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Influence of Parents' Level of Education on Student Enrolment in Public Primary Schools in Kajiado North, Kajiado County, Kenya

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Abstract

The primary aim of this study was to examine the influence of parents' education level on student enrollment in public primary schools in Kajiado North, Kajiado County, Kenya. The research was guided by the question: How does parents' education level affect student enrollment in public primary schools in Kajiado North, Kajiado County, Kenya? The study employed a convergent mixed-methods approach, using a cross-sectional design for quantitative data and a phenomenological design for qualitative insights. The target population included 16 public primary schools, 16 head teachers, 100 teachers, 200 students, and 16 Board of Management members. Simple random sampling was used to select 5 schools, while stratified sampling was employed to sample 80 teachers and 60 students. Five head teachers were automatically included, and purposive sampling was used to select 5 Board of Management members. Data were collected using questionnaires and interview guides. Instrument validity was ensured through content and face validity assessments by experts, while reliability was confirmed using a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.8. Descriptive statistics, such as frequencies and percentages, and inferential statistics, including t-tests and ANOVA, were applied for quantitative data analysis. Qualitative data were analyzed using content analysis. The findings were presented using frequency distribution tables and direct quotes. The results revealed that parents' education level significantly influences student enrollment in public primary schools. Higher parental education levels were associated with increased student enrollment; as educated parents tend to prioritize their children's education. Conversely, lower parental education levels contributed to reduced enrollment rates. The study recommends implementing adult education programs and community awareness campaigns to encourage parental involvement in their children's education, ultimately improving enrollment rates in public primary schools in Kajiado North, Kajiado County.

Keywords: Parental education, student enrolment, public primary schools, Kajiado North, home-based factors

1.0 Introduction

The number of pupils enrolled in public primary schools significantly influences the educational environment within households. A family's decision to enroll their children in public primary schools is often shaped by a variety of home-based factors, one of the most critical being the parents' level of education. Home-based factors refer to elements of the household environment that affect a person's educational experiences and outcomes, including family structures, socio-economic status, parental education levels, and the overall home environment (Coley and Ladd, 2023). These factors are particularly influential in primary education, where parental involvement and support play a pivotal role in shaping children's academic success (Lareau and Weininger, 2019).

Primary education is foundational to creating opportunities for future success, both for the individual and for society at large. It is widely regarded as a key tool in reducing poverty, fostering social transformation, and promoting economic growth (McGivney and Winthrop, 2016). The United Nations recognizes the importance of primary education through Goal 4 of the Sustainable Development Agenda, which seeks to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education for all by 2030 (UNICEF, 2022). Despite global advancements in increasing access to education, significant disparities persist, particularly in marginalized communities where home-based factors, such as parental education, play a critical role in determining access to and success in schooling (Karunia, 2022).

Parental education level is widely regarded as one of the most significant predictors of student enrollment and retention in school. Educated parents are more likely to value formal education and invest in their children's academic success. They tend to be more involved in their children's education, have higher expectations, and provide the necessary resources to support learning (Desforges & Abouchaar, 2003). In contrast, parents with lower levels of education may lack awareness of the importance of education or the resources to support their children's schooling, which can result in lower enrollment and higher dropout rates (Mweti, 2013). The World Bank (2021) also reported a strong correlation between parental education and children's educational outcomes in sub-Saharan Africa, where children of more educated parents are significantly more likely to attend and complete school.

Numerous studies have examined the relationship between parental education and student enrollment. For example, Ashfaq (2020) found that low levels of parental literacy were a primary cause of low enrollment rates in primary education in rural Pakistan. Similarly, Sajid and Khan (2016) demonstrated that higher parental education levels were positively associated with student enrollment in both urban and rural areas. A study by Von, Cave, and Wakeling (2022) in Britain confirmed the long-term impact of family socioeconomic status and parental education on primary school enrollment, showing that these factors have remained influential over several decades.

