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Relationship between selected economic factors and enrolment of girls in rural public primary schools in Samburu County, Kenya

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Abstract
The gist of this study was to examine the relationship between selected economic factors and the enrolment of girls in rural public primary schools in Samburu County, Kenya. Persistent low enrolment of girls in rural public primary schools in Samburu County has been conspicuous despite efforts by the government, as addressed in the Kenyan Constitution and Basic Education Act, 2013. For this reason, the objectives of this study were to establish the relationship between household wealth, rural infrastructure, child labour, family residence, as well as school facilities and meals at school and enrolment of girls in rural public primary schools in Samburu County, Kenya. It employed a descriptive correlation survey design and was guided by Social Conflict Theory by Oberschall. The target population of the research was 136 female teachers and 135 headteachers from rural public primary schools in Samburu County. The sample size for the study was 136 female teachers and 27 headteachers. The census method for female teachers who responded to the questionnaires was used, while a purposive sampling technique was applied for head teachers whose data was obtained using interview schedules. Result analysis by Pearson Correlation Coefficient yielded a significant negative correlation of -0.348 and a low p-value (Sig.) of 0.005, signifying significance at the 5 per cent level, indicating a significant relationship between economic factors and girls' enrolment in rural public primary schools in Samburu County. The study recommended infrastructure improvements, transportation and resolving water scarcity issues in Samburu County as means for enhancing girls' enrolment in rural primary schools.

Key words: Child labour, economic factors, girls schooling, rural schools, school enrolment.

INTRODUCTION

Girls' education critically determines overall societal development, and it is also a basic human right; however, school enrolment levels for girls are still low in Africa, particularly in rural areas. There is a compound, positive effect of education on women's health, economic empowerment and social development (Moodley et al., 2019; Ali, 2020; Silva & Oliviera, 2022; Pinheiro-Machado & Scalco, 2020). As a result, African nations have agreed to guarantee and protect the entitlement of girls to education. Educational planning has been playing a central role in promoting girls' access to basic education. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women– CEDAW (1979) and The Convention on the Rights of the Child – CRC (1989) constitute some of the declarations made to this effect (Silva & Oliviera, 2022). The 2000 Dakar Conference appraised the progress towards achievement of Universal Primary Education (UPE) and realised that attainment of Education for All was far out of sight; as a result, the goal of tackling incongruity in primary schools by 2005 and dispensing with gender disparity in education by 2015 was put in place. The Conference made the proclamation that all children must have gone through primary school successfully by 2015.

Even though significant progress in school enrolment has been achieved, millions of girls and boys worldwide with a gender disparity in favour of boys, especially in Africa's south of the Sahara desert, remain away from school (United Nations Statistics Division -UNSD, 2019; Rafaeli & Hutchinson, 2020). A meagre seven nations in sub-Saharan Africa attained the 80 per cent gross enrollment ratio baseline goal (United Nations Scientific and Cultural Organization- UNESCO, 2019). One hundred and thirty million primary girls are not in school, most of whom live in West Asia and sub-Saharan Africa (UNESCO, 2019; World Bank, 2019). The majority of girls across the African continent are not still enrolled in school (Evans & Yuan, 2020; Steinmann & Rutkowski, 2023).

Divya and Janardhanan (2023) submit that economic challenges plague the access and retention of girls in school. Girls from low-income backgrounds are more impacted by economic problems. According to UNESCO (2022), inequalities in the education system in Europe make low-income families unable to cater fully for the necessities of their children in education, consequently affecting the girl child more by reducing enrolment in primary school. Divya and Janardhanan (2023) observe that in Africa, there are many economic factors, such as high school fees, which could render parents unable to educate their children, girl child included. Instead, parents want their children to work and earn. A girl from a poor family background in sub-Saharan Africa has minimal hope and chance of going through primary school and completing it. More than 75 nations have missed the attainment of the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) for successfully creating primary and secondary school opportunities for boys and girls by the year 2005 as planned (UNESCO, 2022). This inquiry seeks to analogise the link that economic realities entailing household wealth, rural infrastructure, child labour, family residence, as well as school facilities and meals at school have with enrolment of girls in rural primary schools in the context of Samburu County, Kenya.

