	102(57.0)	63(35.2)	13(7.3)

**Table. 4. 17 Reading instruction and academic performance**

When asked whether in their class reading was a skill that was no longer taught, 58.1% said no 35.8% said yes with 6.1% said they didn't know. A mean of 1.70 demonstrated disagreements that class reading was a skill that was no longer taught. Also from

observation reading was still taught as observed in some of the lessons attended by the researcher. In contrast to the National Reading Panel (2000) which observed that there was a correlation between direct instruction and improvement in comprehension. Also Otieno's (2010), established that basic reading skills involved the ability to pronounce written words accurately and this required appropriate teaching instructions in a language most familiar to the pupils.

Also on assumption that having learnt to read lead to being able to read to learn 53.1% said yes 40.8% said no with 6.1 said they didn't know. With a mean of 1.53 pupils agreed that they had learnt to read this lead them being able to read to learn. In agreement, internationally, it was established that, after finishing two years of primary level schooling, a learner was expected to have attained basic competencies in literacy and numeracy which are foundational for learning in all the other subjects (Uwezo, 2011).

On whether it was becoming increasingly difficult for them to understand what they read, 65.9% were of the opinion no, 27.9% said yes while 6.1% said they didn't know. A mean of 1.78 illustrated disagreements by pupils on the issue of increased difficulty for them to understand what they read. In contrast from the teachers' interview schedule Florence a teacher from Luyekhe said that *"Pupil's comprehension is average when they read as they move from one level to another"*.

On importance being placed on written text 57.0% said yes, 35.2% said no and 7.3% said they didn't know. A mean 1.50 designated agreement on importance being placed on written text. Pupils agreed that reading as a skill was taught and they had learnt to read and were able to read to learn. But they still found it increasingly difficult to understand what they read. These findings were in line with Uwezo (2010) that many children reach Standard 7 without any English skills at all. By the time they completed primary school, half of all children (49.1%) still couldn't read a Standard 2 level English story, and far fewer were likely able to read at the Standard 7 level.

This meant that the vast majority of children who entered secondary schooling were unable to read in the English language, the medium of instruction in secondary education. Also the National Reading Panel (2000) observed that there was a correlation between direct instruction and improvement in comprehension. For learners to have had a strong base for reading, appropriate instructional methods in reading should have been used.

It was noticed from the observation schedule as follows: *Lessons in many of the classes visited were well introduced with a recap of the previous lesson. Pupils actively participated in reading activities, while others reading in chorus with those who aren't able to read murmuring along. The teaching methodology in many of the lessons was diversified from lecture, question and answer to demonstration. Pupils responded promptly to questions asked while others were shy. Lessons were well concluded with teachers leaving assignments for the pupils.*

#### 4.4 Moderating effect of home environment on the influence of reading difficulties on academic performance

The researcher sought to find out the moderating effect that home environment had on the influence of reading difficulties on class performance. The results were presented in Table 4.18.

	Questions on The Moderating Effect of Home Environment on the Influence of Reading Difficulties	YES	NO	DON'T KNOW
		F (%)	F (%)	F (%)
23.	Lack of text books and reading materials at home makes reading difficult	114(63.7)	57(31.8)	8(4.5)
24.	Parents spend time talking and encouraging me to read	150(83.8)	25(14.0)	4(2.2)
25.	Lack of radio and television in the home makes me to read	114(63.7)	56(31.3)	9(5.0)
26.	The availability of a reading table make reading easy	146(81.6)	20(11.2)	13(7.3)
27.	The availability of a source of light make reading easy for you	149(83.2)	20(11.2)	10(5.6)
28.	The work my parents do enables them to support my reading	123(68.7)	46(25.7)	10(5.6)
29.	My parents are not able to provide for us at home hence reading is difficult	92(51.4)	72(40.2)	15(8.4)
30.	You have enough time to read while at home	142(73.7)	42(23.5)	5(2.8)

**Table 4. 18 Moderating effect of home environment on the influence of reading difficulties on academic performance.**

When pupils were presented with questions on lack of text books and reading materials at home made reading difficult 63.7% agreed, 31.8% said no, with 4.5% said they didn't know. A mean of 1.41 denoted that pupils agreed on lack of text books and reading materials at home made reading difficult.

From the pupils FGD, respondent four said that, *“I have text books, revision materials, dictionary and newspapers at home”*. It concurred with Eshiwani, (1988) who found out that there was a significant connection between the availability of textbooks and achievement. Also from FGD on the question of the influence of reading materials on reading and performance in class, respondent five from group four said, *“it helps me to go through what i have not understood, helps me to understand many words and write good composition and be creative. Also it helps me to revise, answer questions well, to know vocabularies, improve in language, read for enjoyment and help to pass exams”*.

On whether Parents spend time talking and encouraging them to read 83.8% said yes, 14% said no with 2.2% said they didn't know. A mean of 1.18 showed agreement with Parents spending time talking and encouraging them to read. On lack of radio and television in the home made them to read, 63.7% were of the opinion yes, 31.3% were in the no category with 5% said they didn't know. With a mean 1.41 pupils agreed that lack of radio and television in the home made them to read.

Equally respondent six from pupils FGD group seven said that, *“I'm really affected by TV watching, by being forced to go to read in the bedroom, lack of concentration when the TV is on, failing to do home work because of watching TV and Some pupils escape from school to go and watch favorite programs”*. This is in agreement to Kiarie (2015) who found out those pupils, who watch TV most of the time especially at night, watch uncensored programs, prefer TV to homework do not perform well in language compared to children who watch less TV and also watch educational or age appropriate programs.

