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Perceptions of Teachers on Child-Centered Teaching Pedagogy and Academic Performance in Informal Settlements in Kibra Sub-County, Nairobi, Kenya.

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ABSTRACT

This study explored the Perceptions of Teachers on Child-Centered Teaching Pedagogy and Academic Performance in Informal Settlements in Kibra Sub-County, Nairobi, Kenya. A mixed-methods approach was employed, where quantitative data were collected using descriptive research design, while qualitative insights were gathered through explanatory research design. The study targeted nine public primary schools in Kibra Sub-County with 189 teachers, utilizing purposive and stratified random sampling to determine the sample size. Questionnaires, interview guides and FGD were used to collect data from the sample. The theoretical framework guiding this research included Critical Pedagogy, which provided insights into structural inequalities, educational practices, and societal dynamics affecting academic outcomes in informal settlements. Quantitative data was analyzed using Scientific Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) and ANOVA while NVivo Software for qualitative data. The study revealed that while teachers generally have a positive familiarity with child-centered teaching pedagogy and recognize its benefits for improving teaching practices and its importance in primary education, there are notable challenges and varied perceptions regarding its implementation and the level of support from school administrators. The study found that while child-centered approaches have the potential to improve student engagement and learning outcomes, their implementation is hindered by inadequate resources and insufficient professional development. Recommendations included to effectively adopt child-centered pedagogy, it is crucial to implement targeted professional development programs for teachers and increase resource allocation to support these teaching methods.

Key Words: *Child-Centered Pedagogy, Academic Performance, Informal Settlements, Teacher Perceptions*

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Child-centered teaching pedagogy is an educational approach that emphasizes placing the student at the core of the learning process, focusing on their needs, interests, and active participation. This approach, grounded in contemporary constructivist theories, posits that learning is most effective when students are engaged and have a role in shaping their educational experiences (Hattie, 2015; Brusca, 2020). The primary aim of child-centered pedagogy is to foster a responsive and personalized learning environment that enhances individual growth and academic performance. It has been widely acknowledged for its potential to boost student motivation, engagement, and achievement (Guskey & Yoon, 2021).

Implementing child-centered pedagogy in informal settlements introduces specific challenges and opportunities. Informal settlements are characterized by high population density, limited educational resources, and significant socio-economic disparities, which complicate the application of such pedagogical strategies (UNICEF, 2022). In these settings, teachers often encounter obstacles such as overcrowded classrooms, insufficient professional development, and a lack of educational materials. Despite these constraints, child-centered approaches offer the potential to improve educational outcomes by creating a more engaging and individualized learning environment (Baker *et al*., 2021).

Examining teachers' perceptions of child-centered pedagogy in informal settlements is crucial for understanding its practical impact and addressing implementation challenges. Teachers' views on these pedagogical strategies can influence their effectiveness and the overall academic performance of students. This review synthesizes recent research on the subject, focusing on current findings, challenges, and strategies for enhancing the application of child-centered pedagogy in underserved educational contexts. By evaluating teachers' perceptions and the impacts on student performance, the review aims to provide insights into optimizing educational practices to better support students in informal settlements.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

In a study published in 2021, Cheng & Ding looked into the behavioral characteristics of Chinese teachers and students receiving learner-centered education in China. They concluded that "learner-centered instruction was a significant predictor of intrinsic motivation" after comparing 394 students in an experimental group that was more learner-centered with 368 students in a control group that was more teacher-centered. They found that there was a discernible increase in motivation in the experimental group. In other cases, there was a relationship between students' growing interest and their views about particular subjects.