In Kenya, the situation mirrors global trends. Research consistently underscores the significant role parental education plays in shaping enrollment patterns in public primary schools. Wamichwe, Gichuhi, Mari, and Muriithi (2017) found that parental education levels in rural Kenya were a key determinant of student enrollment. Families with more educated parents tend to enroll their children earlier and maintain higher attendance rates than families with limited formal education. This is further supported by Njuguna (2021), who found that parental education was a critical

factor in decisions to send children to school in marginalized regions of Kenya, where cultural and socio-economic factors often hinder formal education.

In Kajiado North, Kajiado County, where this study is based, the enrollment rates in public primary schools are significantly lower compared to neighboring regions such as Nairobi and Kiambu counties (Kajiado County Government, 2022). A report by the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (2022) shows that Kajiado North has an enrollment rate of 75%, considerably lower than Nairobi County's rate of 97% and Kiambu's 91%. These disparities are attributed, in part, to home-based factors such as parental education levels, household income, and cultural practices, which often affect the decision to enroll children in school. In regions like Kajiado North, where many families come from pastoralist backgrounds, parental education often plays a crucial role in determining whether children, especially girls, will attend and remain in school (Andika, 2015).

Given the importance of parental education in shaping student outcomes, this study seeks to examine how parents' education levels influence the enrollment of students in public primary schools in Kajiado North, Kajiado County. By understanding the relationship between parental education and school enrollment, this study aims to provide insights that can inform policies and interventions designed to improve enrollment rates and enhance access to education in the region. Additionally, it will contribute to the broader discourse on the role of home-based factors in educational attainment, particularly in marginalized communities where disparities in access to education remain a pressing challenge.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

The Kenyan Ministry of Education (MOE) has prioritized achieving a one hundred percent transition rate across all educational levels, including ensuring that all pupils move from pre-primary to primary school. Access to high-quality education is recognized as essential for the growth and future opportunities of Kenyan children, regardless of their socioeconomic status (Wekullo, 2020). As a signatory to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), Kenya is committed to ensuring that education is a basic right for every child. This is further reinforced by Article 43.1 of the 2010 Kenyan Constitution, which guarantees the right to education for all individuals. Nationally, primary school enrollment has shown steady improvement, with rates of 94.54% in 2019, 93.79% in 2020, 96.97% in 2021, and 97.19% in 2022 (UNESCO, 2023). However, in Kajiado North, Kajiado County, where socioeconomic disparities remain significant, the enrollment rate in public primary schools is notably lower at 75%, compared to the national net enrollment rate of 97.19% (NCPD, 2017). This rate is also lower than other sub-counties within Kajiado County, such as Kajiado Central (85%), Kajiado West (82%), and Kajiado South (80%).

While studies like those conducted by Kavutha, Mwanza, and Mulwa (2020) have explored the role of family environment on academic achievement in secondary schools, and Ngare (2018) has examined factors influencing school enrollment in private schools in Kajiado North, limited research exists on how home-based factors impact enrollment in public primary schools in the region. This study seeks to address this gap by investigating the influence of parental education levels on the enrollment of children in public primary schools in Kajiado North, Kajiado County, Kenya. By focusing on this specific home-based factor, the study aims to provide valuable insights that can inform interventions to improve primary school enrollment in the area.

1.2 Research Question

The study was guided by the following research questions:

- i. How does parents' level of education influence student enrolment in public primary schools in Kajiado North, Kajiado County, Kenya?

1.3 Hypothesis

H₀: There is no statistically significant influence of parents' level of education on student enrolment in public primary schools in Kajiado North, Kajiado County, Kenya.

1.4 Scope of the Study

The research study was conducted in public primary schools in Kajiado North, Kajiado County, Kenya, in response to the persistently low enrollment rates observed over the past five years. The study specifically focused on investigating the influence of parents' level of education on the enrollment of children in these schools. A total of 16 public primary schools were included in the study, with participants comprising 16 head teachers, 100 teachers, 200 pupils, and 16 members of the Board of Management. The study sought to explore the relationship between parental education levels and student enrollment in order to address the challenges of low enrollment in the region.

