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Effect of domestic work on children's schooling in Samburu County, Kenya

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Abstract

This study sought to analyse the effect of domestic work on children's schooling in Samburu County, Kenya. 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. 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. 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. The study revealed that respondents' background factors, like domestic work, influence access to basic formal education among the Samburu. From the findings of this study, it is concluded that domestic work negatively impacts accessibility to basic formal education. Accordingly, the study recommends that child rights and awareness creation be enhanced.

Key words: Background factors, domestic work, family activities, peak seasons, poverty.



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INTRODUCTION

Education is one of the basic human necessities in addition to shelter, food, clothing, and health services (UNESCO, 2019). It is also a basic human right as well as a cornerstone of economic and social development. More importantly, education improves societies' productive capacity and political, economic and scientific institutions (World Bank, 2018). More so, it helps reduce poverty by mitigating its effects on population, health and nutrition (UNESCO, 2015).

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 (Njeri, 2022). The government's policy is to make basic education universal, and some efforts have been made to provide it to the disadvantaged (those living in ASAL and in slum areas) (Government of Kenya, 2020).

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" (Njeri, 2022).

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

Domestic Work and Access to Basic Formal Education

UNESCO's 2017 report highlights a global gender disparity: Girls dedicate three times more time to household chores than boys. This unequal burden significantly hinders their educational opportunities in ways such as reduced time for studying and schoolwork, increased fatigue and distraction, impacting learning and concentration, limited

participation in extracurricular activities and social interactions and also potential pressure to drop out of school due to workload demands.

Kiptui (2021) investigated the impact of girl child labour on access to education in Samburu County. The study found that girls engaged in extensive domestic work, including fetching water, collecting firewood, and caring for younger siblings, which significantly limited their school attendance and academic performance. Compared to girls with lighter workloads, their studies suffer as they dedicate more time to household chores. In addition, the combined pressure of domestic responsibilities and schoolwork takes a toll on their grades and learning outcomes.

One of the notable studies related to domestic work and access to basic formal education is that of Fowler (1983), who studied the seasonal aspects of education in Eastern and Southern Africa. The study revealed that in Sub-Saharan Africa, the contribution of children and youth to agriculture and pastoral modes of production is significant. In terms of aggregate annual contribution across the spectrum of family activities, which make up the working day for twenty-four farmers in Uganda, the findings showed that boys contributed (80%) of the adult contribution and girls contributed (70%). The girl's shortfall in hours on the farm is compensated by household activities.

According to the study, there are peak seasons for agricultural and pastoral children labour demands, which conflict with schooling time. One way for local people to deal with the resulting conflict in resource allocation is to keep their children at home (agricultural absenteeism).

METHODOLOGY

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).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Domestic Work

The following were the main domestic activities children engaged in. Each respondent only cited one major activity, as reflected in the following table.

Table 1: Domestic Activities Done By Children

	Highland Rural		Lowland Rural		Urban		Total	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Herding	16	32	71	77.2	3	5.2	90	45
Farm work	20	40	-	-	7	12.1	27	13.5
Household	10	20	11	12.0	28	48.3	49	24.5
No activity	4	8	10	10.9	20	34.5	34	17
Total	50	100	92	100	58	100	200	100

The major activities in general were herding (45%), followed by household work (24.5%), then ‘no activity’ (17%) and finally farm work (13.5%). The respondents added ‘no activity’ since there were some children who mainly just loiter about or stay idle. Most of these children (34.5%) were in the Urban area. The major domestic work for children was farm work (40%) in the Highland Rural, herding (77.2%) in Lowland Rural and housework (48.3%) in Urban. The farm work children did in Highland-Rural was cited as mainly helping parents scare away baboons that eat the crops on the farms.

The respondents were further asked whether these domestic activities children do affect their ‘schooling’- that is, enrolment and retention.

On enrolment, a greater percentage (72%) of the Highland-Rural respondents asserted that domestic work affected the enrolment of children in school, as did 62 per cent of Urban and 91 per cent of Lowland Rural. Urban respondents mentioned ‘caring for

siblings’ and watching over the house as the main domestic (household) activities that inhibit children from being enrolled in school. They asserted that there was high house breakage within the area and that the environment was not friendly.

As regards the children already in school, generally, 87.5 per cent (n=175) of the respondents negated that domestic activities forced children already enrolled in school to drop out, while only 12.5 per cent (n=25) said that it affected them. There was general consensus across regions that domestic work did not affect children’s ‘schooling’ a lot with respect to dropout. However, children may miss school from time to time to engage in domestic activities.

Association between Domestic Duties to Basic Formal Education

Data in Table 2 attempts to show the existing relationship between domestic duties and access to basic formal education. Details of this association are aptly captured as follows:

Table 2: Association Domestic Duties and Access to Basic Formal Education

Access	Domestic Activities		Row Total
	High	Low	



Accessible	38(24.1)	42(100)	80(40.0)
Not Accessible	120(75.9)	0(0.0)	120(60.0)
Column Total	158(100.0)	42(100)	200(100.0)

- Contingency coefficient 0.53
- $X^2 = 79.74684$
- $df = 1$
- Significance = 0.0000

Table 2 shows that the overwhelming majority (79%) of the total sample reported that children are involved in many domestic activities like herding, cleaning utensils, and keeping guard of the house, among others. Indeed, only 21 per cent reported low levels of domestic work for the children.

More significantly, for this study, the majority of those who revealed that children have to be involved in domestic work (75.9%) perceived access to basic formal education to be low. In other words, only 24.1 per cent of those who acknowledged high domestic work for the children reported that basic formal education is accessible.

The relationship between domestic activities and access to basic formal education was found to be very significant at a 100 per cent confidence level but very weak, as revealed by the value of the contingency coefficient (0.53). This implies that though domestic work has a significant influence on access to basic formal education, its association with access is very weak. This suggests the existence of

other factors that can explain access to basic formal education.

Discussion

The findings of the study showed that domestic work was the best predictor of access to basic formal education. The partial regression coefficient reveals that a unit increase in domestic work reduces access to basic formal education by -0.46 units. The chi-square (X^2) analysis depicted that the relationship between domestic work and access to basic formal education was very significant but weak, as indicated by the value of the contingency coefficient (0.53). In addition, correlation analysis supports this finding by revealing that domestic work is strongly associated with access at an inverse relationship of coefficient -. 6315. The former findings imply that by deliberately manipulating domestic work by increasing it, access to basic formal education will go down among the Samburu of Samburu District.

CONCLUSION

From the findings of this study, it is concluded that domestic work negatively impacts accessibility to basic formal education.

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