Okitsu & Edwards Jr. (2023) investigated how instructors in South Africa perceived child-centered teaching pedagogy in informal settlements. With the use of a qualitative research methodology, the study sought to shed light on how educators understood and applied child-centered teaching strategies in the context of the particular difficulties associated with informal settlements. Thirty teachers from different primary schools situated in informal settlements throughout South Africa were interviewed in-depth to collect qualitative data. The purpose of the interviews was to get insight into the attitudes of educators regarding child-centered pedagogy, their experiences with its application, and its apparent effects on student learning outcomes. According to the study, teachers in South African informal settlements had a generally positive opinion of child-centered teaching pedagogy. The significance of encouraging critical thinking abilities, student autonomy, and active student participation in the learning process was underlined. But obstacles to successful adoption included issues including packed classrooms, scarce resources, and a variety of student backgrounds. Instructors emphasized the need for more resources, professional development, and support in order to fully reap the rewards of child-centered approaches in these contexts.
According to Bature and Atweh (2020), a research conducted in Nigeria revealed that students there have undergone "attitudinal changes towards mathematics as a subject," meaning they no longer view the subject as particularly challenging. Furthermore, Ozkan and Topsakal (2020) showed that Learner Centered Pedagogy techniques had a statistically significant impact on Turkish students' positive attitudes toward science.

In Tanzania, Sakata, N. investigated the issue, "Are pupils' positive attitudes toward learning associated with learner-centered pedagogy?" (2023) conducted study. In Tanzanian primary schools, the study included structured lesson observations and questionnaires to investigate the potential relationship between learner-centered pedagogy and positive learning views. The findings showed that students' favorable attitudes toward learning increased when they felt they had experienced learner-centered teaching. On the other hand, no significant correlations between

the observed learner-centered pedagogy and learning attitudes were discovered. Ndirangu and Mbugua's (2019) study, carried out in Kenya, found that when students feel valued and empowered during the learning process, they are more likely to take ownership of their education and perform better academically. This implies that a student's attitude toward instruction has a bigger impact on their academic performance.

A study on child-centered instruction in Kenyan primary schools was conducted by Pluijmen (2017). In Kisumu County, Kenya, a qualitative study was conducted on the attitudes and practices of teachers and students about child-centered education, as well as how they saw the results of the World Teacher Program. The aim of this study was to investigate how teachers and students in Kenyan primary schools perceive the World Teacher Program (WTP) in Kisumu County, as well as their perspectives, methods, and attitudes toward child-centered education. It was shown that although teachers' primary focus is on the needs of the student, their actual methods are different. It's possible that children in Kenya don't have access to a curriculum made especially for them because of the country's extreme poverty. While educators can change their own circumstances, in their talks of challenges, they have mostly focused on external factors. Not every influence on society is favorable.
Ochieng (2015) found that both teachers and students had generally good opinions on learner-centered approaches. The study concentrated on using learner-centered teaching techniques to raise Migori County's physics proficiency. Regarding whether learner-centered approaches broadened the curriculum, teachers couldn't agree.

2.1 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1.1 Critical pedagogy

Paulo Freire created critical pedagogy in the late 1960s in response to educational systems that were oppressive. It made the argument that education should enable students to critically evaluate and alter their social reality rather than just imparting knowledge. In order to identify and confront underlying power relations and injustices, educators and students should have a discussion as part of Freire's pedagogy of liberation (Darder, 2017). Education is seen by critical pedagogy as a means of emancipation and empowerment. In informal settlements, children's prospects are frequently restricted by socioeconomic differences. This strategy aims to enable learners to critically examine their social reality and take appropriate action to modify it. Teachers help students develop a sense of agency and provide them the tools they need to take an active role in their own education and community development by having conversations with them about their lived experiences.
In informal settlements, where traditional educational approaches may not resonate with students' realities, critical pedagogy encourages educators to connect academic content with students' everyday experiences and socio-economic contexts (Bush et al., 2018). This pedagogical framework helps make learning more meaningful and applicable. Teachers can improve student engagement and academic achievement by introducing cultural customs, concerns, and local knowledge into the curriculum (McLaren, 2023). Fundamentally, critical pedagogy aims to undermine disparities in educational environments by questioning established power systems. Fair access to high-quality education is promoted by this strategy in informal settlements, where educational opportunities and resources are frequently scarce. Critical pedagogy attempts to

establish more inclusive learning environments that encourage the academic success of all students, regardless of their background, by tackling structural hurdles such poverty, discrimination, and lack of resources.

