

A Study of Teachers' Perceptions on Economic Factors Influencing Boys' Dropout in Secondary Schools in Kericho County, Kenya

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ABSTRACT

School dropout is a major hindrance in attaining the goals of education in Kenya. Following the implementation of Free Primary Education (FPE) and Free Day Secondary Education (FDSE) by the Kenyan government, several reports reveal more boys drop out of school than girls. Boy-child school dropouts is a concern, not only in Kenya but also in the world over. Numerous researches have been conducted in various regions of Kenya; however, few have specifically examined the factors contributing to the escalating rate of male students dropping out of secondary schools, specifically in Kericho County. The objective of this study was to examine the perceptions of teachers regarding economic factors that contribute to the dropout rates of male students in public mixed-day secondary schools in Kericho County. The study aimed to find out the perceptions of teachers regarding the impact of economic factors on the dropout rates of boys from school. A descriptive research design was adopted. The research was conducted under the framework of Gibson's Theory of Direct Perception. The multistage sampling technique was used, where 121 schools were sampled to participate. The sample size was based on the Krejcie and Morgan sample size determination table. A purposive sampling technique was employed to select a total of 136 form four class teachers. Piloting of the instrument was conducted to determine its reliability using the Spearman-Brown prophecy formula. The validity of the instrument was determined with respect to the established objectives. Data collection involved the use of questionnaire for the teachers. Quantitative data was analysed using the Statistical Packages for Social Science (SPSS) software version 27. The findings of the study revealed that economic factors such as low parental income, high cost of remedial teaching, and high cost of transportation to and from school ($F = 2.689$, $p < .05$), had a significant impact on the dropout rates of boys. The results of the regression analysis indicated that economic factors were found to contribute 22.4% ($R^2 = .224$) to the drop-out rate among boys. Male individuals who drop out of school may potentially involve themselves in crimes, thereby posing a significant risk to the welfare of the community. The findings hold substantial importance for educators, parents, and students, as they shed light on the determinants impacting male students' educational persistence.

Keywords: Teachers' perceptions, economic factors, secondary school, school drop-out, boy-child.

INTRODUCTION

Education can be conceptualized as an ongoing and continuous endeavour that encompasses the acquisition of knowledge, skills, and attitudes throughout an individual's entire lifespan, commencing from birth and concluding at the end of one's life (Mutwol, 2013). School dropout is a major challenge in attaining the goals of education in Kenya. From time to time several policy pronouncements have been made by government but the desired outcomes have not been achieved.

According to a report by UNESCO (2000), those who have received education have higher levels of productivity compared to those who have not. Education has a key role in enhancing individuals' skills, thereby equipping them with a more comprehensive knowledge base. Individuals who exhibit such behaviours as maintaining excellent health, engaging in family planning, adhering to legal regulations, and fulfilling the basic needs of their children, such as giving food, shelter, and clothing, have been seen (Pandey, Hale, Das,

Goddings, Blakemore & Viner, 2018). Investment in education is thus deemed warranted as the most effective means for fostering and expediting societal and various other forms of progress within a given nation.

Despite the progress made in improving school participation since the 1990 Education For All (EFA) conference held in Jomtien, Thailand, dropout rates remain high, particularly among boys, due to various socio-economic factors in many African countries (UNESCO, 2012). The issue of male student attrition is increasing on a global scale, as highlighted by Kane (2004), who asserts that boys from various social backgrounds, regardless of their socioeconomic status, are impacted by dropping out of school. Based on the findings of Kane's (2004) research, it was determined that a significant proportion, specifically 30%, of students in the United States fail to complete their desired educational trajectory and drop out of school. According to Siddhu's (2011) study, the research findings indicate that India exhibits a boy-child drop-out rate of 12%, but the corresponding figure for Asia is 5%. To address the issue of high dropout rates, governments in numerous nations have provided financial support to various components of the education system. Consequently, there was a considerable reduction in drop-out rates. However, because of inflation, many governments faced challenges in sustaining funding for education, leading them to implement cost-sharing measures that subsequently contributed to an increase in drop-out rates.

