

Socio-Economic Factors influencing Repetition and Dropout Rates in Primary Schools in Arid and Semi-Arid Lands of Baringo County, Kenya

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to investigate factors leading to educational wastage in Arid and Semi-Arid areas of Baringo County which currently has a total of 111 public primary schools. The objectives of the study were to: determine social factors that influence pupils 'repetition and dropouts and to establish the economic factors that affect repetition and dropout. The constructivist learning theory guided the study. The study adopted descriptive research design. The study targeted teachers, parents, and pupils. Simple random sampling was used to pick the representative school of a sample size of 226 respondents. The data was collected by use of survey, interviews and review of secondary data from the schools 'records in the ten schools and the County Education Office. The data comprised of mainly quantitative data and was analyzed using descriptive statistics with help of SPSS. The school dropout was associated with institutional and home related factors: lack of food, inadequate parental motivation and overburdening pupils with household during school days. The factors established to influence repetition and dropout were marriages, lack of adequate learning materials, and lack of interest in education by parents, poverty and early pregnancy related issues. The relevant Government Ministries, NGOs and other stakeholders need to institutionalize mechanisms for addressing the plight of learners in disaster/drought afflicted areas. The study recommends that the girl mothers should be encouraged to rejoin school.

Key words: *Social, economic, wastage, repetition and dropouts, inclusion*

Introduction

Family connected variables directly or indirectly associated with poor school attendance and adjustments were established by Alexander, Entwisle & Horsey (1997). These variables include low father education, larger number of siblings', high mother's social alienation and negative attitude towards the school and towards mutual understandings with the child and mother dominated discipline Alexander, Entwisle & Horsey (1997). In Africa, a study was carried out on street boys in free town Sierra Leone in 2008. It highlighted various factors as contributing to children opting out or being forced out of their families' home and implicitly out of school. The less developed countries have devoted substantial proportions of their resources to the expansion of primary education in recent years (UNICEF, 2004). In many of these countries, the cost of attaining these objectives

has been increased because only a small proportion of the increasing number of children entering school complete the primary cycle (Levy, 2001).

Ayodele (2000) stated that a wastage rate of lower primary classes is higher than that obtained in upper classes. According to Fonkeng (2006), the phenomenon of higher repetition is experienced in many third world countries and is an indicator of inefficiency of the education systems. For example, in Cameroon it is as high as

40% indicating inefficiency in terms of cost and constitutes wastage particularly to the state, parents, and the individual victim. Repeating a class is an indicator of the inefficiency of the educational system (Amin, 1999). In some countries pupils are given the opportunity to repeat one or two times at the primary school level (Robinson, Mandelco, Olsen & Hart, 1995).

The dropout rate from primary schools in Nigeria is 9.3 % (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2006). The trend of wastage observable all over Nigeria has become a syndrome in certain states of the federation. According to the Federal Government of Nigeria Education Sector Analysis (2006), dropout/completion rate is one out of the five indicators with which the education system tries to actualize the philosophy of Nigeria Education. Wastage threatens the internal efficiency of school systems. It's the stumbling block to the realization of the nation's aims and objectives of primary education and basic education in general. Ethiopia has currently one of the lowest primary school enrollment rates in the world, thus attaining universal primary education in the country requires great efforts. Educational quality declined in most respects over the same period, due to shortages of qualified teachers and access to textbooks, and overcrowded classrooms (Woldehanna, Hoddinott, Ellis & Dercon, 2008).

Uganda has the highest school dropout rate in East Africa, according to a report by UNESCO (2009). Uganda still has the lowest proportion of children staying in school up to primary standard seven level. Across Africa, studies done in Zambia have shown that half of the students who enroll in secondary schools do not complete the terminal year within the specified duration (Willis, 1993). Although drop outs rate differ with regions, the study revealed that it was the highest at the end of the junior Secondary School that is grade ten (Eshiwani, 2007).