By encouraging students to challenge preconceptions, question assumptions, and develop a critical consciousness about social concerns, critical pedagogy fosters transformative learning experiences (McLaren, 2023). In non-formal settlements, where learners could encounter exclusion and unfavorable generalizations, this method cultivates resilience and a feeling of self and dignity. Students can acquire critical thinking abilities through discussion and introspection, which are crucial for both academic success and personal development. However, this theory has its own weakness which includes; implementing critical pedagogy can be challenging as it requires a shift in traditional teaching methods and curriculum design.

III: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN

3.1 Research Design

The overall strategy used to logically and convincingly combine all of the study's components and guarantee that the research topic is sufficiently addressed is known as the research design. According to Creswell et al. (2018), research designs are plans and procedures for conducting studies that range from broad hypotheses to complex techniques for gathering and analyzing data.A mixed-method approach was employed in this study to gather and examine both quantitative and qualitative data. To be more precise, an explanatory design was used for the qualitative data and a descriptive study design for the quantitative data.By gathering information without altering the immediate surroundings, a descriptive design gives an accurate picture of the existing state of affairs (Kothari, 2022). The idea that case studies provide an excellent fit for study design, as proposed by Creswell and Poth (2017), is supported by this design. A descriptive study design is the most effective for gathering, organizing, evaluating, and interpreting data, claims Maxwell (2021).

3.2 Study Population and Target Population

The nine public primary schools in Kibra Sub County, 198 teachers, and 10,250 students make up the target population from which the sample was drawn, according to the Kibra Subcounty Education Director database, 2024. The study involved the following respondents: primary school head teachers, Class teachers for grade 1-6 as they understand the overall performance of the pupils in their respective classes; pupils who engaged in focused group discussions; the county staffing officer, who oversees staffing matters in the sub county; the sub county examination officer, who oversees examination matters in the entire county where the constituency is located; the county quality assurance and standards officer (QASO), who oversees the implementation of quality standards in the sub county; and PTA chairs in each school.

3.3 Sample and sampling Techniques

Both purposive and basic random sampling were used in this investigation. Purposive sampling was employed in the study to choose the class teachers from nine public schools in Kibra Sub County for inclusion in the investigation. Among the automatic responders were the principals of the chosen primary schools. These comprised five head teachers from the sub county, who represented the nine primary schools, and 54 class teachers. Among the study's automatic responses was the quality assurance and standards officer for Kibra Sub County, the county

examination officer, and the staffing officer. The targeted Focused group discussion involved two pupil groups one school with a good record of academic performance and another with a poor record for the last 3 years.

Sample Size for FGD

Criteria	
One school with good performance record & one School with poor performance record (for the last 3 years). Based on the report from sub county examination officer	8-10 participants

Table 3.1 Sampling Frame

3.4 Tools of Data Collection

Category	Target Population	Sampling procedure	Actual Sample
Head teachers	9	Simple random &Purposive Sampling	5
Class Teachers(Grade 1-6)	198	Simpe random&Purposive sampling	54
Pupils (FGD)	10250	Simple Random sampling	8-10 pupils
PTA Chairperson	9	Simple random &Purposive Sampling	5
county staffing officer	1	Purposive Sampling	1
County examination officer	1	Purposive Sampling	1
Sub County quality assurance and standards officer	1	Purposive Sampling	1

A tool used to collect data over a broad sample size is a questionnaire. (Tromp & Kombo, 2014). To save the researcher time and money, a large number of respondents received structured questionnaires. Because their answers to the questionnaires are always anonymous, respondents are honest when answering questions about contentious subjects and this is what the researcher sought to achieve from the tool.

