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HOUSEHOLD POVERTY LEVEL AND ACCESS TO TERTIARY EDUCATION IN NYAMIRA COUNTY KENYA

Authors: ¹Grace Kemunto Oyaró, ²Johnson Mavole and ³Headmound Okari

^{1&2}Catholic University of Eastern Africa, Kenya. Website. www.cuea.edu

³The Technical University of Kenya

Corresponding author: Grace Kemunto Oyaró. **Email:** graceachoki@gmail.com

Chief Editor
Web: www.ijsdc.org
Email:
info@ijsdc.org
Editing Oversight
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Abstract: *The purpose of this study was to investigate how household poverty level affects access to tertiary education in Nyamira County, Kenya. The study applied descriptive and retrospective research designs and used both qualitative and quantitative methods for data collection and analysis. The study targeted 163,186 people from five sub-counties from which a sample size of 415 households and tertiary institution administrators responded to data collection tools. The study used purposive sampling technique for tertiary institution administrators and stratified random sampling for households. From the findings, education level of their parents or guardians affected their access to higher education. Further, Findings revealed that children from households headed by parents with low education level are more unlikely to attend tertiary institution. Findings showed that that family size affects tertiary education. According to findings, large size household spent more in terms of educational expenses than small sized households. According to findings, there are cultural factors in their locality that influenced access to tertiary education. Findings revealed that females are not valued like their male counterparts by their parents when it comes to education opportunities. It was recommended that the government should make access to tertiary education easier by coming up with more programs which financially supports students who have competed form four to easily access tertiary education, moreover, the government should do more sensitization to the society on the importance of supporting education of all children regardless of gender as well as importance of tertiary education.*

Key Words: *household poverty, parent's education level, household income, size of household, cultural practices, tertiary education*

1.1 Study background

Across the globe today, education accomplishment is perceived to be among the surety path that a person can partake in order to ensure productive and better live. Additionally, education accomplishment by citizens within a given state is considered to be among the key facilitator of state economic development (Darling-Hammond, 2015). Based on this perception, the government of Kenya through the ministry of education has over the last two decades invested heavily towards the education sector with an aim of improving as well as ensuring that every Kenyan has a chance of accessing quality education from every corner of the country. This extensive investment towards the education sector in the country is facilitated by the government desire to achieve the education-related Sustainable Development Goals and Vision 2030 (UNESCO, 2014). According to Wanja, (2014) there is a growing problem of lack of job opportunities for majority of young people in less developed countries particularly those in Sub-Saharan Africa. This high rate of youth unemployment across these countries has in turn become a significant problem in terms of both social and economic development. Details of the World Bank (2015) report established that approximately 60 percent of unemployment in Sub-Saharan Africa is affecting youths and that approximately 72 percent of people in this region earn less than two dollars a day, thus, living below the established poverty line. Additionally, details of the KIHBS (2015) report indicates that youths aged between fifteen and twenty-nine years representing approximately 21 percent of youths in this region are unemployed while another 25 percent are neither in school nor working. Based on this identified problem, vocational training within the Sub-Saharan Africa has come to be recognized as the most effective path which youths can be partake in order to equip themselves with suitable and marketable skills that will eventually allow them to be employed (UNDP, 2013).

In India, the demand of international degrees has over the last few years skyrocketed while at the same time there has been significant increase in the overall provision of private tertiary education (Heslop, 2014). However, despite this increase in demand for tertiary education in India, public higher education system has not been able to provide enough institutions to cater for the increased education demand a factor which has seen a significant growth of private institutions eager to fill the education provision gap (Oza, 2018). Further, the government of Malaysia, has adopted affirmative action regime which is specifically been tasked with the expansion of education sector so as to ensure there is sufficient access of tertiary education as well as upper-level career opportunities for the Bumiputera beneficiary group. Nevertheless, the momentum of change has reduced in recent years. In Indonesia, the bulk of tertiary education financing is made up of private spending in the form of tuition fees, making studying financially burdensome for lower-income households (Tham, 2013).