According to Mishra and Azeez (2014), an analysis of data from countries including Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Kenya, Mali, and Mozambique reveals that a significant proportion of drop-out cases, approximately 60%, are attributed to students who are older in terms of age. Furthermore, the data indicates that over 90% of dropouts come from economically disadvantaged backgrounds, while more than 70% of drop-outs have mothers who did not receive an education.

The issue of school dropout has been a longstanding challenge within the Nigerian education system. Ajaja (2016) argues that the problem of drop-out rates has been a prominent issue in the educational system since the achievement of independence in 1960, resulting in negative consequences. Before attaining independence, the matter of dropout rates had already become deeply rooted in the educational system (Branson, Hofmeyr, & Lam, 2014). The dropout issues is global and it affects African countries.

According to Branson et al. (2014) the phenomenon of dropping out of secondary school in South Africa is influenced by various factors at both the individual and household levels. The study demonstrates that factors such as ethnicity, household size, female household headship, and the educational attainment of household heads are significant indicators of school dropout. The procedure of selecting students for continued enrollment in secondary school appears to exhibit a bias towards children from higher socioeconomic backgrounds in comparison to their peers from lower-income households. In South Africa, there is a prevailing national crisis concerning drop-out rates, with an estimated 60% of first-grade students discontinuing their education before finishing 12th Grade. Similarly, once reaching Grade 12, a mere 52% of the age-appropriate population continue to be registered in educational programs.

The implementation of government-funded education in Uganda resulted in a rise in student enrollment. However, this positive outcome was accompanied by other problems, including a scarcity of teachers and classrooms, as well as a resurgence in dropout rates (Ssewamala, Wang, Karimli, & Nabunya, 2011). This means that as enrolment goes up, the government should be able to provide the necessary facilities so as to guard against dropout.

In Tanzania, the introduction of government-funded education resulted in a deterioration in quality standards, mirroring the aforementioned situation. Various factors contributed to boys' dropout rates, such as the availability of paid employment, peer influence, domestic responsibilities, the illness of a family member, pregnancy, early marriage, financial constraints, limited academic abilities, inheritance matters, and the considerable distance between the student's residence and the educational institution. The causes for dropout in Tanzania seem to align with the findings of the Ugandan government data, which indicate that despite the availability of free secondary education, financial constraints contribute to the dropout rate of 55% (Mugo, Ruto, Nakabugo & Mgalla, 2015).

The Children's Act, which was implemented in Kenya in 2001, affirms that every child has the entitlement to

education, regardless of their socio-economic or cultural background (Mutambo, 2016). In 2003, the introduction of Free Primary Education (FPE) in Kenya, resulted in a notable influx of 1.5 million children into the education system. Subsequently, between 2003 and 2008, primary schools experienced a significant rise in student enrollments, with numbers increasing from 7.5 million to approximately 9 million. According to the Ministry of Education, the implementation of the FDSE policy resulted in a significant increase in the transition rate, which rose from 40% to over 70%.

According to Karabo and Natal (2013), the media in Kenya has highlighted a notable decrease in the dropout rate of girls as a result of the increased focus on promoting girls' education and reintegrating them into the school system. Conversely, the dropout rate among boys has exhibited an upward trend. Findings by Mwihia and Ongek (2019) showed that the rate of attrition among female students in Kenya stands at 2%, whilst the corresponding percentage for male students is slightly higher at 2.1%. Despite the existing observations, there is a scarcity of comprehensive studies investigating the underlying factors contributing to the phenomenon of male student attrition in public day secondary schools. Consequently, there is a pressing need to research to address this knowledge gap. The elevated percentage of male dropouts results in the inefficient use of resources (Parr, 2013). The issue of males dropping out of school has raised concerns among government officials, educators, and other stakeholders in the field of education, thus necessitating the undertaking of this study.