Data from 42 counties in Kenya prove that urban girls are doubly likely to be in school than rural girls (National Bureau of Statistics, 2022), though the government of Kenya has been working hard at promoting girls' access to primary education. It has also been noted that a girl in central Kenya is more likely to attain a standard two level of literacy and numeracy than a girl in northern Kenya by over seven times (Sakwa, 2020). In Samburu County, the disparity between girls and boys in primary school enrolment in rural schools is wider than in urban schools.

Girls' primary school enrolment level in Samburu County has been persistently low, with the percentages remaining around 40 per cent with marginal increases. The national primary school enrolment depicts very minimal disparities of decimal points, with the Gender Parity Index (GPI) for 2022 in Samburu County being 0.7. If the GPI ranges from 0.97 to 1.03, gender parity has been attained; a GPI below 0.97 indicates an imbalance in favour of boys, but 1.03 and above favours girls (UNESCO, 2020). For the year 2022, Kenya achieved gender parity at 0.98 (Ministry of Education, 2022). This indicates that Samburu County is far below the acceptable range of between 0.97 and 1.03.

Up to now, girl child enrolment figures remain low in remote areas such as Samburu County. There is a

relatively lower enrolment of girls in rural primary schools of Samburu County with regard to the overall Samburu County enrolment. In 2022, girls' enrolment in public primary schools was 36.5 per cent, while for boys it was 63.5 per cent. There were similar variations between the sub-counties: Samburu Central Sub-county had a relatively higher enrolment at 40.2 per cent, whereas Samburu East Sub-county had a meagre 34 per cent.

The government of Kenya has made a great effort to promote education for all children through its diverse policy frameworks; however, girls' enrollment in primary school lags behind in rural areas of the country, especially in Samburu County. Girls' school enrolment in rural public primary schools for Samburu County in 2022 was 36.5 per cent (UNICEF, 2019; MOE, 2020). Bongai's study (2022) emphasises the direct impact of economic conditions on girls' enrollment, revealing that children from impoverished families, those with less-educated parents, and those living in areas distant from water sources face notable disadvantages when it comes to accessing education. However, a research gap becomes apparent regarding girls' unique economic challenges for girls' enrolment in rural primary schools. Moreover, a more targeted policy approach is necessary based on the identified gaps in girls' enrollment in rural primary schools in Samburu County.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review centred on the relationship between Economic Factors and Enrolment of Girls in School. European Commission (2021) raises the point that child labour disproportionately affects girls' schooling when compared with the case for boys. Girls are disadvantaged and face specific risks with regard to the issue of child labour. This kind of domestic work engagement makes them miss going to school. A study by Ramachandran (2022) explores the challenges and inequalities present in the Indian education system and emphasises the impact of poor learning at the elementary stage on students' ability to succeed in secondary education. A research study by Fernandez-Gimenez et al. (2021) evaluated aspects interfering with female education in the Bajaur District of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, in Pakistan, with a focus on financial challenges by the schools, inadequate school facilities, inadequate teaching fraternity, lack of girl schools, few female teaching personnel as well as lack of supportive policies.

Bongai (2022) conducted a study to examine the link between socioeconomic factors and children's schooling outcomes in Mozambique and found that children from poor families, where the parents were less educated, those living in the north region, those who lived far from water sources, and children not being biological children of the household head faced the greatest disadvantages in schooling.

In another observation, Börzel and Risse (2021) noted that in Jega Township in the Kebbi state of Nigeria, socioeconomic background interfered with girls' schooling. In a similar inquiry, Nzina (2019) noted that socioeconomic dynamics affected the attendance and retention of girls in high schools of Mukaa in Makueni County, Kenya. Poverty at the family level not only affected school attendance but also affected performance at school. Similarly, Alego (2022) investigated the economic-related features which affected school attendance and academic attainment of girls in basic schools in Murang'a South Sub-County in Kenya. The study realised that due to economic shortcomings at home that forced parents to run about fending for the families, girls were affected in terms of their attendance and achievement in school.

