

## Factors for school dropouts in primary schools of Lake Victoria Islands, Kenya

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### ABSTRACT

*The Kenyan government, in collaboration with other education stakeholders, has done a lot to reduce dropouts in the Kenyan schools. However, the situation has not improved much in the schools within Lake Victoria islands of Suba district. The study investigates factors that led to dropout in primary schools in Lake Victoria islands of Suba district, Kenya. Descriptive survey research design was employed. Kiwa and Kibuogi primary schools were purposively sampled for the study, being the only island schools in the district. Data was gathered using both interview schedules and questionnaires administered to two (2) head teachers, six (6) teachers, 86 school pupils and 16 primary school dropouts. The school dropouts were reached through snowball sampling technique. The study revealed that the main factors that lead to pupil drop out of school were unemployed educated family members, death of both or one parent and migration of parents. Other factors included early pregnancies, early marriages, uncaring polygamous fathers and poverty. The study recommends formulation of policies to improve school progression and reduce pupil drop out for Universal Primary Education (UPE) to be achieved. Failure of a pupil to complete the primary school cycle limits his or her opportunities in life and also drains the limited resources that countries budget with for the provision of primary education. The study recommends low cost boarding schools to enlarge the catchment area of these schools thus increasing their efficiency. Public-Private Partnership (PPP) between The Ministry of Education and Non Governmental Organizations such as UNICEF and USAID should be encouraged to organize school feeding programs in these island schools. There should also be an establishment of Adult Education program in the region to improve the level of literacy among the parents. School mapping should also be done to improve on the existing schools and locate new ones or even merge others depending on the size of catchment areas. These will help improve retention in the primary schools.*

**Keywords:** Factors for school dropout, Lake Victoria Islands, Suba district

### INTRODUCTION

The right to education is one of the basic human rights stipulated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights 1948 (Mathooka, 2009). The Kenya's Education for All (EFA) goal for primary education adopted in the year 2000, states that all vulnerable children should access and complete good quality primary education by the year 2015. According to Sabates *et al.* (2010), children start primary school in greater numbers than ever before but dropout rates are significant which lead to low levels of primary school

completion in many countries

The Kenyan government must therefore take steps to maximize the use of its resources with a view to achieve and fully realize this right of the children. This led to the formulation of the Kenya's Children's Act 2001, which states that 'Every child shall be entitled to free basic education, which shall be the responsibility of the government and parents' (Werk, 2004). The revised Basic Education Act of 2013, stipulates that every child shall have a right to free and compulsory primary education. Parents are therefore expected to ensure that the Kenyan child

attends school regularly. In 2003, the Kenyan government introduced Free Primary Education (FPE) which enabled the poor children gain access and enrolment in to school. This lead to a significant surge in enrolment, with 1.2 million extra increases of children (Tooley, *et al.*, 2012). However, the situation has not improved much in the schools within Lake Victoria islands of Suba district. The study was designed to investigate factors that led to dropout in primary schools in Lake Victoria islands of Suba district, Kenya.

### METHODOLOGY

The study adopted descriptive survey research design with an ex-post-facto approach. The design is concerned with describing the characteristics of a particular individual, group or a situation with specific predictions, narration of facts and characteristics (Kothari and Gard, 2014).

Purposive sampling technique was applied to select the public primary schools given that they receive government funding of Free Primary Education Funds. For this study, there were only two public primary schools namely Kiwa and Kibuogi. The grades six, seven and eight were sampled because the other pupils may be too young to comprehend what the study entails (Orodho, 2009).

Snowball sampling technique was used to sample the school dropouts because they were scattered in the population. The sample size consisted of two (2) head teachers, six (6) primary school teachers, 86 school pupils and 16 primary school dropouts which represented the entire population as recommended by Airasian and Gay (2003),

A structured questionnaire and interview schedules were the main instruments used to collect primary data from the respondents. Interview schedules were used to collect data from the school dropouts in a face to face contact as recommended by Kothari and Garg (2014). This was to win their confidence and allow for easy communication in the native Luo language and also take care of their illiteracy levels. Questionnaires were applied to collect data from the head teachers, teachers and pupils.

### RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

#### The nature of pupils' enrolment

The pupils' enrolment in Kiwa and Kibuogi primary schools in the past four years was important in order to justify the purpose of the study (Table 1)

Table 1  
Enrolment of pupils by gender in Kibuogi and Kiwa primary schools from 2010 to 2013

Year	Kibuogi				Kiwa			
	Girls	Boys	Total	% of Boys in Kibuogi	Boys	Girls	Total	% of Girls in Kiwa
2010	55	48	103	46.6	280	110	390	28.2
2011	50	29	79	36.7	273	114	387	27.9
2012	73	59	132	44.7	260	122	382	31.9
2013	55	43	98	43.9	270	92	362	25.4
End of 2013	30				350			

Source: Data from the schools

More girls were enrolled in Kibuogi Primary school during this period than the boys. On the other hand, there were more boys enrolled in Kiwa Primary school than girls. The enrolment at Kiwa primary school was relatively high compared