The discrepancy between the number of students who complete their studies in form four and the number of students who initially registered in form one is regarded as the rate of drop-out instances, which in this instance amounts to 3.2%. The prevalence of drug and substance abuse, as well as engagement in motorbike riding and informal employment, serves as a diversion for boys, leading to a shift in focus away from academic pursuits, as these activities provide immediate pleasure. Hence, it is observed that Kericho County is not exempted from the prevailing challenges encountered by the male students, particularly in terms of their educational prospects in mixed-day secondary schools. However, there is a lack of explicit initiatives aimed at addressing the issue of male student retention in this educational context. The objective of this study was to examine the viewpoints of the teachers regarding the influence of social, economic, and school-related factors on the dropout rates of male student in Kericho County.

Statement of the Problem

The main goal of Free Day Secondary Education (FDSE) was to create educational opportunities for the children of Kenya, with the ultimate intention of cultivating their future contributions to the nation's development and advancement. This substantial financial resource was committed to the provision of tuition-free education. The occurrence of dropouts is perceived as a wastage of these national resources, as the drop-outs do not acquire the needed information and skills. The phenomenon of school dropout, which impacts both male and female students, is a matter of considerable importance not only in the Kenyan context but also on a global scale.

The data available from Kericho County reveals a persistent upward trend in the dropout rates among male students over the last five years, leading to considerable concern. The phenomenon of male child dropout is a matter of considerable significance, as it leads to the denial of the fundamental human entitlement to education for these specific individuals. The data indicates a consistent decrease in the enrolment of male students in public co-educational secondary schools located in Kericho County. This occurrence provides empirical support for the presence of a discernible disparity that necessitates focused attention and proactive intervention. To maximize the advantages obtained from the FDSE programme, it is crucial to precisely identify the particular obstacles that hinder student retention.

Therefore, it was necessary to undertake a study to investigate the influence of economic factors that contribute to the dropout rates of male students in public mixed-day secondary schools in Kericho County.

Objectives of the Study

To accomplish the aim of this investigation, the following objective was addressed:

- (i) To investigate the perceptions of teachers regarding the influence of economic factors on the dropout rates of male students in public mixed-day secondary schools in Kericho County, Kenya.

Research Hypotheses

In order to achieve the purpose of the study, the following hypotheses were tested:

HO₁: There is no significant relationship between teachers' perceptions of economic factors and drop-out rates among male students in public mixed-day secondary schools in Kericho County, Kenya.

Theoretical Framework

Gibson's Theory of Direct Perception

Gibson's theory of direct perception (1979) posits that the perceptual process relies solely on the information obtained from sensory receptors, encompassing the sensory context, without necessitating additional factors for perception. The perspective that perception is facilitated by the environment providing all necessary information is commonly referred to as ecological perception. Put simply, individuals do not require advanced cognitive processes or any other intermediary factors to bridge the gap between their sensory experiences and their perceptions. Perception does not require preexisting beliefs or higher-order inferential cognitive processes. According to Gibson (1979) the notion of affordances was established to elucidate the dynamic interplay between organisms and their surroundings. Affordances refer to the opportunities and constraints that the environment presents to the organism, which can be beneficial or detrimental. Gibson's core assertion regarding visual perception revolves around the integration of diverse environmental stimuli and the subsequent impact on the individual's cognitive processes, emphasizing the interplay and interdependence between the individual and their surroundings.

Gibson posited that within the realm of reality, an ample amount of contextual information typically exists, hence enabling individuals to make perceptual judgements. According to the theory, it is argued that the explanation of perception does not necessarily need the involvement of higher-level cognitive processes. The hypothesis posits that individuals directly utilize contextual information, suggesting a biological predisposition to respond to such information. Gibson posits that individuals rely on texture gradients as perceptual clues to ascertain depth and distance. These cues assist individuals in directly perceiving the relative proximity or distance of things and their various components.

