

Completion Rates in Secondary Schools in Kenya: Influence of School and Home Based Factors.

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the study was to evaluate factors influencing completion rates in day and boarding secondary schools in Kikuyu sub-county, Kenya. Factors that positively influence completion rates include school infrastructure, student motivation and counselling as well as improved interpersonal relationships between teachers and students. However, inadequacy of the aforesaid lead to completion rates in a negative manner. The study adopted a descriptive survey and targeted 14,000 students, 225 teachers and 25 principals. The study sampled 5 principals and deputy principals, 25 teachers and 140 students from the population. The main instruments of data collection comprised questionnaires and interview schedules. The study findings revealed that School-based factors of culture, norms and values influenced completion rates on a high scale. Besides, the study indicated that home based factors of household economic activities, and chores had a crucial role to play.

The study recommended the marshalling of resources for the improvement of general infrastructure and assistance of needy students as well as offering guidance and counselling, improving student-teacher relations and continuous motivation to students. The Study findings might enhance the current body of knowledge on completion rates and will contribute in policy and legislative development wherever possible.

Keywords: Completion rates, Dropout rates, Guidance and Counselling, School based factors

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To assess school based factors that influence students' completion rates in secondary schools in
2. To determine home based factors that influence students' completion rates in secondary schools in

INTRODUCTION

With the advent of the 21st century, completion rates for secondary schools have been on an upward trend. However, a study of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries, a group that make up some of the richest countries in the world, found out that one in five students failed to complete high school education (Sahlberg, 2007). Several countries, such as Norway, Germany and Finland had completion rates that were above 95%. The United States, the world largest economy, had a completion rate of about 87% in 2019-20, with some states at 79% which is comparable to several developing countries (National Center for Education Statistics, 2023). Past research has established that a number of factors are responsible for low completion rates in secondary schools. Some of these challenges identified as key determinants of completion rates included poverty, female gender and rural location (Wils, Sheehan, & Shi,

2019). Many of these challenges are “parent-centric” or home-based while the rest are school-based/student-focused. A recent study in the United States established that students from economically disadvantaged households as well as black students were more likely to delay their high-school graduation (McKeever, Dodd, & O’Sullivan, 2022). Studies have consistently shown that socio-economic status is a great predictor of a student’s educational outcomes (Thomas & Stockton, 2003). Schools’ conditions and resources also played a big role in determining dropout rates. Schools in poor areas were often underfunded and in turn had inadequate facilities that contributed to low completion rates.

Completion rates in Africa are generally low, placing the continent at the bottom of world rankings. According to data from the World Bank, the average rate of secondary school completion in African countries stood at 44.6% compared to the world average of 77.5% (World Bank, 2022). Another study focused on Sub-Saharan Africa found that the estimated rate of completion stood at 68%, with substantial out-of-school rates standing at 33% for secondary schools and 48% for upper secondary ones (Delprato & Farieta, 2023). The study also points out that these rates have shown a trend of stagnation or decline in the past decade, a revelation which casts doubt on the region’s ability to achieve universal secondary school attainment among its students.

In Kenya’s case, since the introduction of the free primary and subsidized/free day secondary education in Kenya, there has been a marked increase in both transition and retention rates in secondary schools (Asena, Simiyu, & Riechi, 2016; Mackatiani et al, 2020). However, rates of dropout from secondary school stood at 30% in 2016, which is an unacceptably high figure. This high rate of dropout undermines efforts put in place by stakeholders over the past two decades in widening education access, especially in public schools. Studies cite a number of social economic factors such as poverty, drug abuse, institutionalized schooling, political conflicts, and peer pressure as being the key drivers of the low completion rates in secondary education (Mackatiani, 2024; Mackatiani et al 2023; Mackatiani et al. 2022; Mackatiani, 2020; Ndegwa, 2019; Imbova et al. 2018). The lack of adequate curricular and extra-curricular materials and equipment, was also found to lead to a higher rate of dropout in Kenyan secondary schools (Mackatiani, 2017; Asena, Simiyu, & Riechi, 2016). A casual glossing over at the World Bank data on completion rates in Africa reveals a relationship between a country’s socio-economic well-being and completion and retention rates. In the most developed countries in Africa, typically associated with less poverty and less income inequality such as Mauritius and the Seychelles, there are near hundred percent completion rates. The poorest countries on the continent, such as Niger, have the lowest rates of completion. Also, at the household level, the level of education held by a parent was seen as a key determinant of their children’s educational attainment.

