

INFLUENCE OF CHILD LABOUR ON THE ENROLMENT AND ACADEMIC LEARNER PARTICIPATION OF PRE-PRIMARY AND LOWER PRIMARY SCHOOL PUPILS IN MURANG'A COUNTY, KENYA

¹ Maina Caroline Wanjiru; ² Prof. Enos Ezne, PhD; & ³ Dr. Dorcas W. Kibathi, PhD

¹ PhD Student, Kingdom Theological University, Kitale, Kenya

² Professor, Kingdom Theological University, Kitale, Kenya

³ Lecturer, Kingdom Theological University, Kitale, Kenya

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ABSTRACT

Child labour poses a significant challenge to the educational participation of young learners in Murang'a County, Kenya. This study investigates the various forms of child labour affecting pre-primary and lower primary school pupils and examines their impact on school enrolment rates. Employing a descriptive survey design, data was gathered from a representative sample encompassing 96 teachers, 192 pupils, 192 parents, and 24 head teachers across 8 sub-counties, totaling 528 respondents. The study utilized questionnaires, focus groups, and interviews to collect qualitative and quantitative data on the causes of child labour, its effects on school participation, and the role of parents. Analysis of the data revealed significant findings: child labour significantly reduces school enrolment rates, predominantly driven by economic factors. Qualitative insights underscored the socio-economic roots of child labour, while quantitative analysis provided statistical clarity on interrelated variables. Spearman's rank correlation coefficient was employed to evaluate these associations. The study emphasizes the urgent need for coordinated interventions to address child labour and mitigate its detrimental impact on educational outcomes. Recommendations include targeted measures to alleviate economic pressures leading to child labour, enhanced parental engagement in education, and policy initiatives to ensure uninterrupted early schooling for all children. Understanding these dynamics is essential for developing effective strategies that uphold children's right to education and foster their educational participation in Murang'a County and beyond.

Key Words: *Child labour and School Enrollment*

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INTRODUCTION

Child labour is a common phenomenon all over the world. Both developed and developing countries are prone to child labour. Diallo et al. (2013) states that there were close to 168 million child labourers worldwide based on 2012 statistics. The researchers further discerned that about two-thirds (120 million) of these children are aged between 5-14 years with most contributing to family work. The ILO report by Diallo et al. (2013) details the labour statistics indicating child labour based on an individual's region. Asia indicated the highest number of child laborers as at 2012, that is, 77.7 million individuals followed by Sub-Sahara Africa where the number stood at 59 million with 12.5 million children under child labour in Latin America and the Caribbean. The Middle East and North Africa (MENA) tied up this list with about 9.2 million children working in some form or another in ways that constitute child labour. Relatively, Sub-Sahara Africa registered the highest since, in five children, one was a child labourer in the region in 2012. Recent statistics place the number of child labourers in Sub-Sahara Africa at 86.6 million, representing 23.9% of children in child labour (ILO, 2020).

The ILO report further indicates that more boys than girls were engaged in child labour in 2012. Diallo et al. (2013) state that globally, the difference by sex is about 31.6 million - 99.8 million boys compared with 68.2 million girls. This figure does not deviate far from contemporary ILO estimates that claim about 152 million children of which 64 million are girls and 88 million are boys are in child labor. It accounts for one in ten children globally, signalling slow progress in eliminating child labor.

Children may be involved in various work-related activities ranging from domestic and household work to working in home enterprises or farms. Arl (2013) argues that, although age-appropriate work is encouraged, the predicaments may as well, deter their chances of fulfilling other rights, for instance, the right to education. However, Arl does not give a clear guideline on the activities that constitute child labour.

The beginning of the 21st century saw 317 million young children in the world working for themselves and their families' survival (ILO, 2006). While the number of children in the world who are in child labour remains considerable, the most significant number of them in the world who are out of school are concentrated in the Indian subcontinent that is, India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh) (Fyle, 2004). Like many developing countries, children from low-income families in Pakistan tend to work at an early age, typically have the lowest educational level, and suffer other disadvantages. Child labour in South Africa has been an acute problem. It has been estimated that 1/3 of its population is under 15 years old - nearly 15 million are children, and most are in child labour.