In Nigeria, education accessibility has for long been faced with serious problems as majority of the people there are plunging into extreme poverty rather than gaining access to education opportunities (Anyanwu, 2014). As such, Raimi, Akhuemonkhan & Ogunjirin, (2015) asserts that the Nigerian government must establish effective measures to eradicate poverty so as to ensure that sustainable education. This is the strength and uniqueness of education in producing an excellent Human Capital for nation development and economy. Further, higher education expenditure in South Africa has for the last one decade increased significantly both in terms of the government education spending as well as from the household spending per student (RSA, 2013). As such, high cost related with higher education accessibility in South Africa has been identified as a key contributing factor towards education inaccessibility for majority of the people as they

are unable to fund their higher education.

In East Africa, the Ugandan ruling party manifestoes (2014) emphasized on access to tertiary education, with an aim of making education accessible to poor households who could not meet the ever-rising cost of education. Immediately after the implementation of the policy, polytechnics and technical institutions realized increased enrolment of students (Karlan& Linden, 2014). In Tanzania, access to tertiary education has remained a major challenge (Sifuna, 2017). This is irrespective of the government plan to transform the country's education sector through PEDP and SEDP as well as by utilizing the state resources and community effort in the form of 'government-community partnership' (GCP). This challenge is partly based on the fact that majority of the households are poor and therefore they cannot afford to pay for tertiary education.

Nationally, poverty is among the key issues that impacts the accessibility of tertiary and vocational education (Mohamedbhai, 2014). Despite the fact that the national government has significantly lowered the fees for both tertiary and vocational training, the fees payable still stands as a barrier for many Kenyan wishing to access tertiary and vocational training due to their poor background (Nyangau 2014). Currently, fees charged by the cheapest vocational or tertiary state institution represent almost fifteen percent of annual per capita expenditures. According to Munene, (2016) initial evidence from vocational training projects which are being undertaken randomly across the country indicates that reducing vocational training fees through government scholarships and issuing sponsorship vouchers is likely to increase the number of people enrolling for vocational training programs.

In Nyamira county, tertiary education has for the last few years gained substantial recognition and hence its overall growth. Specifically, the towns of Keroka and Nyamira have in recent time been the centers of tertiary education as numerous satellite campuses as well as private colleges have been opened there to cater for the surging demand for tertiary education. However, the overall enrollment rate is not very promising a factor that has been attributed to poverty of the surrounding communities and the county as a whole (Nyamira County Integrated Development Plan 2013–2017). The current study will therefore examine the relationship between household poverty level and access to tertiary education in Nyamira County, Kenya.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The significance of tertiary education has over the last two decades gained great recognition in Kenya. Details of the KIHBS (2015) report indicates that youths aged between fifteen and twenty-nine years representing approximately 21 percent of youths in this region are unemployed while another 25 percent are neither in school nor working. Based on this identified problem, vocational training has come to be recognized as the most effective path which youths can be partake in order to equip themselves with suitable and marketable skills that will eventually allow them to secure employment (UNDP, 2013). However, despite the extensive recognition of the importance of vocational training, the sector is still being faced with serious problems particularly lack of enrollment fees. Despite the government subsidies extended towards the tertiary education sector so as to reduce the fees burden among Kenya, the cheapest fee payable is at least ten thousand Kenya shillings annually which translates to about fifteen percent of average household expenditure according to KIHBS, (2015) report which many Kenyan households cannot afford. Evidence from government vocational training projects undertaken on random basis in Western Kenya has reinforced this as it has been established that approximately 75% of youths who were

awarded government sponsorship vouchers/scholarships enrolled for the vocational training whereas less than 5% of the youths who were not awarded the scholarship but were interested in pursuing vocational training were able to enroll for the program.

In many parts of Nyamira County, the rate of access in schools is low and has been described as a scarce industry (Murungi, 2016). A report by the National Council of Population Development (2017) on the Kenya National Adolescent and Youth Survey conducted in 2015 further stated that the access to tertiary education is still low in Nyamira County and calls for more investment in tertiary institutions. This is mainly attributed to the most distinctive features such as historical and political factors which usually contribute to the regional inequalities opportunities in education. The problem of household poverty level and access to tertiary education in the area is therefore worth investigation due to the fact the lives of many students are at risk of being wasted. This study therefore sought to establish the underlying relationship between poverty level and access to education in Nyamira County, Kenya in the hope that once they are identified solutions would reverse the trend.

