Determinants of Attendance in Alternative Primary Schools in Mathare Slum, Nairobi, Kenya

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Abstract

This study sought to establish the influence of home-based and school-based factors on pupils' school attendance in Alternative Primary Schools in Mathare Constituency, Nairobi. The study employed the correlational design. The Study population was 18,000 pupils, 58 head teachers and 604 teachers. The sample size comprised of 12 head teachers (20%), 60 teachers (10%) and 317 pupils (1.8%). The study established that there was a strong positive and statistically significant correlation between home background characteristics and pupils' school attendance in Alternative Primary Schools (r = .935, p = .012) at alpha 0.05 level of statistical significance. Further, a strong negative and statistically significant (r = -.662, p = .033) correlation at alpha 0.05 level of confidence exists between family size and pupils' school attendance in Alternative Primary Schools.

Key words: School participation, School attendance, Home-based factors, School-based factors, Alternative Primary Schools

Introduction

Expanding access and participation, especially in basic education has pre-occupied the global education agenda for the last three decades. Global commitments such as Education for All (EFA) and Millennium Development Goal (MDG) goals No 2 sought to achieve Universal Primary Education (UPE) by ensuring that all children particularly girls, children in difficult circumstances and those belonging to ethnic minorities have access to, and complete Free Primary Education (FPE) of good quality. Both global commitments whose timeline was year 2015 underscored the importance attached to access and participation in basic education by the global community. Education features prominently in the global community's seventeen Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) adopted in 2015 under the auspices of United Nations (UN, 2015). The SDGs have targets to be achieved by the year 2030. SDG No 4 is specific to education and aims to ensure inclusive and quality education for all and promote lifelong learning. Education is also expected to play a key role in the attainment of targets for all the other SDGs but most notably goal numbers one, five and eleven on poverty, gender equality and reduced inequalities respectively.

Kenya has over the years endeavoured to honour these global commitments via implementation of various policies. The Kenyan government instituted FPE Policy in 2003 as a step towards the achievement of the Universal Primary Education goal. This was followed by the implementation of the secondary school tuition fee waiver in 2008 under the Free Day Secondary Education programme. Kenya's Vision 2030 as well as the Constitution of Kenya 2010 stress on the significance of attainment of education by all the citizens.

Institution of Free Primary Education in 2003 aimed at increasing access, participation and retention in primary education especially for children from poor and vulnerable backgrounds. The initiative led to a surge in

primary schools' enrolment surge from 6.13 million in 2002 to 7.39 million by 2004. In 2015, enrolment stood at 10.09 million in primary schools, an increase from 9.38 million in 2010 (Republic of Kenya, 2016).

However, in Kenyan urban slums many children are not able to reap benefits gained from Free Primary Education programme at a national level due to a number of factors. One, Free Primary Education is given in public primary schools which are very few in urban slums amid the high population. Two, Free Primary Education only caters for tuition costs leaving families to cater for other direct and indirect costs of schooling, e.g., uniform, transport, school meals etc.

Further, the Kenyan government developed Alternative Provision of Basic Education and Training (APBET) policy in 2009 to address the access and participation lacuna of the Free Primary Education. The policy aimed to support alternative programmes offering basic education such as Alternative Primary Schools (APS) and Alternative Education Centres (AEC). According to Thompson (2001) the APS and AEC are predominant in Arid and Semi-Arid Lands, ASALs which often are remote and in urban slums. APS address educational needs of only school age children while AEC address educational needs of both school age children and youth below 18 years who are unable to access formal primary education institutions (Republic of Kenya, 2009b). Moreover, Republic of Kenya (2009b) highlights that APS use the formal curriculum while AEC use various alternative curricula, including the Department of Education's Non Formal Education (NFE) curriculum.

The highest number of APBET institutions in Kenya is in Nairobi County at 640 (Republic of Kenya, 2009). Consistent with United Nations Human Settlements Program (2005), Nairobi's urban slums were found to be inhabited by 50% of the capital city residents and that APBET institutions managed by individual entrepreneurs, communities and non-governmental organizations provide basic education. Statistics show that in formal primary schools in 2009, enrolment was 9,509,500 children (Republic of Kenya, 2010). The number of out of school children in Kenya was 1,010,000, along with UIS (2013) and the APBET institutions enrolment was 163,340 (Republic of Kenya, 2012). Thus, 83% (846,660) of the out of school children were not enrolled in the public government primary schools or in APBET institutes. Instituted APS use the formal curriculum and target school age children who for a range of reasons have been unable to join the formal primary schools (Republic of Kenya, 2014).

