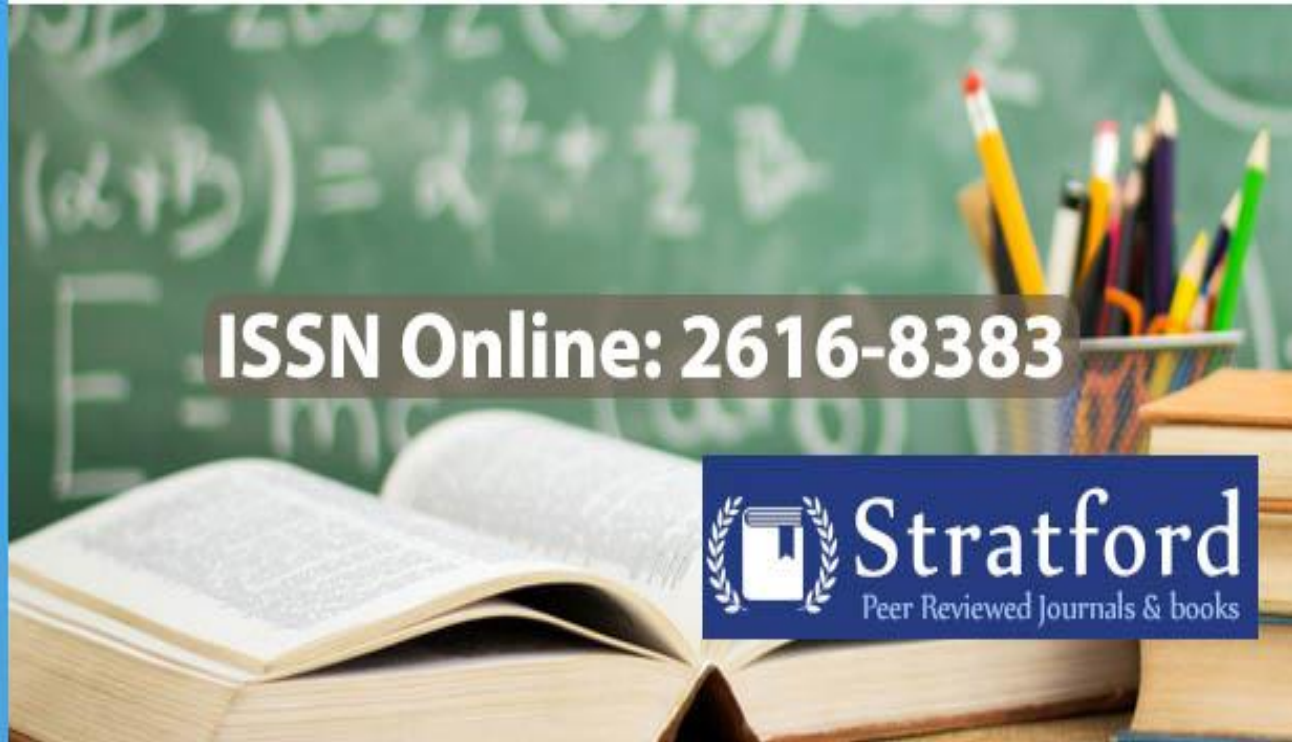


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## Influence of School Financial Requirements on Children Enrolment Rate of Pre-Primary Schools in Rwanda

