



Original Article

School Determinants Influencing Students' Retention Rates in Public Secondary Schools in Rachuonyo South Sub-County, Homabay County

Milton Ouma Oginga^{1*} & Dr. Christopher Ayienda, PhD¹

¹ Mount Kenya University, P. O. Box 4441-40200, Kisii, Kenya.

* Author for Correspondence ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7560-6002>; Email: miltonoginga@gmail.com

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The issue of retention of students in public secondary schools is a major concern all over the world. The purpose of this study was to establish the determinants of students' retention in secondary schools in Rachuonyo South Sub-County, Homa-bay County. The study focused on the family, school, and student factors influencing the retention of students in the secondary schools in Rachuonyo South Sub-County. The target population in this study comprised 14,025 respondents comprised of 25 Principals, 250 teachers, 5400 parents and 8350 students. The sample size for this study included 225 respondents; using purposive sampling, the researcher selected all 25 Principals, 75 teachers, and 25 PTA Chairman and using simple random sampling, 100 students. The research instruments included questionnaires for teachers and students and an interview guide for the principals and parents. Qualitative data was analysed thematically along the objectives and presented in narrative forms, whereas quantitative data was analysed descriptively using frequencies, percentages, mean and standard deviation and inferentially using correlation and linear regression with the help of Statistical Packages for Social Science (SPSS Version 23). The findings of the study were presented using tables and charts. From the findings of the study, the regression analysis showed culture and students' determinants were the only variables with the least number of significant predictors. In addressing the students' determinates, the main points of focus that ought to have required more attention were ensuring students coped with school rules and avoided discipline issues and guidance, and counselling services must be deployed in the Rachuonyo South sub-county. On the issue of cultural determinants, the civilisation of the society and ensuring that traditions do not interfere with education must be addressed.

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INTRODUCTION

Retention in secondary schools is an important aspect of a child's future academic achievement. According to Bermel (2014), the students who get enrolled and complete the programs are more behaved and have higher scores upon joining sly schools than their peers without secondary school education. In addition, it will be shown prowl families enrolled in secondary schools learn and understand quicker than endure not enrolled in these programs (Stacks, Oshio, Gerard, & Roe, 2009). Students enrolled in secondary schools have a frill year(s) of schooling prior to joining tertiary institutions and is intended to protect unprepared students from entering too soon into a demanding academic environment where, it is thought, they will almost surely experience failure. For fitted learners, at the minutest, one year of secondary is adequate to provide a smooth transition from home to school life (Republic of Kenya, 1999). In such schools, students are introduced to the kinds of experiences that help them to make fuller and more efficient use of what, later, will be taught in primary school.

The Education for All (EFA) Global Monitoring Report (2012) states that since 1999 the number of students enrolled in the public secondary in the world has risen by at least half; however, this leaves more than one in two students not attending school rising to five out of six in the poorest developing countries. The group that would benefit the most

from public secondary education is missing out on the most. In Nigeria, for instance, it states that about two out of three students from the richest 20% of households attend preschool, compared with less than one in ten from the poorest 20% of households.

Receptacle view of the importance of secondary school education as the foundation for quality education, all efforts must be made to improve enrolment and retention at this level. The importance of learner enrolment and retention in secondary schools cannot be under-emphasised as several previous studies have revealed its significance (Stacks and Oshio 2009). With all these studies positively linking the success of the students with attendance at secondary schools, it is significant to emphasise the issues that affect learner enrolment and retention into secondary schools. However, missing in the background is the review of previous Kenyan studies focusing on the determinants of student retention. Enrolment and retention are affected by different determinants and factors, and therefore a study focusing on these factors will be a significant step towards its improvement. This study, therefore, will assess the school determinants influencing students' retention rates in public secondary schools in Rachuonyo South Sub-County, Homabay County, Kenya.

LITERATURE REVIEW

According to Fontaine, Torre & Grafwallner (2006), the development of school readiness can be

stimulated by means of quality early learning experiences that learners receive before they enter grade one. It is therefore important that early childhood development and education (school) programs prepare students for school. This is because students with school experience are less nervous in the classroom, participate more frequently in class discussions, seem to enjoy school more and exhibit pro-social behaviours (Applied Survey Research, 2007). Further, they have greater motivation to learn, higher achievement, lower grade retention, higher school graduation and socialisation than students who do not participate (Young, 2002).

It is however important to note that the developmental rate of students is not identical, and Kagan, Moore, and Brakekamp (1995) warn that students of the same age may vary greatly with regard to their physical, social-emotional, language and cognitive development. Consequently, students attain school readiness at different times, therefore, making it necessary that an assessment of school readiness be done to young students around school entry, right before school, at school entry, or early in the lower primary year. According to Hyson (2008), school readiness assessment is a tool that explores whether the child is developmentally ready to benefit from formal education.