However from the pupils FGD, respondent four from group seven reported that, *“Listening to the Radio and watching television, such as educative EDU TV helps me to improve in academics, watch the news, to know about other countries, perform in drama and recite poems well. Children programs help me with spellings and answering questions in social studies”*.

On availability of a reading table made reading easy 81.6% said yes with 11.2% said no and 7.3% said they didn't know. A mean of 1.26 showed that pupils were in agreement that availability of a reading table made reading easy. From the pupils FGD, respondent six of group four said that *“I have no table but only a chair that I read from making me uncomfortable, reading environment at home is not good, there is disturbance from my younger brothers. Also I get noise from loud music from neighbours and quarrels by parents demanding that i do house chores”*.

On availability of a source of light making reading easy, 83.2% said yes, 11.2% being in the no category and 5.6% said they didn't know. A mean of 1.22 showed that pupils were in agreement that availability of a source of light made reading easy. From the pupils FGD, respondent five of group three said that *“Source of light we use for reading are, tin lamp, lantern lamp and candle”*.

Whether the work their parents did enabled them to support their reading, 68.7% said yes followed with 25.7% said no and 5.6% said they didn't know. With a mean of 1.37 there was an agreement with the fact that the work their parents did enabled them to support their reading. From the pupils FGD, respondent eight of Musikoma primary school said that, *“My father is a bodaboda rider while my mother cooks a mixture of beans and*

*maize and sells to the people passing by*". Consequently, they were unable to provide basic needs to their children to enable them learn comfortably in school or even afford to take them to better schools (Glewwe 2002).

On parents being unable to provide at home made reading difficult, 51.4% said yes with 40.2% said no and 8.4% being in the didn't know category. A mean of 1.57 signified agreements with parents being unable to provide at home made reading difficult. From the pupils FGD, Thomas a pupil from Sio primary school said that, *"The influence of my parents work on my performance in class is not good because of leaving me house work to do after school and lack of provision of lunch and supper"*.

On whether they have enough time to read at home, 73.7 % said yes, 23.5% were of the opinion no and 2.8% said they didn't know. A mean of 1.29 showed they have enough time to read at home. Muganda a teacher from Walala Primary school said that *"many of the pupils come from poor, single parent, illiterate, busy parents, poor grandparents, orphaned and a few from middle class families"*.

While a teacher from Namamuka primary school said that *"Most parents don't support their children in reading, however a few of those parents who support their children in terms of reading the support is inadequate"*. On the other hand a teacher from Moi primary school was of the opinion that *"Parents support to pupils in reading would come in handy to motivate and encourage them to be good readers"*. Sarigiani (1990) found out that a large number of siblings and close spacing among siblings diluted the amount of parent time, attention and money available per child. This in turn negatively influenced several child outcomes including performance in language activities.

According to Khisa a teacher from Luyekhe Primary school, “*many pupils come from unsupportive home environments that are poor, noisy and violent , lack provision of reading materials, where parents are not concerned about pupils reading, pupils lack time to read, lack role models, mother tongue interference and lack space and lighting to enable them to read*”. Also Jotham a head teacher of Samoya primary said that “*Most parents do not collaborate with the teachers in supporting their children, only a small percentage collaborating*”.

#### **4.5 The mediating role of school environment on the influence of reading difficulties on academic performance**

The researcher sought to find out the mediating effect of School environment on the Influence of Reading Difficulty on Class Performance. The results are presented in

Table 4.19.

	<b>Questions on The mediating role of school environment on the influence of reading difficulties on academic performance</b>	YES	NO	DON'T KNOW
		F (%)	F (%)	F (%)
31.	My reading difficulties are as a result of inadequate teaching	60(33.5)	115(64.2)	4(2.2)
32.	The way our teacher teaches makes me not to understand well	39(21.8)	132(73.3)	8(4.5)
33.	My teacher finds it difficult to teach because he/she has too many classes in a day	56(31.3)	116(64.8)	7(3.9)
34.	Our difficulties arise from reading materials not being enough	73(40.8)	92(51.4)	14(7.8)
35.	Frequent absenteeism by pupils makes learning unsuccessful	102(57.0)	66(36.9)	11(6.1)
36.	The high number of pupils in classrooms makes learning difficult	53(29.6)	119(66.5)	7(3.9)
37.	Only English and Kiswahili languages are allowed in our school	106(59.2)	69(38.5)	4(2.2)

**Table 4.19 mediating role of school environment on the influence of reading difficulties on academic performance**

On reading difficulties being a result of inadequate teaching 64.2% were in the no category, while 33.5% said yes followed by 2.2% said they didn't know. A mean of 1.69 showed pupils disagreed on reading difficulties were as a result of inadequate teaching. On teachers mode of teaching made pupils not to understand well 73.7% were in the no class with 21.8% said yes and 4.5% said they didn't know . A mean of 1.83 connoted disagreements with the issue of teachers' mode of teaching made pupils not to understand well.

On whether teachers found it difficult to teach as they attended to too many classes in a day, 64.8% said no followed with 31.3% being in the yes category and 3.9% said they didn't know. A mean of 1.73 indicated that pupils disagreed on the issue of teachers found it difficult to teach as they attend to too many classes in a day. Perry (1995) found that teaching load affects teachers' performance. He argued that when teachers experience too many demands on their skills and attitudes they become irritated and confused which affects the commitment and performance.