1.3 Theoretical review

Behavioral/decision-based theory

Detailing in his book “three regime”, Esping-Andersen (2010) argues that the current classification of various welfare models adopted in various developed countries providing a classical views on poverty significantly agrees to the market-espousing, laissez-faire principle attributes responsibility for the results of individuals especially their well-being to their individual economic decisions. Based on this view, individuals are not supposed to be held accountable for their poverty experiences which in most instances are associated principally on such individual deficiencies. Additionally, Rank, Yoon and Hirschl, (2003) posit that the varying characteristics among different individuals are likely to range from the lack of an industrious work ethic or virtuous morality to low levels of education or competitive market skills, a view which they consider to have gained great recognition since the mid-1970s. As such, it is clear that there is no any significant role that the state can play by intervening in such issues because individual characteristics that are associated with causing poverty are solely determined by the market forces. In this context, Esping-Andersen (2010) further states that developed countries such as UK, USA, Canada and Australia among others are thus classified under liberal state category as a result of less generous social benefits being given leading to a smaller set of social rights compared with other countries of Continental Europe.

During the 19th century, the behavioral view was extensively accepted since it was generally considered that poverty was essential as this would motivate laborers to work extensively hard (Townsend, 1979). As such, various policies adopted during this time was, thus, linked with the concept of laissez-faire, which at the time linked virtue with work. This perspective concerning poverty was also very rampant at the time due to the principle of conditional welfare for the few that prevailed at the time such as in the Victorian Poor Law. The Victorian Poor Law which was derived from conditional welfare for the few principle at the time was aimed at maintaining low public redistributive expenditure and subject to means testing, whereas at the same time ensuring maximum relieve which was achieved through charity and voluntary effort. Therefore, the perspective about poverty can be considered as revolving around the perception that the poor self-select into deprivation not resulting from failure of the market forces but as a result of inadequacies

in their own effort and capabilities (Townsend, 1979).

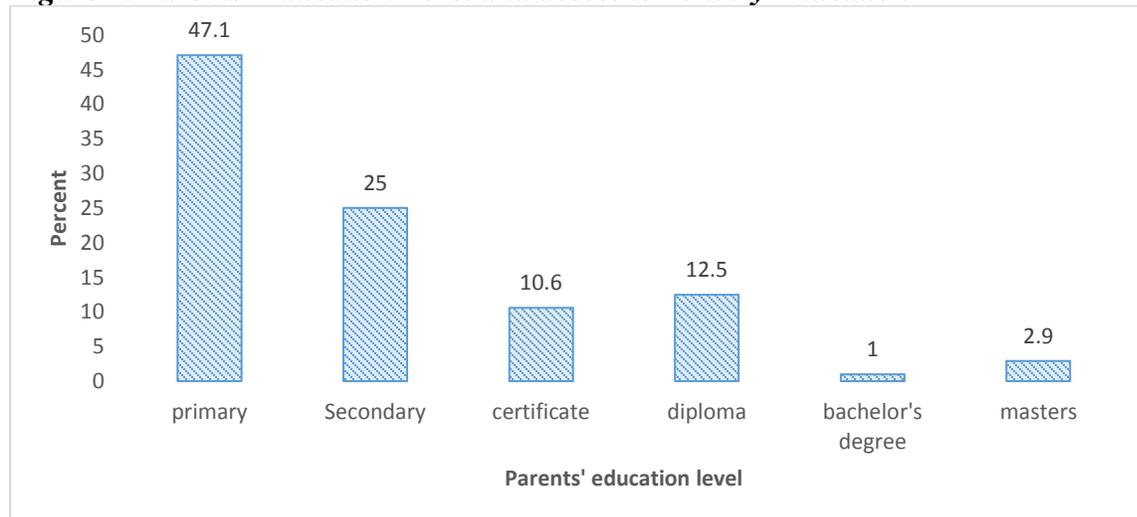
This theory is relevant to this study as it explains that shortcomings such as a lack in education and skills contribute to a rise in poverty levels as individuals' are not able to acquire job opportunities due to lack of applicable skills and know how. Also, poverty that is seen to be persistent will tend to lead to lack of resources restraining individual to advance in terms of education level. This can lead to individual stagnation in terms of limiting one's level of expertise. However, this approach can be criticized based on various perspectives including the fact that personal decisions are likely to be affected by market failures as stipulated in the neoclassical theory while unemployment might not be voluntary as a result of insufficient aggregate demand as seen in the Keynesian theory or class-based oppression and the Marxist theory. Therefore, in order to complement the role of this theory in the study, human capital draws relations between poverty and education with education being specifically perceived as means to eradicate poverty as described below.

