



Influence of Periodic Mobility of Nomadic Pastoralist Parents on Retention of Early Years Learners' Education in Turkana East Sub County, Kenya

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Abstract: Completion of education involves access and retention of the learner in an institution of learning. However, retention challenges pose a great drawback. This paper assesses the influence of periodic mobility of nomadic pastoralist parents on the retention of early year's learner education. The study was guided by Ecological Systems Theory postulated by Bronfenbrenner in 1994. Descriptive survey research design was used. The target population was 402: comprising 300 ECDE teachers, 101 parents and 1 Sub County Director of Education in charge of ECDE. The sample size was 121 and categorized as follows: 1 Sub County Director of Education, 90 ECDE teachers, 30 parents, and 10 from each of the three wards in the Sub County. Structured and semi-structured questionnaires, and interview schedules were used to collect data. Quantitative data was analyzed by descriptive statistics using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 25. Qualitative data was analyzed thematically and presented by table of frequency and percentages. The findings revealed that periodic mobility interferes with children's access to education. The researcher recommends the following: the community should collaborate with the nomadic pastoralists to enhance access to education; the government should provide adequate mobile schools furnished with learning resources; policy makers should come up with policies that will provide the nomadic pastoralists with voluntary room for some of their animals to be bought during dry season; feeding programmes should be provided at home and in school. A study is necessary on "the long-term effects of nomadic pastoralists' children on academic performance."

Keywords: Nomadic pastoralism, Education, Periodic mobility, Retention, Retention rate.

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1. Introduction

The need to access to education at early years and completion has attracted the global debate (UNESCO, 2010). Access to basic education has shown remarkable improvements since the governments met in Dakar Senegal in the year 2000 (Senyefia, *et al*, 2019). Achieving the required basic education is largely pivoted in the pre-school (Wamukwaya & Kibirige, 2014). A child's first years of education influence the further course of education, and therefore, it is vital to allow the child to access education (Austria, Quality Assurance, 2020).

Pastoralism is estimated to be the main livelihood of 268 million people in Africa, and it is critically dependent on mobility (Feyissa, 2020).

Ghana is among African countries where education has been designed from pre-primary school (Ananga, 2017). In addition, parents' attitude impeded girl-child access and retention of learners in Ghana (Anderson, *et al*, (2017). The case in Zimbabwe, parents' income, education level and ignorance interfere with access and retention of their children. Children from stable-income families were likely

to access and be retained in school compared to those from families of low income (Chenge, *et al*, 2017).

Education among the nomadic Fulani people of Nigeria is wanting as many children fail to access education at an early stage, resulting to increased uneducated adult population. Failure to access education by the nomads' children is enshrined traditions that there is no need for a child to go to school (Dahiru, 2017). In addition, the problem of retention of children in school in pastoralist communities has been caused by warring communities due to cattle rustling (Olaniyan & Yahaya, 2016).

Pastoral communities in Ethiopia are faced with educational access for their children. The Ministry of Education has come up with Alternative Basic Education (ABE). Through ABE, satellite schools have been initiated to supplement formal schools. ABE is mainly for the out-of-school students who can only attend classes in the evenings and in rare circumstances, on weekends (Boru, 2020).

In Kenya, pastoral and nomadic communities are among the marginalized and are mostly left out of the national policy-making processes in relation to access to education (Koissaba, 2017). Livestock herders depend on children to provide herding labour and seasonal mobility and such, affects education of the children (Lanyasunya, 2012). Pastoral mobility is the leading contributory factor affecting performance of primary school pupils in Turkana East Sub County (Ing'ollan, 2016). As pastoralists move with their children, boys quit school while girls are denied total access to school due to early marriages. Movement patterns of nomadic pastoralists vary according to the context, livestock type that is reared, season and decision taken by the concerned family (Ngugi, 2017; Turner & Schlecht, 2019).

