

EFFECT OF COST OF SCHOOLING ON THE PARTICIPATION OF CHILDREN IN BASIC EDUCATION IN SAMBURU COUNTY, KENYA

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Abstract

This study aimed to determine the effect of the cost of schooling on children's participation in basic education in Samburu County, Kenya. Data were gathered and analysed using Excel and SPSS computer packages and presented using descriptive and inferential statistics. The specific tools used were frequencies, cross-tabulations, contingency tables, chi-square, multiple regression, correlation, and qualitative presentation in quotations. The study findings reveal that a facility-specific factor, such as cost, is the main factor affecting access to basic formal education in Samburu district and, by implication, other nomadic pastoral areas. From the study findings, it emerges that the cost of education has a significant influence on access to basic formal education. As a result, the study recommends that more schools be available in nomadic pastoral areas, promoting other alternative forms of education, developing the nomadic people's economic resource- livestock- and subsidising the cost of schooling. Accordingly, for the nomadic pastoralists to be able to meet the cost of basic formal education in the era of cost-sharing, there is a dire need to strengthen their economic base- livestock. The latter can be done by opening up markets where they can sell their livestock.

Key terms: Basic education, cost of schooling, financial resources, nomadic pastoral areas, participation of children.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The multiple roles and importance of education make it a key area of public policy in all countries. In this respect, the Kenyan government puts a lot of emphasis on basic education. One of the objectives of the Kenyan Government with respect to education is to ensure universal access to quality and relevant primary education. As a result, by 1990, about 95 per cent of all primary school-age children in Kenya had access to primary education.

Unfortunately, this figure hides a lot of major disparities that exist on regional, economic, and gender lines. For example, while access to basic formal education was approaching 100 per cent in many of the settled districts by 1990, access in some nomadic districts such as Wajir was estimated at around 10 per cent during the same period. The existing disparities arise from the fact that most Kenyans live in settled medium and high-potential areas, and their accessibility to primary education is high.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

UNESCO (2015) reported that a staggering 264 million children lacked access to education worldwide in 2015, and financial barriers, including hidden costs like uniforms and exam fees, emerged as a major culprit. This burden especially hinders adolescents and youth, with a staggering 53 per cent of 15-17 year olds globally out of school. Girls and children in Sub-Saharan Africa face greater obstacles due to entrenched gender disparities and regional challenges. While the exact contribution of hidden costs needs further investigation, their role in this education crisis is undeniable, demanding targeted solutions to ensure education truly becomes a global right, not a privilege.

The World Bank's 2018 report, "Learning to Prosper," recognises hidden costs as a major roadblock to quality education and equal access. To overcome this, they urge investing in skilled teachers who cater to diverse needs, supporting early childhood development for a strong foundation, and prioritising relevant skills development to make education impactful and engaging for all children (World Bank, 2017).

A study by Mungai (2006) found that hidden costs associated with extracurricular activities in Kenyan schools, such as fees for uniforms, materials, and transportation, significantly limited participation for children from low-income families. This financial burden created an unequal playing field, restricting their access to valuable learning opportunities for social and emotional development, skill acquisition, and overall educational enrichment.

Nawose (2016) attributed low access to basic formal education among nomadic pastoral peoples to distance, diseases, and lack of food and clothing. This, by implication, means that children may not attend school due to fear of wild animals as they pass through bushes and areas far from the settlements. Similarly, where basic human needs, such as medical care, food, and clothing, are not adequately met, children may not enrol in school, and those enrolled may drop out.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

Data were gathered and examined using Excel and SPSS computer packages and further presented using descriptive and inferential statistics. According to Yellapu (2018), descriptive statistics involves methods concerned with arranging, summarising and conveying the characteristics of a range of numbers. Descriptive statistics used in these items include percentages, proportions and frequency distributions. On the other hand, inferential statistics involves making generalisations, predictions and conclusions about the characteristics of parameters based on the characteristics of the samples (Guetterman, 2019). The specific tools used were frequencies, cross-tabulations, contingency tables, chi-square, multiple regression, correlation, and qualitative presentation in the form of quotations. The study adopted the Survey Research method. This method of data collection was used because it is the most appropriate for generating data and describing a population too large to observe directly (Creswell & Cresswell, 2022).