1.4 Methodology

The study applied descriptive and retrospective research designs and used both qualitative and quantitative methods for data collection and analysis. The study targeted 163,186 people from five sub-counties from which a sample size of 415 households and tertiary institution administrators responded to data collection tools. The study used purposive sampling technique for tertiary institution administrators and stratified random sampling for households. The data was then processed and presented in the form of frequencies distribution table, graphs and pie-chart that facilitate description and facilitation of the study findings. Data were also analyzed qualitatively. A descriptive method was employed and data presented through narration.

1.5 Findings

Figure 1: Parents' Education Level and access to Tertiary Education



Source: Field data, 2018

The figure above revealed that 147(47.1%) of respondents parents had primary school level, 78(25%) had secondary education level, 39(12.5%) had diploma, 33(10.6%) had certificate, 9(2.9%) had master while the rest 3(1%) had bachelor's degree. This illustrated that majority

(72.1%) of survey participants parents had not attained tertiary education while a few (27.9%) had a chance to go beyond O level. Further, researcher requested survey participants to indicate whether the education level attained by their parents or guardians affected their access to higher education.

Table 1: Level of agreement that children from households headed by parents with very low education are more unlikely to attend tertiary institution

Level of agreement	Frequency	Percent
Strongly disagree	54	18.6
Disagree	51	17.5
Neutral	45	15.5
Agree	99	34.0
Strongly agree	42	14.4
Total	291	100.0

Source: field data, 2018

As table above reveals, 141(48.4%) of the respondents agreed that children from households headed by parents with very low education are more unlikely to attend tertiary institution while 105(36.1%) of the respondents disagreed. This implied that children whose parents have very low education level are unlikely to go for higher studies unlike children whose parents are educated.

**Table 2: House hold income and access to Tertiary Education
Increase in the income of the household is associated with increase in educational expenditure**

Level of agreement	Frequency	Percent (%)
Strongly disagree	48	17.6
disagree	48	17.6
Neutral	39	14.3
Agree	96	35.1
Strongly agree	42	15.4
Total	273	100.0

