



Original Article

Influence of Parent's Level of Income on Student's Enrolment in Secondary Schools in Rachuonyo East Sub-County, Homabay County, Kenya

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Low enrolment rates in secondary schools have been experienced in Homabay County, in particular Rachuonyo East Sub-County. The purpose of the study was to establish the influence of family socioeconomic status on the enrolment of students in Secondary schools in Rachuonyo East Sub-County, Homabay County. A total of 13,786 respondents were targeted comprising 25 Principals, 9 Chiefs, 1 Sub-County Education officer, 5400 parents, and 8350 students. A sample of 355 respondents comprised of 14 Principals, 1 Sub-County Education Officer, 9 Chiefs, 15 parents, and 316 students was sampled for this study. The researcher used simple random sampling to sample the Secondary schools' students, while purposive sampling was applied to sample the principals, Chiefs, and the Sub- County officer. The study depended on questionnaires for students, while an Interview guide was used for Principals, Chiefs, Sub-County Educational officers, and parents. Piloting of research instruments was done in Rachuonyo East Sub-County, on 10% of the sample size. Test-retest technique was used to test for the reliability of the instruments; Cronbach Alpha was used to compute the instruments' reliability at 0.7. To ensure the validity of the research instruments, the instruments were developed under the close guidance of the supervisors. Dependability and credibility are enhanced in the research instruments. After data cleaning, the quantitative data was coded and entered into the computer for analysis using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 21 for windows which was analysed through descriptive and inferential statistics which was presented using percentages, frequencies, and coefficient correlation, respectively. Qualitative data was analysed in themes and presented in narrative form. Based on the findings received from the study, it was evident that the socioeconomic status of families had an effect on the enrolment of students in the Rachuonyo east sub-county. There were two strong positive correlations under the level of income objective. There was a high likelihood that students who came from low-income backgrounds would have challenges in enrolling on the next term or class. Additionally,

lack of support from parents, demotivation, and indiscipline issues contributed to a decrease in the enrolment of students. It was also vital to note that the two most vulnerable issues that would decrease the enrolment of students were low-income levels and the lower level of education of parents.

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INTRODUCTION

In Kenya, secondary school education has been declining since the introduction of free primary education as stated by Muricho & Chang'ach (2013), where secondary school education is recognised as an independent sector. Most parents opted to keep their students at home until they attained the age of six years, which entitled them to Free Primary Education. The parents did this to avoid secondary school fee payment, arguing that the government should provide for free Secondary school education as well. At this age, the child is taken from home directly to standard one, which is free, without going through an ECDE programme (Martin, & Acuna, 2002). As a result of this, standard one teacher complained that the students who skipped the ECDE programme had difficulty coping with lessons and also performed poorly in class. This tendency is particularly pronounced among poor families who cannot afford secondary school education fees. Secondary schools' enrolment can only be increased if the government

can establish policies and incentives to create demand for Secondary schools' education. The study focuses on parental characteristics in order to come up with what type of parents enrolled their students in Secondary schools and who are unable. The study focuses mainly on parental income, education level, household composition, and parental occupation.

The relationship between family socioeconomic status (SES) and the school enrolment and attendance of students has been well established in sociological research. While there has been disagreement over how best to measure SES, most studies have indicated that students from low SES families did not perform as well as they potentially could at school compared to students from high SES families (Graetz, 1995). Most studies, however, compared students from across all SES backgrounds to reach the conclusion that low SES adversely affected a range of educational outcomes. Another important dimension, however, has been the factors that may influence educational outcomes within

particular SES bands. One of the most debated issues among educational professionals has been the correlation between the academic achievement and socioeconomic status of students. A prevalent argument has been that the socioeconomic status of a student has a major effect on his/her academic achievement.

Students' enrolment refers to the process of initiating a child's attendance at a school. Learner retention refers to the action or state of going to school regularly, completing the level and joining the next class. Students who have been enrolled in Secondary school Education programs have benefited greatly by receiving introductory free education after joining primary schools (Stacks & Oshio, 2009).

LITERATURE REVIEW

The family is the primary social system for students. Grolnick, W. S., & Pomerantz, E. M. (2009) found that high parental control will be associated with high achievement, Cassidy and included a specific factor of the family's socioeconomic status, crowding, as an indicator of how being disadvantaged affects educational attainment. They found that a less physically crowded environment, along with motivation and parental support, is associated with higher educational levels of students. Religiosity as an aspect of the family environment is also a factor influencing academic achievement.

