



Original Article

Personal Truancy Dynamics on Learners' Participation in Public Primary Schools in Narok South Sub-County

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*Learners' Participation,
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Learners' participation in public primary schools in Narok South Sub-County has been low. Many primary schools register high cases of learners dropout in public primary schools. This is also characterised by high cases of truancy. The objective of the study was; to assess the influence of personal truancy dynamics on learners' participation in public primary schools. The study was guided by Maslow's hierarchy of needs and the person-centred theories. This study adopted a mixed methodology and applied a concurrent triangulation research design. The target population was 304 respondents comprising 16 head teachers, 160 teachers and 128 parents' representatives, from which a sample of 172 respondents was determined using Yamane's Formula. Stratified sampling was used to create four different strata based on the number of zones in the Narok South Sub- County. From each zone, two head teachers and two parents' representatives were selected using purposive sampling. However, from each zone, 39 teachers were selected using simple random sampling. This procedure enabled the researcher to sample eight head teachers, eight parents' representatives and 156 teachers. A questionnaire was used to collect quantitative data from teachers, whereas an interview schedule was used to gather qualitative information from head teachers and parents' representatives. Piloting was conducted amongst 18 respondents (10.0% of 172) from schools in Narok South Sub- County to establish validity, reliability, credibility, and dependability. Validity was established through expert judgment. Reliability was established using the split-half technique and a reliability coefficient, $r = 0.719$, was obtained using Cronbach Alpha Method, which indicated high internal reliability. Credibility was

ascertained by data triangulation through multiple analysts. Dependability was ascertained through detailed reporting. Qualitative data were analysed thematically along the objectives and presented in narrative forms. Quantitative data were analysed descriptively using frequencies and percentages and inferentially using ANOVA Test Analysis in Statistical Packages for Social Sciences (SPSS 23) and presented using tables. The study established that learners' personal environmental dynamics have a great influence on the extent to which learners participate in public primary schools. However, many learners who often play truant manifest signs of boredom, lack of interest, isolation, always quiet, rarely playing together with their peers, lack interest in studies and are rarely ready for school.

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INTRODUCTION

Personal dynamics or factors within a learner contribute to their ability to absent themselves from school or not. According to Todaro (2009), causes of dropout vary from region to region, country to country, school to school, and individual to individual. However, according to research by Reid (2012), as many girls as boys are now truant. Arguably, the problem of pupil dropout is quite unsettling, especially to policymakers. This is partly because it reflects on the inadequacy of a schooling system in terms of either school quality or quantity. In effect, school dropouts are usually associated with high unemployment levels, low earnings, poor health outcomes, and persistent poverty. Harsh home or family environments, such as less-responsive and less-supportive parents, are some of the social aspects that are also linked to bullying

behaviour. According to Dake (2003), the likelihood of becoming a bully tends to decrease in an environment where open parent-child communication and a positive adult role model exist in the lives of children. Violence and other abusive behaviours displayed by adults in the family tend to predispose some learners to bullying through a process of modelling. It is apparent that situations where bullying occurs tend to create an environment that is conducive to the development of truant behaviour.

Woolfolk (2004) also established that truants with low self-esteem experience greater feelings of rejection or criticism from their parents than non-truants. Reid (2012) reports that regular non-attendees are found among learners whose numeracy and literacy scores are two or more years behind their peers in primary school. According to

Silins and Murray-Harvey (2000), a lack of academic success creates a sense of frustration and constant fear of failure. It appears that learners who experience difficulty with schoolwork often play truant in an attempt to evade frustration.

Statement of the Problem

Participation of learners in public primary schools in Narok South Sub- County has been on a downward trend despite the government initiatives to ensure there is 100% learners' enrolment and transition. As noted earlier, many primary schools register 23.9% cases of school dropout among learners in public primary schools in the Narok South Sub- County. A study by Kantim (2016) indicated that, in 2014, public primary schools in Narok South Sub- County enrolled 2345 learners. However, by 2017, 39.1% of them had dropped out of school, with cases of truancy rated at 34.8% in the entire sub-county (Kantim, 2016). This is also consistent with the findings of Busienei (2018) that 28.3% of learners drop out of public primary schools every year in the Narok South Sub- County. Despite these statistics, few empirical studies have not fully interrogated the extent to which truancy dynamics influence learners' participation in public primary schools, hence the need for this study.

