

Socio- Cultural and Economic Factors affecting Primary School Enrolment in Baragoi Division of Samburu County, Kenya

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ABSTRACT

The study examined socio-cultural and economic factors affecting primary school enrolment in Baragoi division of Samburu County of Kenya. The Kenyan government has introduced Free Primary Education (FPE) since 2003 with the aim of providing more school opportunities especially to the poor rural communities. Enrolment in absolute terms had gone up by 17.7% in 2003. However, primary school net enrolment ratios (NERs) in North Rift region had an average of 13.4% rise. The study was guided by the Social Learning Theory (SLT) and Human Rights Based Approach (HRBA) to explain how primary school enrolment was affected by socio- cultural and economic factors in the division. The study was conducted in Baragoi division. The unit of analysis of the study was the pastoral primary schools while the unit of observation for the study was primary school teachers. The study used the formula for nonrandomised group to get the sample size of ninety four primary school teachers. Particularly, the study used both purposive and convenience sampling technique. Interview schedule was used for data collection. Both qualitative and quantitative methods of data analysis were used. The study revealed that socio-cultural and economic factors such as poverty, cattle rustling, ethnic conflicts, banditry, insecurity, drought, famine, early marriages, 'moranism', boys and girls circumcision contributed to low primary school enrolment in Baragoi. This study recommends increased efforts of government and local communities in enhancement of general security through peace and conflict management, poverty eradication or minimisation through economic empowerment and sensitisation on education value and effects of cultural practices on education in modern society in order to improve primary school enrolment in the division.

Keywords: Socio- Cultural factors, economic challenges, ethnic conflicts, pastoralism, primary school enrolment

INTRODUCTION

With the introduction of Free Primary Education in 2003 by the Kenyan government; enrolment in absolute terms had gone up by 17.7% rise over the same year (Muthwii, 2004; Sifuna, 2009). However, primary school net enrolment ratios (NERs) in the North Rift region (mainly inhabited by pastoralist communities) were low with an average of 13.4% rise. GoK (2009) in the Samburu District Strategic Plan (2006-2011) showed that the district had recorded improved enrolment in primary schools with the inception of FPE. Although the enrolment rates in the district remained low. For instance, out of 60,000 children eligible to access education, only 29,000 had enrolled in school.

Baragoi division is located in Samburu County in the North Rift region of Kenya which has one of the lowest primary school enrolment rates and one of the highest dropout rates in Kenya (Kisima Pastoralist Centre, 2009). According to Leggett (1990), by 1977 just six

districts in the whole country were enrolling less than 50 per cent of their estimated school age population. All of them were pastoral districts: Samburu, Turkana, Marsabit, Mandera, Wajir and Garissa. Leggett further observed that twenty years later (in 1998), almost nothing had changed and the six lowest enrolling districts were the same. Moreover, the Government of Kenya (2009) noted that literacy rate in Baragoi was very low. It stood at 28.3% for males and 15.3% for females. It further indicated that in school enrolment and direct access to education opportunities women were more disadvantaged than men. Kisima Pastoralist Centre (2009) had also observed that many people in the division were illiterate and unable to articulate their problems or contribute to decisions concerning them. Thus, the study examined how social factors affected primary school enrolment in the division.

Kumssa, Jones and Williams (2009) asserted that Samburu County suffered from high level of human insecurity. Baragoi division is inhabited by two major ethnic communities: the Samburu and the Turkana (Karimi, 2003). These are pastoral communities living in arid and semi-arid areas and depended on livestock for their livelihood and had to share the same scarce resources of pasture and water (Kaimba, Njehia and Guliye, 2005). Broeck (2009) has noted that ethnic clashes, livestock rustling and banditry were a common occurrence in the region. Osamba (2000) postulated that banditry and cattle rustling in the region can be attributed to the changing nature of conflicts in terms of diverse factors leading to the conflicts. The study also investigated socio-economic challenges faced by primary school parents in pursuit of education for their children in Baragoi division.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Despite the significant increase in the number of children in public primary schools since the introduction of Free Primary Education (FPE) in 2003, primary school enrolment in Baragoi division has remained low. Education being a basic human right entitlement to all children, the Kenyan government had made enormous efforts to boost primary school enrolment. These included introduction of FPE, employment of more teachers yearly, grants and scholarships to poor students and more opportunities in the national schools for well performing students from public primary schools. Yet, primary school enrolment in Baragoi division has remained low. Hence, this study examined socio-cultural and economic factors affecting primary school enrolment in the division.