Low completion rates have also been observed among delinquent and truant students as well as those that show poor results in academics. Such students eventually drop out after missing too many classes before the completion date. Economic factors have an outsized effect on completion rates and tend to precipitate certain social and psychological factors such as truancy. There is an interplay between economic, social and psychological factors both at the household and societal level, with the former bearing the most weight on the latter two. The economic status of a country, region and right down to a household level influences a child’s educational outcome. Social factors such as gender roles and stereotypes also play a critical role in determining completion rates. For instance, boys in the pastoral communities are expected to herd livestock, a role that regularly keeps them out of school for weeks or months at a time. Girls are expected to assist their mothers in performing household duties, which may sometimes eat into their study time. In the arid and semi-arid counties of Kenya, girls are also at risk of falling pregnant and being forced into an early marriage against their will (Sigei & Tikoko, 2014). Early marriages and teenage pregnancies ultimately keep girls out of school and contribute to low rates of completion. This study examined the factors affecting completion rates in day and boarding secondary schools in Kikuyu sub-county, Kenya, by looking at factors that make it hard to attain universal

Problem Statement

Kenya has enjoyed two decades of free primary education and about a decade of subsidized secondary education. It has made tremendous gains in the area, attaining near universal enrolment and completion rates in primary school education. Unfortunately, this level of success has not been replicated in the secondary school education sector, in spite of the last few years having witnessed marked gains in the transition rate from primary schools to high schools. Nationwide, completion rates remain relatively low. This is especially observable in poor and marginalized parts of the country. This study intends to investigate factors influencing completion rates, whether socio, economic or cultural and then attempt to offer solutions to the challenges. This study shall explore the barriers to attaining a hundred percent completion rate and offer solutions to overcoming them. While the data does not show a grave concern with regards to drop-out rates in Kikuyu sub-county, it does reveal that there is still room for improvement. As such, this study investigated the barriers standing in the way of secondary schools in the sub-county from attaining universal completion rates

LITERATURE REVIEW

School based factors

A lot of literature has been devoted to various socio-economic factors and their effects on enrolment and completion rates. These factors can be broadly divided into two groups; school-based and home-based factors. School-based factors typically include administrative, resource and cultural influences on performance and completion rate. For instance, cultural factors such as norms, beliefs and values give an institution an identity, which in turn helps it achieve its educational objectives. Essentially, norms, beliefs and values constitute a culture. According to one study in the US, an appropriate school culture plays important roles which include strong school leadership, a safe and stimulating learning climate, strong ethical and trusting relationships, increased teachers' professional capacity for instruction and leadership, student-centered instruction, and links to parents and the community (Kaplan & Owings, 2013). The authors stress the need to maintain a school's culture and to also perform a culture "re-boot" whenever there are signs of a decline in performance. A school's infrastructural state also has a major influence on the graduation rate. A study commissioned by the World Bank found that smaller institutions with adequate infrastructure and facilities had a higher completion rate than larger, congested ones (Barrett, Treves, Shmis, & Ambasz, 2019). Larger schools were characterized by lower graduation rates, higher rates of absenteeism, higher administrative costs and lower teacher satisfaction. Students enrolled in congested schools were found to be demoralized and lacking a wholesome learning experience. A similar study found that a ten percent rise in the student population above the optimum figure of 1000 students resulted in increased drop-out rates (Luke & Werblow, 2009). Larger schools with over 2,000 students saw up to 10% drop-out rate. Larger schools were also typical associated with high-stress levels among students. A study in Australia found that high-stress levels among students reduced academic achievement, decreased motivation and heightened the risk of dropping out of school (Pascoe, Hetrick, & Parker, 2019). It was also found to have a role in disrupting their sleep patterns, causing anxiety and depression and substance abuse. It is instructive that substance abuse can both emanate from peer pressure or the need to score high marks in exams.