Objectives of the Study

This study sought to determine the influence of personal dynamics on learners' participation in public primary schools in Narok South Sub-County.

THEORETICAL LITERATURE REVIEW

The study was guided by two following theories; Abraham Maslow's Theory of Hierarchy of Human Needs and the Person-centred Theory by Carl Rogers (1969).

Abraham Maslow's Theory of Hierarchy of Human Needs

This study was guided by the Theory of Hierarchy of Human Needs, which was postulated by Abraham Maslow (1954). This theory was premised on the assumption that motivation through a hierarchy of human needs is met step by step. The basic needs are classified as the lowest category in Maslow's hierarchy. In this case, pupils who lack

basic needs from home might opt to meet them first, which would result in school absenteeism. If the school does not provide for these needs, for instance, providing food to needy learners, the rate of absenteeism could increase in the area (Murungi, 2009). According to Maslow, if learners' physical needs are relatively satisfied, the individual's safety needs take precedence and dominate their behaviour.

Safety needs are security, stability, dependency, protection, and freedom from fear, anxiety, and chaos. These needs also consist of structure, an orderly world in which injustice and inconsistency are under control. Pupils who experience bullying, corporal punishment, and any sort of harassment from school find it difficult to survive in such an unfriendly and insecure environment. This forces the pupil to be absent or to abandon school altogether. Socio-cultural factors also contribute to pupil absence (Murungi, 2009). For example, often time, the Maasai people are nomadic pastoralists who keep on moving from one region to another in search of water and pasture for their livestock.

The Person-centred Theory

This study was also guided by Carl Rogers's (1969) theory of person-centred therapy which describes a healthy person as "fully functioning". For this state to be realised, motivating factors of warmth, acceptance, empathy and unconditional positive regard must be present. Muiro (2005), citing Rogers (1969), stated that a classroom must be a very special, open, accepting climate in which learners really are free to learn.

On the other hand, the teacher, rather than structuring the situation, should encourage individual responsibility where the class reflects warmth, empathy, genuineness, and unconditional positive regard. According to Rogers (1969), in the absence of such an atmosphere, pupils do not feel valued and accepted. The class becomes boring and the pupils opt to avoid such an environment that has failed to motivate them and seek to gratify their needs elsewhere. Malcolm et al. (2010) state that children who engage in truancy might have found life in classrooms dull, boring and uninteresting. Also, they must have found greater pleasure and

interest in activities outside the school and the classroom environment.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In this study, a mixed methodology was adopted which to offer a better understanding of the research problem than a single method design. In the quantitative method, quantifiable data from a large number of participants were collected, analysed these numbers using statistics and conducted the inquiry in an unbiased and objective manner. Quantitative data were collected using structured questionnaires. At the same time, the study adopted a qualitative method to collect data. In the qualitative approach, the researcher relied on the views of participants, asked broad questions, and collected data consisting largely of words from the participants. In this case, data was collected using an interview guide.

Research Design

The study applied concurrent triangulation design since it is a single-phase design in which the researcher implemented the quantitative and qualitative methods during the same timeframe and with the same weight. According to Creswell (2014), this design generally involves the concurrent but separate collection and analysis of quantitative and qualitative data so that the researcher may best understand the research problem. The researcher merged the two data sets by bringing the separate results together in the interpretation.

Target Population

Narok South Sub- County has 16 public primary schools and thus, the target population for this study was 304 respondents comprising 16 head teachers, 160 teachers and 128 parents' representatives, as shown in *Table 1*;

Table 1: Target Population of the Study

Categories	Target Population
Head teachers	16
Teachers	160
Parents' Representatives	128
Total	304

Source: Narok South Sub-County Education Office (2019)

Sampling Procedures and Sample Size

To obtain a sample size that has adequate size relative to the goals of the study, the researcher adopted Yamane's Formula as follows: Yamane, (1967).

$$N_o = \frac{N}{1+N(e^2)}$$

Where, N_0 = desired sample size at 95% confidence interval; N = Target Population; e = Confidence level of 5% (decimal equivalent is 0.05). Thus, desired sample will be:

$$N_o = \frac{304}{1+304(0.05^2)} = 172$$

Stratified sampling was used to create four different strata based on the number of zones in the Narok South Sub- County to ensure homogeneity during

sampling. From each zone, two head teachers and two parents' representatives were selected using purposive sampling, considering public primary schools which have had cases of low learners' participation. This ensured that all zones are proportionately represented. This is because according to Creswell (2014), the goal of purposive sampling is to make sure that one adequately understands the variation in the phenomenon of interest in the setting and to test the developing ideas about the setting. However, from each zone, 39 teachers were selected using simple random sampling to avoid feelings of bias and favouritism. This sampling procedure enabled the researcher to realise a sample of eight head teachers, eight parents' representatives and 156 teachers, as shown in *Table 2*.