4.0 RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Cost of School

The cost of education is the second facility-specific variable in this study. It was measured by the out-of-pocket/monetary cost of schooling, which parents paid in order for their children to be in school.

The following table shows the cost parents pay for their children's education in primary school.

Table 1: Cost of Primary Education per Annum

	Highland Rural		Lowland Rural		Urban		Total	
0-1000	21	48.8	11	68.7	14	34.1	46	46.0
1001-2000	20	46.5	5	31.3	14	34.1	39	39.0
2001-3000	2	4.7	-	-	8	6	10	10.0
3001-4000	-	-	-	-	4	9.8	4	4.0
4001-5000	-	-	-	-	1	2.4	1	1.0
	43	100	16	100	41	100	100	100

A higher number (46%) of the respondents pay Ksh. 1000 and below per annum, while 39 per cent fall under the income bracket of Ksh.1001-2000. Only a small percentage of 15 per cent pay Ksh. 2001 and above. This could be explained as established in the field by the fact that all the schools in the regions studied were public schools, thus the type of cost structure.

The respondents were also asked to give reasons why children drop out of school. The main reason given was generally that of the cost of the school (40%), followed by distance (20%) and 'no reason' (16%). 'No reason' meant that children in Urban areas (as cited by the respondents) mainly refuse to enrol in school and go to the 'streets'. The table below shows the reasons for dropping out of school.

Journal of Education Management and Leadership

Table 2: Reasons for Dropping out of School by Region

Reasons	Highland Rural		Lowland Rural		Urban		Total	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Loiter	6	12.0	2	2.2	24	41.4	32	16.0
To herd	5	10.0	11	12	1	1.7	17	8.5
Housework	2	6.0	-	-	1	1.7	4	2.0
Cost	24	48.0	28	30.4	28	48.4	80	40.0
Distance	-	-	40	43.5	-	-	40	20.0
Ill health	2	4.0	1	1.1	2	3.4	5	2.5
Moranism	2	4.0	5	5.4	1	1.7	8	4.0
Marriage	-	-	5	5.4	1	1.7	6	3.0
Wheat farm	8	16.0	-	-	-	-	8	4.0
Total	50	100	92	100	58	100	200	100

On why parents generally did not enrol some of their children in school, 34.3 per cent cited cost, 25.7 per cent domestic work (herding plus housework), and 24.1 per cent distance as the major reasons. This picture is adequately captured in the following table.

Table 3: Why Never Enrolled Child in School

	Highland Rural		Lowland Rural		Urban		Total	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Cost	17	34.7	20	22.7	30	51.7	67	34.3
Distance	-	-	47	53.4	-	-	47	24.1
Housework	5	10.2	-	-	1	1.7	6	3.1
Ill health	5	10.2	1	1.10	-	-	6	3.1
No reason	2	4.1	-	-	23	39.7	25	12.8
To herd	20	40.8	20	22.7	4	6.9	44	22.6
Total	49	100	88	100	58	100	195	100

From Table 3 above, it seems that cost is a critical factor across all the regions. Similarly, in Urban, it ranked number one as the main cause of school dropout (48.4) and inhibiting school enrolment (51.7%). This outcome agrees with that of Mbilyi (1969), who found that 77% of Urban respondents cited the cost of education as being one of the reasons for not enrolling children (and especially girls) in school. This was against a lesser percentage (47%) of the rural respondents who also cited the same. The government also pointed out in its recent Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper 2001 that "the cost of education, especially in primary, is a huge burden on many households." The high cost of education is one major factor that causes poverty, as illiteracy limits opportunities for employment.

Finally, so far, the responses have shown that both facility-specific factors (distance to school and cost of schooling) affect access, affirming what Mood (1986) called "factors that influence the adequacy of education" are associated with school enrolment and dropout in developing countries.

