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The role of guardian occupation on children's access to school in the nomadic pastoralist in Samburu County, Kenya

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Abstract

This study aimed to establish the role of guardian occupation on children's access to school nomadic Pastoralists in Samburu County, Kenya. Samburu District was stratified into three clusters to facilitate the data collection: Highland-Rural, Lowland-Rural and Urban. Multi-stage and random sampling were used to select from each cluster, one division, one location, one sub-location and then 200 household heads from all the villages in the sub-location. That is moving from the division down to the villages using random sampling. Data were collected and analysed using Excel and SPSS computer packages and further presented using descriptive and inferential statistics. The specific tools used were frequencies, cross-tabulations, contingency tables, chi-square, multiple regression, correlation, and qualitative presentation in the form of quotations and photographs. The study established that the relationship between guardian occupation and access to basic formal education was found to be very significant at a 100 per cent level of significance. Therefore, the study recommended that there is a need for stronger, effective and aggressive community sensitisation programmes to encourage them to engage in viable modern forms of occupation such as crop farming. This recommendation is in light of the study findings that guardian occupation determines access to basic formal education.

Key words: Access to school, community sensitisation, guardian occupation, nomadic pastoralist, programmes.



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INTRODUCTION

More specifically, nearly two-thirds of the children in pastoral areas- Turkana, Maasai, Samburu, Somali, and Oromo-speaking areas do not know the inside of a classroom (Kenya Pastoralists Forum, 1995). In that case, the uneducated are progressively less able to enhance and shape their economic and social development. This process constrains regional and even international competitiveness (of a country) and confines a large proportion of the world's population to poverty (Lockheed et al., 1991).

Because of the arguments advanced earlier, the acquisition of formal education is a must in today's world. It is important and necessary in its own right and is also a basic human right. There could be no sustainable development of the nomadic pastoral people without increased and sustained education of their children. Kenya's government's policy is to make basic education universal, and some efforts have been made to provide access to it to the disadvantaged (those living in ASAL and in slum areas).

However, despite Kenya's policies, plans, and efforts to make education universal, its access to nomadic pastoralists and slum dwellers is still limited. Kenya, therefore, faces a problem in the elimination of illiteracy and realisation of education for all. Gakuru (1993) stated that one of the intractable aspects of the problem, inter-alia, is the "low enrolment and extremely high dropout rates among the pastoral peoples". Therefore, this study sought to establish the role of guardian occupation on children's access to school nomadic Pastoralists in Samburu County, Kenya.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Further, Mohammed (2018) attributed low access to basic formal education among nomadic pastoral peoples to distance, diseases, and lack of food and clothing. This, by implication, means that children may not attend school due to fear of wild animals as they pass through bushes and areas far from the settlements. Similarly, where basic human needs, such as medical care, food, and clothing, are not adequately met, children may not enrol in school, and those enrolled may drop out. In a rather related argument, Roy (1984) blamed the rigid nature of the

formal/conventional education system for low education access among nomadic pastoralists. First, the system requires a single-point entry, in the sense that a child must start from class one and insist on a specific age group. Secondly, it requires sequential progression, in that a child is expected to spend a year in one class and move on to the higher class after passing an examination. Thirdly, it calls for whole-time instruction - an education programme on a full-time basis- and finally, insists on professional teachers and a standardised curriculum. As a result, dissatisfaction accrues as they find the system insensitive to their individual situations.

METHODOLOGY

The study got its data from secondary and primary avenues. The secondary sources were literature materials from local libraries and records/reports in education offices and schools in the Samburu District. Primary sources were based on interviews and direct observations. An interview schedule with 9 main areas was used. Proportional Stratified sampling was used to divide the area into three clusters, namely;- Highland-Rural, Lowland-Rural and Urban. The study adopted the Survey Research method. This method of data collection was used because it is the most appropriate for generating data and describing a population too large to observe directly (Creswell & Creswell, 2022). For this reason, structured interviews and questionnaires were applied. Direct observations were used to assess the nature of the regions studied and capture relevant 'off-the-cuff' remarks of the respondents. Among the issues that were observed were the climate, water sources, activities done by the people, terrain, and settlements, among other things. In this study, the analysis of the data was done using both descriptive and inferential statistical tools. The statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) was used to aid data analysis, organisation, interpretation and presentation. According to Yellapu (2018), descriptive statistics involves methods concerned with arranging, summarising and conveying the characteristics of a range of numbers. Descriptive statistics used in these items include percentages, proportions and frequency distributions. On the other hand, inferential statistics involves making generalisations, predictions and conclusions about

the characteristics of parameters based on the characteristics of the samples (Guetterman, 2019).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Distribution of Respondents by Occupation

The variable occupation in this study was used to shed some light on the occupations of the head of the

household. Since occupation determines whether or not an individual has a regular income, it is assumed that an individual's occupation status influences his/her children's accessibility to basic formal education. The distribution of the respondents by occupation level is given in Table 1.

