

Analysis of Retention and Dropout Rates in Primary Schools in North Horr Sub-County

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Abstract: *This study investigated on retention and dropout rates in primary schools in North Horr Sub-County. Theoretical framework used in this study was based on Vincent Tinto's model of learner departure. This model has had the greatest influence on the understanding of learner's retention. The sample was 56 respondents who included 5 head teachers, 50 members of teaching staff and one Area Education Officer (AEO). The study employed a descriptive survey research design, questionnaires and interviews were used to collect data. The validity and reliability of the research instruments was established before collecting data. The study elicited an understanding of the multifaceted nature of the factors affecting retention and dropout rates of pupils in schools in North Horr Sub-County. Findings of the study showed that the majority of factors are culture related: pastoral lifestyle, strong cultural values, negative attitude towards education and engagement in domestic work. Other factors included social economic characteristics and environmental factors among others. Findings of the study also helped to come up with conclusions and recommendations that would accelerate retention of learners in primary schools among pastoralist communities. The study recommended strategies such as construction of more boarding schools, establishing mobile schools, sensitizing parents on the need for education as an alternative to pastoralism life, offering guidance and counseling to the pupils especially when they undergo FGM.*

Keywords: Enrolment, Retention, Education, Dropout, Socio-Cultural Factors

1. Introduction

1.1 Background of the Study

Despite the undisputable role of education as a prerequisite for development, the Education for All Global Monitoring Report of 2010 pointed out that 72 million children were not enrolled in schools. Enrolment and low retention of children in schools has remained a global challenge particularly for marginalised groups. [1] refer student retention as students' continued study until successful completion. [7] shows that most of the factors that influenced student retention were culture related such as pastoral lifestyle, strong cultural values, negative attitude towards education and engagement in domestic work. In Somalia, [3] indicate that the most significant factor in the district that affects the retention rates of female students is early marriage and domestic labor.

In Kenya learners retention has also been a challenge for instance, [5] observed that the aspects of family background aspects such as level of education of parents, gender of children in family, economic background of the family and aspiration of the family affects retention rate of pupils in public primary schools in Hindi Division, Lamu west sub-county. [2] indicate that cultural factors such as early marriages, cattle rustling among others had contributed to the poor retention of pupils in schools in Kenya. The perception that girls are not meant to receive education has contributed to their low enrolment in the region. This literature calls upon the government to develop policies to govern enrolment ratios on both human and material resources to ensure that the quality of learning in public primary schools is not compromised by socio cultural factors in North Horr Sub-County of Marsabit County. Therefore, this study sought to investigate on the impact of social-cultural factors on learner retention and stimulate various policy options in order to identify strategies that could

improve retention of learners in primary schools in North Horr Sub-County, Marsabit County.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The Kenya government has continued to improve the provision of education for all (EFA) and this is evidenced by the introduction of Free Primary Education which was started by the National Rainbow Coalition (NARC) government in 2003, aiming at relieving the parents of the financial burden of educating their children with a goal to increase the number of pupils completing primary school education. Despite the effort by the government across the country, the learners in North Horr Sub-County which has nomadic and pastoralist communities have experienced challenges in acquiring the basic education because of social cultural factors such as cultural rites, early marriages and Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) among the members of the community.

[2] study focused on the influencing retention of pupils in public primary schools in drought prone Zones of North-Horr District, Marsabit County, Kenya and established that the extent to which pupils' involvement in household economic activities affects their retention levels in public primary schools. However, the study used cross-sectional research design which did not help determine cause and effect on variables. [3] did a study on socio-cultural factors influencing girls' retention rate in secondary schools in Qardho District, Karkar Region, Somalia and revealed that the most significant factor in the district that affects the retention rates of female students is early marriages followed by domestic labor/chores. However, the study used cluster random sampling technique which was prone to biasness and higher sampling error. Despite these studies pointing out a situation similar to that of North Horr Sub-County, no scientific study that has been carried out to intervene on the

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situation. Therefore, this study aimed to provide empirical evidence on impact of social-cultural factors on learner retention and stimulate various policy options in order to identify strategies that could improve retention of learners in primary schools in North Horr Sub-County, Marsabit County.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to determine factors affecting retention and dropout rates in primary schools in North Horr Sub-County, Marsabit County, Kenya.