Source: Field data, 2018

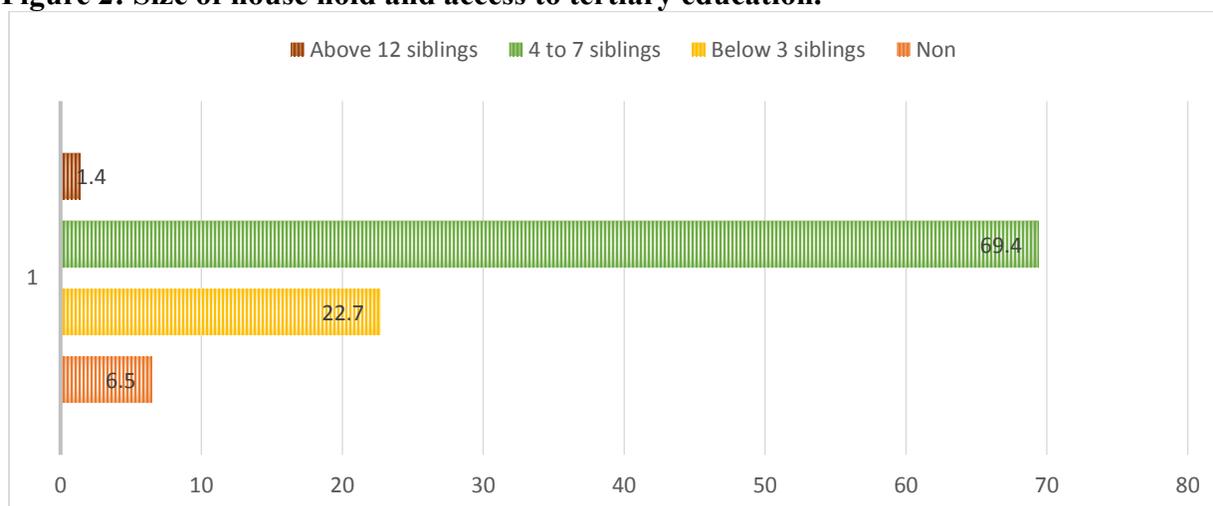
Survey outcome illustrates that 138(50.5%) of the respondents agreed that increase in household is associated with increase in educational expenditure while 96(35.2%) disagreed. This showed that most of the respondents agreed that households with increased income are most likely to spend more in education. Therefore, income in households makes children in that particular household access higher education. Researcher requested participants to indicate whether they agree to statement that children whose parents are educated and in some form of employment invest more in education than those whose parents are not.

Table 3: Children whose parents are educated and in some form of employment invest more in education than those whose parents not employed.

Level of agreement	Frequency	Percent (%)
Strongly disagree	21	7.6
Disagree	18	6.5
Neutral	39	14.1
Agree	126	45.7
Strongly agree	72	26.1
Total	276	100.0

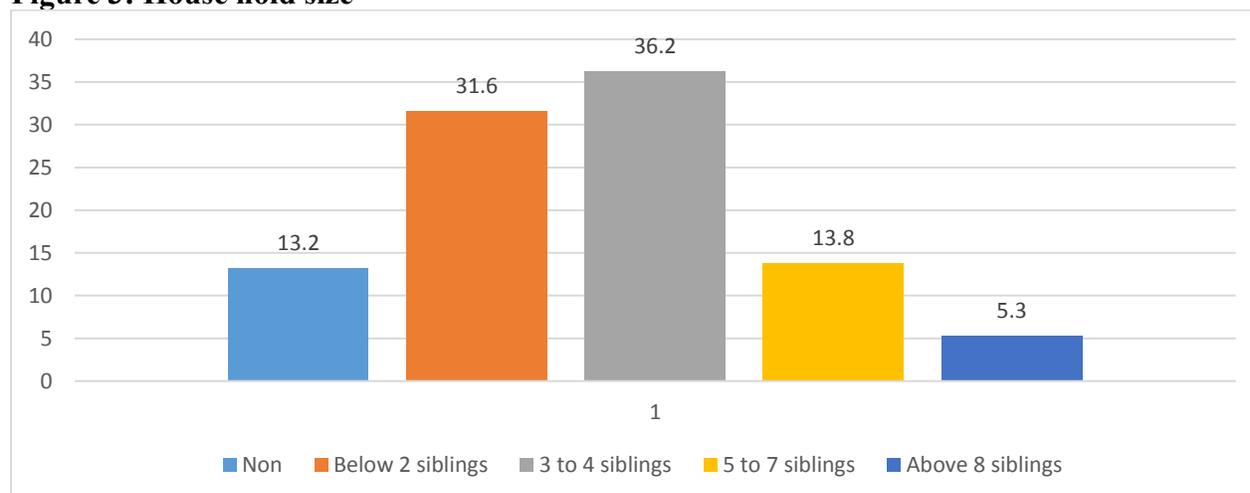
Source: Field data, 2018

The table above illustrates that, 196(71.8%) of the survey participants who were majority agreed that children whose parents are educated and in some form of employment invest more in education than those whose parents not employed while another small percentage of 57(20.6%) disagreed. Therefore, employed parents have a higher possibility on investing more towards their sibling's education than unemployed ones.