STUDY OBJECTIVES

The study was guided by the following specific objectives:

1. To establish social factors affecting primary school enrolment in Baragoi division.
2. To examine cultural practices that hinder primary school enrolment in the division.
3. To analyse economic challenges faced by the parents to ensure their children undertake education in the division.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The conceptual framework illustrated the relationship between socio-cultural and economic factors and their effects on primary school enrolment as showed in Figure 1. Primary school enrolment among pastoral communities was affected by various factors which included but not limited to socio-cultural and economic factors. There was interrelationship between and among these factors in terms of their causes and effects. For instance, cultural practice such as early marriages for girls were caused by or led to economic challenge and poverty. Social factors were examined through food shortage, water shortage, local brews, drought, famine, ethnic conflicts, banditry, insecurity and poor education trends in the region. It was evident

that there was poor education trend in the North Rift region (Karimi, 2003). It was characterised by low primary school enrolments since independence (1963). Moreover, food and water shortage was caused by famine, drought, aridity and semi- aridity in the region. Besides, banditry led to insecurity and impoverishment among the communities. As a result, these constrained either directly (terminated) or indirectly (disrupted) affected pastoral primary schools' enrolment. Furthermore, recurrent ethnic conflicts led to negative socialisation and insecurity. As such, there were vicious cycles of ethnic conflicts in the region that led to disruption of children's education and low primary school enrolment. Still, local brewing had negative social effects on children and also contributed to low primary enrolment in Baragoi division.

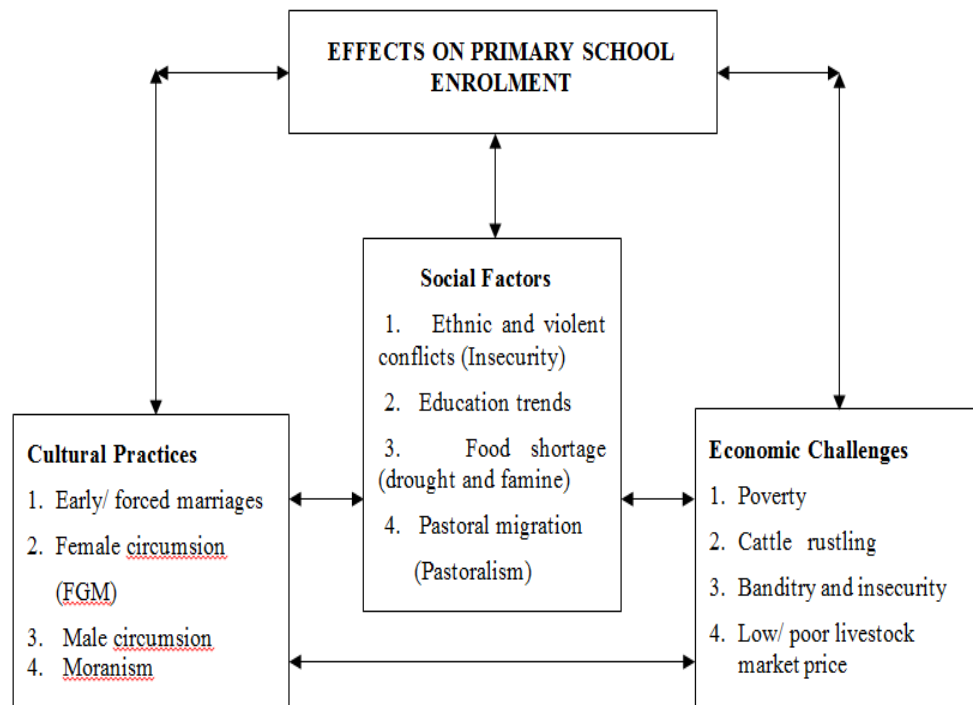


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

METHODOLOGY

Sampling Procedure

The study was guided by non-probability sampling technique because the study was a case study which aimed at getting in-depth information on phenomenon under the study. Both purposive and convenience sampling methods in the sampling procedure were used. Purposive sampling was aimed to achieve a homogeneous sample from primary school teachers. Thus, primary school teachers from public schools in Baragoi division were sampled. The teachers provided required details on socio-cultural and economic factors affecting primary schools enrolment in the division.

