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The Impact of Distance to School on Primary School Enrolment in Samburu County, Kenya

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Abstract
The aim of this study was to investigate the impact of distance to school on primary school enrolment in Samburu County, Kenya. The need for the study arose from the fact that even while education is a fundamental human right and a necessary condition for empowerment, it is still not widely available to pastoralists who live on the move. Notwithstanding, Kenya has made formal education a priority in her policies. However, despite primary schools' Gross Enrolment Rates in Kenya reaching 95 per cent, in some nomadic pastoral areas like Samburu, it was 41.3 per cent. The study findings reveal that a facility-specific factor, such as distance, is the main factor affecting access to basic formal education in Samburu district and, by implication, other nomadic pastoral areas. The results of the study revealed that the association between distance to the nearest school and access to basic formal education was very strong, as indicated by the value of the contingency coefficient (0.76), and was very significant statistically. This implies that the deliberate provision of more schools closer to the people and/or promotion of alternative education opportunities in the district is likely to increase access to basic formal education. This is due to the fact that the households will be living in close proximity to education facilities, thus enhancing their utilisation. Consequently, the enrolment rate of children will be boosted, thus improving access to basic formal education. As a result, the study recommends that more schools be made available in nomadic pastoral areas and that other alternative forms of education be promoted.

Key terms: Distance to school, empowerment, human right, nomadic pastoral areas, school enrolment.

INTRODUCTION

Despite education being one of the fundamental human rights and a prerequisite of empowerment, its accessibility among nomadic pastoralists has remained low. Notwithstanding, Kenya has made formal education a priority in her policies. However, despite primary schools Gross Enrollment Rates in Kenya reaching 95 per cent, in some nomadic pastoral areas like Samburu, it was 41.3 per cent (Kenya Pastoralists Forum, 1995; Abagi, 1997).

Because of the arguments advanced earlier, the acquisition of formal education is a must in today's world. It is important and necessary in its own right and is also a basic human right. There could be no sustainable development of the nomadic pastoral people without increased and sustained education of their children. Kenya's government's policy is to make basic education universal, and some efforts have been made to provide access to it to the disadvantaged (those living in ASAL and in slum areas).

However, despite Kenya's policies, plans, and efforts to make education universal, its access to nomadic pastoralists and slum dwellers is still limited. Kenya, therefore, faces a problem in the elimination of illiteracy and the realisation of education for all. One of the intractable aspects of the problem, inter-alia, is the "low enrolment and extremely high dropout rates among the pastoral peoples" (Gakuru, 1993). This, by implication, means that these people will continue lagging behind in all aspects of development because they will lack the capacity to march forward with the rest of the world.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Fentiman et al. (1999) conducted a comparative study of location, gender, age and health on children's access to basic schooling in rural Ghana. The study revealed that distance from the household to the primary school was cited as a reason for late entry/delayed enrolment or failure to enrol. Several communities did not have schools nearby, and therefore, children could not join school systems. Secondly, migration (the missing girls) was another reason for not enrolling or dropping out. Girls migrate out to urban areas (leave their districts) in order to help a kin member or in search of wage employment as housemaids.

The study by Sitati (2013) explained the low school enrolment and the high dropout rate among primary school children. The significant variables were poor family background, child labour, and truancy parental attitudes, lack of family support, and a low value placed on education by the community are the most prominent variables from which the dropout came.

METHODOLOGY

The study got its data from secondary and primary avenues. The secondary sources were literature materials from local libraries and records/reports in education offices and schools in the Samburu District. Primary sources were based on interviews and direct observations. An interview schedule with 9 main areas was used. Proportional Stratified sampling was used to divide the area into three clusters, namely; - Highland-Rural, Lowland-Rural and Urban. 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). For this reason, structured interviews and questionnaires were applied. Direct observations were used to assess the nature of the regions studied and capture relevant 'off-the-cuff' remarks of the respondents. Among the issues that were observed were the climate, water sources, activities done by the people, terrain, and settlements, among other things. In this study, the analysis of the data was done using both descriptive and inferential statistical tools. The statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) was used to aid data analysis, organisation, interpretation and presentation. 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).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Distance Between Home and School as Measured in 'Kilometres'

Distance was measured in Kilometers (between home and school). The mean distance covered, as per the

table below, was 3.0 kilometres- one way. However, the distance covered in the different regions varied, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Distance Between Home and School in Kilometers

