



Issue no: 1 | Vol no: 4 | May 2022: 389-393

Effect of parental perceived importance of formal education on children's access to primary school in Samburu County, Kenya

Ropilo Lanyasunya 

University of Nairobi, Kenya

Email: ropilolanyasunya@gmail.com

Article History

Received: 2022-02-10

Accepted: 2022-04-13

Published: 2022-05-20

Cite this article in APA

Lanyasunya, R. (2022). Effect of parental perceived importance of formal education on children's access to primary school. *Editon consortium journal of arts, humanities and social studies*, 4(1), 389-393. <https://doi.org/10.51317/ecjahss.v4i1.448>

Abstract

The aim of this study was to examine the effect of parental perceived importance of formal education on children's access to primary school. Samburu District was stratified into three clusters to facilitate the data collection: Highland-Rural, Lowland-Rural and Urban. Multi-stage and random sampling were used to select from each cluster, one division, one location, one sub-location and then 200 household heads from all the villages in the sub-location. That is moving from the division down to the villages using random sampling. Data were collected and analysed using Excel and SPSS computer packages and further presented using descriptive and inferential statistics. The specific tools used were frequencies and cross-tabulations. The study found that guardian education is very important in enhancing access to basic formal education. Indeed, the relationship between guardian education and access to basic formal education was very significant at the study's 95 per cent confidence level. In this regard, the children who did not get a chance to enrol in the formal school system can be reached through the Out of School Programme. Similarly, Adult literacy classes can boost the literacy levels of the household heads.

Key words: Access to primary school, formal education, Out of School Programme, parental, perceived importance.



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INTRODUCTION

Ngugi et al. (2015) further underscored the importance of basic education in his study, which examined the relationship between primary school enrolment growth and Gross National Product (GNP). The study found that no economic growth was achieved before attaining universal primary education. Education, therefore, "becomes a capacity-building process" (Gakuru, 1993).

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 Kenya 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.

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 only be sustainable development of the nomadic pastoral people with 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 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).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Similarly, Clarke (1985) pointed out that the curriculum content of the conventional education system ignores the child's environment, language, and folk, thus discouraging children from going to school as they find the latter to be irrelevant. Along the same line, Shiundu and Mwaura (1992) noted that formal education is still criticised for its irrelevance – assuming that all countries and people are homogenous in their geographic, cultural, social and economic conditions. This alienates children from school, as it does not address the specific needs of the different people outlined above.

Further, Momo et al. (2018) investigated school dropout and low enrollment rates in Asian and African countries. The study looked at the supply and demand variables that could explain the situation. The argument was that there were factors influencing the desire and ability of parents to enrol and keep their children in school (demand variable), as well as factors influencing the adequacy of education (supply variable). Accordingly, the correlation analysis indicates that the low school enrolment and high dropout rate relate significantly to two supply and two demand variables. The population of a nation's labour force engaged in agriculture is mostly correlated ($r=.53$, $p<.01$) followed by pupil-teacher ratio ($r=.41$, $p<.01$). Significant negative correlation was found between dropout rate, low school enrolment and per-capita income ($r= -.27$, $p<.05$) and proportion of GNP a government spends on education ($r= -.26$, $p<.05$).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Perceived Importance of Education

To capture the respondents' views about education, several questions were asked, viz., Is education important? Is it good to send a child to school? What are the reasons for sending children to school? and, who took the child to school? The following table captures the responses given by parents when they were asked whether education is important to them or not.

Table 1: Importance of Education

| | Highland Rural | Lowland Rural | Urban | Total |
|--|----------------|---------------|-------|-------|
| | | | | |

| | f | % | f | % | f | % | f | % |
|-------|----|-----|----|------|----|------|-----|------|
| Yes | 49 | 98 | 86 | 93.5 | 56 | 96.6 | 191 | 95.5 |
| No | 1 | 2 | 6 | 6.5 | 2 | 3.4 | 9 | 4.5 |
| Total | 50 | 100 | 92 | 100 | 58 | 100 | 200 | 100 |

Most of them (95.5%) agreed that education is important. However, there are small variations according to regions. Of urban respondents, 96.6 per cent indicated that education is important, 98 per cent of Highland-Rural and 93.5 per cent Lowland-Rural. Gender-wise, 100 per cent (n=70) of the male and 93.1 per cent (n=121) of the female respondents said that education is important. The 6.9 per cent of

respondents who mentioned that education is not important were from the Lowland-Rural. They asserted that they had not seen any educated Samburu who had come to help them. The respondents were further asked whether it is good to send a child to school. The responses are also captured in the table below:-

Table 2: Is it Good to Send a Child to School

| | Highland Rural | | Lowland Rural | | Urban | | Total | |
|-------|----------------|-----|---------------|------|-------|-----|-------|------|
| | f | % | f | % | f | % | f | % |
| Yes | 50 | 100 | 89 | 96.7 | 58 | 100 | 197 | 98.5 |
| No | 0 | 0 | 3 | 3.3 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 1.5 |
| Total | 50 | 100 | 92 | 100 | 58 | 100 | 200 | 100 |

Also, 100 per cent of the Urban and Highland Rural respondents said that it was good to send a child to school, but 1.5 per cent of the lowland rural respondents said that it was not good. On reasons for sending children to school, 61 per cent (n=122) of respondents mentioned employment, 25 per cent - literacy, 7.5 per cent - influence, 0.5 per cent -

forced, 0.5 per cent - food and 5.5 per cent gave no reason. Respondents were then asked to mention the person who took the child to school. 45.5 per cent said father, 22 per cent said mother, 25.2 per cent said both parents, 1.6 per cent said uncle, and 5.7 per cent said sibling. This is aptly depicted in the following table.