According to research, school readiness entails all aspects of development including; the physical wellbeing, social and emotional development that enable students to live amicably with others, Cognitive development, Language development and normative school readiness that involves self-regulatory skills (Hartgil, 2008; Aber & Gershoff, 2007). Accordingly, the importance of school readiness cannot be underestimated because it means that the child is fully developed and ready to meet the challenges of school. Such students are more likely to experience a smooth transition, perform well, make good school progress, complete school and achieve academic success (Linke, 2006). On the other hand, students who are not ready to

learn at school entry are likely to remain academically behind, repeat grades and require special coaching.

Consequently, this may make students dislike the experience of school and lower their self-esteem and confidence, leading to a lack of social-emotional skills. This condition, in return, may put the child at risk for harmful behaviour like truancy, physical aggression, bullying, and interruption of other students' activities, such behaviour exposes the child to peer rejection which in turn may result in low self-esteem and lack of involvement in school activities and ultimately lead to low performance or even dropping out of school, students' ability to learn and acquire the right skills and attitudes depends to a large extent on their cognitive capacity and psychosocial adjustments that are determined during early years.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN

In this study, a mixed methods approach was applied. This was suitable since this study involved the collection and analysis of both quantitative and qualitative methods. The study adopted the concurrent triangulation design which facilitates the attainment of differing yet corresponding data on the research problem so as to understand it best. The intent of the design was to bring collectively the different strengths and non-overlapped weaknesses of the quantitative method that have larger sample sizes and apply generality with the qualitative method that was characterised by a small sample size and in-depth understanding.

For the purpose of this study, the target population consisted of 25 principals, 250 teachers, 5400 students and 8350 students, all totalling 14025 respondents; for this study, 225 respondents were sampled, as explained by Orodho (2012) defines a sample as a small representative portion of a target population. Purposive sampling was used to select all the principals in the 25 schools and 25 Chairmen of the Parents Association, and stratified random sampling was employed to select 3 teachers and 4

students per school proportionally, each to the zones. According to Mugenda and Mugenda (2003), a sample of 10% is an appropriate research survey.

Data collection tools were used to gather information about the specific set of themes of research objectives. These included a questionnaire for Teachers and Students and an interview guide for principals and PA Chairman. Data analysis begins by identifying common themes. The procedure started with the collection and analysis of quantitative data. This was followed by the subsequent collection and analysis of qualitative data. The second qualitative phase of the study was designed so that it follows the results of the first quantitative phase. The relevant information was broken into phrases or sentences, which reflect a single, specific thought. The responses to the close-ended items were assigned codes and labels. Frequency counts of the responses were obtained to generate information about the respondents and to illustrate the general trend of findings on the various variables that are under investigation. Qualitative data was analysed thematically along the study objectives and presented in narrative forms, whereas quantitative data was analysed descriptively using frequencies, percentages, mean,

and standard deviation and inferentially using ANOVA with the help of Statistical Packages for Social Science (SPSS Version 23). The quantitative findings of the study were presented using tables and charts.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Response Rate

The study had a sample size of 225 respondents. Out of the total respondents, 200 were to fill out questionnaires, and the remaining 25 were to be interviewed. The researcher picked the filled questionnaires after three weeks. One hundred sixty-three respondents had filled in the questionnaire giving a response rate of 72.37%. The researcher made efforts to call other respondents to fill out the questionnaires, but it was not successful. Due to the constraint of time, the researcher continued with the analysis since according to (Baruch, 1999) a response rate of 50% is considered adequate, 60% good and above 70% very good. Therefore, in view of this, the response rate was considered very good and exceeded the threshold postulated by Best and Khan. The summary of the response rate is shown in the following table:

Table 1: Response rate

Sample Size		Participants		Non-participants		Response Rate	
Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
225	100	172	72.37	53	27.63	172	72.37

Source: The researcher, 2022

School Determinants in Influencing the Students’ Retention Rates

Sufficiency of Facilities to Support Students

The findings obtained are shown in the table below.

Table 2: The school does not have enough facilities to support its students

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly Disagree	18	10.5	10.5
Disagree	36	20.9	31.4
Undecided	17	9.9	41.3
Agree	45	26.2	67.4
Strongly Agree	56	32.6	100.0
Total	172	100.0	

From the table above, 31.4% of the respondents disagreed that the school does not have enough facilities to support its students. 9.9% of the respondents were undecided on whether the school does not have enough facilities to support its students. 58.8% of the respondents agreed that the school does not have enough facilities to support its students. The majority of the respondents agreed that the school does not have enough facilities to support its students. According to a study done by (Ng’ethe, Katumanga, & Williams, 2004), head teachers and principals were faced with a challenge of inadequate physical facilities, materials, equipment, and tools due to increase in the number

of students which could not be sustained by the available resources. Learning institutions have a role to play in managing the retention rate of students in public secondary schools. The increased enrolment rates from primary to secondary schools had a major effect on how a school could retain students. Since the Ministry of Education was aware of the growth, and it was part of Vision 2030, it was vital for the upper management to allocate additional funds to all learning institutions to sustain the increase in growth.

