

Influence of Socio-Economic Factors on Access and Retention of Learners in Public Primary Schools in Turkana West Sub-County

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ABSTRACT

Since the introduction of FPE, the concern by the Government of Kenya and other stakeholders in education has been education access and retention. This study sought to investigate the influence of socio-economic factors on access and retention of learners in public primary schools in Turkana West Sub-County. The study was guided by Classical Liberal Theory of Equal Opportunity and Social Darwinism. Exploratory research design was adopted in this study. The study targeted 36 head teachers, 201 teachers, 13221 parents and 22028 pupils from public primary schools in Turkana west Sub County bringing the total population to 35486 people. Stratified sampling was used to select 393 pupils while purposive sampling was used to select 12 teachers, 12 parents and 12 head teachers from the sampled schools. The research instruments used for data collection consisted of questionnaires and interview schedules. The instruments were validated. Piloting of the instruments was conducted in two primary schools in the neighboring sub county (Loima sub-county) each of the instrument yielded a reliability coefficient of above 0.7 using the split- half technique. Questionnaires were used to collect quantitative data from pupils while interview schedules were used to collect qualitative data from teachers, parents and head teachers. Data collected was cleaned, coded and then entered into SPSS version 22.0 for analysis. Quantitative data was analysed using frequencies and percentages while qualitative data was presented in prose in accordance to the study objectives. The study adhered to all ethical considerations in research to ensure that the results are not jeopardized. The study found that socio-economic factors have a significant positive influence on access and retention of learners in public primary schools in Turkana West Sub-County.

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KEYWORDS: Access, Learners, Retention, Socio-Economic Factors

1. INTRODUCTION

Ainley *et al.*, (1995) defines socio-economic factors as the overall status of a person to which social and economic attributes are linked to. In the context of access and retention of learners in schools, socio-economic factors refer to the socio-economic position of the guardian or family. This status is determined in terms of achievements in areas such as occupation, employment, education, income and wealth by an individual or the family. According to Human Development Report by UNDP (2018) noted that poverty is among the frontrunners of the challenges influencing UPE implementation and realization. From the report, with over 50% of Kenya's population living below the poverty line access and retention of learners has been seriously affected. A report by Oxfam (2017) adds that enrolment and

retention of learners in Turkana County is very low as compared to national rates due to its poverty index that is the highest in Kenya.

Nzina (2019) conducted a study on socio-economic factors and their influence on retention of public secondary female students in Mukaa Sub-County of Kenya's Makueni County. The factors considered for the study were financial status of the family, education level of the parents, family size and marital status of the parents. The research design employed was descriptive survey. The target population was 37 public secondary schools; specifically targeting 37 head teachers, 54 class teachers selected from form four and 1240 female students in form four. Sampling technique used was stratified sampling to select the

respondents while SRS was used to select the schools in each category. Data was collected through analysis of documents and questionnaires. From the findings the socio-economic factors were ranked on how they influenced retention as follows: financial status of the family, level of education of the parents, family size and marital status of the parent from the most influential to the least influential respectively. The study recommended for stakeholders to come up with measures to alleviate poverty so as to empower the community and guardians for them to support their dependents in education. The suggestion by the study for future studies to be undertaken in public primary schools is what this study borrows and sought to achieve.

A study conducted by Mike, Nakajjo and Isoke (2016) used logistic regression analysis to test the significance of socio-economic determinants of drop-outs in Uganda's primary schools. The main focus of the study was on the household-based socio-economic determinants of drop-outs. Through the use of several logistic regressions the study found that school's distance from home, household's head gender, and pupils' gender as insignificant in determining drop-out rates. However, the results confirmed the importance of education of the parent, size of the household and fraction of household members who were active economically in determining drop-out rates. The study however conceptualized the socio-economic factors into pupil's related factors, family background factors, personality of the pupils and factors that were community based, an approach that this study seeks to deviate from so as to widen the scope of the socio-economic determinants.

Socio-economic factors and their influence on public primary learners' retention in Malindi Sub-County, Kenya were assessed by Kirimi and Muteti (2016). The context of socio-economic factors was parental involvement related factors. The socio-economic factors were conceptualized in terms of parent's income levels, occupation, education level, and number of children. A descriptive survey research design was adopted. Questionnaires and interview schedules were used in the collection of data. The study found that education level, occupation and number of children were significant parental factors that determined retention of learners. Income level of the parent was not significant in determining retention levels of learners. The fact that this study only focused on parental factors as the context of the socio-economic determinants of access and retentions guides the current study to broaden the scope of socio-economic factors to include other determinants apart from those connected to the parent.