Area	Average Km	Maximum km	Minimum km
Highland Rural	1.8	4.6	0.2
Lowland Rural	6.0	46.4	0.0
Urban	1.2	3.9	0.3
General Mean	1.3	18.6	0.11

The minimum distance for the Highland-Rural, Lowland-Rural and Urban was 0.2, 0.0, and 0.3, and the average was 1.8, 6.0 and 1.2, respectively. According to the results, it seemed that the Lowland-Rural children covered a long distance to school. This variation in distance could probably explain why the Lowland Rural has few children in school. More so, on average, 6 kilometres just one way is quite long when taking the age of children and the nature of an area into consideration. When probed, the respondents mentioned that it was not possible for children aged ten (10) years and below to be allowed to cover long distances to school alone. The Lowland-Rural respondents further mentioned that there was a lot of wildlife in the area, thus posing a great danger to children. Consequently, children delay enrolling in school, while school attendance becomes irregular.

A study that is mentioned in the Literature Review affirming the above scenario is that of Fentiman et al. (1999), which was carried out in Ghana. It revealed that distance from the house to the primary school was cited as the reason for late entry/delayed enrolment or failure to enrol.

From the above table, the 0 (zero) minimum distance in Lowland-Rural was a result of some families migrating next to the school fence in order to access formal education for their children.

Further, the respondents were asked to tell the ideal/appropriate distance between home and school for the district. The same question was presented to education officials in Maralal. It was generally agreed that 0-3 kilometres were okay (short), while more than 3 kilometres was too 'long'. The study then measured accessibility in relation to distance using this criterion. The table below shows the distance frequency distribution.

Table 2: Distance Frequency Distribution

Rating of distance covered	Frequency n=199	Per cent
Short Distance	84	42.2
Long distance	115	57.8
Total	199	100

The above table shows that 42.2 per cent of the respondents were within 3 kilometres distance and below, while the majority (57.8%) were far from school. There are, however, variations noted in regional percentages. For instance, 63.8 per cent of the Urban and 62.0 per cent of Highland-Rural respondents are below the distance of 3 kilometres. Lowland-rural is more affected, with 81.5 per cent of respondents living more than 3 kilometres from school. This could probably explain, among other things, why the differences in the percentages of children enrolled in school in the three regions viz., Urban (50%), Highland-Rural (39.2%) and Lowland Rural (10.8%).

Association between Distance and Access to Basic Formal Education

In Table 3, we are relating distance and access to basic formal education. In this case, access to basic formal

education is the criterion variable, while the distance to school is the predictor variable.

Table 3: Association Between Distance and Access to Basic Formal Education

	DISTANCE TO SCHOOL		
ACCESS	Long Distance	Short distance	Row total
Accessible	5(4.3)	75(89.3)	80(40.2)
Not Accessible	110(95.7)	9(10.7)	119(59.8)
Column Total	115(100)	84(100.0)	199(100.0)

- Missing observation 1.
- Contingency coefficient at (0.760)
- X2 = 145.67874
- Significance 0.0000
- df =1

Table 3 shows that the majority of the total respondents (57.8%) rated the distance to school to be long, while only 42.2 per cent rated the distance to school to be at least short. It also emerges from Table 3 that out of 115 interviews who reported the distance to school to be long, only 4.3 per cent revealed that basic education is accessible. This leaves those who perceived the distance to school to be long and claim that basic formal education is not accessible, with the highest percentage, 95.7 per cent. As also revealed by Mlelwa (1993), distance to school tends to affect accessibility to these facilities.

The relationship between distance to school and access to basic formal education was found to be very significant at a 100 per cent confidence level. This finding suggests that distance to school significantly influences access to basic formal education.

Indeed, the association between distance to school and access to basic formal education was found to be strong, as indicated by the value of the contingency coefficient (0.76). These statistical findings imply that the association between the two variables is not only significant but also strong. The large value of the contingency coefficient (0.76) suggests that distance to school is strongly associated with access to basic formal education in Samburu District.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion: The results of the study revealed that the association between distance to the nearest school and access to basic formal education was very strong, as indicated by the value of the contingency coefficient (0.76), and was very significant statistically. This implies that the deliberate provision of more schools closer to the people and/or promotion of alternative education opportunities in the district is likely to increase access to basic formal education. This is due to the fact that the households will be living in close proximity to education facilities, thus enhancing their utilisation. Consequently, the enrolment rate of children will be boosted, thus improving access to basic formal education.

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