2.1 Theoretical Literature Review

The Human Capital Theory (HCT), developed by Gary Becker and Theodore Schultz in the 1960s, posits that individuals can enhance their productivity and economic potential through investments in education and skills (Gillies, 2017). In the context of education, HCT suggests that parents with higher educational attainment are better positioned to invest in their children's schooling, both materially and cognitively. Educated parents tend to understand the long-term benefits of education and are more likely to create a supportive learning environment at home, which directly influences their children's enrollment in school (Raghupathi, 2020). This theory highlights that the level of parental education can serve as a critical factor in determining children's educational outcomes, including their likelihood of enrolling and succeeding in school.

Health, as an integral component of human capital, is closely linked to education. Parents with higher levels of education often enjoy better health outcomes, which, in turn, positively affect the well-being and academic potential of their children. Educated parents are typically better equipped to make informed decisions about healthcare and nutrition, creating healthier home environments that support regular school attendance and improved academic performance (Burgess, 2016). Moreover, healthier households are less likely to experience educational disruptions due to illness, which can be a significant barrier to consistent school attendance, particularly in socioeconomically disadvantaged regions like Kajiado North.

The standard of living, another key element of Human Capital Theory (HCT), further underscores the importance of parental education. Higher educational attainment often correlates with better economic opportunities and higher income, enabling parents to afford educational resources and prioritize their children's schooling (Standards et al., 2022). In areas where socioeconomic disparities persist, such as Kajiado North, families with lower levels of parental education often face financial constraints that limit school enrollment. In contrast, educated parents are more likely

to view education as an investment in their children's future, recognizing its role in improving living standards and economic mobility (Claudia, 2019). Therefore, HCT provides a vital framework for examining how parental education influences school enrollment, especially in marginalized communities.

2.2 Empirical Literature Review

Several studies have examined the influence of parental education on student enrollment and academic achievement. Ashfaq (2020) explored the determinants of low enrollment rates in rural Pakistan, identifying parental illiteracy, poverty, and limited awareness of education's importance as critical factors. The study's use of a descriptive survey methodology provided a detailed understanding of the socio-economic challenges contributing to low school enrollment in marginalized regions. These findings align with global patterns of low school enrollment in areas where parental education is limited, underscoring the crucial role parental education plays in ensuring children's access to education. Similarly, studies in Kenya have confirmed that low parental education correlates with reduced student enrollment in public primary schools.

Khan, Iqbal, and Tasheem (2015) focused on the academic performance of secondary school students in District Rajanpur, Pakistan, revealing a strong positive correlation between parents' education levels and their children's academic outcomes. Their research emphasized that children with more educated parents generally performed better academically, and parents with higher educational attainment had more resources and awareness to support their children's education. Although their study focused on academic performance, the findings reflect broader patterns seen in studies on enrollment, as parental support and investment are critical at all stages of education. These findings highlight the potential impact of parental education on primary school enrollment, suggesting that similar patterns may exist in Kajiado North, where parental education is a significant factor in school attendance rates.

The study conducted by Vellymalay (2011) examined how the educational attainment of Indian parents influenced their involvement in their children's schooling in Malaysia. Using stratified sampling and structured interviews, the research found that higher parental education was associated with greater engagement in their children's education, particularly in terms of setting high educational aspirations. This study adds to the body of research demonstrating that parents with higher educational attainment not only value education more but also actively engage in their children's academic life, which positively influences their school enrollment and retention rates. In Kajiado North, a similar correlation between parental education and student enrollment could exist, as parents with more education are likely to prioritize and support their children's academic endeavors.

Akinrimisi and Adegemi (2021) investigated enrollment patterns in public primary schools in Ondo State, Nigeria, identifying parental attitudes toward education as a key factor. Their descriptive research revealed that parents who valued formal education were more likely to enroll their children in school. This study is significant because it highlights how parental perceptions of education—often shaped by their own educational experiences—influence enrollment decisions. While this research was conducted in Nigeria, it shares similarities with the present study in Kajiado North, where parental education likely plays a similar role in shaping enrollment patterns.

Furthermore, Akinrimisi and Adegemi's work underscores the importance of creating awareness about education in communities where parental education is low.

Finally, the study by Ndimuh and Ngeh (2022) in Cameroon examined the impact of parental education on children's school attendance in Mbororo villages. The research found that parents with lower education levels were less likely to enroll their children in school due to limited understanding of the value of education and other socio-economic barriers. This aligns with findings from other regions, including Kenya, where parental education has been shown to directly impact children's likelihood of enrolling in school. The study suggests that targeted interventions, such as adult education programs and community awareness campaigns, could help improve enrollment rates by addressing these parental education gaps.