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### Abstract

The challenge faced by the government of Rwanda is to ensure that children from poor households are not excluded from early childhood education and care institutions due to failure to contribute for school financial requirements. One key way of responding to this challenge is by obtaining accurate data on parents' contributions in preprimary schools. The purpose of this paper therefore, was to identify the influence of school financial requirements on enrolment rate of preprimary schools in Rwamagana District in Rwanda. The research design was descriptive and multiple regression. Data collection tools were questionnaires. The target population was 338 including 28 preprimary school staff and 310 parents of 3-6 year olds in Musha Sector of Rwamagana district. From this population, simple random sampling and convenient sampling techniques were used to get 181 respondents. The study results revealed that in pre-primary schools of Rwamagana District, parents spend on average 66,626Frw annually per child which is about 60\$. The major costs and school requirements are teacher salary, school uniform, school materials and school feeding program. The less common school requirements are child transport, school construction, school parties and salaries for support staff. The study found that children enrolled in pre-primary classrooms were slightly more than enough with a 3.53 point scale mean, but the majority of children aged 3-6 years old were already out of schools with a 4.10 point scale mean. This study recommended there should be the promotion of pre-primary education cost sharing between the government and the parents and to abolish unnecessary financial requirements in pre-primary schools and also promote home based care centers. Parents should continue playing an active role in terms of management and funding of pre-primary schools. The government of Rwanda is recommended to increase its budget for pre-primary education funding especially in the rural districts because many poor households failed to contribute to teacher salaries and school construction.

**Keywords:** School financial requirement, Child, enrolment rate and Pre-primary schools

## **1.1 Introduction**

Generally, different policies for early childhood education have been established in many countries around the globe. These policies range from a perception of early childhood care and development as a responsibility of parents to the view that early childhood care and education should be a public concern. Haddad (2001) states that developed countries have well established institutions providing early childhood development services, with special support to low income families and disadvantaged children in general while the private sector provides a range of curricular choices (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD, 2001; UK, 2000). ECD services are wide and shared by many ministries such as ministry of education, and ministry of labour and solidarity in Portugal; the Ministry of education, youth and sport and the Ministry of health in the Czech Republic; etc. Usually one ministry is in charge of 0-3 age category, while another takes charge of pre-primary education (OECD, 2017; Britto, 2012; Bornstein, 2012). Some countries such as Sweden have adopted an approach to ECDC which promotes cost sharing system whereby the parents pay for school building and equipment while the state pay teacher salaries (Sweden's Ministry of Education and Science (SMES), 2017).

In most countries, the top class of pre-primary is considered as a preparation for primary schooling with a key component of literacy and numeracy (Bornstein, 2012). In middle income countries such as Vietnam, Cambodia, and Brazil, the governments are the primary financial sources for pre-primary schools, but many non-governmental organizations and parents' contributions supplement the government budgets. Enrollments for pre-primary education range from 44% and 85% (British Department for International Development (DFID, 2014; Brazil, 2013). Countries in Africa are at different stages of development of the pre-primary education sector, with a few who have taken serious commitments such as Senegal, Kenya, and Mauritius (DFID, 2014); (Ejuu, 2012; KIE, 2015). However, many other countries still consider pre-primary education as a family responsibility. The implication of this approach has been that many preschool teachers are poorly paid which leads to high staff turnover and the general enrollment remain low and stagnant for many years (KIE, 2015).

In Rwanda, pre-primary Education is a component of ECD policy. In 2006, an order from the President's office ruled that all children between the ages three to six should attend preschool and in 2008, standards for improving education quality were developed. The Rwandan Cabinet approved the "Integrated Early Childhood Development Strategic Plan" in 2011 (ECD Policy, 2016). Since then, various parties, both government and its stakeholders, have provided most services in the context of ECD (Save the Children International (SCI), 2012; EDPRS 2013/2014-2017/2018). However, pre-primary education in Rwanda is affected by many challenges including poor enrolments, lack of proper sanitation and nutrition services in pre-primary schools, and high staff turnover rate (ECD Strategic Plan, 2011).

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

The Rwandan government has decided to invest in ECD as the most cost-effective with a view that the benefits of investing in ECD are higher than those from investing in any other age group (ECD Strategic Plan, 2016). This is why the government of Rwanda committed to achieve 100% enrolment rate in pre-primary education by 2030. According to MINEDUC (2018), between 2012 and 2017, the budget for pre-primary education rose from 0.1% to 1.7% of the government of Rwanda Education budget with a purpose to boost enrollments in that section. However, evidence shows that the increased budget did not attract more enrolments because most of the funds were

allocated to salaries of staff in charge of pre-primary education at national and districts levels. The funding and management of pre-primary schools largely remained in the hands of the parents and the private sector. However, there was no research evidence to guide the government's investment in pre-primary education. For instance, 33% of the General Enrolment Rate (GER) for pre-primary education expected in 2018 did not happen, only 24.40% could be achieved (MINEDUC, Statistical Year Books, 2011 to 2018). This paper therefore, sought to identify the influence of school financial requirements on enrolment rate of preprimary schools in Rwamagana District in Rwanda.

