

SOCIO-ECONOMIC FACTORS INFLUENCING FEMALE STUDENTS' RETENTION IN PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN MUKAA SUB-COUNTY, MAKUENI COUNTY, KENYA

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Abstract

Socio- economic factors have been highlighted as of great importance in influencing the retention of female students in secondary schools globally. The purpose of this study was to establish the extent to which socio-economic factors influence female students' retention in public secondary school in Mukaa Sub-county, Makueni County, Kenya. The study objectives were; to establish the influence of family financial status on female students' retention and to determine the influence of parent's educational level on female students' retention. The study was guided by the Systems Theory of Management. The study employed descriptive survey research design. The target population of the study comprised of 37 principals, 50 form four class teachers and 1,240 form four female students in public secondary schools in Mukaa Sub-county. Questionnaires and documentary analysis were used to collect the data. Descriptive statistics specifically percentage and frequency were used for analysis and data was presented in tables and graphs. From the study it was established that; family financial status influence female students' retention to a great extent as indicated by 72.7% of the teachers and principals. Parents' education level influence students' retention to a great extent as indicated by 54.5% of the teachers and the principals. From the study, it was concluded that most female students drop out of school because of their parents' poor financial status and high academic attainment of parents significantly reduces chances of secondary school dropout. This study recommends that: Government should review bursary policies for needy students and increase funding in secondary schools, communities should be empowered to alleviate poverty and enable families' increase their income, Parents should be sensitized to fully understand the importance of completion of secondary education and school administrators should strengthen guidance and counseling department in secondary schools.

Key words: *Socio-economic factors, female students, retention*

1.0 Background to the Study

Globally, education is highly valued and recognized as a basic human right for every child (UNESCO, 2009). This is because education contributes to National development through provision of human resource that helps to increase production and eliminate poverty, disease and ignorance (ROK, 2015). In relation to other factors of production, education attainment is economically

becoming more important as it leads to the transformation of other resources to enhance civil and better livelihoods among communities (Psacharopoulos & Patrinos, 2004).

According to World Bank (2012), literacy of women is an important key to improve health, nutrition and education in the family and to empower women to participate in decision making in the society. Investing in formal and non-formal education and training for female students and women, has high social and economic returns and has proved to be one of the best means in achieving sustainable development and economic returns (UNICEF, 2015). Equipping female students with education leads to more equitable development, stronger families better services, child health and effective participation in governance.

Research conducted by World Bank group proved that education of women leads to; improved nutritional values, proper hygiene and improved management of households (World Bank, 2014). The report puts it clearly that girls with little or no education are far more likely to be married as children, suffer from domestic violence, live in poverty and lack a say over household spending or their own health care than better educated peers. Female education leads to; improved health and education, reduced infant mortality, higher earning, reduced fertility rate and general improvement of quality of life for nations. Although there are many benefits associated with women education, most developing countries, Kenya included, are still analyzing their situation so as to develop programmes to address female education (Wang, 2003).

Report from the 2018 education quality dialogues presented by the Ministry of Education shows that, Kenya has made great efforts in achieving EFA. From the report, participation in ECDE has increased from 64.2% in 2012 to 74.9% in 2016. The primary education enrolment has also risen from 88% in 2012 to 91.2% in 2016. The report also says that close to 85% of learners who complete standard eight make it to secondary schools. Secondary schools enrolment rose from 41.7% in 2012 to 49.5% in 2016. The increased access to education, improved enrolment and transition rates, has caused a rise on concerns on the retention of the students in secondary schools. In most developed and developing countries, success has been adequately recorded in expansion of learning spaces and opportunities. This is mainly due to high resource allocation in the education sector. However, high rate of wastage is a challenge especially among the low socio-economic population. The increasing cost of living is directly attributed to high rate of dropout (Psacharopoulos & Patrinos, 2004).

Socio-economic factors have been highlighted as of great importance in influencing the retention of female students in secondary schools. Some parents cannot keep their children in school even though they wish to do so because of their level of income (World Bank, 2003). The desire of many governments to decrease dropouts in secondary schools has led to heavy public and private investment in education (UNESCO, 2003). Secondary education is a very important sector for national and individual development in any country. It plays an important role in increasing country's human resource base at a higher level than primary education sector (Ohba, 2009). Since independence, the government of Kenya has been concerned with enhancing female student's retention in secondary schools (Sifuna, 2013). This has been done through providing legal and fiscal framework besides advocacy through various campaigns that mitigate against dropout.