2.3 Conceptual Framework

A conceptual framework is a theoretical structure that helps people understand a specific occurrence or problem. A conceptual framework enables a clear grasp of the variables, relationships and assumptions that underpin research studies. It describes the key topics under investigation and how they are related to one another. It also defines the study's scope and outlines the research questions (Muhammad,2024). Figure 1 presents the conceptual framework.

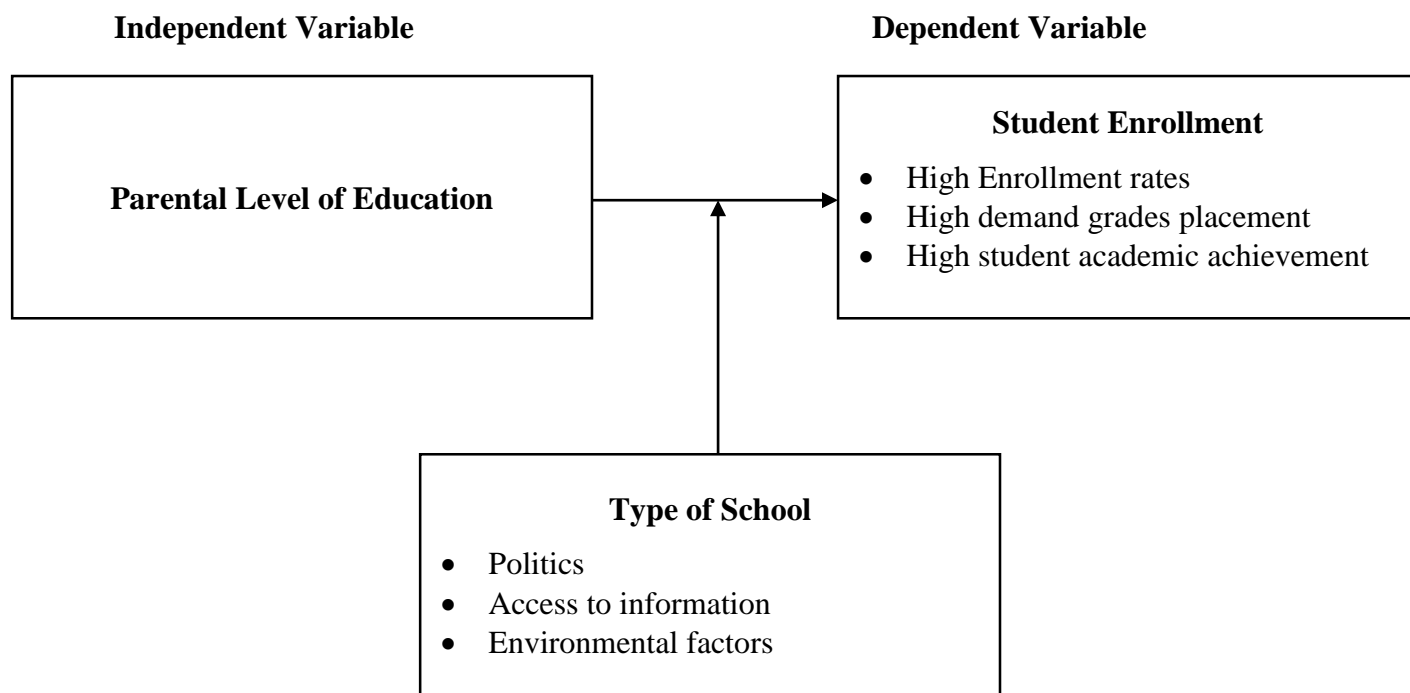


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

Source: Researcher (2024)

The conceptual framework of this study illustrates the influence of home-based factors on student enrolment in public primary schools in Kajiado North, Kajiado County, with a focus on parents' level of education. It suggests that parental education can significantly impact children's school enrolment, as parents with higher educational attainment are more likely to prioritize and invest in

their children's education. Conversely, parents with lower levels of education may lack the awareness or resources to support their children's schooling effectively. While household income, cultural practices, and distance to school are also critical determinants of enrolment, this study specifically explores how parental education levels shape these decisions. The framework acknowledges that external factors such as access to information, politics, and environmental conditions might influence the relationship between parental education and school enrolment but maintains a focus on the direct impact of parental education in this context.