Statement of the Problem

Periodic mobility of pastoral communities remains an unresolved phenomenon in line with retention of learners in schools. In Turkana East Sub-County, retention is still very low in many public early childhood centres despite the Kenyan government's commitment to providing basic education for all children. The problem of low retention is more pronounced in Turkana East Sub County, especially among the pastoralists. Pastoral tribes live in arid and semi-arid regions and always move during dry seasons in search of water and pasture for their animals. The case in Turkana East Sub-County is that, even though the pastoral children may be enrolled in school, the parents are unable to leave them behind as they move.

The Turkana pastoral community perceives that children go to school to make wealth in the long run. The

community therefore finds no justification of sending children to school when already the family has animal wealth. Such perception greatly challenges the need to send children to school and retain them therein. The unpleasant situation of failure to complete school hinges much on aspect of retention caused by pastoral mobility. A lacuna therefore was found to be existing, which necessitated the study on the influence of nomadic pastoral mobility on early years' learner retention in Turkana East Sub County.

2. Literature Review

Davies, *et al*, (2018) explain that aspects of nomadic mobility tend to change due to increased population that has in turn occasioned increased competition over land, demographics, economics, environmental and policy pressures. In addition, Turner and Schlecht (2019) point out that, before pastoralists decide to move, the families agree on distance and routes that they intend to take in regard to availability of forage, water sources, movement and grazing time. The decision by the pastoralists is drawn from diverse information including from historical experience, traditional governance systems, and nationally designated routes. This is a clear indication that nomadic pastoralism engages highly in mobility with their livestock in search for water and grazing field. This situation could be, in a way, impeding their children from accessing schooling, hence retention concern.

Feyissa (2020) notes that, pastoralism is estimated to be the main livelihood of 268 million people in Africa, and it is critically dependent on mobility. In areas of high rainfall variability, such as drylands, the distribution of water and forage varies significantly in both space and time. The foregoing further established that mobility with livestock is among the keyways in which the Karamojong pastoralists of Uganda secure pasture forage and water for their animals. In the absence of pastoral mobility, herds face great danger of being decimated by drought. As much as Feyissa argues in favour of livestock mobility, little indication is made on extent to which such periodic mobility contributed towards other dangers in animal health such as contraction of diseases.

In Nigeria, Dahiru (2017) established that education among the nomads is wanting, more so among the Fulani people who are the major pastoral groups in the country. Failure to access education at an early stage has resulted to adult population that is not educated. This has occasioned the need to educate the nomadic people on the need to enhance capacity building. In reference to the fact that large adult population is not schooled, its foundation rested on the child that did not access education at an early stage. Much of the reasons for failure to access education by the children of the Fulani nomads living in Kaduna were the role of entrenched traditions that there is no need for a child

to go to school. The nomads have a feeling that education does not remit immediate returns compared to rearing livestock which they can see and even sell at will.

Still, in Nigeria, Olaniyan and Yahaya (2016) found that the problem of retention of children in school among pastoralist communities has been compounded by warring communities due to cattle rustling, leading to uncontrolled herding. The herder who has stolen cattle suddenly finds himself with increased stock that needs increased herding attention. The herder whose animals have been stolen finds little time to herd the rest of the animals in a bid to look for the stolen ones. In both cases, children are involved in resolving the problem of herding. This can immensely affect access and retention of children in school. As the pastoralists migrate from northern Nigeria towards the south, their livestock are stolen by Islamic terrorist organization (Boko Haram), who recruit and indoctrinate young boys to damage schools, a situation that impedes access and retention.

A study conducted in Kenya by Ing'ollan (2016) in Turkana East Sub County identified the role of mobility of pastoralists to be affecting learners' performance. Such mobility of pastoralists made the children lack permanent homes and lowering level of school attendance. Although most parents desired that their children attend school, still, retention and eventual completion posed enormous challenges. Despite the fact that there are mobile schools that have promoted provision of education to nomadic pastoralists in Turkana, (Ngugi, 2017) laments that level of access and retention is still low. The current study assessed effects of periodic mobility of nomadic pastoralist parents

on retention of early years' learners' education in Turkana East Sub County, Kenya.