Female students' retention is a great concern to the family, society and government. For this reason, for any educational institution to succeed, students' retention should be considered important. Students' retention rate indicates the percentage of the students who remain at an educational institution after they begin studying there. High retention indicates that the institution is supportive to the students (Ozga, 2000). In any educational institution high students' retention attracts high students' academic achievement while low students retention discourages student from performing.

Retention affects students, the institution and the society. For the students, in ability to cope with demands of educational institution lower self-confidence and self-esteem and in most cases leads to negative lifelong economic impact. For the institution low retention is considered as wastage of institution resources. Failure of the institution to retain students in school damages the reputation of an institution creating long term implications for attracting new students (Ozga, 2000). When female students drop out of the school, they do not achieve their full potential and therefore there is wastage of talents not only for the students but also for the society at large. Also students' development through further education is greatly affected.

Socio-economic factors discourage already enrolled female students from continuing with further studies. The government of Kenya calls for affirmative action to enhance women participation in education and other areas of employment (ROK, 2015). Mukaa sub-county has registered female students dropouts from 2011 as indicated below. According to the statistics from the sub-county education office, average dropout rates between 2011 and 2015 are at 11.33% for boys and 14.48% for girls.

Table 1: Enrolment and completion of female students in Mukaa sub-county 2011-2018

Form 1		Form 4		Dropout rate for female students
Year	Enrolment	Year	Completion	
2011	1,015	2014	928	8.57%
2012	1,137	2015	943	17.06%
2013	1,197	2016	1,077	10.03%
2014	1,333	2017	1,103	17.25%
2015	1,362	2018	1,118	17.91%

Source: Mukaa Sub-County Director of Education, 2018.

The difference between the numbers of female students who enrolled in form one and those who graduated four years later can be used to calculate the drop out rate of the students. From the above table, it is clearly shown that there is an increasing trend of dropout rate for female students in Mukaa Sub-County since 2011. This is now an area of concern in Mukaa Sub-County and therefore measures should be taken to ensure retention of female students in this area. Failing to retain female students in secondary schools leads to dropouts. Dropout can be considered as a waste of potential human resources and money spend on them in primary education and even time lost in sending them to school in the first place. Every secondary school female student dropout signifies unfulfilled objectives, goals and aim of individual as well as the society at large. Despite the Government's efforts to offer FDSE and subsidized secondary education, the retention rate in Mukaa Sub-County is not 100%. Retention of female students in secondary schools is a major challenge which is attributed majorly by socio-economic factors. This research is aimed to

determine the extent to which socio-economic factors influence retention of female students in Mukaa Sub -County.

1.1 Theoretical Framework

This study was based on the Systems Theory of Management. Systems Theory was proposed by Ludwing Van Bertalanffy in 1928. This theory was improved by other scholars such as; Gibson et al (1997), Mullin (2005), weihrich et al (2008) and scott (2008). The proponent of this theory was making an attempt to justify efficient in operations of an organization as a system (Weihrich et al, 2008).

The systems theory proposes that, organizations like the human body consists of multiple components that work harmoniously so that the larger system can function optimally. According to this theory, the success of an organization depends on several key elements (Mullin, 2005). According to this theory, an organization is viewed as a social system consisting of individuals who cooperate within the formal framework, drawing resources, people and finance from the environment Scott (2008). An educational institution is an organization and according to Systems Theory it is a social system that does only depend on its environment but it is also part of the larger system such as society. Schools are social systems in which two or more people work together in a coordinated manner to attain common goals (Scott, 2008). Different actors in an educational system influence decision making. For example, school committee, head teacher, teachers and parents make certain decisions and give opinions on management of the school. The theory argues that school organization is a complex social system where analysis of the constituent elements in isolation cannot give its properties (Mullin, 2005).