Table 2: Sampling Grid

Categories	Target Population	Sample Size	Sampling Techniques
Headteachers	16	8	Purposive sampling
Teachers	160	156	Simple random sampling
Parents' Representatives	128	8	Purposive sampling
Total	304	172	

Data Analysis Procedures

Data analysis began by identifying common themes. The relevant information was broken into phrases or sentences, which reflected 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 were under investigation. Qualitative data were analysed thematically along the study objectives and presented in narrative forms, whereas the quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics such as frequencies and percentages 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.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Personal Dynamics and Learners' Participation in Primary Schools

The study sought to establish how personal dynamics which contribute to truancy among learners influence their participation in primary schools. Descriptive data collected from teachers were organised and summarised and the results are shown in *Table 3*:

Table 3: Teachers' Views on the Influence of Pupils' Personal Dynamics for Truancy on Learners' Participation in Public Primary Schools

Summary of Test Items	SA	A	U	D	SD
Learners usually feel bored, which has reduced their levels of participation in primary schools	71.4	12.1	1.5	10.1	5.3
Lack of interest has made many learners not participate in primary school education	66.9	13.2	2.4	12.7	4.8
Learners usually encounter peer pressure which has negatively affected their levels of participation in primary school education	80.5	12.4	1.6	3.3	2.2
Learners' participation in primary school education has been attributed to learners' attitudes toward education	67.4	19.7	3.5	5.3	4.1
Learners' readiness has contributed to their inability to participate in primary school education	69.6	13.8	1.6	10.6	4.4

Table 3 reveals that the majority (71.4%) of the teachers strongly agreed with the view that learners usually feel bored, which has reduced their levels of participation in primary schools. At the same time, (12.1%) of the teachers agreed with the statement. However, only a paltry (1.5%) of the teachers were undecided, 6(10.1%) disagreed, whereas (5.3%) strongly disagreed. These findings corroborate the assertions of Lewis (2014) that boredom, isolation, and lack of friends may be pull dynamics that keep

a learner off school. These are personal aspects within the learner, which may include shyness, a tendency to become easily distracted or bored, and perhaps an inability to make friends. It appears that an inability to cope with the demands of making friends triggers a strong impulse to escape from the anxiety-provoking situation, thus leading to truancy. This means that some learners respond to a socially challenging or emotionally threatening situation at school by playing truant. The study also

revealed that a fair majority (66.9%) of the teachers strongly agreed with the view that lack of interest has made many learners not participate in primary school education, as did (13.2%) of the teachers. At the same time, (2.4%) of the teachers were undecided, (12.7%) disagreed, whereas (and 4.8%) strongly disagreed. These findings also lend credence to the assertions of Reid (2012) that lack of interest in learning and low self-esteem make learners experience greater feelings of rejection or criticism from their parents than non-truants.

According to Reid (2012), regular non-attendees are found among learners whose numeracy and literacy scores are two or more years behind their peers in primary school. This implies that a lack of interest in academic success creates a sense of frustration and constant fear of failure. In other words, learners who experience difficulty with schoolwork often play truant in an attempt to evade frustration. These findings point to the fact that learners' interest in education should be boosted as a determinant of their ability to effectively participate in primary schools.

The study also revealed that an impressive majority of the teachers (80.5%) strongly agreed with the view that learners usually encounter peer pressure which has negatively affected their levels of participation in primary school education, as did 12.4% of the teachers. However, 1.6% of the teachers were undecided, 3.3% disagreed, whereas

2.2% strongly disagreed. These findings lend credence to the assertions of Solomon (1956) that truancy among pupils is also linked to peer pressure and a lower level of academic self-concept since these learners tend to perceive themselves as having less ability than their peers.