A study by UNICEF showed that a number of factors both at school and in the immediate community serve as barriers to educational attainment for girls in the Eastern and Southern Africa regions (Tao, 2018). Some of the constraints pointed out by the study included extra domestic duties, vulnerability to sexual harassment, protocols that reinforced gender roles at schools, menstruation and expectations of early marriage in some situations. The study also noted that, generally, enrolment for both girls and boys started off on an equal footing. Gradually, the constraints noted above such as early marriage forced girls out of the

school system, permanently. A survey carried in Meru central sub-county showed that the choice of leadership style had a bearing on students' overall performance and the eventual completion of school (Nyatuka, Imbovah, Bogonko, & Nyamwaka, 2020). The study established that two thirds of public schools' principals interviewed believed a democratic leadership style was closely linked with higher completion rates in comparison to autocratic or laissez-faire leadership styles. Democratic leadership style involved negotiations with the student fraternity to solve problems as well as enabling easy flow of information and a feedback mechanism to dispel rumours. Private schools' principals were of the converse opinion, preferring an autocratic leadership style. In this regard, principals, as the main leaders in school settings, play a critical role in the running of secondary school institutions by setting standards and raising expectations on students' performance. Their leadership style in particular has been shown to have an impact on completion rates. Further studies conducted elsewhere in Kenya have also shown that school-based factors have an impact on students' performance and the likelihood of completing or dropping out of school. Imbovah et. al found that lack teaching and learning resources had a negative effect on completion rate (Imbovah, Mackatiani, Getange, & Bogonko, 2018). The study noted the rise in enrolment had not been accompanied by an equal investment in infrastructure and resources, which is thought to have influenced student completion and retention rates. A study on completion rates in Kibera, an informal settlement in Nairobi, also concluded that inadequate instructional and physical infrastructure was a major hindrance to completion rates in informal settlements. Poor working conditions hindered the effective delivery of education to students attending schools in the study.

The social environment in school settings also has a major influence on completion rates. One study in Rongo subcounty, Migori county found that up to 80% of students interviewed believed that peer pressure had an influence on school dropout rate among their schoolmates (Omollo & Yambo, 2017). This view was also shared by faculty members to a large extent. Peer pressure in schools manifested itself through a lack of interest in education. One of the biggest barriers to girls' educational attainment was established to be initiation ceremonies that take place in late adolescence (Mwanza, 2019). These practices ushered girls into the world of womanhood, whereby a different set of societal expectations is placed upon them. They are then taken through weeks of intensive training that often mean that they miss several school days and fall behind other students, especially boys. After these ceremonies, there are expectations in the wider society that girls are now supposed to supplement their mothers as primary caregivers and domestic workers at home. In the deeply patriarchal rural setting, gender roles and stereotypes are also strongly enforced. Thus, a father, by decree, can allocate chores or any other domestic duty to their person of choice, which in most cases disproportionately affects the girlchild. A father may also decide which child can attend school and which one cannot do the same (Mwanza, 2019). Again, as in the case for house chores, there's a bias towards encouraging boys to attend school at the expense of the girls, despite the many years of affirmative action programmes in the Eastern and Southern Africa region.