Njue (2015) assessed influencers of retention of Kajiado County's (Kenya) primary school pupils. Among the objectives was to establish the economic factors influencing retention. The indicators of economic factors included parents' education level, family size and family's income level. Descriptive approach was adopted with simple random sampling (SRS) being applied in electing the schools to participate in the study. The study found that economic factors significantly impacted pupils' retention in Kajiado County, Kenya. One significant aspect in the study by Njue (2015) was how poverty was addressed: first, incapability to cater for the direct costs in schooling, for example materials used in learning, food and uniforms and secondly, the indirect costs related to learning such as transport and payment to third parties such as landlords. However, the study failed to address other economic indicators such as adequacy of resources and sources of financing, a gap that will be addressed in the current study.

A study in Lamu County, Kenya by Makorani (2017) assessed pupils' retention rate and the determinants thereof. In the study, socio-economic factors as determinants of retention rates for pupils were assessed in terms of family background. The design of research adopted was survey research design. Head teachers were selected for the study. Closed and open ended questionnaires were adopted for data collection. The study's findings concluded that aspects of family background such as parents' education level, children's gender in the family, family's economic background and family's aspirations influenced the retention rates of pupils in Lamu County's public primary schools. The study's recommendation was for the government to provide adequate facilities for learning to prevent exploitation of parents by the schools. However, the study only focused on the family position in terms of parents' education, family's economic background and aspirations but ignored other factors such as occupation, sources of funds, size of the family, amongst others, a gap that the current study will fill.

Nyeris and Koross (2015) focused on the efficacy of FPE in the context of special needs children enrolment in Kenya's West Pokot County. Among the factors studied to influence enrollment rates were economic factors. The design for research adopted was descriptive survey. The study's target population was 696 pupils from sixty five primary schools and teachers of special needs. Questionnaires, focused group discussions (FGDs), interview schedules and analysis of documents were used in the collection of data. The findings revealed a significant relationship between economic factors and retention of pupils.

However, the study only focused on pupils with special needs and did not break down economic factors into their respective indicators. The current study will broaden Nyeris and Koross (2015) study by incorporating all categories of pupils and breaking down economic determinants of retention into its indicators.

For Ireri (2015) child labor was studied and its influence on pupils' attendance in school in Kenya's Kiambaa Division of Kiambu County. The study focused on answering research issues such as the causes of child labor for learners in public primary schools in Kiambaa Division, types of child labor engaged in, extent of child labor effect on school attendance and policy measures in place to mitigate the level of child labor in the region. The research design was of cross-sectional survey design with the target population being head teachers, teachers and pupils. Questionnaires, interview guides, FGDs and schedules of observation were used in collection of data. The findings demonstrated poverty, single parenthood, low parental education and negative attitude by parents towards education as causes of child labor. In addition, the study found that child labor negatively affected school attendance leading to those engaged dropping out of school. However, the study only assessed child labor as the only socio-economic determinants of school attendance, an approach that this study seeks to deviate from by exhausting most socio-economic indicators that are perceived to affect access and retention of learners in Turkana West Sub-County.

Chinyoka (2014) assessed the drop-out causes for learners in ordinary level in Zimbabwe's Masvingo. Attribution theory informed the study. The research design was case study where one secondary school in a resettlement area in Masvingo was targeted. Qualitative data was used. Data collection was through observations, interview schedules and FGDs. Thematic coding was the data analysis method used. The study revealed that socio-economic factors such as households' poverty, child labor, malnutrition and health related issues as drop-out causes in the resettlement area of Masvingo. The study recommended the need for establishment of poverty alleviation strategies by the government so as to mitigate the negative effects of poverty on drop-out cases. However, the study by Chinyoka (2014) was general in terms of the drop-out causes. The study also focused on a case study design targeting secondary schools in a resettlement area. This differs from the current study which classifies the determinants into three, socio-economic, socio-cultural and school based determinants. The current

study also uses a descriptive design on public primary pupils, thus deviating from Chinyoka (2014).