Hence, as previously mentioned, Gibson's model is occasionally referred to as an ecological model (Chow, Davids, Button, & Renshaw, 2015). The citation is a product of Gibson's focus on perception as it manifests in the ordinary realm (the ecological environment), as opposed to controlled laboratory settings that offer limited contextual information. The phenomenon of direct perception can also be observed in interpersonal contexts, as individuals engage in the process of interpreting the feelings and intentions of others (Gallagher, 2016). Following Wittgenstein's assertion (1980), individuals possess the innate ability to discern emotions in facial expressions, rather than engaging in a process of deciphering individual facial cues to construct an overall emotional perception. The aforementioned theory can be classified as reductionist due to its inclination towards explaining perception exclusively via the lens of the environment.

This study provides substantial data that supports the concept that perception can be impacted by the brain and long-term memory. Within the specific setting of this study, it can be contended that Gibson's theory holds greater credibility since it successfully elucidates the perspectives of both teachers and students about the subject matter. The primary objective of this study is to examine the perceptions of principals and teachers on the factors that influence the rate of male student attrition in public mixed-day secondary schools located in Kericho County. The variables under investigation in this study encompassed the determinants impacting the rates of attrition among male students, given their presumed constancy and immutability.

Locale of the Study

The study was undertaken in Kericho County in Kenya. Kericho County is situated in the Great Rift Valley's South Rift, some 256 kilometres from Nairobi, Kenya's capital. Kericho County has six sub-counties: Bureti,

Belgut, Soin-Sigowet, Ainamoi, Kipkelion, and Londiani. There are 256 secondary schools and 176 of these public mixed-gender day secondary schools. The Secondary schools are well-equipped. The area is multicultural, with large tea estates, sugarcane plantations, and coffee farms that house people from all over the nation, representing all ethnicities and religions. Most of the population are subsistence farmers who hardly have enough food to feed themselves. Living in both rural and urban areas provided a variety of perspectives on the topic under investigation

METHODS

Sampling and sample size

The study sample consisted of 136 teachers from Form 4 classes. Multistage sampling technique was used, where 121 schools were sampled to participate. The sample size was based on the Krejcie and Morgan sample size determination table. A purposive sampling technique was employed to select a total of 136 class teachers.

Questionnaires for the Teachers

The questionnaire was administered to the teachers in the classroom setting and consisted of two distinct sections. The first section focused on background information, encompassing the demographic details of the participants. The second section delved into specific information regarding the impact of independent variables, teachers' perceptions on economic factors, on the occurrence of dropouts among male students (dependent variable). The study aimed to assess the perceptions of the teachers' regarding the impact of economic issues on the dropout rate of male students. Questionnaires were distributed to four class teachers for data collection.

Reliability of the Questionnaire

A total of fourteen educators were selected to participate in the piloting of the questionnaire. They were initially asked to complete a set of questionnaires. After two weeks, the same group of teachers was again asked to complete the same questionnaires. The correlation obtained was obtained using the Spearman-Brown prophecy formula. A reliability coefficient of .78 was obtained the questionnaire. According to Yang and Green (2011), a reliability coefficient equal to or greater than .7 is deemed to meet the necessary level of consistency. Thus, the questionnaire had a desirable reliability.

Validity of the Questionnaire

Content validity was established by constructing suitable and pertinent items that aligned with the study's aims, which were to investigate teachers' perceptions of economic factors that contribute to the dropout of male students. The questionnaire was designed per the research objectives. The construct validity of the questionnaire was assessed through the utilization of factor analysis and by evaluating the internal consistency of the individual measures. The items underwent careful examination and validation to ensure their logical coherence and adequacy in gathering the intended data, as well as their comprehensive coverage of all the areas investigated in the study. The aspects assessed by the Teachers' Questionnaire in this study were compared among various sub-groups of the teachers.