Owoyomi (2020) carried out a study on child labour experienced by girls vis-a-vis their right to education in Nigeria and noted that many children engaged in hawking commodities in the streets due to a lack of basic requirements in their households. Girls, even as young as ten years or less, were the majority of children who went to the streets to do the hawking business. Such children grow up missing school and become beggars and finally opt to stay in the streets as their preferred social setting.

An inquest by Amutabi and Agoot (2021) on the handicap magnitude of enrolment in primary schools in South Sudan was executed, with interest being focused on features of community, gender and employment disparities in the nation. The findings highlight the fact that longer access time to essential facilities such as schools, hospitals, and food outlets decreases the likelihood of child enrolment in schools in the states of South Sudan. It has been observed that there is a significant role of parental level of education, income, as occupation in pupil enrollment and retention in primary schools, as per Kengere (2019), in an inquiry intended to

probe aggravation of picked out parental socioeconomic status aspects on pupils' schooling in the sub-county of Tambach in Elgeyo-Marakwet County, Kenya. Factors such as financial constraints were found to affect girl-child education in Yobe State, specifically in Damaturu and Bade Local Government Areas, according to Ishaku (2020), who aimed to assess the proportion of girl-child enrolment against the overall enrolment, identify challenges to girl child school enrolment.

Kagigi (2020) studied the factors which impair the attainment of girls in high school in the sub-county of Olkalou in Nyandarua County, Kenya. The findings of the study led to recommendations for addressing economic factors and improving girls' educational outcomes in Nyandarua County. A study was carried out by Wamukuru (2019), which aimed to examine ways in which formal education levels among pastoralists, specifically the Samburu Community in Kenya, impacted economic prosperity; the education status of household heads was established to be associated with household income.

METHODOLOGY

This research was based on a descriptive correlational design, with a survey method being applied for the collection of data on the economic variables of girls' school enrolment, using questionnaires and interview schedules. The study was based in rural public primary schools in Samburu County, Kenya. The respondents were 136 female teachers and 135 head teachers in rural public primary schools. The census method was used to select all 136 female teachers, and purposive sampling was used to select 27 head teachers. Piloting was done on 14 female teachers and 3 headteachers. The questionnaires used four-degree Likert-type items in order to avoid neutral responses.

The analysis of Quantitative data was done using Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 29.0. Descriptively, percentages were computed. Correlation analysis was employed to examine the direction, existence, and degree of the relationship between economic factors and the enrolment of girls in rural public primary schools in Samburu County, Kenya. Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) test was extracted through regression analysis to test for significance. Regression analysis was carried out to show the predictive capacity of economic variables on girls' enrolment in rural public primary schools in Samburu County. In conducting and reporting the research findings, the utmost level of respect for the rights of the respondents was adhered to, including adherence to integrity and truthfulness.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

There was a 100 per cent turn of the respondents, with 30.3 per cent being above 35 years of age, while the rest ranged between 21-34 years. All had primary teacher education training certificates (P1). The study focused on selected economic variables of household wealth, rural infrastructure, child labour, family residence, as well as school facilities and meals at school.

Regarding household wealth, only 26.8 per cent of the respondents disagreed that the low level of household wealth depicted by lack of livestock, child labour and lack of food at home negatively affected the enrolment of girls in rural primary schools, while 73.3 per cent agreed. This result agrees with the findings of Börzel and Risse (2021) regarding enrollment and household economic factors.

Concerning rural infrastructure with a focus on boarding facilities, availability of schools and school sanitation facilities, 37.3 per cent of the respondents disagreed that rural infrastructure affected the enrolment of girls in rural primary schools, while 62.7 per cent agreed. The findings of Fernandez-Gimenez et al. (2021) correspond with this outcome.

With regard to child labour, 38.4 per cent of the respondents disagreed that child labour affected the enrolment of girls in rural primary schools, while 61.6 per cent alluded that child labour was indeed affecting the enrollment. The findings of Owoyomi (2020) also highlighted this effect.

On family residence, 30 per cent of the respondents disagreed, while 70 per cent agreed that family residence affected the enrolment of girls in rural primary schools.