Sirin (2005) stated that there are many variables to consider when determining a student's socioeconomic status effect on school enrolment and attendance. He pointed out that parental income has a strong effect on pupil performance due to the economic resources that allowed for more academic components to be implemented. Resources available at home are an important indicator of the relationship between socioeconomic status and school enrolment and attendance. Sirin (2005) further researched pupils' grade levels and the

relationship between family income status and academic performance. He suggested that a relationship exists between income status and academic achievement across various levels of schooling with exceptions to the high school level pupils. The relationship between grade levels showed significant correlations between income status and academic achievement. It started in the elementary levels and continued through the middle school years. The study showed that there is a statistical gap between pupils from low and high socioeconomic status throughout the grade level, and it tended to widen as the grade levels increased. Sirin also stated that academic achievement is a process, and when valuable skills are not obtained in early grade levels, the gap in academic achievement increases throughout the educational process. The reason for the high school level showing a low statistical gap is due to the fact that many of those pupils performing at a low level are more likely to drop out of school in later years, thus not allowing for inclusion in the research samples.

A parent has a vital role to play in the life of a child. The involvement of a parent in a child's life determines the future of such a child. Extensive researches done by Cox (2005), Desforges and Abouchaar (2003) and Epstein (2001) indicate that parents who are involved with their student's education are building the foundations for a better-educated child. These students will be better adjusted to school, which can lead to more education. In addition, parents are sending a message to their students that education is important. Parental involvement is important because parents who are part of their student's education will understand the importance of reading. These parents will read to their students beginning at a young age. Also, these parents will make sure that their students can read at the right grade level throughout the educational process. Since reading is a big problem in our country, the reading foundation that the parents develop assists

the students in their future educational endeavors as well as life goals (Epstein, 2001).

Equally important is the fact that parents who are involved with their students will make sure their homes are conducive to education. This means that the home will have books available for their students to read. The home will also have several kinds of reference materials and tools, such as encyclopaedias, magazines, computers, calculators, pens, pencils, and papers, to name a few. In the home will be a quiet room that students can use to study or concentrate on their school work. Part of setting up a home conducive to learning also includes a limited amount of television viewing throughout the week. Some parents will even make sure that students' homework is done at the same time every day and if there is no homework, the parent will create some (Epstein, 2005).

Weinreb (2001) study found that students from low-income families are more likely to be preoccupied with environmental stressors within their neighbourhood such as feelings of insecurity about their safety, housing status, and violence within their community to the detriment of their enrolment and attendance. Majoribanks (1996) asserts that pupils from low-income families have been found to score about ten percent lower on the National Assessment of Educational Programs than higher SES pupils. Majoribanks has also shown that students from single-parent households do not perform as well in school as students from two-parent households. There are several different explanations for this achievement gap. Single-parent households have less income and there is a lack of support for the single-parent, which increases stress and conflicts. Secker (2004) stated that when groups of pupils with similar backgrounds are compared, the pupils from a high socioeconomic status outperform those from a low socioeconomic status (SES) in school academic achievement. High SES is related to better social support, higher enrolment and attendance, fewer

discipline problems in the district, and higher social expectations.

Fransoo et al. (2005) indicated that educators have known for years that pupils from high-income families attend schools regularly and academically perform better than those from low-income families. Although many pupils from high socioeconomic backgrounds do not perform well, and many from low socioeconomic backgrounds perform very well, the overall trend is evident. It is not the case that pupils from low socioeconomic status do poorly, but the higher the economic status of the pupil, the more likely the educational success. The results of the authors' study revealed that socioeconomic status as compared to the school academic achievements is far more evident than previous documentation has shown. Pupils from low-income families are much more likely to drop out of school or are retained in a particular grade. The answers to the problem of educating such pupils are challenging and demanding.