Teaching Efficacy

The findings obtained are shown in the table below.

Table 3: Teachers are well-trained and able to teach effectively in ways students can understand

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Disagree	16	9.3	9.3
Undecided	24	14.0	23.3
Agree	66	38.4	61.6
Strongly Agree	66	38.4	100.0
Total	172	100.0	

Source: The researcher, 2022

From the table above, 9.3% of the respondents disagreed that teachers are well-trained and able to teach effectively in ways students can understand. 14% of the respondents were undecided on whether teachers are well trained and able to teach effectively in ways students can understand. 76.8% of the respondents agreed that teachers are well-trained and able to teach effectively in ways students can understand. The majority of the respondents agreed that teachers are well-trained and able to teach effectively in ways students can understand. Teachers are important stakeholders in the school because they provide a harmonic resource in the educational establishment, professional instruction in classroom teaching, and modelling the behaviour of students (Okumbe,

2001). Based on the findings of this study, it was evident that the teachers were skilled and competent in managing the learning process and the overall discipline of students. It was a very pleasing factor because the knowledgeability of teachers and their instructional methods are very crucial determinants in assessing the school factors that may affect the retention of students in the Rachuonyo South sub-county. This also meant that the teaching force would be very vital in cultivating positive relationships with parents/guardians to spearhead the learning process, thus improving the retention rate of students.

Efficiency of Monitoring and Evaluation Activities

The findings obtained are shown in the table below.

Table 4: Monitoring and evaluation activities are conducted to ensure the school is run as expected

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly Disagree	30	17.4	17.4
Disagree	58	33.7	51.2
Undecided	26	15.1	66.3
Agree	58	33.7	100.0
Total	172	100.0	

Source: The researcher, 2022

From the findings above, 51.1% of the respondents disagreed that monitoring and evaluation activities are conducted to ensure the school is run as expected. 15.1% of the respondents were undecided on whether monitoring and evaluation activities are conducted to ensure the school is run as expected. 33.7% of the respondents agreed that monitoring and evaluation activities are conducted to ensure the school is run as expected. The majority of the respondents disagreed that monitoring and evaluation activities are conducted to ensure the school is run as expected. According to research conducted by the Ministry of Education in 2009 on the effectiveness of monitoring the teaching-learning process and subsidiary educational activities, there was evidence that schooling reviews were effective in improving educational quality. From the findings of the study, the respondents stated that the schools lacked monitoring and evaluation activities. Carrying out M & E is vital in

any learning institution, especially when students are moving from one class to the other. As students continue to grow, their learning process has an impact on how they absorb content. This has a significant effect because one of the factors that determine retention rates is how students react to the classroom environment. If the learning method used to teach a particular subject seems to not be effective in how students understand the content and no adjustments are made to the teaching approach, learners may develop a perception of a particular subject. Though this may not seem to be critical, it is one of the small problems that are not solved that eventually contribute to the fatality of the retention rates.

Conduciveness of Classroom Environment

The findings obtained were shown in the table below.

Table 5: The classroom environment is conducive to enabling students to develop a positive perception towards learning

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Disagree	24	14.0	14.0
Undecided	24	14.0	27.9
Agree	94	54.7	82.6
Strongly Agree	30	17.4	100.0
Total	172	100.0	

Source: The researcher, 2022

From the table above, 14% of the respondents disagreed that the classroom environment is conducive to enabling students to develop a positive perception towards learning. 14% of the respondents were undecided on whether the classroom environment is conducive to enabling students to develop a positive perception towards

learning. 72.1% of the respondents agreed that the classroom environment is conducive to enabling students to develop a positive perception towards learning. The majority of the respondents agreed that the classroom environment is conducive to enabling students to develop a positive perception towards learning. Rushton & Fargas-Malet *et al.*

(2010) asserted that students quickly assess the classroom environment as inviting and interesting or cold and dull, triggering the “flight or fight” response before the cognitive portion of the brain can adequately ascertain the environment. The classroom environment was dependent on a lot of factors like the teachers, the students, and the subject being taught, among others. However, all these relied on the tone set by the tutor. To ensure that the environment was conducive, the teacher had to ensure that he/she allowed the session to have open interaction through controlling when to have discussions, time for teachers and students listening

interchangeably, and concepts being taught are conveyed in a practical and instructional-based method.

Inferential Statistics

Further quantitative analysis was used on the data obtained. The techniques used were correlation and linear regression.