Data Analysis

The study adopted a descriptive research design and the teachers' perceptions on the economic factors influencing boy-child dropout were analysed. Data analysis was carried using Statistical packages for social science (SPSS) computer program version 27. Descriptive and inferential statistics was computed from the quantitative data. The quantitative data was subjected to an ANOVA to examine any potential relationship.

FINDINGS

Teachers' Perceptions of Economic Factors and Boy-Child Drop-Out

The objective of this study was to investigate the Class Teachers' Perceptions of Economic Factors and Boy-

Child Drop-Out in public mixed-day secondary schools located in Kericho County, Kenya.

The following hypothesis was tested:

HO₁: There is no significant relationship between teachers' perceptions of economic factors and drop-out rates among male students in public mixed-day secondary schools in Kericho County, Kenya.

Table 1: Results of ANOVA on Class Teachers' Perceptions of Economic Factors and Boy-Child Dropout

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	Fobs	sig.
	Regression	20.324	10	2.032	2.689	.006 ^b
1	Residual	70.291	93	.756		
	Total	90.615	103			

a. Dependent Variable: Boys dropping out of school was on the increase.

b. Predictors: (Constant), High cost of teaching and learning materials led to boy-child drop-out, High cost of secondary education led to boy-child drop-out, Desire to contribute to family income generation led to boy-child school drop-out, Inheritance of family properties contributes to boy-child school drop-out, High cost of transport to and from the school contributed to boy-child drop-out from school, Lack of school fees contributed to boy-child drop-out, Low parental income contributed highly to boy-child drop-out from school, Boys pursuing menial jobs led to school drop-out, Big family size catalysed boy-child drop-out from school, High cost of remedial classes contributed to boy-child drop-out from school.

The ANOVA test produced $F_{obs} = 2.689 > F_{crit(10, 93, .05)} = 1.91$, HO₁ was rejected. The results showed that there is a significant relationship at a .05 significance level.

Table 2: Teachers' Perceptions of Economic Factors and Boy-Child Dropout

Model Summary ^b									
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.474 ^a	.224	.141	.869	.224	2.689	10	93	.006

a. Predictors: (Constant), High cost of teaching and learning materials led to boy-child drop-out, The high cost of secondary education led to boy-child drop-out, Desire to contribute to family income generation led to boy-child school drop-out, Inheritance of family properties contributed to boy-child school drop-out, High cost of transport to and from the school contributed to boy-child drop-out from school, Lack of school fees contributed to boy-child drop-out, Low parental income contributed highly to boy-child drop-out from school, Boys pursuing menial jobs leads to school drop-out, Big family size catalysed boy-child drop-out from school, The high cost of remedial classes contributed to boy-child drop-out from school.

b. Dependent Variable: Boys dropping out of school was on the increase.

Hence, based on the model summary and ANOVA, the analysis of variance revealed a statistically significant difference ($p = .006$). The null hypothesis, which posits that there was no statistically significant association between class teachers' judgements of economic circumstances and the drop-out rate of male students, was

rejected at a significance level of .05. While the correlation between perceived economic considerations and the phenomenon of boy-child school dropout may be modest, it remained statistically significant. Economic considerations exerted a statistically significant influence on the dropout rates of male students, however, the perceptions of teachers regarding that relationship were characterized by ambivalence.

The regression model yielded a correlation coefficient value of .474^a. The data indicates a limited correlation between the dropout rate of male children and the independent variables. A coefficient of determination (R-square) value of .224 was determined. That finding highlighted the observation that the dropout rate among male children was responsible for 22.4% of the variations in the independent variables, while the remaining 77.6% could be attributed to unaccounted factors in the study.

Hence, based on the model summary and ANOVA, the analysis of variance revealed a statistically significant difference ($p = .006$). The null hypothesis, which posits that there was no statistically significant association between class teachers' judgements of economic circumstances and the drop-out rate of male students, was rejected at a significance level of .05. While the correlation between perceived economic considerations and the phenomenon of boy-child school dropout may be modest, it remained statistically significant. Economic considerations exerted a statistically significant influence on the dropout rates of male students, however, the perceptions of teachers regarding that relationship were characterized by ambivalence.