When asked whether reading difficulties arise from reading materials not being enough, 51.4% said no, followed by 40.8% who said yes and 7.8% said they didn't know. A mean of 1.67 suggested disagreement by pupils that reading difficulties arise from reading materials not being enough. From FGD, a pupil from Kitinda primary school said *that*, "*The reading materials available in schools included text books, a few story books*

*though not given to them atlas, encyclopedia, dictionary, newspapers, bible and magazines*". Ubogu (2004) noted that textbooks enabled pupils to follow the teacher's presentation and in understanding of lessons. Also in consonance was the finding by Mutai (2006) which opined that textbooks affect academic performance of pupils.

From the FGD, a Pupil from Walala said that, *"We have a 1:1 book ratio in English, math's and Kiswahili while in social studies, science and CRE the ratio varies from 1:3 to 1:6"*. This contradicted the Government of Kenya's (2010) report that indicated that the average textbook-student ratio is 1:2 in all the classes. Also from the FGD a pupil from Namamuka said that,

*"Low pupil's books ratio brings about sharing of books by pupils causing problems when doing assignments and difficulty of following personal timetable"*.

While a pupil from Moi primary School said that, *"1:1 pupil's book ratio is good because it becomes easy to do corrections, to have more vocabulary and write good compositions. Also it helps us to revise, do extra work, doing assignments, read when we want during our own free time/holiday, to discuss and perform well in exams"*.

Okwara et al (2009) terms availability of essential teaching and learning material as conditions ideal for the effective teaching of integrated English. They agreed however that inadequacy of reading materials was a cause to their reading difficulty. This concurred with Nyambura (2015) that since schools lacked sufficient books was a major hindrance to their academic performance.

When presented with question on whether frequent absenteeism by pupils made learning unsuccessful, 57.0% said yes followed by 36.9% who said no and 6.1% said they didn't

know. A mean of 1.49 signified pupils agreed that frequent absenteeism by pupils made learning unsuccessful. From the observation schedule the researcher noted that, *“in some of the school absenteeism was rampant with as many as 14 out of 46 pupils being absent on the day the researcher visited. It was also observed that English and Kiswahili were the main languages used in the school”*.

From FGD Dorcus a pupil from Musikoma said that *“Causes of absenteeism are lack of school fee, attending disco ‘matanga’ and therefore sleeping during the day”*.

Also a pupil from Ranje primary school said that *“Absenteeism is caused by lack of parental care, being punished in school , discouragement from parents , pregnancy and Sickness”*.

While a pupil from Mukholi primary school said that *“Lack of proper school uniform, not finishing assignments, some parents telling their children to go to the farm, suspension and helping parents to sell ‘chang’aa”*. In contrast, Nkanatha (2013) established that absenteeism in the Western province in Kenya is influenced by class size, school facilities, laziness and lack of sound and efficient leadership in the school administration and teacher characteristics.

On whether the high number of pupils in classrooms made learning difficult, 66.5% were in the no grouping followed by 29.6% in the yes and 3.9% said they didn’t know. A mean of 1.74 implied that pupils disagreed that high number of pupils in classrooms made learning difficult. Similarly, Nannyonjo (2007); Atherton (2009) and Glewwe et al.

(2011) found that class size was unrelated to performance with schools that had large classes out performing those schools that had smaller classes.

From observations by the researcher, most of the classes visited, *the number of pupils was more than 45 pupils which is more than the recommended class population by the ministry of education. The class population in some schools was high with as many as 74 pupils in one class. Classroom interaction was affected because teachers found it difficult to give personalized attention to all the pupils gave adequate assignments to test what had been taught and took full control of their classes.* This finding was in consonance with the findings of Jungic and Kent (2006) who noted that it was easy to ignore pupils when dealing with a large class and this affected the performance of pupils negatively.

From the FGD, the influence of class population on reading and academic performance, a pupil from Walala said that, *“There is a lot of noise making leading to lack of concentration, other pupils play in class and at times because of lack of close monitoring from teachers some pupils don’t concentrate when the lesson is on”*. Similarly Perry (1995) established that a small class size was more important to school achievement. Also Wako (1995) contended that low number of pupils per teacher pointed toward pupils having better opportunity of contact with the teacher and consequently improved teaching/learning procedure.

On whether English and Kiswahili were the only languages allowed in school. 59.2% of the Pupils said yes, 38.5 said no and 2.2% said they didn’t know. A mean of 1.43 depicted pupils basically approved that only English and Kiswahili are the only languages allowed in school.

From the Teachers interview schedule Atieno a teacher from Namamuka , said that

*“The causes of reading difficulty include poor foundation, mother tongue influence, unsupportive home background, negative attitude, lack of exposure to the language, lack of books, teaching methods and nature of the language”*. She also said that *“inadequate teaching contributes to reading difficulty as most of the pupils rely on teachers’ guidance to improve their reading skills”*

Mrs Aketch the Head teachers of Kitinda primary school in the head teachers interview schedule said that *“Challenges experienced in teaching reading ranged from inadequate materials and facilities, negative attitude of pupils towards reading, inadequate time, over population in classes, lack of motivation, language barrier, absenteeism, big teachers workload, and lack of confidence to read by pupils to poor language skills”*. The results were in line with Runo’s (2010) findings that teachers faced such challenges as teaching sounds, inadequate materials, and inadequate time to teach reading and mother tongue interference.