3. Methodology

3.1 Study Locale and Rationale for Choice

This study was done in Turkana East Sub-County in Turkana County, Kenya. The area is predominantly occupied by the Turkana community whose main economic activity is nomadic pastoralism. The study area receives low rainfall, a situation that makes pastoralists to move with their animals during dry season to search for pasture and water. As they move, they are accompanied by their entire household including children. Such situation gravely interferes with the ability of children in accessing and being retained in school. The researcher collected data between July and October 2023.

3.2 Research Design and Target Population

Descriptive survey research design was used to probe deep into the matter that was being investigated by asking the participants questions that allowed them to describe their perceptions. The study targeted a population of 402. This population was segregated as follows: - All the 300 ECDE teachers, 101 parents, one from each targeted ECDE Centre, and the ECDE Sub-County Director, Turkana East Sub County. This information is summarized in table 1.

Table 1: Target Population

Population category	Male	Female	Total
Sub County Director	1		1
ECDE teachers	203	97	300
Parents	40	61	101
Total	244	158	402

Source: Turkana East Sub County Director Office's Report (2022).

3.3 Sampling Techniques

The researcher relied on the assertions of Kothari (2014) that, 30% of the target population can be representative. Simple random sampling technique was used to select the ECDE teachers. The researcher also sampled one parent in

each ECDE Centre. Purposive sampling was used to select the Sub County Director of Education in charge of early childhood since the target population is small.

3.4 Sample Size

The sample size was drawn from the target population and again based on assertions of Kothari (2014) that 30% of a

target population is adequate to sample 121 respondents. These included 1 Sub County Director of Education in-charge of early childhood, 90 ECDE teachers and 30 parents. The related summary is given in Table 2.

Table 2: Sample Guide

Population category	Target population	Percentage (%)	Sample Size
Sub County Director	1	100	1
ECDE teachers	300	30	90
Parents	101	10	10
Total	402	30	121

Source: Researcher (2022)

3.5 Data Collection Instruments

Barnsbee, *et al*, (2019) hold that there is need to prudently select suitable data collection instruments. The researcher used structured and semi-structured questionnaires to collect quantitative data from ECDE teachers and parents. Interview Schedule (IS) was used to collect qualitative data from the Sub County Director of Education in charge of ECDE. Use of IS, as asserts Kothari (2014) helped in generating extensive inquiries from the participants. A pilot study was done in Turkana South Sub-County using 15 respondents to help the researcher to understand to test validity and reliability of data collection instruments.

3.6 Validity and Reliability of Instruments

Instruments for data collection were subjected to validity test. Content validity was determined through conducting a pre-test and was done in Turkana South Sub-County. The reliability was established by computing the Cronbach's alpha (α) for items in the questionnaire. Fraenkel and Wallen (2000) hold that the reliability of items is acceptable if the alpha is within 0.70 and 0.99. Kubiszyn and Borich (2000) add that, α value within 0.80 and 0.90 is preferable.

3.7 Data Collection Procedures

First, the researcher identified the schools in which the study was conducted and pre-visited them. Next, the researcher agreed with the potential respondents on when to meet and be interviewed. The researcher then sought for informed consent from the respondents before being interviewed (Kothari, 2014). Secondary data were collected through documentation from textbooks, magazines and journal articles.

3.8 Data Analysis and Presentation

After data collection, the researcher arranged, sorted and cleaned the raw data ahead of analysis. The researcher employed descriptive statistics to analyze data. The analysis involved calculating the mean, frequencies, percentages, and standard deviation, as demonstrated in the following results. Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS, Version 25) was used to conform tables of frequency based on the objectives of the study. Quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive statistics. Qualitative data was analyzed according to the themes that emerged from the objectives of the study. The related findings were presented using tables of frequency.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Gender of the Respondents

The study sought to establish the gender of the respondents. The summary of this information is presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Gender of Respondents

Gender	Frequency	Percent
Males	36	45.6
Females	43	54.4
Total	79	100

Based on the results presented in the above table, majority of the participants, that is, 43(54.4%) of the total, were females while 36(45.6%) were male. Both genders had equal opportunity for inclusion in the study, suggesting a balanced distribution of gender among the participants.