Conversely, societies in which there is early sexual debut, especially among girls, low completion rates such as those of South Sudan, which remains a conservative society by both world and African standards, were observed. A study carried out among young adults, youngest of whom were aged 21, found out that early sexual debut is correlated with negative educational outcomes later in life (Bengesai, Khan, & Dube, 2018). Individuals who had early sexual debut were less likely to complete high school education in comparison to those that waited. A similar study in Murang'a County also corroborates these findings, whereby it was revealed that an early sexual debut among girls was an impediment to completion rates in primary schools in that area. This finding shows that fears expressed by South Sudanese parents, even for cultural reasons, may have some validity. However, it should be noted that it is the conservative nature of this society that keeps girls out of school, but inadvertently protects them against early pregnancies. This is in sharp contrast with the situation in Kenya, whereby a high number of pregnancies was recorded among school-going girls during the period they were out of school at the height of the Covid-19 pandemic. It is generally observed that being in school protects them against early pregnancies. Further, studies have revealed that a

community's attitude to illicit drugs is also a key factor in determining the rate of completion in secondary school. As established in a study in the central highlands of Kenya, rampant use of drugs and alcoholism has had a negative influence on the boy child (Macharia, 2011). Alcohol use and abuse has become normalized and accepted in this society. This has had a major impact on the boy child by removing key role models such as fathers from their lives. One of the consequences of this breakdown in values systems has been the reduction in secondary school completion rates.

Home based factors

Home-based factors have also been observed to affect completion rates in secondary schools. These include a parent's income level, parent's educational attainment, parents' and community's attitudes towards education. By and large, these factors tend to lean heavily on the level of income of the parent. A number of studies have identified several barriers to education, such as direct costs, i.e., fees, clothing and books, as well as health and nutrition (Ayub, 2018) (Serem & Chebet, 2017). Studies show impacts of home-based factors are especially prevalent in developing countries, where girls are generally more at risk of failing to complete school, than boys. As noted earlier, there are economic factors such as a high prevalence of poverty in the rural areas and urban informal settlements, which are a major hindrance to the attainment of full completion rates in secondary schools. In such settings, the pursuit of education is not prioritized since households commit most of their energy to economic activities or have failed to evolve to accommodate the pursuit of education. In extreme cases, children are also expected to contribute to the family income whereby they may be withdrawn from school to work in plantations, farms or in the fishing industry (Ayub, 2018). In the arid and semi-arid areas, boys are expected to look after cattle and goats, irrespective of the school calendar. While performing household chores has been shown to be beneficial to a child's development, chores that take children away from school are detrimental to their school attendance, performance and probability of completion.

A study conducted in Embu found out that boys from female-headed households often failed to complete school, a factor that was blamed on the lack of a male figure in their lives. It was observed that they often became unruly, engaged in drug abuse and defied their mothers' wishes on school completion (Ndegwa, 2019). Also, boys who engaged in any form of paid labour while still at school, were also unlikely to complete their high school education. These cases are prevalent in rural settings where there is a lucrative economic activity that incorporates child labour. For instance, in miraa growing areas, young boys are often recruited by farmers to climb to the highest branches where adults cannot safely reach to pluck the mild stimulant that has a legal status in Kenya. In such a setting, completion and enrolment rates are low as there is little to no incentive on the part of the student to pursue the education path. Both boys and girls are frequently removed from school for economic reasons, which negatively affects their educational journey. Thus, the pressure to meet families' income needs also affect completion rates, especially in the rural areas of Africa.

Theoretical construct

This study adopted the Liberal Classical Theory as its guiding principle in order to bring out its objectives. The theory is based on the writings of several political theorists, including the French political philosopher, Jean Jacques Rousseau, as well as John Locke and John Stuart Mills. Rousseau in particular, argued that all men are created equal and that society ought not to discriminate against anyone based upon personal idiosyncrasies. A major facet of this theory is that, it seeks to preserve the freedoms of an individual in the face of church, societal and state pressure, arguing that man/woman is born free and that this right shouldn't be taken away (Drougge, 2019). Liberalism also encourages the pursuit of individual goals in life such as happiness and material possessions, within the confines of the law. Social liberalism of the late 19th and early 20th century, can be traced back to the classical liberalism of the 17th century. This theory emphasized a critical but diminished role of government in society. It is on this grounds that liberals advocated strongly

