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Socio-economic factors affecting access to basic formal education among the nomadic pastoralists: A case study of the Samburu

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Abstract

The study examines the socio-economic factors influencing access to basic formal education among the Samburu nomadic pastoralists. To facilitate the data collection, Samburu District was stratified into three clusters – 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. There have been policy intentions to improve the accessibility of the nomadic pastoral communities to basic formal education. What has been lacking is the effective implementation of search policies. Government policies need to be driven. This is because if the future of education in Kenya looks bleak as foreseen, what hope will be there for the already disadvantaged people like the nomadic pastoralists?

Key words: Access, formal education, government policies, nomadic pastoralists, socio-economic factors.



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INTRODUCTION

Since independence in 1963, the Government of Kenya has striven to enhance the development of Education in Kenya. A guiding philosophy underlying the country's education policy has been the commitment that every Kenyan has an alienable right of access to education (Government of Kenya, 1964, 1965).

The education policy has been spelt out in several documents, namely development plans, commission reports, working party reports, and session papers. The National Development Plans cover the periods of 1964-1970, 1970-74, 1974-76, 1979-83, 1984-88, 1989- 93, 1994- 96, and 1997-2001. These Commission Reports include the National Committee on Educational Objectives and Policies (NCEOP) of 1976, the Ndegwa Commission Report of 1971, the Curriculum Development Mission of 1972, the Ominde Commission Report of 1964, the Presidential Working Party of 1980 and the Report of the Presidential Working Paper on Education and Manpower Training for the next Decade and Beyond, 1988. One of the most important Sessional Papers was the Sessional Paper number 10 of 1965 on African Socialism and its application to Planning in Kenya. It outlines the basic objectives for an independent Kenya. All these documents spell out the aim of education in Kenya, although with different emphasises. More specifically, the primary goals of education in Kenya, especially since the attainment of independence, can be seen three-fold: the expansion of educational opportunities, the production of high-level manpower and the promotion of national unity.

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 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). The study examines the socio-economic factors influencing access to basic formal education among the Samburu nomadic pastoralists.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Kenya's educational programme, as spelt out in the first Development Plan, was the provision of Universal Primary Education (UPE). This document identified several problems in realising this objective (RoK 1964-70). One of the problems included the nature of the target population. The dispersed, nomadic lifestyles of some ethnic groups within the country were seen to be a major obstacle to the provision of equal opportunities to all Kenyans. Further, the shortage of qualified teachers and lack of sufficient funds compounded this problem.

Unfortunately, this objective was not given priority on purely economic grounds until after the third Development Plan (RoK 1974-76). The second Development Plan proposed the enhancement of primary enrolment from sixty-five per cent (65%) in 1968 to seventy-five per cent (75%) in 1974. This was to be done by firstly extending the remission of fees for parents who were unable to afford for their children and secondly by providing boarding facilities in nomadic areas.

However, in spite of an impressive overall primary school enrollment of fifty per cent (50%) by 1974, problems remained as observed in the following Development Plan (1974-1978). To be sure, these problems included parental attitudes, lack of access to facilities, and parents' inability to pay fees for their children. As a result, the government eliminated primary school fees and increased expenditure on primary schools. As a consequence, ninety-three per cent (93%) of primary school enrolment was attained by 1982 (Otiende, 1992).

Following the increase in social spending, especially in the provision of social services like education, the Kenyan budget was overstretched. In fact, the latter was compounded by the deep world economic crisis of the 1980s. As a result, Kenya, like other developing nations, was forced by the Bretton Woods Institutions (IMF & World Bank) to

implement Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs).

As a consequence, Kenya started implementing the Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) in 1986. This led to cuts in government spending on education and the introduction of cost-sharing. As a result, the poor were adversely affected, and this negatively impacted school enrolment among the poor. Many children also absented themselves, and others could not join school during planting and harvesting seasons. Children were needed by parents to look after the animals during this time and were often asked to sit in the fields and scare away the birds and wild animals from destroying the crops.