Nairobi County has APSs instituted in various slums. This study however focused on APSs instituted in Mathare Constituency urban slum in Nairobi County. There are 70,000 children of primary school age in Mathare Constituency (Republic of Kenya, 2012). Mathare Constituency urban slum has 58 APSs registered with MOEST. More, it only has two primary schools that are public and consistent with Wildish (2011), Mathare is one of the largest slums in Kenya taking the second position from the largest. The two formal primary schools in Mathare Constituency are located at the periphery of the constituency serving most primary school age children from the neighbouring Constituencies (Dignatas, 2008). Owing to limited number of formal primary schools in Mathare, APSs play a key role

in providing basic education to primary school age children. According to Wildish (2011), the enrolment in the Mathare constituency public primary schools is 3,000 children and in the registered APSs is 18,000 children. This means that 49,000 of the 70,000 children of primary school age in Mathare Constituency did not register or join the instituted APSs and the two formal primary schools. Difficulty in identifying the 49,000 children of primary school age in the established APSs prompted this study.

The study's objective was to establish the influence of home and school-based factors on school attendance in APS in Mathare Constituency, Nairobi. The study hypothesised that:

i.   There is no significant relationship between home-based factors and school attendance in APS in Mathare Constituency.

ii.   There is no significant relationship between school-based factors and school attendance in APS in Mathare Constituency.

Literature Review

Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4 aims to ensure that all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes (United Nations, 2015). Despite a notable increase in pupils' school participation globally since year 2000, according to UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) and UNICEF (2015), about 263 million children and youth aged 6-17 are out of school. Investigation on the exclusion of the poor in post-apartheid education in South Africa by Becker and Preez (2016) concluded that children whose parents can pay for education are included in the education system whereas those without financial means are excluded and are the objects of special measures. Sarkar and Sarkar (2016) in finding out why child labour persists with declining poverty established that income inequality is a channel for transmission of child labour.

Hence, high schooling costs generate child labour which consequently limits children school attendance. School attendance ratio between the vulnerable children has increased from 0.80 around 2000 to 0.96 around 2014 (United Nations, 2015). Though globally, the number of people living in extreme poverty has declined by more than half, falling from 1.9 billion in 1990 to 836 million in 2015, the world's poorest children are four times more likely not to go to school than the world's richest children (UNESCO, 2015). In rural Western Kenya, malaria and lack of finances were identified as the most significant determinants of primary school dropout and absenteeism (King, Dewey, and Borish, 2015). Availability of finances aids affordability of basic needs such as food which enhances children school attendance and participation. School feeding impacts on school attendance of pupils positively, increasing it by 1.34 days a month, which is 6 percent of total school days a month in Bangladesh (United Nations University, 2004). An impact evaluation on education programmes on learning and school participation in low and middle income countries found that school programmes that addressed child and household constraints to children's education were particularly effective at improving their participation outcomes (Snilstveit, Stevenson, Menon, Phillips, Gallagher,

Geleen, and Jimenez, 2016). Mainly, in Sub-Saharan Africa children of school age out-of-school are from deprived households (UIS, 2013). Deprived households are common in Arid and Semi-Arid Lands (ASALs). ASALs are also considered side-lined areas as well as the urban slum areas where majority of the population lack basic things such as clean water, shelter among others (SID, 2011).

The classification of out-of-school children by past and possible future school attendance yields important insights for policymakers (UNESCO, 2014). School attendance contributes to pupils' school participation. Various educational programs have been developed to encourage school participation of children from poor families in many countries through issuance of conditional cash transfers to meet certain school attendance targets (Glennerster, Kremer, Mbiti, & Takavarasha, 2011). Conditional cash transfers, particularly those that are focused on school attendance through reduction of poverty, have boosted enrolment for all beneficiary children in parts of Latin America and the Caribbean, South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa (UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) and UNICEF, 2015). Studies in Sub Saharan African countries have established strong evidence linking cash transfer receipt to increases in school attendance (Bastagli, Hagen-Zanker, Harman, Barca, Sturge, and Schmidt, 2016). Consequentially, attempts to reduce household poverty through issuance of cash transfers have resulted to improved school attendance. However, in Kenya, participation in primary education is characterised by regional and gender disparities, with a rising number of urban slum children not attending school (Kimalu, Nafula, Manda, Bedi, Mwabu, & Kimenyi, 2001).In the National Education Sector Plan 2013/2014-2017/2018, existence of disparities in attainment of primary education and a rising number of urban slum children not attending school situation has been noted as a challenge that needs to be addressed (Republic of Kenya, 2014)

Kipng'etich, Boit, and Bome (2013) conducted a study on factors influencing household decisions on access to primary school education in Kenya with a focus on Uasin Gishu West District. The study aimed to establish factors that influence household decisions on pupils' school attendance to primary school education in Kenya. It established that household related factors can deter many household's decision to have their children attend school regularly. A study by Auma, Migosi, and Ombuki (2013) on factors affecting access to universal primary education by nomadic pastoralists in Garissa District, Kenya, established that household characteristics related to household income and distances covered from households affected nomadic pastoralist pupils regular school attendance.