Convenience sampling appropriately sampled the first easily accessible primary teachers in the division. As such, geographical challenge which involved shattered schools in various localities was minimised. This made it possible to obtain accurate results on socio- cultural and economic factors affecting primary school enrolment in Baragoi division. This was because all teachers were exposed to similar environment and experiences in the division.

Sample Size

The study applied the formula for a nonrandomized group: $n = N / (1 + N (e^{-2}))$ (Ferris, 2011) to get 94 respondents (primary school teachers) for the sample size. The target population was the primary schools in pastoral regions (ASAL) affected by socio-cultural and economic factors on primary school enrolment. The study used the available statistics to calculate the sample size. The accessible population was pastoral primary schools from Baragoi division. According to GoK (2012), the total population for the primary schools was 20 while total number of primary school teachers in Baragoi division was 123.

Unit of Analysis

The unit of analysis was pastoral primary schools because the data required in the study related to a composite unit (primary school) not an individual. The unit of observation was a primary school teacher. This was because the interview schedules were used to collect data from the primary school teachers. Primary school teachers provided the study with detailed information on enrolment in the primary schools in Baragoi division. They were preferred as unit of observation because they are the custodians and guardians of the primary school students. Since the study was a case study, it was limited to providing insight on socio-cultural and economic factors affecting primary school enrolment from pastoral communities' perspective.

Methods of Data Collection

The study used interview schedule with both open- and close- ended questions to obtain data from the 94 primary school teachers in Baragoi division. The close-ended questions had a set of pre-determined answers to provide standardised information (Oppenheim, 1992; Russell, 1994). Close-ended questions collected quantitative data of the study. Thus, validity of the data was obtained for the phenomenon under study. Moreover, open-ended questions were used to collect qualitative data. The questions allowed the respondents to enrich the data with qualitative information because they expressed their opinions freely and in details (Ong'anya, 2009). As such, the primary school teachers provided valid and detailed information about social, cultural and economic factors affecting the enrolment in Baragoi division.

Methods of Data Analysis

The study used both quantitative and qualitative methods of data analysis. These methods adequately complemented each other in analysing all the data on socio-cultural and economic factors affecting primary school enrolment in Baragoi division. Particularly, quantitative analysis used descriptive statistics to code data and then analyse using percentage scores, frequency distribution tables and graphs. The graphs used included pie chart, bar graphs and histograms. On the other hand, qualitative analysis used thematic and narrations and presented in form of utterances by respondents. This was because the study was on descriptions, opinions, feelings, attitudes and other values which could not be quantified. Therefore, the data analysis involved grouping of data into categories. The utterances of each respondent were labelled differently. Key words and phrases by each of the participants were highlighted. Then the responses were thematically coded as guided by the key issue addressed by each. From the various themes under which the responses had been fitted, key utterances by all the respondents were underlined. Using the narrative method the data were presented in the results alongside quantitative results. Qualitative data was used to provide detailed information about the phenomenon under study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The study established that various socio-cultural and economic factors were either inter- or intra- related in terms of their negative effects on primary school enrolment in Baragoi division. The study noted that social factors had more severe effects on enrolment than cultural and economic factors. The conclusions are presented under the various specific objectives.

Social Factors that Affect Primary School Enrolment in Baragoi Division

The study findings revealed that ethnic and violent conflicts (93.62%) had greatly affected and led to low primary school enrolment in Baragoi division. This is because these conflicts were very high (96.8%) with several and severe negative effects on enrolment which either direct or indirect. For instance ethnic conflicts had led to insecurity of pupils to / from school and in / out of the school compound. In case of gun shoot outs, confusion (50%), anxiety (32%) and fear (49%) among students were evident.