According to the head teacher of Ranje primary school in the head teachers’ interview schedule eluded that, *“FPE has enhanced reading through provision of reading materials such as supplementary readers, regular attendance of students to school. Although to some it has resulted to influx of pupils in schools resulting to large classes thus posing a challenge to teaching reading”*. On finances the head teacher of Walala primary school stated that, *“Schools have meager resources that do not facilitate procurement of enough learning facilities”*.

From observation schedule the researcher noticed the following: *Schools had no library rooms, personnel and books were inadequate. But a majority of schools had adequate number of classrooms though some schools had inadequate classrooms. Many of the schools had spacious playgrounds and two time tables for lower and upper classes. Also on the number of teachers of English many registered that they had insufficient manpower.*

From observation schedule it was also found out that, *all the schools visited except two didn't have functional library rooms and personnel* .This finding concurred with Olubor's (1998) study that lack of adequate facilities such as ill-equipped classrooms and libraries lead to low academic achievements. While as advised by UNESCO (2009) which observed that without adequate numbers of professionally qualified teachers, including female teachers, who were deployed in the right places, well-remunerated and motivated, adequately supported and proficient in local languages, they cannot offer the world's children quality education.

Also about the language policy, Walala's head teacher still stated the following: *"English is supposed to be spoken from Monday to Thursday and Kiswahili on Friday. However implementing the same has challenges because of lack of role models among the teachers who speak in mother tongue most of the time. Also the language policy has challenges in implementing it among the lower classes, but among the upper classes there are fair attempts"*.

Another head teacher from Siaka primary school reported that, *“Most parents do not collaborate with the schools in supporting reading among their children”*. Nguru, (1987) and Karanja, (2005) found that parent’s participation in school activities had a positive influence on curriculum implementation and by extension, children’s’ academic achievements. This was in agreement with Ondieki (2012) who stated that parental involvement had been shown to be an important variable that positively influenced children’s education.

From the observation schedule, *four students were sharing a desk meant for three pupils. Few of the classes visited didn’t have wall charts. from the school time table, English teachers had quite a number of lessons throughout the day with the reading materials majorly available being textbooks with an exception of a few schools having storybooks that were kept in the office and lend out during lessons or when pupils asked for them*

From the observation schedule the researcher noted that, *many schools had adequate number of classrooms with an exception of a few rural schools where pupils were learning from abandoned mud walled houses turned into classrooms with many schools having an inadequate number of English teachers”*.

According to the head teacher of Walala she recommended that, *“ Schools need to encourage a reading culture from lower classes, emphasize on language policy, motivate learners to read, encourage learners to recite poems and participate in drama activities. Also, constructions of libraries, provision of more reading materials, ensure*

*adequate teaching and equipping of school libraries with adequate reading materials. At the same time the government needs to provide enough and relevant reading materials, increase the teaching manpower, organize seminars on reading difficulties and solutions and plan reading competitions among pupils country-wide”.*

From FGD, Ezra a pupil from Musikoma primary school suggested that the solution of reading difficulty includes, *“Forming discussion groups, reading storybooks, consulting with fellow pupils and teachers, being given more easy work to practice.* While Celine from Sio primary school was of the opinion that *“those who have reading difficulty should be taken to reading clinics of “Tusome tusome” sponsored by safaricom, using a dictionary to check for new vocabulary and being regular to school”*

#### **4.6 Summary**

This section has analyzed research findings from questionnaires for pupils, English language teachers and head teachers interview schedule, focused group discussion and observation schedule.

##### **4.6.1 Demographic Information of Respondents**

It was established that there was no gender balance in the staff teaching English in public primary schools with majority being (57%) male teachers. Majority of the teachers teaching English are middle aged with a majority falling in the age bracket of 36 to 40 years- which formed sixty percent of the teachers. Majority of the teachers (71%) had P1 which implied that most had adequate knowledge and skills to teach the subject. The

result indicated that most teachers had adequate experience (10 and above) years meaning that they had adequate experience with the students and the environment.

#### **4.6.2 Reading Difficulty and academic performance**

##### **4.6.2.1 Reading comprehension and academic performance**

From the analysis of the Likert scale items a mean of 3.8 showed that pupils concurred with the fact that they should be good readers in order to read in other subjects. A mean of 4.36 denoted a strong agreement with understanding what one reads as a cause of performing well in class. A mean of 3.3 implied that pupils almost agreed that being weak at reading would pose problems to their performance in class. A mean of 3.08 connoted that pupils were undecided with social studies performance being a product of being able to read comprehension.

On whether reading comprehension relates to understanding of science texts, with a mean of 3.0 signified indecision. A mean of 3.72 connoted an agreement with vocabulary being related to comprehension marks. A mean of 2.6 suggests that the pupils were undecided on the reading skills not being majorly related to math's performance. Lastly a mean of 3.6 implied an agreement with class performance being related to understanding what they read.

##### **4.6.2.2 Language skills and academic performance**

On the issue of language skills and academic performance a mean of 3.83 showed an agreement with the fact that spoken vocabulary skills boost reading and class performance. Agreement was backed by a mean of 3.59 on whether the number of words

that they know makes them to succeed in class performance. A mean of 3.85 signified that understanding of the meaning of several ensures they succeeded in class performance. On the issue of English language grammar making reading and spelling difficult to them, a mean of 2.3 suggested disagreement. A mean of 2.88 indicates being undecided on whether they found it difficult to keep what they had read in the short-term memory.

