

## **EFFECT OF EXTRA LEVIES ON STUDENTS' COMPLETION RATES IN PUBLIC DAY SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN MWALA SUB-COUNTY**

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## **ABSTRACT**

This research aimed to investigate the effect of extra levies on students' completion rates in public day secondary schools in Mwala Sub-County. The study was guided by Systems Theory of Management originally proposed by Ludwig von Bertalanffy in 1928. A descriptive survey design was employed to enhance simultaneous collection of quantitative and qualitative data. The target population of this study comprised of 52 principals, 208 class teachers and 52 chairpersons and 52 vice chairpersons of students' councils of public day secondary schools in Mwala Sub-County. Using simple random sampling and Slovin's formula, which was represented as  $n = N \div (1 + Ne^2)$ , a total of 28 principals, 28 chairpersons and 28 vice-chairpersons of the students' councils and 107 teachers

were selected. Data was collected using questionnaires and interview schedules. Quantitative data was analyzed using inferential statistics with the help of SPSS Computer Programme version 24. Qualitative data analysis was done thematically in narration form. The study recommends the government to put measures in place to regulate any extra fees charged by schools to ensure there is fair and equitable fees payment in all public day secondary schools and achieve the goal of FDSE which is provision of affordable education to all its citizens irrespective of their socio-economic backgrounds.

**Key Words:** Extra Levies, Completion Rates, Students, Secondary Schools, Funds.

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **Background to the Study**

According to Onderwijs (2018), extra levies refer to financial contributions demanded from parents by schools, apart from the government-authorized fees. These additional charges are used to fund various programs not covered by the authorized fees, such as annual testing, co-curricular activities, book shows, meals, uniforms, and transport. Unfortunately, the imposition of these extra levies results in inconsistent school attendance among underprivileged learners, eventually leading some of them to drop out due to the financial burden becoming unmanageable for their families. This circumstance poses a financial barrier to education for underprivileged families, even in nations where education is

intended to be both free and mandatory. Consequently, it hinders the adequate execution of policies promoting free and compulsory education.

According to the findings of a research that was conducted by Koya (2015) on educational levies and their influence on school enrollment in Fiji, revealed that children from disadvantaged backgrounds who were unable to pay these additional fees were either refused admission or sent home from school. Consequently, these students faced truancy issues and were more likely to drop out, leading to lower rates of transition, enrolment, and completion. Although the Fiji government offers financial grants to basic education institutions for tuition fees, teachers' salaries, and various forms of support, these schools still implement additional fees to cover expenses related to sports, school magazines, textbooks, extra tuition, building maintenance, uniforms, coaching, and book hire fees.

While formal school fees are no longer charged, Kizito (2016) discovered that many of Tanzania's poorest pupils are still unable to finish their education due to additional school-related expenses. The inability of parents or guardians to cover transportation expenses, uniforms, and essential school materials like books creates a challenging situation. In cases where secondary schools are distant, some students opt for private hostels or boarding facilities nearby, which is unaffordable for many underprivileged families. This becomes a major obstacle for children coming from poor backgrounds. Moreover, schools can no longer afford to finance essential requirements, which were previously covered by parental contributions (additional fees collected by schools for operational expenses), such as school infrastructure, learning materials, and hiring additional teachers.

In 2015, a study was conducted by Omandi to examine the effects of free day secondary education on the rates of completion among students attending public secondary schools in Mvita Sub-County, located in Mombasa County. The research employed a survey methodology and incorporated a participant pool of 265 individuals, consisting of 12 individuals in head teacher positions, 64 teachers, and 189 students. The findings revealed that since the implementation of Free Day Secondary Education (FDSE) in Kenya in 2008, there had been an increase in the transition rate from primary to secondary schools. However, it was observed that some students faced challenges completing their education as they dropped out due to the inability to afford the additional educational expenses.

Mutemi conducted research in Matinyani sub-county, Kitui County in 2015, focusing on the impact of additional expenses on learner retention in secondary schools. The research utilized a mixed methods strategy, combining qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis. The participants in this study consisted of 7 principals, 7 deputy principals, 28 class teachers, 7 parents' association chairpersons and 1 District Quality Assurance and Standards Officer. The results showed that additional educational expenses like uniforms and lunch fees imposed a significant financial strain on parents, leading to students frequently missing classes (truancy) and, in certain instances, leaving school altogether.