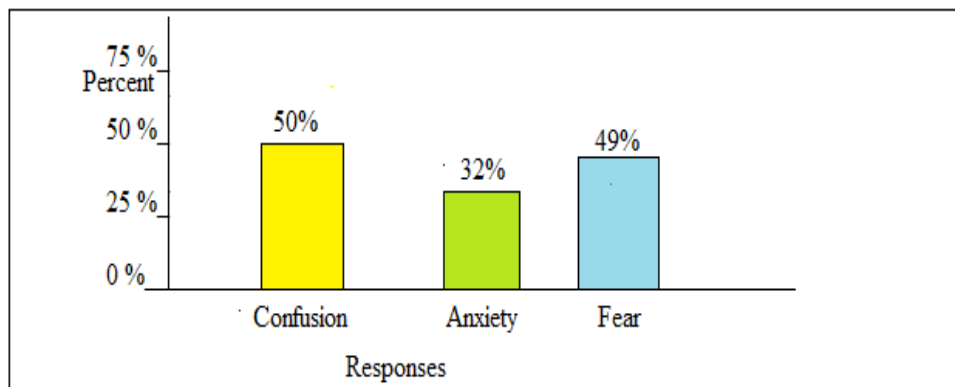


Figure 1. Effects of cattle raiding within and around schools

Insecurity resulted to school drop-outs (48%), frequent transfer of students (46%) and teachers (31%) to safer schools. Consequently, these factors led to low enrolment in primary schools.

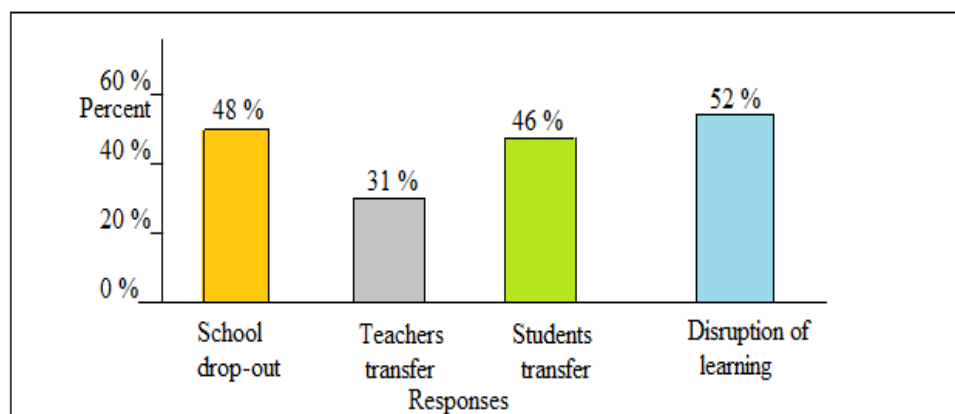


Figure 2. Effects of insecurity on Learning Activities in Primary Schools

These conflicts also affected relationships among the Samburu and the Turkana students in the few schools they shared. Negative attitudes due to conflicts resulted to hostility (69%), animosity (76%), hatred (73%) and enmity (76%) amongst them.

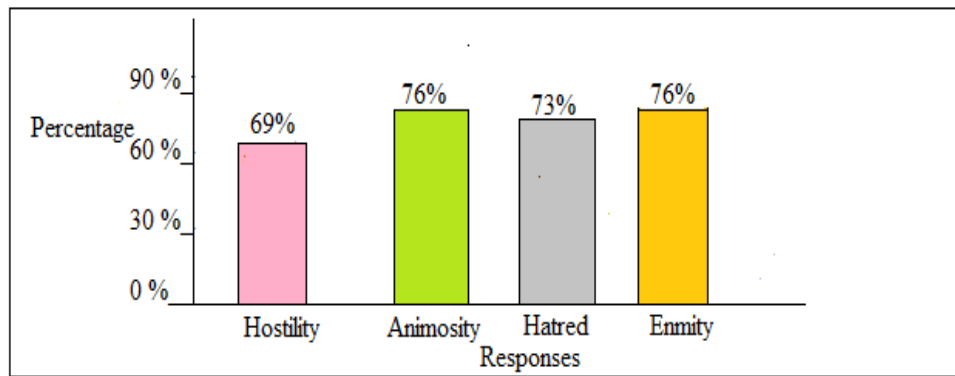


Figure 3. The impact of Ethnic Conflicts between the Turkana and Samburu communities

More so, ethnic based primary schools (95.7%) have been established instigating more negative ethnicity in schools. Unfortunately, the findings confirmed the existent of these conflicts (97.87%) in the division up to date.