In order for a country to realize UPE, inclusion and equity in institutions providing basic education must first be realized. However, a study by Njoka, Riechi, Obiero, Kemunto, Muraya, Ongoto, and Amenya (2012) established that regardless of government interventions in guaranteeing UPE to its citizens since 2003, children attending formal primary schools in ASALs and urban slums continued to be absent, repeat classes and drop out. Furthermore, the study found that established alternative programmes to realize inclusion and equity in the provision of basic education were not effective. In Nairobi urban slums children from larger households tend to attend government

schools while those from smaller households attended non-government schools, particularly formal private schools (Ngware, Abuya, Admassu, Mutisya, Musyoka, & Oketch, 2013).

The reviewed literature sheds light on the critical role played by household and school-based factors in determining pupils' school participation through school attendance. This paper presents the relationship, which is the extent to which household and school-based factors influence pupils' school participation in alternative primary schools of Mathare Constituency. Further, the paper outlines how the variation in proportion of school attendance of pupils in Mathare Constituency alternative primary schools can be predicted in view of household and school-based factors.

Methodology

The correlation research design was employed in the study. Mathare Constituency, Nairobi County was the locale of the study. The target population comprised of 18,000 pupils, 58 headteachers and 604 teachers. Sample selection for teachers and the head teachers was informed by Gay (1992). According to Gay (1992), a population of 100 subjects and above is considered large and can be well represented by a sample size of 10% while a population of less than 100 subjects requires a sample size of (20%). Consequently, the selected sample was 12 head teachers (20%) and 60 teachers (10%). The tables for determining sample sizes for a given population were used to determine the pupil sample of 317 (Krejcie, & Morgan, 1970). Study participants included teachers and pupils and they were identified through systematic random sampling. Alternative Primary Schools in Mathare Constituency that participated in the study were purposively sampled since some do not have children in classes 5, 6, 7 and 8.

Data collection instruments included semi-structured questionnaires for headteachers, teachers and pupils. The semi-structured questionnaires included items for measuring the various variables. Piloting of the instruments was done. Questionnaire reliability was determined using test-retest technique. The researcher purposively selected headteachers (2), teachers (4), and pupils (10) in APSs two times, each time separated with a period of a week to fill in the questionnaires. Results of each administration were documented discretely. Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (PPMCC) formula was used to compute the association coefficient amid the assessments. Calculated coefficient (r) of the headteachers questionnaire was 0.86, for teachers' questionnaire was 0.79 and for the pupils' questionnaire was 0.82. Since the correlation coefficient in these instruments was above 0.7 they were considered reliable for the study as noted by Kerlinger (1973). Data were analysed through descriptive and inferential statistics which entailed use of Correlation and Regression analyses.

Results

The study sought to establish the relationship between home background characteristics and pupils' school attendance in Alternative Primary Schools in Mathare Constituency. The results are as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Spearman's rho Co-efficient for pupils' school attendance and availability of basic needs

Correlations				
			School attendance	Availability of basic needs
Spearman's rho	School attendance	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.935**
		Sig. (2-tailed)		.012
. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).				
Source: Pupil questionnaire			(N = 317)	

Table 1 illustrates relationship between home background characteristics and pupils' school attendance in Alternative Primary Schools of Mathare Constituency. There is a strong positive and statistically significant correlation between availability of basic needs such as food, shelter and clothing and school attendance of pupils in Alternative Primary Schools in Mathare Constituency (r = .935, p = .012) at alpha 0.05 level of statistical significance. A regression analysis was done to determine the exact contribution of availability of basic needs on pupils' school attendance. The results are shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Regression model summary on pupils' school attendance and availability of basic needs

Model Summary				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.689a	.474	.473	1.169
a. Predictors: (Constant), Availability of basic needs such as food shelter and clothing				
Source: Pupil questionnaire			(N = 317)	

Table 2 shows that 47.4% of the variation in school attendance of pupils in Alternative Primary Schools in Mathare Constituency may be predicted from the interaction of basic needs such as food, shelter and clothing availability and pupils' school attendance. The study also sought to establish the relationship between family size and pupil's school attendance. The results are given in Table 3.

Table 3: Spearman's rho co-efficient for family size and pupils' school attendance

Correlations				
			School attendance	Family Size
Spearman's rho	School attendance	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	-.662**
		Sig. (2-tailed)		.033
. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).				
Source: Pupil questionnaire			(N = 317)	

The table shows that the Relationship of family size and pupils' school attendance in Alternative Primary Schools of Mathare Constituency is strongly negative and statistically significant (r = -.662, p = .033) at alpha 0.05 level of confidence (Table 3). A regression analysis was done to establish extent to which pupils' family size determined their school attendance. Table 4 illustrates the findings.