Home-based factors and their influence on participation in learning by secondary students in day public secondary schools in Kenya's Nyatike Sub-County were studied by Ogur (2014). The home based factors were conceptualized as income of the family and level of education of the parents. Mixed research methodology was employed comprising of both qualitative and quantitative data. The sample size included 9 heads of schools and 162 learners selected from 9 learning institutions. From the study's findings, it was evident that most parents' income and education levels were low impacting learners' participating in learning negatively. The study recommended that the government should assist learners in public day secondary schools with materials for learning due to the low income levels of their parents. Just like the study recommended for other factors influencing learners' participation in learning to be investigated, this study will adhere to the recommendation and widen the scope of socio-economic factors beyond parental related factors.

Andrew and Orodho (2014) study was to assess the socio-economic factors that influenced access to school by pupils in Kibera, an informal settlement in Kenya. The study sample 114 participants comprising of 6 head masters, forty eight teachers and sixty parents. For head masters and teachers, questionnaires were used while for parents interview schedules were used. Data was analyzed descriptively, inferentially and through thematic methods. A positive and significant link was found between parents' education and access to school. However, the relationship between parents' financial status and education access was negative but insignificant. The study follows Andrew and Orodho (2014) recommendations that future research should exhaust as many socio-economic determinants as possible since theirs did not; also, a study similar to Andrew and Orodho (2014) was to be replicated in other areas so as to capture a population that is larger and a variety of settlements. By combining the two recommendations, the gap identified in Andrew and Orodho (2014) is filled.

Murage and Kisaka (2015) evaluated the socio-economic factors and how they affected retention and rates of completion for students in Kilifi County, Kenya. The study targeted students attending public secondary schools. The sample size was 250 participants containing parents (200) and head masters (50). The socio-economic factors assessed included occupation of the parents, background in terms of education, family size and gender. Data was

collected through questionnaires and interview schedules. The sample was selected through purposive technique of sampling. From the study, it was found that a larger proportion of the students who had dropped from school were from families with parents with no formal education. The study also found that education of the parents and economic status significantly affected drop-out rates of learners. Murage and Kisaka (2015) only focused on socio-economic factors at the family level while neglecting socio-economic factors at other levels such as the community and those related with the learner's characteristics, an approach that the current study intends to take.

In Rongo District of Kenya's Migori County, a study was conducted by Omollo (2013) on socio-economic factors and their influence on public secondary schools' drop-outs. The socio-economic factors considered in the study included peer pressure,

household head, and financial status of the parents. The target population was 755 students from form 4 and 3. Teachers and principals were also targeted as key respondents. To evaluate the relationship between the DV and IVs, cross tabulation and chi-square test statistic were used. From the cross tabulation results, it was found that peer pressure affected drop-out rates at 43.75%, household heads affected drop-out rates at 50% and financial status of the parent influenced drop-out rates at 81.25%. The chi-square statistics found a significant relationship between financial status and drop-out rates. However, the study ignored other socio-economic factors such as occupation, size of the family, sources of finance among others that the current study sought to study. A study conducted by Oduma (2012) in Sirare on influencers of drop-out rates stated that due to inadequate funds, learners drop out of schools so as to engage in cross-border smuggling that is viewed as more lucrative.

2. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

2.1. Influence of Socio-Economic Status of Parents on Access and Retention of Learners in Public Primary Schools in Turkana West Sub-County

The objective was to investigate the influence of parents' socio-economic status on access and retention of learners in public primary schools in Turkana West Sub-County. From the questionnaires, the pupils were required to briefly describe their economic background, adequacy of finances dedicated by parents towards education, affordability of learning facilities by the parents and how many siblings they are in school. The respondents were also required to indicate their level of agreement/disagreement on several Likert scale statements regarding the influence of socio-economic status of parents on access and retention in schools.

On the economic background, the findings are as reported below in Table 1.

Table 1: Economic Background of the Respondents

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Very Stable	23	6.5	6.5
Stable	64	18.1	24.6
Less Stable	97	27.5	52.1
Very Poor	169	47.9	100.0
Total	353	100.0	

Source: Researcher (2020)

From the findings, 47.9% (169) of the pupils stated that the economic background is very poor, 27.5% (97) stated that it is less stable, 18.1% (64) stated that it is stable while 6.5% (23) stated that it is very stable.

The pupils' response on the adequacy of finances dedicated towards education by their parents is as shown in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Education Finances Adequacy

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Very Adequate	42	11.9	11.9
Adequate	46	13.0	24.9
Inadequate	90	25.5	50.4
Very Inadequate	175	49.6	100.0
Total	353	100.0	

Source: Researcher (2020)

From the findings, it is evident that 49.6% (175) of the respondents indicate that the finances dedicated by their parents towards education are very inadequate, 25.5% (90) indicate that they are inadequate, 13.0% (46) indicate they are adequate and 11.9% (42) indicate that they are very adequate.