In this theory, it is assumed that all systems are purposeful and goal directed. Therefore, the school system exists to achieve objectives through the larger community in the institutional setting. According to this theory, for effective management of retention of female students, emphasis should shift from part to whole. It is emphasized that different factors that influence female students' retention must be managed together. Paying attention to all factors that influence female students' retention will help to produce a common goal (high retention). Schools are open systems and therefore respond to the external influence as they attempt to achieve objectives (Scott, 2008). In a school system, the inputs go through a process where they are planned, organized, motivated and controlled to meet the objectives. Inefficient in a school system results when there is a mismatch between inputs, processes and outputs. In a school system, socio-economic factors are inputs while female students' retention is one of most desirable output.

To ensure the female students participate in schooling and complete their secondary school education successfully, school system should play roles effectively. Parents and the society are part of the school system and have a duty to ensure that female students attend and continue with learning without disturbance. This can be achieved through: paying school fees, creating a conducive environment at home and becoming good role models to the learners. This theory is applicable in this study because it reveals the school as a social system which is often affected by other systems in the environment. The socio-economic factors are the input and the female students' retention is the output. Using this theory, the study sought to explore the socio-economic factors that influence female students' retention in public secondary schools in Mukaa Sub-County.

2.0 Literature Review

2.1 Influence of Family financial Status on Female Students' Retention in Public Secondary Schools

The family financial background is a very important factor pertaining students' retention in secondary schools. Students from lower socio-economic background in terms of parents' occupational status face high risks of drop out (Orodho, 2014). The 2018 Education Quality Dialogue presented by the Ministry of Education, reported that students from high socio- economic background remain in school and perform better than those from low socio- economic status.

The financial status of the family determines how far young people are educated with most families investing more resources in the education of boys at the expense of girls. Adrian (2010) observed that there is preference for boys to girls in terms of educational achievements. According to Amanda(2009) the financial demands for female students is higher than that of male students and therefore in families of low financial status, female students are forced to engage in some income generating activities that can lead to school dropout. Jack (2011) carried out a study on factors influencing female students drop out in secondary schools. From the study it was concluded that female students face a lot of challenges while in learning institutions and some are frustrated when they experience financial difficulties and finally drop out of school. According to Oyunga (2011) most girls drop out of school due to lack of adequate finances to cater for the education and social needs. Such girls get married to men who also happen to have questionable academic credential and finally bring up children who may lead a more miserable life in future hence poverty cycle. This concurred with the study carried out by Juma(2010) which pointed out that Inadequate funds in the family force more girls than boys to drop from school and start looking for financial engagements in towns. According to Wandiga (2008) majority of the females who are streaming to the beaches are from low financial status families and did not get substantial financial support for subsistence in schools and therefore dropped out. When parents in low financial status do not cater for the financial needs of their female children in learning institutions, some of them turn to prostitution and drop out of school.

Generally female students need financial support so that they are kept in schools for long to achieve the national goals (Owuoth, 2010). Rajabu (2007) concluded that most problems of female students' pregnancy are associated with low income of their parents. Parents who have low income are unable to fulfill students' needs such as uniform, stationery and lunch and as a result such students drop out of school. Children from low socio-economic family may drop out of school and engage in child labour in order to assist in earnings. This mostly affects female children. Such children spent their time working as maids and they do not have time for school. In families where resources are scarce, education for boys would be the best option and not for girls (Abagi, 1996).

According to UNESCO-UNICEP (1990) majority of financially unstable and big families prefer to educate boys for family continuity, headship of household and property inheritance since girls marry and go away from their homes. Also in poor families, the inability to pay fees and purchase books, equipment and clothing compel parents to invest in education of their sons, whom they see as a source of future family support in preference to their daughters whose economic contribution could as well be to a different household. Therefore the family's financial status determines who should be taken to school and also who should continue schooling and the preference are always the

boys. Female students are the ones who are discontinued from school to leave room for the male students to continue with their education when the resources are inadequate to educate both of them. This is mainly because it is believed that the social benefit from boys' education has much more impact on the family decision than that from female education (Onyango, 2003). From the World Bank (2009) it is also evident that during economic difficulties, parents opt to withdraw their daughters from school in the view that education for boys is more crucial given that boys have a role as family heads and bread winners. Drewry (2007) observed that socio-economic status of the family and retention of the students in schools are inseparable. This was supported by Son (2012) who concluded that poverty and ignorance of parents leads to most children especially girls dropping out of school.