Table 1: Respondents Occupation

	Highland Rural		Lowland Rural		Urban		Total	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
No occupation	2	4.0	18	19.6	24	41.4	44	22.0
Crop farmer	43	86.0	-	-	-	-	43	21.5
Employed	1	2.0	-	-	8	13.8	9	4.5
Casual	2	4.0	-	-	21	36.2	23	11.5
Herdsperson	2	4.0	74	80.4	5	8.6	81	40.5
Total	50	100.	92	100	58	100	200	100

The respondents cited crop farming, employment, casual, herders and 'no work' as their occupations. 'No work' was not included in the questionnaire but was brought in by the respondents. These were people who lost livestock and were not undertaking any activity except begging and giving out their children to herd other people's livestock (not for payment), but for them to get just-food. Those in the urban area just roam the town begging with their children. The findings of the study reveal that the main occupation was Herding 40.5 per cent. The others were 'No occupation' 22 per cent; Crop farming 21.5 per cent, Casual work 11.5 per cent and lastly Employment 4.5 per cent.

The findings further revealed the regional differences in occupation. The main occupation in the Highland Rural was farming 86 per cent. All these categories of crop farmers have livestock. We decided to put them mainly crop farmers to make the analysis easier later when we differentiate them from pure herders. The Samburu in the Highland Rural have adopted

crop farming because the area has agricultural potential.

The main occupation in Lowland Rural was herding, at 80.4 per cent, while in Urban, it was 'no occupation' at 41.4 per cent, and casual work was 36.2 per cent. The latter finding confirms the problem of unemployment in Kenya today and supports the Kenya Development Plan documentation (1997b), which shows that over three million people are unemployed.

Finally, the study reveals that the majority (88.9) of those employed were in the Urban, while the rest (11.1%) were in the Highland-Rural, showing that those in Urban areas are more accessible to wage employment.

Occupation of the Guardian

This study also sought information on how the occupation of the Guardian/parent influences access to basic formal education. The data on these results is shown in the following table.

Table 2: Occupation of the Guardian/Parent

	Crop Farmers		Employed		Casual		Herders		No Work		Total	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
With a child in school	36	83.7	9	100	20	87.	23	28.3	12	27.3	100	50
No child in sch	7	16.3	-	-	3	13	58	71.6	32	72.7	100	50
Total	43	100	9	100	23	100	81	100	44	100	200	100

Row Totals	43	21.5	9	4.5	23	11.5	81	40.5	44	22	200	100
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All (100%) of those employed had their children in school, followed by casual workers (87%), crop farmers (83.7%), herders, although far below (28.3%) and lastly (very close to herders), those with 'no work' (27.3%). These variations may be explained by the findings of Chege (1983) argued that guardians' occupation influences children's access to school. The guardians who had easy access to cash money took their children to school more than the rest. Finally, those in 'modern' occupations such as employment, casual work and crop farming,

which is also relatively new among nomadic pastoralists, seem to take children to school more than those in traditional engagements like herding.

Association between Guardian Occupation and Access to Basic Formal Education

In this section, we are testing the relationship between guardian occupation and access to basic formal education. The full picture of this relationship is captured in Table 5.6 below:-

Table 3: Association between Guardian Occupation and Access to Basic Formal Education

ACCESS	GUARDIAN OCCUPATION		
	Modern	Traditional	Row Total
Accessible	68(72.3)	11(10.8)	79(40.3)
Not Accessible	26(27.7)	91(89.2)	117(59.7)
Column Total	94(100.0)	102(100.0)	196(100.0)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Missing observations 4 • $X^2 = 77.03951$ • Contingency coefficient 0.53 • Significance = 0.0000 • $df = 1$ 			

While only 48 per cent of the total sample had modern forms of occupation like clerks, teachers, etc, a relatively higher percentage (52%) was still entrenched in traditional forms of occupation, like herding.

Table 3 also shows that overall, 40.3 per cent of the interviewees reported that basic formal education is accessible, while 59.7 per cent revealed that basic formal education is not accessible. Of the 102 respondents who had traditional jobs, only 10.8 per cent revealed that basic formal education is accessible. This leaves an overwhelming majority (89.2%) of the respondents with traditional occupations acknowledging that basic formal education is not accessible. This can probably be explained by a lack of awareness of the importance of basic formal education among the traditional Samburu. These guardians with traditional forms of occupation are less likely to take their children to school, hence affecting enrolment (the study's indicator for accessibility to basic formal education).

The relationship between guardian occupation and access to basic formal education was found to be very significant at a 100 per cent level of significance. Moreover, the relationship is weak, as indicated by the value of the contingency coefficient (0.53). Accordingly, we can argue that the association between the two variables is quite significant but weak - implying that there are other factors that strongly explain accessibility to basic formal education.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Furthermore, there is a need for stronger, effective and aggressive community sensitisation programmes to encourage them to engage in viable modern forms of occupation such as crop farming. This recommendation is in light of the study findings that guardian occupation determines access to basic formal education.

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