1.4 Specific objectives

The objective of this study was to examine factors affecting retention and dropout rates in primary schools in North Horr Sub-County.

2. Literature Review

Retaining pupils within the school systems until they complete a particular level has been a great concern in many regions of the world. Many studies have been carried out seeking to identify the factors affecting retention of learners in learning institutions. For instance, [10] study focused on factors influencing pupils' enrolment in public primary schools in Scotland. The study found out that most of the schools do not have enough charts and maps for use thus not often do teachers go to class with them. As for adequacy of latrines, it was found out that pupils queue at the latrine for a long time which means that most of the schools in primary schools in Scotland did not have enough latrines. The study recommended that an evaluation study should be done to determine retention of pupils in public Primary schools in Scotland.

A study carried out by [3] evaluated the relationship between socio-cultural factors and girls' retention rate in secondary schools in Qardho District, Karkar Region, Somalia. The study found that the retention rates of female students in the district are still very low. The most significant factor in the district that affects the retention rates of female students is early marriages followed by domestic labor/chores. From the findings it was recommended that intervention measures to improve the retention of female students in secondary schools in Qardho District be made by the government.

[7] study examined factors affecting primary school enrolment and retention of pupils in Kotido District, Uganda. The study elicited an understanding of the multifaceted nature of the factors affecting enrolment and retention of pupils in schools in Kotido district, Uganda. Results show that the majority of factors are culture related: pastoral lifestyle, strong cultural values, negative attitude towards education and engagement in domestic work. Other factors included social economic characteristics and environmental factors among others. Future strategies to improve enrolment and retention in schools should be broad based to address Karimojong people's culture as well as socio-economic characteristics.

A study carried out by [8] focused on factors that influence retention of primary school pupils in Maparasha, Kajiado County in Kenya. The key finding of this study were that, cultural practices, parent's level of education, income level of the family and how pupils are treated in school affect retention of primary school pupils in Maparasha. Therefore, it is important to engage the community in income diversification projects so as to increase household income levels and hence encourage parents and guardians to retain their children in school.

Looking keenly into the above studies there seem to be factors closely related and linked in affecting pupil's retention in schools. The factors include available environmental factors such as facilities in a school, socio-cultural factors such as early marriages, domestic chores, pastoralism and negative attitudes towards education. However, these factors are seen in other areas of study not the researcher's focus. Further, the studies indicated the studies were carried in other regions like Kajiado and Lamu. This caused the researcher's a need to investigate whether the above mentioned factors could be affecting pupil's retention in North Horr Sub-County.

3. Research Methodology

This study employed a descriptive survey research design because it enabled the findings to be generalized to a larger population. This study sampled 5 primary schools in North Horr Sub-County. The respondents were 56 comprising of 5 school principals, 1 area education officer and 50 teachers of geography. For collection of data questionnaires and interviews were used. Validity and reliability of research instruments was effectively done before collecting the required data. Data obtained from the questionnaires was first edited, cleaned and categorized into common themes to represent meaningful data. Qualitative data from the interviews was analyzed thematically in line with study objectives and presented in narrative form. Quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive statistics such as mean and standard deviation and presented in tables, figures, graphs and charts.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Retention and Drop Out Across Gender

The respondents were asked to rate the retention rate in North Horr Sub-County for the last five years and their findings are presented in Table 4.1

Table 4.1: Retention Rate

Rates	Frequency	Percentage
Very High	8	15.4
High	11	17.3
Low	24	46.2
Moderate	9	21.2
Total	52	100

The results in Table 4.1 shows that majority 24(46.2%) of the respondents indicated that the retention rate in primary schools in North Horr Sub-County was low, followed by 9(21.2%) of those who indicate that it was moderate,

11(17.3%) agreed that it was high and 8(15.4%) very high. The study established that there was a higher retention rate for boys compared to girls as indicated by 61.54% and 38.46% respectively. These findings are in line with the findings of [4] study on the influence of socio-cultural and school factors on retention and academic performance of students in mixed primary schools in Rachuonyo South Sub-County, Kenya established that most of the girls dropped out of school due to pregnancy and others were married early, due to wage labour as compared to boys, more male students were influenced by their peers while majority also learnt to take drugs from their family members