Journal of Education Management and Leadership

However, as much as the cost was generally a critical factor, there are some variations across the regions. For instance, distance to school ranks first in Lowland Rural. At the same time, it is domestic work that comes first in Highland-Rural. As mentioned earlier, most urban respondents depended upon casual work and the sale of charcoal and firewood. Their daily income was, therefore, from hand-to-mouth. The Highland Rural and Lowland Rural, on the other hand, could sell farm produce and livestock, respectively, and meet the cost of schooling, although they still felt the pinch of cost.

To ascertain how the respondents felt about the cost they incurred for their children's schooling, they were asked to indicate whether the cost was low or high. The general consensus was that Ksh. 0-1000 per annum was reasonable (low), while from Ksh.1001 was on the higher side (high). The frequency distribution is captured in the table below:

Table 4: Frequency Distribution of Cost of Schooling

Rating of Cost	Frequency n=100	Percentage
Low Cost	46	46.0
High Cost	54	54.0
	100	100.0

From the above table, it is evident that the majority of the respondents (54%) felt that the cost of schooling was high. This assertion could be understood when considering the fact that the majority (54%) fell below the income bracket of Ksh.0-1000 per month. The further explanation for this is that the majority of them were not able to use regular cash as they were herders (40.5%) and had no occupation (22%).

Association between Cost of Education and Access to Basic Formal Education

Table 5 sheds some light on the relationship between the cost of education and accessibility to basic formal education among the Samburu of Samburu District, Kenya. The association between the two variables is depicted as follows:

Table 5: Association between Cost of Education and Access

ACCESS	COST OF EDUCATION		
	HIGH COST	LOW COST	ROW TOTALS
Accessible	3(5.8)	38(82.6)	41(41.2)
Not Accessible	51(94.2)	8(17.4)	59(58.8)
Column Total	54(100.0)	46(100.0)	100(100.0)

*Figures in brackets show column percentages.

- Missing cases 6.
- Confidence coefficient (C) = 0.60
- Significance =0.00000
- $X^2 = 116.37822$
- $df = 1$

From Table 5, it emerges that those who perceived the cost of education to be at least high had the lowest percentage (5.8%) of the people who asserted that basic formal education is accessible. To put it in another way, 94.2 per cent of those who perceived the cost of education to be at least high also claimed that basic formal education is not accessible. The latter observation suggests that the cost of education affects accessibility to basic formal education. As argued by Mbilinyi (1969), the cost of education tends to reduce accessibility to basic formal education. For that reason, it can be argued that those who perceived the cost of education to be high considered education facilities to be inaccessible.

Indeed, the association between the cost of education and accessibility to basic formal education was statistically significant at a 100 per cent confidence level. This implies that the cost of education has a significant influence on access to basic formal education among the Samburu. Hence, we can conclude that the cost of education has a significant bearing on access to basic formal education.

The value of the contingency coefficient (0.60) indicates that the relationship between the cost of education and access to basic formal education is slightly weak. This suggests that other factors exist that are strongly associated with access to basic formal education.

Discussion

Likewise, the association between the cost of education and access to basic formal education was found to be statistically significant at a 100 per cent confidence level. This study implies that the higher the cost of education, the less access there is to basic formal education. This can probably be explained by the fact that an increase in the cost of education makes this vital service unaffordable to the majority of households, hence explaining the inaccessibility of basic formal education. Hence, it can be argued that the Structural Adjustment Programmes, through the implementation of a cost-sharing policy in education, have made these facilities beyond reach to many of the population, especially those living below the poverty line.

5.0 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

From the study findings, it emerges that the cost of education has a significant influence on access to basic formal education. Accordingly, for the nomadic pastoralists to be able to meet the cost of basic formal education in the era of cost-sharing, there is a dire need to strengthen their economic base- livestock. The latter can be done by opening up markets where they can sell their livestock.

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Journal of Education Management and Leadership

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