Although pastoralism and migration among pastoral communities in Baragoi division was culturally inevitable (97.9%), 46.81% of the respondents strongly agreed that it effects on enrolment was either direct or indirect. This was because most pastoral parents were conservative and disregarded the value of their children's education (67.02%) and instead valued their livestock (wealth) more. As a result, a large number of children of school going age remained at home to tend the livestock hence low enrolment in schools. Migration patterns which varied due to climatic conditions affected primary school enrolment too. As such, it resulted to transfers to/ from schools (41.49%), long distances to schools (29.79%) and settling in areas without schools at all (28.72%) thereby lowering enrolment in schools.

Food shortage had strong effects on primary school enrolment according to majority responses (63.83%). Drought and famine contributed to severe food shortage (63.7%), causing hunger (42%), low turn up in schools, school drop-out (36.4%) and irregular primary school attendance (31.2%) among students in Baragoi division (see figure 4). 57.42% of the respondents strongly agreed that the drought, famine and food security actually affected primary school enrolment. This is because drought led to famine and food insecurity (food shortage) affecting most pastoral families in the division. As a result, cases of school drop-outs and low primary enrolment had been cited by most respondents in the study.

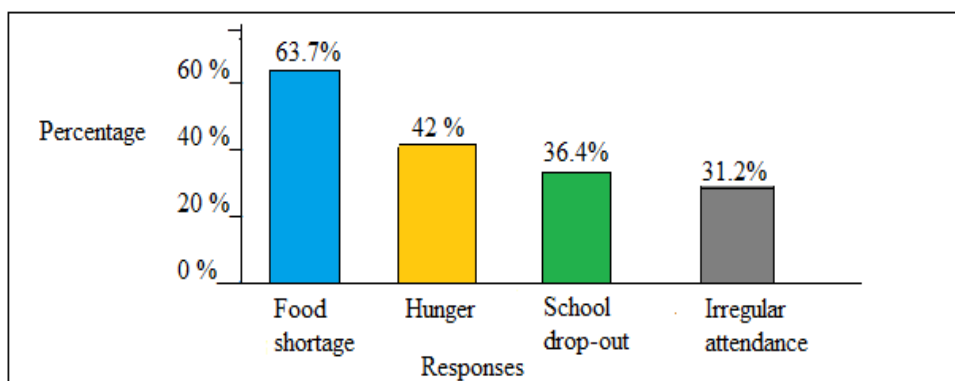


Figure 4. The impact of drought on school attendance

More findings highlighted indirect effects of water shortage and use of local alcohol in the division. This was caused by irregular school attendance to fetch water for domestic use. On the other hand, 9.1% of the students sneaked out of school to take local alcohol, 11.4% of the students went to school when drunk reducing their level of concentration in their studies

while 7.3% of the students dropped out from school to participate in liquor brewing. Hence, affecting the enrolment in schools.

Cultural Practices that Hinder Primary School Enrolment in Baragoi Division

According to Samburu culture, female genital mutilation (FGM) was compulsory. Up to 48.93% of the responses demonstrated that FGM greatly affected primary school enrolment. For example, 48.94% of the girls dropped out of school and got married after FGM. Therefore the findings demonstrated that FGM contributed to school drop outs (90.43%) and early marriages in the division. This is because FGM was a ‘mark’ of maturity and gave way to early marriage. Hence, girls were socialised to be young women and take up the role of young mothers. It was at this stage they were easily married off whether willing or not. Parents also felt that maintaining the girls in schools were an economic burden thus they could not afford causing them to drop out of school at an early age.