Kahlenberg (2001) study found that pupils from high poverty backgrounds tend to skip classes, have more behavioural problems, have less motivation for academic success, and even possibly feel that performing successfully in their academics is embarrassing. Kahlenberg believed that having the majority of the school population comprised of middle-class pupils would improve the quality of teachers and expectations of pupils and would ensure educational quality in public schools. Kahlenberg indicated that all pupils are entitled to quality education. He concludes that the success of such a goal is dependent on schools consisting of a population in which the majority is comprised of middle-class pupils. The author stated there should be much importance placed on the economic diversity of students in public schools.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN

From the mixed methodology, this study entailed a concurrent triangulation research design. The

design was used to obtain different but complementary data on the same topic to best understand the research problem. A total of 13,786 respondents were targeted comprising 25 Principals, 1 AEO, 9 Chiefs, 5400 parents and 8350 Students. According to Mugenda and Mugenda (2003), a sample of 10% of the target population is substantial. For descriptive research, a sample of 355 respondents comprised of 14 Principals, 15 parents, nine chiefs, 1 AEO, and 316 students was sampled for this study. The researcher used simple random sampling to sample the Secondary schools' students and their parents, while purposive sampling was applied to sample the Principals, AEO and Chiefs. The researcher applied a variety of data collection instruments to gather pre-requisite information for the study. These included; questionnaires and interview schedules. The field data was cleaned by checking for any missing or inaccurate data and correct it appropriately. After data cleaning, the quantitative data was coded and entered into the computer for analysis using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 21 for windows. Martin and Acuna (2002) posit that SPSS is able to handle a large amount of data, and given its wide spectrum of statistical procedures purposefully designed for social sciences, it is quite efficient. Quantitative analysis entailed analysing numbers about a situation by choosing specific aspects of that situation. Descriptive statistics were used to analyse the quantitative data obtained. This specifically

included percentages, frequency counts, and inferences to test the relationship between the dependent and the independent variables. Pearson product-moment was computed to establish if there was a relationship and the nature of the relationship. Qualitative data obtained from the interview was analysed and discussed thematically. This data was used to reinforce the quantitative findings and to elaborate on the concepts obtained.

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Response Rate

The study had a sample size of 355 respondents. Out of the total respondents, 316 were to fill out questionnaires, and the remaining 39 were to be interviewed. The researcher picked the filled questionnaires after three weeks. Two hundred seventy-six respondents had filled in the questionnaire giving a response rate of 87.22%. 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 (Deutkens, De Ruyter, Wetzels, & Oosterveld, 2004), 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	%
355	100	276	87.22	39	12.78	87.22	355

Source: The researcher, 2020

Impact of Parents' Level of Income on Students' Enrolment

Students from Low-Income Families and Chances of Finishing High School

The findings obtained are shown in the table below:

Table 2: Students from low-income families have a high chance of not finishing high school

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly Disagree	54	19.6	19.6
Disagree	45	16.3	35.9
Agree	105	38.0	73.9
Strongly Agree	72	26.1	100.0
Total	276	100.0	

Source: The researcher, 2020

From the table above, 35.9% of the respondents disagreed that students from low-income families have a high chance of not finishing high school. 64.1% of the respondents agreed that students from low-income families have a high chance of not finishing high school. The majority of the respondents agreed that students from low-income families have a high chance of not finishing high school. Weinreb (2001) study found that students from low-income families were more likely to be preoccupied with environmental stressors within their neighbourhood such as feelings of insecurity about their safety, housing status, and violence within their community to the detriment of their enrolment and attendance. The uncertainty of not being sure of whether you will be able to pay for the

education of your child affects both the parent and the student. The parent will be anxious if he/she will be able to afford the fees needed for the coming term, while the child will not know whether they will attend a school or even whether they will be able to finish the term without being let go due to arrears. If there was a way to prioritise those who were able to afford or incapable of struggling and find ways to get resources, it would greatly benefit those students.

Family Background and Chance of Enrolling in High School

The findings obtained are shown in the table below.

Table 3: Students that grew up either as orphans or with a single parent have a chance of not enrolling due to a lack of resources.