DISCUSSION

A significant proportion of the participants expressed strong agreement regarding the effect of economic factors on male secondary school dropouts. This indicated an urgent need for attention. These findings aligned with the conclusions drawn by Pharris-Ciurej, Hirschman and Willhoft (2012) in their study, which asserted that the absence of education contributes to both social and economic crises. Consequently, the government must take necessary measures to ensure the provision of free education.

A significant proportion of the participants expressed strong disagreement with the notion that the knowledge acquired in educational institutions did not contribute to boys' ability to address community issues. This agreed with the conclusions drawn by Kaggwa, Onen and Kimoga (2016), who emphasized the significance of the knowledge students acquire through formal education.

A study conducted by Evans (2016) highlighted several variables that contribute to the disengagement of male students from educational institutions. Those factors include socioeconomic disadvantage, the necessity to participate in employment for financial support, the presence of armed conflicts, compelled migration particularly in politically unstable regions, the prevalence of corporal punishment within some schools, and instances of physical violence. Lack of financial development in Kenya has led to destitution among Kenyan families as 50% of Kenyans live below poverty lines and are hence incapable of getting essential needs such food nourishment, protection, wellbeing and education. Due to destitution, guardians or parents are at times incapable of meeting both the coordinate and circuitous costs of tutoring which makes them withdraw their children from school. 59.22% of the respondents suggested that economic issues had an impact on the phenomenon of boy-child dropout. The economic issues that were under study were family economic status, family size and desire to earn. A study by Sabates, Akyeampong, Westbrook and Hunt (2010) suggested that a significant number of students chose to leave school and pursue entrepreneurial endeavours as a result of financial constraints related to tuition prices.

CONCLUSION

The objective of this study was to investigate the impact of economic factors on the rate of dropout among male children in Kericho County, Kenya. The study revealed that a significant proportion of the participants concurred that the absence of sufficient funds for school fees is a contributing factor to the phenomenon of male children discontinuing their education. Additionally, it was observed that the inclination to contribute to the generation of family income serves as a motivation for male children to abandon their schooling, as they become involved in the "*boda boda*" business, which emerged as one of the identified causes for their dropout. Conversely, a significant majority of the participants concurred with the potential correlation between males

engaging in menial occupations and their likelihood of dropping out of school.

Additionally, the research revealed that there is not a significant correlation between poor parental income and the likelihood of boys dropping out of school, since the majority of participants expressed disagreement with this notion. When queried about the potential influence of large family size on the likelihood of boys dropping out of school, the majority of respondents expressed disagreement. The research investigated the potential correlation between the elevated expenses associated with secondary school and the likelihood of male students discontinuing their studies. The findings revealed that a significant proportion of the participants expressed a dissenting viewpoint.

The study additionally revealed that a significant proportion of the participants expressed disagreement with the notion that the inheritance of family traits has a causal relationship with the occurrence of school dropouts among male children. The exorbitant transportation expenses associated with commuting to and from educational institutions significantly contribute to the phenomenon of male students discontinuing their education. The majority of respondents concurred on the correlation between the high cost of remedial programs and the dropout rate among male students. The majority of instructors and principals concur that the high expenses associated with teaching and learning materials contribute to the dropout rates of male students.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the empirical evidence presented in the study, the following recommendations are made:

- i) Since the boy-child education is under threat due to economic factors, the Government should be gender sensitive and embrace an affirmative action especially on issues affecting boy-child and therefore save him from dropping out of secondary schools.
- ii) The regulation of the '*boda boda*' industry by the government is necessary due to its role in enticing young males to abandon their education in favour of engaging in motorbike riding as a means of income generation.
- iii) All schools in Kenya should embrace the strategies that the sampled schools have put in place to curb boy-child dropout which include; proper and effective guidance and counselling, sensitization of parents, making schools friendly to students and coming up with policies that could assist in handling indiscipline cases.

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