The Sub County Examination Officer, who handled examination matters for the entire County where the Constituency is located, the County Quality Assurance and Standards Officer, and the County Staffing Officer, who oversees staffing matters in the sub county, were given semi-structured interview guides. (QASO).This tool consisted of a sequence of key questions that helped to outline the areas studied while also allowing the interviewer to deviate in order to further explore a response. A semi-structured interview is flexible and enabled the researcher to gain comprehensive awareness of the problem at hand as well as in-depth information about the subject under investigation (Kombo & Tromp, 2014). Semi- structured Interview guided was administered to collect primary data from the respondents. A Focused group Discussion was conducted to a group of pupils. The researcher faced a challenge of some sampled respondents not returning the questionnaires which is always common in every research.

3.5 Reliability and validity of research instruments

The degree to which a research instrument produces consistent data or outcomes after multiple trials is known as its reliability (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003). One of the study participants underwent the test-retest procedure to evaluate the instrument's reliability. Two times within a week, the questionnaire were distributed. The results of the test-retest procedure helped with the questionnaire's revision to ensure that it addressed the study's objectives (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2006).

To verify the instrument's reliability, the Cronbach's alpha coefficient was employed. It is acceptable if it was above 0.7 but less than 0.8, good if it was above 0.8 but less than 0.9, and exceptional if it was over 0.9. The research's usefulness was determined by the 0.85 outcome. The content that was chosen and included for a data collection tool that was deemed genuine was pertinent to the identified need or gap. Supervisors discussed the instruments prior to the study's real start. The experts' and supervisors' input was crucial in changing the instruments to close the gap.

3.6 Data Analysis Procedures

To examine the data for the study, the researcher utilized both quantitative and qualitative methodologies. Quantitative data were analyzed using the Scientific Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 25.0, with descriptive statistics such as graphs, percentages, and frequency distributions providing an overview of the data. Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was conducted to determine if there were significant differences between the means of different groups. For qualitative data, NVivo software was employed to perform textual formatting and interpretation, revealing underlying meanings through coding, categorizing, and thematic analysis. The integration of these analyses allowed for a comprehensive summary of the findings, from which conclusions were drawn and relevant suggestions were made to the appropriate organizations.

3.7 Ethical Consideration

Every participant gave the researcher their informed consent by signing the consent form confirming that they were aware of the objectives, procedures, potential dangers, and benefits of the study. It was made very clear that participation in the study was entirely voluntary and that they might leave at any moment without facing consequences. By upholding secrecy, making sure that any data gathered was kept safe, and refraining from revealing participants' identities without their express consent, the researcher safeguarded their right to privacy. The NACOSTI research permit and CUEA introductory letter played a role in creating trust and confidence with

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respondent's data. The researcher was transparent about the purpose, methods, and potential outcomes of the research and reporting findings truthfully and accurately, avoiding fabrication, falsification, or selective reporting. The researcher treated participants with respect and dignity. Acknowledge their autonomy, cultural differences, and individual rights and avoided any form of coercion or manipulation. The researcher abides by all applicable laws, rules, and institutional guidelines on research ethics. Prior to starting the research, got the required approvals from institutional approving research studies in Kenya.

IV: RESULTS

4.1 THE PERCEPTIONS OF TEACHERS ON CHILD-CENTERED TEACHING PEDAGOGY AND ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

The objective sought to examine the perceptions of teachers regarding child-centered teaching pedagogy and its impact on academic performance. The objective was to test how teachers' views on pedagogical approaches that prioritize students' individual needs and learning styles influence the effectiveness of teaching and, consequently, student performance. This investigation aimed to understand how teacher attitudes towards these methods shape educational outcomes.

(*Key:* ***SA:*** *Strongly Agree;* ***A:*** *Agree;* ***N:*** *Neutral;* ***D:*** *Disagree and* ***SD:*** *Strongly Disagree)*