for the provision of primary goods and essential services – such as education, by the authorities, given that they were then viewed as part of inalienable rights and natural justice (Ferreira & Peragine, 2015). Advocates of equal opportunity in education argue that education creates a level playing field as well as entrenches the principle of non-discrimination on whatever grounds (Sardoc, 2016). Public education also leads to the build-up of a “national” character and the development of an ideology for a given state. In this regard, it is imperative that a society, such as Kenya, pursues policy and structural changes that remove barriers to educational access for all. There have been efforts towards achieving this, such as the roll out of the free day secondary programme, together with ministerial and constituency-based bursaries. This theory is relevant to our study since it demands that affirmative action programmes such as the FDSE that level the playing field ought to be entrenched in the provision of secondary education. As noted in this study, family income remains a big determinant of educational attainment. Therefore, measures should be put in place to ensure that bursaries reach the neediest and most vulnerable students who are most likely to drop out of school.

METHODOLOGY

The study used mixed method approach. The approach includes convergent, explanatory and exploratory designs. This method intergraded qualitative and quantitative approaches. Quantitative and qualitative data was collected and analyzed. This was done in order to understand the phenomenon better and answer research questions effectively. It also ensured that weaknesses were neutralized by addressing strength of the data collected. The target population comprised a total of 25 secondary schools in Kikuyu sub-county, of which 11 (44%) are boarding schools while the rest 14 (56%) are day schools. The total student enrolment is 17,500 students The sample size comprised of 5 head teachers and 25 teachers and 140 students. Structured and semi structured question items were used. Semi-structured or unstructured one-on-one conversations with a set of themes or subjects were the basis of in-depth interviews The data was then collected using hand-filled questionnaires and wherever possible, one-on-one interviews. The research assistant dedicated a week to issue questionnaires on students as well as conduct interviews with the relevant stakeholders, preferably at their places of work and in person. Afterward, the qualitative data was subjected to a systematic analysis using preset framework analysis, which involved the identification of topic frameworks, familiarization, classification, and interpretation.

DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSIONS.

Factors affecting completion rates.

The researcher developed a questionnaire for both teachers and students although it contained similar questions. It was further subdivided into school-based and home-based factors in order to a get more nuanced results in that regard. The main aspects captured as informed by the literature review were influence of parental income, parental level of education, parental emotional support, teacher support for students, administrative support for students, early pregnancies, drug abuse, truancy, child labour and chore, peer pressure, bullying at school, among others. Responses from teachers and students was as indicated in Table 1

		Table 1: School-based factors					
		Teachers (23)			Students (127)		
Influence of:		Agreed	Disagreed	Undecided	Agreed	Disagreed	Undecided
Percentage		%	%	%	%	%	%
1	Influence of forced class repetitions	39	60	1	68	20	12

2	Sustained poor academic performance	30	70	0	42	42	16
3	Importance of guidance and counselling	65	34	34	60	29	11
4	Importance of student motivation	100	0	0	80	9	11
5	Uninterested in learning/Finds classes boring	47	34	21	24	57	20
6	Influence of truancy on completion rates	78	9	13	30	36	34
7	Influence of substance use/abuse	86	13	1	74	11	15
8	Influence of early pregnancies	82	13	5	77	12	11
9	Influence of the school leadership style	47	34	19	52	12	38
10	Influence of school values, culture and norms	56	39	5	55	25	20
11	Influence of bullying and harassment	69	21	10	61	20	19
12	Influence of a student's personality i.e. having anti-social behaviour	30	10	60	43	38	19
13	Influence of teacher-student interpersonal relationships	91	9	0	58	24	18

From the data in Table 1, responses from both teachers and students on school-centred factors that influence completion rates; a few questions in the survey were for each group alone. A close analysis of the results revealed interesting perspectives of both teachers and students. The results showed a convergence of thoughts and opinions on some issues as well as divergence on others. The respondents also showed ambivalence to the same issues or on different ones. For instance, there is a convergence of thoughts on the issue of early pregnancy having a major impact on completion rates of female students with 77% of students and 82% of teachers agreeing with the statement. A few teachers (5%) and students (11%) disagreed with the statement with the rest being undecided. A study of girl secondary schools in Buikwe district in Uganda corroborates these findings (Namatovu, Matovu, & Akampurira, 2023). Sexual predation by teachers was sighted as one of the drivers of early pregnancies in our neighbouring country. Early pregnancies in Kikuyu sub-county, on the hand, can largely be attributed to peers unlike in Buikwe, Uganda.