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly Disagree	36	13.0	13.0
Disagree	105	38.0	51.1
Undecided	27	9.8	60.9
Agree	108	39.1	100.0
Total	276	100.0	

Source: The researcher, 2020

From the table above, 51% of the respondents disagreed that students that grew up either as orphans or with a single parent have a chance of not enrolling due to a lack of resources. 9.8% of the respondents were uncertain about whether students that grew up either as orphans or with a single parent have a chance of not enrolling due to a lack of resources. 39.1% of the respondents agreed that students that grew up either as orphans or with a single parent have a chance of not enrolling due to a lack of resources. The majority of the respondents disagreed that students that grew up either as orphans or with single parents have a chance of not enrolling due to lack of resources. Secker (2004) posited that students from single-parent households do not perform as well in school as students with both parents because single parents have less income and there is lack of support for them which increases stress and conflict. Though the findings of the study dispute the literature, there was validity to

the disagreement. Examining the research area, i.e., Rachuonyo east sub-county, the level of low-income earners was higher than medium to high-income earners. There were situations whereby even both parents could not afford to fully finance the fees for their children. The majority of the earners mainly rely on one industry which creates market congestion and the income received is little which ought to be shared. For single parents, the burden was higher because there was no support from their partner, which enabled them to reduce the financial margin required to enrol their kids. Both the child and parent/guardian end up suffering.

The study further examined whether the students from good economic backgrounds are expected to perform better and have high enrolments than their counterparts. The results are shown below.

Table 4: Students from good economic backgrounds are expected to perform better and have high enrolments rather than their counterparts.

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly Disagree	39	14.1	14.1
Disagree	55	19.9	34.0
Agree	182	66.0	100.0
Total	276	100.0	

Source: The researcher, 2020

From the table above, 66% of the respondents agreed that students from good economic backgrounds are expected to perform better and have high enrolments than their counterparts. 34.2% of the respondents disagreed that students from good economic backgrounds are expected to perform better and have high enrolments than their counterparts. The majority of the respondents agreed that students from good economic backgrounds are expected to perform better and have high enrolments than their counterparts. According to (Brownell, Ross, Colón, & McCallum, C. 2005), educators have known for years that pupils from high-income families attend schools

regularly and academically perform better than those from low-income families. The findings of the study corroborated with the literature. It was unfortunate to note how financial resource leverage and have power over those that do not have when it came to education. There was a responsibility that the government had neglected in creating fairness in the education system. The education for all initiative ought to have been backed up by offering free secondary education and ensuring access to knowledge and information at the secondary school level did not have a price tag.

Lack of Motivation, Poor Attendance, and Indiscipline

The study sort of finding out whether lack of motivation, poor attendance, and at times discipline

issues of learners were associated with low-income earning parents. The findings obtained are shown in the table below.

Table 5: Lack of motivation, poor attendance and at times discipline issues were associated with low-income earning parents

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly Disagree	50	18.1	18.1
Disagree	46	16.7	34.8
Undecided	36	13.0	47.8
Agree	90	32.6	80.4
Strongly Agree	54	19.6	100.0
Total	276	100.0	

Source: The researcher, 2020

From the table above, 34.8% of the respondents disagreed that lack of motivation, poor attendance, and at times discipline issues were associated with low-income earning parents. 13% of the respondents were undecided on whether lack of motivation, poor attendance, and at times discipline issues were associated with low-income earning parents. 52.2% of the respondents agreed that lack of motivation, poor attendance, and at times discipline issues were associated with low-income earning parents. The majority of the respondents agreed that lack of motivation, poor attendance, and at times discipline issues were associated with low-income earning parents. Kahlenberg (2001) asserted that students from high poverty backgrounds tend to skip classes, have more behavioural problems, have less motivation for academic success and are possibly embarrassed. One of the reasons why motivation, discipline, and attendance could be related to a low level of income was due to students

not being in a controlled environment. Attendance issues meant that students were let go by the school until they cleared their arrears, and if they took much time out of school, they had to play catch up, and if they could not, they would be disappointed, demoralised, and eventually lose motivation. Additionally, schools did not pay too much to students who had discipline issues because it was linked to demotivation and disregards for academics.

Inferential Statistics

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

Correlation

The findings obtained are presented in the table below.