Statement of the Problem

The integrated Murang'a county development plan for 2013-2017 cites child labour as an impediment to enrolment attendance, retention, and general academic performance in the county. This brings to the fore the gravity of the problem regarding children's participation in schooling. This has therefore brought forth a contextual gap in the need to investigate how child labour affects involvement in the early years of education. The current study seeks to evaluate the existing intervention measures that can raise the academic performance of both genders in Kenya, particularly in Murang'a.

Objectives of the Study

The purpose of the study was to investigate the impact of child labour on learners' academic participation in the early years of education in Murang'a County.

Specifically, the study intended to:

- Identify the various forms of child labour that pre-primary and lower primary school pupils are subjected to.
- Find out the influence of child labour on the enrolment of pre-primary and lower primary school pupils.

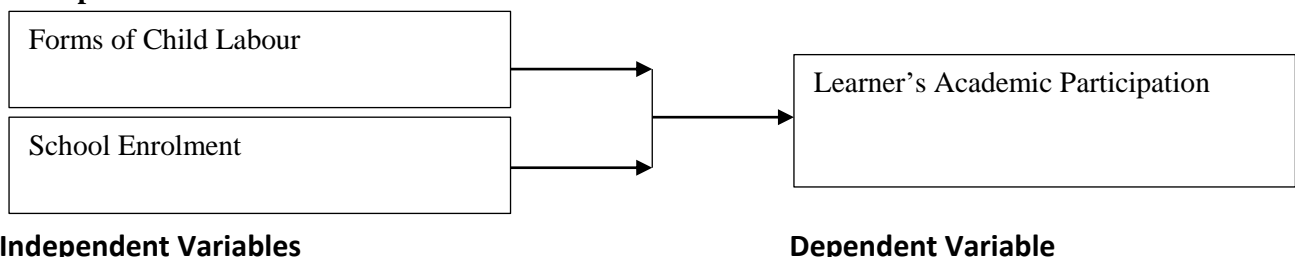
LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Review:

The ecological model by Urie Bronfenbrenner 1979, 1989, and 2005 focuses on population-level and individual-level health determinants and interventions (Bronfenbrenner, 1985). In the model, the guiding parameters are the public policy, community, institutional, interpersonal, and intrapersonal. In the wake of public policy, the local and international treaties outlawing child labour are manifest. Policies are in place to assure universal access to primary school education, despite the practice of child labour still being manifested. The community has a significant role in the relationships among organizations, institutions, and informational networks advocating for outlawing child labour. This entails the programs in place to take charge of ingrained cultural practices and related factors that affect the practice's propagation.

Institutional factors entailing the rules and regulations in the individual schools and the related parameters have a significant bearing on the ability to stem the practice of child labour. The ability to enforce provisions for strict attendance marking for the learners and related issues may forestall absenteeism from school and have the attendance improved. Interpersonal processes and primary groups entailing the formal and informal social networks and social support systems in the larger community working in concert may reduce child labour incidences in the community. This involves respected persons in the community enforcing the requirements for school attendance and having the same cascade down to the target beneficiaries. Intrapersonal factors, mainly at the household level, may equally affect the predisposition to child labour in the community. These factors include gender, religious identity, economic status, financial resources, values, goals, expectations in life, and related aspects that may affect one's outlook towards participation in school.

Conceptual Framework



Independent Variables

Dependent Variable

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

Forms of Child Labour

Child Labour has shown different- structures and forms, which are either dangers or perils (UNICEF, 2021). According to the International Labour Organization, primarily child labour is associated with risky occupations, such as mining, farming, development fortified tyke work, angling, and residential work. Work and Ecological related conditions can affect the well-being and advancement of the youngsters. Children work in various segments, such as residential work, agribusiness, sex labourers, and the city as sellers (ILO, 2020). The impact of employment and activities can differ from nation to nation.

In Europe, Southeast Asia, and Sub-Saharan Africa, children are engaged with the most exceedingly terrible types of child labour, including forced child labour, unsafe tyke work, social work, and working in agricultural sectors (Schwikowski, 2021). More than 80 percent of child labourers are in risky occupations, which are presented with synthetic compounds and perilous instruments (ILO, 2020). Most risky works are going on in developing nations, where youngsters need access to human services.