The findings of the study showed that early and forced marriages (51.08%) contributed to low enrolment in schools. This is because early marriage was considered as both cultural and economic activity (56.2%). Whereby 59.6% of the girls were never enrolled nor had formal education and most girls (96.5%) were forcefully married at a tender age of 9-14 years. For those who were enrolled in primary schools, their education could be terminated any time they got spouses to marry them. The findings also noted that early pregnancies contributed to early marriages, school drop-outs leading to low primary school enrolment in the division.

The study findings revealed that up to 42.55% of boys’ circumcision greatly affected primary school enrolment in the division. It was noted that sometimes learning was disrupted during the school season due to ‘cultural preparations’ for circumcision. It was also observed that boys’ drop out cases increased after initiation. Figure 5 demonstrate that circumcision paved the way for the young man to marry (24.6%), own properties (animals) and become a warrior. As such, due to less value placed on education (22.6%), desire for fame and prestige (53.3%), some young adults dropped out (32.1%) of primary school to practice ‘moranism’.

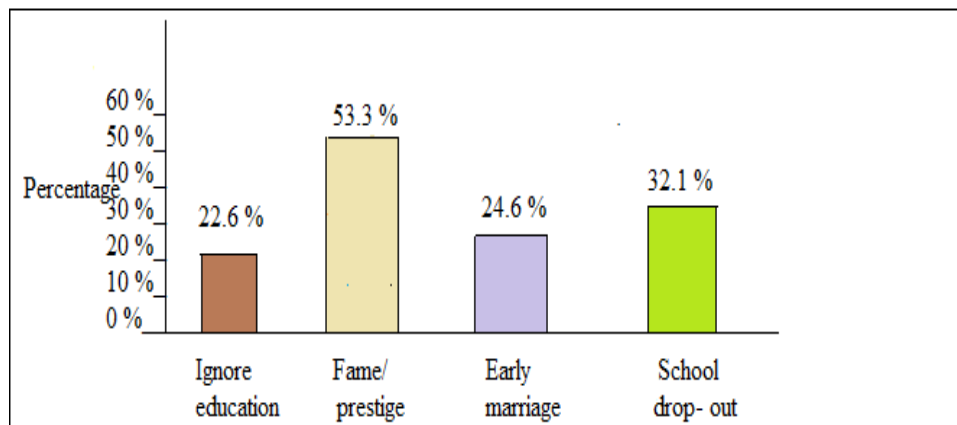


Figure 5. The Impact of Boys’ circumcision on schooling

‘Moranism’ strongly affected (49.1%) primary school enrolment in the division. According to the responses, high drop-out rates and low enrolment was caused by element of ‘moranism’ itself, feeling of supremacy, heroism, militia skills and early marriages. Moreover, “student morans” became very rude (19%), hot tempered (21%), indisciplined (32%) and disrespectful (28%) to their teachers as shown in figure 6 below. Such behaviours resulted to school drop outs leading to low primary schools enrolment.