Table 6: Correlational results

		RO1	RO2	RO3	RO4
RO1	Pearson Correlation	1	.608**	-.399**	.562**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.000
	N	276	276	276	276
RO2	Pearson Correlation	.608**	1	-.234**	.014
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000	.817
	N	276	276	276	276
RO3	Pearson Correlation	-.399**	-.234**	1	-.157**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		.009
	N	276	276	276	276
RO4	Pearson Correlation	.562**	.014	-.157**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.817	.009	
	N	276	276	276	276

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

Key

RO1: Students from low-income families have a high chance of not finishing high school

RO2: Students that grew up either as orphans or with a single parent do not finish school

RO3: Students from good economic backgrounds are expected to perform better and have high enrolments rather than their counterparts

RO4: Lack of motivation, poor attendance and at times discipline issues were associated with low-income earning parents.

Source: The researcher, 2020

From the findings of the table above, there were two positive correlations whose significance levels were ($p \leq .05$). They were as follows:

- Students from low-income families have a high chance of not finishing high school and students that grew up either as orphans or with a single parent did not finish school had a correlation coefficient of .608**.
- Students from low-income families have a high chance of not finishing high school and lack of motivation, poor attendance and at times, discipline issues were associated with low-income earning parents, having a correlation coefficient of .562**.

Linear Regression

From the table below, apart from lack of motivation, poor attendance, and at times discipline issues associated with low-income earning parents, the model shows that all other variables why predictors of why enrolment was a critical issue in the Rachuonyo east sub-county. Their significance levels were $\leq .05$. In analysing the unstandardised coefficient B for one unit increase in the independent variables, the model predicted an increase in the enrolment rates. In analysing the standardised beta, for one standard deviation in the independent variables, the model predicted a deviation in the dependent variable.

Table 7: Linear regression

Model		Unstandardised Coefficients		Standardised Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	3.383	.227		14.914	.000
	RO1	.132	.042	.371	3.143	.002
	RO2	.279	.039	.580	7.191	.000
	RO3	.097	.029	.228	3.354	.001
	RO4	-.049	.034	-.129	-1.440	.151

a. Dependent Variable: Students Enrolment

Key:

RO1: Students from low-income families have a high chance of not finishing high school

RO2: Students that grew up either as orphans or with a single parent do not finish school

RO3: Students from good economic backgrounds are expected to perform better and have high enrolments rather than their counterparts

RO4: Lack of motivation, poor attendance and at times discipline issues were associated with low-income earning parents.

Source: The researcher, 2020

Qualitative Responses from Interviews

One of the parents asserted the following:

"As a parent, I truly understand the pain that one feels when their child is unable to enrol on school. Other students are busy studying while your child lacks the financial resources to be in school. It becomes unbearable to the point of dropping out of school. The education is yet to implement free secondary school education to leverage access to education for all. Parents who are well of do not worry about enrolment because they have the capability to ensure that their children attend school. We should sympathise with what the less fortunate are facing and find ways to aid them."

CONCLUSION

In establishing the influence of parents' level of income on students' enrolment in the Rachuonyo east sub-county, the uncertainty of not being sure of whether you will be able to pay for the education of your child affects both the parent and the student. The parent will be anxious if he/she will be able to

afford the fees needed for the coming term, while the child will not know whether they will attend a school or even whether they will be able to finish the term without being let go due to arrears. If there was a way to prioritise those who were able to afford or incapable or struggling and find ways to get resources, it would greatly benefit those students. Though the findings of the study dispute the literature, there was validity to the disagreement. Examining the research area, i.e., Rachuonyo east sub-county, the level of low-income earners was higher than medium to high-income earners. There were situations whereby even both parents could not afford to fully finance the fees for their children. The majority of the earners mainly rely on one industry which creates market congestion and the income received is little which ought to be shared. For single parents, the burden was higher because there was no support from their partner, which enabled them to reduce the financial margin required to enrol their kids. Both the child and parent/guardian end up suffering. The findings of the study corroborated with the literature. It was unfortunate to note how financial resource leverage

and have power over those that do not have when it came to education. There was a responsibility that the government had neglected in creating fairness in the education system. The education for all initiative ought to have been backed up by offering free secondary education and ensuring access to knowledge and information at the secondary school level did not have a price tag. One of the reasons why motivation, discipline and attendance could be related to a low level of income was due to students not being in a controlled environment. Attendance issues meant that students were let go by the school until they cleared their arrears and if they took much time out of school, they had to play catch up and if they could not, they would be disappointed, demoralised and eventually lose motivation. Additionally, schools did not pay too much to students who had discipline issues because it was linked to demotivation and disregards for academics.

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