For school facilities and meals at school, 38.4 per cent of the respondents disagreed, while 61.6 per cent agreed that school facilities and meals at school affected the enrolment of girls in schools. This result corresponds to the findings of Fernandez-Gimenez et al. (2021).

Table 2 summarises the results on the economic factors in relation to the enrolment of girls in rural public primary schools in Samburu County.

Table 1: Summary of Economic Factors in Relationship with Girls' School Enrolment

Economic Factors	**per cent Disagreed**	**per cent Agreed**
Household wealth	26.8	73.2
Family residence	30.0	70.0
Rural infrastructure	37.3	62.7
School facilities	38.4	61.6
Child labour	38.4	61.6
Average	**34.2**	**65.8**

Test of Null Hypothesis, 'There is no Statistically Significant Relationship between Economic Factors and Enrolment of Girls in Samburu County'

Table 2: The Test of Hypothesis

Area of Residence	Selected Factor	Enrolment of Girls	Pearson Correlation Coefficient Values	Sig. (2-tailed)
Samburu County	Economic factors		-.348*	.005

* - Means significant at a 5 per cent level

The Pearson Correlation Coefficient value of -0.348 with a significance level of 0.005 indicates a significant negative correlation between economic factors and girls' enrollment in these schools.

The results of the ANOVA show that the regression line fits the actual data since the mean square of the residuals is very small (0.322) compared to the mean square of the regression (2.617). The F-statistics of the regression result is $F_{(1,\ 120)} = 8.124$ while the reported *p*-value=0.005, which is less than the conventional probability value of 0.05 alpha level. The model applied can thus significantly predict the change of the dependent variable as a result of the independent variable in the model.

Table 3: Anova Analysis

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	2.617	1	2.617	8.124	.005[b]
	Residual	38.661	120	.322		
	Total	41.279	121			
a. Dependent Variable: Enrolment rate of girls						
b. Predictors: (Constant), Economic Factors						

As presented in Table 3, it was also determined that there existed a statistically significant negative relationship between Economic factors and the enrolment of girls in public primary schools of Samburu County ($\beta = -.607$, $p<0.05$). The beta coefficient of -.607 means that when the practice of Economic factors increases by an additional unit, enrolment of girls in public primary schools in Samburu County decreases by .607.

Table 4: Anova Coefficients

Model		Unstandardised Coefficients		Standardised Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	4.142	.684		6.052	.000
	Economic Factors	-.607	.213	-.348	-2.850	.005

The unstandardiSed coefficients allow us to understand how a unit change in economic factors corresponds to a unit change in girls' enrollment.

Enrollment of girls in public primary schools = 4.142 + (-.348) Economic Factors + ε (.213).

This equation demonstrates that economic factors have a significant negative impact on girls' enrollment in rural public primary schools in Samburu County, Kenya.

Qualitative interviews also corroborated the above findings by the respondents mentioning that economic factors affect girls' enrollment in public primary schools. Parents are hesitant to invest in girls' education; their involvement in the herding of goats and household chores, as well as engagement in employment as housemaids, exclude them from school. Lack of sanitary towels also caused them to miss school. The effect of economic factors is summarised in this statement by a respondent:

Livestock numbers are reducing, forcing families to find other ways of getting food. One way is by giving out their daughters to be house-helps in trading centres.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion: This study brought to the fore the way Economic factors such as household wealth, family residence, rural infrastructure, school facilities, and child labour are correlated with girls' enrolment in primary school. The onus is on both the national and the county governments to devise and implement measures for enhancing the economic status of the people of Samburu County. This study should be replicated in every county of the Republic of Kenya so that county-based solutions for problems facing girls' enrolment in public schools, particularly in individual counties, may be worked out.

Recommendations: Owing to the observed effect of economic factors on girls' enrolment in rural primary schools, both the County Government of Samburu and the National Government of Kenya should train pastoralists on diversification of livelihood sources, such as crop farming and entrepreneurship as a way of enhancing the family economic muscle and so enable more girls to enrol in public primary schools. There is a need for further research countrywide on the relationship between Economic factors and enrolment of girls in public primary schools because this study only limited itself to studying public primary schools in Samburu County.

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