#### **4.6.2.3 Cognitive skills and academic performance**

On analyzing the Likert scale items on cognitive skills and academic performance a mean of 4.015 translated to agreement that difficulty with reading made learning of other subjects difficult. A mean of 4.17 connotes pupils were in agreement that experience with reading difficulty made them read less than others. A mean of 2.358 showed disagreements on whether reading takes a lot of effort, is frustrating and not motivating. A mean of 3.254 exhibited indecision on reading difficulties leading to lesser amounts of reading practice. With a mean of 2.138 pupils disagreed that parents and teachers had lower expectations of their reading abilities.

#### **4.6.2.4 Reading instruction and academic performance**

From the findings on reading instruction and academic performance a mean of 1.6 demonstrated disagreements that class reading is a skill that is no longer taught. With a mean of 3.543 pupils agreed that having learnt to read leads to being able to read to learn. A mean of 2.58 illustrated indecision by pupils on the issue of increased difficulty for them to understand what they read. A mean 3.418 designated indecision on importance being placed on written text.

#### **4.6.3 Moderating effect of home environment on the influence of reading difficulties on academic performance**

On the moderating effect of home environment on the influence of reading difficulties on academic performance, with a mean of 2.91 denoted that pupils were undecided on whether lack of text books and reading materials at home made reading difficult. A mean of 3.71 showed agreement with Parents spending time talking and encouraging them to read. With a mean 2.431 pupils disagreed that lack of radio and television in the home made them to read. A mean of 3.79 showed that pupils were in agreement that availability of a reading table and source of light made reading easy. With a mean of 3.569 there was an agreement with the fact that the work their parents did enabled them to support their reading. A mean of 2.043 signified disagreements with parents being unable to provide at home made reading difficult.

#### **4.6.4 The mediating role of school environment on the influence of reading difficulties on academic performance**

From the analysis on the mediating role of school environment on the influence of reading difficulties on academic performance, a mean of 2.61 showed pupils were undecided on whether reading difficulties are as a result of inadequate teaching. A mean of 2.14, pupils registered disagreements on the issue of teachers being not well trained hence making them to find reading difficult. A mean of 2.31 exhibited disagreement with teachers being not competent enough to help the poor readers. A mean of 2.6 indicated that pupils were undecided on the issue of whether teachers find it difficult to teach as they attended to too many classes in a day. A mean of 3.36 suggested indecision by

pupils that reading difficulties arise from reading materials not being enough. A mean of 3.3 signified pupils were undecided on whether frequent absenteeism by pupils made learning unsuccessful. A mean of 3.84 implied that pupils agreed that high number of pupils in classrooms made learning difficult.

#### **4.7 Conclusion**

From the findings, in regard to the first objective, the study concluded that reading comprehension difficulties had an insignificant influence on academic performance and that pupils had to be good readers in order to perform well academically. Possession of good language skills had an influence on academic performance. Cognitive skills such as thinking, logic and understanding influenced academic performance. Pupils with reading difficulty do not read less than others and are neither frustrated nor demotivated and that reading instruction did not have an influence on academic performance. In the second objective, the study concluded that the home environment contributed significantly to academic performance. In the third objective, reading materials, frequent absenteeism and high number of pupils in classrooms influenced reading difficulty.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION**

#### **5.1 Introduction**

This chapter summarized the study. The summary was divided into parts which addressed, Summary of the study and objectives stated in chapter one. The summary was followed by conclusions based on the same objectives. Thereafter recommendations were made on the influence of reading difficulties on academic performance. Lastly, the chapter made recommendations on areas for further research.

#### **5.2 Summary of the study**

The study sought to investigate the influence of reading difficulties on academic performance. The objectives of the study were to establish the influence of reading difficulties and academic performance, the intervening variables were moderating influence of home environment and the mediating role of school environment on the academic performance of public primary schools pupils in Bungoma County. A descriptive survey research design facilitated the collection of data. Data was collected by use of questionnaires from 179 pupils, 10 focused group discussion, interview schedules from 21 teachers, interview schedules from 11 head teachers and observation schedules. The Sample for the study was from public primary schools within Bungoma County. Purposive sampling technique was used to select Bungoma South Sub-County. The instruments were tested for study reliability and validity in a pilot study, in one of the schools within Bungoma County.

Data from questionnaires was compiled, edited, coded and analysed by use of SPSS programme. Descriptive statistics technique was used to analyze open-ended items as well as the interviews and focus group discussions. Qualitative data was generated from the open ended questions. The data was analyzed using key themes and reported in narrative style using the themes as sub-headings. Specifically the researcher developed a summary report identifying major themes and topics and the association between them as they came up in discussions and used direct quotations to present the findings.

### **5.3 Summary of the Findings.**

The first objective sought to examine the influence of reading difficulties on academic performance. From the findings, the study established that pupils should be good readers in order to read in other subjects, understanding what one reads was found to be a cause of performing well in class. Therefore being weak at reading poses problems to performance in class. On language skills and academic performance it was found out that spoken vocabulary skills boost reading and class performance. The number of words that pupils know made them to succeed in class performance and understanding of the meaning of several words ensures success in class performance. Further, pupils find it difficult to keep what they read in the short-term memory.

The findings on cognitive skills and academic performance were that reading made learning of other subjects difficult. Experience with reading difficulty did not make them read less than others and that reading took a lot of effort and was frustrating and not motivating. Reading difficulties doesn't lead to lesser amounts of reading practice and that parents and teachers have high expectations on their reading abilities. From the

findings on reading instruction and academic performance class reading is a skill that is still taught and having learnt to read leads to being able to read to learn. Importance is placed on written text and pupils understand what they read as they move to higher classes.