Similarly, both teachers and students were in agreement on the impact of substance abuse among students on completion rates. Up to 86% of teachers surveyed and 74% students shared the opinion that drug and substance abuse have a negative impact on completion rates. Various studies have shown that drug and substance abuse negatively affect students' performance and subsequent likelihood of completing their studies. This is primarily through encouraging bad behaviour and indiscipline among student users, which affects their academic performance (Okita, 2021) (Okumu, 2024). These students also tend to be in poor mental, emotional and physical health, a factor which discourages them from participating fully in the education process. Female students who partake drugs might also fall pregnant, which spells double trouble for their education. Substance abuse is often associated with truancy, which is absence for school without

permission. While 78% percent of teachers thought that it led to lower completion rates, only 30% of students agreed on the same. A third of students (36%) disagreed with the statement while the remaining third (30%) was undecided. Only 11% of teachers survey disagreed. Studies show that truancy is more common among male students than females and also highly associated with students from poor background (Kiendi, 2017) (Ampofo, Opoku, & Opoku-Manu, 2022). A study in northern Nigeria revealed that truancy was likely to lead to dropping out of school, poor academic performance and the involvement in crime and drug use (Bajon, 2022).

Bullying and harassment were also highlighted by both teachers and students as a factor influencing completion rates. Two thirds of each, 69% of teachers and 61% of students, agreed with the statement that a school environment rife with bullying and harassment is deleterious to studies and subsequent completion of secondary education studies. However, 21% of teachers and 20% of students refuted the claim that bullying affected completion rates. A study by a team of researchers from KEMRI among form ones in various secondary schools in Nairobi County, confirmed that bullying and harassment were still prevalent in secondary schools (Mokaya, Kikuvi, Mutai, Khasakhala, & Memiah, 2022). Up to 85.7% of the respondents reported experiencing some level of the vice in their first months of schooling. A study in the English-speaking region of Cameroon also found that bullying was rife among students in that region and that it greatly affected their learning outcomes such as academic performance and completion rates (Mbah, 2020).

Respondents were also in agreement that student motivation was an important factor in fostering higher rates of completion. All teachers (100%) and up to 80% of students agreed with this statement, with only 11% having a contrary opinion. A study by the Centre for Education Policy at George Washington University in the U.S established that motivation fostered better academic performance on top of greater conceptual understanding, higher self-esteem and most importantly for this study, higher rates of completion (Center on Education Policy, 2012). Similarly, both students and teachers agreed that guidance and counselling were important in encouraging higher rates of completion among high school students. Two thirds of each group, 65% of teachers and 60% of students, agreed with this statement, while about a third of each (34%) and (29%) respectively, was of a contrary opinion. Studies showed that guidance and counselling was also important in fostering better academic performance and subsequently, school completion (Hrisyov & Kostadinov, 2022).

The study also revealed that student anti-social behaviour such as aggression and maladaptive conduct do not have an impact on completion rates. Most teachers were undecided (60%) while 30% were in agreement. On the other hand, 43% of the students were in agreement, 38% disagreed and 19% were undecided. This is corroborated by studies in other jurisdictions such as one of secondary schools in Jimma town, Ethiopia. Researchers there established that antisocial behaviour was highly correlated with poor academic performance but not necessarily low rates of completion (Girma, Hassen, & Garuma, 2019).

It is also noteworthy that teachers and students differed in their views on the influence of some factors such as forced class repetitions, sustained poor academic performance by students and on whether or not students find classes/academics uninteresting, on completions rates. For instance, on forced class repetitions, only 39% of teachers thought that they influenced completion rates while 68% of students thought that they did. On the other hand, 60% of teachers interviewed disagreed with the statement as well as 20% of students. A study in Siaya county on the influence on repetition on studies revealed that it not only negatively affected academic performance but also led to low self-esteem among students, low learning outcomes and a higher dropout rate.