### **Statement of the problem**

Since gaining independence, the government of Kenya has implemented several initiatives to tackle challenges in the education sector and ensure all enrolled secondary school students successfully complete their studies. Some of these initiatives being used include the construction of more secondary schools, employment of more teachers, enforcement of children's rights, provision of Free Day Secondary Education (FDSE), provision of sanitary pads to girls, and provision of bursaries, among others. However, despite these efforts, the government has not achieved 100% retention of learners in secondary school education. This study investigated the effect of extra levies on students' completion rates in public day secondary schools in Mwala Sub-County.

### **Purpose of the study**

The main purpose of this study was to investigate the effect of extra levies on students' completion rates in public day secondary schools in Mwala Sub-County.

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

According to Onderwijs (2018), extra levies refer to financial contributions demanded from parents by schools, apart from the government-authorized fees. These additional charges are used to fund various programs not covered by the authorized fees, such as annual testing, co-curricular activities, book shows, meals, uniforms, and transport. Unfortunately, the imposition of these extra levies results in inconsistent school attendance among underprivileged learners, eventually leading some of them to drop out due to the financial burden becoming unmanageable for their families. This circumstance poses a financial barrier to education for underprivileged families, even in nations where education is intended to be both free and mandatory. Consequently, it hinders the adequate execution of policies promoting free and compulsory education.

According to the findings of a research that was conducted by Koya (2015) on educational levies and their influence on school enrollment in Fiji, revealed that children from disadvantaged backgrounds who were unable to pay these additional fees were either refused admission or sent home from school. Consequently, these students faced truancy issues and were more likely to drop out, leading to lower rates of transition, enrolment, and completion. Although the Fiji government offers financial grants to basic education institutions for tuition fees, teachers' salaries, and various forms of support, these schools still implement additional fees to cover expenses related to sports, school magazines, textbooks, extra tuition, building maintenance, uniforms, coaching, and book hire fees.

According to Ngwenya (2016), primary education in rural areas of Zimbabwe is provided without tuition fees, but this is not the case in urban areas. Despite the 2013 Constitution of the Republic of Zimbabwe guaranteeing the right to free basic education for all citizens, tuition fees are still imposed in urban primary schools. Ngwenya conducted a study to explore methods of collecting fees without compromising the rights of learners in Zimbabwean primary schools. The research revealed that although rural primary schools

did not charge tuition fees, they required additional levies for purposes such as examinations, boarding, staff remuneration (both teaching and non-teaching), equipment provision, and repair and maintenance. Unfortunately, the inability to pay these extra levies resulted in some learners dropping out, leading to lower completion rates.

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### **Theoretical Framework**

This study was based on the Systems Theory of Management. The theory was originally proposed by Ludwig von Bertalanffy in 1928 and has undergone further development by other scholars like Gibson (1997), Mullin (2005), Wehrich (2008), and Scott (2008). This theory perceives an organization as a social system comprising individuals who collaborate within a structured framework. The organization interacts with its environment, acquiring resources, people, and finances while also contributing back to that environment. According to the systems theory, an organization, such as a school, is not solely influenced by its surroundings but is also an integral part of a larger system, such as society or the economic system it is associated with. The implementation of the Free Day Secondary Education funding by the government of Kenya is an example of a change from the outer environment.

### **METHODOLOGY OF RESEARCH**

In order to be able to answer the research questions, a descriptive survey design was employed to enhance simultaneous collection of quantitative and qualitative data. The target population of this study comprised of 52 principals, 208 class teachers and 52 chairpersons and 52 vice chairpersons of students' councils of public day secondary schools in Mwala Sub-County. Using simple random sampling and Slovin's formula, which was represented as  $n = N \div (1 + Ne^2)$ , a total of 28 principals, 28 chairpersons and 28 vice-chairpersons of the students' councils and 107 teachers were selected. Data was collected using questionnaires and interview schedules. Quantitative data was analyzed using inferential statistics with the help of SPSS Computer Programme version 24. Qualitative data analysis was done thematically in narration form.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Extra Levies

To establish class teachers' views on the effect of extra levies on public day secondary school students' completion rates, the class teachers were presented with 4 items that measured their levels of agreement or disagreement with statements related to extra levies. The 4 items were measured on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from strongly agree (a score of 5) to strongly disagree (a score of 1). Table 1 shows the frequencies, means and standard deviations obtained by class teachers on the scale.