The second objective sought to establish the moderating effect of home environment on the influence of reading difficulties on academic performance. The findings revealed that lack of text books and reading materials at home made reading difficult. Also Parents spend time talking and encouraging pupils to read. It was also found out that lack of radio and television in the home makes pupils to read and that availability of a reading table and source of light made reading easy. Pupils have enough time to read at home however parents' inability to provide at home made pupils reading difficult.

The third objective sought to establish the mediating role of school environment on the influence of reading difficulties on academic performance. Findings revealed that reading difficulties were not as a result of inadequate teaching and that teachers were well trained. Though teachers attended to too many classes in a day they did not find it difficult to teach. Reading difficulties did not arise from reading materials not being enough. However frequent absenteeism by pupils made learning unsuccessful and that the high number of pupils in classrooms made reading difficult.

## **5.4 Conclusion**

From the findings, in regard to the first objective, the study concluded that reading comprehension difficulties did not influence academic performance and that pupils had to be good readers in order to perform well academically. Possession of good language skills had an influence on academic performance. Cognitive skills such as thinking, logic and understanding influenced academic performance. Pupils with reading difficulty did not read less than others and were neither frustrated nor demotivated and that reading instruction did not influence academic performance.

In the second objective, the study concluded that the home environment contributed significantly to academic performance.

In the third objective, reading materials, frequent absenteeism and high number of pupils in classrooms influenced reading difficulty.

## **5.5 Recommendations**

Based on the research findings the researcher made the following recommendations:

### **5.5.1 Recommendations to the Government through the Ministry of Education and Other Stakeholders**

1. The government should consider ways of building more infrastructures such as library and extra classes to accommodate the large number of pupils in primary schools more so with the advent of the CBC
2. The government should also deploy more teachers in public primary schools to help alleviate reading difficulty.
3. Parents should be sensitized on the need to collaborate with schools in order to assist their children to be able to read without difficulty.

### **5.5.2 Recommendation to the Schools**

1. Schools should come up with measures of helping and motivating pupils with reading difficulties.
2. Due to the high number of pupils in classes, teachers need to consider individual attention in order to assuage the problem of reading difficulty among pupils.

### **5.5.3 Recommendations in terms of policy**

1. During the early grades, time, materials, and resources should be provided with two goals:
  - (a) Support daily independent reading of texts selected to be of particular interest for the individual pupils, and under the individual pupil's frustration level, in order to strengthen the student's capacity for independent reading
  - (b) Support daily assisted or supported reading and rereading of texts that are slightly more difficult in wording or in linguistic, rhetorical, or conceptual structure in order to promote advances in the student's capabilities.
2. Schools should promote independent reading outside school by such means as daily at-home reading assignments and expectations, reading lists, encouraging parent involvement, and by working with community groups, including public librarians, who share this goal.

#### **5.5.4 Suggestions for further research**

1. The researcher made the following Suggestions for further research; the study only covered one sub-county, a similar study should be carried out in other sub-counties to find out the situation in other areas of the country.
2. The study could be extended to private primary, secondary schools and tertiary institutions in that the current one was carried in public primary school in Kenya.
3. Further studies on other aspects that influence reading difficulty such as mother tongue influence also need to be investigated.

## APPENDICES

### APPENDIX I: PUPILS QUESTIONNAIRE

#### READING DIFFICULTIES AND ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OF PUPILS IN PUBLIC PRIMARY SCHOOLS WITHIN BUNGOMA COUNTY, KENYA

This questionnaire was designed to gain an understanding of the relationship between reading difficulties and class performance of pupils in public primary schools in Bungoma County. This exercise was purely for school purposes and the information you will provide was not for any other purposes. Please answer all questions as objectively as possible to help us find out the result of home and school environment on the influence of reading difficulties on your class performance. **Kindly answer all the questions.**

#### PART A: BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Answer and tick (✓) where appropriate

DATE \_\_\_\_\_ TIME \_\_\_\_\_ Zone \_\_\_\_\_

1. Name of school \_\_\_\_\_

2. Name of the pupil \_\_\_\_\_

3. Gender Male [ ] Female [ ]

4. How many children are in your family?  
\_\_\_\_\_

5. What's your birth position in your family? \_\_\_\_\_

6. What type of work are your parents doing Father \_\_\_\_\_ mother \_\_\_\_\_?

7. Apart from your parents and siblings, who else stays with you at home? \_\_\_\_\_

8. How old are you now? \_\_\_\_\_

9. Where did you go for nursery school? \_\_\_\_\_

10. Indicate the number of standard seven streams in your school \_\_\_\_\_

11. How many pupils are in your standard seven stream? \_\_\_\_\_

12. How many marks did you get at

- a) End of term 1 of 2019 \_\_\_\_\_ Position in Class \_\_\_\_\_  
 b) End of term 2 of 2019 \_\_\_\_\_ Position in class \_\_\_\_\_

13. How many marks did you get in English at End of term 1 of 2019 \_\_\_\_\_ End of term 2 of 2019 \_\_\_\_\_

**PART B: READING DIFFICULTIES AND ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE**

**Reading Comprehension Difficulties and Academic Performance**

To what extent do you agree with the following statements relating to how comprehension difficulties affect your class performance? Tick in the appropriate column. **Where 1 = YES, 2 = NO, 3= DON'T KNOW.**

		1	2	3
		YES	NO	DON'T KNOW
1.	Pupils Should be good readers in order to read in other			
2.	Understanding what I read makes me perform well in class			
3.	If I am weak at reading I would have problems in my class performance			
4.	Reading comprehension majorly relates with social studies performance			
5.	Reading comprehension is related to understanding of			
6.	vocabulary majorly relates to pupils comprehension marks			
7.	Reading skills are not majorly related to math's performance			
8.	Class performance is related to the ability of the pupils to understand what they read.			