4.2 Influence of Retention Rate and Drop out across Gender

The respondents were further given a list of statement to indicate their level of agreement regarding the influence of rates of retention and drop out across gender in primary schools in North Horr Sub-County. The findings are presented in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2: Influence of Retention Rate and Drop out across Gender

Statement	Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (SD)
Girls are engaged in household work to enable adults to work outside the home	4.06	1.145
Children are forced to look after their animals instead of enrolling in schools	4.00	0.863
Girls prefer marriages to completing schools	4.29	0.605
Parental perception on education influence rate of retention and drop out across gender	4.04	0.839
Parental level of education influence rate of retention and drop out across gender	4.48	0.610

The results in Table 4.2 shows that majority of the respondents strongly agreed on the statements that Parental level of education influenced rate of retention and drop out across gender and that girls prefer marriages to completing schools as shown by mean score of 4.48 and 4.29 respectively which varied significantly as shown by respective standard deviation of 0.610 and 0.605. These findings concur with the findings of [8] study which focused on factors that influence retention of primary school pupils in Maparasha, Kajiado County in Kenya and established that parent's level of education was one of the factors that affected retention of primary school pupils in Maparasha.

The respondents agreed on the statements that girls are engaged in household work to enable adults to work outside the home, parental perception on education influence rate of retention and drop out across gender and children are forced to look after their animals instead of enrolling in schools as shown by mean score of 4.06, 4.04 and 4.00 respectively with respective significance variance of 1.145, 0.839 and 0.863. These findings are in line with the findings of a study carried out by [2] focused on factors influencing retention of pupils in public primary schools in drought prone areas in Kenya and found that the perception that girls are not meant to receive education has contributed to their low enrolment in the region.

4.3 Initiation as a Cultural Rite and Student Retention

The study sought to determine the extent to which initiation as a cultural rite of passage impacted on learner retention in primary schools in North Horr Sub-County. The findings are presented in Table 4.3.

Table 4.3: Initiation as a Cultural Rite and Student Retention

Statement	Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (SD)
Content of knowledge imparted to the children during that time of initiation affects student retention	4.1	0.431
Initiation ceremonies are carried out during school time which affects student retention	3.9	0.823
Girls who attend the initiation ceremonies encounter mistreatments, abuse and sometimes they miss their precious school time.	3.5	0.785
After the initiation ceremonies, girls change their behavior and thus some of them feel they cannot cope with formal education.	3.8	0.705
Girls drop out of school to pursue other womanly responsibilities of getting married and having families after initiation	4.4	0.601

The results in Table 4.3 indicates that majority of the respondents strongly agreed on the statements that girls drop out of school to pursue other womanly responsibilities of getting married and having families after initiation and that the content of knowledge imparted to the children during that time of initiation affects student retention as indicated by mean score of 4.4 and 4.1 respectively with significance variance of 0.601 and 0.431 respectively. This is in line with the findings of a study carried out by [6] which revealed that, initiation ceremonies have affected the primary school students' academic performance negatively due to clash with the school calendar.

The respondents agreed that initiation ceremonies were carried out during school time which affects student retention, after the initiation ceremonies, girls change their behavior and thus some of them feel they cannot cope with formal education. In addition, it was revealed that girls who attend the initiation ceremonies encounter mistreatments, abuse and sometimes they miss their precious school time as indicated by mean score of 3.9, 3.8 and 3.5 respectively and significance variance of 0.823, 0.705 and 0.785 respectively. These findings concur with the findings of a study carried out by [11] which established that the girls who attend the ceremonies encounter mistreatments, abuse and sometimes they miss their precious school time.

4.4 Marriage as a Cultural Rite and Student Retention

The objective of this question was to determine the extent to which marriage as a cultural rite of passage impacted on learner retention in primary schools in North Horr Sub-County. The respondents were given a list of statements to indicate their level of agreement regarding how cultural rites of passage impact on learner retention in primary schools in North Horr Sub-County. The findings are presented in Table 4.4.