As per a report of the First National Child Labour Survey published in 2014, one in ten children aged between 5-17 years was engaged in child labour in Europe. It was absurd that around 175 million children were working in hazardous and unsafe conditions. Children in Albania, Bulgaria, Georgia, Turkey, and

Ukraine worked in agricultural sectors, doing auxiliary work using dangerous equipment in terms of machinery and tools, they would also carry heavy loads, and inhale toxic pesticides. Those children who worked in the streets were more vulnerable to abuse, negligence, and exploitation.

The global image erroneously portrays gradual progress against child labour in Asia, Latin America, and Africa as non-existent. It is important to note that child labour has decreased significantly over the last four years. Nonetheless, sub-Saharan Africa does not indicate similar progress, with child labour increasing drastically since 2012. In this way, the region has more child labourers than the rest of the world combined. Nonetheless, there is continued progress among children aged between 12 years and 17 years. There was significant growth in child labour between ages 5 years and 11 years within the same period. Sub-Saharan Africa showcased an increase of 16.8 million child labourers between 2016 and 2020 (ILO, 2021). This illustrates the necessity for government-led policies to reduce this trend and encourage more children to attend school.

The 2016 Global estimate shows that Africa has the largest number of child labourers. The report indicates that in sub-Saharan Africa, 70 million children out of 22 percent of the children in the region are child labourers involved in the worst forms of labour, including mining, agriculture, and domestic work.

According to the International Labour Organization (ILO, 2021), child begging is a form of child labour. It happens in Dagbon, Northern Ghana (Fuseini & Daniel, 2020). It reports that parents and guardians in Tamale, the capital of the northern region of Ghana, permit their children to beg on the streets to get pocket money to go to school. This is due to the poverty level. Samuel, Thomas, Christine, and Ezekiel (2013) comment that 74.0 of the population in this region are peasant farmers, and only 0.4 percent of the rural dwellers are in professional employment.

Child labour was presented in Kenya by white pilgrims who had money crop Estates during the colonial period (Manda, 2003). Africans (Kenyans) sent their children to the homes of the white settlers to work in order to get some income for paying the poll tax imposed on them. According to a survey done by the Ministry of Planning and National Development in Kenya (2007) for the year 2005/2006, it was found that about 3.8 million children aged 5-17 were working, representing 20.8 percent of the total working population KNBS (2007). Child labour could be related to many child-headed families and poverty because of the impacts of HIV/AIDS. High cases of family misunderstanding prompt family breakdown and ethnic clashes that dislodge children and custom practices, for example, marrying them off at an early age. As examined in the International Labour Organization (2010), progressive Kenya governments have utilized neediness decrease as a comprehensive system of handling child labour. In its decision pronouncement, the present government guaranteed to think of social security programs that would diminish disparity and ease constant destitution Government of Kenya (2017).

Influence of Child Labour on School Enrolment

The achievement of widespread primary education by 2015 constitutes one of the United Nations' Millennium Development Goals (MDG 2), according to the United Nations (2013). The majority of nations have progressed in this direction through enhancing school accessibility. Since 2000, primary school enrollment rates have increased gradually in the majority of nations, according to World Bank (2014). However, certain nations, particularly those in sub-Saharan Africa with the least incomes, remain very far from achieving the aim of universal education (United Nations, (2013). UNICEF claims that child labour is a barrier to achieving this goal because low-income families require their children to work, which prevents them from attending school (UNICEF, 2021). While school enrolment has increased, engagement in child labour has increased in recent years, primarily due to the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic worldwide (ILO, 2021). Nonetheless, the empirical link between child labour and schooling has not been thoroughly documented. Some studies of individual countries report that children who work are less likely to be enrolled in school (UNICEF, 2021). However, this sentiment is not shared by all researchers, as some indicate that while

economic work is related to lower school performance, it does not influence school enrolment (Putnick & Bornstein, 2015).