### **1.3 Objective of the Paper**

The objective of this paper was to identify the influence of school financial requirements on enrolment rate of preprimary schools in Rwamagana District in Rwanda.

## **2.1 Literature Review**

### **2.1.1 Access to pre-primary education**

Access to pre-primary education is diverse across the globe. For instance, Zubairi and Pauline (2017), gathered data on access to pre-primary education worldwide and found that 85% of children in low income countries do not access pre-primary education, on the other hand high-income countries provide access to pre-primary education up to 82% of children between 3-6 years old. Even countries in Latin America and Caribbean have made advances twice bigger in the provision of pre-primary education compared to countries in the Sub-Saharan Africa (University of Cambridge, 2017). More than 200 million lack access to pre-school education and therefore are at the risk of not reaching their full potential (UNICEF, 2016). Despite the 2015 SDGs commitments, which compelled countries to make pre-primary education available to all children under 6 years old by 2030, only 38 countries out of 193 have free and compulsory pre-primary education. The blame goes both on the governments and donors who are not effectively funding pre-primary education. For instance, in 2017, both governments and donor funds combined for the pre-primary education sector accounted for only 11% of all the funds needed to ensure the goal of universal free pre-primary education is reached by 2030 (UNICEF, 2016).

Access to pre-primary education is hindered by disproportionate funding between early years education and higher education. Asma Zubairi and Pauline Rose (2017) revealed that of the 46 poor countries, 40 of them spend huge amounts on higher education than on pre-primary education. For instance countries like Burundi and Malawi spend 1000 times larger portions of funds on tertiary education compared to how much they invest in pre-primary education. Given the fact that only 1% of disadvantaged children make it to tertiary education, this means that education funding in low and middle income countries mainly targets well to do households while children from disadvantaged families are missing out the opportunity. According to UNICEF (2012), access to pre-primary education has stalled; the global population rises but enrollment in pre-primary education remains flat. This denies millions of children the right to education, jeopardizes prospects of educational opportunities in later years. South Saharan Africa accounts for ½ of all children out of school where 1 in 4 children has never attended pre-school and will most likely dropout of primary school. The UNESCO's global monitoring report (2012) revealed that only 30 million of 61 million children aged between 3-6 years old attended at least one year of pre-primary education by 2015 (UNESCO, 2015).



Research evidence has shown that in developing countries, children fail to attend preprimary schools due to low socio-economic status of their parents. A study conducted by Shinali, Githui and Thinguri (2014) found that in Kenya, 65% of children did not attend preschool education due to lack of financial school requirements. This research also found a link between parents' level of education and occupation with enrolment in pre-primary education with better educated and better employed parents having more children enrolled in pre-primary education than low literate and low income families. However, some of the low and middle income counties have put in place measures to encourage enrollment into pre-primary schools. Tanzania, since 2014 revised its education policy and funding to add one free and compulsory preprimary class for 5 year olds so that all children start primary education at the age of six years having at least one year preparatory of pre-school. The general enrollment rate for Tanzanian pre-primary education stood at 36.9% by 2014 (Kate Anderson & Rebecca Sayre, 2016).

In Rwanda, there has been a slow rise of access to pre-primary education with the enrolment rate (GER) in pre-primary schools between 2008-2011 fluctuating, respectively 16.1%, 15.9%, 9.9%, and 11.6% and recently, 33% of the GER for pre-primary education expected in 2017 did not materialize, only 24.40% could be achieved (MINEDUC, Statistical Year Books, 2011 and 2018). Funding is private whereby communities have to contribute largely for school financial requirements, but in some cases, there are church and NGO subsidies to ease the burden of parent contributions (MINEDUC, 2017).