### Language skills and Academic performance

To what extent do you agree with the following statements relating to how language skills affect class performance? Tick in the appropriate column. **Where 1 = YES, 2 = NO, 3= DON'T KNOW.**

		1	2	3
		YES	NO	DON'T KNOW
9.	My spoken vocabulary skills helps my reading and class performance			
10.	The number of words which I know makes me to succeed in class performance			
11.	Understanding of meanings of several words ensures my success in class performance			
12.	English language grammar makes reading and spelling difficult to me			
13.	I find it difficult to remember what I read			

### Cognitive skills and Academic Performance

To what extent do you agree with the following statements relating to the effect of Intelligence on class performance? Tick in the appropriate column. **Where 1 = YES, 2 = NO, 3= DON'T KNOW.**

		1	2	3
		YES	NO	DON'T KNOW
14.	My difficulty with reading makes learning of other subjects difficult			
15.	My experience with reading difficulty makes me read less than others			
16.	Reading takes a lot of effort, is frustrating and not motivating			
17.	My reading difficulties leads to lesser amounts of reading practice			
18.	My parents and teachers have low expectations of my reading abilities			

**Reading Instruction and Academic Performance**

To what extent do you agree with the following statements relating to the effect of reading instruction and class performance? Tick in the appropriate column. **Where 1 = YES, 2 = NO, 3= DON'T KNOW.**

		1	2	3
		YES	NO	DON'T KNOW
19.	In our class reading is a skill that is no longer taught			
20.	It is assumed that we have learnt to read and are able to read to learn			
21.	It becomes increasingly difficult for me to understand what i read			
22.	Importance is placed on written text			

**PART C: MODERATING EFFECT OF HOME ENVIRONMENT ON THE INFLUENCE OF READING DIFFICULTY ON ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE**

To what extent do you agree with the following statements relating to the effect that home environment has on the influence of reading difficulties on class performance. Tick in the appropriate column. **Where 1 = YES, 2 = NO, 3= DON'T KNOW.**

		1	2	3
		YES	NO	DON'T KNOW
23.	Lack of text books and reading materials at home makes reading difficult			
24.	Parents spend time talking and encouraging me to read			
25.	Lack of radio and television in the home makes me to read			
26.	The availability of a reading table make reading easy			
27.	The availability of a source of light make reading easy for you			
28.	The work my parents do enables them to support my reading			
29.	My parents are not able to provide for us at home hence reading is difficult			
30.	You have enough time to read while at home			

**The Mediating Effect of School environment on the Influence of Reading Difficulty on Academic Performance**

To what extent do you agree with the following statements relating to the Intervening Effect of School environment on the Influence of Reading Difficulty on Class Performance. Tick in the appropriate column. **Where 1 = YES, 2 = NO, 3= DON'T KNOW.**

		1 YES	2 NO	3 DON'T KNOW
31.	My reading difficulties are as a result of inadequate teaching			
32.	The way our teacher teaches makes me not to understand well			
33.	My teacher finds it difficult to teach because he/she has too many classes in a day			
34.	Our difficulties arise from reading materials not being enough			
35.	Frequent absenteeism by pupils makes learning unsuccessful			
36.	The high number of pupils in classrooms makes learning difficult			
37.	Only English and Kiswahili languages are allowed in our			

**APPENDIX II: TEACHERS INTERVIEW SCHEDULE**  
**PART A: BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

Tick (✓) where appropriate

DATE \_\_\_\_\_ TIME \_\_\_\_\_

1. Name of the school \_\_\_\_\_

2. Location of the school \_\_\_\_\_

3. Name of teacher \_\_\_\_\_

4. Standard 7 Stream \_\_\_\_\_

5. Gender Male [ ] Female  
[ ]

6. Age \_\_\_\_\_

7. Teachers highest qualification \_\_\_\_\_

8. Teaching subjects overall \_\_\_\_\_

9. Teaching experience \_\_\_\_\_

10. Please indicate the number of lessons you teach in a week \_\_\_\_\_

11. Please indicate the number of standard seven streams in your school \_\_\_\_\_

12. Please tick the letter that best describes what most of your pupils mean grades in end of term exams in standard 7 have been at this school

i) A [ ]      ii) A- [ ]      iii) B+ [ ]      iv) B [ ]      v) B-[ ]

vi) C+ [ ]      vii) C [ ]      viii) C-[ ]      ix) D+ [ ]      x) D-[ ]

xi) E [ ]

**PART B: READING DIFFICULTIES AND ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE**

1. How does reading skills significantly correlate to academic performance?

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2. How do oral vocabulary skills enhance pupils reading and academic success?

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3. How do your pupils perceive reading?

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4. What difficulty do your pupils experience in reading?

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5. In your opinion what is the cause of reading difficulty

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6. How does reading difficulty affect your pupils?

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7. How do your pupils comprehend what they read as they move from one class to the next?

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8. What is the correlation between inadequate teaching and reading difficulty?

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9. How do the parents support influence their children in reading?

