

Causes of Out of School Children in Schools: A Case of Sumbawanga Municipal - Rukwa - Tanzania

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Abstract— Tanzania is devoted to the provision of free basic education, yet there are some children who are still out of school. This study has tried to examine the causes of out of school children in primary schools found at Sumbawanga Municipality in Rukwa Region - Tanzania. The study used mixed method approach where questionnaires and interview were used as data collection tools. The sample size of the study was 80 participants. The study discovered that, good or bad relationship in the family, employment status of the head of the family, orphan hood, cultural and traditional constrains, child labor, community perceptions towards children with disabilities and special needs of some children (impairment) may be the reasons for out of school children.

Keywords— Out of school children and basic education.

I. INTRODUCTION

Out-of-school children may refer to children who have reached official primary school age and ability, yet are not in schools (UNESCO, 2015). The concept of out of school children can be described and categorized into different zones as suggested by Lewin, (2007), to this study these zones are children who have never been to school and children who are at risk of dropping out from schools. This study goes in line with Hunt (2008) who argues that, dropping out of school can be a result of both individual and household-level characteristics, such as gender, disability, household-size, standard of living, children’s living arrangements, their relationship to the head of the household and the level of education of the head of the family.

Objective of the study

The study aimed at examining the possible causes of out of school children in school at Sumbawanga municipality in Rukwa region in Tanzania mainland. This has been motivated by the fact that the government of Tanzania is providing freely the basic education (Educational circular, 2016), and still there are children who are not getting access to education.

II. METHODS

Mixed methods were used to complement each other where questionnaires and interview were used as tools of data collection. Questionnaires were administered through paper and pencil to collect information from teachers, parents and members of the school board while face to face interviews was conducted to get data from Educational Officers. Pilot study was carried out with the aim of testing validity and reliability of the tools for data collection. The sample size of the study was 80 people.

III. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

In the questionnaires the findings are summarize by the table 1 below

TABLE 1. Causes of out of school children

Items	A	U	D
	f (%)	f (%)	f (%)
Orphan hood	80	20	0
Relationship in the family	60	10	30
Education level of the head of family	70	30	0
Employment status of parents or guardians	50	20	20
Child labor	80	10	10
Cultural and traditional barriers	70	0	30
Community attitudes towards children with disability	50	10	40
Family conflicts	60	20	20

Note: Af= Agree frequency, Uf= Undecided frequency, Df= Disagree frequency

With reference to table 1 above, on the item orphan hood, 80% respondents agreed that orphanage contribute to out of school children while 20% were undecided. This tells the effect of orphanage in the access to education despite the free education policy.

In the item family relationship whether good or bad 60% of respondents agreed that there is positive or negative effect on the children attendance to school respectively. Notwithstanding 10% were undecided while 30% disagree. Basing on the majority options it can be argued that good family relationship has positive contribution to children accessing education than the bad relationship.

In addition, 70% of the respondents contented that the level of education of the head of the family facilitates the positively the children access to education, yet 30% were undecided. This is contrary to those children whose heads of the family have low level of education, most of them roam out of school. Shindler (2010) contented that, the education level of the head of the household appears to influence children school enrolment. It can be reflected that, the highest out-of-school rate is influenced by the level of education of the head of the family.

Moreover, employment status of the parents or guardians contribute about 50% according to the respondent’s reaction. This can be assumed that employment status appears to have a mixed impact on school attendance depending on the area or region. In the interview the respondents argued:

R₈: Majority of the children from the parents who are employed sends their children to school, and the family

with no employment wants their children to get better education so that they will get better jobs in future.

R₃₂: Nowadays everyone wants children to be educated except those with special needs, life has changed a lot

R₃: Parents who are employed have at least stable income than the unemployed parents, so every family wants to have a better future through sending their children to get better education.

From the interview responses it can be learned that the awareness of the merits of education is high leading to the positive motivation of the parents to send their children to school.

Nevertheless, 80% of the respondents agreed that the dominant causes of out of school children is due to child labor. Child labor is contributed by the loss of the one or both parents of a child. In this study it was disclosed that orphans are less likely to be enrolled in school than non-orphans as it was argued by Case & Anderson, 2008: Operario et al, 2008.

After all, it was pinpointed that relationship in the family 60% of the respondents agreed that that has effects on students attaining opportunities of schooling. With this it can be contented that structural relations in the family contributes to children of school age be out of formal educational systems.

Townsend, et al (2002) postulates that, children in the family with both biological parents generally had higher chances of schooling than those that had one or no biological parent in the family. Living in a family headed by a woman is not found to disadvantage children, and for some age and sex groups it may be an advantage.

In the interview duration the respondent pointed out that:

R₂₂: In our community many children do live with non-biological parents like grandparents, aunt, uncle. This comes due several reasons such as divorce or death of parent(s), and because most caretakers are not either aware of the value of education or unable to support education costs, many children remain at home or in the streets as out of school children.

The view articulated in the interview seems to be consistent with Townsend, et al (2002) which explains that children who live with both biological parents generally had higher chances of schooling than those that had one or no biological parent in the family. It can be learned that children who are most at-risk are those who are heads of family unit. This observation is consistent with Shindler (2010) who opines that, children who are heads of the family unit are found out of school regardless of their ages fitting the requirement to be at school. This can be interpreted like children who live in the family where the head of that family is a non-relative, are at risk of being out of school compared to the children living with their parents.

Still and all cultural and traditional barriers was seconded in the interview by 70%. This percent portrays that, the culture of indigenous people of the area under this study has the uninvited influence towards education enrolment, attainment and completion. This study found that, there are cultural traditions that obstruct children especially girls to attain education. This tendency is built on the foundation that girls are to be groomed for marital responsibilities than education, a situation that leads many girls lack the chance to education as a result they appear

to be out of school regardless of their age befitting to be at school.

Howbeit, this study come with the argument that community attitudes towards children with special needs has effects on out school children. In the questionnaire it was deduced that 50% of the respondents responded positively to the item arguing that students with special needs are at risk of being out of school than those without special needs. This assertion merges with the study that, some families do not value education for children with special needs instead they tend to hide them in houses as a result they lose their important right to education. Filmer (2005) goes in lie with this finding that, children with special needs have the greatest risk of getting opportunities to education as it is argued in this study.

Nonetheless, family conflict plays a role in making children out of school. This was seen in the questionnaire respondents argued that family conflicts contribute out of school children by 60%. Shaking hands with Markman et al (1994), who postulated that, not maintain marriage affects children in accessing educational opportunities.

IV. CONCLUSION

To ensure that all children get their rights to education, educational stakeholders need to make critical analysis on the barriers to children education. Because tuition fee barrier can be easily identified but things related to family conflicts, parents background, orphan hood, employment status of the head of the family, child labor, community perceptions towards children with special needs and cultural practices cannot be easily studied. This study calls upon the educational stakeholders to make sure they take care of all barriers of education to the children to ensure maximum attainment of children rights to education.

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