Lake Fishing Factors on Pupils School Attendance Pattern in Developing Countries. A Case of Madiany Division, Siaya County Kenya

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Abstract:
Developing countries education system includes both academic and technical training at primary, secondary and tertiary levels (Ward et al. 2006). Formal primary schooling lasts for eight years and seven years respectively. The paper presents the lake fishing factors on primary school pupils attendance patterns in developing countries with focus to Madiany Division, Siaya County located on the shores of Lake Victoria. The introduction of free primary education in Kenya in 2003 was introduced to map out all children who parents could not afford to pay the school fee and enable them access and completion basic education but this has not actually been achieved KNEC report 2010. The paper identify school attendance pattern by pupils and determined probable reasons influencing the attendance patterns. The findings presented in this paper shows that pupils attendance patterns to school is not steady and fluctuates based on the gender, age, and class category and lake activities. The attendance rate per year was found to be at 67.35%, girls attended school more (39.8%) compared to boys (27.51%). It was also established that pupils school attendance patterns was most directly influenced by fishing activities that the community living around the lake practice. The paper highlights policy implications on the topic under study.

Key words: acerbity, antecedents, fishing, attendance pattern.

Introduction:
Education is a fundamental human right as well as a catalyst for economic growth and human development (Okidi et al., 2004). This prompted countries across Africa to promote Universal Primary Education (UPE) in early 2000s. However, much as primary school enrolment has been a success, the concern now is with regard to the internal efficiency of primary education that is the ability to retain pupils until they graduate from primary school. According to Ligeve, Poipoi and Maragia (2012), there were more than four million Kenyan children engaged in child labour. This figure puts the country in sixth position in Africa in the prevalence of the practice of child labour. This has been attributed to rising cost of living and unemployment rates in the country. In a study conducted in the neighbouring county Homabay by (Ligeve et al., 2012) showed that school children were heavily involved in fishing activities. The surveys indicated that children participated in these activities to the detriment of their education. In recent years, there have been constant arguments that despite most children in Africa being enrolled
in primary school, the real problem concerns children dropping out of school has been raised (Du-mas et al., 2004; Lewin, 2007). This has created school attendance patterns where truancy problem has been identified. Enrolment and low retention of children in schools has remained a global challenge particularly for marginalised groups (Namukwaya & Kibirige, 2014). Over 246 million girls and boys around the world are working instead of attending school and enjoying their childhood. Ensuring children enrolment in school is one thing, but whether they will complete their education is another issue altogether. UNICEF (2005) statistics shows that overall 60 per cent of children are attending school, while 38 per cent are engaged in child labour. There is significant overlap between the two half of the children that work also attending school. Low school attendance patterns are pervasive problem throughout the world, especially in developing countries (UNICEF, 2005). According to statistics from FAO, UNESCO and UNICEF, Africa and Asia together account for over 90 percent of total child employment. This is especially prevalent in rural areas where the capacity to enforce minimum age requirements for schooling and work is lacking. For instance, in Uganda, comprehensive evaluation of basic education in Uganda report (2005) asserted that UPE dropout has escalated from 4.7% in 2002 to 6.1% in 2005 (Namukwaya & Kibirige, 2014). The problem of dropout is thus disquieting to policy makers since it partly reflects the inadequacy of a schooling system in terms of either school quality or quantity. Given the glaring dropout rate of pupils and ghastly effects of primary school dropout, there is therefore a dire need to establish the harshness of economic activities on children participation in primary education in Kenya. Research studies have found that there is a trade-off between child involvement in economic activities and attendance rate. FAO (2010) argues that child labour often reinforces a vicious cycle of poverty and has a negative impact on literacy rates and school attendance and limits children’s mental and physical health and development. Although there is a growing body of interest in the influence of child labour and child migration on children’s schooling, there have been relatively few empirical studies in Kenya focusing on how seasonal migration clashes with school calendar.