The learning facilities as the findings in Table 3 below demonstrate are very expensive as demonstrated by a response of 43.9% (155) of the pupils, expensive according to 28.9% (102) of the pupils, not affordable at all as shown by 17.8% (63), affordable according to 7.1% (25) and very affordable according to 2.3% (8) of the pupils.

Table 4.1: Affordability of Learning Facilities

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Very Affordable	8	2.3	2.3
Affordable	25	7.1	9.3
Expensive	102	28.9	38.2
Very Expensive	155	43.9	82.2
Not Affordable at all	63	17.8	100.0
Total	353	100.0	

Source: Researcher (2020)

According to the bar graph in Figure 1 below, 57.22% (202) of the pupils indicate that they are 2 to 4 siblings in school, 37.96% (134) indicate that they are 5 and above siblings in school while 4.82% (17) indicate that it is only them in school.

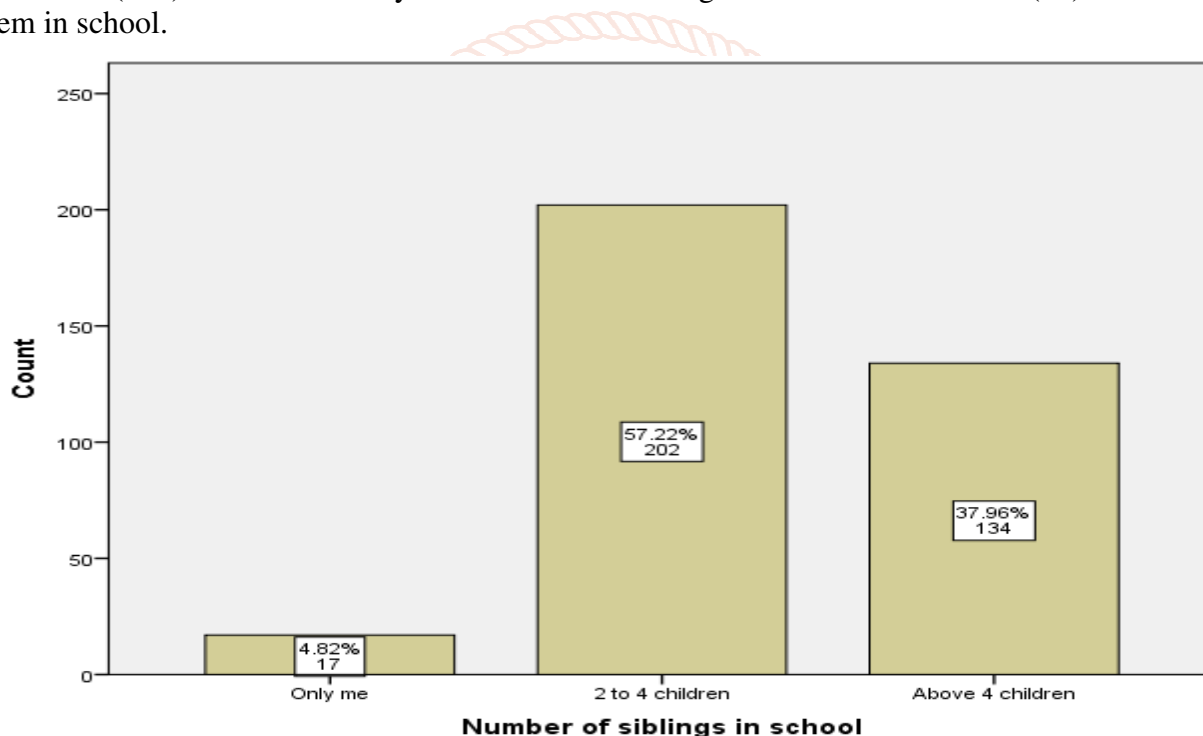


Figure 1: Distribution of Respondents by Siblings in School

Source: Researcher (2020)

The Likert scale responses on the statements regarding the influence of parents’ socio-economic status are as indicated in the table below.