3.0 Research Methodology

This study utilized a Convergent Mixed Method Research Design to examine the influence of parental education on student enrolment in public primary schools in Kajiado North, Kajiado County, Kenya. Quantitative data was gathered through a cross-sectional survey design from teachers and students, while qualitative insights were obtained using a phenomenological approach via in-depth interviews with head teachers and Board of Management (BOM) members. This combination of methods provided a robust framework, allowing for triangulation of data to validate the findings. Kajiado North was chosen due to its consistently low public primary school enrolment rates over the past five years. The target population included 16 public primary schools, comprising 16 head teachers, 100 teachers, 200 students, and 16 BOM members. Simple random sampling was employed to select five schools, while stratified random sampling was used to ensure proportional representation among 80 teachers and 60 students. Purposive sampling was applied to select five BOM members based on their expertise. Data were collected using questionnaires for teachers and students and interview guides for head teachers and BOM members. The instruments were piloted for validity, with a Cronbach Alpha Coefficient of 0.8 confirming high reliability. Quantitative data were analysed using SPSS version 28, employing descriptive statistics, ANOVA, and T-tests to evaluate the relationship between parental education and student enrolment. Qualitative data were analysed through content analysis, with key themes presented using verbatim quotes. Ethical considerations, including confidentiality, voluntary participation, and anonymity, were upheld throughout the study.

4.0 Findings

The study sought to find out how parents' level of education influences the student's enrollment in Kajiado North. The Tables present the teachers' and students' responses on how parents' education level influences the student's enrollment.

Table 1: Teachers’ responses on Parent level of education influence on student enrollment (n = 80)

Teachers’ responses on Parent level of education	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Parents’ level of education impacts their understanding of the enrollment process and available educational options	20(25%)	24(30%)	8(10%)	10(12.5%)	18(22.5%)
Educated parents are more involved in their children’s academic journey	25(31.3%)	30(37.5%)	5(6.3%)	9(11.3%)	11(13.8%)
Educated parents are able to access educational resources and information provided for enrollment	21(26.3%)	25(31.3%)	8(10%)	14(17.5%)	12(15%)
Schools are bridging the gap in enrolment support between parents with varying levels of education	19(23.8%)	30(37.5%)	10(12.5%)	10(12.5%)	11(13.8%)
Parents with lower levels of education are not educated on the importance of enrolling their children to schools	27(33.8%)	18(22.5%)	3(3.8%)	12(15%)	20(25%)

Source: Field Data, 2024

The responses in Table 1 reveal that a majority of teachers, 44 (55%), agree that parents' level of education significantly influences their understanding of the enrollment process and the available educational options. However, 28 (35%) of the teachers disagree, suggesting that a notable proportion of educators believe other factors may also affect enrolment decisions. This finding aligns with research by Kuno et al. (2021), which highlights how parental education impacts their ability to effectively navigate the schooling process. Additionally, 55 (68.8%) of the teachers agree that educated parents are more actively involved in their children's academic journey, indicating that parental education positively correlates with greater engagement in children's schooling. This observation resonates with Rowe and Perry's (2020) findings, which assert that parents’ education not only enhances enrollment but also improves the quality of parental involvement in their children's education.

Further, 46 (57.6%) of teachers agree that educated parents are better equipped to access resources for their children's enrollment, compared to 26 (32.5%) who disagree. This supports existing research linking parental education with better access to educational resources, which can contribute to higher enrolment rates (Rowe & Perry, 2020). Moreover, 45 (56.3%) of teachers agree that parents with lower education levels are less informed about the importance of school enrollment, emphasizing the need for targeted educational programs for these parents. This suggests that interventions aimed at raising awareness among less-educated parents could

positively influence enrollment rates, addressing a critical gap in ensuring broader access to education.