There are links between poverty and child labour and how that results in children being pulled out of school to work (Hunt, 2008). The most important being poverty and the induced pressure upon them to escape from this plight. Though children are not well paid, they still serve as major contributors to family income in developing countries Schooling problems also contribute to child labour, whether it is the inaccessibility of schools or the lack of quality education, which spurs parents to enter their children in more profitable pursuits, (UNICEF, 2005) Traditional factors such as rigid cultural and social roles in certain countries further limit educational attainment and increase child labour. The gender roles that a society assigns to its children will have a determining effect on their future: their access to food and education; their labour force participation; their status in relationships; and their physical and psychological health (Hunt, 2008). Hunt explains that the girl child may drop out of school because of demands on her to look after siblings. Odundo and Rambo (2010) established that female children receive less education than males, and they tend to dropout, or are withdrawn earlier for both economic and social-cultural reasons. The study furthers argues that the opportunity cost of sending female children to school in rural areas, where girls are married quite early, is high because benefits of their schooling will not accrue to their parental household. Elsewhere, Patrick (2000) found a significant relationship between parent’s child labour incidence and schooling, and those of their children. As part of the findings, children are more likely to be child labourers if their parents are not well to do and they attain higher levels of education if their parents are educated. They stressed that the educational attainment of grandparents does not directly affect the child’s labour status, but there seems to be an indirect impact that is transmitted through the parents’ education. According to FAO (2008) research conducted in Ghana, children’s participation economic activities with agriculture are influenced by a multitude of factors on the supply as well as on the demand side. FAO indicates that burgeoning poverty is considered a major determinant of child labour; however, manifold other factors also influence children’s work such as the accessibility and quality of education and the impact of interventions. ILO (2010) reported that crop shock leads to a significant in- crease in child labour and to a
decrease in school enrolment and attendance. In
Nigeria, such factors includes Poverty and
economic issues; early marriage and teenage
pregnancy; inadequate school infrastructure;
cultural and religious biases; Socio-economic status
of the parent(s) largely affects the child’s education.
This is because even when tuition is free, uniforms,
books, sandals, and transport fare have to be
provided. With the high level of poverty and
unemployment, the traditional discrimination as to
which of the sex’s benefits from education becomes
a determining variable that can be employed
negatively (Maslow, 1943).
In common with other parts of Africa there are
many challenges which parents and guardians face
in securing a formal education for their children
and there are also challenges which the children face
which may prevent them from obtaining an
education (Okumu et al., 2008)
However, in addition to the challenges, which
children in fishing communities share with other
children in Africa, we have argued that the socio-
cultural context of rural fishing communities
provides a particular environment that exacerbates
these challenges. Children who do not do well at
school or who drop out because of costs find their
way to the lake a destination where work without
qualifications may be available. (FAO 2008) The
geographical location of many rural fishing
communities is another key factor, as they can be
remote, isolated and lacking infrastructure
(Westway, Barrat & Seeley, 2009). In Uganda,
Okumu et al., (2008) emphasise how communities
can influence dropout rates by providing
employment opportunities during school hours they
established that gender, age and class level of pupils
participating in fishing related activities influenced
their participation in primary education. The study
also established that various fishing related
activities such as actual fishing and seasoning of
fish influenced pupils’ participation in primary
education. However, participation of children in
agricultural labour is not always hazardous as some
farming operations are non-hazardous. Such
activities have positive consequences since it
enhances inter-generational transfer of technical and
social skill and children’s food security (ILO 2014;
Ligeve et al., 2012). This is true, but that does not
mean that children should be exposed to hazardous
operations in the lake. Such skills can still be
learned and acquired without significant
consequence to their academic pursuit especially
during school holidays (April, August and
December). However, close to the global
commitment to Education for All by 2015,
UNESCO Report 2010 recognised that children
from rural populations had not yet benefited from
basic education strategies. This is explained by low
transition rates of pupils from primary to secondary
schools. Primary school participation rates are very
low in schools that are along the beaches of Lake
Victoria in Nyanza province. Education system in
schools around the beaches experiences high
wastage as a result of absenteeism, low completion
rate, high rate of dropout and low performance in
national examination (Anyango, nd).

Purpose of the Study:
Midiany division residents are engaged in fishing
activities mostly as the main economic activity. The
fishing industry contributes to food security, foreign
exchange, employment and local county
government revenue. Fishing is the major source of
livelihood for communities living around Lake
Victoria in Siaya County. The aim of conducting
this study is to determine the primary school
children attendance rate and factors influencing it.
Specifically the paper focuses on:

(i) Identifying the primary school children
attendance rate in developing countries
(ii) Determining factors influencing pupils’
attendance patterns in developing countries

Theoretical Framework:
This paper is guided by Abraham Maslow’s theory
on human motivation (Maslow, 1943). Maslow informs
that people have tendencies towards
and needs for certain things. Maslow discusses that
if a person was both hungry and thirsty, he would
try to address the thirst first as the most immediate
need. The theory of human motivation may be a
plausible explanation for the retention dilemma in
Midiany division as parents and area residents have
to make choices on whether to send their children
to school or not; amidst other social pressing needs.
The social pressing needs experienced at the
household level could be the reason children would
tend to engage in economic activities at the expense
of their education.