### **2.1.2 Cost sharing of preprimary education from high to low income countries**

Effective preprimary education is associated with adequate degree of education cost per child (Belfield, 2006). However, calculation of school financial requirements is very problematic since needs vary widely depending on type of services delivered and parents socio-economic status. Moreover, some pre-primary schools have childcare, health program and nutrition for 0-3 year olds while others have educational programs for 3-6 year olds. It is almost impossible to measure the exact price parents incur for pre-primary education of their children as many aspects of financial school requirements such as the time parents sacrifice to take children to school or back home, contribution to birthday parties, purchase of toys cannot easily be priced. Research evidence shows that the higher funding, the higher the quality of education, the price of preprimary education however, differs from country to country depending on their economic powers

ECCE in Brazil is publically funded and parents do not need to make much contribution, however, a child enrolled in private pre-primary schools spends between 500-1,000\$ per year (Schady, 2015). In China, pre-primary education in well-off areas is mainly the responsibility of parents and the cost is approximately one third of the cost of primary education. The government exempted taxes on pre-primary education investment and this has encouraged many private providers to serve people who would not wish to enroll their children in public schools. International organizations have also a share in the provision of ECCE especially in the disadvantaged areas (Wong and Pang, 2018). In Cuba, the government has the biggest share of the cost of preprimary education. The ministry of education is responsible for policy development and implementation, education for 3-6 year olds is free across the country. Private provision is prohibited. However, parents still have to contribute for uniforms, pens, notebooks, pencils, bags, transport, etc. (UNESCO, 2013). In France, coverage is extensive because the government pays for almost all running costs including the teachers, non-teaching staff, feeding costs, etc The contribution amounts to 0.66% of the government's GDP. Parents are only required to contribute for about 28%

of the school fees plus contribution for children uniforms, bags, paper and pencils, toys, and sometimes birthday parties. The government generally estimates the cost of pre-primary education to be \$5,500 per enrollee by 2017 (Meyers & Gomick, 2015). In Germany, the government contributes 0.4% of its GDP for ECD. Preprimary education is controlled by the Laender and Ministries of Social Affairs and Education. Parents' contributions cover up to 30% of the total cost, and vary according to income levels and the number of children but are around \$400 per year. The government and local governments share the cost of public expenditures (UNESCO, 2018).

In India, pre-primary education is the responsibility of the government primarily, although parents pay funding for supplemental services. Services provided include early education, nutrition, and health. 30% of the population is covered and the government funds range from \$10 - \$22 per child per year (UNESCO, 2015). In Egypt, pre-primary education coverage is still low and parents basically incur all costs including paying teacher salaries, contribution for porridge and snacks and contribution to salaries of non-teaching staff, and children transport to school and back home. The ministry of insurance and social affairs monitors quality but the management of schools remains in the hands of the parents supported by religious groups and employers. Financial school requirements in pre-primary education amounted to 400\$ by 2017 and in most cases parents were only required to pay 25% of that price (UNICEF, 2018).

In Senegal, pre-primary education is overseen by the Ministry of Family and Early Childhood (Rayna, 2013). There is a central unit in charge of policy development, and staff training but normally the system is shared by private formal pre-school which is a privilege for the wealthier families in urban areas who can pay school fees, and the private religious pre-schooling which is low-cost for families because it is subsidized by the church. There are also several NGO funded initiatives and other informal home-based provisions. According to Pence, 2014, pre-primary education in Kenya is mainly private but the government pays \$1 for every child enrolled at a pre-primary class based at public primary school. Parents pay around \$15 per year per child and in some cases, local communities contribute for land for construction or contribute in kind such as voluntary service at the school such as at construction sites, cooking children's porridge or cleaning of classrooms (DFID, 2015).