Table 4.1: Descriptive of Perceptions of child-centered teaching pedagogy

Perceptions of Teachers on Child-Centered Teaching Pedagogy	Response	SA	A	N	D	SD	N	Mean	Std. Dev
Child centered teaching pedagogy is a familiar concept	Frequency	12	33	0	3	2	50	3.51	1.09
	Percentages	24	66	0	6	4	100		
Child centered teaching method is challenging	Frequency	5	9	4	29	3	50	2.86	1.21
	Percentages	10	18	8	58	6	100		
Child centered teaching pedagogy has improved teaching approach	Frequency	32	16	0	1	1	50	3.02	1.18
	Percentages	64	32	0	2	2	100		
Child centered teaching pedagogy is important in primary education	Frequency	29	18	2	1	0	50	3.36	1.16
	Percentages	58	36	4	2	0	100		
School administrators support teachers in effective implementation	Frequency	36	11	0	3	0	50	3.98	1.01

of child centered teaching pedagogy	Percentages	72	22	0	6	0	100

Source: Field Data (2024)

V: SUMMARY

5.1 The Perceptions of Teachers on Child-Centered Teaching Pedagogy and Academic Performance

The study's goal was to examine the perceptions of teachers regarding child-centered teaching pedagogy and its impact on academic performance. According to the findings, there were varied perceptions regarding child-centered teaching pedagogy were observed. For the first item, which aimed to understand familiarity with child-centered teaching pedagogy, it was found that 12 respondents (24%) strongly agreed, and 33 respondents (66%) agreed that they were familiar with the concept. Meanwhile, 3 respondents (6%) were neutral, and 2 respondents (4%) disagreed, indicating a generally positive familiarity with this teaching approach among respondents. The second item explored perceptions about the challenging nature of child-centered teaching pedagogy. The data showed that 5 respondents (10%) strongly agreed, while 9 respondents (18%) agreed that the teaching method was challenging. In contrast, 4 respondents (8%) were neutral, 29 respondents (58%) disagreed, and 3 respondents (6%) strongly disagreed, suggesting a significant perception that this teaching method presented challenges.

The third statement investigated how child-centered teaching pedagogy had improved teaching approaches. It was revealed that 32 respondents (64%) strongly agreed, and 16 respondents (32%) agreed with this viewpoint. Additionally, 1 respondent (2%) was neutral, and 1 respondent (2%) disagreed, highlighting a strong belief in the positive impact of child-centered teaching on teaching practices. The fourth item assessed the importance of child-centered teaching pedagogy in primary education. The findings indicated that 29 respondents (58%) strongly agreed, while 18 respondents (36%) agreed with this statement. Moreover, 2 respondents (4%) were neutral, and no respondents disagreed, underscoring a consensus on the significance of incorporating child-centered approaches in primary education. The fifth statement examined school administrators' support in effectively implementing child-centered teaching pedagogy. It was found that 36 respondents (72%) strongly agreed, while 11 respondents (22%) agreed with this statement. Additionally, 3 respondents (6%) were neutral, and no respondents disagreed, indicating strong support for the implementation of child-centered teaching approaches among school administrators.

5.2 Conclusion

The study concluded that while child-centered approaches are widely recognized for their potential to enhance student engagement and learning outcomes, several challenges must be addressed. Teachers generally view child-centered pedagogy positively, noting improvements in student motivation and participation. However, issues such as inadequate resources, insufficient professional development, and logistical constraints impede its effective implementation. To fully realize the benefits of child-centered teaching, it is essential to provide better support systems, including targeted training, increased resource allocation, and supportive policy frameworks,

thereby enabling a more effective adoption of these pedagogical methods in informal settlement contexts.

5.3 Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions reached, the study makes a number of recommendations, including:

- Implement targeted professional development programs to equip teachers with the necessary skills and knowledge for effectively applying child-centered pedagogy. Training should focus on practical strategies, classroom management techniques, and methods for accommodating diverse learning needs.
- Advocate for increased allocation of resources to support child-centered teaching approaches. This includes providing necessary teaching materials, technological tools, and infrastructural improvements to create a conducive learning environment.
- Develop and implement supportive educational policies and frameworks that promote the adoption of child-centered pedagogy. Policies should address the specific challenges faced by schools in informal settlements and provide a clear structure for integrating these teaching methods.
- Engage parents and community members in the educational process to foster a supportive learning environment. Encourage community participation in school activities and decision-making processes to enhance the effectiveness of child-centered approaches.

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