Ngware (1994) conducted a study in Rumuruti and Ng'arua Divisions of Laikipia County in Kenya. They indicated that wastage occurred among pupils of primary schools. He noted that the main cause of drop outs among pupils of primary schools in Laikipia West was related to the pupils' Socio-economic background. The rise in the level of poverty in Kenya (KNBS, 1997) indicates that 46.8% of Kenyans live below the poverty line. Since the level of poverty has also gone up in the country and the cost of education and training at all levels have continued to rise, many Kenyans are unable to meet the cost of education and can no longer have access to education (Abagi, 1999).

Studies conducted in Kenya by UNESCO (2005 & 2006) noted that children from poor urban areas in Kenya often drop out of school either before or after standard

eight examinations. This they found out was due to factors such as lack of money, lack of motivation, alcohol and drug abuse or failure in national examinations. This is to mean that there is an overriding impetus in the poor urban areas towards wastage. The study also noted that Arid and semi-arid have low participation rates. These are as low as 20.8% in North Eastern Province, 46.1% in Marsabit, 69% in West-Pokot and 53.2% in Samburu. Possible explanations for low enrollment rates include the fact that schooling is in competition with survival activities such as cattle herding, searching for water and fresh pasture for their livestock as well as the long distance between homes and schools. Therefore, the present study will attempt to find out which factors played significant role in causing wastage in schools in Baringo County. The main aim of this study was to determine the dropout and repetition rates for the County, and the socio-economic factors that fuel their occurrence and existence.

Statement of the Problem

Dropping out of school and repetition is also considered a waste of human resources in terms of teacher's salaries and students time. Baringo County enjoys a very high completion rate for both boys and girls whom stand at 97.90% and 87.80% respectively. These figures have generated a lot of interest and remain the single factor that has formed the basis of this study. This study, therefore, intends to establish the exact situation about dropout, repetition and absenteeism and their causative factors. Educational wastage produces citizens who are not adequately prepared to be absorbed in to the country's labor force; instead they become a liability to those who depend on them (Ngware, 1994).

Data available from County Education Office indicate that only about 56% of those enrolled in primary one do complete primary cycle of education. For example, 51.7% of those enrolled in standard one in 2001 went through the primary cycle. This means about half of the pupils actually dropout before going through primary cycle (Eshiwani, 2004). Illiteracy reduces the government's efforts to build a human capital which is essential for any development in the country. This study therefore sought to determine factors that influence absenteeism, dropout and repetition from primary schools in Baringo County, which is an ASAL region of Kenya.

Purpose of the Study

This study sought to determine socio-economic factors that influence absenteeism, dropout and repetition from primary schools in Baringo County, Kenya.

Objectives of the Study

1. To determine social factors that influence pupils 'repetition and dropouts in public primary schools in Baringo County.
2. To establish the economic factors that affect repetition and dropout in public primary schools in Baringo County.

Theoretical Framework

The study was based on constructivist learning theory which asserts that knowledge is constructed uniquely and individually in multiple ways (Brush & Saye, 2000). It is derived from the experiential model in which teaching is seen as transformation of existing knowledge (Kohonen, 1992) and the active learning model which suggests that all learning activities involve some kind of experience or dialogue, such as dialogue with self and dialogue with others. Student-centered learning is a model whereby students are placed in the core of the learning process. In this model, teachers are guided by what is best for the students when helping them to learn or make decisions.

The model was of great significance to the study because both models view dropping out of school as being influenced by the degree of satisfaction and schooling. Hence, the future benefits the pupils expect to gain from going to school will make them continue with schooling or drop out if they are not fully satisfied with education. If the household perceives that school cannot provide children with such basic skills, they may decide that an investment in education is not worth the small return (UNESCO, 2009). The dropout of pupils from school over a given period of time affects the impact of various socio-economic factors originating from the community and homes/families of the pupils. Socio-economic variables influence the dropout of pupils directly by determines a pupils' decision to drop from school, or that of the parent to withdraw the pupils from schooling. The variables also indirectly influence the drop out of pupils by negatively affecting their education achievements in school (attendance, learning and academic performances in examinations).