2.2 Influence of Parents' Educational level on Female Students' Retention in Public Secondary Schools

A study conducted by Orodho (2014), demonstrated that home educational background and parents' educational attainment greatly influence the education attainment of their children. Students' achievement was found directly proportional to the education level of their parents (Orodho, 2014). Researchers show that there is strong relationship between parents education particularly mothers and children's school learning ability. Educated parents have the ability to identify with the school learning experiences of their children and therefore able to lend the necessary assistance to them.

Education Quality Dialogue report presented by the Ministry of Education in 2018 concluded that, students whose parents meet teachers regularly remain in school and perform better than those whose parents do not frequently meet teachers. Uneducated parents lack the ability and capacity to assist in the supervision of school assignment or proper guidance and counseling to their children (Colclough, Al-Saramal, Rose & Tembo, 2003). Parental education, influence and encouragement are strongly related to improved female students retention. Isangedighi (2011) observed that education gives parents discipline which is equally important in the learning of the children. Children who learn to accept parental authority at home will also accept the teachers' authority in the school. There is positive impact on students learning in school when parental interest and involvement in school activities are increased. Full involvement of parents in schooling is an important indicator of child success in schooling. This means students perform better in school if their parents are more involved with their schooling. There is also less dropout and improved retention when more parents participate in schooling since they are role models for the students. Parental education level is a very consistent determinant of children education and employment decisions thereafter. High parental education is associated with increased access to education, higher attendance rates and lower dropout rates (Jamie, 2011). Therefore, there is a powerful link between parental education and retention of students in school. Research also shows that education of household members is an important factor in whether children gain access to schooling and for how long. Research carried out by Brown & Park (2010) indicates that majority parents and households who are not educated do not see the importance of providing support for their children schooling because they do not appreciate the benefits of schooling. The type of education acquired by the parents affects the students' academic performance in the schools. Parental education level helps in grooming the personality of the children and also adding skills and knowledge to their children. The academic achievement of the children and also retention in schools is greatly influenced by parents' educational background. This is because the parents can be in a good

position to be a second teacher at home to the child. Also such parents are able to give the necessary guidance and counseling to their children on the best way to perform well in education and provide the necessary materials needed by the children. Rothstein (2004) pointed from his research that children from a well-educated family with high socio-economic status are more likely to have higher educational achievements compared to children from an illiterate family. The reason is because children from educated family have a lot of support from the family members such as decent and good environment for academic work, parental support and decent feeling. Little support from parents and members of the family towards female students' education leads to lack of vision and prospects for future life which reduces girls' interest to participate achieve and perform in education. Parents and family members need to employ special efforts to cultivate female students' interest in education and provide a conducive environment that will ensure their full participation and achievement in education.

3.0 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study adopted descriptive survey research design to investigate the current situation with regard to the influence of socio-economic factors on the retention of female students in public secondary school in Mukaa Sub- County. The target population was 37 principals, 50 form four class teachers and 1,240 female students in form four 2019 in the 7 pure girls and 30 mixed public secondary schools in Mukaa Sub-County. The study used simple random sampling to select 12 principals, 15 class teachers and 124 female students in form 4. The sampling was done in Mukaa Sub-County which has 8 County schools and 29 Sub-County schools (Mukaa Sub-County Education Management Information Systems). The researcher used three sets of questionnaires and documentary analysis to collect data. The questionnaires consisted of open and closed ended questions to collect primary data. The questionnaires were administered to the principals, teachers and student

4.0 Research Findings

4.1 Influence of Family Financial Status on Female Students' Retention

The first research objective was to establish the influence of family financial status on female students' retention in public secondary schools in Mukaa Sub-county. The researcher sought to find out the financial status of the families that the students came from. Table 1 presents the family financial status.