Table 2: Students Responses on their Parent level of education influence on student enrollment (n = 60)

Students Responses on Parent level of education	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Parents' education level influences student enrollment	21(35%)	20(33.3%)	4(6.7%)	6(10%)	9(15%)
Educated parents know the importance of enrolling their children to school	19(31.7%)	17(28.3%)	6(10%)	8(13.3%)	10(16.7%)
Parents who are educated are ready to invest their money in their children's education	25(41.7%)	15(25%)	3(5%)	7(11.7%)	10(16.7%)
Parents who are not educated do not access information on enrollment from schools	13(21.7%)	22(36.7%)	2(3.3%)	11(18.3%)	12(20%)
Educated parents are involved in the educational process of their children	12(20%)	23(38.3%)	5(8.3%)	12(20%)	8(13.3%)

Source: Field Data, 2024

According to Table 2, 41 (68.3%) of students agreed that their parents' level of education influences their enrollment in school. This suggests that students also recognize the critical role parental education plays in shaping their school enrollment experiences. 21 (35%) students strongly agreed, reinforcing that educated parents have a more positive impact on their children's likelihood of attending school, which aligns with the teachers' perspectives and supports the findings of Nzina et al. (2024).

When asked if educated parents understand the importance of enrolling their children in school, 36 (60%) students agreed, while 18 (30%) disagreed. This shows that most students believe that educated parents prioritize education, a finding consistent with earlier studies indicating that educated parents are more likely to invest in their children's education (Nzina et al., 2024).

Similarly, 40 (66.7%) of students agreed that parents who are educated are willing to invest financially in their children's education, compared to 17 (28.4%) who disagreed or were undecided. This further supports the notion that educated parents are not only more informed but also more willing to allocate resources for their children's education, in line with the findings of Rowe and Perry (2020).

Finally, 35 (58.4%) of students indicated that parents who are not educated struggle to access information about enrollment. This finding echoes the responses from teachers and suggests that there is a significant gap in information access for less-educated parents. Addressing this gap could improve enrollment rates, as more parents would be informed about the process and importance of enrolling their children in school.

5.0 Summary

The study found that parental educational attainment significantly influences student enrolment in public primary schools in Kajiado North, with educated parents being more capable of navigating the enrolment process, accessing educational resources, and actively supporting their children's academic progress. Both teachers and students noted that higher parental education enhances involvement in schooling. However, a gap remains for parents with lower education levels, suggesting the need for parent education programs and community outreach to empower all parents. Additionally, cultural practices and long distances to schools were identified as significant barriers to enrolment, with recommendations to build more schools, offer scholarships and bursaries, implement feeding programs, and engage the community to address these challenges.

6.0 Conclusion

The study concludes that parental education levels play a significant role in determining student enrollment in public primary schools in Kajiado North. Educated parents are more likely to engage with the educational system, comprehend enrollment processes, and support their children's schooling. Additionally, household income, cultural practices, and the distance to schools also significantly influence enrollment. Cultural practices, in particular, have been found to hinder enrollment, especially in cases where traditional beliefs or discrimination limit access to education.

The study further concludes that parents in Kajiado North face several challenges when enrolling their children in school, including financial constraints, transportation difficulties, and a lack of adequate documentation. Addressing these issues, along with improving parental education and awareness, is essential for increasing enrollment rates. To overcome these barriers, the study suggests implementing strategies such as scholarships, school feeding programs, simplification of enrollment processes, community engagement, and improving school infrastructure to make education more accessible to all children in the region.

7.0 Recommendation

The study recommends that to increase student enrolment in public primary schools in Kajiado North, the government should establish parental education programs specifically for parents with low educational attainment, helping them understand the importance of enrolling their children in school. Additionally, collaborative efforts between the national and county governments should focus on improving parents' income levels, offering incentives to ease financial barriers to education. Building more schools is also essential to reduce the long distances many students must travel, which negatively affects enrolment rates. Furthermore, ongoing initiatives such as school feeding programs, scholarships, and bursaries should be strengthened, alongside campaigns targeting cultural practices that hinder school enrolment. Lastly, the Ministry of Education should create clearer policies and guidelines on student enrolment at the primary school level to ensure equitable access to education.

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