

**INFLUENCE OF CULTURAL FACTORS ON PUPILS' TRANSITION
FROM PRIMARY TO SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN NAKURU COUNTY,
KENYA**

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ABSTRACT

Increasing the transition rate from primary to secondary schools is critical to the creation of the anticipated middle and high level manpower required for Kenya to attain middle income status by 2030. The national average transition rate of pupils from primary to secondary schools for Kenya stood at 76.6% by 2013 but falls below global standards and the national target. In Nakuru County, transition rate has stagnated at about 50% and decreased to 48.6% despite the inception of Free Primary Education in 2003, Free Day Secondary Education in 2008 and there being several vacancies in secondary schools within the County. This study sought to investigate the extent to which cultural factors influence pupils' transition rate from primary to secondary schools. The study applied *ex-post facto* research design. A sample of 406 respondents (42 head teachers and 364 teachers) was selected through stratified random sampling. The sample size was determined using Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) table. Data was collected using structured questionnaires and analysed using the linear regression analysis where hypotheses were tested at the .05 level of significance. Cultural factors such as include gender preference in education, girls' exposure to sexuality leading to teenage pregnancies, and boy circumcision were found to have a statistically significant negative influence on pupil transition rate to secondary school using data from both head teachers ($\beta = -.724$) and teachers ($\beta = -.461$) when controlling for school-based and family socio-economic factors. The study recommends that the government and other stakeholders should address negative cultural practices particularly gender preference in education, boy circumcision and early marriages.

Keywords: Culture, Transition, Primary-to-secondary school.

INTRODUCTION

Background to the Study

The value of education in many nations cannot be over emphasized. Education plays a major role in socialization, development and reform (Ogusanju, 2006). There is a mounting acceptance that secondary education also has a vital role in ensuring a country's development. A World Bank Paper (2008) cited secondary education and training as pre-requisite to economic growth and social development. In order for countries to compete in a globalised economy, it is important for labour markets to have high calibre school graduates with relevant skills and knowledge. Furthermore, secondary education is increasingly understood as a way out of poverty for many individuals, having marked improvements on their standards of living.

This study is concerned with transition from primary to secondary schools. According to the Republic of Kenya (2005a), the interpretation of the transition rate is done through analyzing the number of pupils graduating from the last year at a particular level of education (primary) as compared to the proportion of the same cohort that enters the first year of the next level of education (secondary). Transition is an important component of education as it helps in understanding how balanced or unbalanced the education program between the two levels is. Transition to secondary education is beneficial in enhancing economic and social development, promotion of active citizenship as well as enhancing social cohesion by increasing trust and tolerance amongst individuals (World Bank, 2008).

Worldwide, 85% of learners who get to the last grade in primary school get to attend secondary schools (UNESCO, 2011b). According to UNESCO, the two regions with the lowest education transition rate are West and Central Africa at 52%. Further, the statistics indicate that transition rates are highest in developed countries such as US, France and Japan with 98% transition rate while Eastern Europe has 96%. Many developing countries are bedeviled by low rate of transition. A study by Omuga (2010) indicates that a large percentage of pupils see education as a means of achieving their dreams and hence most of them intend to work hard so that they go to secondary schools so that these dreams will be achieved although most of these pupils don't make it to the secondary level.

In Kenya, the government policy is to expand secondary education in order to increase its access to all the citizens. This is hinged on the government's commitment to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2020 where a crucial aspect of these goals is increasing access to secondary and tertiary education especially for the financially poor. However, the current situation paints a grim picture on the education transition rate from primary to secondary schools (Kikechi, Musera, & Sindabi, 2011). According to Kirera (2013), a good

number of students upon finishing primary school do not make it to the secondary level. Each year, after the announcement of KCPE results, there are alarming numbers of learners that fail to progress to the next level. For instance, about 27.5% of 880,759 pupils who sat for the K.C.P.E examination did not proceed to secondary school (Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, 2015). This proportion translates to over 240,000 pupils who fail to continue to secondary school.