Table 4.4: Marriage as a Cultural Rite and Student Retention

Statement	Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (SD)
Early marriages impact learner retention in primary schools in North Horr Sub-County	4.46	0.641
Circumcision impact learner retention in primary schools in North Horr Sub-County	4.57	0.537
Female genital mutilation impact learner retention in primary schools in North Horr Sub-County	3.73	1.548
Rite of eldership impact learner retention in primary schools in North Horr Sub-County	3.29	1.499
Rite of adulthood impact learner retention in primary schools in North Horr Sub-County	4.58	0.696

The results in Table 4.4 indicates that majority of the respondents strongly agreed on the statements that rite of adulthood, circumcision and early marriages impacted on learner retention in primary schools in North Horr Sub-County as shown by mean score of 4.58, 4.57 and 4.46 respectively with respective standard deviation of 0.696, 0.537 and 0.641. These findings agreed with the findings of a study by [8] on how home environmental conditions positively or negatively influences a child's participation and retention in school and revealed that cultural factors such as early marriages, pregnancy, working at home, and negative attitude towards the education, cultural beliefs and practices were responsible for the low participation in school.

The respondents agreed on the statement that female genital mutilation impacted on learner retention in primary schools in North Horr Sub-County as shown by a mean of 3.73 which varied significantly as shown by standard deviation of 1.548. This agrees with [9] study on the persistence of female genital mutilation (FGM) and its impact on women's access to education and empowerment: a study of Kuria district, Nyanza province, Kenya and found that girls dropped out of school to get married due to FGM, peer pressure and feeling mature among other factors.

The respondents indicated to moderate extent that rite of eldership also impacted on learner retention in primary schools in North Horr Sub-County as shown by a mean of 3.29 with a standard deviation of 1.499. This contradicts with the findings of [6] that investigated factors that leads to school dropout in Namibia and found that, for all the learners interviewed, 50% of learners dropped out due to the practice of cultural rites such as rite of eldership.

From the interviews, teachers and area education officers explained that the community values Female Genital Mutilation which gave girls false believe that they were adults and they needed not to be in school. They further explained how after the ceremonies, girls changed their behavior and thus some of them felt they could not cope with formal education. As a result of the changed of behavior the girls reported dropping out of school to pursue other womanly responsibilities of getting married and having families. The FGM as initiation rite, consequently promoted early marriage which subsequently affected schooling. On the other side, boys also went through

initiation rites that promoted manhood and the responsibilities that come with it. Once the boys were exposed to this they felt that schooling process was wastage of time hence they dropped out and considered starting family life through marriage, the Area Education Officer explained. These responses were supported by [6] study that evaluated the effects of initiation ceremonies on Primary School students' academic performance in Malawi. The findings revealed that, initiation ceremonies have affected the primary school students' academic performance negatively due to clash with the school calendar, dropout, early marriage and early pregnancies for girls.

5. Summary, Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1 Summary of the Major Findings

Generally, the findings of the study showed that retention rate in primary schools in North Horr Sub-County were low. Further, the study indicated a higher retention rate for boys compared to girls, that Parental level of education influence rate of retention and drop out across gender and that girls preferred marriages than completing schools.

5.2 Conclusions

This study concluded that most of the girls dropped out of school due to pregnancy and others were married early due to wage labour as compared to boys. However, more male students were influenced by their peers while majority also learnt to take drugs from their family members. It was also very clear that parental perception on education influence rate of retention and drop out across gender. This was observed in that, children were forced to look after their animals instead of enrolling in schools. Further, the study concluded that the perception that girls were not meant to receive education has contributed to their low enrolment in the region.

It also concluded that initiation ceremonies have affected the primary school pupils' academic performance negatively due to clash with the school calendar. From the study it came out clearly that initiation ceremonies were carried out during school time which affected student retention. This was because after the initiation ceremonies, girls changed their behavior and thus some of them felt they could not cope with formal education. In addition, the girls who attended the initiation ceremonies encountered mistreatments; abuse and sometimes they missed their precious school time hence affecting their completion of studies negatively. However, the study revealed home environment conditions such as working at home, and negative attitude towards the education from parents and other siblings might negatively influence a child's participation and retention in school. In addition, the study also concluded that cultural factors such as early marriages, pregnancy, cultural rites such as rite of eldership, adulthood, boys' circumcision and Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) practices were responsible for the low participation in school.

5.3 Recommendations

Findings from this study recommended that there was need for the government to use money and invest in increasing access to boys' and girls' primary schools. Given the documented role of education as a catalyst for economic and social development, a sensitization on the factors that influence educational attainment would enable policy makers to adopt strategies to improve the allocation of resources, with the objectives of increasing school completion and reducing the inequality in attainment. A key recommendation was made that intervention measures to improve the retention of female learners need to be put in place.

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