Table 4: Likert Scale Responses on Socio-Economic Factors Influencing Access and Retention

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Access and retention in school is facilitated by my family financing education materials that I need	26 (7.4%)	30 (8.5%)	86 (24.4%)	134 (38.0%)	77 (21.8%)
More funds allocated to boys as compared to girls influences access and retention of girls in education	3 (0.8%)	37 (10.5%)	75 (21.2%)	176 (49.9%)	62 (17.6%)
There are no funds set aside for special needs pupils in this school and as a result are forced to miss classes and drop out of school in the long run	11 (3.1%)	32 (9.1%)	77 (21.8%)	204 (57.8%)	29 (8.2%)

Most learners dropping out of school come from poor families and are forced to drop out of school so as to engage in economic activities	9 (2.5%)	34 (9.6%)	66 (18.7%)	185 (52.4%)	59 (16.7%)
Donations from well-wishers such as NGOs ensure that facilities for learning are availed to learners in this school	6 (1.7%)	43 (12.2%)	117 (33.1%)	125 (35.4%)	62 (17.6%)

Source: Researcher (2020)

From Table 4, 59.8% (211) of the pupils agree and strongly agree that access and retention in school is facilitated by family financing education materials that they need, 24.4% (86) are neutral on this statement, 8.5% (30) disagree and 7.4% (26) strongly disagree. Table 4 also shows that 49.9% (176), 21.2% (75), 17.6% (62), 10.5% (37) and 0.8% (3) of the pupils agree, are neutral, strongly agree, disagree and strongly disagree respectively that more funds allocated to boys as compared to girls influences access and retention of girls in education. It can also be seen from Table 4 that 57.8% (204) of the respondents agree that there are no funds set aside for special needs pupils in this school and as a result are forced to miss classes and drop out of school in the long run, 21.8% (77) are neutral, 9.1% (32) disagree, 8.2% (29) strongly agree and 3.1% (11) strongly disagree. According to the findings as reported Table 4.5, 52.4% (185), 18.7% (66), 16.7% (59), 9.6% (34) and 2.5% (9) of the pupils agree, are neutral, strongly agree, disagree and strongly disagree respectively that most learners dropping out of school come from poor families and are forced to drop out of school so as to engage in economic activities. Lastly, 53.0% (187) of the pupils agree and strongly agree that donations from well-wishers such as NGOs ensure that facilities for learning are availed to learners in this school, 33.1% (117) are neutral, 12.2% (43) disagree and 1.7% (6) strongly disagree.

The key respondents interviewed are in support of most of these findings. For instance, one parent interviewed, Parent 1 was of the opinion that:

“We rely on pastoralism in this area and the market for our livestock has not been good due to poor economic conditions in the country that has led to closure of animal markets and as a result most parents cannot afford money to buy school uniforms”

Another parent (Parent 4) added that:

“The poverty experienced in some families forces the elder siblings to drop out of school so as to support the family by working in manual jobs and catering for livestock”

Among the teachers interviewed, Teacher I was of the opinion that:

“Drought in this area is prevalent and this leads to livestock deaths denying the households livelihoods and source of income for schooling”

For Head Teacher D,

“Challenges such as famine force parents to dedicate the minimal resources they get from sale of livestock in buying basic needs for the family such as food and little is left for school needs”

The findings agree with Shi (2016) who noted that resources in education are not equitably distributed among boys and girls in most developing countries leading to low rates of girls joining and being retained in schools. Ogur (2014) findings support this study by illustrating that most pupils especially girls drop out of schools due to parents' financial difficulties forcing most of these pupils who drop out to engage in activities that further demean them such as early marriages, prostitution and economic activities that further widen the socio-economic inequity gap. Further, Achola and Pillai (2016) explain how financial inadequacy has forced more girls than boys to drop out seeking unjust ways to make their ends meet in Kisumu City and other neighboring towns. The retention rates of pupils in Kitui County as opined by Katiwa (2016) is very worrying as the poor financial background force parents to spend most of their resources on child up keep rather than on their education. According to Komora (2014), the escalating drop-out cases of pupils in Tana-River primary schools can be attributed to lack of substantial financial support in their education resulting to most drop-outs to sneak to the beaches for quick money from fishing and sex tourism.

3. CONCLUSION

The study concludes that socio-economic factors have a significant positive influence on access and retention of learners in public primary schools

4. RECOMMENDATION.

It is recommended that socio-economic factors have a significant influence on access and retention of learners, parents in the study area should be empowered to adopt diverse economic activities in favor of the traditional pastoralism activities so as to liberalize them poverty and enable them finance the education of their children.

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