Correlation

The findings obtained were shown in the table below.

Table 6: Correlation for objective

		R01	R02	R03	R04
R01	Pearson Correlation	1	.543**	-.191*	-.015
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.012	.845
	N	172	172	172	172
R02	Pearson Correlation	.543**	1	.487**	.017
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000	.828
	N	172	172	172	172
R03	Pearson Correlation	-.191*	.487**	1	-.015
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.012	.000		.842
	N	172	172	172	172
R04	Pearson Correlation	-.015	.017	-.015	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.845	.828	.842	
	N	172	172	172	172

***. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).*

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).*

Key:

R01: The school does not have enough facilities to support its students

R02: Teachers are well-trained and able to teach effectively in ways students can understand

R03: Monitoring and evaluation activities are conducted to ensure the school is run as expected

R04: The classroom environment is conducive to enabling students to develop a positive perception towards learning

Source: The researcher, 2022

From the table above, there were two positive correlations whose concurrent implementation would have positively impacted the retention rates of public secondary schools in the Rachuonyo South sub-county. Their significance levels were $\leq .05$. They were as follows:

- Ensuring that teachers are well trained and able to teach effectively in ways students can understand and that the school has enough

facilities to support its students had a correlation of .543**.

- Ensuring that monitoring and evaluation activities are conducted to ensure the school is run as expected and that the school has enough facilities to support its students had a correlation of .487**.

Linear Regression

The findings obtained were shown in the table below.

Table 7: Linear regression for objective

Model		Unstandardised Coefficients		Standardised Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.885	.275		6.863	.000
	R01	-.064	.030	-.184	-2.167	.032
	R02	.050	.049	.096	1.008	.315
	R03	.082	.036	.188	2.305	.022
	R04	-.181	.038	-.332	-4.697	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Students Retention Rates DV

Key:

R01: The school does not have enough facilities to support its students

R02: Teachers are well-trained and able to teach effectively in ways students can understand

R03: Monitoring and evaluation activities are conducted to ensure the school is run as expected

R04: The classroom environment is conducive to enabling students to develop a positive perception towards learning

Source: The researcher, 2020

From the table above, apart from teachers being well-trained and able to teach effectively in ways students can understand, all other independent variables were significant predictors of improving the retention rates of students in public secondary schools in the Rachuonyo South sub-county. Their significance levels were $\leq .05$. The constant variable was also a significant predictor of improving retention rates.

One of the interviewees was quoted on the following:

“From the school angle, there are four categories that must be evaluated, school infrastructure, teaching staff, motivation factors, and learning environment. Funding should be appropriately provided by the government to facilitate the gradual growth of students to ensure that physical structures and teaching & learning equipment are enough to sustain the increased enrolment. The teaching staff must be competent, patient, use teaching methods that are in line with the advancements in teaching and learning and most of all, they must directly engage the student. In motivating

and encouraging students, guidance and counselling sessions must be in place to guide the students from both learning and other engaging activities to ensure that their wellbeing, esteem, and confidence are well managed”.

CONCLUSION

In analysing the school determinants influencing the students' retention rates in public secondary schools in Rachuonyo South sub-county, Homabay County, learning institutions had a role to play in managing the retention rate of students in public secondary schools. The increased enrolment rates from primary to secondary schools had a major effect on how a school could retain students. Since the Ministry of Education was aware of the growth, and it was part of Vision 2030, it was vital for the upper management to allocate additional funds to all learning institutions to sustain the increase in growth. Based on the findings of this study, it was evident that the teachers were skilled and competent in managing the learning process and the overall discipline of students. It was a very pleasing factor because the knowledgeability of teachers and their

instructional methods are very crucial determinants in assessing the school factors that may affect the retention of students in the Rachuonyo South sub-county. This also meant that the teaching force would be very vital in cultivating positive relationships with parents/guardians to spearhead the learning process, thus improving the retention rate of students. From the findings of the study, the respondents stated that the schools lacked monitoring and evaluation activities. Carrying out M & E is vital in any learning institution, especially when students are moving from one class to the other. As students continue to grow, their learning process has an impact on how they absorb content. This has a significant effect because one of the factors that determine retention rates is how students react to the classroom environment. If the learning method used to teach a particular subject seems to not be effective in how students understand the content and no adjustments are made to the teaching approach, learners may develop a perception of a particular subject. Though this may not seem to be critical, it is one of the small problems that are not solved that eventually contribute to the fatality of the retention rates. The classroom environment was dependent on a lot of factors like the teachers, the students, and the subject being taught, among others. However, all these relied on the tone set by the tutor. To ensure that the environment was conducive, the teacher had to ensure that he/she allowed the session to have open interaction through controlling when to have discussions, time for teachers and students listening interchangeably, and concepts being taught are conveyed in a practical and instructional-based method.

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