According to the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (2015) Kenya achieved an average transition rate of 72.5% (69.9% for boys and 75.3% for girls) in the 2014/2015 year indicating that the 100% target was not met despite the efforts made by the government. Transition rates in Nakuru County, which is the target locale of the study, were lower than the national average. In this county, transition rate stagnated at about 50% between the years 2008-2013 and drastically decreased to 48.6% in 2016. This implies that over half of the pupils who sat for their K.C.P.E examination in 2016 did not proceed to secondary school.

Various studies such as Odhiambo et al. (2016), Ogolla (2013), and Mucee et al. (2014) found that cultural practices such as early of forced marriages, initiations, religion, and gender preferences play a major role in determining the rate of pupils' transition from primary to secondary schools. However, none of the studies has been conducted in Nakuru County. Culture is a dynamic parameter that changes from one region to the next. The findings of these study may not reflect the current situation in Nakuru County; hence, the need for the current study. It is on this basis that the study sought to investigate the influence of cultural factors on pupils' rate of transition from primary to secondary schools.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The concept of transition in education covers the major transitional points in the education cycle. Transition points in the education cycle of a Kenyan child involve movement from early childhood school to primary schools (UNESCOa, 2011). From primary schools they transit to secondary and finally to college and University. Whilst these are the major vertical transition points, students also experience other transitions such as moving from one grade to the next in the course of the educational journey.

In Sub-Saharan Africa, transition from primary to secondary school is beyond an individual challenge. Despite achieving remarkable rise in primary and secondary school enrolment over the past decade, there are places where just 36% of children who have attained the appropriate age to enroll in Secondary Schools get the chance to do so. The low proportion indicates that countries are facing significant challenges in meeting the demand for secondary education. More than 21.6 million children of lower secondary school age in Sub-Saharan Africa remain excluded

from school and many are never expected to enter school. By 2009, sub-Saharan Africa was home to 30%, of all lower secondary school-age children who are out of school worldwide where 40% of all lower secondary school-age girls and 33% of boys were out of school (UNESCOa, 2011). .

In 2003, the Kenyan government implemented the free primary education program. This new and welcome development saw an estimated 1.3 million children going back to school. In 2000, the primary completion rate was 57.7 percent (60.2 boys, 55.3). By 2013 it had increased to 81.8 percent (80.3 boys and 78.8 girls) (Republic of Kenya/UNESCO, 2015). However, access to secondary and tertiary education remained a challenge for most young people in Kenya. In 2010, approximately 30 percent of the primary level graduates did not proceed to the secondary (Kikechi, Musera & Sindabi, 2011). This was despite government efforts to introduce Free Secondary Education in 2008 and other efforts that the government made towards achieving Education for All such as expansion of the construction of school infrastructure in order to increase access to secondary education for learners transiting from primary education.

Transition from primary to secondary schools continues to be an uphill task and if inadequately addressed, it is a sure way of undermining the gains made in education sector (ANPPCAN, 2004). This study therefore sought to investigate the influence of selected cultural factors on transition from primary to secondary schools in Nakuru County, Kenya. Cultural factors refer to factors related to a community's way of life. Most communities in Africa still have traditional practices that undermine their children progress in education (Mbui, 2010). In this study, the factors that were investigated include; gender preference in education, teenage pregnancy/early marriages, female genital mutilation, and boy circumcision.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The study was guided by Bronfenbrenner (1979) the Ecological Systems Theory. This theory postulates that a child's development is influence by several factors within the environment. The theory categorizes these factors into five environmental systems: micro, meso, exo, macro and chrono environmental systems. The micro system's setting is the direct environment people have in their lives. This environment includes their family, friends, classmates, teachers, and neighbors. The Meso system refers to the relationships between the Microsystems in one's life such relationship between the family and neighbors. The exo system refers to elements that influence the child development but which the child does not directly involved. The macro system is the actual culture of an individual while the chrono system includes the transitions and shifts in one's lifespan. This theory is relevant to the study as it stresses the role that culture plays in the development of a child.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

This study holds that pupils' transition rate from primary to secondary (dependent variable) is contingent upon cultural factors. The study also advances that there are extraneous variables which may act as catalysts hence fastening or slowing the relationship between independent and dependent variables. Such variables include school-based factors and family socioeconomic factors. The conceptualized relationship between the variables subsumed in the study is illustrated in Figure 1:

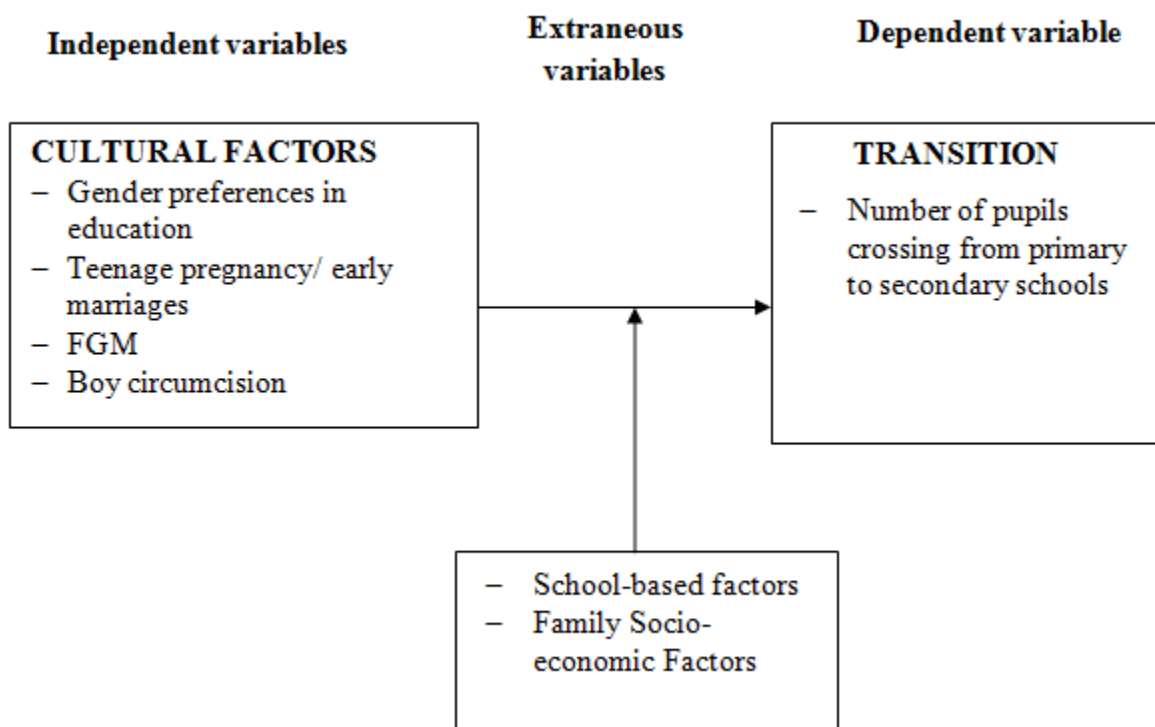


Figure 1: Interrelationship between Variables subsumed in the Study

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Ex-post facto research design was applied in this study. This method is used when the researcher is not able to select, control or manipulate factors (Kasomo, 2007). It can be used instead of experimental research design when trying to identify the relationship between variables, for instance cause-effect relations. As indicated in the background of the study, transition is already a problem in Nakuru County, and therefore *ex-post facto* design was applied to study which cultural factors can explain the transition rates.

The target population was 7805 respondents comprising 420 head teachers and 7385 teachers in all the 420 public primary schools in Nakuru County. From this population, a sample of 406 respondents was selected comprising of 42 head teachers and 364 teachers. Since the population was homogeneous, stratified random sampling was used and a total of 42 schools were selected. The nine sub-counties that make up Nakuru County were used as strata. All the public primary schools per sub-county were listed down, papers folded and churned up. The researcher then picked schools randomly from according to the sampling ratio accorded to each stratum.

Two sets of questionnaires were administered; one for head teachers and the other one for teachers. A Likert scale with five point rating scale was used out of which the respondents were to choose the option that best suited their opinion. The scale was labeled; Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Moderately Agree (MA), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD). The scoring was SA= 5, A=4, MA=3, D=2 while SD=1. The questionnaires were examined by the experts in the School of Education in order to ascertain their validity.