Figure 2: Size of house hold and access to tertiary education.

Source: Field data, 2018

Findings depicted from the figure above illustrates that 193(69.4%) of the survey participants who were majority had 4 to 7 siblings, below 3 siblings were 63(22.7%), another 18(6.5%) had no siblings while 4(1.4%) had above 12 siblings. This implied majority of families in Nyamira County had a Family size of 4 to 7 children. Therefore, it can be said that majority of family sizes in this locality are big. Out of the total siblings of the respondents, the researcher sought to determine the number of siblings who have 18 years and above.

Figure 3: House hold size

Source: Field data, 2018

As the figure above reveals, 102(36.2%) of the respondents had between 3 to 5 siblings who were aged 18 years and above, 89(31.6%) had below 2 siblings who had reached 18 years and above, 39(13.8%) had between 6 to 7 siblings who were 18 years and above, 37(13.2%) no sibling who had reached 18 years and above and 15(5.3%) had above 8 siblings who had reached 18 years and above. This implied that out of the total number of respondents, its only 37(13.2%) respondents who had no sibling who had reached 18 years. Therefore, 13.2% of the respondents had no sibling who had reached 18 years and above can further be used to estimate the figure of those who have not reached an age of accomplishing their high-school studies. Further, the study aimed to determine the number of respondent's siblings who had done KCSE.

Table 4: Cultural factors and access to tertiary education

Response	Frequency	Percent
Yes	156	54.2
No	132	45.8
Total	288	100.0

Source: field data, 2018

From findings 156(54.2%) of the respondents agreed that there are cultural factors in their locality hindered access to tertiary education while the rest 132(45.8%) disagreed. This show that most of the respondents felt that community culture is one of the tertiary institution access impediment. For those who agreed that cultural factors are some of the impediments to access to tertiary institution, respondents were asked to state some the cultural practices. According to findings, failure to value girl child education among locals was one of the greatest problem, existence of religions which discouraged school going among children terming education as non-biblical, Polygamy marriage which makes fathers to have large family sizes, Female genital mutilation among some females and witchcraft practice are some of the cultural factors preventing access to tertiary institution.

Table 5: Some parents adhere to their religious obligation which entails denying their children accessing education

Response	Frequency	Percent
Strongly disagree	42	15.1
Disagree	36	12.9
Neutral	69	24.7
Agree	84	30.1
Strongly agree	48	17.2
Total	279	100.0

Source: field data, 2018

As the table above reveals, 132(57.3%) of the respondents agreed that adherence to some religious beliefs by some parents caused them to deny their children from accessing education opportunities while 78(28.0%) of the respondents disagreed. This implied that religious practices and beliefs among residents also hinders children access to education.

1.6 Discussion Of Findings

Using a Linkert scale, the study aimed to determine the degree of agreement in the statement that children from households headed by parents with very low education are more unlikely to attend tertiary institution. Findings revealed that children from households headed by parents with very low education are more unlikely to attend tertiary institution. This implied that children whose parents have very low education level are unlikely to go for higher studies unlike children whose parents are educated. This findings concurs with a study done by Wanka (2014) in South Africa which concluded that there is positive correlation between lower education level attained by a parent and the failure to take children to the institutions of higher learning.

Further, parent's education is the most important factor influencing children's education. This implied that parents' education is very crucial in influencing child's education. Therefore, parents who have attained higher education levels are in a better position to influence their siblings to get educated unlike uneducated parents. The findings agrees with survey done by Knight and Shi (2016) who used household sample survey and observed that parents' educational attainment is the most important factor influencing children's education.

The study revealed that children whose parents are educated and are in some form of employment invest more in education than those whose parents not employed. Therefore, parents who are in professional employment have a higher possibility of investing on their sibling's education compared to unemployed ones. Kainuwa and Yusuf (2013) in their survey indicated that parents with moderately better socio-economic rank and have attained formal education mostly facilitates educational access for their children while at the same time encouraging them to complete school and achieve their higher educational objectives. They further observed that education level of parents, their income levels, and profession act as the main inspiration on parents' attitudes towards the education of their children's while at the same time playing a significant role in determining the level of support, they accord their children. Moreover, Huy (2012) argued that households whose heads have career jobs increases the possibilities of increased cost of education.