UNCEF (2005) reported that approximately 24 percent (12million) of all children under the age of 15 had been working, and most were not enrolled in school in Nigeria. Those children were primarily found in big cities and rural villages, trading food on the Streets, herding animals, and tanning and drying raw leather, among other activities. Thumbery (2013). The major causes of children working at the expense of schooling have been poverty and low levels of parents' education ILO (2002). In Kenya, the Government set up National Centres for Early Childhood Education (NACECE) in 1984 and District Centres (DICECE) in 1985 to coordinate ECDE programs. It also included service delivery and increasing enrolment of learners in the sector. The constitution of Kenya passed that every child, youth, and adult should have access to education Republic of Kenya, (2010). Further, the Basic Education Act (2013) spelled out that primary education, which had been made free and compulsory, should be operationalized through the legal framework enshrined in the Act (the Republic of Kenya, (2012). These continual growth policies have seen school enrolment rise over the years within the nation. However, this trend has declined in recent years due to factors such as HIV prevalence, family finances, and climate. Nonetheless, the underlying reason for these issues results in child labour as they have to sustain themselves and sometimes help their families, choosing work over school due to necessity (Ndung'u, 2017).

METHODOLOGY

This study used a descriptive survey design to investigate the influence of child labour in the early years of learning on school participation in Murang'a County. This design was used in the research to gather information on the impacts of child labour in the early years of learning. The design was also crucial in summarising, presenting, interpreting, and categorizing the information gathered. The main advantage of the descriptive design is that this research design allowed the researcher to collect relevant data that facilitated developing accurate conclusions on the influence of child labour on children in the early years of learning on school participation in Murang'a County.

RESULTS AND FINDINGS

Reliability Test

The reliability of the data collection instrument was ascertained using the test-retest method. The evaluated instruments were administered twice to the same group of the sampled subjects within two weeks between the first and second tests. The feedback of data collected through the questionnaire was classified into various categories for a more straightforward correlation. The data was then given a score between 1 and 2 according to its relevance to the research topic. Spearman rank-order correlation was used to calculate the correlation coefficient to establish the degree of consistency. If a correlation coefficient (r) of 0.7 of the questionnaire was obtained, it indicates sufficient high reliability of the instrument.

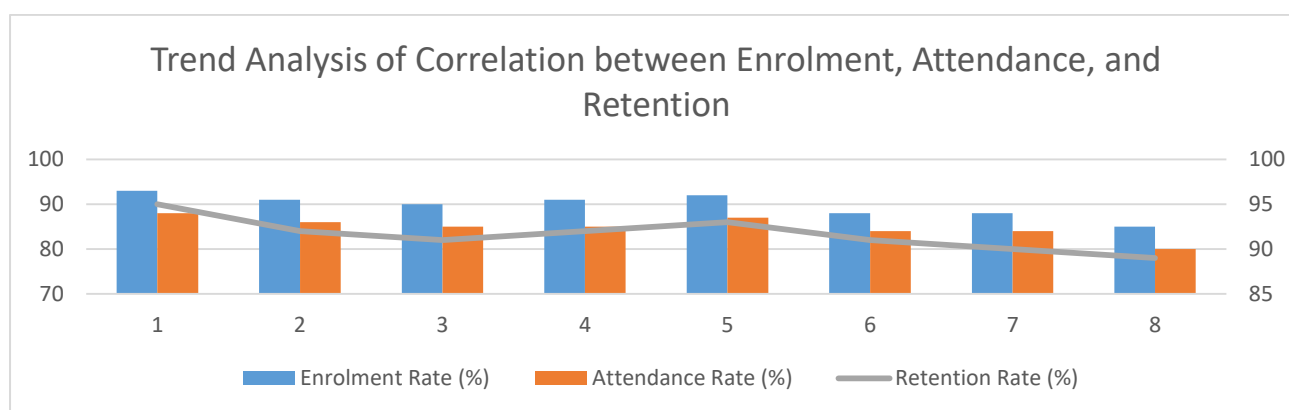
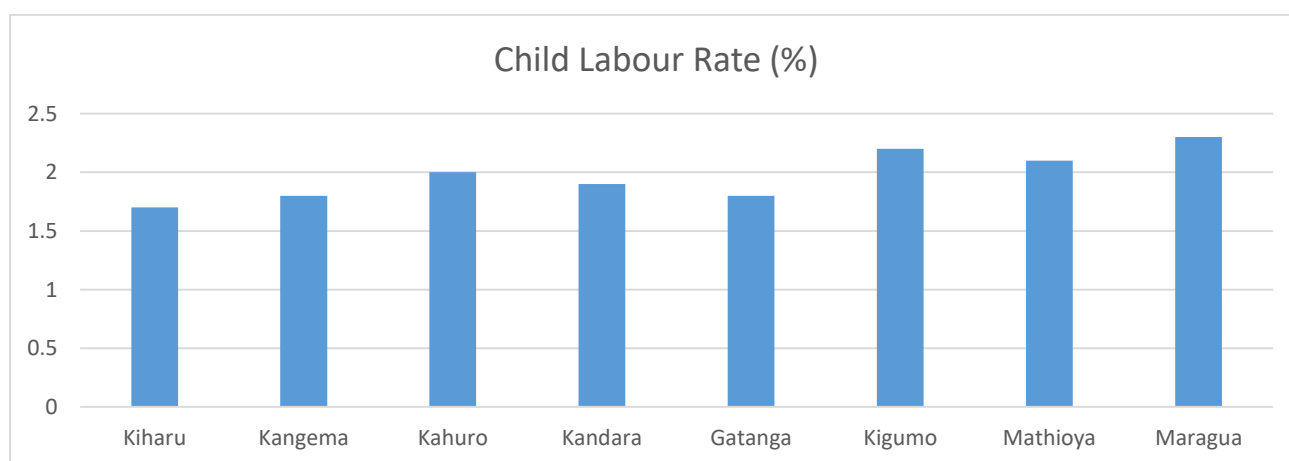
Effects of Child Labour