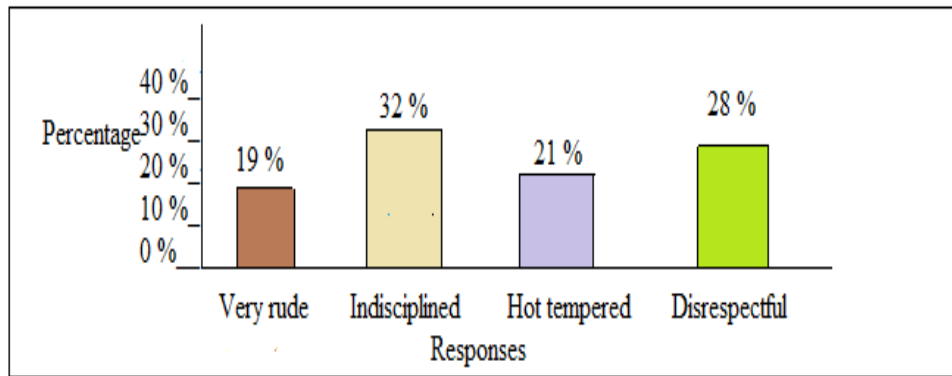


Figure 6. The Behaviour of students morans

Economic Challenges Facing Primary Schools' Parents in Baragoi Division

The study findings identified poverty was a major economic challenge (94.68%) to the pastoral parents hence it strongly affected (58.5%) primary school enrolment in the division. These parents could not meet the education requirements of their children therefore they lacked consistency of their children's enrolment in primary schools. The findings revealed that poverty resulted from insecurity (43.2%), violent conflicts (39.7%), banditry (41.5%), cattle rustling, unreliable 'small' businesses, general laziness, poor family backgrounds and aridity in the division. Consequently, these factors led to school drop-outs, disregard for education and low enrolment in schools. Besides causing or increasing poverty, up to 35.49% of the respondents that low livestock market price during drought season also affected school enrolment in Baragoi. This was because a majority of parents in the division depended on livestock to educate their children. Low market price made it hard for parents to meet education requirements such as school fee payment, buying books, school uniforms and exam levies. Hence, primary school enrolment was negatively affected in the division.

The study results demonstrated that banditry activities had strong effects (45.7%) on primary school enrolment in Baragoi division. This resulted from occasionally disruption of learning, dropped out and transfer cases to schools in safer regions while others unfortunately lost their lives in bandits' attacks. 46.82% of banditry activities affected the pastoral economy negatively. This resulted to human insecurity and disrupting economic activities, displacement of families and forced migration. Furthermore, cattle rustling (40.95%) was an impediment to enrolment. The findings revealed that it also created a lot of insecurity (74.8%), general underdevelopment (66%) and increased poverty (58.2%) affecting enrolment in primary schools in the division.

CONCLUSIONS

Empirical Conclusion

The basis for the examination of the effects of socio-cultural and economic factors on primary enrolment in Baragoi division resulted from low primary enrolment and socio-cultural and economic factors related to pastoral communities in the division. As such, the study confirmed that indeed these factors were the cause of low primary enrolment in the division. Besides, these factors had led to high school drop-out rates and very high levels of illiteracy among the pastoral communities' of the division. Furthermore, economic underdevelopment was a long-term effect which had been caused by these socio-cultural and economic challenges and a reflection of low enrolment in primary schools over the years.

Social factors that were identified as contributing to low primary school enrolment in the division included ethnic and violent conflicts, insecurity, food shortage, drought, famine, pastoral migration (pastoralism), water shortage and local alcohol.

Theoretical Conclusion

The study was guided the Social Learning Theory (SLT) and the Human Rights Based Approach (HRBA). SLT was applied to explain the effects of negative socialisation on socio-cultural and economic factors among pastoral communities in Baragoi division. However, HRBA was applied to explain how primary school enrolment is affected by socio-cultural and economic factors in the division. From the findings, various conclusions were made in relation to the two theories.

Negative socialisation among the Samburu and the Turkana in Baragoi had led to negative ethnicity, hostility and animosity over the years. Both immediate and long-time effects on these communities were evident. Each community had already established a clear mark of their social interactive limits. Though they shared the same administrative services, the division is geographically (physically) sub-divided into two zones: the Samburu and the Turkana zones. These zones had led to establishment of ethnic-based primary schools propagating further ethnocentrism. For instance, Nachola primary school is purely for the Turkana community members while Bendera primary school is purely for the Samburu community members (pupils).

Negative socialisation had been manifested in the form of constant ethnic and violent conflicts. It was also reflected in the form of banditry and cattle rustling mannerism. As a result, insecurity had led to disruption of socio-economic activities, teaching/learning activities and displacement of populations in the division. Moreover, there had been constant closure of primary schools. A good illustration was Charda primary school which was permanently closed in 2009 due to ethnic conflicts and the local people relocated to safer region never to return to the area. Constant and irregular transfer cases of teachers and pupils and school drop-outs had led to low enrolment in primary schools in the division. As such, HRBA theory helped to demonstrate how children's right to access, progress and complete primary education was violated.