Methodology:
Midiany division was chosen for the study because
it is documented that a high number of children
work in fish industry during school holidays. The

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The fishing industry hires many unskilled workers who reside in landing sites, temporary fishing camps and more permanent fishing villages on the lakeshores. The researchers decided to conduct research within the lake because various governmental and non-governmental stakeholders are involved in awareness and policy implementation initiatives of addressing child labour in several counties (Busia, Siaya, Kisumu, Homabay and Migori) in Nyanza region. The study opted to conduct cross-sectional surveys in primary schools located in Kopieta, Kabuon’g, Misori, Luanda, Kotienopier, Ndenda, Wichlum and Kuya beaches. These sites are dynamic centres of activity attracting different types of people; fulltime fishermen, male and female traders and fish processors, as well as service sector workers, in lodges, bars and restaurants and commercial sex workers. Many children live, and often work, at these sites (Westaway et al. 2007).

The public primary schools that participated in the research were: Lieta, Mumbo, Rabai, Ndigwa, Lweya, Mituri, Ramuya and Boru. The study collected data from teachers, head teachers and pupils selected from the above mentioned schools. The sample size involved 43 teachers, 8 head teachers and 86 pupils selected through proportionate stratified random sampling technique. The research utilised questionnaires and interviews as instruments for data collection. Elsewhere, checklists from head teachers’ records were used to supplement primary data. Quantitative data collected was analysed using descriptive statistics while qualitative data is presented thematically.

Results and Discussion:

The responses presented in this section came from 36 teachers, 7 head teachers and 86 pupils. Table 1 presents the demographic characteristics of pupils.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Range</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6 – 9 yrs</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>24.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 – 13 yrs</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>33.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 – 17 yrs</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>41.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1 results shows that 36 (41.9%) of pupils were aged 10-13 years, 29 (33.7%) were aged 10-13 years while 21 (24.45) were aged 6-9 years. Based on their participation, all (100.0%) of pupils indicated that their parents are involved in fishing activities within Lake Victoria. The number of males’ pupils who participated in the research was slightly higher (57.0%) than that of females (43.0%). From teachers’ responses, 25 (69.4%) said fishing is largely the task of men and boys with only few women and girls participating. This was to ensure balanced responses in participation.

School attendance patterns

The study sought secondary data from head teachers from seven schools on the attendance rate in their schools. The results are presented in Figure 1.

The statistics in figure 1 shows that there average pupils attendance rate from the eight schools was 67.35% which is low compared to other areas of the country that have attendance rate of more than 80% of pupils attendance rate. The statistics shows that only one school has attained more than 80% attendance rate of students per year in Madiany division. Moreover, the study also reviewed documents from 8 schools with regard to girl and boy-child attendance rate to school for the past one academic year. The results are presented in Figure 2.
Figure 2 shows that the attendance pattern of male-female pupils is varied across the schools studied. In all schools, boys’ participation rate is low compared to female pupils. This shows that boys tend to miss school so often compared to girls in public primary schools in Madiany Division, Siaya County Kenya. Moreover, the researcher sought to find out the pupils attendance pattern based on the classes that students came from, i.e. lower classes (1-3), middle classes (4-6) and upper classes 7-8. The results are given in Figure 3.

The results presented in Figure 3 shows that the attendance rate for pupils in lower primary is higher than those in upper primary in Madiany division. The model shows a decreasing trend as pupils’ grade level in schools increases. Computed average results shows that 74.0% of pupils in lower primary school (class 1-3) attended school on regular basis compared to 66.7% of those in middle primary schools (4-6) and 61.4% of those in upper primary (class 7-8). This shows that class attendance patterns increases by class (or by age). The result clear shows that attendance is a problem being faced by pupils in the eight public primary schools in Madiany Division, Siaya County Kenya.

Respondents View on Factors influencing Children Attendance Patterns in School:

According to head teachers, teachers and pupils, the main factor influencing attendance patterns in schools was poverty, child labour, sickness and also family factors. However, most respondents viewed the fact that fishing activities in Lake Victoria was the main reason for pupils’ attendance to schools. The fishing industry is the main economic activity that residents of Madiany division rely for sustenance of their families and supporting their children. Fishing activities occurs mostly in Lake Victoria where men, women and children engage in different activities related to fishing. The study further asked pupils to indicate the frequency at which they participated in fishing activities; the responses are illustrated in Table 2.