Spearman's rank correlation coefficient and descriptive statistics were used to assess empirical information on the impact of child labor on school participation. The theoretical foundation for this research covers independent factors such as types of child labor and dependent indicators such as attendance, enrollment, and retention rates throughout Murang'a County's eight sub-counties. The scholar believes child labor is favorably connected with student enrollment, attendance, and retention, eventually impacting personal achievement.

Table 1: Correlation between Child Labour and School Participation

Sub-County	Child Labour Rate (%)	Enrolment Rate (%)	Attendance Rate (%)	Retention Rate (%)
Kiharu	1.7	93	88	95
Kangema	1.8	91	86	92
Kahuro	2.0	90	85	91
Kandara	1.9	91	85	92
Gatanga	1.8	92	87	93
Kigumo	2.2	88	84	91
Mathioya	2.1	88	84	90
Maragua	2.3	85	80	89

The correlation coefficient study shows a high positive link between child labor and school participation metrics in all sub-counties. The Spearman's rank correlation scores for child labor and enrollment, attendance, and retention rates are 0.70 to 0.75, indicating a substantial relationship between these factors.



DISCUSSION OF KEY FINDINGS

The current study investigated the complex link between child work and school attendance in Murang'a County. This study sought to shed light on the variables affecting child labor practices and their influence on academic achievement by conducting a thorough analysis of data acquired from multiple sources, such as focus groups, interviews, and surveys. This study was driven by an urgent requirement to comprehend the complicated dynamics of child labour and its consequences for children's access to school in a rural Kenyan environment. By delving into the complexities of this link, the study hoped to reveal insights that may

influence targeted policies and programs aimed at increasing welfare for children and academic parity in the region.

The investigation found numerous notable conclusions about the frequency of child labour and its impact on school attendance in Murang'a County. First, it was discovered that many youngsters labour in various industries, including domestic tasks, farming, and informal sector jobs. These obligations frequently interfere with school attendance, resulting in greater absenteeism and worse academic achievement for impacted children. Additionally, socioeconomic variables like poverty, parental job status, and familial relationships were found to be important determinants of child labour in the area. Furthermore, insufficient enforcement of child labour laws and social conventions perpetuates the downward spiral of exploitation, worsening the situation.