### **2.1.3. Completion rates and drop out in pre-primary schools**

In Latin America and OECD countries, the pre-school enrollment and completion rates are above 50% in general and in many countries around 90% already. However, some developed countries like the USA have very complex ECCE systems that universal coverage has always been just a dream. For example, the GER of preschool education in the USA has only risen from 60% to 64% between 2000 and 2016 (IEA, 2016). The reason for slow growth is caused by a variety of pre-primary education curricula and provision mechanisms available from which many affluent parents have the freedom to choose which to take. The only central regulation mechanism is available for children from disadvantaged families who attend the Head Start program while many affluent families choose to educate their children from a diversity of other international programs or just provide toys-rich environment, home tutoring with qualified teachers or not (OECD, 2017).

According to Adriana Jaramillo and Alain Mingat, (2016), pre-primary education in Africa is not well attended compared to the status on other continents. The general completion rate in pre-primary education on the African continent was 16% by 2016. This is because; many African countries are still struggling to implement universal primary education, which, in some countries still looks like a dream. Another explanation of low attendance and completion rates in preprimary

education is that the rate of malnutrition and child mortality are still high in many African countries, 26.5% for children under 5 (UNESCO, 2016).

The development of early childhood learning in Africa generally is very slow and the challenge remains immense. Given the slow pace many countries are taking, UNESCO warns that if nothing is done to break the trend, it would take about 150 years for the enrollment rate to reach 50% only (2170). With this in mind, it seems like some countries would reach GER above 50% by 2030 depending on the current progress already registered.

Since 2000, Mali embarked on a journey to increase the GER in the pre-primary education sector by using trained women to provide home based ECD services in what is known as “Clos d’enfants” (UNESCO, 2000). The Ministry of education, UNESCO, UNICEF, and the “Federation International des Centres d’Entrainement aux Methodes d’éducation Actives (FICEMA) worked together to scale up the program across the country, providing good health and educational opportunities for 3-6 year olds from rural communities. Care-giver mothers in a team of three provide day care on a weekly basis; play activities such as storytelling, dance and cognitive building activities plus a daily meal to a group of 12-15 children.

Nigeria is the most populated African country. Universal Free Primary education has been a very big challenge in this large country with lots of minerals. Many children drop out of school to help their parents work in the mines or on the farm. Many women living in Nigerian cities, townships and slums are often involved in small businesses that make it very complicated for them to cater for their young children (UNESCO, 2014). Since 2003, fisher women in Lagos who weave fishing nets and smoke fish established childcare facilities so that one or two of their colleagues takes care of children by feeding them and reading them storybooks as other parents go on with their business activities. Women therefore take turns caring for children on a rolling basis. UNICEF, churches and other NGOs embraced this approach in other areas of the country such as market places, shopping malls, and other workstations to give more freedom to women to engage in income generating activities but also making it possible to give children nutritious meals, immunization, and provide play opportunities for children (UNESCO, 2014).

In 1984, Zimbabwe started early childhood education with the support from Kushanda early childhood education project. Parents with children 3-6 would make associations based on farming or other employment opportunities. As part of their association, their children were enrolled in a nearby pre-school centre where they would benefit a day care by a trained pre-primary care-giver. Nearby schools plan to have a 3-day session in service training where teachers meet, share best practices and discuss challenges together. This continuous in service training provide concentrated refresher courses, allow teachers and the parent management committees to discuss progress, problems and support/learn from each other which made this model very successful to scale up country wide by 2012 (World Bank, 2017).

According to UNICEF (2017), Kenya is the most developed ECD provider in East Africa. Pre-primary education was a government agenda since 1970s when the Centre for Early Childhood Education (NACECE) started offering teacher training and upgrading the quality of the program for early childhood teachers. Enrollment rates in pre-primary schools have been fluctuating with slight annual increments due to the policy design. Parents take responsibility of ECD management, and teacher pay while the role of the government is mainly that of regulation and quality assurance. Having said so, many pre-primary schools across the country struggle to improve quality outcomes

if the parents cannot raise enough funds to attract well trained teachers and buy the necessary materials for children to engage into effective play opportunities. However, recent government measures to increase enrollment and pre-school resilience include providing grants to communities who demonstrated commitment and ability to manage ECD centres. The government grants allow schools to enroll children from low-income families as well. Services provided at ECD centers include early learning opportunities, feeding program, de-worming, immunization and growth monitoring. In some cases, grants are given to parents associations to start income generating activities, and run an ECD Centre alongside that (World Bank, 2013).