4.2 Age Bracket of the Respondents

The researcher also sought to determine the age bracket of the respondents. These results are presented in Table 4.

Table 4: Age of Respondents

Age Bracket	Frequency	Percentage
18 – 25 years	15	19.0
26 - 35 years	34	43.0
36 - 45 years	23	29.1
45 years and above	9	8.9
Total	79	100

From the table above, 15(19.0%) of the participants were between ages of 18-25 years, 34(43.0%) were between the age of 26-35 years. Moreover, 23(29.1%) of the respondents were aged between age 36-46 years while 7(8.9%) of participants were over 45 years of age. There is a vivid indication that majority of the respondents were between age 26-35 years.

4.3 Years of Operation in the School

The need to establish the number of years the respondents had stayed in a particular centre would inform the quality of responses. The outcome of the research on experience of the participants is summarized in Table 5.

Table 5: Years of Operation

Years of operations	Frequency	Percentage
Below 5 years	32	40.5
6 to 15 years	24	30.4
15 to 20 years	14	17.7
Over 20 years	9	11.4
Total	79	100

Majority 32(40.5%) of respondents had worked in the school for less than 5 years, 24(30.4%) had worked for between 6 and 15 years. 14(17.7%) had worked for between 15 and 20 years while 9(11.4%) had worked for more than 20 years. This shows that majority of the respondents had less than 1 year of experience. This implies that a significant portion of the participants were relatively inexperienced. The interpretation herein is that

the majority of respondents were familiar with the topic under investigation.

4.4 Education Level of Respondents

The researcher determined the education level of the respondents to evaluate the extent to which educational level influenced the level of participation of respondents in the study. This is presented in Table 6.

Table 6: Education Level

Education level	Frequency	Percent
Certificate	37	46.8
Diploma	24	20.4
Undergraduate	10	12.7
Doctorate	3	3.8
Total	79	100

Considering the table, 37(46.8%) had a certificate level of education, 24(30.4%) were Diploma holders, 10(12.7%) were undergraduates, 5(6.3%) were postgraduates, while 3(3.8%) had a doctorate holders. The fact that 46.8% of the participants had a certificate level implies that majority of respondents were certificate holders.

4.5 Response Rate

The researcher issued out 90 questionnaires to the respondents. Out of which 79 were completed, and which the researcher worked on. The returned ones were from ECDE teachers. Based on the returned 79 questionnaires against the unreturned 11, the response rate was 87.78%. This accounts for 12.22% of the total unreturned, a smaller percentage that had minimal impact on the results. Since the response rate was more than 50%, it met the criteria argued by Holtom, *et al.*, (2022) as sufficient for statistical analysis. This is represented in Table 7.

Table 7: Response Rate

Responses	Frequency	Percentages
Responded	79	87.78
Not responded	11	12.22
Total	90	100

4.6 Influence of Periodic Mobility on Retention

The study sought to assess effects of periodic mobility of pastoralist parents on retention of early years' learners' education in Turkana East Sub County, Kenya. Responses were elicited on a 5-point Likert scale of 1-5 where: 1–strongly disagree; 2–disagree; 3-neutral; 4-agree; 5-strongly agree. Analysis of the response mean scores was conducted on the continuous scale <1.5 represents strongly

disagree; with 1.5-2.4 disagree; while 2.5-3.4 neutral; with 3.5- 4.5 being agree and finally >4.5 represented strongly agree. A total of 6 statements were used to determine the effects of periodic mobility of pastoralist parents on retention of early years' learners' education. The responses elicited on a 5-point Likert scale as shown in Table 8.