Piloting was done to establish reliability of the research instruments. The pilot test involved a total of 20 participants (2 head teachers and 18 teachers) selected from two schools within the county. The pilot followed the test-retest procedure where the same questionnaire was administered twice to the same respondents (twenty in number) at an interval of two weeks. The scores of the respondents on the two tests were correlated using the Pearson product moment correlation coefficient. The instrument was accepted as it achieved a correlation coefficient of .864.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The study sought to investigate and answer the following research question:

To what extent do cultural factors influence pupils' transition from primary to secondary schools in Nakuru County?

- i. The indicators for cultural factors were:
- ii. Early marriages
- iii. Gender preference in education in favor of boys
- iv. Teenage sex
- v. Female genital mutilation
- vi. Boys' circumcision

To achieve this objective, the null hypothesis was tested at .5 level of significance:

Cultural Factors have no statistically significant influence on pupils’ transition from primary to secondary schools in Nakuru County, Kenya

Cultural factor (CF) was the independent variable while transition rate was the dependent variable. School Based Factors (SBF) and Family Socioeconomic Factor were included in the model so as to control them as so as to rule out the possibility that the difference observed in transition rate is as result of these factors.

Table 1: Summary of Regression Analysis between Cultural Factors and Pupils’ Transition to Secondary School using the Head teachers’ Dataset

| | | | | | | |
|-------------|--------------------|------|----------------|-------------------|---------|------|
| Variable | | r | r ² | Constant | F | P |
| Dependent | Pupils’ transition | .695 | .483 | 90.364 | 52.792* | .000 |
| Independent | Cultural Factors | | Beta | Standardized Beta | t | |
| | | | -. 724* | -.681 | -5.209 | .000 |

The beta coefficient for cultural factors (C.F) is -0.724, which indicates the existence of a negative relationship between cultural factors and pupil transition rate to secondary school. The t-statistics for this relationship yielded a p-value of 0.000, which indicate that there is a statistically significant relationship between C.F. and pupils transition to secondary school at the .05 level of significance. The null hypothesis is thereby rejected. The r² of 0.483 indicates that the model comprising of cultural factor as a predictor explained 48.2% of total variance in pupils’ transition rate to secondary school.

This finding is consistent with Werunga et al. (2011) who found that over 40% of pupils who sit for K.C.P.E. examinations in Taita Taveta County because of cultural factors such as early marriages. Odhiambo et al. (2016) also found that children’s progression to secondary school in Narok County was hampered by cultural factors such as F.G.M, early marriages, and preference for boy education. Gikunda (2014) found that pupils’ transition to secondary schools in Tharaka Nithi County was hindered by culture factors such as large family sizes, preference for boy education, early marriages, FGM, and child labor.

Table 2: Summary of Regression Analysis between Cultural Factors and Pupils’ Transition to Secondary School using the Teachers’ Dataset

| Variable | | r | r ² | Constant | F | P |
|-------------|--------------------|------|----------------|-------------------|---------|------|
| Dependent | Pupils’ transition | .648 | .421 | 64.235 | 87.092* | .000 |
| Independent | Cultural Factors | | Beta | Standardized Beta | t | |
| | | | -.461* | -.442 | -2.761 | .001 |

From Table 2, the beta coefficient for cultural factor (C.F.) is -0.461, which indicates the existence of a negative relationship between C.Fs and pupils’ transition to secondary schools. The t-statistics yielded a p-value of 0.001 for this relationship, indicating that the relationship between cultural factors and pupils’ transition to secondary school is statistically significant at the .05 level of significance. The null hypothesis is thereby rejected. The r² value of .421 indicates that the model explained 42.1% of the variances in pupils’ transition to secondary school. These results are consistent with those obtained from the head teachers’ dataset. However, head teachers perceive cultural factors to have stronger effect on transition rate.

CONCLUSIONS

From the findings, the study concludes that cultural factors have a significant negative influence on pupils’ transition rate from primary to secondary schools in Nakuru County, Kenya even after controlling for school-based and family socio-economic factors. It can be concluded that, cultural factors such as gender preference, girls’ exposure to sexuality, early marriages, FGM, teenage pregnancy, and boy circumcision hinder pupils’ transition to secondary schools. The study recommends that the government, community organizations, and other education stakeholders should intensify campaigns against these practices that are hindering pupils’ progression to secondary schools.

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