Table 1: Family Financial Status

Variable	Frequency (F)	Percentage (%)
Type of family		
Poor	108	87.1
Middle	16	12.9
Total	124	100.0
Total amount of money earned annually		
Less than 50,000	63	50.8
50,000-100,000	48	38.7
100,000-150,000	10	8.1
150,000-200,000	3	2.4

Total	124	100.0
School fees financier		
Parents	113	91.1
Guardians	8	6.5
Well-wisher	3	2.4
Total	124	100.0

Findings in Table 1 show that majority of the students 87.1% described their families as poor. This was supported by 50.8% of the students who indicated that their family annual income was less than Ksh. 50,000 and those 38.7% indicated that their family annual income was between 50,000-100,000. Only a few students who indicated that their family annual income was more than 100,000. Findings further show that majority of the students' education 91.1% was financed by their parents although there were 6.5% who were funded by guardians and 2.4% that were funded by well-wishers. The finding shows that majority of the female students in the study area come from poor families who lack the ability to fully finance their children education. The finding concurs with Son (2012) who revealed that poverty of parents leads to most children especially girls dropping out of school.

In order to understand how family financial status influence students retention, students were asked to tick with a yes or no answer on questions with regards to fees payment. Table 2 presents the findings.

Table 2: Students Responses on Influence of Lack of School Fees

Questions	Yes		No	
	F	%	F	%
Have you ever been sent home for fees?	109	87.9	15	12.1
Are there some students in your class who drop out of school due to lack of school fees?	91	73.4	33	26.6
N=124				

Findings in Table 2 show that majority of the students 87.9% have at one time been sent home for school fees and 73.4% responded in affirmative that there are some students in their class who drop out of school due to lack of school fees. This finding was further supported by the students who indicated that the funds to finance their academic needs were inadequate as shown in Table 4.8. This implies that some parents are not able to fully finance their children academic needs and they are at times sent home to collect school fees and not all students who are sent home manage to come back to school due to financial limitations. This reduces retention rates in public secondary schools. The finding is in agreement with Owuoth (2010) and Oyunga (2011) who both agreed that most girls drop out of school due to lack of adequate finances to cater for the education and social needs. The education needs include learning materials, school uniform and school fees while social needs include personal hygiene needs.

Table 7: Adequacy of Finances

Extent	Frequency	Percentage
Adequate	25	20.2
Inadequate	83	66.9
Very inadequate	16	12.9
Total	124	100.0

Table 2 show that 66.9% of the students indicated that the finances were inadequate, 12.9% indicated that finances were very inadequate and 20.2% of the students indicated that the finances were adequate to meet all academic needs. This finding support the previous finding that majority of the students come from poor families who are unable to pay school fees on time as well as meet all financial needs of a students' leading to drop out in extreme cases where parents are unable to raise the funds and girls look for menial jobs to meet their needs. The financial engagement for girls who drop out school in Mukaa Sub-county are mainly working as domestic house helps and working as casual laborers in shops or hotels. The finding concurs with Juma (2010) who also found out that inadequate funds in the family force girls to drop from school and start looking for financial engagements in towns.

The principals and teachers were asked to indicate the extent to which family financial status influence retention of female students. Findings are presented in Table 3

Table 3: Teachers and Principals Responses on Influence of Financial Status

Extent	Frequency	Percentage
To some extent	6	27.3
To great extent	16	72.7
Total	22	100.0

Findings in Table 3 show that 72.7% of the teachers and principals indicated that family financial status influence female students' retention to a great extent and 27.3% indicated to some extent. All the teachers and principals who participated in the study added that the main financiers of the students' are the parents who are low income earners and are unable to pay fees on time leading to the students being sent out of school and some don't come back to school hence affecting retention rates. The finding concurs with Chacha (2012) which established that family income affect girls retention throughout level of learning. Girls from low income families are often sent out of school and eventually drop out of school.

The students were also asked to indicate the extent to which the financial status of their family affected their education. Table 4 presents the findings.

Table 4: Students Responses on Influence of Financial Status

Extent	Frequency	Percentage
Little	20	16.1
Great	71	57.3
Very great	33	26.6
Total	124	100.0

Findings in Table 4 show that 57.3% of the students felt that their family financial status affected their education to a great extent, 26.6% indicated to a very great extent and 16.1% of the students indicated to a little extent. The findings show that family financial status highly influence girls' education. The girls might opt to drop out of school to avoid shame especially if the family is unable to meet all financial needs required to maintain girls in school. The finding is in agreement with Drewry (2007) that the socio-economic status of the family affects children retention in schools.