Findings showed that there is no any discrimination that is levelled against students from poor background when applying for enrollment to Tertiary institutions but instead there is less

possibility of these students from poor background applying for enrollment. The implication was that there is no any discrimination that is levelled against students from poor background when applying for enrollment to Tertiary institutions but instead there is less possibility for these students from poor background applying for enrollment at tertiary institutions. Therefore, tertiary institution does not discourage poor children from doing higher education but the children fails to apply due to different factors like fear of being consistent in their education as they fear that their poor parents might be unable to raise enough fees required by these institutions. This therefore implies that institutions of higher learning don't in anyway discriminate against students from humble background applying for their enrollment but rather these students are not likely to make application (Anders 2012). Chowa et al. (2012) Household structure includes number of children a parent has which is believed to have resource dilution hypothesis where the material resources and parental attention are diluted with additional children in the household. Findings showed that family size affects tertiary education. This shows that family size affects children's chances of joining tertiary institution. Therefore, the probability of a child from bigger family size joining tertiary institution may not be the same with the one from smaller family size. Moreover, the researcher sought to understand why the size of family may affects tertiary education and gathered data showed that it is because large families comes with high education expense than smaller family and therefore low income families are not able to educate big number of children up to tertiary level because of the high education expense for every child. Others stated that large family size makes children to lack basic needs like clothing, food mostly in poor families hence dropping out school in order to support themselves and their family's too hence low chances of accessing tertiary education.

1.7 Conclusion

The study concluded that children whose parents have very low education level are unlikely to go for higher studies unlike children whose parents are educated. This implied that parents' education is very crucial in influencing child's education. Therefore, educated parents are likely to influence their children to get educated unlike uneducated parents.

On house hold income and access to Tertiary Education, it was concluded that house hold income to a very great extend influences access to tertiary education. Majority of children's education in Nyamira County is funded by parents while a very few are educated by National and County government. Therefore, household income is very important factor in determining child's access to tertiary education since most children depends on their parents' income for education.

The study concluded that family size affects children's chances of joining tertiary institution. Therefore, the probability of a child from bigger family size joining tertiary institution may not be the same with the one from smaller family size. This implied that the number of children in a family determines households' decision on how much should be spent in education.

The study concluded that there are cultural factors in their locality that influenced access to tertiary education. Community culture such as failure to value girl child education among locals was one of the greatest problem, existence of religions which discouraged school going among children terming education as non-biblical, Polygamy marriage which makes fathers to have large family sizes, Female genital mutilation among some females and witchcraft practice were some of the cultural factors preventing access to tertiary institutions.

1.8 Recommendations

To County and National governments– There is need to increase resources critical in improving the tertiary education system in Nyamira County. Such include increasing the number of universities and colleges in the county. Further, the government should make access to tertiary education easier by coming up with more programs which financially supports students who have completed form four to easily access tertiary education, moreover, the government should do more sensitization on the importance of supporting education of all children regardless of gender as well as importance of tertiary education. Government should stand firm in ensuring those who abuse children's rights like engaging them early marriages, early pregnancies and female genital mutilation are prosecuted. County government should empower parents too through creating income sources to enable them afford school fees for their children. Further, parents should be encouraged to practice family planning in order to have a number of children which they can support academically on their own. Lastly, the children should start programs aiming at educating children about Right of a Child in order to make children demand their rights.

To the parents and Guardians– The parents ought to understand that education is child's right and they have a duty to create a conducive environment for their children to go to school, as well as supporting them financially and socially for study. They should commit in educating their children and supporting them financially, socially and stop abusing them through forced early marriages and FGM. Parents should commit in practicing family planning in order to produce children which they can comfortably support up to tertiary studies. Moreover, parents should shun away from harmful cultural practices which negatively affects child education.

The research focused on household poverty level and access to tertiary education in Nyamira county Kenya. Therefore, further study can be done to shed more light into household poverty level and access to tertiary education in other counties, Kenya.

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