### 3.1 Research Methodology

This paper employed descriptive and multiple regression in order to find out the extent to which school financial requirement can influence the level of enrolment rate in pre-primary schools. The target population was 338. The sample size was 181 obtained by the use of Yamane formula. The sample was obtained by the use of simple random and convenient sampling techniques. Questionnaire and interview guide were used to collect the data. The data management of this study was maintained by using SPSS software version 21.

#### 4.1 Research Findings

The study sought to examine the influence of school financial requirements on enrolment rate of preprimary schools in Rwamagana District in Rwanda. The study findings were presented in sub sections.

##### 4.1.1 Pre-primary school financial requirements

**Table 1: Pre-primary school financial requirements**

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance
Fees	15	9,000	45,000	22,567	11,318	128,102,381
Feeding	15	6,000	13,000	9,280	2,436	5,933,143
Uniform	15	6,000	22,000	13,600	5,600	31,364,286
Transport	15	0	35,000	10,133	10,348	107,088,095
Parties	15	0	6,000	1,280	1,974	3,897,429
Toys	15	0	8,000	4,633	3,159	9,980,952
Stationery	15	0	6,000	3,200	2,128	4,528,571
Construction	15	0	5,000	1,400	1,692	2,864,286
In-kind	15	0	2,500	533	935	873,810
Valid N	15					

The study results in Table 1 reveals that school fees which is mostly to pay staff salaries is the highest school requirement with a mean of 22,567 Frw per year, followed by uniform (13,600Frw), transport (10,133Frw), school feeding (9,280Frw), toys and materials (4,633Frw), stationery (3,200Frw), construction (1,400Frw), parties (1,280Frw) and contribution in-kind (533Frw). All respondents mentioned school fees, school feeding and school uniform as compulsory



requirements. Other school financial requirements depend on the commitment of schools and parents to improve quality of services provided to children. This is why some respondents did not mention them as school financial requirements at all. Further analysis of standard deviations and variances show that school fees, transport and school uniform have high variances. This is because a few parents prefer to send their children to private schools where they are looking for more quality. By adding up all means, the total school financial requirements per child per year would be 66,626Frw which is about 60\$. This is in line with findings from a study conducted by the British Department for International Development in 2014, which estimated the cost of pre-school education in low income countries to be around 50\$ per year (DFID, 2015).

**Table 2: Respondents’ responses on the question, “In pre-primary schools, parents spend much money on”**

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance
Teacher salary	181	1	5	4.48	.860	.740
School feeding	181	1	5	3.91	.664	.441
Construction	181	1	5	2.03	1.016	1.032
School materials	181	2	5	3.92	.887	.788
School uniform	181	1	5	3.98	.836	.700
Transport	181	1	5	2.31	1.137	1.293
Valid N (listwise)	181					

Parents spend much money on teacher salary (Table 2) with a rate mean of 4.48, followed by school uniform (3.98), school materials (3.92), and school feeding (3.91). Contribution to school construction and payment of child transport rates are lower than other rates and have higher standard deviations and variances. This suggests that contribution to school construction and payment of child transport were found not to be common school financial requirements in pre-primary schools of Musha Sector of Rwamagana District. Data in Table 1 and Table 2 are aligned as contribution to teacher salary, school uniform and school feeding stand out. However, respondents emphasized that parents are also likely to spend much money on school materials as well. This does not conflict with the information presented in Table 2 given that teachers and members of pre-primary schools management committees preferred to differentiate school materials into toys and stationery. A few respondents commented that in addition to school financial requirements presented in Table 1 and Table 2, parents may be requested to contribute on the salary of the cleaner or school janitor. In 2013, The World Bank stated that the single most important challenge that low and middle income countries need to tackle was the issue of teacher salary as parents carried more than 75% burden of pre-primary education school cost (World Bank, 2013).