Influence of Parents Education Level on Female Students' Retention

The second research objective was to establish the influence of parents' education level on female students' retention in public secondary schools in Mukaa Sub-county. The students were therefore asked to indicate their parents' education level. Findings are presented in Figure 1

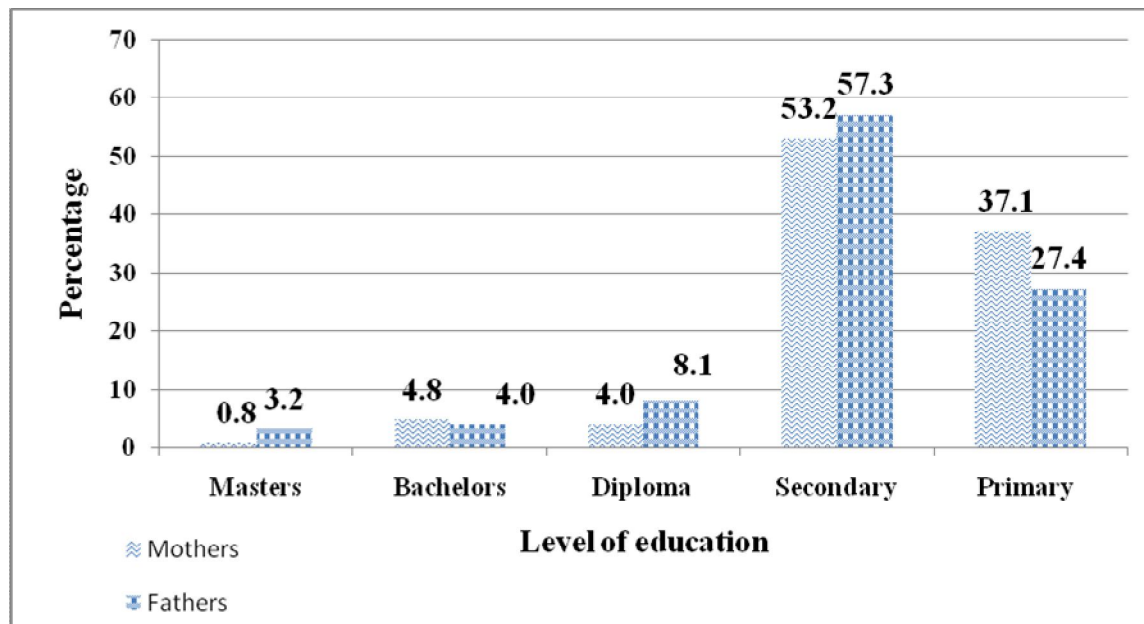


Figure1: Parent Level of Education

Findings show that 53.2% (66) of the mothers and 57.3% (71) of the fathers had attained secondary education while 37.1% (46) of the mothers and 27.4% (34) of the fathers had only attained primary education. Only a small percentage of the parents had attained diploma, bachelors and masters. This shows that majority of the parents had only attained basic primary and secondary education and only a few had attained higher education to enable them build a career. Findings also implies that male parents are more educated compared to female parents which proves the boy child education is more prioritized and boys are supported to pursue higher education. In addition uneducated parents

do not see importance of girl child education. The finding supports Brown and Park (2010) findings that majority of parents and households who are not educated do not see the importance of providing support for their children schooling because they do not appreciate the benefits of schooling.

5.0 Conclusion

Findings presented and discussed have proved that most students drop out of school because of their parents' poor financial status. The parents who are low income earners are not able to pay school fees on time. This leads to the school administration sending the students home to collect school fees and not all students who are sent home manage to come back to school. When the parents lack funds to maintain their children in school, they end up dropping out. It can also be concluded from the study that, parental level of education influence female students retention rates in public secondary school. It has also shown that high academic attainment of parents significantly reduces chances of secondary school dropout. The researcher further concludes educated parents were more effective in helping their children in academic work and that educated parents were interested in the academic progress of their children and encourage them to pursue professional careers.

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