*Table 1: Extra Levies (N=93)*

Statement	1 (%)	2 (%)	3 (%)	4 (%)	5 (%)	Mean	SD
1. Extra exorbitant levies lead to students being send home for money hence loss of learning hours leading to truancy	7 (7.5)	11 (11.8)	6 (6.5)	24 (25.8)	45 (48.4)	3.96	1.310
2. Engaging in income generating activities to raise extra fee, exposes students to premature money handling which push them into delinquency such as substance abuse, illicit sex hence dropping out of school	5 (5.4)	8 (8.6)	3 (3.2)	27 (29.0)	50 (53.8)	4.17	1.176
3. Working to earn money for abolished charges divert students' focus from learning to attractive distractions	2 (2.2)	5 (5.4)	9 (9.7)	21 (22.6)	56 (60.2)	4.33	1.004
4. Government's failure in enforcing hidden levy ban encourage introduction of more new levies that is exploited by students looking for flimsy reason to drop out of school	7 (7.5)	4 (4.3)	3 (3.2)	26 (28.0)	53 (57.0)	4.23	1.190
<b>Average score</b>						<b>4.17</b>	<b>1.17</b>

*Source: Research data (2023)*

An average score (M=4.17, SD=1.17) in Table 1 show that majority of the class teachers strongly agree to all the four statements; extra exorbitant levies lead to students being send

home for money hence loss of learning hours leading to truancy (M=3.96, SD=1.310), engaging in income generating activities to raise extra fee, exposes students to premature money handling which push them into delinquency such as substance abuse, illicit sex hence dropping out of school (M=4.17, SD=1.176), working to earn money for abolished charges divert students' focus from learning to attractive distractions (M=4.33, SD=1.004) and government's failure in enforcing hidden levy ban encourage introduction of more new levies that is exploited by students looking for flimsy reason to drop out of school (M=4.23, SD=1.190).

The findings were similar to qualitative data gathered through an interview with a principal from one of the public day secondary school which revealed the following:

*Through the parents' annual general meeting, we have agreed to charge extra fees to cater for development project funds, teacher motivation fees, remedial teaching up keep, and school tours among other levies.*

The same view was advanced by another principal that:

*The parents/guardians remain pressed financially to afford the extra levies that are not covered by FDSE as they are supposed to meet other expenses such as uniform, development levy, personal effects, and lunch.*

These findings concurred with that of Koya (2015) who found that children who did not pay the extra charges are sent home and end up becoming truant and eventually drop out, which lower completion rates. Similarly, Capron (2015) posit that the idea of free education in United Kingdom (UK) is barely realizable, for parents spend on average £800 per child yearly on extra levies which results in poor children falling behind at school due to truancy, suffering embarrassment and or dropping out, with consequent reduction in completion rates. A research done by Ngwenya (2016) revealed that although tuition in rural primary schools was free, the charging of extra levies was a requirement and inability to pay the extra levies led to dropping out of some learners, hence lowered completion rates. The findings also agree with William and Abbot (2014) who found out that the fee-free schooling in Rwanda attracts high enrolment rates in Rwanda, but charging of extra levies negatively impacted on the learners' attendance, performance in academics and completion.

The findings support a study by Omandi (2015) that found out that since introduction of FDSE in Kenya, transition from primary to secondary schools had been increasing, but completion rate had been low for some students dropped out due to inability to pay the extra levies in education. The findings also concurred with study findings of Getange, Onkeo and Orodho (2014) who found out that parents are supposed to pay levies like lunch, development fee and even extra fees. Similarly, studies by Mutemi (2015); Shavanga (2015); Ngwacho, Theodore and Chemwai (2016) agree with the finding that failure to pay the extra levies inclusive of uniform and lunch costs led to learners unable to pay being sent home, leading to truancy of students with some eventually dropping out of school hence reduced completion rates.

According to a study by Mbalaka, Cheloti and Maithya (2021), there is a statistically significant relationship between charging of extra levies and implementation FDSE as the higher and the more the levies are charged, the lower the transition and completion rates.