#### 4.1.2. Enrollment of children in pre-primary schools

The second objective of this study was to assess the enrolment rate of children in pre-primary schools in Rwamagana District. To achieve this objective, respondents were requested to rate how far they agreed or disagreed with statements provided in Table 3 by using a rating of five to one.

**Table 3. Enrolment rate of children in preprimary schools**

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance
The number of children enrolled in each class is enough	181	2.64	.989	.977
All children attend classes regularly	181	2.87	.778	.605
All children enrolled are aged 3-6 years old	181	3.94	.889	.791
The school has the capacity to enroll more children	181	2.71	.935	.875
Within the nearby community, many other children aged 3-6 are not yet enrolled in preprimary schools.	181	4.10	.860	.739
There is overpopulation in classrooms	181	3.53	.992	.984
Valid N (listwise)	181			

Most respondents disagreed with the statement that, “the number of children enrolled in each class is enough” with a rating of 2.64 points (Table 3) and disagreed with the statement that, “the schools have the capacity to enroll more children” with a rating of 2.71. This implies that either the classroom size is not big enough compared with the number of children enrolled or there are not enough rooms and teachers to care for children according to the desired standards. However, the fact that respondents were somewhat reserved on the statement that, “there is overpopulation in classrooms” with a rating of 3.53 points reveals that overpopulation in classrooms is an issue but not yet at alarming stage. These findings are in line with a study conducted by Save the Children in 2010 and found that pre-primary education infrastructure was poor or lacking in rural areas (Save the Children, 2013).

According to MINEDUC (2018), national pre-primary education minimum standards and guidelines for Rwanda state that classroom dimensions should be equivalent to the minimum of 1.5 sqm for each child and the enrollment for each classroom must not exceed 30 children with one teacher. Respondents disagreed with the statement that, “all children attend classes regularly” with a 2.87. The reasons for poor classroom attendance may include lack of school financial requirements, poor social economic standards within the household or the distance between children households and pre-primary schools. The study revealed that pre-primary education in Africa is not well attended compared to the status on other continents. The study further noted that the general completion rate in pre-primary education on the African continent was 16% by 2016 (Jaramillo & Mingat, 2016).

Respondents agreed with the statement that, “within the nearby community, many other children aged 3-6 are not yet enrolled in preprimary schools” with a 4.10 points which suggest that children enrollment in pre-primary schools in Rwamagana District are still low. They also almost agreed with the statement that “all children enrolled are aged 3-6 years old” which suggests that age range of 3-6 years old is respected with a few cases of below or above, but given the high access of primary education in Rwanda, it is most unlikely to find a child aged more than 6 years in pre-primary education. There are a few children below 3 years of age who enroll in pre-primary

education because in rural areas, there are no crèches for babies and young children like in urban areas. MINEDUC states that 0.5 % of children under three years of age are enrolled in pre-primary education (Education Statistics, 2019).

#### 4.1.3 School financial requirements and enrollment of children in pre-primary schools

The model summary of school financial requirements and children enrolment in pre-primary schools is shown in Table 4

**Table 4: Model summary of school financial requirements and children enrolment in pre-primary schools**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.377 <sup>a</sup>	.142	.113	.838	.265	49.712	1	174	.000

a. Predictors: (Constant), school financial requirement

The regression analysis model presented in Table 4 shows that R. Square is 0.142, which means that 14% of the data can be explained by this model. The significance F is 0.000 which is less than  $\alpha = 0.05$  therefore this is a very good model. Further analysis shows that p-values for most of independent variables are less than  $\alpha = 0.05$ . This means that their effect on standard 3-6 age range enrollment in pre-primary schools is statistically significant. School construction and school uniform are negatively associated with standard 3-6 age range enrollment in pre-primary schools. This means that parents may hold children at home because they cannot afford those requirements. On the opposite, school materials requirements are positively associated with 3-6 standard age range enrollment in pre-primary schools. As preschoolers learn mainly through play, parents are likely to assume that their children learn better in a well-resourced environment. Findings from Table4 can also be supported by a study conducted by Shinali, Githui and Thinguri in 2014 which found that in Kenya, 65% of children did not attend pre-primary education due to lack of school materials (Shinali, Githui & Thinguri, 2014).