Methodology

Descriptive research design was used to conduct the study in Salawa division of Baringo County. The primary schools in Salawa division formed the target population for the study. Baringo County is situated in Rift valley province. The target population for the study was public primary school standard 7 and 8 pupils, the head teachers and teachers of public primary schools, as well as the parents whose children attend public primary schools. Purposive sampling was used to decide on Salawa division of Baringo County; this division is unique in terms of its geographic and economic characteristics. Simple random sampling was used by the researcher to sample both the homes and household respondents. This method was ideal because the area is sparsely populated hence difficult to reach most homes. The researcher used any adult household respondents who were within reach and who were willing to respond to the questionnaires.

A total of ten primary schools from the division were randomly chosen, at least two rural and two urban schools. The researcher used standard seven and eight pupils because it is assumed that they have the ability and capacity to respond to the instrument items adequately and appropriately, based on their comprehension and experience. All the head teachers of the participating schools were requested to be a part of the respondent. Class teachers for class seven and eight were purposively chosen from each school, while the rest of the teachers were randomly picked from those found in the staffroom and were willing to fill the questionnaires.

This study utilized three types of instruments for data collection; questionnaire, interview schedules and observation. Questionnaires were administered to the class teachers and pupils. Interviews schedules sought information regarding the background of the parents and reasons responsible for repetition and dropout in primary schools. Interviews were used to solicit information from the community members who were illiterate and could not understand the questionnaires. Direct field observations were used by the researcher at the time of data collection to collect information concerning physical and general atmosphere. The researcher also used direct observation method to observe various aspects of the school life in each of the schools and homes and to get relevant information to the nature of the data required by the researcher. The data was qualitatively and quantitatively analyzed. Contributory factors on wastage were coded, tabulated, and analyzed to enable the researcher to use simple descriptive statistics such as frequencies, Percentages, and means which enabled the researcher to determine the direction taken by the respondents on a given variable.

Findings

Extent of Pupils' Repetition from Primary Schools in Baringo County

As pupils move up the primary school levels, their numbers dwindle drastically by the time they reached primary eight. It could be seen that when all primary levels are considered, dropout is higher for girls than for boys and that for both the girls and the boys, it is highest in primary seven meaning that very few pupils complete the primary cycle of education. This gives a crude survival rates that may indicate an overestimate of the level of net primary dropout, due to the fact that class repetition has not been taken care of in the data, these figures do give an indication of the magnitude of the dropout problem in primary schools in Baringo County.

Differences between boys and girls were tested by the t-test at 95% confidence level and the results obtained were significant ($p = 0.005$). The main reason may be that at this stage both girls and boys become economically active and thus dropout to engage in income generating activities and or get married off. These findings are consistent with those of Holmes (2003), who argues that the girl child is more likely to drop out of schools than the boys.

Repetition Rate in Baringo County.

The percentage of pupils repeating at each level of primary education was calculated from the number repeating at a level out of the total level population. This figure revealed that repetition rate in Baringo County is quite high and calls for immediate action from all the concerned sectors. What figures meant was that, for example, if class 8 had 100 pupils 37 of them are repeaters, that amounts to more than a third are repeaters of that level. The reasons given for such high rate of repetition were similar to those of dropout. Even though repetition was not cited as a strong factor of dropout it may be acting as a secondary factor that eventually results in dropout.

Causes of School Repetition and Dropout. The findings showed a lot of similarity between those who dropped out and have since resumed and those whose siblings have had similar experiences. The overall pattern of causes highlights three major sources: (i) lack of school requirements (32.5%); (ii) involvement of the pupils in family business and tending to animals at home (18.4%); (iii) parents' inability to provide children with school and other requirements (14.3%) (see figure 2 below).