The following section focuses on home-based factors affecting completion rates. Some of these factors include parental level of education, parental level of income, size of the household and gender of the head of the household. Responses from teachers and students were reflected in Table 2

Influence of:	Table 2: Home-based factors					
	Teachers (23)			Students (127)		
	Agreed	Disagreed	Undecided	Agreed	Disagreed	Undecided
Percentage	%	%	%	%	%	%
1 Parental level of education	22	72	6	17	79	4
2 Parental/head of household level of income	52	35	13	60	26	12
3 Gender of household head	0	100	0	51	28	23
4 Size of household/number of children	0	100	0	15	71	14
5 Age of the head of household	12	81	7	25	53	18
6 Influence of students' involvement in household economic activities	36	56	8	76	12	12
7 Influence of chores on students' studies and drop-out rate	22	78	0	47	35	18
8 Substance abuse among parents and guardians	27	73	0	38	49	10

Table 2 Shows responses from both teachers and students on home-centric factors that influence completion rates; a few questions in the survey were for each group alone. As with the school-based factors, both teachers and students agreed on some of the statements in the survey and disagreed on others. For instance, both students (79%) and teachers (72%) disagreed that the head of household's/parent's educational attainment had a bearing on completion outcomes. However, about 17% of students and 22% of teachers surveyed agreed that it had an effect on the same. Research is also in support both of teachers and students, although some studies have linked a parent's educational attainment to student's academic performance and not necessarily completion rates (Ngangi, Cheloti, & Mwania, 2023). Since studies show that good performing students are more likely to complete their studies, then we can infer that a parent's educational attainment is a critical impact on a student's completion rate. On parental/head of household level of income, both teachers and students agreed that there was a relationship between income and completion rates. Roughly half of teachers (52%) and two thirds of students (60%) agreed with the statement, 35% of teachers and 26% of students disagreed and a further 13% and 12% of teachers and students respectively, were undecided. A lot of studies have shown that a parent's income level is highly instrumental on a student's academic performance and subsequent completion rates. One study in China showed that this was especially true of students living in large urban areas, where competition for good schools with good academic performance was quite stiff (Li & Qiu, 2018). In African countries such as Kenya, a parent's income is a great predictor of a student's academic outcome especially for girls (Aregae & Kikechi, 2023). A study in Meru among day schools showed parental income greatly affected the student's learning experience by denying them access to critical learning materials, books and instruments (Kirima, 2019).

On the issue of the size of the household, hundred percent (100%) of teachers surveyed and about 71% of students disagreed with statement that it had an influence on completion rates. On the other hand, only about 14% of the students interviewed believed in that statement. However, one study in Cameroon showed that big households were associated with lower educational attainment and completion rates, especially for secondary and higher education in comparison to small families (Tambi & Ewane, 2019).

On the influence of gender of the household head on completion rates, as with the size of household, a hundred percent of teachers surveyed and 28% of students surveyed disagreed while 51% agreed with the statement. 23 % of students surveyed were undecided. Studies do not support the statement in its entirety i.e. determining completion rates, but one study in Nigeria showed that female-headed households experienced more constraint in terms of resources in handling their children's education (Bammeke, 2010). However, there were no studies showing gender of the household-head having influence on the completion rates but

on student's performance owing largely to disparities in earning the potential of both genders.

On the influence of students' involvement in a household's economic activity on completion rates, slightly more than half (56%) of the teachers interviewed and 12% of students disagreed. On the other hand, 78% of students and a third of teachers (36%) agreed with the statement while 12% of students and 8% of teachers surveyed were undecided. It is instructive that research conducted on the subject shows that involvement in household economic activities negatively affects students in their studies. This phenomenon had especially been observed in informal settlements, rural areas with lucrative cash crops such as miraa and among pastoralist communities. A study in Baringo showed that secondary school students, especially boys involved in their family source of livelihood were likely to fail to complete their education (Amdany, 2017).