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10. What are the challenges you experience in teaching reading to the pupils with reading difficulties?

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11. What type of families do most of the pupils with reading difficulties in your class come from?

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12. How does the home environment contribute to reading difficulties among some of your pupils in Standard 7

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13. How do you collaborate with parents to assist children with reading difficulties in your class?

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14. What should the school do to reduce reading difficulties among standard 7 pupils in your school. \_\_\_\_\_?

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15. What should the government do to reduce reading difficulties among standard 7 pupils?

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### **APPENDIX III: OBSERVATION SCHEDULE- Assessing English– reading and Comprehension**

The researcher will focus on observing actual reading in the classroom to assess its effectiveness.

**DATE** \_\_\_\_\_

**TIME** \_\_\_\_\_

**Name of the School** \_\_\_\_\_ **Location** \_\_\_\_\_

1. What is the general classroom environment in terms of
  - a) number of students in class seven,
  - b) number of lessons a class seven English teacher has,
  - c) wall charts
  - d) sitting arrangement
  - e) student book ratio
2. The atmosphere of the entire English lesson
  - a) How the lesson starts
  - b) Pupils participation in reading activities
  - c) Teaching methodology
  - d) Individual pupils response
  - e) How the lesson ends
3. Reading difficulty in standard seven
  - a) How Good are the pupils at reading
  - b) How do pupils understand Vocabularies..
  - c) The number of words which they know
  - d) Understanding of meanings of several words
  - e) English language grammar makes reading and spelling difficult
  - f) difficulty in remember what they read
  
  - g) reading difficulty makes reading less than others
  - h) Reading takes a lot of effort, is frustrating and not motivating
4. Reading instructions
  - a) Class reading skill is no longer taught
  - b) Importance is placed on written text
5. Mediating role of school
  - a) Teacher of English has too many classes in a day
  - b) Availability of Reading materials
  - c) Frequent absenteeism by pupils
  - d) High number of pupils in classrooms
  - e) languages allowed in the school

**APPENDIX IV: HEAD TEACHERS INTERVIEW SCHEDULE**  
**PART A: BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

Tick (✓) where appropriate

DATE \_\_\_\_\_ TIME \_\_\_\_\_

1. Name of the school \_\_\_\_\_

2. Location of the school \_\_\_\_\_

3. Name of teacher \_\_\_\_\_

4. Gender Male [ ] Female [ ]

5. Age i) 25-30 years [ ] ii) 36-40 years [ ]  
 iii) 31-35 years [ ] iv) Above 40 years [ ]

6. Teachers Grade P1 [ ]  
 P2 [ ]  
 P3 [ ]  
 Diploma [ ]  
 Degree [ ]

7. Teaching subject (s) \_\_\_\_\_

8. Teaching experience 1-5 years  
 6-10 years  
 10-15 years  
 16 and above

9. Please indicate the number of standard seven streams in your school

i) 1 to 2 streams [ ] ii) 3 to 4 streams [ ]  
 iii) 5 to 6 streams [ ] iv) Over 6 streams [ ]

Others (please specify).....

10. Please tick the letter that best describes what most of your pupils mean grades in end of

term exams in standard 7 have been at this school

i) A [ ] ii) A- [ ] iii) B+ [ ] iv) B [ ] v) B- [ ]  
 vi) C+ [ ] vii) C [ ] viii) C- [ ] ix) D+ [ ] x) D- [ ]  
 xi) E [ ]

11 What is the impact of the free primary Education on enhancing reading and academic performance of standard seven pupils

12. What is the general state of the school infrastructure in facilitating learning?

I. Library

- a) Library stocking of books in terms of adequacy and variety
- b) Library reading environment
- c) Library personnel

II. School environment

- a) Number of classrooms
- b) Play ground
- c) Timetable
- d) Number of teachers of English

13. What can you say about financial and human resources in relation to alleviating reading difficulty of the pupils?

14. What is the language policy of the school and how effective in enhancing reading and academic performance?

15. How is the collaboration of parents in enhancing the reading and academic performance of pupils?.

16. What is the general state of reading difficulty and academic performance of standard seven pupils in your school?

## **APPENDIX V: Focus Group Discussion Guide for Pupils**

I wish to welcome every participant to the discussion and first and foremost let me introduce the moderators and assistants of various groups. Our topic of discussion is reading difficulty and academic performance among standard seven pupils. The results will be used for the improvement of reading among pupils in primary schools. You were selected so as to enhance the discussion. There is no right or wrong answers its only different points of view.

**Name of the school** \_\_\_\_\_ **Location** \_\_\_\_\_

**Group number** \_\_\_\_\_

1. How do most pupils in your class understand what they read?
2. What is the class position of those who do not understand what they read?
3. (a) what type of reading materials do you have at home?  
(b) How do they influence performance in class?
4. How does the listening and watching Radio and television respectively influence pupils reading?
5. How is your reading environment at home?
6. What source of light do you use for reading at home?
7. (a) What type of work do your parents do?  
(b)How does their work influence your academic performance in class?
8. Why do some pupils miss school?
9. How does your class population influence your reading and academic performance?
10. (a) Which reading materials are available in your school  
(b) How do the reading materials influence your reading and performance in class?
- 11.(a) How many pupils share one textbook in your class?  
(b) How does it influence your reading and Performance in class?
12. What challenges do standard seven pupils face in terms of reading?
13. What are your suggestions on how to solve reading difficulty in your class?

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# MAP: BUNGOMA SUB-COUNTIES