Inferential Findings on the Influence of Personal Dynamics on Learners'

Participation in Primary Schools

To verify the possibility of difference between personal dynamics and learners' participation in primary school education, data were collected on learners' levels of readiness (ready-3, not sure-2 and not ready-1) for all the eight sampled schools and the number of learners who were enrolled and those who dropped out of school between 2014 and 2018 in sampled public primary schools and the results are shown in *Table 4*.

This indicates that learners' personal dynamics, such as readiness for school, determine their levels of participation in primary schools, that is, their enrolment into school and the rate at which they drop out. These results further corroborate the assertions of Dekalb (1999) that learners' readiness plays a key role in the extent to which learners participate in primary school activities. These results were subjected to ANOVA and the results are shown in *Table 4*.

Table 4: ANOVA Analysis of the Difference between Means of Levels of Learners' Readiness, Enrolment and Dropout from Public Primary Schools from 2014-2018

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig
Levels of Learners' Readiness	308.958	7	44.137		
Enrolment				57.107	.000
Dropouts	8612.333	2	4306.167		
Residual	1055.667	14	75.405		
Total	9668.000	16	604.250		
Total	9976.958	23	433.781		

Grand Mean = 18.0417

From the ANOVA Statistics in *Table 4*, the processed data generated a significance level of 0.000 which shows that the data is ideal for making a conclusion on the population's parameter as the value of significance (p-value of 0.000) is less than 5%, that is, p-value = 0.000 < 0.05. It also indicates that the results were statistically significant and that there is a significant difference between means of

the levels of learners' readiness, enrolment and the number of learners who drop out of primary schools. As noted earlier, these results were consistent with the findings of Dekalb (1999), which generated a p-value of 0.037 < 0.05.

Thematic Analysis of Qualitative Findings on the Influence of Personal Dynamics on Learners' Participation in Public Primary Schools

Headteachers and parents' representatives were also interviewed. The interviewees indicated that the feeling of boredom among learners had affected participation in primary schools. Headteacher, H1, noted;

"In many cases, learners who absent themselves from school often manifest signs of boredom, isolation, always quiet and rarely play together with their peers" (Male, Med)

Just as noted earlier, these views further support those expressed by Lewis (2014) that boredom, isolation, and lack of friends may be pull dynamics that keep a learner off school. The interviewees concurred with Lewis (2014) that personal aspects of the learner include shyness, a tendency to become easily distracted or bored, and perhaps an inability to make friends. Just like in quantitative findings, these views indicate that learners respond to a socially challenging or emotionally threatening situation at school by playing truant. On the question of lack of interest, the interviewees responded in favour of the view that lack of interest has made many learners not participate in primary school education.

Discussion of Research Findings

The study established that primary school learners who are absent themselves from school often manifest signs of boredom, lack of interest, isolation, always quiet and rarely playing together with their peers. This indicates that boredom, isolation, and lack of friends may be pull dynamics that keep a learner off school. From the study findings, learners' personal aspects such as shyness, a tendency to become easily distracted or bored, and perhaps an inability to make friends have a role to play in the extent to which the learners enrol, attend, transit, and drop out of school. It is indicative of the fact that lack of interest among learners is a major cause of truancy which, in turn, reduces their levels of participation in school activities. From the study findings, levels of the learners' readiness are also key and have been established as a major factor in

their enrolment in school. This indicates that learners' readiness plays a key role in the extent to which learners participate in primary school activities. Hence, these study findings affirm the fact that learners' readiness contributes to the extent to which learners absent themselves from school, which, in turn, affects learners' participation in primary schools.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

It is evident that primary school learners who are absent themselves from school often manifest signs of boredom, lack of interest, isolation, always quiet and rarely playing together with their peers. Lack of interest among learners is a major cause of truancy which, in turn, reduces their levels of participation in school activities. This is also the case with learners' readiness which critically determines learners' enrolment into public primary schools. It is also evident that there are many cases of poor interpersonal relations among learners and their teachers. Learners who are unable to adjust to the social demands within the school context become socially maladjusted and tend to develop in ways that are detrimental to them socially and emotionally with their behaviours becoming inappropriate in regard to the norms of the school context. It is also evident that learning difficulties have become common among learners and have been a major cause of truancy among learners.

On personal dynamics of truancy and learners' participation in public primary schools, the study recommends that teachers and school heads should develop teaching approaches such as engagement of learners in hands-on activities which are geared toward removing instances of boredom, lack of interest and feelings of isolation among learners.

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