Among the study's primary results were many striking trends concerning the presence and consequences of child labor on school participation. First, it was discovered that many of Murang'a County's youngsters are involved in different labor, such as housework, agriculture, and informal jobs. This shows a widespread problem that demands immediate action from stakeholders and policymakers. Furthermore, the study found a substantial link between child employment and school absenteeism, showing that working children are likelier to miss lessons regularly. Additionally, the study found inequalities in the experiences of children from various socioeconomic backgrounds, with families with low incomes disproportionately impacted by the requirement of adding to household revenue. These findings highlight the intricate interaction of socioeconomic conditions, social conventions, and academic possibilities that shape children's labor and learning experiences in rural Kenya.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the results of this research highlight the critical need for coordinated measures to address the complicated interplay between child labor and school participation in Murang'a County. Child labor in the region creates considerable impediments to educational access and achievement, prolonging cycles of poverty and inequality. However, it is critical to remember that combating child labor necessitates a multidimensional approach that transcends simple legal changes (Schwikowski, 2021). Poverty reduction initiatives are critical for tackling the core causes of child labor by reducing monetary vulnerabilities and enabling families to contribute to their children's education. Furthermore, community participation and cooperation are critical for increasing awareness about the harmful impacts of child labor and rallying local resources to tackle this widespread problem.

RECOMMENDATIONS

According to the study's results, many recommendations are made to alleviate the issues created by child labour and increase pupil engagement in Murang'a County:

Improving legal frameworks

Strengthening legal structures is critical for effectively addressing the problem of child labour. This includes passing and implementing laws that ban predatory labour practices and ensure proper safety for children's liberties (Admassie, 2002). To ensure that kids have access to education, security, and development, governments must endorse and put into effect worldwide agreements such as the International Labour Organization's Convention on the Rights of the Child (ILO-CRC) and the Convention on the Worst Forms of Child Labour (ILO-C182). Furthermore, laws should be supplemented by strong enforcement measures, such as inspections, monitoring, and sanctions for offenders, to dissuade employers from participating in exploitative behavior (Fuseini & Daniel, 2020). By enhancing regulatory structures, governments may develop a favourable climate for the abolition of child labour and the advancement of children's rights.

Increasing Access to Education

Increasing access to high-quality education is critical for preventing and mitigating the consequences of child labour. This involves addressing educational hurdles like destitution, gender prejudice, and a shortage of infrastructure and offering benefits to families to take their children to school. To guarantee that all children have access to a high-quality education, authorities could invest in school construction and maintenance, provide free or subsidized schooling, and give scholarships and prizes to low-income families. Furthermore, educational initiatives should be adapted to the requirements of disadvantaged students, such as children involved in or in danger of child labour, by offering flexible learning alternatives, remedial help, and vocational training possibilities. Lawmakers can help children overcome the downward spiral of destitution and abuse by increasing access to education.

Areas For Further Research

This study has explored the forms of child labor affecting pre-primary and lower primary school pupils and examined their influence on school enrolment rates. However, several areas warrant further investigation to develop a comprehensive understanding and inform more effective interventions. Investigating the long-term effects of child labor on academic performance and educational attainment is crucial. Longitudinal studies could provide valuable insights into how early labor influences children's academic trajectories and future employment opportunities. Such research would help identify critical intervention points and inform policy development aimed at breaking the cycle of poverty and labor.

The psychological and social impacts of child labor on children's mental health, self-esteem, and social development remain under-explored. Understanding these effects is essential for developing comprehensive support systems for affected children. Future research should focus on the emotional and social dimensions of child labor to create holistic intervention strategies.

Exploring how child labor differentially affects boys and girls is vital. Gender-sensitive research can shed light on the specific types of labor boys and girls are engaged in and the unique barriers they face in accessing education. Such studies would inform tailored approaches to address these gender-specific challenges and promote equitable educational opportunities.

The role of family and community dynamics in perpetuating child labor needs deeper investigation. Research into parental attitudes, economic conditions, and community norms can help design culturally appropriate interventions. Understanding these dynamics is key to implementing effective community-based strategies to reduce child labor and enhance school participation.

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