Table 2 Extent of children participation in fishing activities in Madiany Division

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency of involvement in fishing activities</th>
<th>Age category</th>
<th>6-9 yrs</th>
<th>10-13 yrs</th>
<th>14-17 yrs</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>f</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>f</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>f</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regular</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9.7</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>32.3</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occasionally</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>18.2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>36.4</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rarely</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>43.5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>26.1</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>40.0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>50.0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2 results shows that for those who were regularly involved in fishing activities, 18 (58.1%) were aged 14-17 years, 10 (32.3%) were aged 10-13 years while only 3 (9.7%) were aged 6-9 years. It is further revealed from the table that as the number of years of a child decreases, the involvement in fishing activities decreases significantly as confirmed by chi square statistics (p<0.05). This implies that there exists significant difference between pupils’ age and involvement in fishing activities in Madiany division. As reviewed in the background information, the statistics shows that school-going children are actually involved in fishing activities during school days in the area. The

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statements were supported by teachers and head teachers who unanimously acclaimed that children involvement in fishing affects education development in the area as children are lured of paid work in fishing. However, this was denied by local Beach Management Unit representatives who denied that they do employ children under the age of 18 to work during school days but acknowledged that sometimes they cannot monitor all the activities that happen within the lake side. Moreover, the representative said that they only allow children to participate in fishing activities during weekends and during school holidays. The head teacher said that the beach committee members were instructed by the chiefs and local county administrators to cane any under-age children caught hanging around the landing site on weekdays. But the head teachers acknowledged that despite this directive, the beach management unit members are reluctant to follow the directive. The teachers were further asked to indicate the rate of children involvement in fishing activities during school days and their responses are given in Table 3.

Table 4 Teachers response on rate of school going children involvement in fishing activities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rate</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>52.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>36.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>11.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to table 4 19 (52.8%) of teachers, pupils participation in fishing activities is high. 13 (36.1%) said that participation of pupils in fishing activities is on moderate while only 4 (11.1%) acknowledged that it was low. This support the view of head teachers who lamented that the rate of children dropping out of school to go and engage in paid fishing work. After ascertaining that children were involved in fishing activities during school times, the researchers went further to identify the specific tasks that children engaged. these activities were in paddling, fetching water from the boat, casting and pulling the net in the lake, checking it and taking fish out, diving to free nets entangled between tree stumps, carrying the net and fish to the village and mending or adapting the net. The study found out that boys had different roles in fishing activities compared to their counterparts; girls’ participated beach seining activities.

For instance, if the boats do not have an outboard motor, older boys assist in paddling. Boys also accompany the fishing crews out to Lake Victoria, where they help to locate the fish, cast and pull the nets. The boys are usually engaged in all these methods. From teachers and teachers’ respondents from all the beaches in Madiany division, girls assisted in the processing and marketing of fish together with their mothers and relatives. Their work included waiting at the beach, removing the fish from the nets and carrying it per head load to the village, cleaning the fish, preparing the fire, spreading the fish on the oven, turning, packaging and taking it to the markets. The findings coincides with FAO (2010) who established that children are active in fish loading and unloading, transport and marketing, and in various types of fish storage and processing activities including sorting, peeling, slicing and filleting, and fish salting, smoking, curing, and drying as well as packing.

Considering that fishing is the mainstay of economy in Madiany division, the researchers sought the information of head teachers, teachers and pupils on the specific reasons that makes children to engage in fishing activities during school days. The pupils’ responses are given in Table 5.

Table 5 Factors influencing pupils to fish during school days

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reasons</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Support family</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>83.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family low income</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>75.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To look for fees</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>70.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To buy school uniforms</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>68.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culture</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>64.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To have money</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>57.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Results on table 5 shows that majority 72 (83.7%) of pupils engaged in fishing during school days so that they can support their siblings, parents and relatives. For instance one pupil remarked that he had to go to fishing so that he can take care of his brothers and sisters and that is what makes him to attend school irregularly. The statistics further shows that 65 (75.6%) of pupils indicated that to they have go to fishing during school days so that they can supplement family income. One girl remarked that she doesn’t go to school regularly because she had to work. This is in consonance with the ILO (2010) that observed that poverty and limited access to adult labour were also causes of child labour in agriculture. Moreover, 61 (70.9%) of

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pupils indicated that they do fishing to enable them raise enough money to pay school fees. This is due to the fact that the government allocation per child to finance free primary education is not enough to meet the schools needs as some schools are understaffed while others do not have the required infrastructure to support learning. Related to the findings made, 59 (68.6%) of pupils indicated that they are involved in fishing activities so that they can buy uniforms. For instance, one boy indicated that: “I have been working to make money to buy a new school uniform, books and other resources and that makes me to miss school some days in a term.”