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.

More specifically, 70 per cent of children were sent home due to school fees, 13 per cent of the "bottom group" (in performance) and 7 per cent of the "top group" wasted one or more months at home due to ill health. Many children were also left at home to 'herd' their animals. The study further revealed that girls were few in schools, and the main reason behind it was early marriages. Girls were married off as early as the age of 14 years. Further, there was general dissatisfaction with school life among pupils due to the poor quality and quantity of meals offered at school.

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).

RESULTS AND FINDINGS

Distribution of Respondents by Level of Income

The study findings show that most (53%) of the respondents fell under the Ksh income bracket. 0-1000 per month. Further, 16% fell between 1001-2000, 12 per cent between 1000-2999, 6 per cent between 6000-6999 and 6 per cent between income bracket of 7001-8000, 4 per cent between 8001-9000, 2 per cent between 9001-10000 and 1 per cent, fall under that of 10001 and above. This income scenario shows that poverty is entrenched in Kenyan society. According to the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper 2001, the absolute poverty line in 1997 was Ksh.1239 per person per month and Ksh.2648, respectively, for rural and urban areas. More significantly, the results of this study reveal that 75 per cent of the respondents were below the poverty line.

Access to Basic Formal Education

This section tries to ascertain the level of access to basic formal education among the respondents' families using Gross Enrolment Rates. The total number of children in school (standard 1-8) within the respondents' families was 268 (161 boys and 107 girls). There were regional differences, as shown in the table below.

Table 1: Children in School per Region

Area	Boys		Girls		Total	
	f	%	f	%	f	%
Highland-Rural	64	39.8	41	38.3	105	39.2
Lowland-Rural	20	12.4	9	8.4	29	10.8
Urban	77	47.8	57	53.3	134	50.0
Total	161	100	107	100	268	100

Of the 268 children enrolled in school, 50 per cent are from Urban, 39.2 per cent are from Highland-Rural, and 10.8 per cent are from Lowland-Rural. Urban had the highest number of girls in school (53.3%). The level of awareness could probably explain this. The total number of school-going age

children was 598 (29.8%) in the Highland-Rural, 34.4 per cent in Lowland-Rural and 35.8 per cent in Urban.

Table 2 below reveals the number of children aged 6-14 years as captured in this study.

Table 2: Total Number of Children Aged 6-14 Years

Area	Boys		Girls		Total	
	f	%	f	%	f	%
Highland Rural	109	32.7	69	26.0	178	29.8
Lowland Rural	104	31.2	102	38.5	206	34.4
Urban	120	36	94	35.5	214	35.8
Total	333	100	265	100	598	100

The Gross Enrolment Rate (GER), therefore, is computed by taking the total number of children in school (irrespective of age) divided by the total number of school-going age children (6-14 years) multiplied by 100. To be sure, a detailed calculation is shown below.

$$268 \times 100 = 44.8\%$$

$$598$$

This figure of 44.8 per cent shows that access to basic formal education among the nomadic pastoral Samburu is still low compared to the National average of 84 per cent (Abagi & Olweya, 1999)

RECOMMENDATION

There have been policy intentions to improve the accessibility of the nomadic pastoral communities to basic formal education. What has been lacking is the effective implementation of search policies. Government policies need to be driven. This is

because if the future of education in Kenya looks bleak as foreseen, what hope will be there for the already disadvantaged people like the nomadic pastoralists? The following statement by renowned Kenyan policy analysts describes the future of education in Kenya.

"From a policy perspective, we see a gloomy future. The crisis facing education will become worse. More children, especially girls, will not access school by 2015. And the few who would have accessed basic education will be withdrawn en masse by their poverty-stricken parents...This bleak prophecy is not a mere conjuncture with possibility. It is based on an extrapolation of the history of the development of education in Kenya over the last 35 years, and the current globalisation trend in the world engineered by the rich western nations" (Abagi & Olweya, 1999).

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