Lack of food, early pregnancies, chronic illness, long distance and poor performance in class also featured very prominently in this study as causes of dropout and repetition. Although there were similarities on the reasons of dropping out of school, those who had repeated class(s) highlighted sickness, household work and lack of school requirements in the order of decreasing preferences as their main reasons. From the study finding, it is clear that lack of school requirements, sickness and household work had the greatest impact on repetition and dropout. The three combined accounted for 72.10% according to the pupils who had dropped out but have since resumed schooling and 64.0% according to those who have never dropped out.

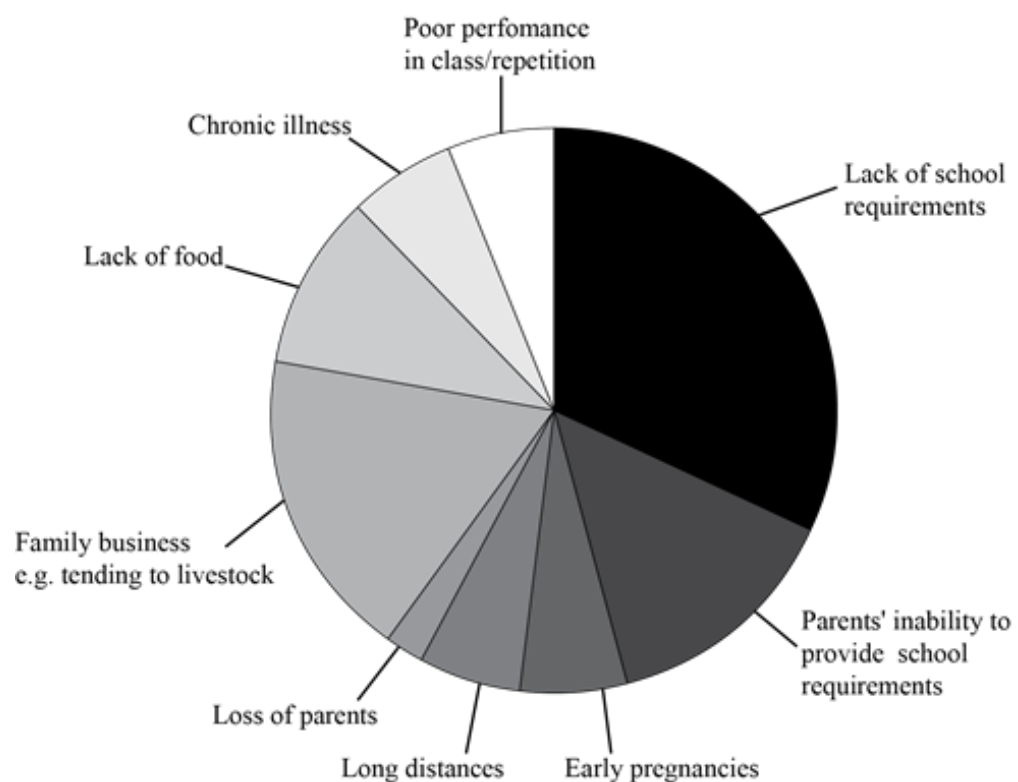


Figure 2: Factors Influencing Pupils' Repetition and Dropout.

Causes of School Repetition and Dropout from the Parents’ and Teachers’ Viewpoint

From their experiences, parents and teacher participants noted that there were varied causes of dropout and that these were sometimes different for girls and boys (Table1). Early marriage related factors were perceived to be the biggest cause of dropout for both girls and boys. In general marriage related factors and parental value of education were more a girls’ issue than boys’ whereas lack of schools’ requirements and parents’ poverty apply more to boys than girls as reasons for both repetition and dropping out of school. Poor performance in class (1.1% for girls and 2.4% for boys) and income generating activities (3.1% for girls and 6.8% for boys) appeared to influence boys more that girls though they were not important features of dropping out for both boys and girls.