Table 4: Regression model summary on pupils' school attendance and family size

Model Summary				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.525a	.276	.274	1.372
a. Predictors: (Constant), Family Size				

Source: Pupil questionnaire   (N = 317)

The regression results show that 27.6% of the variation in pupils' school attendance in Alternative Primary Schools in Mathare Constituency may be predicted from the relationship of pupils' family size and school attendance. The study also sought to establish the relationship between school-based characteristics and pupils' school attendance in Alternative Primary Schools in Mathare Constituency. The results are shown in Table 5.

Table 5: Spearman's rho Co-efficient for school-based factors and pupils' school attendance

Correlations			School attendance
Spearman's rho	Presence of School Feeding Programme (SFP)	Correlation Coefficient	.780**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.013
	Flexibility of school hours	Correlation Coefficient	.689**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.021
	Teacher qualifications	Correlation Coefficient	.627**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.032
	School physical facilities	Correlation Coefficient	.822**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.026
	School fees required	Correlation Coefficient	-.812**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.022
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).			

Source: Teacher questionnaire   (N = 60)

Table 5 shows that there exists a strong positive and statistically significant relationship between: The presence of school feeding programme (SFP) and school attendance (r = .780, p = .013) at alpha 0.05 level of statistical significance; Flexibility of school hours and school attendance (r = .689, p = .021) at alpha 0.05 level of statistical significance; Teacher qualifications and school attendance of pupils (r = .627, p = .032) at alpha 0.05 level of statistical significance; School physical facilities and pupils' school attendance (r = .822, p = .026) at alpha 0.05

level of statistical significance. The correlation between school fees required and school attendance of pupils in Alternative Primary Schools in Mathare Constituency is strongly negative (r = -.812, p = .022). Also, the school attendance of pupils is statistically significant at alpha 0.05.

Regression analysis was done to establish the proportion at which variation in Alternative Primary Schools attendance in Mathare Constituency could be predicted from the relationship between schools-based factors and pupils' school attendance. The results are shown in Table 6.

Table 6: Regression model summaries on school-based factors and pupils' school attendance

Model Summary				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.942a	.887	.877	.167

a. Predictors: (Constant), School fees required, Flexibility of school hours, Teacher Qualifications, Presence of School Feeding Programme (SFP), School physical facilities

Source: Teacher questionnaire   (N = 60)

Table 6 shows an R Square is .887. Therefore, 88.7% of the variation in pupils' school attendance in Alternative Primary Schools in Mathare Constituency may be predicted from the relationship of pupils' school-based factors and their school attendance.

Discussion and Conclusion

This paper endeavoured to establish factors that influence school attendance in Alternative Primary Schools in Mathare Constituency by determining the relationship of pupils' school attendance with household and school-based characteristics. With regard to home background characteristics on availability of basic needs such as food, shelter and clothing and pupils' school attendance, the study reveals a strong positive and statistically significant relationship. Where basic needs such as food, shelter and clothing are available in a pupil's household, the pupil tends to attend school more frequently hence participates more in school. Further, almost half of the deviation of a pupil's school attendance can be envisaged by availability of basic needs such as food, shelter and clothing in the household. The findings concur with the findings of study in South Africa (Becker, & Preez, 2016) and another in Kenya (Kipng'etich, Boit, & Bome, 2013) which established that household related factors can deter many households decision to have their children attend school regularly. Also, the results relate to the findings of a study in slums of Dhaka, Bangladesh which established that families provided with food stuffs had their children attend school regularly (Cameron, 2010).

The study found reverse relationship between family size and pupils' school attendance in Alternative Primary Schools of Mathare Constituency. The larger the family size of pupils in Alternative primary schools of Mathare Constituency the less frequently the pupils attended school. More so, more than a quarter of the difference of a pupil's school attendance would be forecasted by the pupil's family size in Alternative Primary Schools in

Mathare Constituency. These findings concur with the findings of Kainuwa & Yusuf (2013) in Nigeria which established that big families had most children not enrolled in learning institutions hence not attending school.

With regard to the relationship of pupils' school attendance and school-based factors, the study noted a parallel relation in all investigated school-based factors except for school fees. The presence of School Feeding Programme (SFP), flexibility of school hours, qualified teachers and school physical facilities enhances pupils' school attendance. Nevertheless, presence of school fees dissuades pupils from attending Alternative primary schools in Mathare Constituency. Besides, more than 80% of variation in pupils' school attendance can be anticipated from the relation of school-based factors. This concurs with other findings that found a strong relationship between cash transfer and increased school attendance in Sub Saharan African countries (Bastagli et al., 2016). In addition, UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) and UNICEF (2015) ascertained that conditional cash transfers particularly those that are focused on school attendance through reduction of poverty, boosted school attendance for all beneficiary children in parts of Latin America and the Caribbean, South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa.

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