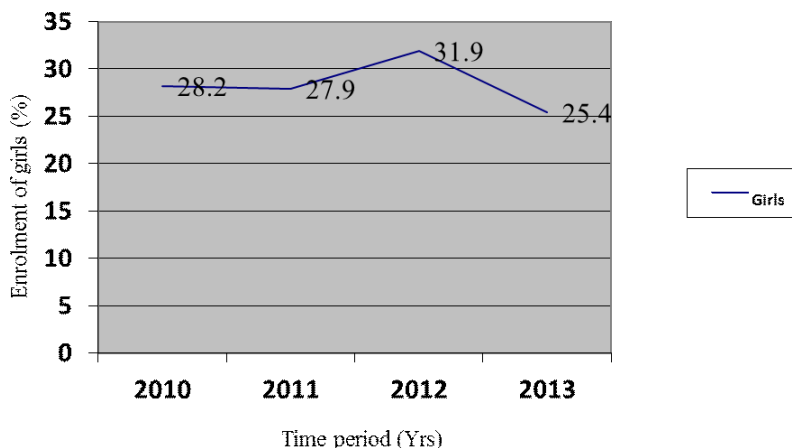
to that of Kibuogi primary school but it steadily dropped throughout the period. Despite the low enrolment at Kibuogi primary school, the pupils' number fluctuated from high to low to an eventual drop of thirty (30) pupils who only comprised class

one to four. This kind of enrolment could be attributed to transfers from the schools or several other reasons.

### Gender parity trend

The girls' enrolment against the total enrolment was highest in 2012 but lowest in 2013 (Figure 1).

Figure 1  
Gender parity trend: enrolment of girls against the totals in Kiwa primary school



### Factors for school dropout

Table 2  
presents factors for school dropout in the study area

STAKEHOLDERS		Poor teaching methods	Failure to follow lessons	Poor academic performance by pupils	Migration of parents	Educated unemployed family members	Bullying by elderly pupils	Excessive homework	Excessive punishment	Death of parents
Pupils	Boys	1.5	2.6	3.1	2.0	2.5	2.1	2.1	2.9	3.1
	Girls	1.6	2.5	2.8	2.5	1.9	2.1	1.9	2.5	2.6
Average		1.6	2.6	3.0	2.3	2.2	2.1	2.0	2.7	2.9
Teachers		2.3	2.5	1.7	4.8	4.3	1.7	3.0	2.3	4.3
Head teachers		1.5	1.5	2.0	5.0	4.5	1.0	2.5	2.5	4.5
Grand average		1.8	2.2	2.2	4.0	3.7	1.6	2.5	2.5	3.9

The general view of these stakeholders revealed the main causes of dropout as unemployment of educated family members (3.7), death of parents (3.9) and migration of parents (4.0). They were however undecided whether excessive

punishment and excessive homework would push pupils out of school. The migration of parents could be due to parents, who are fishermen, moving out with their families to seek richer fishing grounds. Poor perception of how education influences

lifestyles from unemployed educated family members, level of parents' education, child labor and sexual issues may have led to the above factors of dropout. Elder pupils are occasionally forced out of school to fend for their younger siblings after the death of their parents, hence forcing them to drop out.

However, according to school dropouts, the main factors for their dropout were poverty and death of their mothers being on the lead. They also mentioned other factors to include fishing while in school, uncaring polygamous fathers, early

pregnancies and early marriages for girls. The dropouts revealed that fishing was not a major factor for drop out, but confirmed that they resorted to fishing after dropping out of school. This is contrary to the findings in the Nyanza province report in TSC Image (2009) which stated that fishing activities in the beaches contributed a lot to child school dropout in the lake region.

**Other factors for dropout**

Other factors for dropout as suggested by teachers and head teachers are presented in Table 2.

*Table 2  
Other factors that lead to dropout as suggested by teachers and head teachers*

S/No.	Other factors that led to pupils dropouts in the area	Teachers (N = 6)		Head teacher (N = 2)		Total (N = 8)	
		n	%	n	%	n	%
1.	Early marriages	6	100.00	2	100.00	8	100.00
2.	Early pregnancies	5	83.33	2	100.00	7	87.50
3.	Fishing	6	100.00	2	100.00	8	100.00
4.	Child labor /Poverty	3	50.00	0	0.00	3	37.50
5.	Lack of parental care/guidance/role model	1	16.66	0	0.00	1	12.50

The teachers and head teachers sited early marriages (100%), fishing (100%) and early marriages (87.5%) as other factors leading to dropout among the pupils. Child labor (37.5%) and lack of parental guidance (12.5%) also contributed to dropout although to a low extent. These were in agreement with the pupils' views on other factors that also lead to dropout among the pupils. These findings are however, similar to the works of Hunt (2009), Holmes (2003) and Sabates et al. (2010). Hunt (2009) in his findings stated that poverty determines when children start going to school and how often they attend. He further stated that orphan hood often exacerbates financial constraints of poorer households and increase demand for child labor. Holmes (2003) in his findings stated that the girls are married off early since the benefits of their schooling do not accrue to the parental household. It is also seen as an escape route from poverty as stated by Kasante (2004) and Bureau of Education, U. & Kakuru (2003).

**CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The study revealed that the main factors that lead to pupil drop out of school were unemployed educated family members, death of both or one parent and migration of parents. Other factors included early pregnancies, early marriages, uncaring polygamous fathers and poverty. The study recommends formulation of policies to improve school progression and reduce pupil drop out for Universal Primary Education (UPE) to be achieved. Failure of a pupil to complete the primary school cycle limits his or her opportunities in life and also drains the limited resources that countries budget with for the provision of primary education. The study recommends low cost boarding schools to enlarge the catchment area of these schools thus increasing their efficiency. Public-Private Partnership (PPP) between The Ministry of Education and Non-Governmental Organizations such as UNICEF and USAID should be encouraged to organize school feeding programs in these island

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