Table 8: Periodic Mobility of Pastoralist Parents

Statement		SA	A	N	D	SD	Mean	Sd
1. Periodic mobility of pastoralist parents interferes with formal learning	F %	19 24.1	36 45.6	4 5.1	14 17.7	6 7.6	3.61	1.24
2. Periodic mobility of pastoralist parents hinders school resources	F %	19 24.1	38 48.1	3 3.8	11 13.9	8 10.1	3.62	1.24
3. Mobility interferes with access to education of children	F %	26 32.9	32 40.5	3 3.8	14 17.7	4 5.1	3.78	1.23
4. Mobility gives little time for children to be in school	F %	21 26.6	39 49.4	3 3.8	10 12.7	6 7.6	3.75	1.20
5. School-going age children mostly involved in mobility	F %	26 32.9	31 39.2	2 2.5	13 16.5	7 8.9	3.71	1.32
6. Periodic mobility of pastoralist parents hinders peer socialization in school	F %	26 32.9	35 44.3	2 2.5	10 12.7	6 7.6	3.82	1.24

Considering the above, 55(69.7%) of the respondents agreed while 20(25.3%) disagreed that periodic mobility of pastoralist parents interferes with formal learning. Further, the respondents “agreed” that periodic mobility interferes with formal learning (mean=3.62 standard

deviation=1.24). The findings concur with the earlier findings of Muthuri and Egal (2019) that religious, socio-economic, government policies, and environmental factors greatly influence provision of learning activities.

Furthermore 57(72.2%) agreed and 19(24.0%) disagreed that the periodic mobility of pastoralist parents hinders access to school resources. In terms of mean and standard deviations the respondents “agreed” that periodic mobility hinders access to school resources (mean=3.62, standard deviation=1.24). The findings of the study are in tandem with the earlier findings of (Engdasew & Wogasso, 2021).

In addition, 58(73.4%) of the respondents agreed and those who disagreed 18(22.8%) that the mobility interferes with access to education. This implied (mean=3.78, standard deviation=1.23). These findings are consistent with earlier findings (Ganle, *et al*, 2018). Also, 60(76.0%) of the respondents agreed that the mobility gives little time for children to be in school while 16(20.3%) disagreed. This provided a mean and standard deviation of those who agreed (Mean=3.75, standard deviation=1.20). These findings are consistent with earlier findings of (Patel & Brown, 2019).

The current findings also revealed that, 57(72.2%) of the participants “agreed” that school-going age children were mostly involved in mobility. 20(25.4%) “Disagreed” to that effect. This provided a mean and standard deviation of those who agreed (Mean=3.71, standard deviation=1.32). These findings are consistent with earlier findings by (Zannat, *et al*, 2022) that lack of close proximity to the school impedes access and retention of learners.

In addition, 61(77.2%) of the respondents agreed that the periodic mobility of pastoralist parents hinders peer socialization in school while 16(20.7%) disagreed. This provided a mean and standard deviations of those who agreed (mean=3.82, standard deviation=1.24). These findings are consistent with earlier findings of (Leath *et al*, 2020) that, intermittent absence of children due to mobility decreases retention rate and disrupts learning.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusion

This paper concludes that periodic mobility of nomadic pastoralist parents negatively affects retention of early years’ learners’ education in Turkana East Sub County. It was established that such mobility hinders learners from accessing school resources. Mobility also gives little time for children to be in school since they are the ones who are mostly involved in taking care of animals as their parents move, hence interfering with access and retention. Such mobility as well was found to be disrupting consistency in attending school. Mobility was found to be posing a great impediment on social development of the child due to inadequate peer interactions in school.

5.2 Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made:

1. The community should collaborate with the nomadic pastoralists in order to incorporate them into the educational system.
2. The government should provide adequate mobile schools, furnished with learning resources, and dig mega dams that can provide adequate water among the community.
3. There should be policies that would provide the nomadic pastoralists with voluntary room for some of their animals to be bought during dry season. Once the number of animals is reduced, it would be unnecessary to involve children in herding activities during mobility.
4. Feeding programmes should be put in place at home and school. This would enable mothers to remain with children at home to attend school as the fathers move with animals.

5.3 Suggestion for Further Research

The researcher suggests that a study be done on “the long-term effects of nomadic pastoralists’ children on academic performance.” This would enable a profound understanding on the extent to which the nomadic pastoral community has lost out in failing to assist their children to access and be retained in school.

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