Moreover, the violation of other rights' of pastoral children also affected their primary school enrolment. Contrary to provisions and protections of children's rights, pastoral children in the division were subjected to child labour such as cattle herding and banditry. Some children lacked parental care and protection. Some of them turned into social crimes which included cattle rustling, moranism, alcoholism and banditry. Others ended up in street life for survival. Girls faced gender discrimination and degrading treatment which involved early and forced marriages and FGM. These factors led to in quality and inequitable education. Therefore, the disruption of pastoral children's education was violation of their rights. This affected the children's primary school enrolment in the division. It resulted to low enrolment and had long time negative socio- economic effects in their future life.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the study's findings and conclusions, the following recommendations were made:

Civil Education to Sensitise on the importance of Schooling for Children

1. The study recommends sensitising of the communities on the negative effects of retrogressive culturally held practices.

2. Sensitising the communities on the value of education especially in the modern competitive world.
3. Enforcing universal / free primary school education in the division.
4. Improvement of formal education to rehabilitate former school dropouts and morans.

Peace Education in Schools

The study advocates for peace education in schools which should be pursued at the policy level so that education policy entrenches peace education and activities in the education curriculum. Teachers and pupils be sensitised to do drama and develop songs, poetry and puppetry among others to be used in peace rallies. Primary students should also be engaged in arts/ crafts for competitions that will help in inculcating values/ issues of peace in minds of pupils' understanding of the peace issues at the community.

Provision of Adequate Security

More security personnel should be deployed in the division because it is a conflict prone region in Kenya. Security forces should be armed with appropriate weapons and instructions to deal with conflict perpetrators and help to tackle the issues of banditry and cattle rustling in the division.

Disarmament should involve all the stakeholders. It should be a gradual process based on consultation and consensus building between the government and the concerned communities of Baragoi. It should not be seen as a calculated move to make certain communities vulnerable to attacks or so. The government should play a key role to curb the proliferation of small arms.

Strengthening Peace and Conflict Management Mechanisms

Inter-community meetings, media, theatre, literature and exhibitions should be enhanced in order to create awareness on effects of conflicts in the division. The expected impact of this awareness will be changes in attitudes, stereotypes, prejudice and a deeper understanding of conflict dynamics. Inter- community dialogue and or mediation should be promoted before eruption of violence. Such meetings should be used to pre-empt conflicts between the Turkana and the Samburu communities. Modeled on customary conflict management mechanisms, elders should be facilitated to understand, analyse conflicts and come-up with joint action plans for necessary intervention to curb ethnic and violent conflicts in Baragoi division.

The local communities should establish locally formulated framework of conflict prevention and management to address conflict. The framework should be all inclusive, comprehensive and systematic framework of resolving ethnic and violent conflicts in the division. Where necessary, the government should be involved to enforce communities' resolutions. Strengthening of the existing and or marginalised indigenous mechanisms and institutions of conflict management in the division is necessary. Security and law enforcement officers and local religious and political leaders should be enlisted in consultations and collaboration between peace structures and local government administration.

Poverty Alleviation

Most parents majorly depend on their livestock to enroll their children in primary schools. Poor families that do not own livestock are incapable of maintaining their children in primary schools. Some students choose to remain at home due to lack of food and other school necessities (books and uniforms). Appropriate strategies to ensure food security therefore

must be put in place to curb it. The government and other stakeholders should take initiative and ensure that children who cannot go to school due to lack of school fees are considered for scholarships and bursaries.

Furthermore, some parents are impoverished as a result of cattle rustling, banditry and drought in the division. The study recommends that the government and community policing system should be beefed ensure human and livestock security in the division. Drought mitigating measures should be taken to ensure good livestock's health and market price at all times. These may include construction of dams and boreholes among others. This will ensure easy access to water by the livestock thereby increasing their market value.

Besides, there is need for the government, non-governmental organisations and or individuals to start up economic empowerment programmes or projects that will enable such poor families see their children complete the primary school education. Such projects will also create employment, improve the people's livelihoods and engage them in productive activities which will dissuade them from engaging in idleness, conflicts, cattle rustling and banditry. The Baragoi communities can be involved in identifying priority projects from which they could derive direct benefits. These projects may include posho milling, honey production and marketing, 'jua kali' activities such as weaving, hide and skin business, sand harvesting and quarrying among other projects.

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