The research also captured the likely influence of household chores on completion rates among high school students. While 78% of teachers and 35% of students disagreed with the statement, 22% of teacher and 47% agreed that chores might lead to lower completion rates. Slightly smaller than a fifth of students (18%) were undecided. Chores might not affect urban students but studies show that rural ones, especially girls are assigned too many chores that disrupt their concentration on studies. On study in the Qardho district in Somalia found that assigning girls many chores affected their retention in school but not necessarily completion rate (Jama, Asiimwe, Mugenyi, & Asiimwe, 2023).

Finally, on the influence of substance abuse among parents and guardians on completion rates, 27% of teachers surveyed and 38% of students were in agreement while 73% of teachers and 49% of students disagreed. A further 13% of students were undecided. Our findings are contrary to studies available that show adverse effects of substance abuse on a student's educational experience. One study that reviewed literature on the subject found that such students were more likely to experience behavioural challenges such as truancy, suspensions, absenteeism and early school departure (Lowthian, 2022). Another study in Denmark showed that students from households where there was substance abuse were more likely not continue with their education (Frederiksen, Hesse, Brummer, & Pedersen, 2022).

MAJOR FINDINGS

School-based factors influencing completion rates include inadequate guidance and counselling services, lack of student motivation, lack of interest in learning among students or finding classes boring, truancy, substance use/abuse, early pregnancies, bullying and harassment, culture and norms and school values and school leadership style.

The study also focused on home-based factors influencing completion rates which included; parental level of education, parental/head of household level of income, gender of the household head, size of household/number of children, age of the household-head, students' involvement in household economic activities, students' involvement with household chores and substance abuse among parents and guardians.

CONCLUSION

The study of completion rates among high schools' students in Kikuyu sub-county revealed interesting perspectives while confirming others. On the whole, both teachers and students' views coincided with various others studies on the subject. For instance, it reinforced the importance of school-based factors such as; student motivation, counselling, substance abuse, school culture and norms, early pregnancies. Similarly, there were divergent views on the role of home-based factors such as parental educational attainment, parental/head of household level of income, gender of household-head, size of household/number of

children, age of the household-head, influence of students' involvement in household economic activities, influence of chores on students' studies and drop-out rate and substance abuse among parents and guardians.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The study recommended the minimization of institutionalization of schooling. Besides, it was recommended that the guidance and counselling services be enhanced in schools.

The study also recommended that parents to oblige to financial needs of students by subsidizing government funding in schools.

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The researchers were generally guided by the following ethics: the need to obtain consent when dealing with minors, confidentiality, privacy and respect for the respondents' time and livelihoods. Respondents were adequately briefed on the nature of the study, its objectives and any negative results from participation. Responses were treated with utmost care and discretion. Personal and confidential information gathered from the respondents was also handled with care and protected. The researchers maintained anonymity of the respondents when sharing the results with third parties. The researchers also ensured that the data collected was accurate and free of his personal biases. The researchers also ensured that their schedule fit into those of the respondents so as not to interfere too much with their normal activities.

LIMITATION OF THE STUDY

The scope of the study was limited by budget and time constraints. The researchers addressed the challenge of time constraints through proper time management. They also incorporated the services of a research assistant who helped in data collection and analysis. He also took advantage of school, religious and national holidays to draft the initial final report after the data analysis process had ended.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

It is envisioned by the researcher that the findings of the study may enrich the knowledge base on completion rates in Kenyan secondary schools, and that it will reveal peculiarities and nuances found in that sector. The researcher is hopeful that this new body of knowledge is going further into informing future policy formulation and legislation in the education sector. Potential beneficiaries of this piece of research include policy makers at the ministry of education, educational researchers and experts, parents and students. Most importantly, it is envisioned that recommendations that will be proposed in the study will guide interventions in the education sector.

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