The study recommends The Ministry of Education (MOE) to enforce the ban on charging of extra levies and publish all approved levies that a school can charge learners if need arises. In order to get further insight on the aspect of extra levies and completion rates, the chairpersons and vice-chairpersons of students’ council were also asked to give their opinion concerning on the effect of extra levies on public day secondary school students’ completion rates. The results are presented in Table 2.

**Table 2: Extra Levies and Students Completion Rates (N=46)**

<b>Statement</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>
	<b>(%)</b>	<b>(%)</b>	<b>(%)</b>	<b>(%)</b>	<b>(%)</b>		
1. I’m always required to pay extra levies by the school same way I did before FDSE introduction	3 (6.5)	1 (2.2)	1 (2.2)	16 (34.8)	25 (54.3)	4.28	1.089
2. Levies are too expensive for poor parents resulting to students being send home for long hence dropping out of school	2 (4.3)	4 (8.7)	3 (6.5)	10 (21.7)	27 (58.7)	4.22	1.172
3. Extra charges is prioritized as a key conditionality for enrolling and continuous learning hence poor students miss, repeat or eventually drop out	1 (2.2)	2 (4.3)	0 (0.0)	12 (26.1)	31 (67.4)	4.52	.888
4. Despite free day secondary education, students unable to purchase requisite personal items are never allowed in school	1 (2.2)	3 (6.5)	2 (4.3)	11 (23.9)	29 (63.0)	4.39	1.000
5. Government’s failure in enforcing hidden levy ban cause inconsistent attendance and drop out	0 (0.0)	2 (4.3)	1 (2.2)	13 (28.3)	30 (65.2)	4.54	.751
<b>Average score</b>						<b>4.39</b>	<b>0.98</b>

*Source: Research data (2023)*

From Table 2 it can be clearly observed that the chairpersons and vice-chairpersons of students’ council strongly agree to all the five statements; I’m always required to pay extra levies by the school same way I did before FDSE introduction (M=4.28, SD=1.089), levies are too expensive for poor parents resulting to students being send home for long hence dropping out of school (M=4.22, SD=1.172), extra charges is prioritized as a key conditionality for enrolling and continuous learning hence poor students miss, repeat or eventually drop out (M=4.52, SD=.888), despite free day secondary education, students

unable to purchase requisite personal items are never allowed in school (M=4.39, SD=1.000) and government's failure in enforcing hidden levy ban cause inconsistent attendance and drop out (M=4.54, SD=.751). The respondents specified that extra levies on public day secondary school students' had a negative influence on completion rates with all items with a mean above 4 scores giving an average mean of 4.39 and standard deviation of 0.98.

These results are in conformity with those of Orodho (2014) who found that parents teachers associations (PTAs) have been authorized to suggest extra levies to be imposed with their consent, a tendency that has made the fees being charged in most secondary schools to skyrocket beyond the financial means of most poor household hence locking out children from such vulnerable backgrounds. These findings further conform to findings by Genevieve (2017) which revealed that, FDSE grant is not adequate to sustain a child in secondary school thus schools compel parents to pay additional fee in form of motivation, development, KCSE registration (upload of details), photocopying papers, trips among other payment which is unregulated and hence varies in amount from one school to the other.

Othoo, Olendo and Gogo, (2023) posit that there is a mismatch of the methods of pricing secondary education and expenditure realities in schools which calls for the examination of the current pricing methods. According to Orodho (2014), the parents should cater for strictly regulated and monitored expenses related to national examinations, internal assessments, transport and affordable school uniforms while the role of the government should be to allocate more funds for developing adequate and appropriate school infrastructure.

## **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION**

### **Conclusion**

Inadequate FDSE funds has left schools with no other options but to charge extra levies to cater for development project funds, teacher motivation fees, remedial teaching up keep, school tours, lunch, school uniforms among others. This has led to truancy of students with some eventually dropping out of school hence reduced completion rates.

### **Recommendation**

The government should put measures in place to regulate any extra fees charged by schools to ensure there is fair and equitable fees payment in all public day secondary schools and achieve the goal of FDSE which is provision of affordable education to all its citizens irrespective of their socio-economic backgrounds.

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