#### 4.2 Discussion

The Rwandan government has ambitious targets for development and strengthening pre-primary education. This commitment can be traced back to the universal declaration of human right signed in 1948 and highlighted that education is a basic human right (United Nations, 1989). The UN convention on the rights of the child states that education is a means through which a nation achieves sustainable development (UNICEF, 1990). In addition, many research studies were conducted and confirmed economic, private, and social returns on investments in education, health, nutrition early in life. There is no room for doubt that early childhood development is a key element in breaking the poverty cycle (Der Gaag & Tan, 1998; Schweinhart, Barnes & Weikart, 1993; Meyers, 1998). The Rwandan government ratified secondary treaties and policy frameworks to reinforce this international commitment: the 1990 Jomtien World Treaty, the 1990 African Charter on the rights and welfare of the child, the 2001 Children’s Act, the 2000 millennium development goals which later became the sustainable development goals in 2015.

It was until 2008, when the government of Rwanda took a serious stand to promote early childhood development including pre-primary education also because of the vision 2020 which aimed to transform Rwanda into a knowledge based economy. Although the Rwandan government has undoubtedly committed to develop pre-primary education across the country, it has been a challenging endeavor beyond the expectations. Almost all the targets were missed or at least fallen short year after year. For instance, it was expected that by 2020, pre-primary education enrollments should have been above 30% of GER but were still below 25% despite a spike in the budget line for pre-primary education, which has been in constant growth over the past ten years (MINEDUC, 2020).

This challenge is not specific for Rwanda but is common to all developing countries, which still consider universal primary and secondary education as a priority hence lack adequate funding for pre-primary education. For instance, the government of Kenya started investment in pre-primary education since 1970's but has been struggling ever since as well. Its GER for pre-primary education is stands at 44% with 40% attrition rate (ADEA, 2018). Reasons for low enrollment include parent's inability to provide basic needs, lack of school fees, lack of necessary services among pre-primary education centers, poor child protection and safety services, free primary education and lack of community awareness (Murungi, 2013). Similarly, the results from this study reveal that the influence of pre-primary school financial requirements is significant on enrollment rate of children in pre-primary schools. However, the independent variables selected in this study (teacher salary, school uniform, school feeding fees, child transport, and school materials) appear to be just a few among many reasons for low enrollments in preprimary education in Rwanda. To make matters worse, some of the variables deemed to cause poor enrollment were found to be actually stimuli for increased enrollments in pre-primary schools. These are parent's contribution to school materials, and child transport and the feeding program. Teacher salary appears not to be statistically associated with enrollment rates in pre-primary schools while school uniform and school construction appears to discourage children enrollments.

### **5.1 Summary of findings and Conclusion**

The objective of this paper focused to identify the influence of school financial requirements on enrolment rate of preprimary schools in Rwamagana District in Rwanda. The respondents revealed that contributions for school materials and child transport have positive influence on children enrolment. Contrary, contributions for school feeding, school uniform, school construction have negative influence on enrolment of children in pre-primary schools. Interestingly, school feeding was also found to be positively associated with classroom attendance. The study concluded there is a statistical significance relationship between the variables of school financial requirement and children enrolment in pre-primary schools. This implied that the schools financial requirements are ready to make changes associated with children enrolment especially in pre-primary schools.

### **6.1 Recommendations**

Based on the study findings, the following recommendations were made;

1. Parents should continue playing an active role in terms of management and funding of pre-primary schools. One way to ensure that parents are actively involved is to establish functional school management committees.



2. The government of Rwanda is recommended to increase its budget for pre-primary education funding especially in the rural districts because many poor households failed to contribute to teacher salaries and school construction.
3. The ministry of education, civil society and private actors are recommended to increase their efforts to promote proper awareness on pre-primary education among the vulnerable communities.

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