Table 1: Parents’ and Teachers’ Perceived Causes of Dropout by Pupils Gender

Effects of the Cause On	Effects of the Cause On	
	Boys (%)	Girls (%)
Early marriage	30.4	35.1
Parents do not value education	25.1	29.4
Lack of school requirements	14.4	11.1
Parents are poor	14.2	10.8
Provide household labor	6.5	7.7
Income generating activities	6.8	3.1
Long distance	1.3	2.1
Poor performance in class	2.4	1.1
Total	100%	100%

It is therefore evident that factors of repetition and dropout are somehow similar for both boys and girls. The findings of this study are similar to others, for example, in an account for gender disparity in primary school dropout, marriage, pregnancy and sickness are major causes of drop out among girl children while amongst the boys, they include; jobs, lack of interest, dismissal and fees. Thus the findings of this study compares closely with those from other studies.

Influence of Academic Attainment of the Mother and Father. High academic attainment of a mother and father significantly reduced chances of primary school dropout for both girls and boys in rural and urban areas. For a mother, this phenomenon could perhaps be attributed to the fact that: an educated household head(s) spent more financial resources on the education of their children, sets them free from all sorts of income generating activities and they were also able to monitor and supervise their children’s academic progress. The other reason as suggested by Robinson, Mandelco, Olsen and Hart (1995) is that educated parents are more aware of the possible returns to their children’s education and they are more likely to have access to information and social networks necessary for enhancing their children’s educational outcome. Educated parents also act as mentors and role

models for their children who then are eager to be like their parents. The study associates this to the high chances of girls to get pregnant or be married off by parents as they grow older in rural areas as compared to urban areas. Boys are also more likely to engage in income generating activities as they grow older in rural areas as compared to urban areas. These factors are likely to contribute to higher school dropout in rural areas where in addition the parents have low education attainment.

Majority of the rural folk are educated up to primary level. This means that the type of jobs they can seek for are those with very low pay, hence they will remain poor. The children of the less educated parents with low income are more likely to repeat a grade and or dropout than for highly educated families with good income. Numerous studies have found that dropouts are more likely to come from low socioeconomic status families with structural disadvantages, for example, large families, lone-parent families, and parents with low levels of education (Astone & McLanahan, 1991)

Influence of Occupation of the Parent on Pupil School Repetition and Dropout.

The study results revealed that household head major occupation does influence pupils' school repetition and dropout. The major activity in the study area was peasant/farmer and working as casual labourer which accounted for about 76.9%. These activities exhaust one, leaving the parents with no time to supervise their children and makes the parents less enthusiastic with their children's academic work. This may contribute to high dropout rate being experienced in this area. Based on the findings the family socio-economic background plays an important role in hindering pupils from attending school on a regular basis in Arid and Semi- arid areas. These findings are supported by Walker (2003) who identified factors such as poverty, harsh climatic conditions, lack of food at home and low income earning among parents. The findings in the study revealed that there are rampant teenage pregnancies and early marriages within the study area. These factors lead to dropping out and absenteeism among girls in primary schools in arid and semi-arid areas and mainly affect the girls in upper classes who are undergoing the process of adolescent hood hence vulnerable to sexual abuse.

Conclusion

It is without doubt that a big percentage of pupils are still repeating levels and dropping out of school in Baringo County. It is clear that school dropout is associated with numerous factors some of them are social factors which include harsh school rules which are un-accommodative to pupils and regular sending home of pupils for school necessities like uniforms, and poor parents' motivation towards their children.

Economic factors associated with repetition and dropout included lack of food, and allocation of house chores of pupils during school days. However, the most important factors of repetition and dropout were marriages, insufficient learning materials at school, lack of interest in education by parents' poverty and pregnancy

related issues.

Recommendations

The researchers recommend that the girl who becomes pregnant while still in school should be encouraged to rejoin school once the weaning period (one year) is over.

Policies and programmes aimed at enhancing productive capacities at household levels could go a long way in curtailing repetition and dropout problem.

The Government of Kenya with the help of NGOs should educate parents and guardians on the importance of educating their children. It is when parents are well aware of the benefits that accrue from education that they will follow their children educational progress more closely.

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