Table 3: Who Took the Child to School

| | Highland Rural | | Lowland Rural | | Urban | | Total | |
|-----------------|----------------|------|---------------|------|-----------|------|------------|------|
| | f n=47 | % | f n=34 | % | f n=48 | % | f n=123 | % |
| Father | 21 | 44.7 | 10 | 41.7 | 25 | 48.1 | 56 | 45.5 |
| Mother | 11 | 23.4 | 1 | 4.15 | 15 | 28.8 | 27 | 22.0 |
| Father & Mother | 13 | 27.7 | 6 | 25 | 12 | 23.1 | 31 | 25.2 |
| Uncle | 1 | 2.1 | 1 | 4.15 | - | - | 2 | 1.6 |
| Sibling | 1 | 2.1 | 6 | 25 | - | - | 7 | 5.7 |
| Total | 47 | 100 | 24 | 100 | 52 | 100 | 123 | 100 |

In general, 92.7 per cent said that it was parents (father, mother or both) who took children to school. Siblings featured more in Lowland Rural (25%). No Urban respondent mentioned an uncle or sibling having helped to take their children to school. This result shows that parents value education a lot. Their attitude towards formal education was positive. In addition, the study results disapprove of the

assumption the development officials in Samburu District had when they asserted that "the biggest impediment in the growth of education in the district is the negative attitude of the local people towards it". More so, the positive attitude of respondents towards formal education is seen in the number of children enrolled in school in the Urban and Lowland-Rural areas, as shown in the table below.

Table 4: Total Number of Enrolled Children in School

| | Highland | | Urban | | Lowland | | Total | |
|--------------|----------|-----|-------|------|---------|------|-------|------|
| | f | % | f | % | f | % | f | % |
| Enrolled | 105 | 60 | 134 | 62.6 | 29 | 14.1 | 268 | 44.8 |
| Non-enrolled | 73 | 40 | 80 | 37.4 | 177 | 85.9 | 330 | 55.2 |
| Total | 178 | 100 | 214 | 100 | 206 | 100 | 598 | 100 |

In Urban, 62.6 per cent of children were enrolled in school, while it was 60 per cent in Highland-Rural. It is the Lowland-Rural, which had a low enrollment of 14.1 per cent, making the District reflect a low enrollment of 44.8 per cent. The conditions in the Lowland-Rural were extremely pathetic. The climatic conditions are harsh; otherwise, as indicated earlier in the study, parents asserted that they value formal education a lot.

Association between the Perceived Importance of Education and Access to Basic Formal Education

This part attempts to test the relationship between the respondents' perceptions of the importance of education and access to basic formal education. The way these variables are related is aptly captured in Table 5 below;

Table 5: Association between the Perceived Importance of Education and Access to Basic Formal Education

| ACCESS | PERCEIVED IMPORTANCE OF EDUCATION | | |
|----------------|-----------------------------------|---------------|------------|
| | Important | Not Important | Row Total |
| Accessible | 78(41.5) | 2(20.0) | 80(40.4) |
| Not Accessible | 110(58.5) | 8(80.0) | 118(59.6) |
| Column Total | 188(100.0) | 10(100.0) | 198(100.0) |

- Missing observations 2
- Contingency coefficient 0.10
- $X^2 = 1.82095$
- Significance = 0.17720
- $df = 1$

Table 5 reveals that out of the total sample (198), only (5.1%) perceived education as not important, while an overwhelming majority (94.9%) acknowledged that education is important.

In addition, out of the total sample (198), only 40.4 per cent of the respondents reported that basic formal education is accessible. This leaves the majority (59.6%) alluding that formal basic education is not accessible. The latter category is explained by the rising cost of education as a result of poor economic performance. Indeed, since the advent of Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs), the cost of education has been escalating.

Evidently, it is stated in the National Development Plan 1997-2001 that 'the policy of cost sharing between the government, parents and communities,

which has been in place since 1988, will be maintained in financing education' (Rock 1997-2001, 135-136).

Indeed, the point of accessibility is further advanced by the fact that out of the 188 respondents who reported that education is important, only 41.5 per cent revealed that basic education is accessible. This leaves the majority, 58.5 per cent, alluding that basic education is not accessible. The latter finding confirms that basic education in Kenya is at a cross-road (Abagi, 1997)

Despite the above findings, the perceived importance of education does not have a significant influence on access to basic formal education. The association is only significant at 82.3 per cent - far below the

study's acceptance level of 95 per cent. More so, the relationship is very weak, as indicated by the value of the contingency coefficient (0.10). This implies that the association between the perceived importance of education and access to basic formal education is not only significant but also very weak. The small value of the contingency coefficient (0.10) implies the existence of other factors that can help explain access to basic formal education.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Despite the above findings, the perceived importance of education does not have a significant influence on access to basic formal education. This study recommends a study that will address the quality of education in relation to the needs of the nomadic pastoral people. The question that may arise for this study would be whether the quality and nature of education offered/available has an influence on basic formal education access among the nomadic pastoralists.

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