The pupils also acknowledge that they go for fishing because their culture and social practices permit them (64.0%) while 49 (57.0%) acknowledged they are involved in fishing activities to make more money. One pupil remarked that: “During fish harvest season, I do work at the beach to make money despite being school day.” This implies that luring of paid work makes learners to irregularly attend schools in the area. These results reflect the extent to which children were attracted to seek employment in the lake fishing instead of going to school. It seems that children from poor socio-economic backgrounds are the ones engaged in fishing as compared to those from richer families. The head teachers and teachers remarked that low literacy levels amongst parents and uncertainty of finding adequate job after finishing form four makes them to allow some of their children to school while others assist them in lake fishing among other economic activities.

**Influence of lake fishing on pupils school attendance patterns:**

As the main focus of this paper, the teachers were asked to indicate the influence of children involvement in fishing activities during school days and their attendance patterns. The results are presented in Table 6.

**Table 6 Influence of lake fishing on pupils school attendance patterns**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Influence</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>61.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>25.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>13.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>36</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Results shows that 22 (61.1%) of teachers acknowledging that lake fishing has high influence on pupils school attendance patterns, 9 (25.0%) said that it had moderate influence while only 5 (13.9%) indicated that it had low influence. This implies that fishing activities affect learners’ participation in education. The study findings coincides with Ligeve et al., (2012) research in Homa Bay that found out that there was significant difference in the academic achievement of pupils who were involved and those who were not involved in fishing activities. Also FAO (2010) found out that school children involvement in fishing activities impact on literacy rates and school attendance and limits children’s mental and physical health and development. Lake fishing deprives the children of learning opportunities at school. These activities eventually lead to poor academic performance, academic wastage, high dropout rates and achievement deficits. Closer interaction with children revealed that during the times they are absent to school, 63 (73.3%) of them joined their parents in fishing expeditions while 23 (26.7) were either ill or attended other duties given by their parents at home.

**Conclusions and Recommendations**

The study has established that student attendance rate in schools in Madiany division public primary schools was 67.35%. With regard to gender category, 39.85% of female pupils attended schools on regular basis during an academic year compared to 27.51% of male pupils. With regard to class attendance, it was established that 74.0% of pupils in lower classes came to school regularly compared to 66.7% of those in middle classes and 61.4% of those in upper classes. The result showed that as the age of pupil increased, their participation in schooling decreased. The study has found out that children are involved in lake fishing activities in Madiany division. Surprisingly, children who are aged below 10 years were found to be involved in one way or another in fishing activities. Majority of children acknowledged to be going while on some occasions they were involved in fishing activities. Their activities ranged from loading and unloading of fish, fishing expedition (rowing or steering the boat, keeping watch, scooping/removing water, casting and pulling the net or angling, operating machinery), transport and marketing which involves sorting, peeling, slicing and filleting, and fish salting, smoking, curing, and drying as well as packing fish at the beaches and processing centres. This has hindered children participation in primary education which affects their right to universal


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primary education. This has seen fishermen (including parents) involve their young ones to substitute adult labour with cheap and reduced labour costs. This affected school attendance negatively as stated by teachers and head teachers. The study findings revealed that poverty, parental level of education, household size, family income, and culture among other factors influenced children decision to engage in fishing rather than attending school. Based on the aforementioned, it is recommended that

(i) Ministry of Education officers, county government officials and non-government organisations should educate the households on the consequences of using children as labourers; they need to educate the society on the dangers of involving their children in lake fishing activities at the expense of their schooling. 

(ii) For effective mainstreaming it is crucial to sensitise and train all stakeholders in education sector; the development of teaching material on child labour in social studies is critical to ensure that learners and society understands the dangers and consequences of child labour.

(iii) There is need for the national government in collaboration with the county government to prioritise education by emphasising on quality (hiring of enough teachers) and reduction of additional costs associated with free primary education. This would ensure learners remain in school throughout the academic year.

References:


